

Adams, John Wolcott (1874-1925)

John Wolcott Adams was born on November 7, 1874, in Worcester, Massachusetts, son of John Francis and Ellen Wilson Adams and descendant of an established New England family which had produced two United States presidents. He first studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and, in 1898, he went to New York, where he attended the Art Students League classes. Soon his work began to appear in well-known magazines of the day, and he would become a frequent contributor to such periodicals as Everybody's, Success, Youth's Companion, Saturday Evening Post, Delineator, Collier's, and others. Then Adams came to Wilmington to study with Howard Pyle as an established professional illustrator. He attended the 1904 Monday night lectures where Pyle sometimes commented on his drawings of New England scenes, as recorded in the Rush-Leach notebooks. For part of 1904 Adams shared a studio with Henry Peck, while Clifford Ashley was away. After his sojourn in Wilmington, Adams settled in New York permanently. In 1903 he married Francis Pendleton Sheldon, who divorced him in 1920; they had one daughter, Frances.

John Wolcott Adams was born on November 7, 1874, in Worcester, Massachusetts, son of John Francis and Ellen Wilson Adams and descendant of an established New England family which had produced two United States presidents. He first studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and, in 1898, he went to New York, where he attended the Art Students League classes. Soon his work began to appear in well-known magazines of the day, and he would become a frequent contributor to such periodicals as Everybody's, Success, Youth's Companion, Saturday Evening Post, Delineator, Collier's, and others. Then Adams came to Wilmington to study with Howard Pyle as an established professional illustrator. He attended the 1904 Monday night lectures where Pyle sometimes commented on his drawings of New England scenes, as recorded in the Rush-Leach notebooks. For part of 1904 Adams shared a studio with Henry Peck, while Clifford Ashley was away. After his sojourn in Wilmington, Adams settled in New York permanently. In 1903 he married Francis Pendleton Sheldon, who divorced him in 1920; they had one daughter, Frances.

Under Pyle's instruction Adams undoubtedly advanced to what was to become his characteristic pen-and-ink manner - a lively, detailed, finely-wrought depiction of people and events in vignette or small scenario settings. Here also Adam's interest in portraying American historical incidents would have found informed encouragement. He liked to illustrate old songs and poetry as well as stories and novels, such as *A Hoosier Romance* by James Whitcomb Riley, 1910 and *Steamboat Days* by Fred Erving Dayton, 1925.

Adams was interested in the theatre and designed at least one stage setting that was executed for a 1923 Walter Hampden production. He was a member of the Players, the Dutch Treat Club, and the Society of Illustrators. He died in New York on June 24, 1925, of acute appendicitis.

References: *A Century of American Illustration*, Brooklyn Museum, 1972; Fielding; Gorman; Pitz, *200 Years*; Reed, *Illustrators*; *New York Times* obit, June 25, 1925; DAM files; Lykes correspondence.