

Gray's Watercolors
15 Weisewitz Rd., Ringoes, New Jersey 08551

Gray's Watercolors

**An Exhibit of Pochoir
and Original Watercolors
of
Philadelphia and the
Greater Delaware Valley**



**September 20th
through
November 23, 1991**

Port of History Museum
at Penns Landing
Philadelphia, PA

About Gray's Watercolors



Gray's Watercolors is a 35-year collection of watercolor paintings of America's local scenes and history, numbering altogether more than 4,000 subjects. These scenes are not, for the most part, nationally recognized monuments and landmarks, but are instead the "Our Towns" libraries and railroad stations, high schools, mills, rivers, and bridges of hundreds of communities, familiar only to those whose lives have been touched by them.

Gray's Watercolors began in rural Ringoes, New Jersey, the brain child of a History of Fine Arts graduate turned printer/lithographer, and was created to provide affordable handpainted reproductions of familiar college and university scenes to alumni. Building on this concept of affordable reproductions of familiar scenes,



Gray's expanded in the early 70's to include financial institutions, which commissioned hand-painted prints of their local landmarks for customers. Then during the heyday of the Bicentennial era, historical series of Revolutionary events were added which, in some cases,



numbered as many as 25,000 hand-rendered reproductions per scene.

More than a dozen artists produced the original paintings for these reproductions, working



primarily under the brush name of Gray, which was first used in 1968 by Ernest Walden (Davis Gray), the most prolific of the Gray's artists. As the demand for the paintings grew, a Walden colleague, Allan Hunter, joined the group under the brush name of Allan Gray — and the tradition was born. Also producing scenes under the Gray's name were two members of The American



Watercolor Society, Dave Bareford (Wilson Gray), and James McBride (James Gray), as well as others including Hart Gray, Paul Gray, Jacob Gray, Foster Gray, Tavis Gray, Flannery Gray, and others.



All reproduced scenes have been archived by Gray's, as well as some 2,400 original paintings. Of almost equal interest with the collection — significant for both its size and the quality of the paintings—is the evolution of the reproductions: from actual handpainting, to pochoir, to a greatly refined combination of pochoir and handpainting that make the later reproductions barely distinguishable from the original artwork in fineness of detail and subtlety of color.

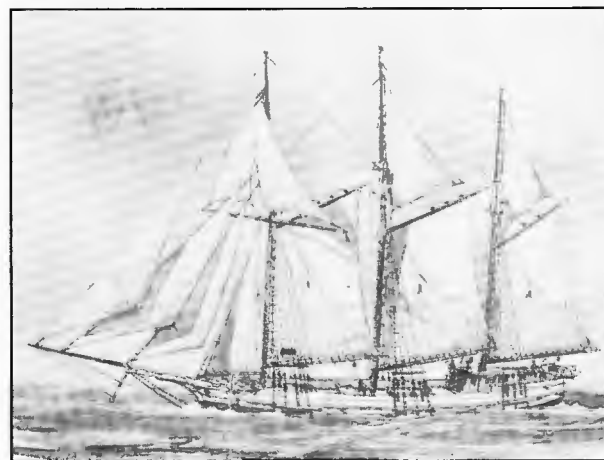
Although Gray's has not followed the traditional route of museums and galleries to recognition, the collection represents an important view of America. In the tradition of Currier and Ives, the

paintings have become treasured collectibles: with the passage of time, their bright yet subtle charm remains undiminished. The extraordinary appeal



of the paintings continues to be the “I-know-where-that-is!” delight in discovering familiar scenes of the past.

As one moves through the collection, there is a growing sense of intrinsic value and appeal that



is timeless and well beyond the local boundaries represented. It is an immensely satisfying view of America, as it was and as it is — a view of America seen not only with the eyes but with the heart.

About Pochoir

The process for reproducing *Gray's Watercolors* known as pochoir (literally—the use of stencils) has been in use for centuries. In its most rudimentary form, it can be traced back as early as the caveman, and historically, its applications have been widespread—from the 18th century fabric decoration in Japan to fine art books in France. Also in France, where the technique is again in vogue today, pochoir was embraced by such artists as Utrillo and Braque in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Traditionally, pochoir is employed by an artist who draws the penline of the subject, then uses a series of stencils as guides in adding color. In the art reproduction process used by Gray's, the original piece of artwork is drawn and painted by hand, then reproduced as a black and white lithograph on which watercolor is overlaid. The earliest Gray's pochoirs—using stencils exclusively—are markedly different from the later ones in which the pochoir process has evolved into a far more sophisticated system of color overlay using a series of stencils and hand detailing, a process which produces an extraordinary range and subtlety of color and gives a sense of "original" to each reproduction. Gray's use of pochoir is unique in the United States.



About The Philadelphia Collection

The Philadelphia/Greater Delaware Valley collection spans centuries and miles, moods and purpose. The more than eighty scenes which comprise this group range from Colonial Elfreth's Alley to today's Gravers Lane Station in Ardmore—connected by a Revolution.

Many of the scenes were commissioned in the fervor of the Bicentennial: a people honoring its history and heroes. The schematics of the Battle of Princeton were commissioned to save a Revolutionary battlefield from commercial development. Other series were commissioned as a quieter celebration of their communities' life and times.

George Washington figures largely. Independence Hall is six times represented. The good ship Polly sails into the harbor. Gay Street School stands as a quiet monument to a nation's way of life and enduring values.



Scenes in sequence: Independence Hall, Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge, Wm. Penn Charter School, Washington at Valley Forge, Crossing the Delaware, Betsy Ross House, Carpenter's Hall, Old Christ Church, Three Masted Schooner, New Britain Covered Bridge, Spruce Street.

A catalog of the more than 4,000 scenes of towns and colleges throughout the United States is available for \$15 from
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