

## Schoonover, Frank (1877-1972)

Frank Earle Schoonover was born on August 19, 1877, in Oxford, New Jersey. In 1891, he graduated with high honors from a Trenton, New Jersey, high school, where he gave the salutatory address. After considering the idea of entering the ministry, he decided, in 1896, to attend art school at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia. There he came under the beneficial influence of Howard Pyle, whose work he had copied from magazines throughout his boyhood. During the summers of 1898 and 1899, Schoonover received one of ten annual scholarships to Pyle's summer school at Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. At Drexel, Schoonover and Stanley M. Arthurs became class monitors for Pyle's class. In 1899, Schoonover moved to Wilmington; in the following year, he set up his studio at 1305 Franklin Street and later, in 1906, established a permanent studio at 1616 Rodney Street, where he remained for the rest of his career. In 1903, Schoonover, who since boyhood had loved the great outdoors, traveled by snowshoes and dog sled in the Hudson Bay and James Bay areas of Quebec and Ontario in Canada. He sketched and studied his environment unceasingly in order to master the realistic depiction of the North American frontier. In 1907, during a trip to Europe in the company of Richard Sellers of Wilmington, Schoonover was particularly impressed with the great monuments and works of Italian art. He married Martha Culbertson of Philadelphia in 1911.

Besides doing magazine illustration, Schoonover wrote articles and stories and illustrated more than two hundred classics and children's books. He and Gayle Hoskins organized the Wilmington Sketch Club in 1925, and in 1931 lectured at the School of Illustration for the John Herron Art Institute of Indianapolis. In 1942 he began his own school in Wilmington, where he taught art classes until 1968, when he was ninety-one years of age. Schoonover, a devout Episcopalian, devoted much energy to Immanuel Church, Wilmington, where he designed sixteen stained glass windows and served as warden for forty-one years until 1959. After a series of paralyzing strokes, which ended his artistic career in 1968, Schoonover died at the age of ninety-five in 1972.

Schoonover's subject matter included cowboys, Indians, and Canadian trappers. His forms were simple and well defined and his moods powerful. Later in his career, his style became less rigid and more impressionistic. Schoonover was also an accomplished watercolorist and muralist and an avid photographer. He used photographs as references for his illustrations to remind himself of the mood and character of the models.

References: Apgar, John., Jr. Frank E. Schoonover: Painter, Illustrator. Privately printed, 1969; The Ege of the Wilderness: A Portrait of the Canadian North, Frank E. Schoonover. Cortlandt Schoonover, ed. Secaucus, New Jersey: Derbiboooks, Inc., 1974; Elzea, Diversity; Pitz, Brandywine Tradition; Pitz, Howard Pyle; Schoonover, Cortlandt. Frank Schoonover, Illustrator Of the North American Frontier. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1976; Wyeth letters; Sunday Star (Wilmington), April 10, 1910; Delaware Art Museum, Frank Schoonover Collection.