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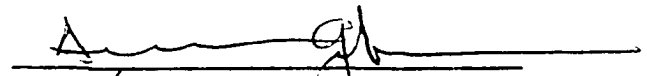
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WILLIAM ROBINSON LEIGH
BIOGRAPHY OF A WESTERN ARTIST
A DISSERTATION
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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PREFACE

Research for this dissertation took the author to a number of archival institutions. The most significant repository of materials related to William R. Leigh is located at the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The many months of concentrated research at that museum are recalled with special fondness. There was an invariably happy atmosphere, highlighted by the considerate and assistance of Senior Curators, Dan McPike and Pat Edwards; the informal and freely exchanged thoughts on Western art with Art Curator Carolyn Bradshaw; and most of all by the thoughtful, patient and cheerful cooperation of Marie Keene, Librarian. Together, they transformed the tediousness of research into a very enjoyable experience. Other institutions which yielded useful materials include the Library at the University of Oklahoma, the Dulaney-Browne Library at Oklahoma City University, the Denver Public Library, and the Oklahoma City Public Library. In addition, the facilities of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, the Wooclaroc Museum at Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art at Fort Worth, Texas, were frequently visited and consulted. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the librarians and curators in each

of those institutions who were always very willing to assist in locating materials.

The writer has a number of other debts for help received in the preparation of this manuscript. Dean Krakel, Director of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, who in 1970 made available his extensive private collection of materials on 1,130 western artists; Dr. Walter Rundell Jr., Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Maryland, who first opened the opportunity and encouraged research in the general field of Western art; and particularly to Dr. Arrell M. Gibson, who since 1953 has been major professor and counselor to the writer, and who presently is director of this dissertation.

Finally, a warm word of appreciation is due two exceptionally fine typists: Suzi Cummins and Rita Lewis. Each went well beyond the call of duty to meet the unrelenting deadlines. Their professional skills are sincerely respected.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Historian and the Scientist
need the Artist to supplement
their studies---to make them more
understandable, more nearly com-
plete, more human and truthful.(1)

Frederick Jackson Turner once wrote that "the data of history must be drawn from studies of literature and art as well as of politics, economics, sociology, psychology, biology and physiography." (2) Historians, however, have been consistently reluctant to give scholarly consideration to western art as a potential source of historical information. In an era of digital computers, high speed cameras and sophisticated recording devices, the artist and illustrator are customarily forgotten as recorders of history. Yet prior to the extensive use of photography, hundreds of artists created thousands of drawings and

(1) William R. Leigh. "Idea File." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Storage Envelope 6; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(2) Merle Curti. "The Section and the Frontier in American History; The Methodological Concepts of Frederick Jackson Turner," in Stuart A. Rice, Ed., Methods of Social Science. A Case Book. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931, p. 355.

paintings which form the only existing visual documentation of the nation's early years.

A sizeable portion of America's Western art was produced by eyewitness illustrators whose very purpose was to document the frontier's fauna, flora and aboriginal cultures. Most of the federally-subsidized expeditions into the trans-Mississippi West were assigned artists who traveled with the explorers and illustrated the official reports. Accompanying Major Stephen Long's cortège of 1819 was artist Samuel Seymour, and the official reports of John C. Fremont's expedition in the late 1840's were augmented with the illustrations of Edward and Richard Kern.⁽³⁾ The transcontinental railroad surveys, conducted by army engineers in 1853-54, included geologists, botanists, zoologists, topographers and artists in each party. All were instructed to thoroughly examine the unknown regions to determine their suitability for a railroad. John Mix Stanley and H. B. Möllhausen were among the eleven artists whose detailed illustrations appeared throughout the comprehensive twelve-volume

⁽³⁾Robert Vine. The American West: An Interpretative History. Boston: Little Brown, 1973, p. 283.

published report.⁽⁴⁾ A third group of visual reporters consisted of magazine illustrators. Editors such as Frank Leslie and the Harper brothers repeatedly sent staff artists on Western assignments for the specific purpose of accurately illustrating frontier subjects. Many American artists, including Winslow Homer, began their careers as illustrators. The work of official expedition artists, survey painters and magazine illustrators deserves careful analysis and selective use by scholars.

Several professional artists with substantial reputations were often personally compelled to preserve a passing phase of history. According to his own statement, George Catlin attempted to visit every Indian tribe on the continent because he had devoted his life

to the production of a literal and graphic delineation of the living manners, customs, and character of an interesting race of people; lending a hand to a dying nation, who have no historians or biographers of their own to portray with fidelity their native looks and history.⁽⁵⁾

⁽⁴⁾ Robert Taft. Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850-1900. New York: Scribners, 1953, p. 8.

⁽⁵⁾ Quoted in Paul Rossi. "George Catlin." The American Scene. Vol. II, No. 3, 1964, p. 3.

Similarly, Frederick Remington was gripped with the idea of recording a disappearing culture.

I knew the railroad was coming.
I saw men already swarming into
the land. I knew the derby hat
and the thirty-day note were
upon us in a restless surge. I
knew the wild riders and the
vacant land were about to vanish
forever---and the more I con-
sidered the subject, the bigger
the forever loomed. Without
knowing exactly how to do it, I
began to record some facts
around me.⁽⁶⁾

Catlin and Remington articulated motives which were representative of many nineteenth century artist-explorers. The urge to pictorially document the frontier produced a utilitarian quality in Western art which is a point of significance to the historian.

Certainly not all Western artists produced their art for historical purposes and of those who did not all were scientifically precise. Frequently, paintings that prove useful to the scholar are not good art, while an excellent piece of art is likely to be useless as documentation. "An artist's first concern is obviously esthetic," wrote Walter Rundell, an authority on the cultural history of the West, and the

⁽⁶⁾Owen Wister. "A Few Words From Mr. Remington." Colliers. March 18, 1905, p. 11.

historian will "rejoice if a work is both esthetically pleasing and historically accurate; the two qualities do not often reside in the same composition."⁽⁷⁾ The paintings and drawings as well as the lives of the artists themselves should be subjected to the same thorough investigation as newly discovered letters, diaries, official documents or memoirs and their authors. The validity and reliability of a work of art must be carefully judged and the power of observation, personal prejudices and professional skill of the artist should be ascertained with equal care.

The first objective of the scholar is to determine if the piece of art under examination is an eyewitness account or a historical reconstruction. Among the many historically significant eyewitness works are Charles Nahl's drawings of the California Gold Fields; the near photographic nature studies of John James Audubon; Alfred Jacob Miller's paintings of the fur trade; George Caleb Bingham's pictures of river commerce and Missouri political campaigns; Thomas Moran and Albert Bierstadt's studies of western landscape; Charles Schreyvogel and Frederick Remington's canvases

(7)Walter Rundell, Jr. "Arts in the West." Scholarly paper delivered at the Western History Association, 1971, Santa Fe, p. 20.

depicting frontier military history; and the hundreds of paintings by George Catlin, Karl Bodmer and Charles Wimar on American Indian life. More important than any of those works, however, are the eyewitness illustrations recorded in official reports of the western survey and exploratory expeditions.

Generally the paintings of an eyewitness are more reliable, although some artists have successfully recreated historical scenes with a high degree of precision. Edgar S. Paxson, for example, spent twenty years researching and eight years painting his famous battle scene of the Little Big Horn. Frederick Remington's hostile reaction to Custer's Demand, a 1902 pictorial reconstruction by Charles Schreyvogel, illustrates the amount of technical knowledge necessary to accurately rebuild a historical event on canvas.

The Indian on the left has a form of pistol holster which was evolved in Texas in the late 70's and was not generally worn until the 80's. (And his picture is in 1869.) The cartridge belt was invented by buffalo hunters and not at all in general use for ten years afterward. The sioux war bonnet was almost unknown in the southern plains---though one might have been there through trade. The white campaign hat was not worn at that period, and not until many years after. The hat was black. The boot Custer wears was adopted by the United

States cavalry, March 14, 1887, and the officer's boot of 1867-9 was quite another affair. The Tapadero stirrup cover was oblong and not triangular as he paints it. The saddle bags in this picture were not known for years after 1869. Crosby wears leggings, which were not in general use until after 1890. The color of Colonel Crosby's pantaloons was not known until adopted in 1875. The officer's saddle cloth is wrong as to the yellow stripe. Now, the picture as a whole is very good for a man to do who knows only what Schreyvogel does know about such matters, but as for history---my comments will speak for themselves.(8)

Remington's detailed criticism revealed a further danger in pictorial reconstruction. Actuality was not always as precise as historical research. A few days following Remington's analysis, Colonel Schuyler Crosby, one of the individuals portrayed in Custer's Demand, came to Schreyvogel's defense. After disputing many of Remington's claims and supporting others, he added

Of course it must be very annoying to a conscientious artist that we were not dressed as we should have been, but in those days our uniforms in the field were not according to regulations and were of the 'catch

(8) New York Herald. April 28, 1903.

as catch can' order, and were not changed regularly.⁽⁹⁾

Certain present day western artists exercise great care in creating their reconstructions and therefore devote more time to researching a painting than to its actual execution upon canvas. Exemplary of those artists is Joe Grandee, whose home is a virtual museum. He has accumulated over 850 authentic western costumes, including 150 different military uniforms, and a wide variety of Indian apparel. His collection contains over 100 saddles, 125 bridles and bits, twenty-five different styles of Indian moccasins, thirty-four pair of chaps, and selected varieties of spurs, lariats, hats, sabres, bugles and canteens. His gun assemblage ranges from Derringers and Colt .45's to Kentucky rifles and even a Sharps buffalo gun. Grandee does not have to guess at the dimension and color of artifacts because they are in his studio. His assortment of relics is superior to many public museums and is the largest private collection in the country.⁽¹⁰⁾

⁽⁹⁾New York Herald. May 2, 1903.

⁽¹⁰⁾Wayne Gard. "Joe Grandee: Painter of the Old West." American Artist, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, June, 1967, p. 81.

Grandee creates authoritatively detailed reconstructions from his reading of history and science and his study of artifacts. For proper rock formations and plant life placed on canvas, which vary with elevation and geographic location, he has studied geology and botany. He is always careful to note subtle distinctions such as the brim of a hat, flare of the chaps, or type of weapon which correspond to the Arizona, Montana and Texas drovers. Furthermore, he carefully examines every animal, vehicle and mechanical device that becomes a part of any composition. The depth of research requisite to a Grandee-type historical reconstruction is generally unknown to the historical scholar. John Ewers, senior ethnologist at the Smithsonian Institution and an authority on Western art, believes reconstructions are more accurate today than they were a half-century ago.

The evaluation of a painting begins with the artist himself. It is essential to determine at the outset where and within what artistic context the artist was professionally schooled. His approach to a given subject, skill as a draftsman, and power of interpretation are rooted in his training. The majority of America's nineteenth and early twentieth

century Western artists studied in Europe. A few received their instruction in American schools and some had no formal education at all. An analysis of the professional training received by a representative group of thirty-four Western artists, taken from a score of books and articles, reveals helpful patterns.

PARIS

Blumenschein, Ernest
Brush, George de Forest
Croze, Irving
Henri, Robert
Higgins, Victor
Kurz, Rudolph
Miller, Alfred Jacob
Nahl, Charles
Phillips, Bert
Sharp, Joseph Henry

MUNICH

Baumann, Gustave
Chase, William Merritt
Currier, J. Frank
Duveneck, Frank
Farny, Henry F.
Hennings, Ernest
Higgins, Victor
Leigh, William R.
Mulvany, John
Sharp, Joseph Henry
Schreyvogel, Charles

UNITED STATES

Adams, Cassilly
Bellows, George
Berninghaus, Oscar
Cassidy, George
Dunton, Herbert

Myers, Frank
Remington, Frederick
Sharp, Joseph Henry

NO FORMAL INSTRUCTION

Bingham, George Caleb
Catlin, George
Davis, Stuart
Eastman, Seth
Mollhausen, H. B.
Moran, Thomas
Russell, Charles M.
Stanley, John Mix

Those who studied in France tended to be more impressionistic and versatile in their work than artists who studied in Germany. More of the Paris students were attracted to the Taos art colony and fewer of their number worked as professional illustrators. Munich students on the other hand tended toward realism and were largely attracted to genre painting. A lesser number spent time in Taos but a larger proportion sought work as illustrators. The untrained, with rare exceptions, were genre artists, motivated to preserve scenes for the historical record. Many of the painters who studied in the United States ultimately settled in Taos. One of the most popular American art schools in the late Nineteenth Century was the Cincinnati Art Academy.

In order to appreciate the significance of where an artist was trained, it is important to know something

of the general trends of art history during the Nineteenth Century. The period from 1800 to 1860 is often interpreted as a struggle between the improvisational, instinctive and imaginative technique of Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) and the deliberate, academic, high linear style of Dominique Ingres (1781-1867).⁽¹¹⁾ The two French artists became the titular heads of a long standing controversy between romantic and classical art. The romanticists argued that the most valued faculty of the human mind was imagination. One authority sharply contrasted the concept of romanticism with the concept of actuality when he wrote that

In the phenomenal world the dialectical opposite to potentiality or rather to possibility is actuality. Romantic theory considers actuality a field of conversion or diversification of potentialities, not the terminus or proof of possibilities.⁽¹²⁾

If a romantic artist painted an acorn, it would probably appear in rather vague form near the foreground of the picture, and more clearly visible in the background would be an oak tree and perhaps a wooden building, thereby suggesting potential,

⁽¹¹⁾Horst de la Croix and Richard Tansy. Gardner's Art Through The Ages. New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1970, p. 651.

⁽¹²⁾Donald Sutherland. On Romanticism. New York: New York University Press, 1971, p. 103.

possibility and the process of becoming. The romantics believed that the power of imagination needed to be continually nurtured by great literature, art and music. "The function of art," according to their view, "is to illuminate or reveal the universal through the particular."⁽¹³⁾

The classical artist emphasized the precision of descriptive line and the outward aspects of his subject whereas the romanticist focused upon inner substance. It was Ingres who was reputed to have originated the famous statement, 'Drawing is the probity of art.' If the classicist painted an acorn, it would be an exactly perfected portrait of the acorn, nothing more, nothing less. It would appear just as if it had been photographed, but without a single blemish or deformity. Delacroix labeled such art as "the complete expression of an incomplete intellect."⁽¹⁴⁾ The classicist sought to perfect the form given to the eye while the romanticist sought to attain truth as given to the imagination.

In 1855 another French artist, Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), introduced a new movement when he

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid., p. 75.

⁽¹⁴⁾ de la Croix and Tansy. Art Through the Ages, p. 654.

rejected the classic-romantic styles of Ingres and Delacroix and advocated instead a forceful realism. Courbet wrote that "since beauty is real and visible, it holds within itself its own artistic expression," and the artist's sole obligation and only privilege was to "find the most complete expression of an existing thing . . . the artist does not have the right to amplify this expression."⁽¹⁵⁾ When describing the purpose of his art, Courbet was even more restrictive.

To be able to translate the customs, ideas, and appearances of my time as I see them---in a word, to create a living art---this has been my aim. The art of painting can consist only in the representation of objects visible and tangible to the painter I hold also that painting is an essentially concrete art, and can consist only of the representation of things both real and existing an abstract object, invisible or non-existent, does not belong to the domain of painting. Show me an angel and I'll paint one.⁽¹⁶⁾

Courbet's paintings were rejected by the jury at the Paris International Exhibition in 1855 because of the common people he chose to portray. The viewers associated his subjects with those suspicious characters

⁽¹⁵⁾ John Canaday. The Lives of the Painters. Neo-Classic to Post-Impressionist. New York: Norton and Company, 1969, Vol. III, p. 865.

⁽¹⁶⁾ de la Croix and Tansey. Art Through the Ages, p. 664.

only recently described by Proudhon and Marx as the 'working class.' The rejected Courbet simply ignored the Exhibition and opened his own "Pavilion of Realism."⁽¹⁷⁾ By 1869, when Munich held its first international exposition, Courbet was considered the grandmaster of realism. Among those who had studied with him were Monet, Renoir, Manet, Whistler, and from Germany, Wilhelm Leibl.

Leibl (1844-1900) became Nineteenth Century Germany's most determined and influential realist. He spent much of his time in Bavarian villages painting peasant life without idealization. His pervasive impact upon the Royal Academy of Art at Munich lasted well into the Twentieth Century. Munich realism dominated the "Society of American Artists" founded in 1877, and the work of William Merritt Chase and Frank Duveneck, American artists trained in Munich, was for a time the most influential art in the United States. Leibl's pictures have been described as hyperphotographic. John Canaday wrote that "his preoccupation with photographic realism was turning him from a painter into a camera."⁽¹⁸⁾

⁽¹⁷⁾ Canaday. Lives of the Painters, p. 862.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 869.

Leibl was also influenced by a group of painters who had settled near the village of Barbizon in France and remained relatively unconcerned with the art controversies in Paris. Known as the "Barbizon School" and claiming Jean Francois Millet (1814-1875) as their leader they sought to portray accurately the life of the peasant and the scenery around him. Millet's The Gleaners, Peasant Family, The Water Carrier, The Angelus, The Shepherdess and The Man With a Hoe are outstanding examples of the Barbizon tradition.

During the late 1860's another art movement known as Impressionism was born in Paris. Among its leading exponents were Manet, Monet, Renoir and Pissaro. The traditional linear forms of representation were abandoned in favor of a thorough exploration of light and color. Impressionism was based upon individual sensation or reaction to the visual world. Subject matter became unimportant and served as little more than a framework for recording the transitory effects of light. One student of Impressionism wrote that the "perceptual experience of the painter was more important than the natural appearance of the object."⁽¹⁹⁾

⁽¹⁹⁾Alan Bowness. The Book of Art: Impressionists. New York: Grolier Publishers, 1965, p. 272.

They relied heavily upon optical response, often to the neglect of thought and imagination. The movement enjoyed its greatest prominence between 1874 and 1886.

The last major art reformation in the Nineteenth Century was introduced by Paul Cezanne in 1886. It was identified as Post-Impressionism. The art of the post-impressionist was expressive rather than descriptive and as a result subject matter became even more insignificant, taking on a mere symbolic character. The movement divorced art from its pictorial tradition and made of it a means through which emotional reaction to natural phenomena could be expressed. It was not what an artist saw but how he saw it that became important. The main thrust of Post-Impressionism lasted well into the early Twentieth Century and included such famous names as Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec.

An awareness of the significant Nineteenth Century art movements provides helpful insights for the student of Western art. Any American artist exclusively trained in Munich would be firmly rooted in exact draftsmanship, realism, and genre painting with almost no exposure to the new movements in Paris. Because of their schooling, Munich graduates were better prepared to enter the profession of illustrating and therefore more likely to create pictorial

documentation useful to the historian. Conversely, Parisian students received a much wider artistic perspective by virtue of their simultaneous association with Courbet's Realism, Manet's Impressionism, Millet's Barbizon Style, and Cezanne's Post-Impressionism. The result was that a mid- to late Nineteenth Century Paris-trained Western artist was more likely to produce a higher quality art than his Munich counterpart, but less likely to produce an accurate visual record for historical analysis. But a student trained in early nineteenth century Paris, which was still under the classical influence of David and Ingres, was apt to produce more descriptive and linear work.

After determining first that a picture is either a reconstruction or an eyewitness account, and second, where the artist was trained, the historian should identify the ideals and prejudices which influence the artist's mind. George Catlin, for example, exhibited great sympathy for the Indian. He saw the noble red man living in an unspoiled culture and perceived the Anglo as an intruder. Frederick Remington viewed the same scene with a totally different prejudice. He saw the hostile Indian, whom he intensely disliked, as a barrier to the expansion of Anglo-Saxon civilization. The biases of Catlin and Remington are manifest in

their writings, thereby alerting the historian to examine their Indian art with caution. The scholar should further attempt to discover the artist's basic theological, political and economic percepts, all of which play influential roles in the creative process of producing a work of art.

Finally, the evaluation of a piece of art should include a comparative analysis with other similar works. John Ewers examined over fifty different paintings of the buffalo hunt. After digesting the best contemporary written descriptions of the event, Ewers then eliminated those artists who had not actually participated in or seen a buffalo chase. From the remaining pictures, he at last chose The Buffalo Hunt by Charles Wimar as the one which most nearly duplicated the action. The same discriminative process should be used in selecting the most accurate canvas of a mining camp, cattle drive, numerous aspects of Indian culture, and dozens of other themes which attracted more than a single artist.

Little serious research has been done in the field of Western art. Only two authors have attempted major analytical studies. John Ewers' article, "Fact and Fiction in the Documentary Art of the American

West,"⁽²⁰⁾ is the finest comparative analysis that has yet been written on the subject. It is easily superior to his more widely-known book, Artists of the Old West. The other analyst was Robert Taft, a professor of chemistry at the University of Kansas, who authored Artists and Illustrators of the Old West which remains the only monographic study of Western illustration. It is a work of sound research and is indispensable to the student of Western art.

The paucity of serious scholarship is certainly not indicitive of the recent swell of public interest. Within the past twenty-five years, Western art collections in most of the nation's leading repositories have been significantly expanded, while simultaneously several major new galleries and museums appeared, including

Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, Oklahoma	1949
Glenbow Art Gallery, Calgary, Alberta	1955
Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Cody, Wyoming	1959
Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, Texas	1961
National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	1965

(20) John Ewers. "Fact and Fiction in the Documentary Art of the American West," in The Frontier Re-Examined edited by John Francis McDermott. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1967, pp. 79-95.

Public interest in the work of western artists is best reflected in the substantial increase in sales and sales prices of their work. Comparative prices paid during art exhibitions at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1968 and 1972 by collectors, dealers, and galleries across the land reveal a continuing trend.

		<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>
Robert Lougheed	oil	\$3,000	\$8,500
Fred Harman	oil	3,900	5,500
Melvin Warren	oil	5,000	6,500
John Hampton	oil	4,000	5,500
Joe Beeler	Sculpture	800	5,000
Tom Ryan	Charcoal	125	2,500
James Boren	Watercolor	425	3,000

(21)

During the same twenty-five year time span there was a proliferation of unscholarly publications on Western artists. Most were in the form of exceedingly laudatory biographical sketches written for the purpose of promoting the man's work. Very infrequently did a quality biographical study such as Thurman Wilkin's Thomas Moran, Artist of the Mountains or Maurice Bloch's George Caleb Bingham: Evolution of an Artist, reach the market. Among the scholarly deficiencies in the field of Western art are the lack of critical biographies of artists, analytical studies of the

(21) The Sunday Oklahoman. November 19, 1972.

various Western art themes, a compilation of the location of artists' works, bibliographies of materials, and a much needed biographical dictionary of Western artists.

The obvious lack of work in the field prompted the research for this dissertation. William Robinson Leigh was one of the last eyewitness observers of the West and one of the most controversial Western artists that America produced. His work is exhibited today in nearly every major repository of Western art, yet a full scale biography has not been written. A few brief sketches of his life have appeared in the form of magazine articles, but they are not based upon solid research and consequently reveal very little about the man that would help to evaluate his work.

The biography of Leigh which follows will demonstrate how his childhood environment, his professional training and the art climate of the United States determined the direction of his career. It will also explore his basic theological, political and economic beliefs with an eye toward their collective impact upon his art. The biography will identify those works by Leigh, both reconstructions and eyewitness accounts, which are of value as documentation or illustration. Finally, the work contained in subsequent chapters is designed to transmit the spirit of the man. Silvestre's

eulogy of Delacroix might well have been written for
William R. Leigh, an artist

who had a sun in his head and
storms in his heart; who for forty
years played upon the keyboard of
human passions and whose brush--
grandiose, terrible or suave--
passed from saints to warriors,
from warriors to lovers, from
lovers to tigers and from tigers
to flowers.(22)

(22) de la Croix and Tansy. Art Through the Ages,
p. 651.

CHAPTER II

MAIDSTONE TO MUNICH

My tameless soul
Has aye abhorred control!
And from the first
Has with revulsion curst
convention's fetters,
And blind slavishness reviled!(1)

It was 1939. Crisp autumn days had only recently merged with the bitter cold of December. On a desolate clearing amid canyon and mesa in northeastern Arizona, a ceremonial fire blazed into the night. The erratic flickering of light revealed bronzed, near naked figures of Navajo men circling the flames, chanting and dancing with uncommon zeal. They wore fierce masks and brandished torches and rattles to exorcise evil spirits which had wrought illness upon one of their tribe. Evolved from ancient Pueblo ritual, this healing ceremonial, creatively refined by an inventive Navajo theology, had become an extravagant nine-day pageant, known as the

(1) William R. Leigh. "The Invocation." Unpublished poem, Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, p. 2.

Night Chant.⁽²⁾ Past midnight, in sub-zero cold, the ceremony neared its climax.

Seated on the earthen floor within the ring of tribal spectators was an Anglo visitor. He was a man of dignified appearance and gentlemanly bearing, who displayed a sturdy countenance, alertness of eye and steadiness of hand that belied his 73 years.⁽³⁾ He had traveled often among the Navajo people and knew intimately their habits of work and play. Long ago he read of the Night Chant,⁽⁴⁾ and now, late in years, had risked his health in the dead of winter to be an eyewitness. Freezing on one side, baking on the other, with children laughing, shouting and jumping about, he studied the dance intently. At last, satisfied that all conditions were precise, he took a pencil from his pocket and on the pad in front of him began sketching with loose and fluid strokes.⁽⁵⁾ Within a few minutes the aged artist had

(2) Ruth Underhill. The Navajos. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956, p. 212.

(3) William R. Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, Vol. II, p. 421.

(4) Washington Matthews. The Night Chant. New York: American Museum of Natural History; Memoir, No. 6, 1902.

(5) William R. Leigh. "Portfolio #5." Leigh Collection, Cabinet No. 1, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

completed a preliminary sketch that he would later transform into a mural-sized painting.⁽⁶⁾

Such work was merely routine. William Robinson Leigh regularly strayed far and in many directions from his 57th Street-studio in New York City. He could be found at lonely campsites on the Lukenia plains in Africa, high in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming, on Arizona's desert floor, or perched on the rim of the Grand Canyon busily preparing countless sketches. But it was to the life of the Navajo, the Zuñi, and the Hopi that his brush and palette were repeatedly attracted. Again and again he traveled to their reservation lands, sketching every detail of custom and culture. In the commonplace scenes of southwestern Indian life, Leigh found the content for his finest work.

Although it became his most enduring legacy, Leigh had not originally envisioned a reputation or career as a "Western" artist. He turned to it almost as a last resort. The story of his developing talent and its final interlocking with the American Southwest is an epic of struggle, frustration and disappointment. In old age he glanced back across a lifetime and wrote, "We

⁽⁶⁾William R. Leigh. Navajo Fire Dance. 6½' x 10½' painting, Leigh Collection, Exhibition Gallery; Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, 1941.

are all like marbles,--big, medium, or little; and Fate . . . sets us rolling."⁽⁷⁾

BIRTH AND ANCESTRY

William Robinson Leigh was born September 23, 1866, at Maidstone, the family home in Berkeley County, West Virginia.⁽⁸⁾ The Maidstone lands were located in the northeastern fringe of the panhandle near the little village of Falling Waters on a secluded bend of the Potomac. One of the two 600-acre Leigh farms actually abutted the River.⁽⁹⁾

The surrounding region presented an idyllic scene. Years earlier, following a visit to Berkeley County, Washington Irving described it as

a lovely and temperate region,
diversified by gentle swells and
slopes admirably adapted to culti-
vation. The Blue Ridge bounds it

⁽⁷⁾William R. Leigh. "My Life." Penciled notes, Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, p. 384.

⁽⁸⁾William R. Leigh. "Leigh to Mother, Oct. 13, 1884"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-55; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa; and William R. Leigh, "Family Tree"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁹⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 1, 3.

on one side, a ridge of the
Alleghenies on the other. (10)

The countryside boasted a reputation as an abundant and luxuriant land. Fish, deer, elk, bear and wild turkeys abounded. The area near Martinsburg, watered by Tuscarora Creek, offered excellent agricultural advantages. There, beyond the crest of the Blue Ridge, was a sanctuary of rural contentment. In that setting of physical beauty and natural endowments, the insecure, imaginative, young Leigh found solace and inspiration. His intimate familiarity with the many moods of the land nurtured an artistic appreciation of nature that grew in intensity with passing years.

At opportune moments in his career Leigh often claimed to be the descendent of famous persons. Following the publication of his Shakespearean play, Clipt Wings, word circulated that he was "descended from Sir Walter Raleigh and Chief Justice Marshall." (11) When his painting, Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, began to receive national promotion, William Brewster suddenly found a place in the Leigh family tree. (12) But the most persistent claim, which appeared in scores of

(10) Washington Irving. Life of George Washington. New York: Co-Operative Publication Society, n.d., p. 58.

(11) The opening sentence printed on a bookmark which accompanied each copy of Clipt Wings.

(12) William R. Leigh, "Scrapbook #5"; Leigh Collection, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

newspapers, magazine articles and exhibition catalogues from 1910 until his death, was of his descendance from Pocahontas. Leigh offered that his relationship to Pocahontas ". . . may have inspired him to make his first trip west, in 1906. . . ." ⁽¹³⁾ His belief in that bloodline served as the inspiration for a spectacular mural-sized work which portrayed Pocahontas saving the life of John Smith. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Unfortunately, the facts do not support all of the claims. The Leigh family tree ends with a seventh generation ancestor named Rawleigh Travers and a penciled note, "this line may lead to a sister of Sir Walter Raleigh." ⁽¹⁵⁾ Near the chart's edge after the name of another seventh generation relative, Isaac Allerton, is the name Elder William Brewster. In neither instance has evidence been discovered to verify a relationship. Leigh was correct, however, in his claim of kinship with Chief Justice John Marshall. His maternal great grandmother, Elizabeth Marshall Colston, was the sister of

(13)"The Rugged Spirit of the Golden West"; Think Magazine, February, 1951, p. 17.

(14)William R. Leigh. Pocahontas. 6½' x 10½' painting, Leigh Collection, Exhibition Gallery; Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, 1943.

(15)Leigh. "Family Tree."

John Marshall.⁽¹⁶⁾ Elizabeth and John were two of fifteen children born to Mary Randolph Keith and Thomas Marshall. But Leigh was inaccurate in claiming the ancestral blood of Pocahontas. He noted on his family tree that his great-great-great-great-grandmother, Judith Fleming, was the link to such famous heritage. In reality, Judith Fleming's brother, John Fleming, was married to Mary Bolling, the great-great granddaughter of Pocahontas and John Rolfe.⁽¹⁷⁾ The only link Pocahontas held with William R. Leigh was that of an exceedingly distant great-aunt, by marriage, not blood.

There was certainly no need to issue questionable claims of kinship. A distinguished procession of ancestors reached far back into the colonial days of Virginia. The mother of Leigh, Mary White Colston, was descended from Ishams, Keiths, Randolphs, Marshalls, Whites, and Fauntleroyes. These were families of property, station in life, commanding character, industry, and firm root in the colonial gentry. Counted in their ranks

(16) Albert J. Beveridge. The Life of John Marshall. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, Vol. I, p. 14, 15; also Leigh. "Family Tree."

(17) "Fleming Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 23, Dec. 31, 1915, p. 214, 325, 441.

"Fleming Family," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. 24, Dec. 31, 1916, p. 94, 206, 327.

Wyndham Robertson. Pocahontas and Her Descendants. Richmond, Va.: Randolph & English Publishers, 1887, pp. 32-34.

were leading clergymen⁽¹⁸⁾ and several members of the House of Burgesses. Among those ancestors were William Randolph (1651-1711) and Mary Isham (1659-1735) who numbered in their offspring a great-grandson, President Thomas Jefferson; a great-great grandson, Chief Justice John Marshall; and a great-great-great-great grandson, William R. Leigh.⁽¹⁹⁾ Curiously, Leigh never mentioned any relationship to Thomas Jefferson.

His father's lineage is more difficult to trace. The Leigh strain contains sea captains, Colonels and Majors, men given to adventure and wandering. They intermarried with Lears, Coles, Carys and Watkins. names not regularly included among the first families of the commonwealth.

Both of Leigh's grandfathers, however, were especially prominent citizens of Virginia. His maternal grandfather, Edward Colston, was born at Honeywood, Berkeley County in 1788. The Honeywood Estate was part of a joint purchase made three years earlier from the legatees of Thomas, Lord Fairfax; by Edward's father, Raleigh Colston; Raleigh's brother-in-law, John Marshall; and a third more distant relative, General

⁽¹⁸⁾ Rev. James Keith (1696-1757); Rev. Alexander White.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Beveridge. John Marshall. Vol. I., p. 10.

Henry Lee.⁽²⁰⁾ Maidstone itself, was later created from a small portion of that quarter-million acre acquisition. Edward was graduated with a degree in law from Princeton in 1806 and later served as a Captain in the War of 1812.⁽²¹⁾ An ardent Federalist, he was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, and in 1817, to the United States Congress. He assumed an active role in the legislative proceedings, arguing in favor of relief funds for surviving revolutionary soldiers, supporting the internal improvement powers of Congress, and issuing a harsh condemnation of General Andrew Jackson for the execution of Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister in the Seminole War.⁽²²⁾ He served in Congress until his defeat in 1825 by William Armstrong, then spent his remaining years living the quiet life of sage and country gentleman.

Benjamin Watkins Leigh, the paternal grandfather, was born near Petersburg in 1781. He was graduated from the college of William and Mary in 1802 with a degree in Law.⁽²³⁾ Elected to the House of Delegates in 1811,

(20) F. Vernon Aler. History of Martinsburg and Berkeley County, West Virginia. Hagerstown, Md.: Mail Publishing Co., 1888, pp. 55-57.

(21) Biography of Edward Colston, n.d.; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, p. 1.

(22) Ibid., p. 2.

(23) Richmond News Leader. October 15, 1957, p. 12.

he gained recognition as a legal authority and was appointed to supervise the preparation of Virginia's Code of 1819. The success of his work on the code led to his appointment in 1822 to represent Virginia in a dispute with Kentucky over distributed lands. He and Henry Clay, commissioner from Kentucky, reached agreement on the matter, but the Virginia Senate refused to ratify the compromise. Leigh retired to private life until 1829 when he was appointed representative from Chesterfield County to the Virginia Constitutional Convention. Four years later he was sent by Virginia to South Carolina requesting that state to withdraw her act of nullification. The following year William Cabell Rives resigned from the United States Senate, and Leigh was elected to replace him. He became a determined opponent of Andrew Jackson in the dispute over re-chartering the Bank of the United States, just as he had in 1818 when he authored the "Algernon Sidney" letters.⁽²⁴⁾ An aristocrat, Leigh was one of the most prominent Virginia statesmen of his day.

The grandfathers of William R. Leigh had much in common. They were of the same social class, both university graduates with degrees in law, both elected to the

⁽²⁴⁾The "Algernon Sidney" letters, written in 1818-1819, were published in the Richmond Enquirer, denouncing General Andrew Jackson's entire military career.

Virginia House of Delegates, both respected political leaders who served in the legislative branch of the United States Government, and both held a firm dislike of Andrew Jackson. They were also brothers-in-law. Benjamin Watkins Leigh was married to Susanna Colston, the sister of Edward Colston.(25)

Leigh's father, William, born in 1814 at Richmond, Virginia, was exemplary of the adventurous spirit in his lineage. He enlisted in the United States Navy at the age of fourteen and spent the next twenty years roving the seven seas in a sailing man-of-war. In later years, he entertained his children and neighbors on summer evenings, sitting on the porch, telling stores about the sea--buying trained monkeys in Calcutta, attacked by an octopus in the Indian Ocean and a giant python in the Ganges, washed overboard during a typhoon in the Caribbean, and stranded in the Pacific without a breeze.(26)

Lieutenant Leigh gave up the seafaring life when in 1854 he married Mary Colston of Honeywood plantation and built Maidstone on one of her inherited land tracts. Mary, eighteen years younger than her husband, was a delicate lady, nervous, impatient and of choleric

(25) Leigh. "Family Tree."

(26) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, pp. 92-103.

temperament. To this union was born seven children: Watkins, Wickham, Colston, Raleigh, William, Thomas and Elizabeth.

CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT

Maidstone was built along classical southern lines, with Grecian pillars in front, French windows in back, a cypress shingle roof, and borders of well-kept flower gardens. A short distance north of the mansion was a stone-constructed slave house. South were the milk cellars, horse barn, carriage house, granary, cattle barn, and barnyards. The ten-acre lawn was graced with clusters of silver maple and mulberry trees.⁽²⁷⁾ During the late ante-bellum years, Maidstone was a scene of affluence, elegance and gentility.

On the eve of the Civil War, the Colston mansion at Honeywood was destroyed by fire.⁽²⁸⁾ By war's end, the entire plantation was a ruin, the land weedgrown, and even the family vault had been desecrated and robbed. The fate of Maidstone was no less depressing. After burying the family silver, consigning the farms to a

⁽²⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 2.

⁽²⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 10.

caretaker, and sending Mary and the children to live in South Carolina, William Leigh joined the Confederate Army.⁽²⁹⁾ The Leighs returned in late 1865 to find the estate in total disrepair, their livestock stolen, and personal belongings, including the family library, pillaged. What had been a center of opulence and hospitality had decayed with neglect. Although offered \$75,000 for the property, Leigh turned it down and attempted instead to redevelop the land. In those melancholy surroundings, with the family living on the very edge of poverty, William R. Leigh was born in the unpromising autumn of 1866.

Leigh's father lacked training and experience in farm management. It was one thing to give orders on a sailing vessel to trained seamen, but quite another to manage laborers on a large acreage. Furthermore, he failed to develop any economic perception of the war's impact and therefore ignored suggestions to move West or transform his farm land into fruit orchards. He tried renting portions of his two farms to poor-white tenants only to discover that they were "thorough at nothing, listless and without ambition."⁽³⁰⁾ Matters

⁽²⁹⁾ Ibid., p. 12.

⁽³⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 7.

were compounded by the post-war unemployed who resorted to thievery for survival. The Leigh farms were constantly pilfered; corn stolen from the fields, fruit from the orchard, oats from the bin, and chickens from the roost.⁽³¹⁾ The combination of these factors led to the eventual loss of both farms. Leigh remembered the post-war years at Maidstone as "a ghastly, long drawn-out torture" and reflected on the plight of his father: "he was like a man running from a prairie fire which could run faster than he could."⁽³²⁾

Struggling to survive the economic hardship of reconstruction in West Virginia left indelible marks upon the mind and character of young Leigh. Private tutors who had educated his four older brothers could no longer be afforded. Attending a nearby public school, integrated and staffed with an inferior teacher, was considered worse than no education at all. "Willy" was therefore taught at home by his mother.⁽³³⁾ She was an unsystematic person and her attempt to manage the household as well as educate a young son proved too heavy a burden. Occasionally his grandmother and Aunt Elizabeth were called in to assist, but most often he

⁽³¹⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 33.

⁽³²⁾Leigh. "My Life." Penciled notes. (Leigh was a very poor speller. All subsequent quotations from his works will appear as he wrote them and without the use of sic.)

⁽³³⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 44.

was alone with his mother. It was a grueling experience for both the recalcitrant student and the impatient teacher. She read to him repeatedly Shakespearean plays and the Bible, drilled him in basic arithmetic, and the skills of reading and writing. He much preferred to draw pictures on his slate rather than practice subtraction or the alphabet. Except for his professional art training in later years, William R. Leigh had no formal education at all. From the crude pedagogy imposed upon him at Maidstone he emerged an atrocious speller but with keen appreciation of great literature, a poor manager of finances but with perceptive insight into artistic values, filled with suspicion of humanity but brimming with confidence in nature.

He was intimidated as a child. Living at Maidstone, an anachronism in a new age, enduring relentless financial oppression, nurturing a self-conscious attitude about the lack of formal education, and suffering from the debilitating effects of hookworm, Leigh developed an enormous inferiority complex. No one in the family understood the childhood malady or its effects. Consequently, they thought Willy was a lazy and foolish child, whom they could exploit. In his autobiography, written at least seventy years later, Leigh remembered clearly every childhood injustice, insult and slight inflicted upon him by others. He characterized the neighbor children, along

with his older brothers, as incessant humiliators, taunting and making jokes of his embarrassments, as well as blaming him for the results of their own mischief. He remembered, too, severe beatings from his father, which left him bruised and unable to lie in bed. Embittered, he became hostile and defensive toward friend and relative alike. Often in his autobiography he lashed out at them with scathing rhetoric. Insecurity, intimidation, and feelings of inferiority plagued his early years, molding impulses and instincts that moved him all his life. He was inwardly driven to excel in art, to prove his worth through achievement.

The Leigh home was a frequent visiting place of affluent urban relatives. Elizabeth and Alfred Williams along with their daughter, Rosalie, often made the trip from Baltimore to Berkeley County. Aunt "Lizzie," a favorite sister of Leigh's mother, enjoyed moderate wealth due to Alfred's employment with The Baltimore American. Occasionally, Chapman Leigh came all the way from New York City. Cousin John Hansen Thomas, a Baltimore banker, enjoyed bringing his prize bird dogs to hunt on the Maidstone lands. Young Leigh resented their wealth and felt insulted when they brought food to sustain the family during their visits.⁽³⁴⁾ Somehow it

(34) Ibid., p. 80, 82.

reinforced the family's impoverished condition and added to Leigh's feelings of inferiority.

The only congenial playmate he knew was cousin Susie Colston who lived on the neighboring lands at Medway. Their romantic little world of adventure was a big yellow pond populated with frogs, tadpoles, butterflies and mud-daubers. The happiest hours of his life were spent there among the cattails with Susie wading in water and watching the cattle as they came to drink.⁽³⁵⁾

From his earliest years, Leigh held a special love for all animals. He preferred their company to that of people because it offered an escape from all he disliked. Throughout his autobiography, the farm animals at Maidstone were described with greater affection than his own family. Each one was given a name and a special personality. There was Hoffman, the gladiatorial Red Durham bull; Lil, the motherly, sedate old milk cow; a canine aristocrat known as Rover; and Old Barney, the patriarchal saddle horse.⁽³⁶⁾ While just a young boy, he would spend hours sitting on a fence intently observing the animals as each fought for a place at the trough or simply roamed about. The habit and mood of the barnyard became second nature.

⁽³⁵⁾ Ibid., pp. 16, 22, 24.

⁽³⁶⁾ Ibid., pp. 56, 68.

I don't know when I learned that a horse must be mounted on the left side, and a cow milked on the right; it seems to me I always knew these things. (37)

When he could not be with animals he read about them. Cassell's Popular Natural History was the most influential book he encountered as a child. He enjoyed looking at it even before he could read. Very early he knew the names and habitats of nearly every animal in the world. He listened carefully to the stories his mother read about the African adventures of Sir Samuel Baker, Stanley and Livingston. The knowledge of animal life he received at Maidstone proved invaluable in his later career as an artist.

ART TRAINING IN BALTIMORE

By the age of seven, he had drawn all the animals on the farm and practiced cutting out dramatic scenes of tiger hunts and lion fights. (38) One of his paper cut-outs, representing a man on horseback being chased by an elephant, won first prize at the Martinsburg County

(37) William R. Leigh. The Western Pony. New York: Huntington Press, 1930, p. 18.

(38) William R. Leigh. Art Collection. Leigh Collection, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, Rack D-38.

William R. Leigh. "Portfolio #3." Leigh Collection, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, Cabinet No. 1.

Fair.⁽³⁹⁾ Although the prize was only one dollar, it represented the greatest triumph of his beleaguered childhood. His mother encouraged him to develop the talent, but others in the family were apparently not so impressed. He recalled, "My grandfather thought that painting was an occupation fit only for a woman, unworthy of men."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Leigh sensed the peculiarity of his talent in the minds of those around him. "In those days I was tolerated,---A fool with a faculty. It was discussed at length in my presence; I was a freak. The faculty was for drawing."⁽⁴¹⁾

A visit from relatives during the summer of 1880 brought a fateful turn to the life of William R. Leigh. Alfred and Elizabeth Williams, at Maidstone for a ten-day vacation, told the family of a new instructor recently employed at the Maryland Institute of Art. His name was Hugh Newell, a former student of Edward Landseer⁽⁴²⁾ in London. Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Alfred

(39) Ibid.
Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 48.

(40) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay." Leigh Collection, Library; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa. Hollinger Box-VII.

(41) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 48.

(42) Georgiana White. "William Robinson Leigh: Painter of the American West." University of Tulsa, Department of Art, 1970, p. 6.

invited Willy to live with them in Baltimore and attend the Institute. The proposal was accepted and that fall the fourteen year-old Leigh boarded his first train and traveled to Baltimore.⁽⁴³⁾

The art class at Maryland Institute was composed of himself and six older boys. Two of the boys, Emil Meyer and Paul Hallwig, became his most frequent companions. For eight years, Leigh, Hallwig and Meyer were fellow art students, first at Baltimore then in Munich. There was also a wealthy Cuban student named DeMuro with whom Leigh often discussed the writings of Alexander Dumas, in particular, The Count of Monte Cristo.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Hugh Newell, reticent but forceful, appeared in class only once a week. He assigned the students elementary forms to be drawn singly and in simple outline. Later they were to be copied in combinations and shaded. Here the first principles of perspective along with the groundwork of logic in drawing were learned. Leigh remembered, "I began to see the slow, sure, logical development of sincere painting."⁽⁴⁵⁾

⁽⁴³⁾ Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 108.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 115, 117.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 110.

By the end of the first term, he had distinguished himself with exceptionally high marks and proved the confidence of Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Alfred. He also excited the admiration of Susie Robinson, a cousin in Washington D.C. She carried the news of his achievement to Mr. William Wilson Corcoran, one of the city's most prominent art collectors and philanthropists. He sent two hundred dollars to help Leigh continue his studies. (46)

Baltimore offered an excitingly different world to a boy who had never been in a town larger than Martinsburg. Leigh spent three years at the Maryland Institute of Art, returning home only during summer months to help with the harvest. He enjoyed roaming the streets, visiting Baltimore Harbor, and especially attending theatre. In the winter of 1881, he went with Cousin Rosalie to see Edwin Booth perform Hamlet. It was one of the few plays his parents would have approved. "My mother was brought up to look upon the theatre as an evil institution; actors and actresses were vile. Yet there were exceptions; she considered Edwin Booth a great and splendid citizen. . . . My father concurred." (47) Of all the fine arts, Leigh considered drama the most

(46) Ibid., p. 112.

(47) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay." Leigh Collection, Library; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa. Hollinger Box-VII.

effective communicator and spent much time authoring plays at various times in his career.⁽⁴⁸⁾ From those days in Baltimore until the end of his life, he attended plays and operas at every opportunity.

Leigh consistently improved his abilities. During the third term at the Institute, he learned to incorporate in his art the subtlety of action, movement and life. He once spent nine days drawing a quoit-thrower, and Mr. Newell commented that it could almost leap from the pedestal. Newell helped Leigh obtain a teaching position at the Institute. It was a late-night elementary class of eight boys which met three evenings each week, and Leigh earned fifteen dollars per month. Most of his waking hours were consumed with the study of art.⁽⁴⁹⁾

At the close of the term in 1883, Newell told Leigh the Institute had done all it could for him. He recommended that William continue his art education in Europe. Emil Meyer and Paul Hallwig had already arranged to study in Munich, while his Latin friend, DeMuro, had decided upon Paris. Leigh wanted to go to Paris, but the cost was seven hundred dollars, compared

⁽⁴⁸⁾In 1930, his play, Cleft Wings, was published. Among his voluminous unpublished works are three plays: "Summer Night Fantasy," "The Vagabond Poet," and "The Witch."

⁽⁴⁹⁾Ibid., p. 119.

to three hundred dollars required to attend the Munich Academy. The family wrestled with the problem throughout the spring and early summer because they lacked the funds to send him either place. During the course of the summer, William was invited to visit New York and discuss the matter with his uncles, Chapman Leigh and Charles Fry. Soon after his return to Maidstone, a letter arrived from Charles Fry, indicating he would pay three hundred dollars per year for Leigh to further his studies in Munich.⁽⁵⁰⁾ William accepted the offer.

Unlike anyone else in his illustrious lineage William R. Leigh was going to become an artist. He had indeed ". . .burst convention's fetters and blind slavishness reviled."⁽⁵¹⁾

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 121.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Leigh. "The Invocation," p. 2.

CHAPTER III

STUDENT DAYS IN MUNICH

Can anybody tell me where this circle
begins or ends? Where do we come from?
Where are we going? Why do we come?
Why do we go and where?(1)

At 5:40 a.m. on the morning of July 20, 1883, a ship bound for Bremen, Germany sailed from Baltimore Harbor.(2) Among the passengers was sixteen year-old William R. Leigh. The home tie, fragile at best, was irrevocably broken. No expression of sadness was uttered at his departure and only rarely in the stream of letters that followed was there any hint of homesickness. He experienced instead a sense of finality about his early years, and the voyage to Europe offered a long sought escape. So intent was his preparation to leave that a letter of brotherly counsel from Watkins went unanswered. As an afterthought he asked his

(1) William R. Leigh. "Untitled 20 page essay on Priestcraft." Unpublished essay, Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, p. 4.

(2) William R. Leigh. "Map of Atlantic Crossing." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-1; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

mother "to tell brother Watkins when you write I thank him for his kind letter of advice, and tell him his counsel will not be thrown away. . . ."(3) Watkins, along with most of his brothers, was unceremoniously consigned to an unhappy past, and never written to again.

The sea journey lasted fifteen days. Between bouts of seasickness Leigh spent much of his time speculating about the future with Paul Hallwig, his former Baltimore classmate and traveling companion. The boys were accompanied by Paul's father who was charged with properly enrolling them in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. Emil Meyer, another Baltimore classmate already in Munich seeking a residence for three, was awaiting their arrival. Leigh grew ". . . heartily tired of [the] dreary expanse of water,"(4) but at last on the afternoon of August 4, they docked at Bremerhaven.

Very little escaped Leigh's curiosity and observation. Within hours of sighting the German countryside he wrote, "there is a look about the whole face of the country which calls up to mind upon first landing the recollection that the land is an old one,

(3)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 22, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-1; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(4) Ibid.

with everything worked down to a system."⁽⁵⁾ They stayed one day in Bremen where Leigh was awed by the equestrian statue of Gustavus Adolphus and found time to visit his first Rathskeller.⁽⁶⁾ He was intrigued with the medieval character of the city and as he rode the train to Munich the following day, it seemed he had been transported backward in time.

"At last I am in the city of art,"⁽⁷⁾ wrote Leigh. His inquisitive nature led him to search out and comment upon the city's character. Massive Gothic architecture, the local gasthaus, people, picturesque city streets, and Frau Löanas boarding house at 17 Ratmanstrasse all received thorough descriptions from his pen. But his most enthusiastic comments told of abundant statuary, fine carvings on public buildings, and especially the many art galleries, and exhibits. His initial exhibition viewing was more spontaneous than cultivated. Typical of his observations was that some of the paintings ". . . were the strangest looking things ever to be

⁽⁵⁾"William R. Leigh to Aunt Elizabeth Williams, August 22, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-4; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁶⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 122.

⁽⁷⁾"William R. Leigh to Mother, August 12, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-2 Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

intended to represent nature, that you ever saw, being mostly scriptural scenes and having no perspective; . . . I could not help thinking that some of the angels must have pretty strong wings to lift the limbs they had." (8)

IN THE MUNICH ACADEMY

Trial drawings were required for students to enter the academy. Mr. Hallwig, laden with sample works by Emil, Paul and William, paid a visit to Professor Raupp, instructor of the antique class. Leigh sent his drawing of the "quoit-thrower" completed during the last term in Baltimore. Raupp invited all three to participate in the trial drawing competition for admission in late October. The trials began on Monday, October 28, and Leigh chose a "death mask" for the subject of his drawing. (9) Seventeen students were rejected, but Leigh, along with Hallwig and Meyer, was

(8) "William R. Leigh to Aunt Elizabeth Williams, August 22, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-3; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(9) "William R. Leigh to Mother, November 25, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-7; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

admitted and at last able to ". . . say positively, that I have been accepted in the academy."⁽¹⁰⁾

Leigh immediately plunged into the academy regimen. Due to the restriction of daylight hours the antique class began at eight o'clock in the morning and lasted until four o'clock in the afternoon. From four until seven in the evening he attended academy lectures on art history, architecture, anatomy and perspective; then participated in night drawing classes by lamplight until nine.⁽¹¹⁾ Although the hours were long, Leigh did not object. He was still inwardly driven to excel in art and also willing to work diligently for Professor Raupp, one of the few people at the academy of whom he spoke kindly.

He is a regular German with
pleasant countenance, always in
a good humer, and always ready to

(10)"William R. Leigh to Father, November 7, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-8; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(11)"William R. Leigh to Aunt Elizabeth Williams, November 11, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-9; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"William R. Leigh to Susie Robinson, December 2, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-11; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

explaine everything in art that
you do not know. (12)

Professor Raupp's antique class met six days a week and consisted of sketching plaster casts. The first project assigned Leigh was to draw the bust of Bacchus. (13)

Leigh was at great disadvantage in the lectures because he had not studied German before arriving in Europe. However, soon after arriving in Munich he did spend several hours each day until the opening of the academy with a German grammar. Yet he was woefully unprepared to comprehend formal lectures. Simultaneously he was attempting to improve his skill in spelling English. He requested of his aunt and mother when they wrote to ". . . point out all defects in spelling." (14) They dutifully sent scores of corrected words and when the lists grew short he inquired "Is the list of miss spelt words smaller than at first because

(12)"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 16, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-13; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(13)Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 131.

(14)"William R. Leigh to Aunt Elizabeth, August 5, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-3; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

you do not like to send them, or because I do not spell so badly as before?"⁽¹⁵⁾ Then the lists became so long that time did not permit him to study them at all. After four months of intensive drilling he complained "I acquire German much more easily than spelling."⁽¹⁶⁾

Leigh's inherent distrust and suspicion of humanity was no less apparent in Munich than it had been at Maidstone. He observed his fellow students with a cold detachment and critically described their character and motives. He commented to his mother ". . . that every student at that school without a single exception was a mean and jealous man. Artists hate to see each other succeed for fear someone else will surpass them."⁽¹⁷⁾ "I expect," he said, "they have as much meanness among them as one would wish to find, for artists are proverbially mean towards each other."⁽¹⁸⁾

(15)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 7, 1883."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-15;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(16)"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 2, 1883."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-11;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(17)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 12, 1883."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-10;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(18)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 25, 1883."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-15;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

He characterized Emil Meyer, a colleague of three years, as deceitful, greedy, jealous, underhanded, and "a person of ten thousand plots and plans and the great object of them all is to get ahead of me."⁽¹⁹⁾ Leigh vowed that Meyer would never overtake him.

After the passage of sixty years Leigh still remembered everyone he disliked among the cosmopolitan assortment of students at the Munich Academy. Among those he bitterly recalled were Stark, a brutish New Englander who detested Southerners; Bigel, a crude, ex-prizefighter from Chicago; a fat, bespectacled, unimaginative Wurtenberger known as Keck; an unkempt, unwashed, shock-haired Russian nihilist named Cherishevsky; Bauer, the sly American who bought works of others and put his name on them; the uneducated, unfriendly, one-armed Smith; Von Hess, the class jester; and Kahn the pompous Hebrew.⁽²⁰⁾ It was extremely difficult for Leigh to find virtue in any man. Because of his pessimistic view of human nature, he was and forever remained a loner. When his mother

(19)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 18, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-15; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 23, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-14; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(20)Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, pp. 128-132; 166-167.

inquired about friendships he responded that he was acquainted with nearly all the forty American and English students at the academy, but "as for violent friendships, I have none. . . . Outside of the students I have no acquaintances and do not wish to have any."⁽²¹⁾ Two years later he wrote again,

I am not one of those happy
mortals who can be fast friends
with any fellow who comes along.
To like them, and to have them
as intimate associates, are two
very different things.⁽²²⁾

Only one student held a sympathetic spot in Leigh's memory; an impoverished Czech peasant known in the academy as "Blue Pants," whom he memorialized in an epic poem.⁽²³⁾ A student of superior talent, Blue Pants was constantly harassed by students of lesser ability and finally crushed by poverty. Therein, Leigh drew parallels with his own early life.

(21)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 28, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-36; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(22)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 12, 1886." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-106; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(23)"William R. Leigh. "Blue Pants." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa. (The poem is 56 pages in length and contains 222 verses.)

My early 1884, the studious and frugal habits of the first six months gave way to a flurry of new interests. A gymnasium membership provided much needed exercise. There was also a sudden burst of interest in literature. He began reading the poems of Byron, Tennyson and Longfellow, and the writings of Washington Irving.⁽²⁴⁾ A copy of Ivanhoe was a warmly welcomed gift from home,⁽²⁵⁾ and many rainy spring days were consumed with reading the works of Shakespeare. His life did not lack the influence of literature.

The most spectacular change in Leigh's routine was the result of his decision to begin attending theater and opera. Hallwig and Meyer had been regular patrons throughout the autumn of 1883, but Leigh had refused to go with them because it was ". . . contrary to his bringing up."⁽²⁶⁾ But once having heard an opera, his appetite became insatiable. The first was Richard Wagner's Lohengrin, which he saw three times.⁽²⁷⁾

(24)"William R. Leigh to Mother, February 10, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-19; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(25)"William R. Leigh to Mother, March 23, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-24; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(26)"William R. Leigh to Mother, January 13, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-17; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(27)Ibid.

A few weeks later he went to see Die Walkure, an opera originally produced in Munich in 1870 and a part of the famed Wagnerian Ring. He stood in line two hours just to buy a standing-room-only ticket.⁽²⁸⁾ Later in the season he attended a performance of Mozart's The Magic Flute, but most often he was attracted to the works of Wagner. Leigh became a warm admirer of the composer, who defended the right of free men to live by their own law; who sought to change the moral and political foundations of Germany; who created beauty; and who combined the arts of poetry, music and philosophy into a single form.⁽²⁹⁾ Leigh, beginning to sense his own independence, was attracted to such ideals and, in later years, adopted them as ambitions for his own life.

PROGRESS IN ART

Leigh arrived at the Royal Academy without any fixed career objective. His only goal was to study

(28)"William R. Leigh to Mother, March 16, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-22;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Earnest Newman. Stories of the Great Operas.
New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1930, p. 320-321;
187-221.

(29)Golo Mann. The History of Germany Since 1789.
New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968, p. 237-238.

for a brief time at Munich and then continue his training in Paris because he thought French artists were superior to German artists. After one month in the academy he observed:

They teach one to draw very closely and carefully and to thoroughly understand everything he draws. But the exquisite ease and grace of the French picture is lost and as for sketching the student has to teach himself all of that. Still it is a fine school, and has many fine teachers in it. Mr. Newell told me before I left of my stay here, and that after that I should go to Paris, if it was possible in any way to do so. (30)

A few weeks later he was even more candid when he declared that "the German mode of teaching [was] inclined to stiffness and rigidness of work. German artists do not rank as high as those of France." (31) Leigh consistently wrote of his desire to study in Paris. He had wanted to go there in the first place but financial limitations directed his path to Munich. Unrecognized by him was the fact that the nature of his training at the Royal Academy, which superbly prepared him as an exact draftsman, was limiting his

(30)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 25, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-15; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(31)"William R. Leigh to Susie Robinson, December 2, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-11; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

career options in an age of art impressionism and guiding him inexorably toward the field of illustration.

During the spring of 1884 Leigh began to travel outside the confines of Munich which brought subtle changes to the subjects on his drawing tablet. His formal training in Maryland along with his first two terms in Munich consisted largely of drawing from statuary and plaster cast. Early in 1884, for example, he spent more than three months preparing a six-foot drawing of the Venus de Milo statue.⁽³²⁾ Weary of repeated copy work he had hoped to enter the "Nature Class" in the spring but only three were accepted.⁽³³⁾ He therefore sought other diversions from the regimen. With the arrival of Easter holidays in April, Leigh, dressed in old clothes and armed with newly purchased easel, stool, and painting umbrella, set out on a one-week trip through the Alps to the little village of Tyrol. Although often irritated with the antics of his

(32)"William R. Leigh to Aunt Lizzie Williams, March 9, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-21; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(33)"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 16, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-13; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"William R. Leigh to Mother, May 4, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-27; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

eight traveling companions, he was thoroughly captivated by the beauty of the land. In the grandeur of the mountains Leigh rediscovered the solace and inspiration he had enjoyed as a child roaming through Berkeley County. The day after his return to Munich he wrote a thirty-one page letter to his mother detailing the complete experience.⁽³⁴⁾ It reveals an articulate young man equipped with an increasingly profound sense of aesthetic observation and a basic attraction to nature. Of the medieval village, Weilheim, he wrote that the

. . . odd looking old houses standing
in irregular array on every side,
seemed like silent sentinals of
time watching from year to year the
universal changes that take place.⁽³⁵⁾

Following a heavy snowfall which shrouded the countryside he perceived the struggle for freedom on the limbs of a pine, and wrote that the

. . . pine trees were all drooping
with the wate of the snow, which
was melting beneath the influence
of the sun, and now and then
slipped from their boughs, which
sprang to their natural position

(34)"William R. Leigh to Mother, April 14, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-26;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(35)Ibid.

with a sudden bound as they were
released, glad to be once again
free.(36)

The Tyrol excursion was the first of many trips. His talent for artistic expression was at its best in natural settings outside the city of Munich.

Following spring recess the new term offered a modestly expanded variety of activities. Students drew from live models during the morning hours and had brief sketching periods each afternoon. As the session drew to a close near mid-July, Leigh made application for nature class in the fall, finished a drawing of a zither player, and then directed his attention toward another statuary sketch to be entered in the annual competition for medals.(37) He sent one sketch home and was surprised at the response, writing that he was "glad you were so pleased with the zither player. Didn't know so small a thing would afford you so much pleasure. You see it with a mothers eyes."(38) His other drawing went on display with the rest of the

(36) Ibid.

(37) "William R. Leigh to Mother, June 8, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-36;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(38) "William R. Leigh to Mother, July 15, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-34;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

academy work July 27th, and was examined by two faculty members in the antique class. There was not much hope of his winning a medal, Leigh thought, because there were no American judges. Ten awards were given to 150 students, five by each professor. William R. Leigh, Paul Hallwig, and Emil Meyer each won a bronze medal.⁽³⁹⁾ Judging from the substantially improved quality of his work and the intensity of his study, it was a well-deserved reward. He cautioned his mother, however, not to place too much emphasis on his victory; "If a student wins a gold medal in Professor Loefftz school or the composition school, then begin to open your eyes."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Another mark of improvement, born of his first year at the academy, was his ability to perceive the beauty of great masterpieces. Months earlier he had been repulsed while viewing several master works on exhibit in the Munich galleries, criticizing their content, unnaturalness and poor technique. But in June, 1884, he saw the same exhibits with a more cultivated and romantic eye. Of a work by Rembrandt he wrote, "When

(39)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 28, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-39;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(40)"William R. Leigh to Mother, August 30, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-38;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

you see the picture, you look at it as if at nature; no technique in work, no canvas attracts your eye, but a poetical feeling creeps over your mind, as if you were transported back to the scene of ages long passed away, and lost in the depths of time."⁽⁴¹⁾

During the summer of 1884, Leigh spent all of August in Rothernburg, a quaint Bavarian town with its medievalism fully preserved. There he sketched a stable, several street scenes, a peasant kitchen, a mill, an ancient castle and other subjects.⁽⁴²⁾ His sketchbooks became crowded with genre scenes in the Barbizon tradition.

NATURE CLASS

Winning the Bronze medal carried certain advantages. He was allowed to enter Professor Gyses' nature class in the fall of 1884 without submitting a trial drawing. He wrote of his plan "to spend two years in the nature

(41)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 29, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-33; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(42)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 8, 1884," Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-30; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

school, then move to composition."⁽⁴³⁾ Furthermore, he still clung to his desire of someday studying in Paris and to that end talked of arrangements to begin studying the French language under a special tutor while in Munich. After just receiving a medal and being admitted to nature class it seemed like an appropriate moment to write of such possibilities to those at home who were providing support.

The fall term commenced on October 20, 1884. Nature class concentrated on human anatomy, particularly head studies. From eight o'clock until noon daily students using charcoal drew live models, with emphasis upon light and shading. The afternoons found them beginning to sketch with brush and paint. Leigh became anxious about his progress and after viewing the American Club exhibition wrote,

I could not help wishing I was as far advanced as some of them are, but, I suppose or at least hope, that industry and perseverance will bring me on as far in a couple of years.⁽⁴⁴⁾

With growing regularity he went on sketching trips to the country. Most often he went alone which added

(43)"William R. Leigh to Mother, October 19, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-44; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(44)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 23, 1884." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

to his reputation of being snobbish, unsociable, aloof and a purist. His favorite spot was Chiemsee, a beautiful mountain-lake retreat southeast of Munich that served as a vacation area for several of the academy instructors including Carl Raupp and the famed Piloty. The scenes Leigh sketched at Chiemsee were executed with a graceful, impressionist, light and delicate technique unlike his drawings in the academy classroom.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Decades later he recalled, "I found drawing from nature vastly more absorbing than drawing from the cast."⁽⁴⁶⁾

Although the beautiful scenery at Chiemsee afforded excellent material for artists, Leigh believed the region was over-civilized. He complained that the mountains were too distant, the lake too tame, too many boats crossing, and too many houses covered the shore. For the first time he was moved to mention the American West, but only because of its natural endowments and not with any thought of a career objective.

Europeans have no scenery like the bold, wild American mountains and streams. Even the Alps are not as wild as American mountains, for every peak has been ascended; every where

⁽⁴⁵⁾William R. Leigh. "Sketchbook 4." Leigh Collection, Cabinet No. 1, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁴⁶⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 168.

one looks habitations come in sight.
But in America's range of western
rocky mountains the gorges yet exist
where never mortal eye except some
wild hunter or Indian has scanned
the scene. I do not think that
America stands second in its kind
of wild grandure to any country in
Europe.(47)

The young artist's fascination with nature was steadily growing. Throughout the late summer and fall of 1884 he illustrated many of his letters with sketches of Chiemsee and Rothenburg. Only in that brief period did he illustrate letters.

From October 1884 until April 1886 Leigh spent three terms in nature class. Apart from increasing financial pressures, his life in Munich followed the familiar routine of previous months. During the 1885 Easter holidays he was among five students who traveled to Venice.(48) Visits to numerous Venetian galleries sparked an interest in the works of Titian and especially the enormous murals of Tintoretto and Veronese.(49)

(47)"William R. Leigh to Mother, September 29, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-41;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(48)"William R. Leigh to Mother, March 29, 1885."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-67;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(49)"William R. Leigh to Mother, May 24, 1885."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-69;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Their canvases, dating from the Venetian Renaissance, were painted on a huge scale and contained highly dramatic scenes. Leigh was influenced by what he saw and throughout his later career produced many paintings reminiscent of the Venetian masters both in size and content. While in Venice he also devoted a large amount of his time to sketching canals, gondolas, and street singers which revealed his continuing interest in genre scenes.

At the close of the spring session he again won a bronze medal for the quality of his work.⁽⁵⁰⁾ After sketching at Chiemsee during August and September he returned to the academy and began a third term in nature class. His mother, plagued with financial worry, urged him to move quickly into Professor Ludwig Loefftz's painting class, but Leigh resisted.

you say "most decidely" I had better go into the painting class, and push on my studies, as you did not think it best that I should be detained in Europe longer than is necessary; that is a command against my judgement. The academy is no college

(50)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 27, 1885."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-75;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

where one goes through a course and comes out an artist. Artists are not so easily made.(51)

Although William wanted to continue his nature class studies another full year he finally compromised and entered the painting class in the spring of 1886.

PAINTING CLASS

March and April found Leigh's passion for opera and Shakespeare undimmed. In a span of only two weeks he attended Wagner's The Flying Dutchman and saw Macbeth and Othello. The grand scale of Wagnerian opera and Shakespearian drama was as influential and appealing to his mind as the giant murals of Tintoretto and Veronese.

After an Easter walking trip to several Alpine villages Leigh settled into Loeffftz's painting class. It was a difficult adjustment. Well grounded in draftsmanship, he was now instructed not to draw. Instead, he had to use pigment and paint to develop a subject, without benefit of preliminary drawing. Students painted from seven o'clock in the morning until one in

(51)"William R. Leigh to Mother, September 27, 1885." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-80; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

the afternoon and then indulged in sketching. The difficulties he experienced during his first term in painting class confirmed the claim that he had not been ready to enter.

Leigh's letters of June and July, 1886, were largely devoted to discussing the death and funeral of Bavaria's King Ludwig II. Page after page described the Munich buildings draped in black and endless lines of people waiting to view the King's body in the palace chapel where it lay in state. Leigh himself stood in line two hours,⁽⁵²⁾ and like thousands of others, traveled to Starnburg to visit the scene of Ludwig's drowning. His most interesting letter described what the majority of people believed happened.

The belief here is that the King as he was walking with the Dr. suddenly started for the water, and that the Dr. pursuing him, caught him by the coat collar to hold him back. The King slipped out of the coat and ran into the water; the Dr. attempted to check him, but the King being a larger and stronger man, weighed him down and drowned him, after which he scratched and bruised, and the tracks

(52)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 20, 1886."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-103;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

left upon the soft mud bottom showed that a violent struggle had taken place. The Kings coat and over-coat were found together; also one of the buttons was torn from the coat.(53)

Sometime after the burial Leigh wrote that a "band of masked men discovered by a watchman in the cemetery, were digging up the body of the Dr., with the intention of hanging it to a lamp-post in the center of the city because he pronounced the King crazy; authorities say they were roughs, others say they were army officers."(54)

Ludwig had barely reached his grave when Piloty, director of the Royal Academy, also died. He had been widely respected for his work at the Munich school and his death was a severe loss to the German art community. Leigh, however, offered little comment but did attend his funeral.

The practice of awarding medals was discontinued in 1886. Instead, student work was put up for sale. Three were sold, including Leigh's for which he received 20 marks.

The remainder of the summer was spent drawing and reading at Chiemsee. He read Faust along with many of

(53)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 5, 1886."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-105;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(54)Ibid.

Goethe's short poems between sketching periods at the mountain retreat. It was the last period of general leisure he was to know for sometime. Toward the end of August the foreboding news arrived.

You said in your letter of August 2,
that I could not stay in Munich
longer than this year, you thought.
Why do you not let me know exactly
how every things stand?(55)

From that time until his departure from Europe in the summer of 1887 the one consuming topic in the correspondence was money. Letters became irregular and noticeably strained with very little discussion of his progress at the academy.

Much of the problem was of Leigh's own making in that he had abandoned the habit of frugality. Although it was understood at the time he left home that the cost of living and studying in Munich would be \$300 per year, an amount his uncles agreed to pay, the cost spiraled dramatically. A review of the correspondence for the years 1883 to 1887 shows that Leigh received substantially increased amounts of money from his mother and uncles every year.

Aug. 4 - Dec. 31, 1883	-	\$200
Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 1884	-	\$400

(55)"William R. Leigh to Mother, August 31, 1886."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-110;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 1885	-	\$600
Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 1886	-	\$900
Jan. 1 - July 27, 1887	-	\$400

The figures do not include the unspecified amounts which he frequently acknowledged receiving such as the small checks from his mother or gold coins from brother Watkins. During the first eighteen months he managed finances quite well but thereafter gradually became more careless. He refused to concern himself with such mundane matters as fiscal planning or a job and was content to let his mother provide for his needs.

For Mrs. Leigh, having a son in a European art school was the last vestige of passing family affluence and social prestige. She was willing to preserve it at all costs. She arranged for many of his weekly letters to be published in the Martinsburg Statesman so that friends and neighbors would know of her son's work. She took the precaution of correcting his spelling and even re-wrote certain passages in the letters before submitting them to the paper so they would befit a student in Europe. Those letters from "Willy" which told of good progress or the award of a medal were swiftly sent on to Chapman Leigh, Alfred Williams and Charles Fry in the hope it would encourage them to continue supplying the necessary funds. In addition to her annual check of \$100 she frequently sent along \$10 from her household account to pay for William's

expenses. To save on clothing costs she made his shirts and offered to make his suits as well, but he refused the latter preferring to purchase them from a Munich tailor. Furthermore she was forced to play the role of diplomat between her son and her brothers to reduce the animosity resulting from the soaring costs. She continually urged her son to write letters to his benefactors and send samples of his work while at the same time she explained to her brothers the rising support costs.

Overlaying her efforts were serious troubles at Maidstone. Mr. Leigh was seriously ill, crops had been lost to the drought, and they were being forced to sell the entire Maidstone estate. In the midst of those circumstances she received a letter from William telling of his trip to Venice which cost 130 marks and of his need for more money.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The letter was mailed on to her brother and on the margin she wrote in despair, "I sometimes think it was almost a pity he went to Europe, and think maybe he had better come back."⁽⁵⁷⁾ Chapman, experiencing business difficulties of his own, was forced to reduce his contribution.

⁽⁵⁶⁾"William R. Leigh to Mother, April 19, 1885." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-69; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁵⁷⁾Ibid.

In August she pleaded with her son to consider entering painting school in an effort to shorten his stay in Europe. She met with rebuff.

You ask if I do not think that it would be my better plan to go into the painting school. Well I will tell you just how that is. You probably think that after having studied drawing for the length of time which I have studied it, (three winters in Baltimore, and two winters here, five in all) that I ought to be a pretty good draftsman by this time, at least good enough to go into the painters school. And it is very natural of you to think so; having not a very minute knowledge of what an artist has to know. But you only have to reflect what an enormous undertaking it is to become an artist. When a person begins to paint, think what he has to struggle for. The bare outline of the head, the moddling of each individual part, the color, and the manipulation of the paint. When one begins to paint before he can draw well, he finds the difficulties so increased that he is crushed, and is at a loss to know how to advance. The only thing, is to go back to the drawing school and draw, until drawing becomes easy to him, so that when he begins to paint the color and handling of the paint are the only things that he has trouble with. . . . Art is not a thing which can be understood at a glance, or studied out by rule like long division sum, nor can it be pushed along by force or learned in a measured space of time; It is not simply the skill of long practice, it is mental creative power.(58)

(58)"William R. Leigh to Mother, September 6, 1885."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-79;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

One week later, Leigh again told his mother

Do not think that all I have to do is to go into the Antique one year, Nature one year, Paint one year, and Composition school one year, and then come home an artist. I might as well tell you now, that it will take much much, longer than you think. . . . I have begun the study of art now, and there is no turning back.(59)

Mrs. Leigh faced a dilemma. William's argument was rational but so were the complaints of her brothers who could no longer assist with the expense. Although Leigh was aware of most of the difficulties at home he continued his regular attendance at opera, theater and the gymnasium as well as purchasing books and traveling. By December, 1885, he wrote that it was no longer possible to live on 100 marks per month and then asked directly, "Why does Chapman only send \$100 at a time?"(60)

Early in 1886 he wrote his mother, "Hope you can solve the money problem soon. If there is no alternative but for me to come home, I will tell you not to

(59)"William R. Leigh to Mother, September 13, 1885." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-79; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(60)"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 28, 1885." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-91; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

expect anything of me. I can do nothing because I have not been here long enough."⁽⁶¹⁾ He also informed his mother in that letter that he was being accepted into Loefftz's painting class at Easter, hoping that might relieve some of the pressure on him to move more quickly through the academy. By March he was confidently asking his mother to inform Uncle Chapman that all the money he had sent should be considered borrowed money. "There is not a particle of doubt, but that I will be able to pay it all back after a while."⁽⁶²⁾ There is no record that he ever repaid anyone who helped him study in Munich.

The problem grew worse. In June Leigh demanded, "I have only 100 marks in the bank left; Uncle A. will have to send another supply. . . . The money flies, but I can't help it. I have to buy material and I have to live."⁽⁶³⁾

A temporary respite came in the fall. Mr. William Wilson Corcoran who once before had given Leigh

(61)"William R. Leigh to Mother, February 2, 1886." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-92; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(62)"William R. Leigh to Mother, March 1, 1886." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-93; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(63)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 20, 1886." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-103; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

assistance presented the family with a \$200 gift for their son to further his studies. But his incessant requests continued. Within a month he wrote, "I have 100 marks in the bank and 50 in my pocket; the rest of the 500 has vanished: 40 to tailor, 63 to academy, 35 to landlady--it is all gone somehow or other."⁽⁶⁴⁾

A few weeks later he was requesting his uncle to send still another \$100, and added that he "just as well send \$200 while he is at it."⁽⁶⁵⁾ But the money was not sent. Instead a letter came from Uncle Chapman indicating he would send no more money, and Leigh responded to his mother, "I see nothing left for me to do but to go home."⁽⁶⁶⁾

He spent the entire spring brooding over his fate. In his gloom he wondered if he should ever have chosen art as a profession.

I expect when you first thought of
my studying art, you never imagined
it would take so much time and money

⁽⁶⁴⁾"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 8, 1886."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-114;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁶⁵⁾"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 28, 1886."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-117,
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁶⁶⁾"William R. Leigh to Mother, January 23, 1887."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-119;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

to carry out the idea, otherwise perhaps you would have thought it better not to humor my whim in that direction, but tried to get me into some lucrative business situation. Sometimes I think it might have been better if it had happened so, because I have not the means to follow it out to the end.(67)

Leigh completed the spring term without medals, awards or distinction. He wrote often that Loefftz was very pleased with his work but gave no further indication of his professional progress. The thought of Paris still attracted him. He grew impatient with Munich and wrote,

I don't like the way they paint here, and don't like to get into their way of painting any more than I can help. They paint too spiritless for me. In one way I am glad that I am leaving this place this summer; that is if I can make enough money in America to take me to Paris.(68)

Just before his departure from Munich he commented in passing that "sketching to me is a very interesting occupation; more so than working in the school."(69)

(67)"William R. Leigh to Mother, February 28, 1887."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-122;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(68)"William R. Leigh to Mother, March 27, 1887."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-124;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(69)"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 22, 1887."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-131;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

The statement adds confirmation to the view of many critics that his performance at sketching was superior to his finished work.

From Antwerp, in early August, 1887, Leigh sailed homeward on the steamer, Westernland. He was going home to "knock and hamer for myself, which I have had no experience of as yet." (70)

THE RETURN TO MUNICH

The year following his arrival in America was wholly directed toward a single objective--returning to Europe. His first act upon landing in New York was to visit one of his benefactors, banker Charles Fry. He planned to thank him for his support and ask for the loan of money for further study. Fry abruptly refused to discuss the matter.

After reaching Galehill, the new family home near Martinsburg, West Virginia, Leigh attempted unsuccessfully to obtain several art commissions. Finally he resorted to teaching a class of young ladies at a Baltimore boarding school for the sum of \$15 per month.

(70)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 20, 1887."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-129;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

The meager income was occasionally supplemented by the sale of an oil painting for \$60. Uncle Alfred Williams tried to assist by arranging for Leigh to paint the portrait of Baltimore bank president, Enoch Pratt. But Pratt was so horrified when he saw the finished painting that he refused to pay.(71)

The fact that Leigh's father died during the winter of 1887 did not deter his plans. He helped his mother move to Martinsburg where she opened a boarding house. By summer he had saved enough money to return to Munich and during the last week of July sailed for Germany.

During his absence from Munich, Meyer and Hallwig had become close companions. They rented a private studio and did not wish to have Leigh join them. He described their circumstances with envy.

They have at their disposal all the advantages now that a man can have. A splendid great big studio, all the clothes and comforts that one could in moderation desire, a first class teacher, and nothing under the sun to do but work and learn.(72)

As usual, Leigh was happier by himself. "I am going to move into a small studio on the first of October,"

(71) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 183.

(72) "William R. Leigh to Mother, October 8, 1888." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-135; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

he wrote, "where I will be alone. I can always work better alone." (73)

Financial arrangements for his return to Munich included the requirement that Leigh seek employment, that he would send his best sketches and finished work to Uncle Alfred Williams who in turn would sell them and mail the money to Leigh, and that his mother would send what money she could afford. As it turned out, Leigh was unable to find work and Uncle Alfred rarely sold a painting. Incensed by criticism and refusal to buy his works, Leigh vowed "I will never send any more work to Baltimore as long as I live." (74) But Uncle Alfred continued his efforts and occasionally met with modest success.

His first winter back in Munich was difficult. Unable to find a job until the following May, he lived six weeks without any money at all. Although forced to borrow in Munich, not once in his letters of that period did he directly ask for money from home. However, he often inquired how Uncle Alfred was getting on selling the sketches. Throughout those tedious

(73)"William R. Leigh to Mother, September 24, 1888." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-134; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(74)"William R. Leigh to Mother, January 8, 1889." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-138; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

months the subjects on his canvas became exclusively genre in theme and melancholy in tone. At no time did he mention attending opera or theater. When summer finally arrived he wrote of the time just past,

I hope I never spend another winter like the last. I am further with my art than if I had stayed in America, and nearer to independence, and I knew I would probably have to stand a little poverty and I did, but I am none the worse off for it, and I think my way is growing better now.(75)

Years later, he recalled the time only as "an indistinct blur of misery."(76)

Lack of money forced Leigh into a habit that eventually proved very useful. In January 1889, he first mentioned that he was painting from a photograph. He explained that he could not afford to hire models and had to do all his work from photographs.(77) Although a source of much criticism, it was a practice he followed throughout his career. He compiled extensive photographic files on cloud studies,

(75)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 16, 1889." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-141; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(76)Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 188.

(77)"William R. Leigh to Mother, February 14, 1889." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-139; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

landscapes, humans and animals to which he constantly referred when painting his western scenes.(78)

Temporarily the burden of poverty was lifted. In May he was employed by Professor Braun to assist in painting a military mural for a monthly fee of 250 marks. In addition, a letter from his mother in early June contained \$200. Unfortunately it soon became evident that Professor Braun was not going to pay as he promised. Leigh then began thinking of new ways to obtain money.

I have another scheme; Braun and Loefftz will write letters of recommendation to Mr. Fry to see if he will lend me \$400; if he writes you abusing you for having such a cheapy son, tell him you had nothing to do with it. He has to answer me because I will request the letters back.(79)

The scheme was rejected.

The summer of 1889 marked a turn in Leigh's fortunes. In July word came that he was admitted to Professor Wilhelm von Lindenschmidt's composition class. Earlier in the year Leigh thought he had been accepted as one of Professor Deffregir's students but the Professor

(78)See the bibliographical listing of five major photograph collections.

(79)"William R. Leigh to Mother, June 11, 1889." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-141; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

suddenly refused to take him. Fortunately Lindenschmidt was a friend of Ludwig Loefftz and agreed to accept Leigh in his class.(80)

During the same month Leigh found employment as one of eight artists painting a giant panorama entitled "The Battle of Waterloo." It was the first of many cycloramas, then popular in Europe, on which Leigh would work. The canvas was 115 meters in circumference and 15 meters high. Circling the studio was a scaffold on wheels loaded with containers of paint labeled and numbered for use. Leigh was assigned to paint breastworks and a field piece with a shattered wheel. He was paid 200 marks each month.

In Lindenschmidt's composition class Leigh learned to plan a painting much as an architect plans a building. Using live models and photographs he designed beforehand each part to be integrated into the final composition. The result of such training, manifest in Leigh's finished work, did not allow for spontaneity of expression. Little was left to either the artist's or viewer's imagination.

(80)"William R. Leigh to Mother, January 13, 1889."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-138;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"William R. Leigh to Mother, July 7, 1889."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-143;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Leigh consumed the full term in Lindenschmidt's class producing his first major work, a genre painting entitled Grandfather's Story. It won a silver medal, the highest honor at the academy, and also received honorable mention while on exhibition in Paris.⁽⁸¹⁾

During the months while he was laboriously and meticulously creating Grandfather's Story, he was also at work on another panorama, "The City of Naples." To that mural Leigh contributed a team of horses, a cart and the human figures.⁽⁸²⁾ It was finally completed in May 1890, after which he immediately set to work on still another panorama, "The Imperial Family." He was now being paid a monthly fee of 500 marks.

His last few years in Munich are vague and difficult to trace. In the fall of 1891 he and an American student from San Francisco named Rashin toured Italy.⁽⁸³⁾ They visited Verona, Pisa, Naples, Capri, and finally Florence. Although Leigh saw the great works of Michelangelo, including the Sistine Chapel, and many of the great masterpieces by Rubens, Raphael, Rembrandt and Van Dyck, he was much more interested in

⁽⁸¹⁾ Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 193.

⁽⁸²⁾ Ibid.

⁽⁸³⁾ "William R. Leigh to Mother, November 25, 1891." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-145; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

sketching beggars, ragged children and shepherds along the Tiber.⁽⁸⁴⁾ The commitment to genre had indeed grown very strong. His painting, Children, completed in 1891, was awarded the silver medal.

The following year found Leigh painting on his most spectacular panorama, "The Crucifixion of Christ." The work was sold to the pilgrimage resort of Einsiedeln, Switzerland where it still remains a popular shrine. The gigantic canvas of nearly 2,000 square meters was primarily the work of three men: Kal Hubert Frosch, who painted the architecture; Herr Joseph Krieger, painter of the landscape; and William R. Leigh, who painted the figures.⁽⁸⁵⁾ It depicts the crucifixion scene with the city of Jerusalem in the background.

By 1893 Leigh had decided to consider illustrating as a means of livelihood until he could support himself as a professional artist. He projected, "I am going to work myself into the illustrating line, which will always give me a good living, and enable me to proceed with my art."⁽⁸⁶⁾ A few months later he sent some of

(84) Ibid.

(85) "Einsiedeln File." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(86) "William R. Leigh to Mother, September 24, 1893." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-148; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

his black and white sketches to illustrating firms in the United States. (87)

In 1896 he sold Grandfather's Story to a Mrs. Howe for \$1,000 which provided the money for him to return to the United States. Those twelve years at the Royal Academy had been a long, arduous struggle. Leigh emerged a thorough disciple of the "Munich Style," characterized by a strong linear tradition, superb draftsmanship, vigorous brush work, dexterous manipulation of pigments, and a tendency to overfinish. The discipline of the line stood above all else, crowding out interpretation, imagination and emotion. Genre themes were predominant subjects of the Munich school. Unpretentious and picturesque figures drawn from everyday life were dramatized and given dignity with all things. Peasant scenes in Bavarian villages were the favorites.

Leigh had not wanted to be trained in the Munich tradition, and in fact was very critical of its style, but circumstances held him there. He was never able to achieve his ambition of studying at the impressionist schools in Paris. Furthermore he was returning to the

(87)"William R. Leigh to Mother, January 14, 1894."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-150;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

United States during the era of Currier and Ives. The combination of his training and the age determined his course toward illustration and Western art, neither of which he had set out to pursue. He did not know "where the circle began or where it end; where he was going or why."(88)

(88) Leigh. "Essay on Priestcraft," p. 4.

CHAPTER IV

IN SEARCH OF A CAREER

Shadows guide, and dreams decide
and fictions lead astray
The strongest of us, not immune,
may fancy's call obey.⁽¹⁾

William R. Leigh was thirty years old in 1896 when he returned to the United States. He arrived in New York with forty dollars and without any fixed design for a future career.

In retrospect Leigh declared, "I have always felt that the West was the place for me. Even while in Europe I had this in mind as my objective, and consistently worked and planned to the end that I might go there and paint."⁽²⁾ The claim lacks support. During twelve years of European study such an intention was never discussed at any time in his voluminous correspondence. Furthermore, he ignored opportunities that would have enhanced the likelihood of his becoming

(1) William R. Leigh. "The Land of Rainbow Chasers." Unpublished poem. Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(2) William R. Leigh. The Western Pony. New York: The Huntington Press, 1932, p. 19.

a Western artist. Representatives of Harper's Magazine occasionally traveled to Munich and held open receptions for the purpose of meeting prospective young artists to illustrate his periodical. It was Harper's Magazine in 1886 that first brought Frederick Remington to the attention of America. Two years later it accomplished the same thing for Charles Russell. Although Leigh knew of the Harper receptions he did not attend them.⁽³⁾ Finally, only once in his student days did he produce a painting with a Western theme.⁽⁴⁾ If painting the American West was the long-held ambition he suggested, he managed to keep the fact effectively concealed.

Leigh settled in New York. He first attempted to find a patron who would purchase his entire output for a monthly investment of \$100. No one was interested. Art history in the Western world had just entered a period of post-impressionism, introduced by Cezanne in 1886. The popularity enjoyed by the

(3)"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 18, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-10; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"William R. Leigh to Mother, November 25, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-11; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"William R. Leigh to Mother, December 23, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-14; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(4)The Gamblers, 1892. The painting depicts a cowman and a gambler in a saloon gunfight. Leigh's friend, Rashin, posed as the gambler.

French school caused the photographic realism of artists such as Leigh to be less in demand. In addition American art in general was languishing. Consequently Leigh was forced to turn to illustrating. He later confessed, "At all costs I had hoped to avoid illustrating, yet it seemed as if I were doomed to do it."⁽⁵⁾

After an interview with the art editor of Scribner's Magazine he was immediately employed and remained with Scribner's for more than a decade. Working out of a squalid 14th street studio and receiving \$100 per page-drawing, Leigh illustrated a wide variety of articles. In the summer of 1897 he was sent to North Dakota to sketch the wheat harvest. Traveling in a mail wagon he finally reached the harvest fields near Mayville. Sixteen of Leigh's illustrations were included in an article written by William Allen White, "The Business of a Wheat Farm."⁽⁶⁾ Notable among those illustrations were "Steam Threshers at Work," and a scene of harvest hands resting in the evening, titled simply, "A Camp." In his memoirs Leigh wrote very respectfully of

⁽⁵⁾ Leigh. "My Life," p. 227.

⁽⁶⁾ William Allen White. "The Business of a Wheat Farm." Scribner's Magazine, Vol. XXII, November, 1897, pp. 531-548.

William Allen White with whom he later collaborated on a second article, "Victory for the People."⁽⁷⁾

The following year he was on assignment in Chicago gathering sketches for an article, "The Workers--the West," by W. A. Wyckoff.⁽⁸⁾ Leigh provided descriptions of his numerous and dramatic adventures--attending anarchist meetings, avoiding muggers, and consorting with streetwalkers.⁽⁹⁾ He reported that at all times he was forced to carry a revolver. The sketches he produced show workers struggling in sordid conditions, harassed by employers who appear as demeaned characters out of a Thomas Nast cartoon.⁽¹⁰⁾ Clearly present in his drawings was the concept of economic and social class struggle. The series of articles by Wyckoff ran for eight months in 1898. Robert Taft, an authority on American illustrators, has written that those articles, accompanied by Leigh's remarkable illustrations, undoubtedly played a role "in stirring the slowly

(7) William Allen White. "Victory for the People." Scribner's Magazine, Vol. XXV, June, 1899, pp. 717-728.

(8) Wyckoff, W. A. "The Workers--the West." Scribner's Magazine, Vol. XXIII and XXIV, March through November, 1898.

(9) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, pp. 233-236.

(10) William R. Leigh. "Scribner Proofs." Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Cabinet #1, Folders 1 and 2, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

awakening social conscience of the American people around the turn of the century."⁽¹¹⁾

Other assignments included an article entitled "The Foreign Mail Service at New York," and a sketching expedition to Princeton University. Princeton was the alma mater of the Scribner family and Leigh was sent there for three months to prepare various campus scenes in gouache, and pen and ink. The drawings were framed in school colors and presented to the university as a gift from Scribners.⁽¹²⁾ Leigh's selection for that particular assignment revealed Scribner's esteem for his talent. The artist then offered to do field illustrating during the Spanish-American War in 1898, but no agreement was reached on the cost.

During many summer months in the late 1890's, Leigh vacationed with his mother and sister in Martinsburg, West Virginia.⁽¹³⁾ While there he regularly trekked into the Blue Ridge on sketching jaunts. From those mountain tours he produced oils entitled Landscape in West Virginia, West Virginia Forest, and a painting with three black children returning home

⁽¹¹⁾Robert A. Taft. Artists and Illustrators of the Old West. New York, Scribner's 1953, p. 242.

⁽¹²⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 231.

⁽¹³⁾Ibid., p. 252.

who stopped to play with goats, entitled Loitering. His most significant oil canvas for the period 1896 to 1906 was West Virginia Wood Chopper.⁽¹⁴⁾ It is a beautiful genre scene done in the full Munich tradition. Although making his living through illustration, Leigh was still hoping to produce that one great canvas which would establish him as a respected American artist.

On November 5, 1989, Leigh married Anna Seng from Muskegon, Michigan.⁽¹⁵⁾ It was a short-lived marriage and Leigh made only one brief reference to it throughout his entire autobiography.

I had married Anna Seng; we had a boy--William Colston Leigh--a beautiful child; but the marriage did not work out. I shall not go into the case further here than to say that it was not due to any fault of mine that the marriage failed.⁽¹⁶⁾

William Colston Leigh was born in 1901 at New York City.⁽¹⁷⁾ Sometime between the birth of the baby and

(14)Grand Central Art Galleries, Inc. Eight Decades in Review 1870-1955 by William R. Leigh. New York, January 11-29, 1955, p. 2.

(15)"William Robinson Leigh: An Artist of Distinction." Reprint of article from the Town and Country Review, London, undated, p. 2.

(16)Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 270.

(17)Irving Wallace. "They Talked Him Into Riches." Saturday Evening Post, November 23, 1946, p. 22.

1906, William and Anna were divorced. The son was sent to live with his Grandmother Leigh, then residing in Portsmouth, Virginia. The boy remembered his education as a nightmare. "My father hated religion, so my mother put me in two religious schools just to spite him."⁽¹⁸⁾ Following the death of his grandmother in 1918, William Colston Leigh returned to live with his father in New York. Leigh apparently remained in touch with his estranged wife for a time. At the bottom of the last page of one of his Idea Books, he had scrawled the name, Anna Leigh, under which was written two addresses, the first one crossed out.⁽¹⁹⁾

There is no record of how William and Anna met, where they lived, the motivation for their divorce, or family background for Miss Seng. The only other piece of evidence to the affair was a cryptic verse, untitled and undated, found among Leigh's miscellaneous poems and written in his hand.

I wish my wife was in Jarusalem
Far--far--away;
If she were there I wouldn't give
a dam
How long she'd stay;
I got myself into an awful jam;

(18) Ibid.

(19) William R. Leigh. "Idea Book." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Storage Envelope, #5; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

I married a cold blooded clammy
clam;
But a peach in the line of slick
flim-flam.(20)

By the turn of the century, Leigh had acquired a reputation as an accomplished illustrator. Because of his passion for detail, he was known in the trade as old "Buttons and Shoestrings."⁽²¹⁾ Evidence indicates that beginning in 1900, he gradually moved toward part-time free lance illustrating while attempting to launch a career as a portrait painter. Leigh illustrations began to appear in McClure's Magazine⁽²²⁾ as well as Scribner's. Simultaneously he was painting the portrait of Mrs. Reed, wife of the President of Rock Island Railroad.⁽²³⁾ A life-size canvas of Sophie Colston, dating from that period, is considered one of his finest works of portraiture.

IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Finding little success in portrait work, disappointed in his marriage and bored with illustrating,

(20) Ibid., Envelope #8.

(21) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 245.

(22) Elmore Elliott Peake. "A Story of Domestic Life Among the Railroad People." McClure's Magazine, Vol. XV, May through October, 1900.

(23) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, pp. 267-274.

Leigh sought a new outlet for his talent. Under the auspices of its advertising division, the Santa Fe Railroad had sponsored art excursions into the Grand Canyon area of the Southwest since 1895. Leigh more than likely learned of those trips while illustrating the "Railroad" articles for McClure's in 1900. Shortly thereafter he met and became acquainted with Thomas Moran, one of America's most famous landscape artists who regularly participated in the Santa Fe junkets. Leigh was an attentive listener to Moran's "urgent appeal for a more native art, independent of European fads." (24)

In the summer of 1906, forty years old, discouraged, and nearly destitute, Leigh accepted an invitation from a former Munich classmate, Albert Groll, to visit Laguna, New Mexico. (25) Having no money for the trip he contacted William Simpson, advertising manager for the Santa Fe lines, and close associate of Thomas Moran. Leigh was given a free railway ticket to Laguna in exchange for a proposed painting of the Grand Canyon.

(24) William H. Simpson. "Thomas Moran--The Man." Fine Arts Journal, Vol. XX, No. 1, January 1909, p. 24-25. (Quoted in Thurman Wilkins. Thomas Moran Artist of the Mountains. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1966, p. 217.

(25) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 275.

On a September morning, at 2:30 a.m., the train pulled into Laguna and William R. Leigh for the first time set foot in the Southwest. He found himself standing in sage brush, facing a flat-topped mesa, and engulfed in a cluster of Pueblo dwellings. He was thoroughly enchanted. "I stood alone in a strange and thrilling scene," he recalled. "At last I was in the land where I was to prove whether I was fit--worthy of the opportunity--able to do it justice--or just a dunderhead." (26) There in New Mexico all of the pieces suddenly fell into place; the Munich training which so strongly emphasized genre subjects, his own long-standing attraction to nature, and his newly adopted ideal from Moran of producing a truly Native art.

During the few weeks Leigh spent there in the fall of 1906, Albert Groll acted as guide and host, escorting the enthusiastic artist throughout the surrounding region. It was not an easy responsibility because Leigh was

eager to waste no time whatever;
I saw that I needed studies of
everything---the vegetation, the
rocks, the plains, the mesas, the
sky, the Indians and their dwell-
ings; scores of studies---dependable
studies. I saw that I must so far
as possible be a sponge; soak up
everything I saw; must know the

(26) Ibid., p. 276.

manners and customs of the people
and their employments--in short,
absorb all that it was humanly
possible to absorb. I started in
to paint, paint, paint!(27)

Groll introduced Leigh to Joseph Henry Sharp,
another artist visiting Laguna that summer. Sharp had
studied in Munich at the same time as Leigh under
Professor Gysis. During the 1890's, he was an
illustrator for Harper's Magazine, but since 1902 had
been traveling over the West spending several months
each year in and around Taos.(28)

Traveling most often by hired wagon, Leigh visited
the villages of Acoma and Zuñi. What Leigh saw through
his Munich-trained eyes were Indian women wearing red
blankets which contrasted sharply with their jet black
hair, the symmetry of multi-storied dwellings, a
primitive and unspoiled culture all mingled with an
impressive natural habitat. He thought "it would be
impossible to add, or take away anything, to heighten
the fabulous picturesqueness; color, line, massing,
distribution--everything was perfect."(29) Beyond

(27) Ibid., pp. 279-280.

(28) Laura M. Bickerstaff. Pioneer Artists of
Taos. Denver, Sage Books, 1955, p. 85-89.

(29) Ibid., p. 288.

Zuñi Leigh visited a remote trading post where he sketched his first rustic hogan with its corral full of goats.

He was unable to travel farther into Navajo country in 1906 because he ran out of money. Since leaving the East he had twice been forced to wire a New York friend for additional funds. He could not ask for more so following a brief visit to the Grand Canyon where he painted the canvas promised to the Santa Fe Railroad he returned to New York. But he went home with the resolve to come west as often as he could because "I knew now that my field was in the frontier west."⁽³⁰⁾

The next three winters Leigh spent in New York City illustrating for Scribner's but every summer he returned to the Southwest. His most productive summer was 1908 when he was again commissioned by William Simpson of the Santa Fe Railroad to produce two pictures of the Grand Canyon for \$200 each. Leigh embarked upon a two-week campout on a prominent formation near the south rim of the canyon. The legendary Bill Bass was hired as his guide and together they followed the precarious "Dripping-Spring" trail which

⁽³⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 292.

had been created less than ten years before by the famous hermit of the canyon, Louis Boucher.⁽³¹⁾ Leigh camped at Columbus Point, eighteen miles from the nearest human outpost. He made a cookstove out of rocks, obtained fresh water from a nearby spring and took refuge in his tent. Alone for fourteen days, he strolled about his circumscribed domain studying carefully every aspect of the view before him. His description of a sunset reveals that he became a student of the canyon and its many moods.

Presently the great shadows began to swallow up the depths, while the light on the upper pinnacles gathered color; a delicate orange and pearl lilac; a grand kaleidoscopic array of tints. Now the orange light was changing into rose, to vermillion; the shadows to lavender, to purple. The shadows of peaks were growing to enormous lengths in the east; in the west a giant conflagration was developing; Meanwhile pearl-cerulean mists gathered in the depths and climbed--creeping, gliding up--up--stealthily lengthening. No language, no pigment could be more than a clumsy makeshift; beyond all human power to describe--as the sublime drama of light and shade--of color and form--in stately magnificence drew to a close.⁽³²⁾

(31) Ibid., p. 299.

(32) Ibid., p. 305.

During the two weeks spent in solitude, Leigh produced the material for six canvases. One of them Titan of Chasms, was selected for the cover of the Santa Fe dining car menu.⁽³³⁾ Among his other significant works from those three summers were Grand Canyon at Sunset, Grand Canyon at Sunrise, and Grand Canyon. It was a period in Leigh's art career when he was obviously influenced by his acquaintance with and admiration for Thomas Moran who had previously painted two well-known oils of the same subject, Chasm of the Colorado, 1873, and The Grand Canyon of the Colorado, 1892.⁽³⁴⁾ Although trained as a genre specialist, over half of Leigh's finished work between 1906 and 1914 falls into the category of landscape. His portfolios and sketchbooks from the same period, however, are preponderantly genre. Many of the sketches were used in his Navajo canvases of later years.

In 1910 he was introduced to another region of the trans-Mississippi West. Throughout the months he had wintered in New York, Leigh tried desperately to improve his financial condition. Once again it was Albert Groll who told him of a new opportunity. Will

(33) William R. Leigh. "Scrapbook #1," Leigh Collection, Art Storage, Oversize Book #1; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(34) Wilkins. Thomas Moran, pp. 49-96.

Richard, a French-Canadian taxidermist in Cody, Wyoming, was in search of a painter to accompany him on a hunting trip in the Grand Tetons. Leigh accepted the invitation and through Richard, with whom he was to correspond and work for many years, became acquainted with the mountains and big-game hunting, along with the craft of taxidermy.

For three summers, beginning in 1910, Leigh went on hunting trips to the region of the Yellowstone and the high ranges of the Rockies. His oil sketches reveal those trips to be one of the few periods in which he experimented slightly with impressionistic techniques.⁽³⁵⁾ Mountain scenes dated 1911, 1912, and 1913 show Leigh loosening up, although he was never able, as was Monet, to let go of form. His finished product nearly always emerged a tight, realistic canvas. Often, he used grid paper to prepare the preliminary drawings so that the final painting was the result of calculated precision. Several landscape paintings were made from the dozens of sketches collected during the Wyoming expeditions. Among them were Tetons at Jackson Lake Wyoming, Canyon of the Yellowstone, and

(35) William R. Leigh. "Mountain Scenes." Leigh Collection, Art Storage, Rack D-38; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Foothills of the High Rockies, all reflecting the lingering influence of Thomas Moran.

The best known of Leigh's paintings from that period is Bear Hunt in Wyoming,⁽³⁶⁾ considered by sportsmen to be one of the greatest hunting scenes in American art. The subject of the painting originated on a hunt in 1912 organized by J. D. Figgins, Director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History in Denver. He was in search of a grizzly for a habitat group. Five years later, Figgins recalled how Leigh acquired his sketches of the episode:

I told Leigh that I would be glad for him to accompany me on my trip in search of a bear group for the Colorado museum, and he accepted the invitation, bringing along his own equipment and his guide. We had found a great many tracks and had followed them without result over hundreds of miles of rocky and wooded territory, when one morning one of the guides found a new track in the dust near our camp.

We followed the prints through the dust for about four hours and then our dogs got the scent and took up the trail. For two hours we trekked after the bawling hounds as they made straight for higher ground up the side of a mountain.

Leigh's manner was all eagerness now and his eyes glistened as he rode along with his kodaks

(36) William R. Leigh. Bear Hunt in Wyoming. Leigh Collection, Studio Exhibit; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

and boxes dangling. His object was entirely different from ours, but he entered into the pursuit with quite as much zeal, and there were no indications that he would fall off his horse, although the day had already been a hard one.

Finally the dogs came within sight of the bear. Up the mountain-side they bounded with a bruin giving them a fast race. On a north slope of the mountain the animal made a fatal mistake--he plunged into a stretch of snow, soft and mushy now from the spring sunshine, a certain trap for his heavy body. He lumbered along for a time in the snow, with the lighter dogs gaining every second. Then he turned and made for an open space. But it was too late.

The dogs were upon him as he reached firm ground and a terrific fight began. One of the guides and I came up with our guns...and Leigh was right at our heels. He asked if we would let him make some sketches before we killed the grizzly, and we consented.

Leigh got to work with his kodaks and pencils and we waited nearby, changing our position occasionally in order to maintain a vantage point in case the bear should make a break for liberty. It was in one of these maneuvers, I think, that the guide came too close to the fighting dogs and was knocked down. This gave Mr. Leigh the idea which he has incorporated in his picture as it was finished.

Leigh developed his pictures and made numerous visits to the spot before he put the painting in its present form. He measured distances and counted trees and lived over again many times and the whole

encounter in order to give every detail as it had actually been.(37)

Leigh's expeditions to Western America were very demanding and filled with difficulties typical to all Western artists who sought to view their material first-hand. Their food was provided by nature, and Leigh wrote in his "Wyoming Diary" how tiring weeks of trout, sage hen, and squirrel could become.(38) In neither Wyoming nor the Southwest could he sketch on an overcast day because the coloration was distorted and if the oil sketches were not well protected a sudden downpour could ruin weeks of work. Indians were often uncooperative subjects, refusing to model for either photograph or sketch because they had been warned by tribal leaders that doing so would result in the loss of part of their soul. Insects were a constant bother. "After a day of sketching," complained Leigh, "my palette was thickly strewn with dead, dying, or famished insects; I ignored them. After work it took me an hour, with the point of a penknife blade, to pick

(37) Rocky Mountain News, April 7, 1917. (Also see William R. Leigh; "Sketchbook #2." Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Cabinet #1; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.)

(38) William R. Leigh. "Wyoming Diary, July 12 to August 4, 1910." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, pp. 7, 9, 24.

the dead mosquitoes off my studies." (39) Learning to survive in the wilderness was a matter of course for the Western artist. Thomas Moran gave Leigh a special accolade when he proclaimed, "He's no Parlor Car Artist." (40)

THE SNEDECOR AND BABCOCK YEARS

Upon his return to New York, Leigh gave serious thought to his reputation and future career. At age forty-seven he was still better known as an illustrator than a painter, and unable to sell his art without assistance. He therefore began the search for an art dealer who would promote his work. A new partnership of Snedecor and Babcock became interested in Leigh and decided to include him in a small group of painters they planned to promote.

Leigh's initial exhibition under their sponsorship included The Poisoned Pool, Roping the Wolf, and Hunting with the Boomerang. Art critics were not laudatory. Wrote one, "his viewpoint is frankly that of the illustrator, intent upon depicting natural phenomena

(39) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 375.

(40) Christian Science Monitor. June 21, 1913.

and the incidents of life, and his pictures have the suggestion of photographic accuracy."⁽⁴¹⁾ A second reviewer was more kind when he stated that "for eight years good paintings by this artist have been coming out of the west", which brought a significant comment from Leigh himself, "the west has called forth the best there is in me."⁽⁴²⁾

During the same year Leigh also attempted to gain membership in the National Academy of Design. Being a member of the academy would bring considerably increased respect from fellow artists along with an enhanced standing among art critics not to mention increased sales. Several of Leigh's Munich acquaintances including Frank Duveneck, William Merritt Chase, and Frank Currier were already members due to the 1906 merger with the Society of American Artists. Leigh submitted In A Bad Fix to the academy for exhibition and was angered that the painting was discriminately placed above a door.⁽⁴³⁾ He was bitterly disappointed over the fact that he was not granted membership. Years later he painted the same picture again on a 6½' x 10½'

(41) New York American. May 1, 1913.

(42) Christian Science Monitor. June 21, 1913.

(43) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 324.

canvas variously renaming it The Master's Hand and The Leader's Downfall.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Erwin S. Barrie, director of the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City, said Leigh thought it was his finest work.

In January, 1914, Leigh was among a small group of artists who founded their own national art society, the Allied Artists of America. He served as chairman of the Poster Committee whose membership included Frank Tenny Johnson.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Leigh displayed work in the Allied Artists annual exhibitions from 1914 until his death.

The outbreak of World War I ushered in a bleak economic period for most professional artists. The market was drastically diminished and employment of any kind, including illustrating, was difficult to secure. Leigh wrote that "illustrating was all shot to hell"⁽⁴⁶⁾ because magazines were then beginning to use photographs almost exclusively rather than etchings for their illustrations. Art work was consigned to the front cover. To make matters worse Snedecor and Babcock

⁽⁴⁴⁾William R. Leigh. The Leader's Downfall. National Cowboy of Fame, Gallery #1; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁽⁴⁵⁾Allied Artists of America. Exhibition Catalogue, 1915, p. 2.

⁽⁴⁶⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 373.

were unable to find enough interested patrons for Leigh's art to earn him an adequate living. The sale of an oil in the fall of 1915 for \$2000 was an unusual event,⁽⁴⁷⁾ but after the dealers commission, cost of supplies, frame, canvas, modeling fees, and studio rent were subtracted, Leigh netted only about twenty percent of the purchase price.

For a while he entertained the idea of leaving the art profession altogether. After unsuccessfully auditioning for stage and screen he changed his mind. Instead he joined the scene-painter's union and was paid \$50 for each backdrop he completed.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Combined with the occasional sale of an oil painting it earned him enough money to return to the Southwest in 1916.

The war-time trip to Arizona provided the core of material found in Leigh's paintings for the next five years. He headquartered at the regionally well-known trading post of Don Lorenzo Hubbell near Ganado. The post was a hospitable mecca to artists, scientists and writers who did research in northeast Arizona. Leigh was allowed to pay for his expenses with paintings.

(47) New York World. November 13, 1915.

(48) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, pp. 377-381.

Traveling north from Ganado Leigh explored the ancient cliff dwellings at Canyon de Chelly for ten days. Not yet protected as a national park, pre-historic implements and pottery fragments were still strewn about, and scenes from centuries past easily reconstructed themselves in the artist's mind. Several were eventually put on canvas, but the most exceptional one, not painted until 1940, was The Lookout.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Inhabitants of the nearby village of Walpi, themselves descendants of cliff-dweller stock, were used as models for his sketches. Of the finished painting Leigh wrote "Here a young woman with perfect eyesight and hearing sat, drumstick in hand and a drum beside her. Her job was to keep a keen lookout; at the first sign of enemy movement or suspicious sound she beat the drum, and all the people on the floor of the canyon cultivating the crops, at once would make for the ladders; and hauling them up behind them, retire to their cliff fortress."⁽⁵⁰⁾

After leaving the cliff dwellings, Leigh scoured the Navajo reservation lands making an intensive study of their life and customs. He researched the Hopi with

⁽⁴⁹⁾William R. Leigh. The Lookout. Woolaroc Museum; Gallery #2, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

⁽⁵⁰⁾Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 364.

equal thoroughness, visiting their settlements at Walpi, Shipaulovi and Oraibi. Leigh literally produced stacks of sketches on numerous subjects including Indian life, burros, goats, desert scenes, plant life and cloud studies.⁽⁵¹⁾ He even painted the desert by lantern light at two o'clock in the morning in an effort to capture the effects of the moon. Beyond the vast collection of sketches he also acquired scores of photographs.⁽⁵²⁾

Leigh returned to New York and immediately set to work producing canvases for the Snedecor-Babcock exhibitions scheduled for the spring and fall of 1917. Among the paintings he exhibited early in the year were Water Carrier, Land of His Fathers, Navajo Boy and Flocks, Twilight, and Buffalo Hunt. All are classic Leighs in both content and style. The exhibit opened in Washington D.C. and met with unkind reviews. Leigh was described as "an illustrator and romantic historian

(51) Leigh. "Sketchbook #8." Art Storage, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Leigh. "Oil Sketches; Boxes 1-14." Art Storage, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(52) William R. Leigh. "Southwestern Photographs." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box IX, Folders 1-4; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

on the order of Frederick Remington. They go to nature with intentions more or less photographic and return with nothing even vaguely suggesting a first-hand impression."⁽⁵³⁾ Another conceded that his canvases were very well painted but added, "Sharp, Russell, Remington, Schreyvogel, Paxton, DeCamp, even Goodwin are not as capable as Leigh, but they grabbed it."⁽⁵⁴⁾ A third analyst joined the chorus when he admitted Leigh possessed a "masterly knowledge of drawing," but lamented that he was "frankly a storyteller with a school-boy's romantic vision of the west."⁽⁵⁵⁾ The New York Times lauded his vigorous draftsmanship but complained of his lack of subtlety and illustrative character.⁽⁵⁶⁾

In March the exhibition moved on to New York but the reviews did not improve. One critic suggested that Leigh's Buffalo Hunt should not be allowed in the exhibit because it contained, "an impossible brown buffalo, an impossible horse, and an evidently fictitious Indian in an incomprehensible attitude."⁽⁵⁷⁾

⁽⁵³⁾ Washington Post. January 5, 1917.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Washington Sun Star. January 14, 1917.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Brooklyn Eagle. January 27, 1919.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ New York Times. February 3, 1917.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ New York Morning Telegraph. March 29, 1917.

Undeterred, Leigh exhibited his work again in September. A new painting, The Sentinel, was added to his collection and hung in Snedecor's gallery C along with Whistler's Nocturne. It depicted an Indian sitting alone on a remote mesa in moonlight. It was his only painting to receive special comment. "Charlie Russell is not as good a painter as William R. Leigh," commented the reviewer, "but he is a greater artist because he knows the west. The Sentinel is the least pretentious, one of the smallest, and done with the narrowest palette. It is of the night, almost a monotone of gray, but it has a kind of tenderness and a suggestion of feeling that is missing from the more presumptuous canvases."⁽⁵⁸⁾

The first year on the exhibition circuit with Snedecor and Babcock had not been an overwhelming success but neither had it been an absolute disaster so Leigh decided to continue. The January, 1918, exhibition brought sharply mixed reaction. One critic charged, "Mr. Leigh is not a colorist--the accuracy of his draftsmanship is proof enough of this, along with the unimaginative nature of his conceptions. For the most part they are literary saws, so timeworn that any but a callous hackwriter would blush in using them. But as

⁽⁵⁸⁾ New York Evening World. September 14, 1917.

drawings these figures, in the academic manner, are always far away from being the work of a hack."⁽⁵⁹⁾

Just the day before an analyst had praised, "there are not many American painters who can so glorify in paint the radiance of color, or maintain the always high, but never discordant, key on which he sets his brave palette."⁽⁶⁰⁾ A third New York critic carelessly wrote, "Leigh is as fond of his Indians as Bouguereau was of his pretty peasant maids. The flesh of the warriors is comely and clean, as if they were just manicured and bathed. Leigh should paint more Western landscape, not so many Eastern Reservation Indians, fat ponies and plethoric papooses."⁽⁶¹⁾

Leigh considered the biting criticism of his work terribly unfair. He thought that the French influence on art had so distorted the critics views that anyone trained in Munich was held to be a second or third rate painter before he ever put a brush to canvas.⁽⁶²⁾

Increasingly embittered, Leigh began to nurture a deep hostility toward impressionist and abstract art.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ New York Evening Post Magazine. January 26, 1917.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ New York Morning Telegram. January 25, 1918.

⁽⁶¹⁾ New York Morning Telegram. January 25, 1918.

⁽⁶²⁾ Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 324.

Snedecor and Babcock became heavy exhibitors of American genre and Western art throughout 1918 and 1919. An exhibit in April, 1918, featured the work of E. L. Blumenschein, Herbert Dunton, E. Irving Couse, Robert Henri, Frank Tenny Johnson, Charles Russell and William R. Leigh. The list read like a Who's Who of Western painters. The same group of artists exhibited again in 1919 and included among the works displayed were Henri's Francesca, Russell's Medicine Man, The Blanket Weaver by Couse, and Leigh's The Enemies Horses. A critic from the New York Tribune characterized the entire affair as "at best an interesting exhibit," and of Leigh reported that what he was "now gaining in quality he loses in distinction."⁽⁶³⁾ Only three months before the American Art News had referred to him as the "successor of Frederick Remington."⁽⁶⁴⁾

Two of Leigh's best-known paintings were exhibited that year; The Maya Historian and Up Where the Big Wind Blows.⁽⁶⁵⁾ The former shows a Maya Indian seated and

⁽⁶³⁾ New York Tribune. February 18, 1919.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ American Art News. November 9, 1918.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ William R. Leigh. Up Where the Big Wind Blows. Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Rack D-25; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

carving hieroglyphics on a wall. In his right hand he holds a stone hammer and in the left a flint chisel. The latter canvas pictures a Navajo on his pony straining to scale a mesa summit. Both were praised by critics and were very popular with the viewing public. But his work in general was still severely criticized in the New York press. He was chastised as a romantic historian who used too many setting suns. His Arizona scenes were criticized because "the desert is recorded as it would appear verbatim. He gives us a snapshot of action with all the accuracy of a photographic lens. It seems a great waste of unusual ability."⁽⁶⁶⁾

Although the New York reviewers were dependably harsh, Leigh's reputation was beginning to grow. By 1920 his work was receiving full-page color reproduction in Sunday newspapers across the nation, as well as appearing on the front covers of national magazines.⁽⁶⁷⁾ That same year he exhibited at the Union League Club, the National Academy of Design, Allied Artists of America and with Thomas Moran and the Taos artists at Snedecor and Babcock. He also produced two major oils;

⁽⁶⁶⁾New York Post. March 29, 1919.

⁽⁶⁷⁾Leigh. "Scrapbook #1." Art Storage; Gilcrease.

First of the Rough Riders,⁽⁶⁸⁾ and The Sanctity of Motherhood for which he was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal of Honor by the Hudson Valley Art Association in New York. Leigh described the painting

The newly risen sun casts its rays across the hazy mesa lands of the Navajo. The rainy season has filled the rock pockets with clear, cool water. The young mother has brought her firstborn from the summer hogan, which always faces the rising sun, and is preparing him for the morning bath. She has never heard of Christ; she has never conceived of a benevolent God. Is it instinct, is it mere animal urge that illuminates, that sings in her, that makes her one with the vast mystery of life? Whatever it is--it is the loftiest thing and the most beautiful.⁽⁶⁹⁾

The artist successfully weathered both the economic hardships of the war years and the comments of the art critics. By the end of the decade he had developed a national reputation among painters and patrons alike as a Western artist in the tradition of Frederick Remington. He was universally acclaimed for his draftsmanship and criticized for his adherence to the discipline of the line and for his

(68) Christian Science Monitor. August 16, 1920.
Leigh. First of the Rough Riders. Rack D-35,
Gilcrease

(69) Comment by Leigh on a sheet of paper accompanying a photograph of the painting; Leigh studio exhibit;
Gilcrease

consequent lack of free expression. There was also a general displeasure among critics for the romantic and illustrative character of his work. The criticisms leveled against him were true in every respect when read from the perspective of French post-impressionism. But from the viewpoint of Munich realism his work would not have been evaluated so harshly.

A SECOND MARRIAGE

The artist was nearing his 55th birthday in 1921, an age when most men are thinking ahead to retirement. But for Leigh his career was just beginning and would span another 35 years. The year had hardly opened when, to the surprise of many, he announced his impending marriage. The previous December he had received an invitation from his old friend Will Richard to accompany him on an Alaskan hunt.⁽⁷⁰⁾ Although Leigh was intrigued with the prospect of tracking caribou, he respectfully declined because of his plan to marry. Richard was exceedingly pleased at the news and responded, "Was most agreeably surprised to learn of your coming marriage; 'hop to it,' you've got my

(70)"Will Richard to William R. Leigh, December 3, 1920." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-22; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

consent, along with my wife's and my congratulations and I sincerely hope that good luck and fortune will turn your way from now on. God knows you certainly deserve it."(71)

Others also expressed surprise. Leigh was often in the social company of Edith Terry during the war years and before her departure to California. They had discussed marriage, yet did not pursue it. When Miss Terry learned of Leigh's engagement to Ethel Traphagen, she wrote to him one week before the wedding, and after wishing him every happiness added:

I do believe in marriage, although you write as though I do not--but only as the result of a great love on the part of both the man and the woman, and I recall your saying on the evening of our seeing 'Humoresque' - that no man can love after 35 as he no longer has illusions. I told you I did not agree with you, especially as regards considering mainly the practical side as one would a business partnership. I am glad to know you have found happiness, as you were lonely. You as well as others.(72)

(71)"Will Richards to William R. Leigh, February 7, 1921." Leigh Collection, Art Storage, Folder M-22; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(72)"Edith Terry to William R. Leigh, May 28, 1921." Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Folder M-23; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Leigh's conception of marriage was indeed ahead of its time. He and Ethel Traphagen were married June 4, 1921, embarked on a honeymoon trip which took them camping in the Kayenta region of Arizona and the Yellowstone of Wyoming, then returned to New York where they set up housekeeping--in separate apartments. Both believed that it was the loss of individuality which caused a marriage to fail and although two people were married they could continue on their own separate paths as well as retain their own names.⁽⁷³⁾ It was reported, "To the neighbors in Brooklyn Ethel Traphagen is known as the bride who lives next door to her husband. Whenever Mr. Leigh comes calling on his wife he must ring the bell like any other stranger. That, they think, is an ideal arrangement for two artists who expect to be happy though married."⁽⁷⁴⁾

Ethelinda Horton Traphagen was a native of New York City, born there in 1882 the daughter of William Conselyea Traphagen and Carolyn Ross Maxwell. Following studies at three New York art schools, she entered a 1913 competition sponsored by the New York Times and the Ladies Home Journal. Winning first prize on a

⁽⁷³⁾ Sarah MacDougall. "How to be Free though Married." The World Magazine. November 27, 1921, p. 4.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Ibid., p. 5.

costume drawing prompted a venture into the profession of fashion design. Edward Bok employed Ethel on the staff of Ladies Home Journal, and immediately asked her to go to Arizona to study Indian costumes and adapt them to modern design. A brother in Flagstaff advised her to visit with an artist named Leigh before leaving because he could assist in the preparations for an art trip among southwestern Indians. She sought him out and the two were introduced in 1913 by Leigh's cousin, Ellen Page. Eight years later, they were married.⁽⁷⁵⁾

The marriage was a triumph for both Ethel and William. He assisted her in developing the Traphagen School of Fashion and Design in New York City into an institution of national prestige. Miss Traphagen created a new periodical, Fashion Digest, which became a leading publicist of Leigh's art. Ethel contributed as much as the dealers and galleries in promoting Leigh's work throughout his remaining years and therefore must be regarded as one of the major influences on his career.

(75) Ibid.

Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, pp. 384-385.

"Ethel Traphagen, 1882-1963." Fashion Digest. Vol. XVI, No. 1 (Spring, Summer, 1963).

EMERGENCE AS AN AUTHOR

Although Leigh had written much in the private of his studio, he had never been published. But in 1922, a steady flow of short stories came from his pen. In March, "A Day With a Navajo Shepherd," was published;⁽⁷⁶⁾ "A Flash of Genius," in September;⁽⁷⁷⁾ and "The Coward," in December.⁽⁷⁸⁾ All three stories were developed around southwestern Indian themes. During the following year his poem, "The Painted Desert," was published by the Salmagundi Club.

Leigh wrote to people living in Arizona requesting information about the Navajo and the Apache, which he used in his fiction. The man he corresponded with most often was A. M. Blazer whom he first wrote in 1922. The artist introduced himself by stating, "I have painted in the West for many years and have found the field for both painting and writing unsurpassed. I am a well-known painter and would be glad to paint you a

(76) William R. Leigh. "A Day With a Navajo Shepherd." Scribner's Magazine. Vol. LXXI, No. 3, March, 1922, pp. 334-342.

(77) William R. Leigh. "A Flash of Genius." Munsey's Magazine. Vol. LXXVI, No. 4, September, 1922, pp. 693-699.

(78) William R. Leigh. "The Coward." Scribner's Magazine. Vol. LXXII, No. 6, December, 1922, pp. 738-748.

picture in exchange for your trouble. I have only lately begun to write for the market, and am therefore not known widely in that field, but what I have written has been well received." (79) Blazer responded with long letters detailing incidents, both fictitious and true, which had occurred on the Mescalero reservation and Leigh used them in his stories. Two novel length manuscripts remain in the Leigh files, unpublished. "Little Foot," containing many of the details supplied by Blazer, was sent to twenty-three publishers in a period of twenty months but was rejected by them all.

Themes other than the Southwest also interested Leigh. He wrote a play entitled "The Black Peril," which Putnam and Sons refused to publish. The letter of rejection noted that it was a "powerfully dramatic piece of work," but the company could not "forsee sufficient sales to off-set the inevitable criticism which will be aimed at it and at us." (80) The letter went on to note that the attackers would be violent

(79) "William R. Leigh to A. M. Blazer, December, 1922." Leigh Collection, Art Storage; Folder W-1; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(80) "Edmund W. Putnam to William R. Leigh, August 19, 1922." Leigh Collection, Art Storage; Folder M-40; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

while the supporters would remain inactive and it would therefore be bad business to publish the play.

No copy of "The Black Peril" exists in the enormous collection of Leigh's writings, but its essence was contained in a letter to Edith Terry written ten years later.

Now concerning the Black Peril. . . .
Thatcher as a symbol exhibits what I believe are the most typical and salient traits of the Black; Conscious treachery, defiance, craft and quenchless hunger for revenge. The dull, apathetic, clodhopping negro of course, only is conscious of these emotions in a dim, vague, unreasoned way, but the crudest of them feel them and act them when they dare. For the White is their common enemy, to be used, pilfered, imposed upon, destroyed if it be safe to do so. There is not a negro man in the world who would not like to have a white wife, nor a negro woman who would not prefer to have a white husband, for nobody knows better than the negro that the mind, the imagination, the mastery of the white man is above, beyond-utterly unattainable to him.

The intelligent black, such as Thatcher, still lacks the character, the balance, the grasp upon facts which would enable him to hope to compete with the whites; and he sees it, and in his helplessness, his fury, he despairs. His utmost efforts are directed toward imitation - yet he is incapable of copying - and he knows it, so the strongest of his race, who in Africa would be a chief, loathes being a servant to a white man yet has not the force to be otherwise.

The theme is revenge - revenge of the black race on the white race. That feeling is secretly held by all negroes and that is why I say the races should be separated; their remaining together will be one long drawn-out tragedy.(81)

It was indeed a controversial subject which caused publishers to shy. Less than three years before the nation had been inflamed by a major race riot. The play reflected Leigh's Southern origins and widely held postwar attitudes resulting from the increased migrations of Blacks to Northern cities.

Interestingly, Leigh continued to correspond with Edith Terry long after his marriage to Ethel Traphagen. They offered encouragement to each other, compared their latest publications, and discussed current literature. Miss Terry promised to read "Sinclair's book that you praise so highly," and informed Leigh that her recent poem, Mother Love, "was inspired by your painting, The Sanctity of Motherhood." (82) Their friendship continued for many years.

(81)"William R. Leigh to Edith Terry, January 5, 1932." Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Folder M-23; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(82)"Edith Terry to William R. Leigh, August 3, 1923." Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Folder M-23; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Although attracted to writing, Leigh did not forsake his art. One of the most sensational paintings of his career appeared in 1922, which he called The Reckoning.⁽⁸³⁾ It represented Leigh's protest against the capitalistic system. The painting shows a successful but unscrupulous businessman who, having reached middle age, is forcibly seized by his memories and approaching fate. He is surrounded by hands --- the hands of infants and of the aged; hands pleading, begging, shaming, accusing, threatening; hands that are soft and smooth, others that are hard and powerful; including, the hand of death. The canvas was extremely controversial and Leigh said it was the most difficult and expensive he had ever made.⁽⁸⁴⁾

From themes of protest, Leigh easily returned to the docility of the Navajo. In an effort to enrich his reputation, he presented one of his Indian paintings, Navajo Pony, to the Prince of Wales.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Forever after, he listed the Prince as one of his patrons. But the critics were still unimpressed. Of his

⁽⁸³⁾William R. Leigh. The Reckoning. Leigh Collection; Art Storage, Rack D-27; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁸⁴⁾New York Times. April 30, 1922.

⁽⁸⁵⁾New York Times. October 26, 1924.

exhibit in 1925, one wrote that Leigh was a patient and painstaking draftsman who "accurately portrayed, but he does not love --- there is little suggestion of love --- so he misses the peculiar charm of the pony, goat and dog." (86) The following year brought more of the same: "Leigh's drawings are better than his paintings, oil having the best of the battle in his encounters with it." (87) But the artist was not there to read it. He had gone to Africa.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

In 1926, the sixty-year-old Leigh pursued a new fascination. He was teaching an illustrating class at the New York school of Industrial Art when one of his students, Arthur A. Jansson, who was employed at the American Museum of Natural History, told him of an African expedition under preparation which was in need of an artist. Leigh, having studied the animal life of Africa in his youth, was easily attracted to the suggestion. Willard Metcalf, a renowned landscape painter agreed to go, but had died, and mural painter, Ezra Winter, had been approached but was unable to come

(86) New York Times. January 25, 1925.

(87) New York Times Magazine. June 6, 1926.

to terms. After an interview with Carl Akeley, director of the expedition charged with building an African Hall of habitat groups in the museum, Leigh was selected. The project was financed by George Eastman who promised to contribute \$1,000,000.⁽⁸⁸⁾

There was a certain incongruity about an artist accompanying a scientific expedition. Science and art are not generally linked; and the fact that Leigh accepted such an assignment offered further evidence, in the view of critics, that his art was photographic, illustrative and unimaginative. But the eye of the anthropologist and natural scientist sought out those very qualities in the work of Western artists and deemed them valuable.

The Akeley party set sail in February, 1926.⁽⁸⁹⁾ After reaching Nairobi, East Africa late in March, they moved directly to the Lukenia plains where the expedition camped until June 1. Ten habitat groups were planned for the African Hall --- Impala, Wild Dog, Plains Group, Greater Koodoo, Lesser Koodoo, Water Hole, Gorilla, Buffalo, Klipspringer and Elephant. Each exhibit required research in different

⁽⁸⁸⁾William R. Leigh. Frontiers of Enchantment. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938, pp. 1-4.

⁽⁸⁹⁾Brooklyn Daily Times. February 14, 1926.

locations to procure the necessary specimens, sketches, and photographs. The plains group, for example, was taken from Tanganyika, the Koodoo on Mount Kilimanjaro, and the Gorilla habitat from the Belgian Congo.

Leigh found life "reaking with interest from end to end."⁽⁹⁰⁾ During his fourteen month absence from the United States, he wrote a weekly letter to Ethel detailing all his experiences. Familiar contours appear in the correspondence, revealing old prejudices, his penchant for working alone, and beautiful descriptions of the natural landscape. Of the black natives, he observed that "African women were half-naked, gaunt, shriveled, hideous and aggressively forward"; and the "African men were horribly gross, ugly, scar decorated with rat-eyes."⁽⁹¹⁾ The African Black, he analyzed, "has no use for civilization, he prefers savagery; they are not made of the stuff needed to build an empire."⁽⁹²⁾ But as the months passed and Leigh's observations of native life continued, his opinion

(90)"William R. Leigh to Ethel Traphagen, March 25, 1926." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder A-3; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(91) Ibid.

(92)"William R. Leigh to Ethel Traphagen, April 27, 1926." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder A-8; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

softened. By Christmas, only one month following the death of his valued friend, Carl Akeley, he philosophized:

I see young adults unashamed and healthy, and natural; filled with vitality and the joy of living. We haven't got it all --- all there is in life --- not by a hell of a sight. I don't know what the purpose of life is --- some smart alic has said 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' If that is it, then they have it all over us. Our damned brains have been developed into a restless mania for struggle --- we must occupy these beastly brains with problems and tasks, and the net purpose is "self expression" and money; we ruin our nervous systems, our digestions, we rangle and haggle over our curried conceptions which we call "conscience," "morality," "Principle" and so on, and we accomplish not liberty, not happiness, and we do not live --- we vegetate, slave, grub, fight; Are we less savage, or more so?(93)

As with classmates in Munich and fellow artists with whom he worked on the European cycloramas, Leigh again grumbled about many of his associates and praised few. Included in the expedition along with Leigh and the Akeleys were A. A. Jansson, R. C. Raddatz, R. H.

(93)"William R. Leigh to Ethel Traphagen, December 25, 1926." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder A-33; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Rockwell, Daniel Pomeroy and George Eastman. Leigh believed Jansson was a rank amateur "unable to grasp the enormity of his own stupidity" (94) and who was jealous of Leigh's superior skill. But the person he distrusted most was George Eastman, benefactor of the entire project. Leigh thought Eastman kept Akeley in a constant state of worry by not supplying all the funds he had promised and therefore characterized him as a "cynical type, devoid of any vestige of artistic appreciation, sly, crafty, bitter and mean; consider the power he wields, and that our country is ruled by such cold, brutal unimaginative and on the whole ignorant men." (95)

Carl Akeley, on the other hand, was a respected and trusted friend. He had participated in several previous expeditions to Africa including an elephant hunt in Kenya with Theodore Roosevelt in 1909. Akeley raised taxidermy to the level of a sculptor's art by pioneering in the development of frameworks on which clay was sculpted to exact size. A plaster mold was

(94)"William R. Leigh to Ethel Traphagen, November 27, 1926." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder A-28; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(95)"William R. Leigh to Ethel Traphagen, August 1, 1926." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder A-17; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

then cast from the clay model and became the base on which the skin was fitted. Leigh admired his innovative character and the two became close companions during the course of the trip. When Akeley suddenly died of exhaustion and typhoid while in the Congo, November 17, 1926, Leigh was deeply remorseful. He penned a moving poem commemorating Akeley's burial on the flank of Mt. Miconos and then wrote Ethel, "the Soul of the Project is gone."⁽⁹⁶⁾ Many pages of Leigh's subsequent book were consumed with praise for Akeley's genius and reaffirming the fact that "his child --- his monument --- African Hall remains, with its truth, its beauty, and its deathless significance."⁽⁹⁷⁾

The entire expedition was a testimony to Leigh's industry and physical stamina. In addition to the countless sketches of animals, landscape and natives, he wrote three plays and finished two oil paintings: Kenya (22 x 34), given to the Kenyan government; and Gorilla Sanctuary (66 x 34) which was presented to the King of Belgium just before the party returned to America.⁽⁹⁸⁾ He survived endless miles of hiking, a

⁽⁹⁶⁾"William R. Leigh to Ethel Traphagen, December 19, 1926." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder A-31; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁹⁷⁾Leigh. Frontiers of Enchantment, p. 252.

⁽⁹⁸⁾East African Standard. February 15, 1927.

limited diet, severe heat, a truck accident which crushed his pith helmet, and a bout with malaria fever --- to return home, docking in New York, April 19, 1927.⁽⁹⁹⁾

The following year Leigh, accompanied by his wife, returned to Africa with the Carlisle-Clark expedition to collect specimens and sketches for the lion habitat. It was a trip of brief duration, beginning in May and ending in September, 1928.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Lack of funds in the early depression years forced a four year suspension of the project lasting until 1932. From that time until he resigned from the museum in 1935, Leigh was in charge of a group of artists painting the background murals for each African Hall exhibit in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Difficulties with the young artists and with the lighting engineers who were unable to satisfactorily simulate sunlight caused Leigh to withdraw. The wing, dedicated to Carl Akeley, was finally opened to the public in 1936, ten years after it had first begun.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ New York Herald Tribune. April 19, 1927.

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ New York Sun. May 10, 1928.

Leigh published two articles and Frontiers of Enchantment, which became a best-seller, detailing his African experiences.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ The year after African Hall was opened, Life magazine carried a feature pictorial on the exhibits and reproduced in full-color three of Leigh's background murals.⁽¹⁰²⁾

The search for a career had been arduous. During the four decades between his return to the United States in 1896 and the conclusion of the African Hall assignment in 1936, Leigh had tried nearly everything that a professional artist could possibly do. The early years of illustrating at Scribners put an irrevocably stamp on his reputation and much of his art. Two contributions from the Scribner years should be noted: (1) his eyewitness sketches of the North Dakota wheat harvest in the late 1890's deserve study and use by agricultural historians, and (2) his etchings for the series of "Workers" articles near the turn of

⁽¹⁰¹⁾William R. Leigh. "A Night With an African Herder," Natural History, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, July-August, 1929.

William R. Leigh. "Painting the Background on the African Hall Groups," Natural History, Vol. XXVII, No. 6, November-December, 1927.

William R. Leigh. Frontiers of Enchantment. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938.

⁽¹⁰²⁾Life. May 24, 1937.

the century had in a small way helped bring the inequitable condition of laborers to national attention.

By evolution rather than design he moved toward a career in Western art. His Munich aptitude coupled with a fondness for nature and genre equipped him extraordinarily well to be a frontier artist. But he first put those talents to work in the Blue Ridge of West Virginia rather than the trans-Mississippi West. Financial desperation carried him to New Mexico via the rails of the Santa Fe. There in 1906, his zeal for Southwestern genre was born. Although frequently on a tangent such as painting stage scenery, producing intermittent landscapes, authoring a stray story or book, and even accompanying a scientific expedition to Africa (a major testament to his superior skill as a draftsman), Leigh inevitably returned to painting Southwestern Indian life.

Now, at age seventy, when most men have put aside their active careers, Leigh returned again to the Southwest. He was entering what would become the most productive period of his life and for the next twenty years enjoyed a long awaited recognition as a leading Western artist. The shadow of economic despair had guided; the fiction of affluence had led him astray; and the call of fancy was seldom ignored, but his future course was firm.

CHAPTER V

IDEAS AND IDEALS

1. Thou shalt not say 'I Believe' merely because you are told to.
2. Thou shalt have no other God but Commonsense
3. Thou shalt not stultify thy mind.
4. Thou shalt not maltreat thy body.
5. Thou shalt not betray thy race.
6. Thou shalt not inculcate self-destruction.
7. Thou shalt not surrender to exaggerated ego.
8. Thou shalt not cultivate the ugly.
9. Thou shalt not use the inexperience of the young to their detriment.
10. Thou shalt not destroy thy self-respect.⁽¹⁾

The question of whether Leigh was an artist or an illustrator stirred a controversy that raged around him throughout his life. The artist is generally inspired by a few formal ideas which he feels compelled to express. His subjects come to him from within. The illustrator, by contrast, is basically a reporter whose subjects come to him from the outside. To distinguish between the artist and illustrator the presence of ideas and ideals in the painter's mind becomes a decisive factor.

⁽¹⁾William R. Leigh. "My Ten Commandments." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Folder M-2; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Least known of Leigh's many sides was his habit of composing essays in response to the social and political trends of his day. Those essays, written largely during the 1920's and 1930's, were controversial in both theme and rhetoric and were never offered for publication. They reveal Leigh's deep convictions which found more limited expression on canvas than in his idea books.

THOU SHALT NOT SAY 'I BELIEVE'
MERELY BECAUSE YOU ARE TOLD TO

Shortly after the First World War, Leigh created a select group of commandments by which he professed to govern his life. The first commandment, he said, was the greatest of all. Consequently, the search for knowledge and fact became an avocation. His personal library of nearly 1400 volumes, contained works on chemistry, physics, music, economic systems, drama, the Bible, political revolution, biography, English composition and art, plus most of the significant contemporary novels. In addition, his personal files bulged with newspaper clippings on even more diverse topics. Conclusive evidence, he asserted, allowed man to form knowledge; partial evidence only allowed the formation of belief, while no evidence at all limited man to simple preference.

Leigh wrote several essays on reason and truth.

In one, he expressed his compulsion for facts.

I have found that to know things
for what they really are, to get
at the actual truth, the real
facts, is one of the most difficult things in life. Facts seem to me to be much like diamonds; things that we spend our whole lives in digging for; the hardest things to brake, the rarest things to find; the most valuable things to own; and the most beautiful of all things to contemplate.(2)

Believing that society was filled with deception, Leigh urged the cultivation of reason. "Reason," he wrote, "is the king of the universe; it is the spark which the all-mighty intelligence which governs all things has given us." (3) An abiding devotion to fact and reason was consistently reflected in the relentless fidelity to nature and anatomy in his paintings. The passion for fact at times crippled his imagination.

Leigh's search for truth ranged into the field of theology where he gradually established a position of agnosticism, and in the process became a staunch opponent of institutionalized religion. In one of

(2) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay - Idea File." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Storage Envelope 26; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(3) Ibid., Envelope 25.

his last essays on religion, Leigh concluded

Religion is a trangent phase of mans evolution; its form indicates accurately the degree of mental development. Religion is a busi-ness pure & simple, carried on for gain; It is manufactured in all lands and all times out of the same materials, by the same types of men, and in the same general way; its purpose is to gain authority and wealth; it was built to exploit mankind--and that is all it has ever done. It is a curse--and has always been mans worst enemy.(4)

In another he scoffed, "the oldest and still the most profitable business in the world is the manufacture of Gods. The only capital it requires is hot air and craft."(5)

Leigh acquired his aversion to religion as a child in Berkeley county, home of the first Episcopal church west of the Blue Ridge. His parents were devout low church Episcopalians and, following the destruction of their church building during the Civil War, they held services for several years in the living room at Maidstone. Young Leigh was not an attentive worshipper. On one occasion, during his father's prayer, he casually

(4) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay on Religion." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(5) William R. Leigh. "The Public." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

answered the call of a catbird heard outside the window.⁽⁶⁾ For that impertinence he received a sound spanking. Leigh also despaired of the incessant drilling in the book of Genesis imposed upon him by his mother. "Theology," he stated, "had the effect of driving me out of doors."⁽⁷⁾

Six weeks after reaching Munich, Leigh wrote his mother, "I am hunting an English church; when I find it I will attend every Sunday that is not taken up in letter writing."⁽⁸⁾ Munich was not so large that six weeks were required to locate a church. Many Sundays were apparently consumed with letter writing because another seven weeks passed before he first acknowledged having attended a church,⁽⁹⁾ and then not again until Christmas Eve. Five months went by before he mentioned church again when he informed his mother, "I have not been to the church lately because the weather has been

⁽⁶⁾ Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 41.

⁽⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 40.

⁽⁸⁾ "William R. Leigh to Mother, September 16, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-6; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁹⁾ "William R. Leigh to Father, November 7, 1883." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-8; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

so beautiful that I always take a walk instead."⁽¹⁰⁾
Eight months later, Leigh wrote of church attendance
for the last time in his extensive correspondence,
commenting

I was at the church this morning
and found it pretty well filled.
A man came into church with a
disdainful look--he wondered why
so many people could make such
fools of themselves as to
believe in all such things as
churches.⁽¹¹⁾

The weak commitment he carried with him to Munich
vanished altogether. Years later he confessed: "I
was brought up an Episcopalian; my infantile training
in religion by my parents, destroyed in me all belief
in the Christian religion. It did more: it impelled
me to study all religions."⁽¹²⁾

Following the return to America, Leigh's interest
in religion revived. By the 1930's, his library
shelves held a copy of the Book of Mormon, several
studies on Siddhartha, Hinduism and Buddhism, the

(10)"William R. Leigh to Mother, May 19, 1884."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-29;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(11)"William R. Leigh to Brother, February 1, 1885."
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder E-59;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(12)"William R. Leigh to W. E. Zeuch,
January 13, 1939." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33,
Folder M-34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Meditations of Marcus Arelius, with a miscellaneous assortment of titles including Upton Sinclair's The Profits of Religion, The Bible Unmasked by Joseph Lewis, History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science by John William Draper, The Varieties of Religious Experience by William James, J. T. Sunderland's Origin and Character of the Bible, and Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions by T. W. Doane. These works suggest that Leigh was more than a casual student of the subject. He witnessed the activities of shamans and medicine men in the Southwest, studied the works of Calvin and Luther, read the biographies of popes and saints, analyzed the teachings of Christ, Mohammed, Buddha and Krishna; and even followed the work of American evangelist Billy Sunday. "Still," he admitted, "there are a great many things I don't know, and if God is as kind as the ministers insist-- though they don't know anymore about him than I do-- he will forgive me." (13)

As result of his research, Leigh concluded that religion was a system of guesses, assumptions and inferences. He observed that "Christianity was the triumph of emotionalism over knowledge, ignorance over

(13) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay-Idea Files." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Storage Envelope 21, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

enlightenment, fraud over honesty."⁽¹⁴⁾ By his reasoning, religion consisted of only three ingredients: promises, threats and deceptions. It promised heaven and threatened eternal torture, but if a person "greased the hand of the priest, he wouldn't go to hell."⁽¹⁵⁾ Leigh was convinced that religion and capitalism had formed a partnership to exploit mankind. He referred to them as the Two-Headed Monster, The Two Arms of Usury, and as the "Two Shells, in the great shell-game through which the substance of the masses is sucked out."⁽¹⁶⁾ Furthermore, he warned that societies are often unable to detect the fatal effect of such a partnership.

It is the same mistake which the reformationists in the 16th century made: they thought the Roman Church was their trouble. It was the mistake the French revolutionists made: they imagined their ills were caused by the aristocracy. It was the same mistake the American revolutionists made: they supposed their woes were due to a vicious king. The intellectuals in each

(14) William R. Leigh. "American Philosophy." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(15) William R. Leigh. "The Democratic Cult of Know-Nothingness." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(16) William R. Leigh. "The Two Arms of Usury." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

case, knew the truth and betrayed the cause. All were wrong: the thing they suffered from - the thing we suffer from - is the partnership between capital and priestcraft.(17)

In a final reference to the partnership he described the manner in which they enslaved mankind:

Capitalism and Religion are the twin masters who divide between them the enslavement of the bodies and the enslavement of the minds of men. The twin masters have abolished free speech and free press in America, and if sporadic exceptions occur they are dubbed irresponsible, red, bolschvec, comunestic, socialistic.(18)

Leigh's propensity for factual precision did not allow him to accept anything by faith alone. He regarded religion as the chief enemy of fact and reason. Therefore, other than the Crucifixion cyclorama at Einsiedeln in 1893, he did not paint religious themes. The near total absence of religious content from his work is in itself a significant commentary on his ideals.

(17)"William R. Leigh to Oscar Ameringe, January 5, 1939." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-33; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(18)William R. Leigh. "Art: What Is It?" Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

THOU SHALT NOT STULTIFY THY MIND

Leigh believed that mankind was in danger of losing the ability to think freely. He pessimistically observed, "only a small minority are born to think; a larger proportion, though incapable of original thought, are able to appreciate, and therefore can follow; but the overwhelming majority can neither think nor follow, and must be driven."⁽¹⁹⁾ In response to that conviction, Leigh uniformly adopted nonconformist opinions which would set him apart from the unthinking majority. In 1915, he became a charter member of the Freethinkers of America,⁽²⁰⁾ an organization which directed its energies toward the support of unpopular causes. The Freethinkers led the first legal battle to stop the reading of the Bible in New York City's public schools. In October, 1929, the organization openly distributed copies of Thomas Paine's Age of Reason among students at Upsala College, an act which threw the campus into an uproar. Leigh viewed these activities as constructive

⁽¹⁹⁾ Leigh. "The Democratic Cult of Know-Nothingness." Box-VII.

⁽²⁰⁾ Charter Member Card. Freethinkers of America; Leigh Collection, Miscellaneous materials, File 9, Drawer 34, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

and proceeded to line his bookshelves with much that was published by the Freethought Press.

Erwin S. Barrie, manager and director of the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City, remembered Leigh as "the most outspoken and forthright of any artist I have ever known."⁽²¹⁾ Nonconformity and inventiveness were hallmarks of his unpublished writings as well as most of his societal attitudes. Inventiveness was indeed a characteristic of some of his basic ideals. Regarding the concept of justice, he proposed

If I were asked to paint a picture of Justice, I would prefer not to paint him--I like to conceive Justice as masculine--the more logical creature--not blindfolded with scales in one hand and a sword in the other. My representation of justice would be a lonely star; for justice is an idea only; Justice is not of this Earth; it is a glorious ideal which lives removed from this foul world.⁽²²⁾

Leigh did not express this concept on canvas. As was the case, he was more bold with pen than with brush.

⁽²¹⁾Erwin S. Barrie. "William Robinson Leigh, N.A., 1866-1955." Leigh Collection, 3-page biography, File 9, Drawer 34, Storage Envelope 1; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽²²⁾William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay-Idea File." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

THOU SHALT NOT MALTREAT THY BODY

Throughout his writings, Leigh noted that struggle was the first law of life and that fitness to fight was the highest duty of man. All of his life, Leigh gave careful attention to the preservation of his physical health. Debilitating sickness during childhood had prompted the concern. He joined a gymnasium while studying in Munich, an experience which contributed to the development of his unusual stamina. On sketching trips he climbed mountains and hiked across deserts. He survived typhoid fever near the turn of the century in New York, malaria during his first African expedition, twice underwent major surgery, and lived to the age of eighty-eight.

Leigh took pride in the fact that he did not smoke or drink. During the 1920's, he was a strong supporter of prohibition. His files contained six folders of articles describing the tragic results of alcohol, and he wrote numerous unpublished essays, poems and short stories on the harmful effects of liquor, tobacco and narcotics. In 1933, publishers rejected a full-length play he had written entitled "Anaconda," which had as a theme the devastating effects

of narcotics.⁽²³⁾ He thought of the body as a mechanism given in trust to each man, and to misuse it was a betrayal of nature.

Leigh's respect for the body is clearly present in his art. The human torso invariably appears in idealized form as a plains Indian, African native, or ancient cliff dweller. Few American artists have painted human anatomy so well, but the unending parade of perfectly formed Indian torsos leads to the question of objectivity. Leigh was more often an idealist than a realist.

THOU SHALT NOT BETRAY THY RACE

A Darwinist, Leigh believed all men were born unequal. Strong racial convictions emerged in his unpublished essays. He regarded Blacks as inferior species and he held Jews in contempt because he believed that they used their business acumen to exploit the masses. Conversely, he praised the Anglo-Saxon race for its proficiency in the areas of war, science, diplomacy, commercial genius, philosophy,

⁽²³⁾"Robert E. Corradini to William R. Leigh, April 25, 1933." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-25; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

poetry and drama but criticized it for deficiencies in art and music.(24)

From his student years in Munich, Leigh developed a lasting attachment to the German people. It resulted in his adopting the unpopular position of defending Germany during both World Wars. He wrote of the first war that, "American neutrality was a lie from the start,"(25) and he resented the fact that the United States came to the defense of France, a country he had grown to despise. "The world," he thought, "would have been better off if Germany had triumphed."(26) At the outbreak of the Second World War, Leigh attacked the

universal assumption that we English speakers are the only civilized, fit God-approved, race, and we are opposing an uncivilized, unfit, god-condemned race. They are as highly developed as we, and are certainly not our inferior in combat. We take the lopsided, emotional, self-righteous and dangerously childish position that Hitler is a tyrannical fiend, entirely different from any of us. Rubbish! Nothing is more dangerous than to underestimate your

(24) William R. Leigh. "Untitled essay." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(25) William R. Leigh. "The World War. Why?" Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(26) Ibid.

opponent. Hitler wants exactly the same kind of people that we are, neither better nor worse. They have at least as much right on their side as the English have on theirs.(27)

Interestingly, the human characters which populated Leigh's canvases were overwhelmingly members of primitive cultures: Navajos, Zuñis, Hopis and African natives. Rarely did an Anglo appear. Frederick Remington's paintings, by contrast, were often filled with Anglos dominating lesser groups which the artist disliked. Leigh's deepest bias was against civilized man, and he therefore concentrated upon unspoiled cultures where individualism remained unweakened and freedom unabridged.

THOU SHALT NOT CULTIVATE THE UGLY

All but beauty will pass -- beauty will never die. No, not even when the earth and the sun have died will beauty perish. It will live on in the stars.(28)

(27)William R. Leigh. "World War II." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(28)Leigh. Frontiers of Enchantment, p. 297.

Leigh perceived much that was ugly in the world and did not hesitate to say something about it. He spoke disparagingly of Jazz, and thought women's cosmetics revolting. Although married to one of the nation's leading fashion designers, he wrote that "of all the tyrannies known to human experience today, fashion is the most complete; of all the devices for exploitation of the masses not one other is so triumphantly effective."⁽²⁹⁾ He especially disliked artificiality in fashions, art and people.

The topic which received greatest attention in his unpublished writings was art. He defined it as "Nature seen through artistic eyes," and as "Nature translated with artistic discrimination."⁽³⁰⁾ Arguing from his realist orientation, Leigh declared that when men expressed their ideas through writing, painting, sculpture, music, acting or dancing they were all governed by the same general laws of truth, beauty and integrity. The most significant was truth. "Art," stated Leigh, "gains force and poignancy only by

⁽²⁹⁾William R. Leigh. "The Incubus of Fashion." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII: Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽³⁰⁾William R. Leigh. "What Is the Matter With Our Art?" Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

virtue of accuracy."⁽³¹⁾ To achieve beauty a piece of art must obtain grace, rhythm and above all form. Abstract and impressionist work, in his opinion, were nothing more than hideous distortions. Such work lacked integrity, he accused, which meant they were devoid of simple honest, professional mastery and worthiness of purpose.

The ugliest thing in the world to Leigh was modern art. He reserved his most pungent rhetoric to describe it. The only purpose he found in post-impressionism was deception and the object of the deception was to accumulate money. "A whole generation," he lamented, "is being mentally indoctrinated with sophistic garbage and the philosophy of Parisian sewer-psychology."⁽³²⁾ At various points in his extensive writings, he referred to French paintings as barbaric, vulgar imbecilities, brazen effrontries, hideous travesties, sadistic, psychological bamboozle, technical flubdub and insults to the common intelligence. "Sodom and Gomorrah would have been contaminated by them," he growled, and the "corroding reek of the

(31) Ibid.

(32) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

gutters of Paris befowls the American atmosphere from coast to coast."⁽³³⁾ Paris, he thought, had become the cesspool of the world. Those words were from the same artist who, as a student in Munich, longingly hoped to study in Paris.

In retrospect, Leigh claimed his mind had been changed after viewing an exhibition of French art at the New York armory in 1913.

When our country was first
invaded by the excretions of
French absinth fiends & soul-
debassed moral prostitutes at
the armoury exhibition in 1913,
few including myself, could
have been brought to believe
possible, the aberrations of
which our land is capable.⁽³⁴⁾

The experience, he claimed, was humiliating to his intelligence as well as to his taste and he referred to the armory exhibit as an intellectual pigsty and a lunatics' hang-out. In a 1941 issue of Time, Leigh offered an unusual explanation for the origin of modern art.

Crotchety Realist Leigh blames
modern art on the Algerian War
(1830-47), when French aristo-
crats, began drinking absinthe,

(33) William R. Leigh. "Inferiority Complex in High Places." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(34) Ibid.

and the 'lower classes,' with their vulgar ideas, began to dominate the art world.(35)

The most likely reason for his intense dislike of post-impressionist art was the fact that it consistently outsold his own by an overwhelming margin in both price and quantity. In Leigh's library were two copies of Bolshivism in Art and Its Propagandists written by the editors of Veritas Publishing Company in 1924. One copy contained profuse marginal notations and much of the narrative was underlined. The book is extremely harsh in its criticism of French art, and of individual artists such as Manet, Whistler and Rodin, and especially bitter toward art critics and dealers. Many of Leigh's essays contain quotations from that source which was an obviously significant influence on his thought. Leigh urged protest and boycott against French artists.

We can excuse ignorance, we can pardon ineptitude, we can endure stupidity up to a certain point, but when the resources of a foreign government are marshaled behind fraud and chicanery seeking to pervert our civilization for profit, patience becomes criminal.(36)

(35)"Nature Painter." Time, March 10, 1941, p. 66.

(36)Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 423.

His opinion of American art was only slightly higher than his view of French art. Leigh believed that the czars of finance controlled American art and no American painter had any standing unless he managed to make money. An artist could not accumulate wealth if he offended the purchasers, consequently the subjects of capital, race, politics, religion, and women were rarely painted. Instead, Leigh complained, artists chose romantic, picturesque and sentimental scenes.

American painters do not produce significant pictures. They are very good, docile, decoras, and harmless painters. In their studios they may let loose and God dam the powers that be, but they never paint anything of that sort. They turn out nice, mannerly, innocuous, and tame pictures; American painters are nice gentle, fully broken, securely hobbled painters.(37)

Leigh advocated the creation of a position in the Federal Government for a minister of art. He believed it would do for American art what Colbert's position under Louis XIV had done for French art in the early Seventeenth Century. He did not want it carried too far, however, because he thought government-subsidized art created through the W.P.A. was "barbarous

(37) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay on Art." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, p. 11.

drival." The person appointed to the position which Leigh had envisioned would have to be from the art community because "there is no one connected with our government whose art instincts are above those of canables." (38)

Art critics and art dealers were among Leigh's favorite targets. He thought the average critic was a painter who had failed and who possessed only a superficial familiarity with quality art. Matters were compounded by the fact that they were the worst paid members of newspaper staffs. Leigh concluded that they vented their frustrations by writing devastating reviews. He believed there should be a thorough test of a man's artistic understanding before allowing him to become a critic of other men's art.

In a subsequent essay entitled "The Tricks of Art Dealers," Leigh told of methods by which potential purchasers were exploited. First, an artist had to claim to be either of French extraction or an English aristocrat. The dealers would then assist the artist in his pretention of having a reputation abroad, and in many cases it was simply faked. Then, the artist was placed in a fashionable studio so the wealthy

(38) Leigh. "Inferiority Complex in High Places," Box-VII.

patrons would feel at home. Leigh claimed that the exploitation of both artist and purchaser by the dealer resulted in building the popularity of modern art. Although very critical of those practices, Leigh used at least one of them when he claimed to be a descendant of Sir Walter Raleigh and also of Pocahontas. He apparently agreed with Charles Baudelaire, one of the Nineteenth Century's most influential poets and art critics, who wrote, "A little charlatanism is permitted to genius. It even sits well. It is like the rouge on a pretty woman's face, a new inspiration to the mind." (39)

In the search for artistic beauty, Leigh urged viewers to "study the work of art as you would sit through a play. Stop long enough to look at it." (40) He cited many of his own preferences among the great masters. The greatest painting of all time, he thought, was Ruben's Fall of the Damned. "The most perfect woman on canvas," (41) in his opinion, was Ingres'

(39) Quoted in Bolshivism in Art and Its Propagandists. Veritas Publishing Company, New York, 1924, p. 26.

(40) William R. Leigh. "What is Art?" Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(41) William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay on Art." Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

La Source. Other paintings receiving high praise from Leigh were Titian's Venus, Rembrandt's Nightwatch, da Vinci's The Last Supper, the portraits by Van Dyck, the works of Raphael and particularly the optical realism of Valezquez. "In looking at these pictures," commented Leigh, "the thing that strikes us most forcibly is the fact that they live; we do not think of paint."⁽⁴²⁾ While praising the masters, Leigh expressed disgust for one of America's most famous artists, James O'Neal Whistler

Whistler never understood that the human message in a picture was weightier than his tonal effects; He was devoid of story telling qualities; human joys and sorrows, the tragedies and the poetry of life, the problems of the world, the sublimity of the ocean, the clouds, the stars did not stir his imagination. Cold and cynical, he took no interest in anything outside of himself and the technical; the milk of human kindness, if he had any of it, was in the form of a lump of ice. Never before had the mediocre and the ignorant such a champion.⁽⁴³⁾

Of all the many essays and addresses he prepared on the concepts of art, his finest work was a lecture

⁽⁴²⁾ William R. Leigh. "What is the Matter With Our Art? Our Art Critics." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁴³⁾ Ibid.

entitled "The How and What Men." It is his most complete and reasoned statement on the subject and he presented it on numerous occasions to classes of young art students.

THE HOW AND WHAT MEN

How men are those who concentrate their energies on how they execute; What men are those who focus their powers on what they create.

A happy combination of the two makes a great work of art. . . .

Another way of distinguishing between the two types of graphic creators is to call them "Painters" and "Artists." Painters are preoccupied with technic, artists with ideas.

Still another way - more comprehensive than either, is to look upon every art as a language using varying mediums of expression. Writing, painting, sculpture, music, acting are merely media for conveying thoughts, ideas, emotions, reactions of the human mind to nature: all are but differing pitches of one voice - the voice of the creative intellect. . . .

The How man strives for technical execution as an end - he sees it as the whole thing - he makes it conspicuous, strident; he sacrifices all other qualities to it. His brush strokes must be obvious, he calls that being fluid, loose, easy, delightful, artistic. It may be all of these, and remain insignificant, because it takes more than these to make a work of art. The What man makes the idea predominate: he must have all the technical skill that the How man has, but he does not flaunt it in the world's face: he subordinates it to the thing he wants to say.

But I will tell you this: the language of paint is one of the most powerful at our command, because it makes its appeal through the eye, our strongest

sense. It is the oldest language we have, barring speech.⁽⁴⁴⁾

THOU SHALT NOT DESTROY THY SELF-RESPECT

Individualism was the most pronounced trait in Leigh's character and a theme repeatedly appearing throughout his writings. "Great things are done by single persons," he wrote, "never by mobs."⁽⁴⁵⁾ He viewed competition as one of the most fundamental laws in nature. There was no place for an anemic species, therefore Individualism had to be carefully preserved to insure human freedom and survival. One method of protecting individuality, suggested Leigh, was to be vigilant about one's self-respect.

His unrelenting adherence to that philosophy led him to write a number of stinging essays on democracy and capitalism, ostensibly exposing ways in which they were destructive to human dignity. He was particularly critical of the United States Constitution which he characterized as a document resulting from patchwork and compromise, and written by wealthy, leisured men

⁽⁴⁴⁾William R. Leigh. "The How and What Men." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Lecture, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽⁴⁵⁾Leigh. "Democratic Cult of Know-Nothingness." Box-VII.

of the gentry who contrived the instrument to serve their own class. Leigh described Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton and Franklin as atheists who nonetheless threw in their lot with priestcraft and "cheated the masses out of the communism they knew the masses had fought to win."⁽⁴⁶⁾

Leigh believed the founding fathers developed a system whereby the government would remain intricate and inefficient, while natural resources were left to private ownership. It followed in his thinking that whoever owned the natural resources controlled everything, including the government. Popular government was no more than a catch phrase, according to Leigh, because the people were really not capable of governing due to the fact they had no reliable sources from which to inform themselves. Among the first things "Natural Resource Owners" purchased and controlled were the newspapers and magazines, and the appeal of those sources of information was to emotion rather than reason. Leigh concluded that typical voters knew simply what they read in the papers and consequently

⁽⁴⁶⁾William R. Leigh. "Untitled Essay." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

"only think they have a hand in the conduct of affairs."(47)

Leigh thought the concept of majority rule was for the most part unworkable. He perceived the weakness and ignorance of the majority to be a source of power for the more intelligent, but the majority itself was inherently weak.

That the majority, who can neither think or follow, could select strong leaders who are conscientious is a fantastic idea--it is a subtle trick on the part of religion and capital to enslave the masses. To evolve a system by which the fit can be sorted out, and placed in the lead without abusing their power is the greatest problem confronting mankind. Occasionally such an individual is placed in such a position by fate--never by man--extraordinary things happen, and all the world wonders.(48)

Leigh defined capitalism as "a systematic monopolization of the resources of nature by private men."(49) He believed power was based in nature and it could not be divided. When men seized the mines, oil, forests,

(47) William R. Leigh. "Democracy." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(48) Leigh. "Democratic Cult of Know-Nothingness," Box-VII.

(49) Ibid.

water power and the land, the net result was to reduce the power of government, while simultaneously each resource owner was gathering around him lawyers, propagandists and an army of laborers. Leigh claimed that there were fifty or sixty uncrowned emperors in the United States who formed an invisible government which bought and sold political offices at auction. In an unfinished writing entitled "The Sink-Hole," Leigh explained how a few American capitalists had consequently taken possession of the nation's resources, government, church, education, social leadership and fine arts.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Civilizations fell, reasoned Leigh, not because farmers failed to produce crops, or laborers failed to work, but because the farmers and laborers were oppressed by the resource owners or capitalists.

Leigh read widely on the subject of capitalism and his thoughts evolved from more than idle conversation. In his library were worn copies of Charles Beard's An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States, Louis Hacker's The Triumph of American Capitalism and Das Kapital by Karl Marx.

(50) William R. Leigh. "The Sink-Hole." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Writing, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

In addition, there were biographies of Jay Gould and William R. Hearst, Ida Tarbell's History of Standard Oil, and Matthew Josephson's The Robber Barons. Leigh emerged from those readings and from his own life-long battle with economic problems a confirmed anti-capitalist but only once did he express a firm protest on canvas. That was his controversial painting, The Reckoning.

Because he believed man's individualism was being increasingly absorbed by capitalistic and democratic institutions, Leigh continually emphasized individual worth in his paintings. The Indian subjects in his art most often appear alone, at one with nature. A basic ideal of all Western art was man's need for a harmonious relationship with nature. Canvases such as Navajo Boy, Zuñi Belle, Water Pockets and Land of His Fathers along with scores like them contain a single person, exhibiting the qualities of human dignity, self-respect, assurance, and inward contemplation. Of the solitary young lad intently gazing over the landscape in Land of His Fathers, Leigh wrote

The large mixed herds of goats
and sheep owned by the Navaho
Indians are taken out to graze
and browse each day by children.
Their only aids are mongrel dogs
and sometimes a burro or a horse.
However, the work tends to make
men out of the boys; self-
reliance, resourcefulness, and
courage are developed. Coyotes,
eagles, an occasional wolf or

cougar are possibilities to be met. The children have no weapons, so alertness and quick decision are requisites. There is something inspiring in the contemplation of a manly fellow fellow in his picturesque rags, perched on a high rock on the lookout for mauraunders; in the trust in him of his herd, and in the romantically primitive and wild sublimity of the scene.(51)

Leigh certainly did not lack confidence in himself or self-respect for his character. The whole of society might criticize his work but he refused to be intimidated.

In the hyper-active mind of William R. Leigh, ideas and ideals were abundant. Unfortunately, many of them did not reach a canvas. His thoughts on capitalism made only a limited appearance while his concept of individualism was presented with regularity. His respect for nature and human anatomy are readily discovered but his deep animosity toward institutionalized religion is notably absent from his work. At one time, Leigh attempted to place all of his thoughts on a single canvas which he named Pseudo Civilization. It depicted the crucifixion of a man, woman and child, with the child crucified upside down because Leigh

(51)A typed statement attached to a photograph of Land of His Fathers; Leigh Collection, Photography Files, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

believed children were the most exploited of all humanity. The crosses stand on a summit of corpses representing destroyed individualism. Encircling the crosses are spectators, each representing a pet hatred of Leigh's mind -- priesthood, capital, gluttony, army, navy, judiciary, wall street, industry, and many more. To one side is a large mass of have-nots who simply do not understand what is happening. There is no record of this painting ever having been displayed or where it is located today. The only evidence of its existence is a photograph of the completed piece in Leigh's files.

Leigh was an idealist who lived close to his ten commandments. To describe him merely as an illustrator or painter is to present an incomplete portrait. He was an artist, an artist who believed ---

Nothing is more necessary in
this world than idealists--
persons who see in large units,
see far, see distinctly; persons
who are more interested in the
whole of humanity than in self.(52)

(52) William R. Leigh. "Idealism." Leigh Collection, Unpublished Essay, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL YEARS

Goodby, my friend; the sun is
sinking in the west and the
glories of sky and earth sing
in union a matchless symphony.(1)

THE THIRTIES

Throughout the depression decade, the main thrust of Leigh's creative talent was directed toward writing. His first major publication, a play entitled, Clipt Wings, appeared in 1930 and immediately drew controversial reaction.(2) It alleged that Sir Francis Bacon actually authored all of the Shakespearean plays and sonnets. Shakespeare was purported to be an illiterate Stratford butcher named Shaxper who posed as the author of works whose real author dared not acknowledge for fear of execution. The play also suggested that Bacon was the illegitimate son of Elizabeth I, the

(1) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 429.

(2) New York Times Book Review. December 7, 1930.
New York Evening Post. May 31, 1930.

supposed Virgin Queen of England.

Even though the idea of Baconian authorship was not new, Leigh's play still produced indignation. His files contain many irate letters from outraged readers, including one from the World's Purity Federation. The reaction delighted Leigh, who himself contributed to the controversy by writing letters of complaint about Clipt Wings to the editors of various newspapers and signing them simply "a reader." The notes were obviously written to stir interest and increase sales.

Leigh had been interested in Shakespeare most of his life. His mother often read to him from the sonnets and as a student in Munich he not only read the plays but saw them performed on stage. During his camping trips to the Grand Canyon and even on the African Safaris, Leigh carried with him the works of Shakespeare. The preparation for Clipt Wings began seriously in 1927-28 when he started corresponding with several Baconian and Shakespearean scholars. He conferred with Dr. Charles P. G. Scott, a Bacon scholar in Boston; with Dr. C. H. Grandgent, a professor of Shakespeare at Harvard University; and with Henry Wellington Wack, a former President of the National Shakespeare Federation and a founder and Vice-President of the Bacon Society of America. The play was

subsequently written in 1929 during a period of post-operative confinement.

Following the publication of Clipt Wings, Ethel Traphagen vigorously publicized it in Fashion Digest and through correspondence with customers and former students. The Leighs received many letters of support and encouragement but the most unusual response came from a noted spiritualist at New York's Mount Lebanon Wood Working Company.

You write like Shakespeare himself
and I feel sure you have lived and
thought with him. Just after I
had finished reading your book
Queen Elizabeth was a guest at the
banquet supper personally conducted
by the famous Bherio. How far you
are influenced by the original
personality I of course cannot
measure but it would appear that
you may have established some
spiritual connection.(3)

The depression blunted Leigh's ambitions as a playwright. He tried repeatedly to acquire financial backing for the production of Clipt Wings but was never successful. He even suggested signing John Barrymore to play the title role of Bacon, hoping that would attract investors; but it was all to no avail. Another of his plays, Anaconda, was forced to

(3)"William Perkins and Lillian Barlow to W. R. Leigh, September 26, 1930." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-12; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

postpone casting although the director had already signed J. M. Holmes, Alan Bunce and Susan Freeman to major roles.⁽⁴⁾ Six months later, Leigh was still struggling with the difficulty and wrote that once again "the scarcity of money prevented my play, Anaconda, from going on."⁽⁵⁾ The pattern continued throughout the thirties and thwarted every one of Leigh's attempts to stage a Broadway production.

During the late summer of 1931, the Leighs traveled through the Southwest and on into Mexico, Panama and Cuba. The trip was a welcome respite for the artist, and he wrote his old friend, Will Richard,

The places that appealed to me
most were, as usual, those
furthest removed from white man.
The White man's cities don't
intrigue me; New York with its
skyscrapers alone makes an
appeal to my imagination; the
tremendous perpendicular lines.
The vast simplicity and giant
proportions are inescapable -
they are fine, inspiring, grand.
But the garishness, the disorder
in architecture, the terrible
advertisements, banging bells
and screeching horns of most of

⁽⁴⁾ New York Times. May 9, 1932.

⁽⁵⁾ "William R. Leigh to Will Richard, November 7, 1931." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-22; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

the white man's cities make me
long for the desert.(6)

His second book, The Western Pony, was published in 1933 and became an immediate success. It was later named one of the fifty best books of the year.(7) Leigh's detailed description of the Navajo Pony and its accompanying gear reveal an intimate knowledge of Indian custom which is equally manifest in his paintings. In words and sketches, he romantically described the changing life of the mustang, lamenting that "the Indian pony no longer carries his painted master to war --- he pulls the master's plow." (8) The highlight of The Western Pony, however, was Leigh's explanation of how an artist conveys impressions.

Since painting is an art, its mission is to produce impressions; Let us suppose an artist painting an express train moving at a mile a minute. The smoke of the engine would be streaming back in a flat line as taken by the camera. But in the instantaneous photograph, every spoke in the wheels of the engine would be clear and sharp, as if the machine were standing still. The painter, however, must show these spokes as a blur, otherwise he would totally destroy the impression of

(6) Ibid.

(7) New York Times Review. February 4, 1934.

(8) William R. Leigh. The Western Pony. New York: Huntington Press, 1933, p. 111.

movement he wanted to suggest. From the point of view of the observer, he would be exactly right, since no human eye could see anything but a blur. Now let us suppose the same painter, picturing a hummingbird hovering over a flower. To the eye the wings of the bird would be quite as much of a blur as the spokes of the wheel, yet so painted would not convey the idea of motion, but merely of a smeared or unfinished picture. The only thing the painter can do to give the impression of the bird is to paint the wings out in detail, exactly the opposite procedure to that involving the wheel. Why one riddle with two answers? The reason is that the painter must convey the impression of truth as best he can; It is photographically correct to paint the horse in action as the camera shows it, but it is artistically wrong because some of the phases of the stride do not convey the idea of rapid movement.(9)

In addition to authoring two books in the first half of the decade, Leigh was also directing a group of artists painting backdrops for the African Hall exhibits in the American Museum of Natural History. Furthermore, he consumed much time preparing sundry manuscripts such as "Littlefoot" and "The Vagabond Poet" which were never published. Because of his commitment to writing and his work in the American Museum, Leigh produced very few paintings during the

(9) Ibid., pp. 113-114.

early thirties. Art sales were understandably low during the entire decade, which reduced the general output of all artists.

Some of the canvases he did produce deviated significantly from his traditional style. In 1933 he painted Goldenrod, Brook, Wood Interior, Sage Brush, Meadow Grove, Autumn and Western Sunset.⁽¹⁰⁾ All of them are impressionistic in both subject and technique. He used a very light palette along with impasto methods to render the soft color harmony found in each of the peaceful landscapes. Those oils, all created in the same year, represent a remarkable departure from his Munich realism but there is no record that any one of the works was ever exhibited. Only twice before had Leigh experimented with impressionism. In 1911 he painted several canvases entitled simply Mountains, and New Hampshire Landscapes which were impressionistic and in a few cases prepared with a palette knife. Again from 1925-1927 he attempted similar works including Eastern Landscapes, Potomac Scenes, and Brooklyn Skyline. But the group of canvases created in 1933 was his last trial with impressionism.

⁽¹⁰⁾William R. Leigh. Works of Impressionism. Leigh Collection, Art Storage, Racks-26, 28, 30, 33, 37, 38; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Late in 1935, Leigh resigned in disgust from his work on the African Hall exhibits and prepared for an around-the-world tour. On January 9, 1936, he and Ethel sailed from New York, beginning their 37,000 mile journey. They returned in May laden with dozens of boxes and crates which prompted the press to remark

From what we saw on the pier after passengers and baggage had been landed we know that the most extensive and most successful shopping done by any of the Reliance cruisers was that of William Leigh, the artist, and Mrs. Leigh.(11)

The Leighs remained financially untroubled by the depression.

Following the 1938 publication of his third and final book, Frontiers of Enchantment, Leigh once again turned his full attention to art. Although teaching at the Art Students League and the New York Evening School of Industrial Art, he still found time to produce many new paintings of the Southwest. He received the distinction of a one-man exhibit at the Grand Central Art Galleries scheduled to coincide with the 1939 World's Fair. Newspapers across the nation carried announcements of the exhibition which contained twenty-eight oils of historical and natural scenes.

(11) New York Sun. May 29, 1936.

Among the new paintings on display was the mural-sized Custer's Last Fight (6½' x 10½'), but the works preferred by reviewers were Navajo Sheep Tender, Water Pockets, and Indian With Herd of Goats. The latter were eyewitness, genre pictures painted with sensitivity and instinctive understanding, whereas the Custer painting was a cold, historical reconstruction.⁽¹²⁾ The viewing public, however, was more impressed with the large canvas than with the smaller Navajo scenes. Frank Phillips, an Oklahoma oil man, later paid \$10,000 for Custer's Last Fight and brought it to his Bartlesville home in 1944. Phillips became one of Leigh's most devoted patrons, eventually purchasing six major oils.

Leigh was more productive as an author than as an artist during the nineteen thirties. The reasons for the change in emphasis included his work in the American Museum, declining art sales due to economic depression, a brief period of ill health, and a sincere desire to write. By 1939, his emphasis had shifted back to art. He closed the year and the decade with a return trip to the Southwest where he filled several

(12) William R. Leigh. Custer's Last Fight. Leigh Collection, Exhibition Galleries; Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville.

drawing tablets with new ideas. Among them were his sketches of the Navajo Fire Dance.

THE FORTIES

From 1940 through 1950, Leigh reached the peak of his performance as a Western artist. In 1941, he completed the famous Navajo Fire Dance from sketches and notes made two years before. It is the only known eyewitness pictorial account of the Indian ceremonial. Another important painting of that year was Patient, which depicted two shaggy burros contentedly waiting near the adobe house of their Hopi master. It successfully conveyed the quality of patience and stolid devotion. Leigh often referred to the burro as the Indian's "ship of the desert he has the virtues of patience, docility and the ability to endure almost incredible hardships."⁽¹³⁾ The artist painted the lowly burro more often than any other animal, and it became a trademark of his art.

The following season, Leigh exhibited in Salt Lake City; and his featured oil, Homeward Bound, appeared

⁽¹³⁾The Christian Science Monitor.
January 24, 1944.

along with Joseph H. Sharp's Crucita and Dry Flowers.⁽¹⁴⁾ He entered three exhibitions in 1943, and the paintings most prominently and favorably discussed by reviewers were Mirage, Rescue, and A Renegade At Bay.

The most widely publicized exhibition of his career was held in 1944. It opened in January and was sponsored by the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York City. The aged artist was billed as "the last great painter of the old west," and the "only living member of the Remington-Russell-Leigh trio."⁽¹⁵⁾ Nearly 200 national newspapers carried pictures of Leigh and his canvas, Navajo Fire Dance, announcing the Grand Central exhibit which was named "Cowboys and Indians: Paintings of the Old West."⁽¹⁶⁾ The massive publicity campaign propelled Leigh into national prominence. He was often identified in the media as "William R. Leigh, adventurer-explorer-author-artist." The Miami Herald called him the "Last survivor of the outdoor triumvirate,"⁽¹⁷⁾ and Newsweek reported in its third issue of the year that he was the

⁽¹⁴⁾ Salt Lake Tribune. March 29, 1942.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Newmeyer, Sara. "Grand Central Art Galleries News Release Form." Leigh Collection, Scrapbook 3, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ibid.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Miami Herald. May 20, 1944.

Last of the famous wild west painters. His principle admirers are not critics, but western enthusiasts and anthropologists. They like his photographic realism and painstaking authenticity.(18)

In spite of his sudden public acclaim and increased sales, most critics remained reluctant to accept his work. When he and Georgia O'Keefe, a Western impressionist, were compared in the same article, Miss O'Keefe was described as "pure, fresh and enchanting;" while Leigh was dubbed "technically proficient and unexciting."(19)

Contained in the 1944 exhibition were three new murals: Pocahontas, Visions of Yesterday and Westward Ho.

Leigh completed his work on Pocahontas (6½' x 10½') in 1943.(20) For years he claimed to be a descendant of the famous lady and had desired to memorialize her on canvas. Leigh researched every available illustration of the historical incident involving Pocahontas and John Smith as well as carefully examining Smith's own account of the event. He also conferred regularly with

(18)"Leigh's Last Stand." Newsweek. Vol. XXIII, No. 4, January 24, 1944, p. 84.

(19)New York Herald Tribune. January 26, 1944.

(20)William R. Leigh. Pocahontas. Leigh Collection, Exhibition Galleries, Woolaroc Museum; Bartlesville.

Dr. Clark Wissler, Indian Specialist at the American Museum of Natural History. In spite of his research, the finished canvas was a disappointment. The Seventeenth Century Powhatans are shown in costumes worn by Western plains tribes of the late Nineteenth Century, thereby giving the painting a superficial and unauthentic aura. Leigh had hoped the finished canvas would be permanently housed in the state of Virginia and was displeased that it went to Oklahoma. All attempts to retrieve it ended in failure.

The impressive mural, Visions of Yesterday (6½' x 10½'), was based upon a scene the artist witnessed during his early Western travels.⁽²¹⁾ He saw an elderly Sioux with his government plough and inadequate team of horses pause to look at a bison skull.⁽²²⁾ Leigh first painted the scene in 1935 on a small canvas which he named The Happy Hunting Ground and sold to Edward Doheny. He re-executed the subject in 1943 on a larger scale and at Ethel's suggestion gave it a new name. Leigh wrote of the aged Sioux contemplating the skull that he "was once more young,

(21) William R. Leigh. Visions of Yesterday. Leigh Collection, Exhibition Galleries; Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville.

(22) Leigh. "My Life." Unpublished Autobiography, p. 421.

astride his valiant pony, and chasing the serried
hosts of bison. Undreamed of then were the plough,
agriculture, the uneventful life. His white hair and
his once brawny arms are tinted by the dying day;
night will soon swallow up all."⁽²³⁾ Using poetry,
he expanded the interpretation a few years after the
work was completed.

He stands behind his plough; his age-dimmed
eyes rest on a bleaching relic of the past.
Even as the bison, so the Sioux at last
will pass ere long--Small wonder that aghast
He stands gripped by emotions that compound
While tortured thoughts within his soul abound.⁽²⁴⁾

The picture as well as the written commentary show Leigh
to have been a thorough romantic who continued to
nourish an unrelenting dislike of 'civilization.' The
Indian remained one of his favorite subjects and he
once commented that "The only good Indian in art is a
big one."⁽²⁵⁾

Frank Phillips purchased all three murals from
Leigh at a cost of \$10,000 each. As usual the net

⁽²³⁾ One page typed description by W. R. Leigh
attached to photograph of Visions of Yesterday. Leigh
Studio Collection, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽²⁴⁾ William R. Leigh. "Idea Files." Leigh
Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Envelope 14; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

⁽²⁵⁾ The Dallas Morning News. January 20, 1946.

profit was comparatively small. An expense analysis of Pocahontas told a familiar story.

A.	Sale price of Pocahontas	\$10,000	
B.	Expenses		
	1. Grand Central Galleries	\$2,500.00	
	2. Slaughter Commission	3,333.33	
	3. Stretcher and Canvas	49.50	
	4. Paint and Models	50.00	
	5. Studio Rent (5 months)	750.00	
	6. Frame	170.00	
	7. Costume Rental	35.00	
C.	Net Profit for Leigh	\$2,111.17	(26)

On August 24, 1944, Leigh presented a large historical allegory, Writing the Epitaph (3½' x 6½') to Eamon de Valera, Prime Minister of Ireland. The painting, completed nearly twenty-five years before, was based upon the last words of the famed Irish patriot, Robert Emmet, who announced as he stood on the gallows in 1803, "When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written."⁽²⁷⁾ At the center of the canvas is the allegorical figure of Erin seated on a cloud and holding a tablet upon which she has just written the name of Robert Emmet. To the left and to the right are representations of the past and future. On the

(26) William R. Leigh. Miscellaneous Materials. Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Envelope 12; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(27) One page typed comment by Leigh attached to photograph of Writing the Epitaph. Leigh Studio Collection, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

left is gloom and on the right, happiness. The sun is shown rising out of the vapors of oppression and the figure of Ireland appears young and strongly molded with his face turned toward the future. Erin's tablet is open to a new leaf, thereby adding to the theme of hope. Leigh's presentation of the gift was widely publicized and the canvas hangs today in Dublin at the Department of External Affairs in Iveagh House.(28)

As World War II drew to a close, the grotesque potentials of the atomic age caused Americans to closely examine their values and traditions. Many grew nostalgic for the less complex society of frontier days with its focus on individual rather than societal survival. During the post-war years Western art was in growing demand which resulted in increased sales, expanded collections, and the opening of new repositories. Leigh began to enjoy a popularity which he had always desired. The nation's newspapers increasingly referred to him as the last of the great Russell-Remington-Leigh triumvirate, and his number of annual exhibits multiplied dramatically. In 1947 alone he held major exhibitions in Elmira, New York; Green Bay, Wisconsin; Charlotte, North Carolina; Shreveport,

(28) New York Times. August 25, 1944.
Irish Echo. September 2, 1944.

Louisiana; Rochester, New York; Louisville, Kentucky; Atlanta, Georgia; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. That same year, he completed two large murals, The Buffalo Hunt (6½' x 10½') and The Buffalo Drive (6½' x 10½'), each of which sold for \$15,000. Dr. Edward Weyer, editor of Natural History Magazine, called Leigh's The Buffalo Hunt one of the very remarkable animal paintings of all time.

In 1948, at age eighty-two, he produced thirty paintings--seventeen in 1949 and thirty-two in 1950--which may be unsurpassed for an artist of eighty-four years. The New York Grand Central Art Galleries displayed one hundred Leigh paintings in an April, 1948 exhibition. The artist was also the subject of several brief life sketches which appeared in periodicals such as Arizona Highways and Caravan.⁽²⁹⁾ A few months later, Time magazine published a short biographical summary which told of his student days "at Munich mastering--between occasional beers---the realistic painting then in demand."⁽³⁰⁾ His paintings were widely used as cover illustrations for many

(29)Helen Shelley. "Leigh's Early West." Caravan. April 1948.

William R. Leigh. "My America." Arizona Highways. February, 1948, p. 25.

(30)"Painter on Horseback." Time. Vol. LI, No. 18, May 3, 1948, p. 55.

publications including The American Rifleman and Arizona Highways. Among Leigh's works produced during the forties were The Mystic, Zuñi Baking Day, The Pottery Merchant, The Goat Herder and Struggle for Existence. Toward the end of the decade as he was happily enjoying a long awaited fame, his work developed a strand of humor and action. Representative of that aberration were Onery Going, A Whirlwind Hombre, Downright Nasty and A Double Crosser.

It had been a satisfying ten years. In its opening months, he and Ethel had enjoyed a Caribbean cruise and traveled through five South American countries purchasing many items for their extensive jewelry collection.⁽³¹⁾ The decade ended with the artist experiencing a popularity and rate of production beyond anything he had ever known.

THE FIFTIES

During the final five years of his life, Leigh received numerous honors and awards while enjoying the novelty of national prestige. He was recipient of the Scroll Award given by the New York Federation of Women's Clubs which elected him "The Outstanding Painter

⁽³¹⁾ New York Journal and American. April 27, 1941.

who has contributed most to art in 1950-51."⁽³²⁾

Other honors in 1951 included being voted the "Outstanding Painter of Outdoor Scenes and Wild Animal Life" by the New York Natural History Club and his election as an honorary member of the Kappa Pi National Art Fraternity.

In 1953, he was awarded the Benjamin West Clinedinst medal for "Outstanding Achievement in Art" by the Artists Fellowship.⁽³³⁾ Interestingly, it was Ben Clinedinst who helped Leigh obtain his first job with Scribner's in 1896. The nation of Switzerland also honored Leigh that year by presenting to him a Parchment Citation commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the Crucifixion Cyclorama in Einsiedeln. But the most significant of his 1953 honors was being elected an Associate member of the National Academy of Design.⁽³⁴⁾

The following year Leigh received the distinction of being the first recipient of the Alumni Honor Medal from the Maryland Institute of Art which was celebrating its 128th anniversary. The President of the Institute,

⁽³²⁾ New York Herald Tribune. May 5, 1951.

⁽³³⁾ Eighty-Fifth Anniversary Program. Artists Fellowship, Inc. Leigh Scrapbook 5; Leigh Collection, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

⁽³⁴⁾ New York Herald Tribune. April 11, 1953.

Carlysle Maclea, was supposed to present the medal⁽³⁵⁾ but Leigh insisted on receiving the award from the Governor of Maryland. On January 11, 1954, Governor Theodore McKeldin made the presentation. The artist was honored again in December with the National Life Conservation Society's Award as a tribute to "his fidelity to truth and beauty in interpreting nature and recording the arts of primitive man."⁽³⁶⁾

Early in 1955 a special film clip was prepared on Leigh and his work for distribution to classrooms throughout the United States.⁽³⁷⁾ But the most coveted honor of his career finally came when he was elected "National Academician" at the annual meeting of the National Academy of Design, March 2, 1955.⁽³⁸⁾ It was a distinction very few Western artists have ever received and was denied Leigh for decades. He could at last place his name in exhibition catalogues as "William R. Leigh, N.A." His last honor came posthumously when on May 1, 1955, the Hudson Valley Art

(35) "George Slade to Mrs. W. R. Leigh, December 21, 1953." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-39; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(36) New York Times. December 10, 1954.

(37) News Magazine of the Screen. March, 1955.

(38) New York Herald Tribune. March 5, 1955.

Association awarded Leigh the Gold Medal of Honor for his painting The Sanctity of Motherhood.

Throughout the fifties the news media were lavish in their praise. Leigh was variously called "nationally famous," "world famous," "painter laureate of the old west," "Rembrandt of the West," and "The most famous of all Western illustrators, with the possible exception of Frederick Remington."⁽³⁹⁾ One national magazine printed a special article on his life and work which was captioned "Sagebrush Rembrandt."⁽⁴⁰⁾ Newspapers were nearly unanimous in identifying him as a member of the famous Western art trio, but the most effusive reference proclaimed that

Remington, Russell and Leigh were once as familiar to the art world as Bach, Beethoven and Brahms to musicians, or Tinker, Evers and Chance to baseball fans.⁽⁴¹⁾

Listing him with Russell and Remington was a promotional idea first used by the Grand Central Art Galleries in 1944. Despite the fact that Leigh had never met Remington or Russell, often criticized their work, painted the West at a later period, concentrated

⁽³⁹⁾ New York Times. December 10, 1954.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ "Sagebrush Rembrandt." Colliers. November 11, 1950, p. 34.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Parkersburg Sentinel. May 1, 1954.

on a different geographic area, and received professional training far exceeding that of Remington and Russell combined---the idea of a "triumvirate" spread quickly. Only in the sense that all three were Western artists and that their work had simultaneously and suddenly become fashionable could the term be used accurately.

Leigh became a popular dinner guest and lecturer during those final years. His outspoken manner and non-conformist views were a delight to listeners. He still claimed that modern art "disfigured the wall on which it hung," that "any vulgar fool could create a masterpiece in abstraction;" and one periodical reported that Leigh, "bristling his snowy mustache, said artists have sunk to vicious imbecility."⁽⁴²⁾

Old age had not dulled his zest for argument and confrontation. In 1950, he filed a lawsuit against the United Auto Workers and a local job printer for using one of his paintings on a union brochure without his consent. The picture in question was Struggle for Existence, which depicted a herd of mustangs fighting off wolves during a prairie blizzard. A union handbill, labeled "Horse Sense," had reproduced the picture on its cover which implied that the employers were wolves

⁽⁴²⁾"Crazy Over Horses." Time. Vol. LXI, No. 16, April 20, 1953, p. 78

and the union workers were horses. Leigh claimed his copyright had been infringed upon and the painting cheapened by such use. The judge ruled in favor of the defendants because Leigh had not filed two copies of the painting with the copyright office as required by law.⁽⁴³⁾

Although his output of art diminished, the steady pace of exhibitions continued. Early in 1950, he displayed twenty pictures in the New York Women's Bible Society Exhibition entitled, "Paintings of the Old West."⁽⁴⁴⁾ The proceeds of the exhibit were used to assist in the distribution of Bibles. Nearing the end of his life, perhaps Leigh was beginning to mellow his theological views. He exhibited from coast to coast between 1950 and 1955, averaging five to six shows annually. Often they were benefits, such as the 1951 Allied Artists Show in New York which donated the proceeds to a school for the blind. The mood of the fifties was reflected in a review of Leigh's major exhibition in 1953. It was described as having

no freakishness, no decadency, no
neurotic, Freudian impulses wild-
brushed for effete critics; no
stigma of the pro-Communism that
marks such of modern so called

⁽⁴³⁾ Newark Evening News. November 2, 1950.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ New York Times. February 26, 1950.

art--no surrealist, no post-impressionist, no cubist, no follower of weird and degenerate daubings.(45)

The most significant exhibition of his career was held in January, 1955 at New York's Grand Central Art Galleries and entitled "Eight Decades in Review 1870-1955." One hundred paintings were placed on display representing the work of a lifetime. One reviewer wrote

Happily the lure of the west has at least one living and rigorous exponent. To see these scenes as old-fashionedly lurid and bombastic is to be deprived of some very real, if unsophisticated pictorial pleasures. The show is an anachronism but a thoroughly enjoyable one.(46)

The paintings Leigh produced in his last years reflect deep affection for the Southwest and thoughts of approaching death. In the former group were Navajo Family, Chindy Hogan, Primitive Transportation, The Fuel Merchant, Sand Painter, and Papago Mending Pottery; and in the latter were The Evening Star, Finishing the Day, and A Hard Day's End. Ethel explained that

(45) Manchester Union Leader. March 13, 1953.

(46) Robert Rosenblum. "The Wild Wild West." Arts Digest. January 1, 1955, p. 19.

Of recent years he worked in his quiet studio on New York's Fifty-Seventh Street and let his brush roam the windy plains---among the land, the life and the people he helped to preserve for America.(47)

William R. Leigh reached the age of eighty-eight years. He had lived long, and at last achieved a measure of fame for which he struggled so hard. Appropriately, the Leigh family crest as "a hand holding a broken, tilted spear."(48) It had indeed been a quixotic life. On Friday evening, March 11, 1955, after working all day at his easel, he announced to Ethel that "he was going to bed to read until sleep overtook him."(49) During the evening hours, the mortal Leigh bade farewell.

CONCLUSION

William Robinson Leigh was a pugnacious individualist, often arrogant and openly disdainful of social imperatives, uninhibited in thought, and

(47) Ethel Traphagen. "Painter of the Vibrant West." Fashion Digest. Spring-Summer, 1955, p. 24.

(48) "Agnes C. Robinson to William R. Leigh, January 21, 1929." Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-6; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

(49) New York Times. March 13, 1955.

extraordinarily gifted in many forms of expression. Religious agnosticism directed much of his time and thought to nature in an unending search for the external forces which govern man. Likewise, a steadily increasing distrust of civilized society turned Leigh's mind toward the attributes of individualism and the less complex edifice of primitive culture. Continual exposure as a child to southern romanticism, literature, and the beauty of nature contributed heavily to the origins of his artistic talents. Coupled with his personal growth was a full professional grounding in the artistic realism of Nineteenth Century Munich.

His attraction to nature, empathy for the primitive, and extensive training in Realism prepared him superbly for the field of Western art. He had not planned to become a Western painter, but being financially forced to enter the field of illustration altered his destiny. Leigh subsequently made twenty-five trips into the West and Southwest, becoming an eyewitness student of the isolated Navajo, Hopi and Zuñi societies. In the process of snapping endless photographs and drawing hundreds of sketches he developed an authoritative knowledge of the native cultures. The unglamorous activities of their day-to-day existence were the subjects Leigh studied most intently and painted with

meticulous detail. He became thoroughly familiar with the rituals of the Kiva and the holiness of sand-painting. "He could relate the full details of a Navajo woman making a blanket from shearing the sheep, washing the wool in a solution of Yucca roots, carding and dying, spinning on a primitive spindle, twisting the fibers and placing them on a loom," wrote Dean Krakel, a noted student of Western art.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Krakel added,

Many artists have copied subjects made famous by Remington and Russell, but William Leigh was not among them. He especially steered away from traditional buffalo hunts, cavalry and Indian conflicts. Indeed, I have yet to see a cavalryman painted by Leigh. He was far more interested in portraying life in the Southwest--its drama, simplicity and beauty with very little of its violence.⁽⁵¹⁾

Leigh was a superior draftsman, perhaps better than any other American artist. His fidelity to truth and detail led him to clutter his studio with artifacts.

The setting in which William Robinson Leigh paints is more in keeping with Arizona than with Manhattan. From the walls of his studio hang the bleached skulls of bison, mountain sheep and horses; scattered over the

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Dean Krakel. "W. R. Leigh: The Man and His Studio." Montana, The Magazine of Western History. Vol. XVII, No. 3, July 1967, p. 58.

⁽⁵¹⁾ Ibid.

floor are striking Navajo rugs;
displayed elsewhere about the
apartment are tomahawks, war
clubs, quivers filled with arrows
and other relics of a past chap-
ter in the history of the
prairies.(52)

With his Munich training, collection of artifacts and extensive southwestern travel, Leigh was in a position to produce useful documentary art.

It is the southwestern dimension of his work that deserves selective study and use by historians.

Representative of Leigh's many detailed genre studies that have documentary value to the student of history are The Fuel Merchant, Zuñi Baking Day, Sand-Painter, Primitive Transportation, Summer Hogan, The Pottery Merchant, Water Pockets, and The Goat Herder. There are of course dozens more. Ruth Underhill's well-known monograph, The Navajos, would have been enhanced by the use of a few carefully chosen Leigh oils.

Leigh's historical reconstructions, however, are generally useless as documentation. Among his best known reconstruction canvases are Paul Revere's Ride, Pocahontas, and Custer's Last Fight. In each case Leigh romanticized the event and was also careless in his research. There is no question about his virtuosity

(52)"Sagebrush Rembrandt." Colliers Magazine.
November 11, 1950, p. 34.

as a technician and the excellent composition of each canvas. The problem lies in their lack of authenticity. His best historical reconstruction is The Lookout, a scene of ancient southwestern cliff-dwellers.

In the final analysis Leigh was a romantic who is more accurately characterized as an idealist rather than a realist. He was exceedingly gratified to read of himself in a French magazine of modern art, just six months before his death, that "In our country [Leigh] would be compared to Delacroix whose dash and romanticism the American painter often shows." (53)

(53) La Revue Moderne Des Arts et de la Vie.
Mensuelle, Paris. Octobre 1954, p. 12.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Manuscript Materials

A. Correspondence

Cummins, D. Duane, Correspondence with Leigh
Relatives and Associates; Cummins Collection,
File 1, Drawer 3, Oklahoma City University,
Oklahoma City. (8 items)

Krakel, Dean, Correspondence with Ethel Traphagen;
Krakel Collection, File 6, Drawer 2, National
Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City. (11 items)

Leigh, William R., Correspondence with A. N. Blazer
1923-1925; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer
33, Folders W-1, W-4 and W-5; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa. (15 items)

_____, Correspondence with Edith Terry 1923-1933;
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folder M-23;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa. (9 items)

_____, Correspondence with Ethel Traphagen
1926-1927; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33,
Folders A-1 to A-48; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa. (48 items)

_____, Correspondence with family 1883-1894;
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folders
E-2 to E-150; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.
(217 items)

_____, Correspondence with Henry Wellington
Wack 1929-1931; Leigh Collection, File 9
Drawer 33, Folder M-21; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa. (20 items)

_____, Correspondence with Will Richard
1920-1932; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33,
Folder M-22; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.
(18 items)

_____, Miscellaneous Correspondence 1920-1955;
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 33, Folders
M-1 to M-38 and W-2, W-3, W-6, W-7; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa. (42 items)

B. Diaries and Memoirs

Biography of Edward Colston, n.d.; Leigh Collection,
File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Leigh, William R., "Log Book, Around the World
Cruise Jan. 9-May 26, 1939"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-I; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Map of Trans-Atlantic Crossing, July 20
to August 4, 1883"; Leigh Collection, File 9,
Drawer 33, Folder E-1; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "My Life," autobiography, 2 vol., n.d.;
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "My Life," penciled notes, n.d.; Leigh
Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Wyoming Diary, July 12 to August 4, 1910";
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

C. Sketchbooks and Portfolios

Leigh, William R., "Oil Sketches, Boxes 20 through 33";
Leigh Collection, Area E, Art Storage;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Portfolios 1 through 5"; Leigh Collection, Cabinet No. 1, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Scribner Proofs and Etchings, Folders 1 and 2"; Leigh Collection, Cabinet No. 1, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Sketchbooks 1 through 12"; Leigh Collection, Drawer 67, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Wyoming Sketches," McCutcheon Drawing Tablet; Leigh Collection, Drawer 67, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

D. Photography Files

Leigh, William R., "African Photographs - (Studies of Landscapes and Animals)"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34, Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Miscellaneous Photographs - (Studies of Clouds, Children, Animals, Sea, and Women); Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Personal Photographs - (Honeymoon, Studio, Camping trips, and Galleries)"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Photographs of Completed Paintings - Leather Albums 1 through 9"; Leigh Collection, Cabinet No. 1, Art Storage; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Southwestern Photographs - (Studies of Indians, Animals, and Landscapes)"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box IX, Folders 1 through 4; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

E. Unpublished Writings

1. Novels

Leigh, William R., "Littlefoot"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-XIII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, n.d.

_____, "The Hessian"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-I; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, n.d.

_____, "The Sink-Hole"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-III; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, n.d.

2. Plays

Leigh, William R., "Summer Night Fantasy"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-II; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, n.d.

_____, "The Vagabond Poet"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VI; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, n.d.

_____, "The Witch"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-V; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa, n.d.

3. Short Stories

Leigh, William R., "Askkan Four"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-I; File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Hessian"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-I; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Outcast"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-XI; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Pearl Diver"; Leigh Collection,
File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Spell of the Solitudes"; File 9,
Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Tyrant Hand"; Leigh Collection,
File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Woman Who Had No Language";
Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "When the Law Caught Up With the
Virgin"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer
34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

4. Poems

Leigh, William R., "All in the Name of God";
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII:
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Blue Pants"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Dead World"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Let Us Not Despond"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII: Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "O Butterfly"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Oh, Dar Am a Nigger"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "On - No"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Song of the Ticker"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Two Acorns"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Fairy and the Spoons"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Invocation"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Land of Rainbow Chasers";
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Painted Desert"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-X; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Ride of Portugee Phil"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Singer's Curse"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Two Roses"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Vale Where Life Is Easy"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Valley of Enchanted Sleep";
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "When I Was Four"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "You"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger
Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

5. Essays

Leigh, William R., "American Philosophy";
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "An Exhibition of Paintings"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Art: What Is It?"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Bluffing"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Democracy"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Germany and the Jews"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Government Should Govern"; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Idealism"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Impressions of An Artist While
Camping In Colorado"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "Love"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger
Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Our Art Critics"; Leigh Collection,
Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute,
Tulsa.

_____, "The Democratic Cult of Know-Nothingness"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The How and What Men"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Incubus of Fashion"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Inferiority Complex in High Places"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Public"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Puritans"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Real Danger in Our Gold"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Tricks of Art Dealers"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Two Arms of Usury"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The Value of Painting"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "The World War: Why?"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "What Is the Matter With Our Art Critics?"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "What Is the Matter With the United States?"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Will Occidental Civilization Survive?";
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Woman"; Leigh Collection, Hollinger
Box-VII; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, Untitled Essays on the Human Brain;
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, Untitled Essays on Art; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, Untitled Essays on Religion; Leigh
Collection, Hollinger Box-VII; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, Untitled Essays on World War II;
Leigh Collection, Hollinger Box-VII;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

F. Miscellaneous Materials

Barrie, Erwin S., "William Robinson Leigh, N.A.,
1866-1955"; Leigh Collection, 3-page Biography,
File 9, Drawer 34, Storage Envelope 1; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

"Einsiedeln File"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer
34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Leigh, William R., "Family Tree"; Leigh Collection,
File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Idea Files"; Leigh Collection, File 9,
Drawer 34, Storage Envelopes 1 through 29;
Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "My Ten Commandments"; Leigh Collection,
File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Owners of W. R. Leigh Paintings"; Leigh
Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease
Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Scrapbooks"; Leigh Collection, Art Storage, Oversize books 1 through 5; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, "Reproductions of William R. Leigh's Paintings Appearing in Color and Black and White in the Following Publications Since 1910"; Leigh Collection, File 9, Drawer 34; Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

Art Collections

Leigh, William R. Art Collection; Leigh Collection, Racks D-24 through D-40; (530 oils, 4 watercolors, 318 charcoal-pencil drawings, 42 pen-ink drawings, 1 bronze sculpture, 28 etchings); Gilcrease Institute, Tulsa.

_____, Art Collection; Leigh Collection, Exhibition galleries; (6 oil paintings); Woolarock Museum, Bartlesville.

_____, Art Collection; Leigh Collection, Exhibition galleries; (4 oil paintings); Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center, Oklahoma City.

Newspapers

All of the newspapers listed below are in the Leigh scrapbook collection at Gilcrease Institute.

Arizona Republic
Baltimore Sun
Binghamton Sun
Brooklyn Daily Eagle
Brooklyn Daily Times
Charleston Daily Mail
Chicago Daily News
Christian Science Monitor
Cody Times
Columbus Dispatch
Daily Oklahoman
Dallas Morning News

East African Standard
Florida Times Union
Green-Bay Press Gazette
Irish Echo
London Times
Manchester Union Leader
Martinsburg Evening Journal
Miami Herald
Milwaukee Sentinel
Morning Telegraph
Newark Evening News
Newark Star-Ledger
New York American
New York Enquirer
New York Evening Post
New York Evening World
New York Herald
New York Herald Tribune
New York Journal and American
New York Mirror
New York Post
New York Times
New York World
New York World-Telegram and Sun
Norfolk Ledger Dispatch
Parkersburg Sentinel
Philadelphia Record
Richmond News Leader
Rocky Mountain News
San Diego Union
St. Louis Globe-Democrat
Springville Herald
Staunton News-Leader
Tombstone Epitaph
Washington Post
Washington Sunday Star

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APPENDIX



The Lookout (6½' x 10½'). Exhibition Galleries,
Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.



Visions of Yesterday (6½' x 10½'). Exhibition
Galleries, Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville,
Oklahoma.



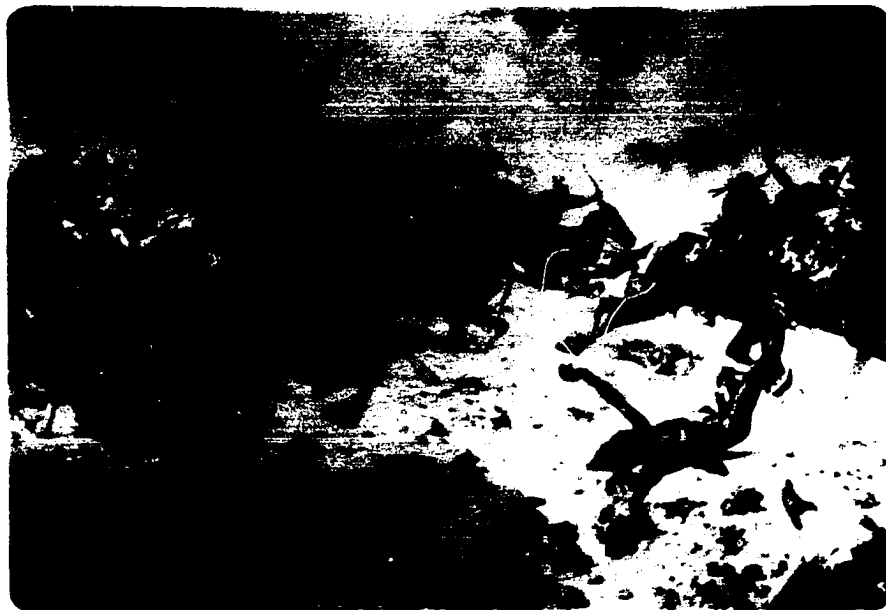
Navajo Fire Dance (6½' x 10½'). Exhibition
Galleries, Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville,
Oklahoma.



The Leaders Downfall (6½' x 10½'). Exhibition
Galleries, National Cowboy Hall of Fame,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



Pocahontas (6½' x 10½'). Exhibition Galleries,
Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.



Custer's Last Fight (6½' x 10½'). Exhibition
Galleries, Woolaroc Museum, Bartlesville,
Oklahoma.