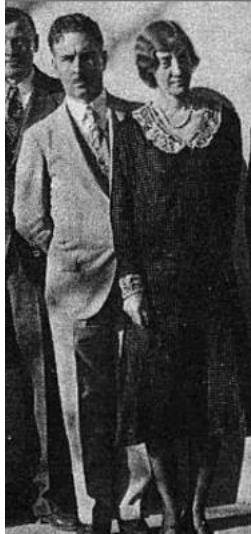


Norma Bassett Hall

1888-1957



BIOGRAPHY

Norma Bassett Hall was born May 21, 1888 in Halsey, Oregon. She lived her life in Oregon, Chicago, Kansas, Virginia and New Mexico. After a brief illness, she died May 1, 1957 in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In the 1920's, Norma lived at 920 ½ W. Central in El Dorado, Kansas. After traveling in Europe, the Hall's returned to El Dorado before moving to Bluemount, Virginia in the late 1930's. Returning to Kansas with the beginning of World War II, they lived in Howard, then in El Dorado at 1018 S. Denver, before moving to New Mexico in 1944.

During her life, she was a founding member of the Prairie Print Makers. She also held memberships with the Printmakers Society of CA, the Northwest Printmakers, the American Color Block Association, the Printmakers Society of Chicago, and the Chicago Art Association.

CONNECTION TO BUTLER COUNTY

While studying art at the Chicago Art Institute in 1916, Norma met fellow student Arthur William Hall. World War I interrupted their romance, when Arthur served with the infantry in France. After graduation, Norma worked in the drafting office on defense projects until the end of the war, when she returned to Oregon to teach art.

Norma came to El Dorado, Kansas when she and Arthur married. Norma taught local art classes and produced her own artwork.

During the depression, Norma was commissioned by Mrs. Wilber Stone to paint a folding screen. House paint was used, being the cheapest paint available. This screen is now a part of the Coutts Memorial Art Gallery collection.

LEAVING THE AREA

Norma came to El Dorado when she married Arthur Hall in 1922. Aside from working at his art, he was a court reporter for the four-county 13th Judicial District following World War I.

The Halls moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1942, where they were able to devote full time to their individual artistic pursuits. Norma's reputation was firmly established, especially for her block prints and serigraphs of the Southwest. They lived and worked in a 200-year old adobe house. In 1950, they bought Rancho del Rio, an estate near Alcalde between Santa Fe and Taos on the Rio Grande. This became their studio and art school.

ACHIEVEMENTS

After vacationing in Cannon Beach, Oregon, the Halls decided to make a souvenir book of their trip, using block print illustrations. Making 2 copies by hand, involving more than 30 blocks per copy, this was when Norma first saw the real possibilities of woodblock printmaking.

During a 2-year trip to England, Scotland and France, the Hall's studied in Scotland with well-known blockprint artist Mable Royds and her husband, noted etcher E. S. Lumsden. Mable taught Norma the Japanese ukiyo-e method of woodblock printing, in which dry pigments are mixed with water and a rice flour paste. With this, she produced translucent prints on rice papers. When they returned to El Dorado, she continued to master this intricate technique, rather than her previous use of opaque oil-based paints, producing prints with a distinctive charm and delicacy.

Woodcuts are made using the relief process. The negative areas of a design are carved out of the block so that the design alone stands out. This positive area is covered with ink to transfer the design to paper. Color woodcuts require a different block for every color used; Norma used up to 7 separate blocks, all hand-cut from cherry wood.

On Dec. 28, 1930, Arthur and Norma Hall became founding members of a group of artists called the Prairie Print Makers, interested in furthering interests of both artists and art lovers. From 1930 to 1965, this group succeeded in bringing fine art to the general public; there were probably more of their works hanging in the homes of Butler County than any other form of art. Included in the group were such notables as Birger Sandzen and C. A. Seward.

Norma Hall was the only founding woman and the only member to establish a reputation exclusively for her color prints, both woodcuts and her later serigraphs (a silk-screening process). She also designed the group's logo.

AWARDS, RECOGNITION

Norma Bassett Hall's 6-color woodcut print, "La Gaude France", was selected as the Prairie Print Makers' 1943 yearly gift print sent out to members.

She participated in many annual group art shows and touring exhibitions. Her work was also presented in one-person exhibitions at the United States National Museum, the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, France. Her work was featured in issues of American Artist, American Magazine of Art, and Print Connoisseur.

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