

## The Latimer School

### Lorenzo P. Latimer and the Latimer Art Club

Organized on the 90th anniversary of the Nevada Museum of Art, this exhibition brings together landscape paintings by Lorenzo P. Latimer, alongside the artists he mentored in Northern Nevada beginning in the 1920s. Nine of his students—Mattie S. Conner, Marguerite Erwin, Dora Groesbeck, Hildegard Herz, Nettie McDonald, Minerva Pierce, Echo Mapes Robinson, Nevada Wilson, and Dolores Samuels Young—established the Latimer Art Club in 1921. This group was the founding volunteer organization of the Nevada Art Gallery, which is known today as the Nevada Museum of Art.

Latimer and his students shared a passion for painting *en plein air*, or outdoors. While showing aspects of Hudson River School and Barbizon styles of painting, their approach owes a debt to the tradition of topographical watercolors that became popular in England during the nineteenth century, in which artists poetically embellished real scenes from nature. Their shared style, approach—and commitment to portraying the beauty of nature—constitutes a unique school of thought that can be defined as the Latimer School.

For over twenty years Latimer taught watercolor classes outdoors in the Truckee Meadows and Washoe Valley, and at Lake Tahoe and Pyramid Lake. He became a cherished member of the Northern Nevada arts community, and the paintings on view in this exhibition are foundational to Nevada's art history.

*The exhibition is co-curated by Nevada art specialist Jack Bacon and Ann M. Wolfe, Andrea and John C. Deane Family Senior Curator and Deputy Director. Special thanks to California art historian Alfred C. Harrison.*

[mini text panel]

### **About Lorenzo P. Latimer**

The son of a prominent attorney and judge, Lorenzo P. Latimer was born in 1857 and grew up in the rural town of Gold Hill in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California, and later the town of Windsor in Sonoma County. He finished his early education in Oakland, California, and at the age of nineteen, he moved to San Francisco to enroll at the California School of Design in 1877. While a student, he began painting outdoors in picturesque locales such as the Santa Cruz mountains, the oak-studded hills of Oakland and Alameda, the rural San Joaquin Delta, and Sonoma County.

During the 1890s, the market for Latimer's work steadily grew, and he was invited to join the faculty at the School of Design. During his short-lived tenure, he helped move the school into the former Mark Hopkins mansion on Nob Hill. During this same decade, Latimer kept a busy exhibition schedule and was invited to join the Palette Club, the Bohemian Club, and the exclusive San Francisco Guild of the Arts and Crafts. In 1893, he married Jennie Phelps and their son Lorenzo Phelps Latimer was born three years later.

Latimer made his first visits to the High Sierra in 1904 when he visited Donner Pass. After the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed his Market Street Studio, he continued to paint further afield, first visiting Yosemite in 1912 and then Fallen Leaf Lake near Lake Tahoe in 1914. After the 1920s, Latimer fell into an annual late summer and autumn routine of teaching classes at Fallen Leaf Lake, Reno, and Ukiah. Latimer passed away in 1941.

[Latimer image]

## Display Case 1

Palette, sketches, letters, portraits, workshop photos

[mini text panel on green wall, 20 painting cluster]

### In the Redwoods

In the 1890s, Lorenzo Latimer became known as the leading California painter of redwood forests. As early as 1878, he encountered the trees during his painting excursions to the Santa Cruz mountains. When he was elected to membership in the Bohemian Club in 1894, he joined the group's summer excursions to a stand of old-growth redwood trees on the Russian River known as the Bohemian Grove. That year he also won a prize at the San Francisco Midwinter Fair for his oil painting titled *Redwoods*, and soon after illustrated a small booklet of poetry, *In the Redwoods*.

In 1898 he penned an article for the *Overland Monthly* titled "The Redwood and the Artist," in which he described the challenge of painting redwoods—of capturing "the delicacy of color tone, the feathery foliage, and the graceful lines of the bark, with its variegated coloring, the rich carpet of green... the rank growth of ferns, broken here and there with some fallen tree...." He felt redwood forests were a cathedral of nature, and wrote:

In the midst of such grandeur, such sublimity of nature, how insignificant one feels himself to be. With awe and utter helplessness the rash artist begins the drawing even of the first line and as he goes on he becomes dissatisfied and discouraged—then he stops and stares, completely at a loss to know how to proceed. Nowhere does one find such depth of feeling as in a forest of giant redwood trees. I think the Creator never intended that anyone should represent on canvas these noble trees, as they really are, or He certainly would have made them simpler.

[artwork label]

## Yosemite

In 1912, Latimer visited Yosemite, which had been a popular artist mecca in the 1860s and 70s. Although artworks depicting Yosemite scenes fell out of favor by the 1890s, the subject underwent a minor renaissance when the talented watercolor painter and Latimer classmate, Chris Jorgensen, revitalized the subject, painting small-scale watercolors of its many scenic attractions at the turn of the twentieth century.

Perhaps because Yosemite was so closely associated with Jorgensen, Latimer put off visiting this iconic location until 1912. Once there, however, he was successful in producing poetic images out of its familiar landmarks.

[artwork label]

## Ukiah Label

Latimer visited Ukiah in Mendocino County, California, each autumn to sketch the valley scenery. In September of 1916, the Ukiah Times published an article about Latimer's recent month-long visit, praising his works for their "lyric quality" and "great sense of color." The critic noted that "he paints the prosaic, but seen through the eyes of an artist, not the lens of a camera."

[artwork label]

## Last Glow Label

Following Lorenzo Latimer's death in 1941, the Nevada Art Gallery's cofounder Dr. James Church worked tirelessly to add a painting by Latimer to its permanent collection. After lengthy correspondence with the artist's son Lorenzo Phelps Latimer, Church acquired *The Last Glow*.

"I am always glad to hear from members of the Latimer Art Club," Latimer's son wrote, "because they did more than any other group of people to honor my father and bring him so much happiness in his later years...."

[mini text panel]

### **Latimer at Fallen Leaf**

In the decade following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, Bay Area residents increasingly sought solace and healing in the wilderness. The advent of the automobile made the Sierra and nearby Lake Tahoe more accessible. Fallen Leaf Lake, located about a mile southwest of Lake Tahoe, was a popular destination. Fallen Leaf Lodge was a rustic mountain resort catering to Bay Area visitors, and its owners William and Bertha Price invited Latimer as their guest in 1914. He eventually began teaching watercolor classes there and made some of his most exquisite watercolor paintings in the vicinity of Fallen Leaf Lake.

In 1916 two young painters from Reno, Nevada, signed up to take one of Latimer's workshops at Fallen Leaf Lake. Dora Groesbeck and Nevada Wilson were both public school art teachers in Northern Nevada. They took Latimer's workshop, enjoyed his teaching style, and invited him to visit Reno. Latimer obliged and soon began making regular visits. In 1917, by arrangement of Walter Nagle, the secretary of the Reno Commercial Club, Latimer debuted his work in an exhibition at the National Bank Building. After this, Latimer's annual pilgrimage to Reno became an eagerly anticipated affair.

### **Display Case 2**

Photographs show Latimer and his students shaded by parasols and painting near the shore of Fallen Leaf Lake, while other images show him trekking on horseback in search of future painting sites and scenes. By the 1920s, Latimer was fully embedded in the growing resort culture of the region when Price invited him to design the Lodge's printed stationery. The new letterhead featured a sketch of Mount Tallac alongside the lake's reflective surface with thunderclouds gathering in the distance, while other printed pieces included a simple drawing of a fallen alder leaf. Latimer also illustrated the small souvenir booklet *Legends of Tahoe* that included local stories and lore collected by lodge owner Bertha Price. News of Latimer's comings and goings were often described in newspaper society columns in the 1920s. "Friends of Mr. Latimer," one said, "will be pleased to know that he is

conducting large classes at the interesting resort where he will remain for three months, and where his work meets with a too-ready sale....”

[min text panel]

### **The Latimer Club**

In 1921, a small group of Northern Nevada women based in Reno founded the Latimer Art Club. Among the Club’s earliest active members were women from Nevada pioneer families and public-school teachers. The Latimer Art Club held business meetings, luncheons, and events, and also adopted a rugged outdoor workshop component that set them apart from other local social organizations. Recognized as the first arts organization in Nevada, the Latimer Art Club gained further legitimacy through their formal affiliation with the Women’s Federated. The Latimer Art Club met for regular workshops and critiques, organized exhibitions throughout Reno, hosted education programs on art appreciation, and facilitated community-wide gatherings focused on the visual arts. The founding women of the Latimer Art Club are profiled in this section of the exhibition.

[small artist vinyl sticker labels with portraits]

### **Mattie S. Conner**

1870–1956

Mattie Stewart Conner was born in 1870 in Carson City, Nevada. As a child, her family resided in Carson City where her father, I.H. Conner, was county clerk and her mother was Susan Ann Holman Conner. Mattie attended schools in Carson City, and eventually moved to Reno and lived on north Center Street. Mattie never married, and she cared for her mother and younger brother for many years.

In 1921, Mattie was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club. She remained very active in the Club in the 1930s and 40s. She was also member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. In 1938, Mattie took an extended 10-day trip to Brockway, on the north shore of Lake Tahoe, to paint with Minerva Pierce. She operated an apartment house on University Avenue and lived and kept an art studio on North Virginia Street in Reno.

[image]

### **Marguerite Erwin**

1897–1997

Marguerite Wagner was born to William and Catherine Wagner in Niagara Falls, New York in 1897. She and her sister Alma were both talented musicians. After her family moved to Floriston, California, where her father worked for the Floriston Pulp and Paper Company, they eventually moved to Reno, Nevada. She performed solo violin concerts and was often described in local newspapers as a “child wonder” or “little prodigy.” At the age of 15, Marguerite played first violin with the Reno Symphony Orchestra.

In 1921, Marguerite was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club. She married John Donovan, a Reno attorney with the firm Thatcher and Woodburn in 1926. She taught piano and violin to children and students at the University of Nevada, and helped to organize the first music club in Reno. She was a member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. She frequently provided musical entertainment at the Nevada Art Gallery. In 1957, she married

cellist Thomas Westbury in Reno. In 1969, she was honored for her longtime service to the Nevada Art Gallery and was granted a lifetime membership. She remained active in the Latimer Art Club and became historian for the club in 1974. In 1957 she married Arthur Erwin. Over the years, she signed her paintings either Marguerite Donovan, Marguerite Westbury, or Marguerite Erwin.

[image]

## **Dora Groesbeck**

1884–1966

Dora Novacovich was born in 1884 in Virginia City, Nevada. She was a longtime teacher in Nevada's public schools beginning in 1905. Her longest tenure was in Sparks, where she was supervisor of the art department for thirteen years.

Groesbeck took classes at the College of Arts and Crafts in Berkeley, California and became known for her work in leather, copper, and woven textiles. She was a member of the William Keith Art Association in Berkeley.

In 1916, Groesbeck heard about Lorenzo Latimer's watercolor course at Fallen Leaf Lake and attended with her friend Nevada Wilson. The pair is credited with inviting Lorenzo Latimer to visit Reno to teach classes in Northern Nevada. Groesbeck was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club in 1921 and was elected its first vice president. She was a member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. Groesbeck married P.E. "Ted" Groesbeck in 1908, who co-owned the Groesbeck & O'Brien funeral home in Reno, operated a Reno furniture store, and ran the Overland Hotel in Reno for a short time. Following Groesbeck's retirement from teaching, she offered private art lessons in her Reno home. She moved to San Leandro, California in 1945, but visited Reno regularly.

[image]



## **Hildegard Herz**

1894–1979

Hildegard “Hilda” Herz was born in Reno, Nevada in 1894 to Carl Otto and “Christina” Bruder Herz. Her father Carl emigrated from Germany to Virginia City, Nevada in 1884 to work with his brother Richard Herz as a jeweler. In 1885, they established the jewelry business that became R. Herz & Bro. in downtown Reno.

In 1910, Hilda traveled with her family to Germany, visiting relatives in Dresden and touring a number of other countries. She spent considerable time in museums viewing the work of European artists. When the family returned to Reno, she pursued her interest in art. She attended Reno schools and graduated from the University of Nevada in 1919, where she studied painting with Katherine Lewers. She continued to travel extensively throughout her lifetime.

Herz was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club in 1921 and held many offices over the years. She was a member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. From 1957 to 1970 she was the historian of the Nevada Art Gallery and her meticulous scrapbooks serve as an important archival resource for what is today the Nevada Museum of Art. She could be seen painting outdoors throughout the Truckee Meadows well into her eighties.

[image]

## **Jeanette M. McDonald**

1880–1965

Jeanette M. “Nettie” Buckles was born in 1880 in northeastern Montana. She was of Assiniboine ancestry, an Indigenous culture of the Northern Great Plains. She attended Carlisle Indian Boarding School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania from 1891 to 1899 and started teaching on the Silitz Indian Reservation the following year. In 1903, she married James A. McDonald, who was an engineer working for the Nevada Indian Agency. They were wed at the Riverside Hotel in Reno, Nevada

In 1910, the family lived in Verdi, Nevada, where James McDonald was the foreman at the Sierra Pacific Power Company plant. According to a story in the 1919 Nevada State Journal, Nettie had begun painting regularly with a group of eight women. She was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club in Reno, Nevada in 1921, and was also a member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. In 1932, she gave a talk to the Reno Branch of the American Association of University Pen Women about her Native American cultural ancestry. She moved to the San Francisco Bay area in the 1940s.

[image]

## **Minerva Pierce**

1883–1972

Minerva Dorinda Lockwood was born in Trinidad, Colorado to George and Martha Lockwood. In 1902, she married Charles William Pierce in Salt Lake City, Utah and they settled in Reno in 1906. Charles was employed by the Wood-Curtis Company in the grocery and produce industry and the couple spent 1912-14 in Southern California. In 1915, they took an extended trip to Southern California to visit the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. Minerva earned a teacher's certificate at the University of Nevada in 1917, where she took painting classes from Katherine Lewers.

Pierce was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club in 1921 and was elected its first president. From 1927-36 she was a resident of San Francisco, and while there, she studied with California painters George Demont Otis and George Post, and was assistant director of the Ethel Wickes School of Art. In 1927, the Latimer Art Club granted her a leave of absence from active membership and in 1928 she was made an honorary member. Upon returning to Reno, she served as house chairman of the Nevada Art Gallery. In 1969, she was honored for her longtime service to the Nevada Art Gallery and was granted a lifetime membership.

[image]

## **Echo Mapes Robinson**

1899–1955

Echo Mapes was born in 1885 in Reno, Nevada, to George W. Mapes and Josephine Whitcraft Mapes. Her father was a prominent stockman, rancher, banker and landowner. Echo's brother was Charles Mapes, Sr., and it was her nephew, Charles W. Mapes, Jr., who owned and operated the Mapes Hotel in Reno.

Echo Mapes studied at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art in San Francisco from 1902 to 1906. The school was destroyed by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. She resided in Berkeley for three years and graduated from the California Guild of Arts and Crafts.

In 1908 she married George W. Robinson, who had moved to Nevada from the East Coast and worked as an agent for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company. He also helped Echo manage the many properties she owned in Nevada. Mapes Robinson was very active in Reno's social clubs and service organizations, often serving in leadership roles. She was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club in 1921, she was also a member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. Echo and her husband George Robinson moved to San Francisco and made their residence at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel beginning in the late 1940s.

[image]

## **Nevada Wilson**

1877–1961

Nevada "Neva" Wilson was born in 1877 in northeastern Nevada. Her father owned the Elko-Tuscarora Stage Line. Neva was raised in Tuscarora and in 1895 attended the California State Normal School, a teacher training college, in San Jose, California. In 1900, she returned to Nevada and worked for her father as a Wells Fargo agent. In 1903, she married Arthur Primeaux in an elaborate wedding in Elko, Nevada, but they divorced a couple of years later. In 1908, Neva opened an

art studio in the Thoma-Bigelow Building in Reno and a year later married H. C. Reilly in Santa Cruz, California. She taught art in the Reno public school system.

In January of 1915, the local Reno newspaper reported that Neva had a nervous breakdown and left for California. She spent the winter of 1915 in San Francisco and exhibited her paintings at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. In 1916, she heard about Lorenzo Latimer's watercolor course at Fallen Leaf Lake and attended with her friend Dora Groesbeck, also a school art teacher. The pair is credited with inviting Latimer to visit Reno to teach classes in Northern Nevada. In 1916, she moved to Los Angeles and married for a third time to Samuel Evans in 1925.

[image]

### **Dolores Samuels Young**

1899–1977

Mary Dolores Samuels was born in Winnemucca, Nevada to Dr. William Samuels and Mary Stout in 1899. Her father was a physician and her family moved to Reno in 1910 when her father became the doctor for Southern Pacific Railroad. In 1921, Dolores married Francis Menardi Young, who was the manager of Ossen Motor Company in Reno. The family lived on Roberts Street and then Huffaker Lane in Reno, and had a summer home at Elk Point, Lake Tahoe.

In 1921, Dolores was a founding member of the Latimer Art Club. She was also a member of the Latimer Art Club when the Nevada Art Gallery was incorporated in 1931. She was a founding member of the Nevada Artist Association in 1950 and was an early active member of the Nevada Art Gallery, serving as its art chairman and helping to acquire exhibits for the gallery for many years.

### DISPLAY CASE LABEL 3

In 1931, the Latimer Club joined together with the visionary humanist scholar and scientist Dr. James Church to establish the Nevada Art Gallery, now the Nevada Museum of Art. The founding group planned art exhibitions and interdisciplinary public programs for the museum for many years.

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For over a decade, Hildegard Herz was the historian of the Nevada Art Gallery. Her meticulous scrapbooks serve as an important archival resource for what is today the Nevada Museum of Art

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Active membership in the Latimer Art Club required fieldwork and proof of prior classwork with Latimer. Meeting this requirement included completion of a course (consisting of twelve lessons) under his direct tutelage. Active members paid \$1.00 in annual dues and were permitted to paint directly from Latimer's original artworks as part of their coursework during indoor studio sessions. For this express purpose, the Club began purchasing "class pictures" from Latimer for \$10.00 apiece—in essence developing a small art collection of its own.

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During the winter months, the Latimer Art Club met monthly and remained deeply committed to establishing a slate of core functions. A second level of "associate" membership was developed with annual dues set at \$1.50. Associates were civic leaders, community art enthusiasts, or artists working their way up to active membership.

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The Club designed their own lapel pin—the design of which was the subject of prolonged discussion beginning in 1924. The final pin featured an artist's palette ringed with sagebrush and etched with the initials L.A.C. It was produced in 1927 by R. Herz & Bro., a longtime Reno jewelry firm.

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This scrapbook was saved by Zella Conan Piersall, a member of the Latimer Art Club beginning in the 1920s. Her personal clippings are some of the best examples showing photos of early club members painting in the field.

#### VINYL QUOTES

You can never feel any other inspiration like that of home...you will paint with a deeper feeling than in any other spot.

Lorenzo P. Latimer

Paint what you see; paint it as you see it...and remember always, whoever you are, that you always have more to learn.

Lorenzo P. Latimer

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