

# John Sloan And His Contemporaries: The Gloucester Years

BY JAMES J. PUZINAS  
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BLUE HERON FINE ART

Considerable scholarship has already revealed the strong ties that John Sloan and his contemporaries had with Gloucester.<sup>1</sup> After viewing the pivotal Armory Show of 1913 and feeling financially secure enough to take a few months off in the summer to paint, at the suggestion of Charles Allan Winter, John Sloan ventured up to Gloucester to paint in the summer of 1914. Sloan and his wife Dolly rented the same "red cottage" each year for the next four summers and shared it with their artist friends Charles and Alice Beach Winter, Randall Davey and the painter Agnes Richmond. All had ties from Cincinnati, St. Louis and New York City where they were respectively art students, teachers and professional artists.

For the short period of 1914–18, the confluence of a shared color theory, familiar subject matter and the camaraderie of living and painting together, led to a wonderful output of brightly colored portraits and landscapes. Many of these paintings were so closely related in color and composition, they were indistinguishable from artist to artist.

Charles Allan Winter had painted in Gloucester prior to 1914, experimenting with various color theories that he and fellow Cincinnati Edward Potthast had developed while in Europe in the late 1890s.<sup>2</sup> Winter was much influenced by the Fauvist movement and was particularly taken with the works produced by Van Gogh. Through much study, Winter had come to believe that music and painting were related in a similar harmonious way. Upon return to the United States, Winter gave lectures about his color theories, influencing The Eight, including John Sloan and others.<sup>3</sup>

In 1909, Robert Henri introduced Sloan and Winter to the Maratta color theory promoted by the artist and paint manufacturer Hardesty Maratta. This complicated system employed the use of primary and secondary colors which were numbered and considered analogous to musical notes.<sup>4</sup> Henri was so intrigued with this system that he recommended that his students use only these pigments when painting.

These were colors that were used by John Sloan,<sup>5</sup> Charles and Alice Beach Winter as well as many of the other artists during the period they spent time at "the red cottage" in Gloucester, allowing them to develop similar color wheels which were used in the execution of their paintings.<sup>6</sup>

Like Charles Allan Winter, Sloan experimented with more vigorous brush strokes and stronger Fauvist colors than he employed prior to 1914. Similarities between the two artists can be seen in such works as Sloan's "Path Through Rocks and Bushes, Gloucester"<sup>7</sup> painted in 1914 and "Red Cottage With Lilacs,"<sup>8</sup> 1917, and Charles Winter's "Gloucester." In addition to color similarities, both artists' interest in Van Gogh can be seen in their use of strong vertical brushstrokes in the trees and also in Winter's treatment of the sky in which he curls the clouds with circular sweeps of his brush.

Likewise, Alice Beach Winter's "Rocky Neck, Gloucester," 1914, and Charles Winter's painting "Gloucester" not only employ a similar palette, but appear to almost be painted in close proximity to each other. The treatment of Alice Beach Winter's brushwork is more delicately handled, choosing to emphasize a more personal view of nestled homes overlooking the harbor than the broad backdrop of the recognizable Gloucester harbor front painted by her husband. Although painted from higher ground, it is likely both were executed in the general vicinity of Sloan's "Sunflowers, Rocky Neck,"<sup>9</sup> 1914, suggesting and confirming the belief that often times these artists would paint together, sharing not only color palettes but locations as well.

Agnes Richmond, another summer visitor to Sloan's "red cottage," was an established portrait painter and one of the first women teachers at the Art Students League in New York City. Working with a similar palette as Sloan and both Winters, Richmond produced vibrant and colorful Cape Ann landscapes and attractive portraits set against local backdrops. "Portrait of a Young Girl, Rockport, MA" portrays a confident young woman with bold color and wonderful expressive impasto. Although this scene is set against the very familiar and recognizable fishermen's shack, Motif #1 in Rockport Harbor, it is an air of confidence that fills the canvas, reflecting the strength of execution and conviction of the artist herself. Although the sitter is not identified, she may have been one of several female students that Richmond was known to invite for working summer art instruction while in Gloucester<sup>10</sup> or alternatively, one of many local children or visitors to the "red cottage," a number of which were used as subjects by John Sloan.

This special period of collaborative effort among these artists changed when in 1919, John Sloan departed for Santa Fe. The Winters remained in Gloucester for many years, teaching and working with other artists who chose to visit, explore and paint the inspirational scenes of Cape Ann. Richmond would spend remaining summers painting between Mountainville, N.Y. and Gloucester.

Blue Heron Fine Art specializes in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American paintings and is located at 63 Nichols Road, Cohasset, Mass. The gallery is open daily by appointment. For more information, visit [www.blueheronFA.com](http://www.blueheronFA.com), call the gallery at 781-383-3210 or email [info@blueheronFA.com](mailto:info@blueheronFA.com).

<sup>1</sup> This subject was extensively explored in the Cape Ann Historical Association's exhibit "The Red Cottage," May 29 through September 26, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Jobe Pierce, *Edward Potthast, More Than One Man*, page 74.

<sup>3</sup> William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 1969.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth H. Hawkes, Assistant Curator Delaware Art Museum, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> Cape Ann Historical Association, *The Red Cottage*, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> John Curuby, Boston Art Club.

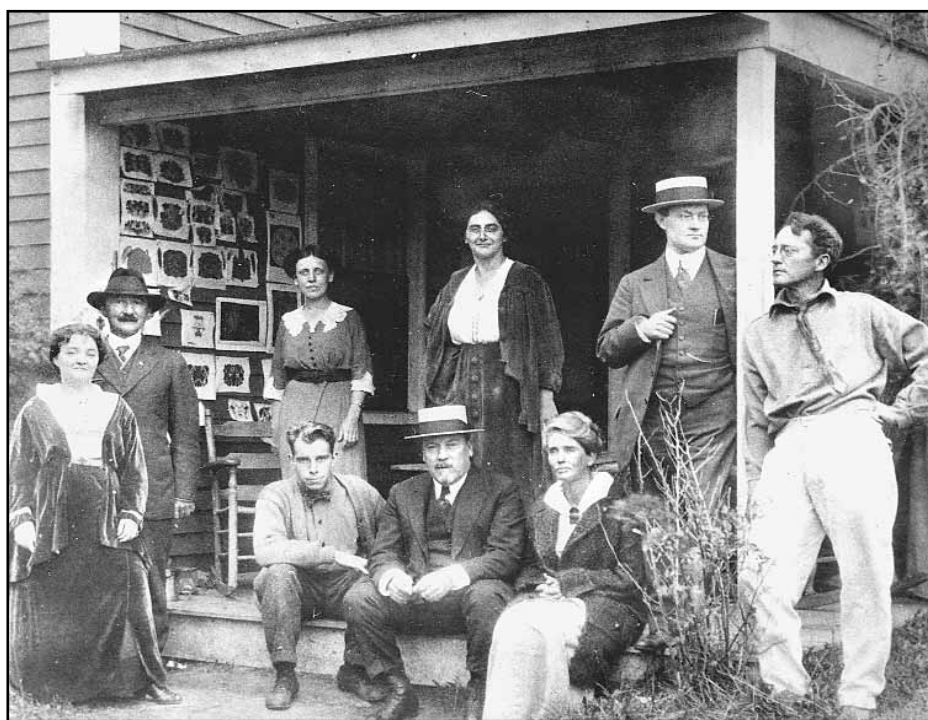
<sup>7</sup> Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware

<sup>8</sup> Ex. Cat., *John Sloan the Gloucester Years*, Springfield Library & Museum Assoc. for the Springfield Museum of Fine Arts, 1980.

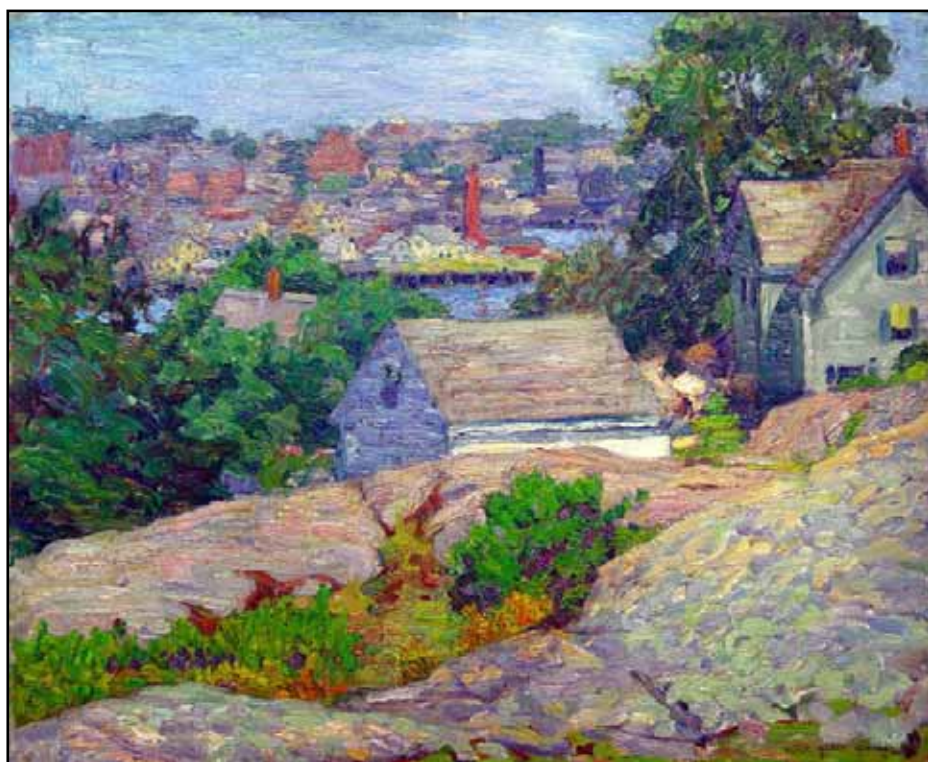
<sup>9</sup> Ex. Cat., *The Red Cottage*, Cape Ann Historical Association, 1992

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Schmidt, interview conducted in December, 1969 by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

*Charles Allan Winter, "Gloucester," oil on canvas, 20 by 16 inches*



**On the side porch of the red cottage, East Gloucester: (left to right) Seated — Stuart Davis, Paul Cornoyer, Agnes M. Richmond. Standing on ground — Dolly Sloan, F. Carl Smith, John Sloan. Top row — Alice Beach Winter, Katherine Groschke, Paul Tietjens, 1915, photograph by Charles Allan Winter. Photo courtesy of Cape Ann Historical Association, Gloucester, Mass.**



**Alice Beach Winter, "Rocky Neck," 1914, oil on canvas, 16 by 20 inches**

