

Dougal F. Anderson (1854-1921)



With the firm conviction that business has a responsibility to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life, the Wm. Underwood Co. has had a longstanding commitment to support the arts.

In 1978 we are pleased to be able to sponsor the first major exhibition of work by Dougal F. Anderson, a man whose talent and fine skill deserve recognition and sharing. Our special thanks to those who have loaned work for this show and to Bill Bagnall, Curator.

We hope that you will enjoy Dougal Anderson's paintings from the still life studies to the coastal scenes of Maine.

George C. Seybolt
President
Wm. Underwood Co.

Cover: Weir and Fishing Boat in the Fog, watercolor

Dougal F. Anderson (1854-1921)

Painter

A Retrospective

In considering the work of Dougal F. Anderson, two questions are basic: first, and most fertile, what does an analysis of surviving paintings, pastels, and drawings reveal in terms of sensibility and the sensitivity dimension that Anderson set for himself as an artist?

Second, and this question follows because Anderson's measure must be taken not only in comparison with prior development of a Native American School but in comparison with current painting, what effect does his work have on current painting — to what degree is his vision laminated to our own?

A quote from Henry James, the Boston Brahmin, expatriate critic and historian, is applicable. Considering the work of Winslow Homer in 1875, James wrote:

He has chosen the least pictorial features of the least pictorial range of scenery and civilization; he has resolutely treated them as if they were pictorial, as if they were every inch as good as Capri or Tangiers; and to reward his audacity, he has incontestably succeeded.

That Jovian judgment by James was a factor in American art for over a century. He could have been writing of Dougal Anderson. Such an attitude was more than simple "snob appeal of . . . educated European origins"; priority had long been set on the inherent and superior value of European culture. For most American painters particularly, this would prove either to be a block or a bridge, preventing growth or pro-

viding an opening for further involvement producing unique qualities of a distinctly Native School. What came to distinguish American painting has been critically evaluated by John I. H. Bauer in 1948 with *Early Studies in Light and Air by American Landscape Painters*. In this examination, emphasis was placed on the freshness of view not only toward subject or object but toward both light and atmosphere. Bauer later used the term *luminism* to specifically describe such involvement in "one of the most indigenous styles in this history of American art." Looking at Dougal Anderson there is a sense of the same involvement and highly personal style.

Anderson's sensitivity to light qualities and atmospheric effects becomes apparent in watercolor. Delicate, softly elegant washes build an isolated scene with startling clarity. To be sure, there is realism required to identify objects and subjects, at times even literal topography of locale, but the sophisticated use of light is thrust through and pervades his pictures. In tonal gradations, "by the most exact study of the relative clarity of near and far objects, and by a precise rendering of the variations in texture and color produced by direct or reflected rays" Anderson assumes not only the *luminist* idea but contributes a specific point of view. He was from Eastport, Maine, and he saw the beaches, sea, harbor, and headlands, meadows and woods through atmosphere filtered by fog, snow, or haze. To summer sunlight there is added pale reflection and refraction. And by moonlight there is romantic drama in scudding clouds and silhouetted ships. He was at home both in terms of place and idea, both in control and conception.

In the oils there is less luminous spontaneity; but aside from natural affinity for watercolor as a "sketch" technique used primarily out-of-doors, Dougal Anderson in handling oil showed the same disposition toward building a picture. Larger questions of craftsmanship and skill were solved in the studio and this is never more evident than in *A Lady's Lunch* and *A Gentleman's Lunch*. Using thinned layers of oil, color volumes are glazed in progressive dimension against a neutral background. In one he subdues total effect in a grayed palette, som-

berly lit, in low key more suitable for the gentleman. In *A Lady's Lunch* there is more vitality; palette changes, and a warm, rich series of reds and yellows are juxtaposed to greens. His color is never more notable and the quality of light used in each becomes a symbol to point up differences. These two paintings were either done simultaneously or in sequence, probably the latter; together they prove ability in terms of fact, what is shown, coupled to feeling, how it is shown. Singly these two pictures shine; together they illuminate.

How Dougal Anderson started painting or when is not known; natural urge and native talent, however, obviously exist. Few facts in his life are supported by documentation but around him has grown a legend where affection and personal regard are enlarged by his surviving work. Born in 1854 in Charlestown, Massachusetts, Dougal F. Anderson came from mixed Irish and Scot-Irish stock. His mother, Mary Horan, was born and raised in Lubec, Maine; his father, Dougal Anderson, Sr., came originally from Rathlin Island off the coast of Northern Ireland. He was a fisherman. Two years after young Dougal was born they moved from Massachusetts to the Passamaquoddy Bay area and bought a small farm on Kendall's Head outside of Eastport. Their eight children helped the father fish and their mother farm. Dougal's sister, Ellen, also showed a talent for art; in later years as Mother Superior of an Ursuline convent in Quebec, she and Dougal are shown in snapshots painting a mural at the convent. The mural, a copy of an Italian Renaissance fresco, still exists.

For most of his early life, Dougal worked hard at both fishing and farming; he and his brothers started a fishing cannery but all that remains are some labels he designed for a lithographer. At age 28, in 1882, he left Eastport to enroll in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts School of Drawing and Painting, the predecessor of the present School of the Museum of Fine Arts. By 1884, he had won a scholarship. And in 1885, he received an additional prize for "excellence," one of seven given that year. In 1897 he left the School and insofar as can be documented, returned to Eastport. Aside from short trips around New

England to Vermont, Connecticut, and back to Massachusetts, the only other extended stay was a mysterious visit to Mexico in 1910. A series of snapshots with notations and numbers in his hand still exists but no paintings or drawings or other explanations have been found. To add further finality to his life, neither a marked grave nor the Anderson homestead exist. Only the work and warm recollections by relatives and friends have come down.

In looking at this retrospective exhibition, several educated speculations can be made on the effect that Dougal Anderson's training had on what was already a mature mind. Part of the effect would be simply the change to the urban milieu of Boston in the mid 1880's. While the School had a small enrollment, one hundred and twenty-six students, there was a camaraderie and free exchange both within the Museum, then located in Copley Square, and the arts community outside. Both the Copley Society and the St. Botolph Club were Back Bay bastions for the serious and dedicated who attended exhibitions and salons. Massachusetts Institute of Technology was a block away and Museum School students received regular instruction in both color and perspective there. The year that Dougal Anderson arrived, the students had started their own magazine, *Art Student*, and the Annual Report for the School in 1883 notes "the sanguine issue of an over large edition obliged the editors to appeal to the School for relief, which was given in the form of subscriptions. It is not expected that either the remedy or mistake will be repeated."

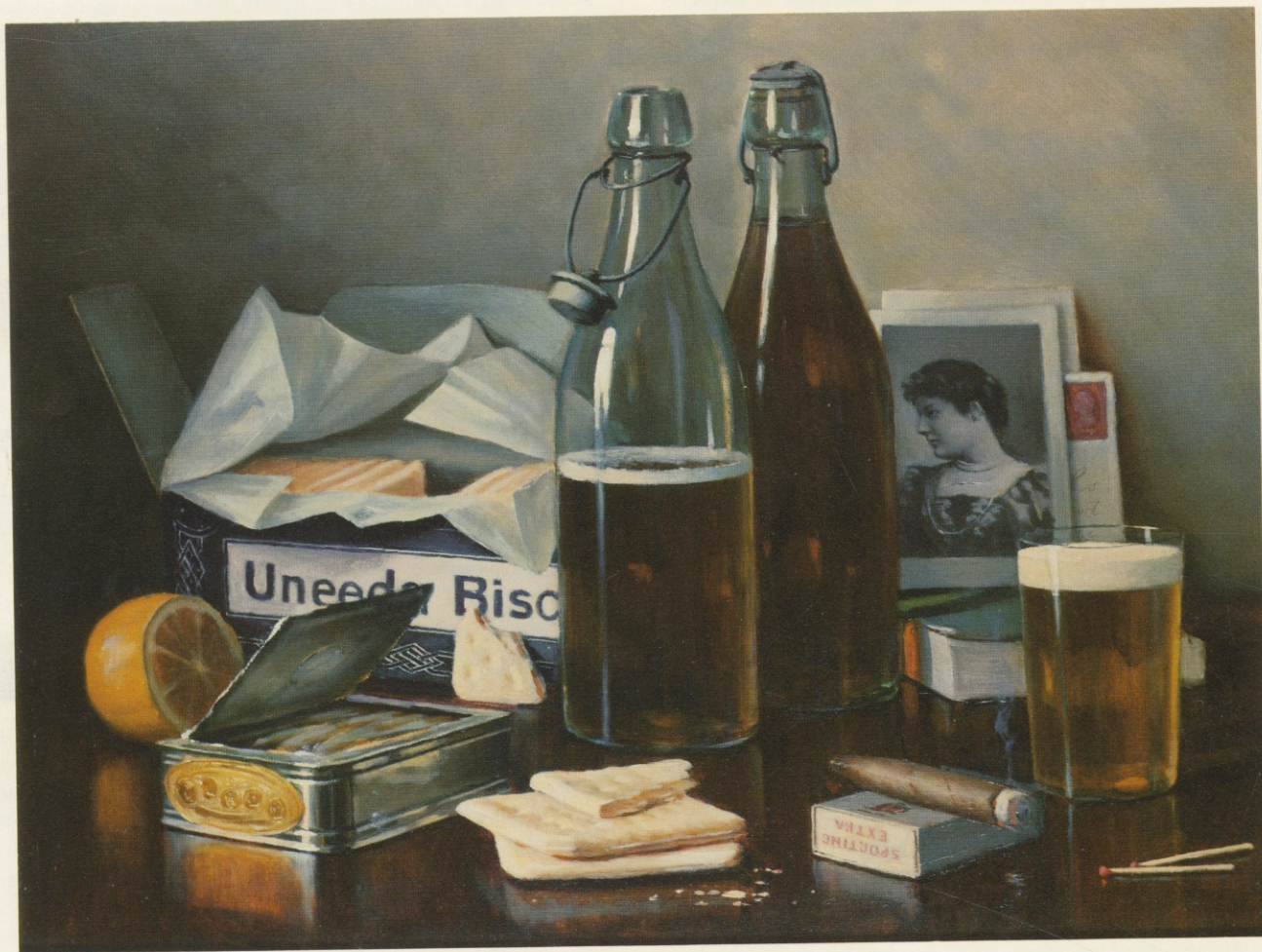
Essentially conservative, the faculty in painting and drawing took pride in solid craftsmanship and emphasis on European, particularly German and French academic traditions. Advanced students were given paid assistant positions but only after proof of talent and ability; it is almost certain Dougal Anderson, having won scholarships and a prize, would have been one of these assistant teachers. The tradition of his teaching at the school is virtually confirmed by the quality of his work. Three examples from this period still exist and two (*Portrait of a Young Girl* and *Portrait of an Arab*) are in this exhibition; and each

exhibits grasp of the demands for drawing either from casts of classical antique sculpture or later, from live models. Observing Victorian propriety, life classes were "alternated between men and women who approved (sic) themselves by working from the antiques in the galleries of the museum before they were admitted to the examination for the life class." Coupled with instruction in Artistic Anatomy and composition, students were also encouraged to work during vacations at home or in the summer school held in the Berkshires. Study of drapery was added in 1885 as preparation for painting but in general students had their desire to paint deferred by demands for drawing in all graphic techniques and media. *Portrait of an Arab* must be the earliest student painting from Dougal Anderson's hand. An almost duplicate painting has been uncovered which is signed by a contemporary at the school. This exercise combined not only full folds of somewhat exotic costume but also was concerned with portraiture. Painted in a heavy oil technique which is uncharacteristic (Anderson preferred a thinner use of this medium), both this painting and the charcoal sketch *Portrait of a Young Girl* are typical examples of portrait heads. Later as in *Portrait of Charles E. Brown* the painting is more noted for light effects than likeness; and the grouping in *Charles E. Brown's Loring Studio* neglects facial features almost altogether in a painting far more important in composition and light effects.

Speculation on another level is difficult because aside from lack of signature, most of his work is not dated. By looking at certain pictures, however, and comparing how subject is handled, even what subject or object is operable in selection, there is enough visual evidence to enable judgment. The pivotal years of 1882-1887 served to strengthen certain innate sense and sensitivity. He knew more about painting as both craft and conception. As in the portrait examples above, Dougal Anderson grew and went his own way — even more strongly by virtue of growth. He chose subject not merely as an object of interest but as a departure point for his art. Choice of color and palette range, composition and the manner in which he structured our seeing, his

sense of a part as piece of a whole, and use of space to describe not only volume but mood, were all subject to greater discipline. And his handling of medium became thin, delicate, and elegant. Two examples can be contrasted in watercolors. *Beached Row Boat in Cove* is surely an early landscape with stiff technique, heavy color and cramped handling which cannot compare to the later, delicate *luminist* space and composition of *Weir and Fishing Boat in Fog*. The former is learning, the latter knows. In the oils there is no marked transition. This leads to the hypothesis that prior to his Boston experience, he did not attempt oil. Aside from technical difficulties, it was and is common attitude to hold oil as the superior, therefore, supreme medium. If that attitude is still prevalent today, it was virulent in the nineteenth century. The real strength of Dougal Anderson is in sharing the formulae and direction of his teachers. He did not lapse into limp illustration or flashy technical virtuosity. He returned to Maine, to Kendall's Head, and Eastport. In still lifes of fish, apples, or a lunch, in evening sunsets in the snow or on the shore, his art shows a serenity and a security. It is not the aim of this exhibition to discover Dougal Anderson; his friends and neighbors did that and have passed on this legacy to their children and grandchildren. His talent is a contribution we now can share.

Bill Bagnall



A Gentleman's Lunch, oil



A Lady's Lunch, oil

Prologue to the Exhibition

During a visit to Eastport, Maine, in August, 1975, I first saw the work of Dougal F. Anderson. On the rise out of Bank Square, further up the hill, is the Peavey Memorial Library. A restrained, Romanesque-revival building built at the turn of the century, it has in addition to books and periodicals, a collection of gifts, bequests, and art memorabilia. As a collection it is notable for the Dougal Anderson paintings, the only ones discovered to be part of the public domain. My thanks, therefore, are due to the anonymous donor to the library as well as to the generosity of the Library Board in lending three for this exhibition.

That particular visit was important in one other respect; Alice Sleight, the librarian, took time out to discuss Dougal Anderson with my wife and me. She explained who he was and what he meant to Eastport. And as I looked and listened she described how "he had gone to the Boston Museum for his training." Enjoyment and excitement took a quantum jump as my memory went back. As Dean of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, I had just received a letter from a Mrs. Ralph Otis making inquiry as to any records or recollections the School had of Dougal Anderson. Mrs. Otis was Alice Brown, daughter of Charles E. Brown, the leading photographer in Eastport and Dougal Anderson's best friend. That letter and this visit made me realize how fate had fortified Dougal Anderson's ability to endure.

Without the help and encouragement, enthusiasm and knowledge of Alice Brown Otis, this exhibition would be greatly diminished. Both Alice and Ralph Otis have been hospitable, generous in both time and effort, and it was through their efforts that we met many of the owners and collectors of Anderson's work. In talking to William McGarvey, Mrs. Rowland B. French, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Ray, Mr. and Mrs.

George Call, Mr. and Mrs. Kinsman Corthell, Mrs. Frances Mitch, Mrs. Sarah Maybee, and Dr. and Mrs. James C. Bates, pleasure and a very special understanding of Dougal Anderson went beyond pride into appreciation. Their generosity and interest is greatly valued. Finally, through Irene Anderson, Dougal's niece, there was personal reminiscence and more than once she went through her memory, closet, and collection of family papers. For these efforts as well as lending to this retrospective, a very special thanks is due.

Pleasure of discovery was soon joined by opportunity. With the encouragement of George C. Seybolt, President of the Wm. Underwood Co., an exhibition was planned as part of the 1978-1979 Underwood Exhibition Program. Such support was given a special, finer point with Mr. Seybolt's own personal knowledge and enthusiasm, having already seen Dougal Anderson's work on trips to Maine. The next logical step was to ensure a major Maine museum would be interested in the exhibition. Again through the interest at Underwood, the director of the Portland Museum, John Holverson, was contacted. He too, was helpful and enthusiastic.

In conclusion appreciation is deserved by Joan Thacher Tiffany for coordination and detail in this exhibition; Vincent G. Moloney for review of this manuscript; Terry Vose of the Vose Galleries, Boston, for professional perception and evaluation; Elise A. Brink for cleaning and restoration; and by Leon Brathwaite for sensitivity not only to the repair of existing frames, but for framing those which are being seen by the public for the first time.

Bill Bagnall

Catalogue

- 1 Portrait of a Young Girl, *charcoal*
- 2 Portrait of an Arab, *oil*
- 3 Tug and Fishing Boat in the Moonlight, Eastport, Maine, *pastel*
- 4 Boat House on Boyden Lake, Perry, Maine, *watercolor*
- 5 Surf on the Beach, *watercolor*
- 6 Sunset on Winter Woods, *watercolor*
- 7 Weir and Fishing Boat in the Fog, *watercolor*
- 8 Beached Row Boat in Cove, *watercolor*
- 9 Blue Sail Boats in the Fog, *watercolor*
- 10 Headland and Friar's Head, Campobello Island, New Brunswick, *watercolor*
- 11 Fishing Boats in the Fog, *watercolor*
- 12 Sunset, *oil*
- 13 Fishing Boat at the Wharf, Eastport, Maine, *oil*
- 14 Night Boat to Boston, *oil*
- 15 Vegetables, *oil*
- 16 Portrait of Charles E. Brown, *oil*
- 17 Man with a Lantern, *oil*
- 18 Steamboat at Night, *oil*
- 19 A Gentleman's Lunch, *oil*
- 20 A Lady's Lunch, *oil*
- 21 Smoked Herring, *oil*
- 22 Two Apples, *oil*
- 23 Lady with a Violin, *oil*
- 24 Lady Reading by a Window, *oil*
- 25 Charles E. Brown's Loring Studio; Eastport, Maine, *oil*
- 26 Mackerel, *oil*
- 27 Brook Trout, *oil*
- 28 Barnum and Bailey Circus; Eastport, Maine, *watercolor*
- 29 Kendall's Point; Eastport, Maine, *watercolor*
- 30 Tug Pushing Fishing Boat, *watercolor*
- 31 Eastport, Maine from the Water, *watercolor*
- 32 Headland; Eastport, Maine, *watercolor*
- 33 The Beach and Three Ships, *watercolor*
- 34 The Town of Eastport, Maine, *watercolor*
- 35 The Town of Eastport, Maine, *watercolor*
- 36 Friar's Head, Campobello Island, New Brunswick, *watercolor*
- 37 Sail Boats, Eastport Harbor, Maine, *watercolor*
- 38 Sail Boat, *pencil drawing*
- 39 River Island, *watercolor*
- 40 Snow Scene, *pastel*
- 41 Headland, *watercolor*

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Lenders to the Exhibition

Miss Irene Anderson

Dr. and Mrs. James C. Bates

Mr. William McGarvey

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Otis

Peavey Memorial Library

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Ray

Mrs. Joan Rice Wyatt

