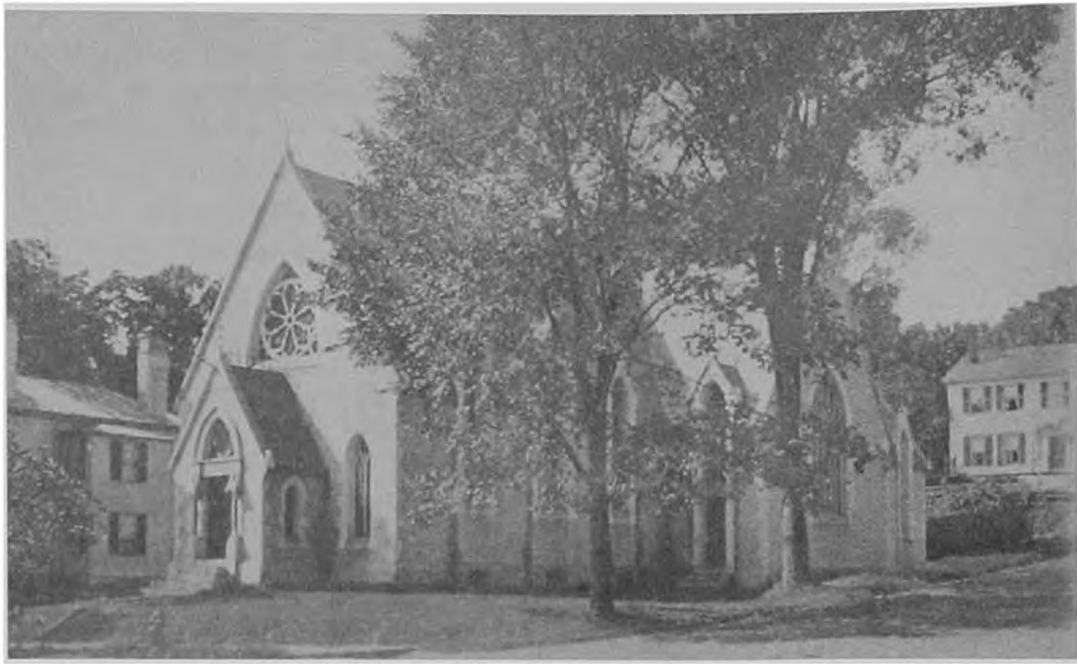




The Hubbard Free Library, Hallowell. Designed by Alexander Currier, Alger Veazie's father, the library displays a progressive influence in its stance against Victorian excess and its relatively simple lines. The elder Currier's architectural achievements suggest a home atmosphere conducive to the young boy's artistic instincts. *Emma Huntington Nason, OLD HALLOWELL ON THE KENNEBEC (1909).*



The Hallowell Academy. *Nason, OLD HALLOWELL ON THE KENNEBEC.*

ALGER VEAZIE CURRIER: APOSTLE OF THE BEAUX-ARTS IN MAINE

BY V. SCOTT DIMOND

Alger Veazie Currier began a promising career as an artist in Paris when two of his paintings were accepted to the prestigious Salon of 1888. After this moment of glory, Currier returned to his home in Hallowell, at a time when art in Maine was at its most provincial. He brought with him with fresh approach to teaching art and a mission to bring both painters and patrons up to date. During a brief tenure at Bowdoin College, Currier signaled a break from the old-fashioned landscape painting that dominated the Maine art scene. Although his European, Beaux-Arts ideas were not always welcomed, he was an important pioneer of art education in Maine, and an important exponent of artistic progress in a region still wedded to the mid-century Hudson River landscape tradition.

IN January 1898 the renowned figure painter Abbott Handerson Thayer returned to Brunswick, Maine, to repaint and restore portions of his mural, *Florence*, installed four years earlier in the rotunda of Bowdoin College's new Walker Art Building. Untrained as a muralist, Thayer had made some notable errors, both stylistic and technical. Compared to the two other murals then in the rotunda—murals by leading artists Kenyon Cox and Elihu Vedder—Thayer's work appeared awkwardly composed and shoddily crafted.¹ The high-strung painter was mortified. Eager to rectify his mistakes, he volunteered to pay for his own travel and labor. Yet he dreaded having to address his work again, and in repeated letters to college curator and professor Henry Johnson, he begged for assistance.² The names of potential helpers were traded back and forth, and while it is not known who ultimately helped Thayer, it is not surprising that Johnson's first choice was the college's recently-appointed drawing instructor, Alger Veazie Currier.³

In 1898 Currier represented the best that Bowdoin and indeed Maine had to offer. No ordinary artist would do, for despite its flaws, Thayer's mural was no incidental wall decoration. Unlike the stiff old-fashioned murals across the green in the college's Romanesque Revival chapel, Thayer's painting and the three others that ultimately accompanied it were part of an important new movement that had drawn the eyes of the

American art world to the remote New England campus. Thayer was right to be horrified by his blunders, for at that moment the Walker Art Building was being scrutinized from across the country as one of the first major expressions of the dawning American Renaissance.

Spearheaded by Beaux-Arts architect Charles Follen McKim and his artist friends, the American Renaissance sought to echo the great religious and civil projects of Renaissance Italy in a modern European vein. Old-World cognoscenti had long dismissed the United States as a fundamentally utilitarian and tasteless nation, and as America began to play a larger role in international affairs toward the end of the nineteenth century, it became increasingly important to overcome accusations of cultural provincialism. Under McKim's direction, painters, sculptors, and architects gathered together in Chicago in 1892 to create a spectacular setting for the World's Columbian Exposition. These artists and designers were acutely aware that the exposition would mark the first major opportunity to show their training and skill before an international audience. The resulting combination of the arts became America's first large-scale bid for recognition as the cultural equal of Europe; the rapidity of execution and sheer enormity of the exposition sent a bold, if not swaggering message of American power and organization. The fairgrounds were visited by millions and spontaneously celebrated as a triumphant validation of American high culture. Yet the exposition was only temporary, and in 1893 it was closed and subsequently dismantled. Bowdoin's Walker Art Building, designed by McKim while he was yet busy with the fair, opened the following year. Conceived in the same spirit as the Columbian Exposition, it was almost immediately hailed by critics as a first fruit of the growing Renaissance movement.

Currier understood the significance of the new Art Building better than most in Maine. He was the rare Maine artist who had trained in Paris and who had seen firsthand just how far advanced Europeans were in matters of art. Currier himself was no mean talent, for his work had been admitted to the Paris Salon, that great annual exhibition which during the second half of the nineteenth century made or broke many of the western world's painters. For American artists, acceptance to the Salon marked the beginning of a successful career in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., or other major cities. Currier, however, chose to return to Maine, where both patronage and taste were limited. The decision ruined his prospects as an artist, dulled his ability as a painter, and consigned him unfairly to oblivion. Yet for the history of art education in Maine, it was possibly the most significant decision he ever made.

At a time when institutional art training was only just beginning to spread from a few established centers in Boston, New York, and a handful of other cities, Currier stayed in Maine and almost singlehandedly led the way toward establishing a strong regional art school. Looking beyond the limitations and idiosyncrasies of private art instruction and hoping to supersede the faltering early efforts of the school of the Portland Society of Art, Currier established himself at Bowdoin College, already acknowledged for its new Art Building, its American Renaissance murals, and its broad collection of paintings and drawings. He envisioned a permanent institution whose curriculum would be based on the rigorous programs of the leading American and European art schools. To this end, Currier sacrificed his career as a painter, and although his plans for Bowdoin ultimately fell through, he persisted in his efforts to bring modern art education to Maine. Recognition for Currier's role in setting the stage for Maine's emergence as a major non-urban art center is long overdue.

Alger Veazie Currier was born in Hallowell, Maine, on February 7, 1862. The first and apparently only child of Alexander C. Currier and Louisa C. Hersey of Waterville, he arrived on the scene almost exactly seven months after his parents were married on July 8, 1861.⁴ Despite the precocious birth of his son, Alexander C. was a solid member of the Hallowell community. His family had lived in Hallowell since at least the birth of his own father in 1808, and during his lifetime, he made significant contributions not only to the material fabric of the village but to the larger world outside. At the age of twenty, he founded a periodical devoted to general literature, and in later years he continued to supply articles to major national publications. In addition to his literary talents, Alexander was an engineer and designer. As Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. and S.A. Webber have related, during the Civil War Currier invented a special turret for use in forts and ironclad warships. Following the war, he went to Philadelphia to take a position in the Merrick iron foundry. He then moved on to become superintendent of the Ames Bronze Works in Chicopee, Massachusetts, before returning to Hallowell in the early 1870s. There he became architect and head draughtsman at the Hallowell Granite Works. With the exception of a stint in Montreal as designer and supervisor of a large cotton mill, he remained associated with the granite works for much of his later career. Under its auspices, he designed or remodeled a number of important civic buildings, including

the Hallowell Social Library, the Universalist Church, and the Hallowell High School.⁵

In his 1966 town history, *Richmond on the Kennebec*, John Daly Fleming asserts that Alexander Currier was also a skilled woodcarver. While working in Richmond as a sculptor of ships' ornaments, he formed a drawing class for interested local boys. Among his pupils was said to be Ben Foster, a tagalong little brother who by the turn of the twentieth century would become one of the country's leading landscape painters. Although apocryphal in nature, the story's identification of Alexander Currier as sometime artist-teacher does suggest at least one possible origin for Alger Currier's own developing love of drawing and painting.⁶

Regardless as to whether Alexander Currier was himself an artist, his particular work as an architect must have brought his son into contact with some of the current issues surrounding art and taste in America. Alexander was clearly aware of changing architectural trends, and as an examination of his buildings in Hallowell shows, he was quick to incorporate modern styles. Demonstrating an awareness of the reform movement in European and American architecture after about 1870, Currier's design for the Hallowell Social Library (now the Hubbard Free Library) takes a stance against Victorian excess in its relatively simple medieval vocabulary. Unlike the wood-based Gothic Revival architecture which had been the norm for ecclesiastical buildings in New England since 1840s, Currier's updated medievalism reflects modern French and English styles in its uncomplicated facade, its use of stone, and its expansive roof.

Ten years later in 1890, Currier's remodeling of the Hallowell High School shows further advances. With its massive proportions, rounded arches, and exaggerated entry portal, the High School building shows the strong influence of Henry Hobson Richardson, a progressive Boston architect who during the 1880s gained widespread recognition for his innovative treatment of the medieval Romanesque vocabulary. Combining American functionalism with an architectural muscularity suited to the nation's emerging role as a global power, Richardson's style was utilized for public buildings well into the twentieth century. In Hallowell, a village still dominated by the Federal vernacular of the 1790s, Currier was notably progressive. Designed for aesthetic and moral impact as much as function, these buildings stand as expressions of artistic as well as architectural beliefs. As such, they serve—however circuitously—as evidence of a home environment in which issues of culture played an influential role.

Alger Veazie Currier was eighteen years old when the Hallowell Social Library was formally dedicated on March 9, 1880. At that time he was in his "middle," or junior year at the Hallowell Classical and Scientific Academy, a modern coeducational institution that had evolved out of the earlier village academy. Formally established in 1873, the academy offered three courses of study: the Classical Course, which prepared students for "the best colleges"; the Seminary Course, designed "especially for young ladies . . . to carry their training and culture considerably beyond that given in our public schools"; and the English and Scientific Course, whose purpose was to "give the most valuable studies" in the least amount of time.⁷ Currier was enrolled in the English and Scientific Course, and by early March 1880 he had already studied English grammar, arithmetic, elocution, algebra, Roman history, book-keeping, and natural philosophy, among other subjects. Classes were small and apparently demanding; attrition seems to have been a fact of life, and when Currier graduated the following year, he was but one of two in his course to complete the four-year program. The other was one Mamie E. Redlon of Abbott, Maine.⁸

At the Hallowell Classical and Scientific Academy a student could take a class in painting and drawing in addition to the regular courses. For those in the Seminary Course, there was the unusual option of lectures in art history, given by visiting faculty. Judging by course roster, these classes were intended mainly for young women and interested amateurs. For example, of nineteen students enrolled in painting and drawing during the academic year 1881-1882, only two were men, and neither of these was among the regular students of the Academy. In his monumental history of Maine, Currier's biographer, Louis C. Hatch, states that Currier "gained the most rudimentary knowledge of his chosen work under the local teachers."⁹ It is difficult to say whether these were academy instructors or others, but given the attendance profile in the art class, it is probable that Currier did not avail himself of academy drawing lessons. On the other hand, he may have had access to the school's valuable collection of large photographs of works of art in the galleries of Europe.¹⁰ Presented by Mrs. Charlotte Eastman and others, these were used in the art history course and were presumably available for study. Although it is unknown as to whether Currier attended any art history lectures or examined the photograph collection, his later decision to go to France and become a painter (instead of an architect) may have had its origin in the academy's focus on European art. Hatch seems to imply that Currier's schooling did affect his choice of career, and in

his biography of the artist he states that it was “while still a student at the local schools of Hallowell [that Currier] determined to make art his life’s work.”¹¹

Currier graduated from the Hallowell Classical and Scientific Academy on June 28, 1881. He remained in Hallowell for some time after, and when the Augusta, Hallowell, and Gardiner Directory for 1882 appeared, he was listed as a student boarding at A. Currier’s on Vaughan Street. It was probably around this time that Currier took his first art lessons with Albert E. Moore, a Portland portraitist who during the early 1880s was based in Gardiner, just to the south of Hallowell.¹² Moore, incidentally, was frequently called upon to restore objects in the Bowdoin College painting collection, and it was probably through him that Currier first met Henry Johnson, who became a lifelong supporter and patron of the artist.

Currier’s father seems to have approved of his son’s decision to become a painter, and according to Hatch, it was the elder Currier who made it possible for Alger Veazie to pursue his studies beyond Gardiner.¹³ Although Moore was a competent teacher, his own training and resources were limited. Other choices were few, for in general, the Maine art scene in the early 1880s was deeply provincial. Were it not for the arrival of Winslow Homer to Prout’s Neck in 1882-1883 and the stalwart efforts of the modestly talented Portland landscape artists Harrison Bird Brown and Charles Frederick Kimball, Maine would never have registered on the critical radar screens of Boston and New York. As it was, Homer frowned on taking students and Brown and Kimball were too closely tied to landscape painting. For would-be figure painters such as Currier, Maine had no formal venues for study. By the time the newly-established Portland Society of Art opened its first classes in 1886, Currier had left Maine far behind.

In 1882 Currier entered the Museum of Fine Arts School of Drawing and Painting in Boston. Founded five years earlier by a group of artists and entrepreneurs, the school was intended as the New England counterpart to the successful programs of the Cooper Institute and the National Academy of Design, both in New York City. Boston painter William Morris Hunt was among the new school’s strongest supporters, and together with John La Farge and others, he played an active role in searching for its first instructor. The insistence of Hunt and La Farge on the superiority of European art gave the school an international flavor, and on the advice of fellow artist Francis D. Millet, they chose a German painter, Otto F. Grundmann, as the primary teacher. In his technique,

Grundmann combined the exactitude of Netherlandish painting with the lyricism of modern French work, and through his early pupils, Frank Benson, Philip Leslie Hale, and Edmund Tarbell, he institutionalized European style and brought New England to the fore of modern painting in the United States.

Currier was also one of Grundmann's early pupils, and under his tutelage and that of others, the young painter initially practiced figure drawing in charcoal. Over the next two-and-a-half years, he made significant progress. Although surviving record books at the Museum School record only Currier's matriculation, sources published on the occasion of his first exhibition in 1885 assert that he won two scholarship prizes for his work and a "special prize" for composition during his time in Boston. The artist graduated to oil painting, and according to Hatch, he was commended by his instructors "not only for his technical skill but for a certain individuality and boldness that seemed to presage much for the future."¹⁴

Following the completion of his studies, Currier, now age twenty-three, held an exhibition of his work at the Portland Society of Art. Consisting of charcoal drawings, oil paintings, and a few watercolors, the exhibition was generally well received. Professor Johnson attended, and despite noting "the occasional unfortunate pose," he found the artist's work to contain much "vivacity and character."¹⁵ Currier was encouraged by these and other observations. Determined to follow the course of America's leading artists, he chose to complete his training with overseas study. Within weeks after the close of his exhibition in September 1885, he sailed for Paris, whose art schools were regarded by many connoisseurs as the finest in the world.

Not long after his arrival, Currier managed to secure admission in the Académie Julian, a large school popular with American art students. Modeled after the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts, but without the rigid entrance examinations and limited working hours, the Académie Julian offered sound training under some of the most respected members of the French art community. Faculty included William Bouguereau, Gustave Boulanger, Benjamin Constant, Jules Lefebvre, and Tony Robert-Fleury. In large studio classes, each professor taught different aspects of drawing and painting, while a system of regular competitions kept students performing at their highest level of ability. Currier studied primarily with Boulanger and Lefebvre, and under their supervi-

sion he practiced drawing from the nude model. The artist remained at this task for about a year, during which time, so Hatch tells us, his work “developed greatly and gained form and character.”¹⁶

Toward the close of 1886, Currier returned to Hallowell for a stay of four months, perhaps to prepare himself for the next phase of his art education: painting in oils under a single master. By early 1887 Currier was back in Paris, where he sought out the well-known academic painter, Émile-Auguste Carolus-Duran. Currier obtained a place in his private atelier and resumed his study of the nude figure. At the same time, he enrolled in another large art school, the Académie Colarossi, where he pursued the less exalted but no less important study of drapery and costume.

Currier seems to have made notable progress under Carolus-Duran, and after about a year, the French artist pronounced the young American ready to work on his own. He advised Currier to take a studio, to develop his personal tendencies further, and finally to compete for entry to the Salon.¹⁷ Currier followed his instructor’s advice diligently and was rewarded with the acceptance of two oil paintings and two watercolors to the Salon of 1888.

Salon judges placed Currier’s oils in the second of four possible classes. With Class One being reserved for recognized professionals, Class Two was an unusual honor for a debut effort. While one might argue that Carolus-Duran influenced the selection process—a not-unheard of practice among instructors—an examination of Currier’s Salon entries reveals that the artist had done his homework in terms of the themes he chose to treat. Of the two oils, each was a subject popular among Salon artists, and together they demonstrated Currier’s range and abilities. The first, numbered 676 in the Salon catalogue, was a painting entitled *Déesse* (c. 1888). Currently unlocated, it was described by both Henry Johnson and Louis Hatch as the difficult subject of a young nude woman depicted against a white background. At the opposite end of the spectrum was Currier’s second entry, *à la Santé* (fig. 1), “To [your] Health,” a depiction of a good-natured old man who raises a glass to the viewer. The painting was numbered 677 in the Salon catalogue and is now in the collection of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art.

Although Currier’s *Déesse* is presently unlocated, the artist’s title and Hatch’s brief ekphrasis enable one to place the image within a clearly-defined category in nineteenth-century French Salon art. From about the middle of the century, French artists focused on the female nude as a



Figure 1: *Santé* (a la Santé). Oil on Canvas.
Bowdoin College Museum of Art Collection,
gift of Mrs. Alger V. Currier.

means by which to convey not only anatomical knowledge and classical refinement, but a visceral sensuality which could give the painting a powerful impact. Walking the line between intellectual prowess and soft porn, paintings such as Alexandre Cabanel's famous *La Naissance de Vénus* (1863, Metropolitan Museum of Art) epitomized the look of much Salon painting during the second half of the nineteenth century. For artists working in this mode, Greek and Roman mythology supplied many of the motifs, and by painting a nude and calling it "Venus," "Nymph," or simply "Goddess," one might cloak the disturbing power of sex in the guise of erudite and remote classicism. No one was fooled, however, and in apparent disgust at such well-meaning hypocrisy, Realist Édouard Manet responded with his revolutionary *Olympia* (1863, Musée D'Orsay, Paris). Ranked among the great monuments of nineteenth-century painting, Manet's canvas depicted a veritable anti-goddess: a flesh-and-blood prostitute who was probably recognized by more than a few Salon goers.

Manet's protest shocked viewers but did nothing to affect the increasing taste for female nudes. Led by contemporary giants like William-Adolphe Bouguereau and Jean-Léon Gérôme, Salon artists vied with one another to create the perfect female figure. The genre became codified by the later nineteenth century, and to attempt the subject was to take up a challenge of sorts. Currier was aware of the stakes involved, and according to a review written by Henry Johnson in October 1888, *Déesse* was deliberately chosen "for its difficulty and as affording the severest test of the artist's ability . . . To make a background white was a hazardous *tour de force*, but it [was] brilliantly successful."¹⁸ Johnson was also quick to note that Currier diligently avoided any offense to good taste. After finding much praiseworthy modeling in the nude girl's left knee, he pronounced the painting pure in sentiment and "with nothing of the debased feeling sometimes observed in native French art."¹⁹

While Currier's *Déesse* addressed the challenges of accurately and tastefully representing the female nude, his second entry in oil, *à la Santé*, strove to establish its creator as a master of narrative sentiment. Currier's image of an old man raising his glass fits neatly within a popular subcategory of Salon painting that took as its subject old men and women enjoying the simple and apparently innocent joys of their bygone youth. In a nation that had seen successive revolutions and the embarrassing military defeat of 1871, not to mention the added loss of prestige as England and the United States surged ahead in industrial growth, depictions of the elderly—the witnesses and survivors of these upheavals—gained appreciative new audiences by the 1880s. Shown

gossiping among each other, sharing simple meals, or alone with a favorite pipe or mug, the aged protagonists of many Salon paintings reassured viewers with their ability to endure hard times with patient good cheer.²⁰ At the same time, their infirmities and occasionally comical bearing invited a sympathetic condescension that ultimately empowered a demoralized younger generation. Currier's image, more direct than most in its overt address to the viewer, showed the artist to be not merely a clever delineator of character types, but a socially engaged painter who was aware of his audience's needs.

Currier seemed on the threshold of success when the death of his grandfather in late February 1888 recalled him to the United States. After settling his affairs in Paris, the artist sailed for home in the early summer. At the time of his departure, Currier's teacher, Carolus-Duran, was reported to have begged Currier to return quickly, saying: "I want you to come back to Paris and paint for the expositions, and I will do all I can for you." To this he added: "The time will come when you will stand in the front rank of painters."²¹ Whether Carolus-Duran's words were genuine or merely apocryphal, they made a distinct impact on Currier's contemporaries and were repeated in accounts of his life written long afterwards.

Indeed, later observers tended to lionize Currier, for they knew it was unusual for a European-trained artist of talent to attempt to establish himself in Maine.²² Before the turn of the century Maine had little to offer by way of training, professional support, and educated patronage. Although the state's picturesque scenery had regularly drawn important landscape painters, none save Winslow Homer had remained for any length of time. Local artists, it was true, could be found in every sizeable town, and in Portland, there was an old and tightly knit group of portrait and landscape painters that had been brought together largely through the efforts of the remarkable playwright-cum-critic John Neal. One of Portland's leading citizens, Neal helped secure patrons for his artist-protégées. Yet even the most ambitious of these artists could do no more than sell paintings to keep viable and participate in the occasional exhibition in Boston or New York. Neal passed from the scene in the years following the Civil War, and as Maine's economy worsened in the late nineteenth century, local patronage began to evaporate. For a rising artist in Maine during these years, the way to fame and security lay beyond the state's borders. To return, as Currier did, was a risky choice, for the most likely outcomes were stagnation at best and artistic extinction at worst.

Currier's prospects seemed bleak, but despite the stalled provincialism of Maine's art community, there were signs of improvement during the 1880s. The most important of these, the founding of the Portland Society of Art in 1882, marked Maine's first step toward cognizance of national and international artistic developments. Although its backers tended towards conservatism in art matters, the Society did much to broaden the public's awareness of contemporary art. Through annual exhibitions of work from "away," the Society educated the public and fostered a renewed enthusiasm for American painting. In addition to these shows, the Society became the first organization in Maine to offer regular art classes conducted like those in the larger cities to the south. At the time of Currier's return in 1888, the school of the Portland Society of Art was still in its infancy, yet it was nevertheless headed by instructors regarded as possessing talent and training on a national level. The first teacher engaged by the society, Frank Benson, was a fellow alumnus of the Museum of Fine Arts School who had also studied in Paris. Within a few years, he would become a leading figure in American Impressionism as one of the important group of pioneers known as the Ten American Painters.

In 1888 Currier returned to an audience anxious to see what he had learned, and following his arrival he set out to exhibit his Salon paintings as widely as possible. After a week on display in Currier's Hallowell studio, the paintings, together with some forty or fifty other works, went to Portland, where they debuted at the Congress Square picture shop of Joseph T. Stubbs. Currier was hailed as prodigal genius, and on the Friday before the opening of the exhibition on October 15, the artist was fêted at a large private dinner held at the Preble House Hotel. His exhibition remained in place for a month, and his principal Salon canvases, *Déesse* and *à la Santé*, received favorable coverage in the local press. These paintings were subsequently sent to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Union League Club of New York, and may have been exhibited at Boston's St. Botolph as well.²³

Currier's mounting fame led to professional opportunities, and by November 1888 he had assumed a position of head instructor of the Drawing School of the Portland Society of Art. His predecessor, a fellow alumnus of the Museum School in Boston, was the noted American impressionist Frank W. Benson. At the school Currier conducted an antique class, where students copied plaster casts after Greek and Roman statuary, and a life class featuring live models. He taught for at least one term and possibly more before his father's declining health forced his re-

turn to Hallowell in early 1891.²⁴ Currier seems to have remained there until at least the spring of 1892, when his father died at the age of sixty-one. At that time, Currier was listed in the Augusta, Gardiner, and Hallowell Directory as an artist resident at the corner of Second Street and Litchfield Road in Hallowell. His home, which was also his studio, was a locally famous colonial mansion that had once belonged to the Dummer family of Hallowell.

The Dummer Mansion became Currier's lifelong base. Although he would travel far afield in subsequent years, his studio and much of his art remained in Hallowell. Like the studios of famous artist-contemporaries in New York and Paris, Currier's house was filled with antiques and curios. Among his possessions were French tapestries, an "enormous caravan rug," an ancient spinning wheel, snowshoes, and a "kimona-clad Parisian model," the last presumably a lay figure used for composition studies. Currier's most prized treasures, however, were two small bronzes of cattle, cast under his father's supervision after originals by the great French animalière, Rosa Bonheur. Apparently bequeathed to the artist on his father's death, these sculptures were probably valued as much for sentimental reasons as for their aesthetic qualities or monetary worth.²⁵

When Currier's father died on April 24, 1892, Currier's stepmother, Ellen C. Currier, left her former home on Vaughan Street and moved in with her stepson. This arrangement was not to last long, however, for Alger himself married on September 24 that year. With the arrival of Currier's new wife, Catherine I. Moulton of Randolph, Maine, Ellen left the mansion for New York City.

Little is recorded of Currier's activities between 1892 and 1896, when he commenced teaching at Bowdoin College. The artist was not inactive, however, for two of his few located works were completed during this period. The first, now in the collection of Bowdoin College, is a portrait of Helen Johnson (fig. 2), signed and dated 1892. Commissioned in the summer of 1890 by Currier's friend and supporter, Professor Henry Johnson of Bowdoin, the painting depicts Johnson's daughter, Helen, aged perhaps four or five years. Solidly constructed, the figure of Helen possesses a monumentality that is curiously at odds with her juvenile fragility. On the other hand, her winsome pose balances Currier's heroic, Salon-inspired modeling. One critic, Alice Frost Lord of the *Lewiston Evening Journal*, found the portrait "singularly fascinating," writing that "the figure is full of grace, [and] the pose is simplicity itself."²⁶ Unwilling, perhaps, to address Currier's application of a mighty mode to a del-



Figure 2: *Portrait of Helen Johnson Chase*, 1892.
Oil on canvas. Bowdoin College Museum of Art Collection.

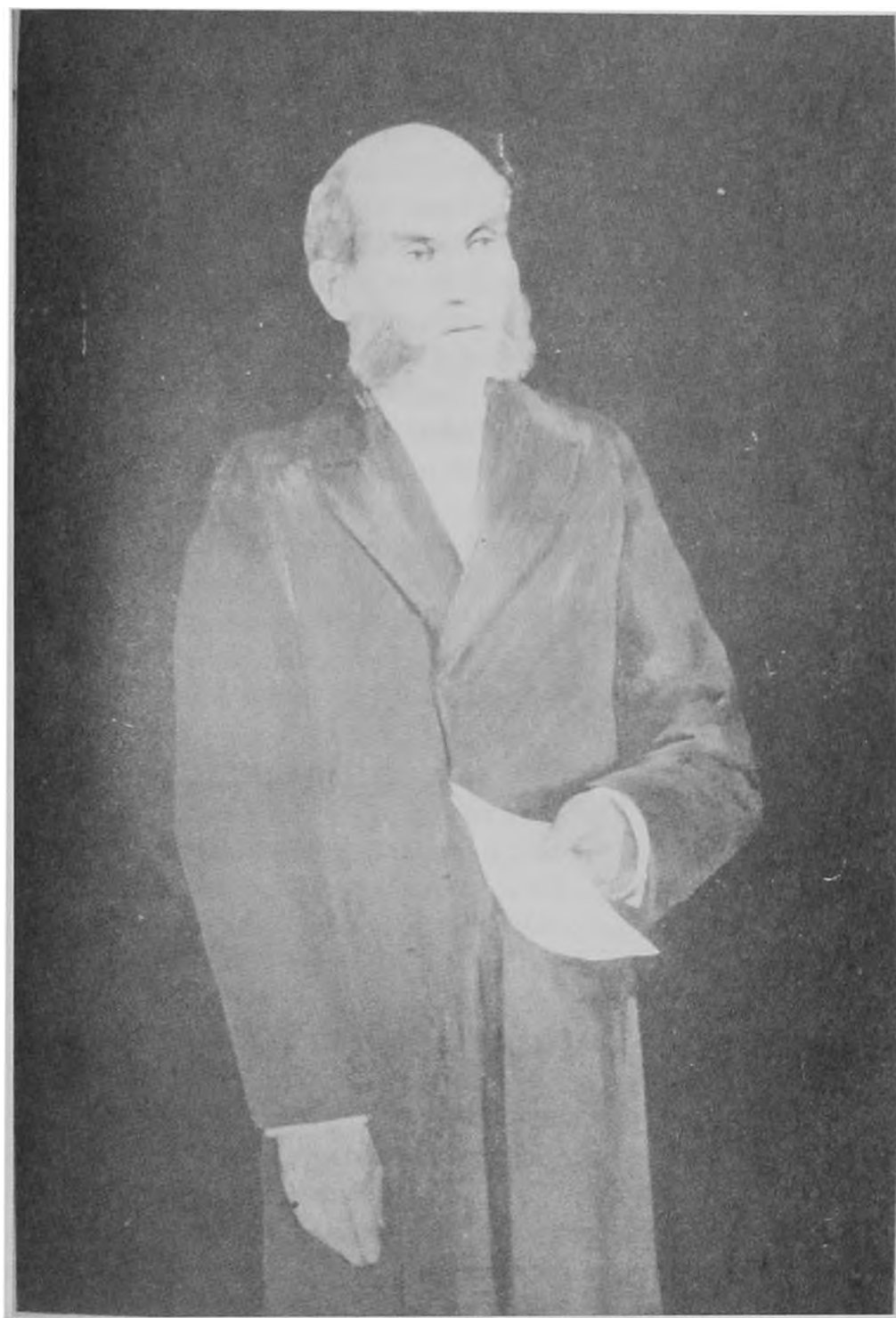


Figure 3: Facsimile, *Merritt Caldwell Fernald*, 1894. Oil on canvas.
Annual report of the Maine State College for the Year 1894 (Augusta, 1895).
Original at University of Maine Museum of Art.

icate subject, Lord saved her highest praise for the figure's expression, stating: "the face dominates the picture with a tranquil beauty that casts a lasting spell upon the beholder."²⁷

Within two years of completing the Johnson portrait, Currier was commissioned to execute a three-quarter length likeness of *Merritt Caldwell Fernald* (fig. 3), second president of the Maine State College (now the University of Maine). The painting, which is held in the collection of the University of Maine Museum of Art at Orono, was presented to the college by the Alumni Association at the commencement ceremonies of 1894. Like the Johnson portrait, it possesses a statue-like quality, but it is much darker in color and tone. Dressed in a black overcoat, Fernald stands against a maroon backdrop. In his left hand he holds a document upon which the words "Maine State" may be read. This detail is probably a reference to Fernald's annual president's reports, which were recorded and published as state documents in Augusta.

With his wooden, planklike clothing and slightly off-kilter facial features, the figure of Fernald betrays the unevenness Currier's critics occasionally saw in his portraits. Yet Fernald's expression seems to reveal the determination and stoicism his contemporaries admired. Left fatherless at the age of five, Fernald became a teacher while still in his teens and in 1861 graduated with honors from Bowdoin College. He became acting president and then president of the Maine State College, and from 1879 to his retirement in 1893, he orchestrated the University of Maine's first great period of prosperity and growth.²⁸ Currier's portrait was received with apparent enthusiasm, and following its presentation at Commencement, it was hung in the college library and reproduced in the institution's annual report for 1894.

In late November, 1895, Currier wrote to Henry Johnson asking to borrow the portrait of Helen so that he might exhibit it in the window of a prominent Portland art supplier. He explained that he and his old teacher, Albert E. Moore, were planning to open a private art school in January of the coming year. The portrait, Currier stated, "would awaken an enthusiasm which would be lacking without such an exhibit."²⁹

Johnson gladly loaned the painting, but to no apparent avail. Moore backed out of the art school project a few weeks later, and Currier was left to gather such pupils as he could find. On January 13, Currier wrote again to Johnson, lamenting: "My school has not as yet commenced as favorably as I wish"; to his he added: "I find art in Portland rather dormant." Johnson replied, expressing hopes for a better outcome, but at the same time he suggested that something might be done for Currier in

Brunswick if matters did not improve. Currier leaped at Johnson's vague proposition and by the following month Currier and Johnson were discussing plans to bring formal art instruction to Bowdoin College.³⁰

Due to the collecting habits of James Bowdoin III in the early nineteenth century, Bowdoin College already possessed Maine's finest collection of Old Master paintings and drawings. Later, the gifts of Harriet Sarah and Mary Sophia Walker (among which was the new Art Building and its American Renaissance murals) added significantly to Bowdoin's holdings of modern European and American work. The acquisition of large plaster casts of ancient sculpture completed the necessary furnishings for a first-rate museum of the period, and in 1896 the Walker Art Building could be considered among the foremost institutions of its kind in New England, if not the United States. Indeed, few colleges in the country could boast such a collection, and even fewer had buildings devoted solely to art.

Yet the Walker Art Building and its collection were underutilized. Johnson was well aware of this fact, and in addition to his work as professor of modern languages, he gave art appreciation lectures in the Art Building's Teaching Room. When Currier approached Johnson with his plight, the latter acted swiftly to secure an appointment for the artist, for here was an opportunity with benefits for all: with Bowdoin's unusual resources and Currier's reputation as a veteran of the Parisian academies, the college suddenly had the ingredients for an art school of national significance. Currier recognized the potential as well as the importance of founding such a school in Maine, and from the moment he took up his duties at Bowdoin, he devoted himself to bringing art education to his fellow Mainers.

Thanks to the *Bowdoin Orient* and other college publications, the artist's Bowdoin years are among the best-documented of his career. During his time, Currier served as instructor of drawing and artist-in-ordinary to the college. He was the first to put the new Walker Art Building to practical use as a place of teaching and the first to make the fine arts a regular part of the college curriculum. Relatively fresh from Europe, he was progressive by Maine standards, and as such, he figured in several controversies while at Bowdoin. In general, however, Currier seems to have been well liked and respected. His activities, carefully and sympathetically recorded in the college newspaper, reveal him to have been an earnest teacher and an enterprising artist.

Currier was news well before he began teaching at Bowdoin, and in the *Orient* for March 4, 1896, the artist's imminent arrival formed the leading story. In a paragraph-long account, the paper's student editor explained how the artist came to Bowdoin and what he was doing in the weeks prior to taking up his duties in Brunswick:

The ORIENT has for some time known that Professor Johnson was desirous of utilizing, to the fullest extent, the opportunities and advantages given by the magnificent Walker Art Building for a course in Art, both in the way of lectures and actual training, and is glad to make mention of the securing of a competent teacher of painting and drawing. Professor Johnson has engaged Alger V. Currier of Hallowell, at present instructor of the Portland Art Club, and an artist favorably known through all New England as a painter of more than ordinary talent. Mr. Currier has studied in Paris under the best masters, and was very successful in getting his pictures into the Salon. The ORIENT feels confident of the success of this new departure, and is sure that it will add to the usefulness of Bowdoin.³¹

Paving the way for Currier's arrival, Johnson had three of the artist's paintings hung in the Walker Art Building for general examination by students and faculty. He also issued an attractively worded circular announcing the formation of a "School of Instruction in Drawing and Painting." Johnson noted that the first term would run until June 1, 1896, and would include "classes . . . in drawing from the cast and in drawing and painting from life and still-life."³² Currier, who would teach all such classes, was to provide instruction on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, while the classroom and sculpture hall would remain open every day for students to pursue their work.

In the beginning, Johnson and Currier intended their nascent school to exist independently of Bowdoin College. The several courses in drawing and painting were open to all comers at ten dollars a month, and reduced train fares were offered to pupils traveling from Portland or other cities on the Maine Central Railroad line. For Bowdoin students, on the other hand, Currier's courses were listed as non-credit freshman electives. In a brief course description in the Bowdoin Catalogue for 1896-1897, Currier's drawing class was described in the following words: "DRAWING: To enable the student to attain some degree of facility in reproducing in sketches objects of study or analysis throughout his [college] course, The College offers to the Freshman Class an elective course in elementary drawing under professional instruction. The instructor assists also in the laboratory courses of the student's later years in so far as these

courses are concerned with drawing from nature or making diagrams.”³³

At first, Currier apparently tried to keep outside art students and Bowdoin students separated. This distinction seems to have broken down, however, and was further complicated by the fact that Currier permitted women students to enroll in his classes. The result was perhaps Bowdoin’s first brush with co-ed education, the novelty of which was not unappreciated by the college’s all-male student body. Although the *Orient* remained mute on the issue, one may infer that the presence of women pupils contributed significantly to the demand for Currier’s teaching. On November 23, 1898, the paper reported that Currier had “a large class and is meeting with great success.” With unintended irony, it added: “The college is waking up to find what the Art Building stands for under the able direction of Mr. Currier and Professor Johnson.”³⁴

If it seems unfair to attribute Currier’s success mainly to the presence of women, it should be noted that his enrollments dropped precipitously after he finally barred them from his courses in late 1899. Until then, however, Currier was something of a force on campus and was behind many of the major art happenings at Bowdoin during the final years of the nineteenth century. He gave several lectures on art, using both his own works and works in the college collection. In spring 1897 he planned and probably implemented an exhibition of student work at the Walker Art Building.³⁵ Currier staged another such exhibition in June 1898.³⁶ Such exhibitions were a regular part of the curriculum at both American and European art schools, where they were used to foster the spirit of competition and a desire to excel. Currier’s adoption of the student exhibition format suggests another effort to model his school after academies in Boston, New York, and Paris.

Aware that a successful art school often depended upon the personal success of its instructors, Currier pursued his own painting as well. The presence of the murals in the Art Building’s rotunda, each by a contemporary painter of national importance, must have been both inspiring and challenging to an artist seeking recognition. When Johnson asked Currier to help Thayer repaint portions of Florence, the Hallowell native was ready to make a major contribution of his own. Currier knew that some of the bays in the college chapel still awaited murals, and with an eye to filling one of them, he began work on his first mural-sized canvas.

Described in the *Orient* as a work in progress, Currier’s thirteen-foot



Figure 4: *Honor to the Living and to the Dead*, c. 1897-1898.
Oil on canvas, unlocated; reprinted in Louis C. Hatch,
Maine: A History, vol. 4 *Biographical* (1919).

high canvas, *Honor to the Living and to the Dead* (fig. 4), was most likely executed in response to the United States' conflict with Spain. The work was still unfinished in June 1898, when it hung for inspection in the Boyd Gallery of the Walker Art Building. Ambitious in scope and as lofty as any work of the American Renaissance, Currier's mural depicts what the *Report of the Committee on the Art Interests of Bowdoin College* described as a "striking symbolical representation of War, in which Victory Crowns the living and the dead."³⁷ Hovering over two soldiers, one a fallen cavalryman, the other a rifle-wielding sailor, the figure of Victory proffers symbolic awards. To the dead man she presents the unfading wreath of laurel, while to the living will go the palms of victory over her left shoulder.

Evidently meant to test his skill in foreshortening, anatomy, and figure arrangement, Currier's design seems to have fallen short of the mark. The work was not installed in the Chapel, and it remained in his studio for years after his death. Yet despite problems of scale and narrative conception, the mural was long remembered as one of the artist's major works. Inspired by the possibilities presented by Bowdoin's Chapel, Currier extended himself beyond portraiture and single-figure genre painting to create one of the first heroic history paintings by a Maine artist. While modern viewers may be tempted to dismiss the work as the unfortunate byproduct of an unfortunate conflict, *Honor to the Living and the Dead* is, nevertheless, an important milestone in the history of painting in Maine.

Although Currier's mural was ultimately rejected by the college, the artist's efforts as a creator of allegorical compositions did not go unnoticed. Sometime in the first half of 1897, Currier was asked to design a new seal for Bowdoin to replace the crudely engraved and faintly ridiculous sun face of the late eighteenth century. Currier submitted his first design to Professor Johnson on July 18, 1897, and by November of the following year, the new seal was ready to debut. The *Orient*, following Currier's description, offered an explanation of its subject and meaning. Opining that it was "without question the handsomest seal of any college or university in this country," the *Orient* stated that "the scheme of it [the seal] is taken from the metope of Helios (the sun god) found at Il-ium. The sun forms a crown for the god, whether he be Apollo or Helios, the source of light and knowledge; the rays representing the effulgence and blood spots the fulness of learning. All is symbolical, the line of drapery representing the progression of the god, which is in character with knowledge. The hair above the head is raised to show the common

representations of Apollo. The lack of beads or outside circumscribing line is that the inside fulness may be better shown by outside simplicity.”³⁸

Like John La Farge’s mural, *Athens*, Currier’s seal design was a carefully constructed amalgam of classical archaeology and high allegory. Yet while the *Orient* admired the symbolism and appearance of the design, it noted that “it is of course a very serious thing to change the old seal of the college.” The paper predicted that the college’s alumni would resist the new seal, and asserted that “the highly favored Mr. Apollo or Helios.....will have a hard row to hoe.....until he gets better acquainted with the friends of his predecessor.” Unfortunately for the artist, the *Orient*’s prediction came to pass. In doing away with the imagery of the earlier seal, Currier had neglected the importance of tradition. Shortly after the college boards voted to accept the new seal, a movement to restore the original seal sprang up among the alumni. At first Currier’s design was deemed inappropriate because it bore the artist’s initials. Currier offered to remove them, but still the alumni protested. In 1899, the boards suspended their vote and put the question directly to the alumni. In two surveys by mail, the supporters of the original seal won out. The sun face, although it was more finely drawn, was retained and Currier’s design discarded. When the decision was announced by college president William de Witt Hyde at the commencement dinner of 1899, the diners responded with spontaneous applause.⁴⁰

Later that year the *Orient* reported that Currier had decided “to admit no female pupils to instruction in drawing during the college year.” After that the artist taught for perhaps two more terms before low enrollments forced him to cancel his courses and leave the college. By barring women from his courses—a move probably motivated by a desire to keep order—Currier rendered the classroom experience uninteresting to Bowdoin students and inaccessible to the majority of would-be outside pupils, that is to say, women. Thus he inadvertently put an end to his own success and the first flowering of the fine arts at Bowdoin. Currier’s four years as an instructor were not wasted, however, and his connection to Bowdoin was remembered as one of the salient moments of his career. In her account of the artist, Alice Frost Lord commented: “How much [Currier] did for the students of Bowdoin College, during his connection with the Walker Art Gallery, none can fully estimate; but the men who have scattered to the borders of six continents in the years since he taught art there bear witness to the potent influence of this unostentatious man. Because of him, their ideals are a little higher and

their appreciation of beauty a little more profound and sincere than if he had never walked among the pines of the Bowdoin campus.”⁴¹

It is difficult to track Currier’s post-Bowdoin career. In February 1900, a full eight months before he left the college, the *Orient* related that Currier was planning an art class in Portland. City directories for 1900 list him at 507 Congress Street, noting that he boarded at 24 Deering Street. Currier did not stay long in Portland, however, for in the 1901 directory, his name was followed by the notation, “moved to Gardiner.” In a letter to Henry Johnson dated from Hallowell, October 11, 1900, the artist explained that he had done no painting that summer because he had been too preoccupied with a scheme for establishing a correspondence school. This new enterprise was apparently to be operated out of his Hallowell studio, for in the same letter Currier told Johnson that he would not go back to Portland owing to the dreariness of its winters.⁴² Currier’s correspondence school apparently never developed beyond the planning stage, and such teaching as he did, according to Hatch, was confined to small private art classes.⁴³

In fall 1903 Currier toyed with the idea of moving to New York City. Announcing his intentions in another letter to Johnson, he stated, “I know that you will approve of the change as life in Hallowell is one of stagnation only.” Currier discussed the need to find suitable quarters before moving his family, and in a final aside he noted: “I am going to take the large decoration with me where I can find the models to finish it.”⁴⁴ The artist did not mention the title or subject of this decoration, but it is likely his mural, *Honor to the Living and to the Dead*.

If Currier went to New York, he did not remain there long. By February 1904 he was back in Hallowell, where he seems to have undergone a personal crisis of sorts. Somewhere between 1904 and early 1907, Currier set aside his art career. He studied law under a local lawyer and in February 1907 took the bar exam. The results proved Currier unsuited to the legal profession and brought him, to use his words, “to the forceful conclusion that my true love is for art.”⁴⁵

Shortly after failing the bar exam, Currier traveled to Spokane, Washington, in hopes yet again of founding an art school. Currier’s letters indicate that the trip was his own idea, but Hatch claims that Currier was invited to Seattle by Julian Itter, a painter, and August Wolf, a member of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce. Wolf was probably the

“very good friend” Currier mentioned in a letter to Johnson as being “connected with the chamber of commerce and other positions there.” At any rate, a representative from Seattle’s art societies met Currier on his arrival. Asked to help organize the fledgling Seattle Art Institute, Currier immersed himself in the city’s art scene. He found the situation promising, but tainted with “greed and sharpness.”⁴⁶ Added to his disquiet over art matters in Seattle was an immediate and powerful homesickness for New England. In less than a month, the artist was back in Hallowell.

Over the next few months, Currier set aside his art in order to work on a family camp house at nearby Cobbesecontee Pond. He resumed painting toward the end of the summer, returning to a large portrait of his wife which he had begun a number of years earlier.⁴⁷ As with his portrait of Helen Johnson, the artist planned to exhibit the work at the state fair in Lewiston. Lewiston had been on Currier’s mind for other reasons as well, and in fall 1907 he traveled there “to see what I could do in that city by way of a School or Class.” His first stop was the studio of Lewiston’s leading landscape painter, Delbert Dana Coombs, who pledged to do anything in his power to help. Unfortunately, nothing has come to light regarding Currier’s forays into Lewiston. One wonders, for instance, if he might have run across the young Marsden Hartley, or Hartley’s early mentor, Alice Farrar, an artist whose Lewiston home served as a salon of sorts for the city’s more culturally inclined.⁴⁸

Whatever his doings in Lewiston, Currier eventually renewed his affiliation with the Portland Society of Art; by winter 1909-1910 he was again conducting art classes there. According to Alice Frost Lord, Currier dreamed of establishing a Maine School of Art, an institution “lofty in ideals, sincere in work, which should become the home of such high achievement as to warrant its mention in the same breath with the long-established schools of art in Boston and New York.”⁴⁹ Together with other Portland artists, he held high hopes for such a school in the Swett Mansion, donated to the Portland Society of Art for use as a permanent gallery and classroom space. He seems to have taken little part in the transformation of the old home into a museum and school, however, for by that time, he was already seriously ill. Stricken with an unspecified ailment, Currier spent the first months of 1911 fighting what was to be a losing battle. On March 16, 1911, he died at Augusta. The funeral was conducted on the grounds of his home, and the artist buried a short distance away at the Hallowell Cemetery. Currier’s wife remarried within a

few years, but for decades afterward she preserved his studio as a shrine to the artist.

Currier's death was attended by a flurry of brief newspaper eulogies. Later, during the teens and twenties, there came one or two reminiscences as well as Louis Hatch's biography. Alice Frost Lord seems to have been the last to remember Currier, and in 1939 she revisited the artist's studio and confirmed that all was as he left it nearly thirty years before.⁵⁰ After that date, Currier dropped into oblivion. During the revival of interest in Maine art during the 1960s and 1970s, he was completely overlooked. Where artists such as Harrison Bird Brown and Delbert Dana Coombs were resuscitated by virtue of the large body of work they left behind, Currier was condemned by his paltry and uneven oeuvre. He received no credit for his important contributions to art education; nor was he recognized for his role as an apostle and pioneer of European academic art in Maine.

Of course it did not help matters that academic art itself was neglected until very recently. With the current resurgence of interest in the work of the *pompier* artists and their American followers, Currier deserves his due. Although a handful of Mainers had preceded him to Europe—Eastman Johnson, Frederic Porter Vinton, Ben Foster—none returned to careers in their home state. It is possible that the Fryeburg genre painter Benjamin Tupper Newman returned to Maine from Europe before Currier, yet he seems to have done little by way of disseminating what he had learned, either through teaching or exhibiting. The Portland painter Charles Lewis Fox ran a moderately successful private school following his own return from France and Holland in the mid-1880s, but he held no great visions for Maine art education and eventually abandoned art in order to pursue socialist politics. Others, such as Walter Griffin and the Brunswick Impressionist William Wallace Gilchrist, Jr., would not come into prominence until the early twentieth century. During the 1880s and 1890s, Currier alone seems to have recognized the value of his training and the importance of sharing it with other artists in Maine.

With Johnson as his chief supporter and mediator, Currier for a brief moment transformed the Walker Art Building from an underutilized college museum to a fully-equipped art school independent of Bowdoin College. Opening Bowdoin's gates to art students, and particularly to women art students, Currier attempted to forge links between art pupils and collegians that would have made Bowdoin a university of sorts,

boasting Maine's first academic art school. Although this experiment was short-lived and quickly forgotten, it demonstrated the value of the Walker Art Building and initiated an interest in art at Bowdoin that, despite lapses, remains strong to this day.

Equally as important as Currier's effort to promote art instruction in Maine was the content of his teaching. In general, Maine in the late nineteenth century was an artistic backwater. Old-fashioned landscape painting was the predominant genre, and with the possible exceptions of Charles Frederick Kimball and later Charles Woodbury, most artists continued to work in the long outmoded style of the Hudson River School painters. Currier was among the first to bring direct knowledge of European painting techniques, and was perhaps the only artist to really devote himself to disseminating them in his home state. It is difficult to gauge the extent of his influence, but at least one Maine artist, Charles Hovey Pepper, benefitted from Currier's instruction and went on to establish his own career as a significant modern painter.⁵¹ At a time when art in Maine was at its most provincial, Currier returned with fresh teaching and apparent zeal to bring both painters and patrons up to date. Although his progressive ideas, such as his Beaux-Arts seal for Bowdoin College, were not always welcomed, his actions were appreciated. Currier was recognized as an important contributor to Maine's art heritage, and at one point, according to Alice Frost Lord, he was awarded a medal by the state for his efforts.⁵²

It has been a hundred years since Currier left Bowdoin College, and in the interim Maine has progressed to the fore of non-urban art centers. Today both native-born and transplanted artists are producing work that can stand with the best that New York or Los Angeles has to offer. To be sure, Mainers still like old-fashioned landscapes, but they are not content to rest with them. They now recognize the value and importance of artistic exploration and—if I may say so—artistic progress. Alger Veazie Currier was an early catalyst in this important shift, and if his work does not always speak best for him, his life and deeds should be remembered and celebrated among the brighter moments of the history of art in Maine.

NOTES

1. The fourth Walker Art Building mural, John La Farge's *Athens*, was not installed until later in the year.

2. Abbott Handerson Thayer to Henry Johnson, January 20, 1898 and early February, 1898. Quoted in Richard West, *The Walker Art Building Murals*, Bowdoin College Museum of Art Occasional Papers, no. 1 (Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College Museum of Art, 1973), pp. 24-25.

3. Henry Johnson to Alger Veazie Currier, January 11, 1898, Bowdoin College Library, Department of Special Collections, George H. Mitchell Collection, Henry Johnson Papers, Correspondence, 1870-1918, n.d. Box 10. All letters between Currier and Johnson cited in this essay are located in the correspondence files of the Johnson Papers, hereafter referred to as HJP, correspondence.

4. For the dates of Alexander C. Currier's marriage and the birth of Alger Veazie Currier, see Mabel Goodwin Hall, ed., *Vital Records of Hallowell Maine to the Year 1892* (n.p.: Maine Historical Society, 1925), vol. 1 *Births*, p. 75; vo. II *Marriages*, p. 101.

5. See Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., "Hubbard Free Library" (pamphlet published by the Hubbard Free Library, Hallowell, Maine 1992); S.A. Webber, Sr., "Hubbard Free Library and Its Artifacts," (typescript essay, Hubbard Free Library, Hallowell, Maine, n.d.).

6. See John Daly Fleming, *Richmond on the Kennebec* (Lewiston, Maine: Twin City Printery, 1966), pp. 137-138.

7. *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the Hallowell Classical and Scientific Academy, Hallowell, Maine* (Hallowell, Maine: Press of the Maine Farmers' Almanac, 1880), p. 18 (hereafter *Catalogue* 1880).

8. *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Hallowell Classical and Scientific Academy, Hallowell, Maine* (Hallowell, Maine: Walter F. Marston, 1881), p. 12 (hereafter *Catalogue* 1881).

9. *Catalogue* 1881, p.13; Louis Clinton Hatch, *Maine: A History* (5 vols., New York: American Historical Society, 1919), vol. 5, *Biographical*, s.v. "Currier, Alger Vezie [sic]," pp. 32-35, p. 33.

10. *Catalogue* 1881, p. 23.

11. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 33.

12. *Catalogue* 1880, p. 21. An unidentified Portland, Maine, newspaper clipping of c. 1885 in the scrapbooks of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, mentions Moore as Currier's teacher. See "Exhibitions of Drawings," School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

13. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 33.

14. Henry Johnson, "Mr. Currier's Art Work," unidentified clipping datelined Portland, August 26 (1885), School of the Museum of Fine Arts; Hatch, *Maine*, p. 33.

15. Henry Johnson, "Mr. Currier's Art Work."

16. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 33.

17. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 33.

18. Henry Johnson, "The Currier Exhibition," *The Press* (Portland, Maine), October 20, 1888, n.p., Special Collections, Bowdoin College Library, Henry Johnson Papers, Clippings, Box (hereafter HJP, Clippings).

19. Johnson, "Currier Exhibition."

20. For examples from the previous year's Salon, see Gustave Ollendorf, *Salon de 1887; Cent Planches en Photogravure par Goupil & Cie.* (Paris: L. Baschet, 1887).

21. "A Maine Artist's Success," *The Press*, July 29, 1888, HJP, Clippings, Box 41; Hatch, *Maine*, p. 33.

22. The writer wishes to thank William D. Barry, Maine Historical Society, for his insights regarding the content of this and the following paragraph.

23. "Mr. Currier's Paintings," *Daily Kennebec Journal*, October 4, 1888, HJP, Clippings, Box 41. See also "Alger V. Currier," *The Press*, October 13, 1888, *ibid.*; Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, November 19, 1888, HJP, Correspondence, Box 6.

24. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, February 22, 1891, HJP, Correspondence, Box 7.

25. (Alice Frost Lord), "A Glimpse of the Alger Veazie Currier Studio at His Late Home in Hallowell," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, August 9, 1913.

26. Frost, "Glimpse."

27. Frost, "Glimpse."

28. On Fernald, see *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White and Company, 1910), supplement I (vol. XIV), s.v. "Fernald, Merritt Caldwell," p. 138.

29. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, November 24, 1895, HJP, Correspondence, Box 9.

30. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, January 13, 1896; Johnson to Currier, January 20, 1896; Johnson to Currier, February 24, 1896, HJP, Correspondence, Box 9.

31. Editorial Notes," *Bowdoin Orient*, March 4, 1896.

32. *Bowdoin Orient*, March 4, 1896.

33. *Catalogue of Bowdoin College and the Medical School of Maine 1896-97* (Brunswick, Maine: n.p., 1896), p. 38.

34. *Bowdoin Orient*, November 23, 1898.

35. *Bowdoin Orient*, April 28, 1897, p. 8.

36. *Report of the Committee on the Art Interest of the College, June 21, 1898* (Brunswick, Maine: Bowdoin College, 1898), p. 5.

37. *Bowdoin Orient*, March 2, 1898; *Report of the Committee on the Art Interest of the College, June 21, 1898*, p. 5.

38. *Bowdoin Orient*, January 18, 1899.

39. *Bowdoin Orient*, January 18, 1899, p. 176-77.
40. Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, Maine: Loring, Short and Harmon, 1927), pp. 223-24.
41. *Bowdoin Orient*, November 5, 1899, October 18, 1900; Frost, "Glimpse."
42. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, October 11, 1900. HJP, Correspondence, Box 10.
43. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 34.
44. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, October 14, 1903, HJP, Correspondence, Box 11.
45. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, February 27, 1907, HJP, Correspondence, Box 13.
46. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 34; Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, February 27, 1907; Currier to Johnson, April 16, 1907, HJP, Correspondence, Box 13.
47. This painting is probably identical with the portrait of *Catherine M.. Currier* dated 1907 and now in the Hubbard Free Library, Hallowell, Maine.
48. Alger Veazie Currier to Henry Johnson, October 28, 1907, HJP, Correspondence, Box 13. On Delbert Dana Coombs, see Genetta McLean, "D.D. Coombs", typescript lecture, 1995, curatorial files, Bates College Museum of Art, Lewiston, Maine; on Marsden Hartley and Alice Farrar, see Townsend Ludington, *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992).
49. Frost, "Glimpse."
50. See Alice Frost Lord, "Looking Back to Alger Veazie Currier of Hallowell," clipping, December 30, 1939, Special Collections, Bowdoin College Library, Faculty Files (Alger Veazie Currier)
51. Frost, "Glimpse."
52. Frost, "Glimpse."