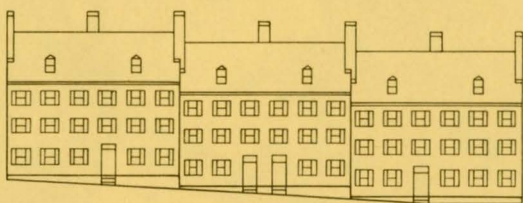


STRONG LIGHT AND OPEN SPACES

John Ingersoll Coggeshall (1857-1927)
Painter, Photographer, Engraver

An Exhibit by Linda Knaack and Martha Mayo,
University of Massachusetts Lowell,
Center for Lowell History

PATRICK J. MOGAN
CULTURAL CENTER

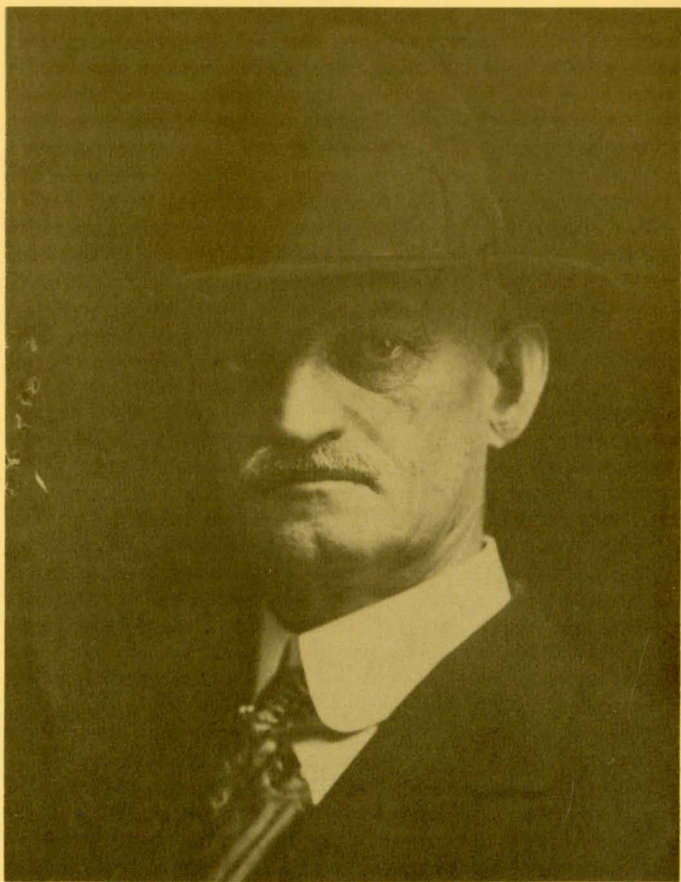


April 20 - June 20, 1994

Monday through Sunday
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

40 French Street, Lowell, Massachusetts

When John Ingersoll Coggeshall arrived in Lowell in 1877, he was surprised to find a thriving arts community. The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia had whetted American appetites for the pictorial arts, and the people of Lowell were no exception. The artist David Neal had returned to his native Lowell after teaching in Munich and his presence here attracted other gifted artists like Walter Shirlaw. William Preston Phelps, a promising young painter from New Hampshire, arrived in 1880. The Lowell Art Association was chartered in 1878, and the exciting young field of photography was represented by the Camera Club, established in 1892. Coggeshall, an avid painter and photographer, joined both of these organizations. He had also recently finished an engraving apprenticeship in Boston and came to Lowell to work with James E. Rice in his engraving firm at 31 Central Street. John Ingersoll Coggeshall truly typified the American Renaissance man of this period. His energies, interests and abilities ranged over a variety of artistic activities. He embraced both the yearning for nature embodied in American landscape painting, and the fascination with new technology symbolized in photography and engraving.



Portrait: John I. Coggeshall

HIS MILIEU

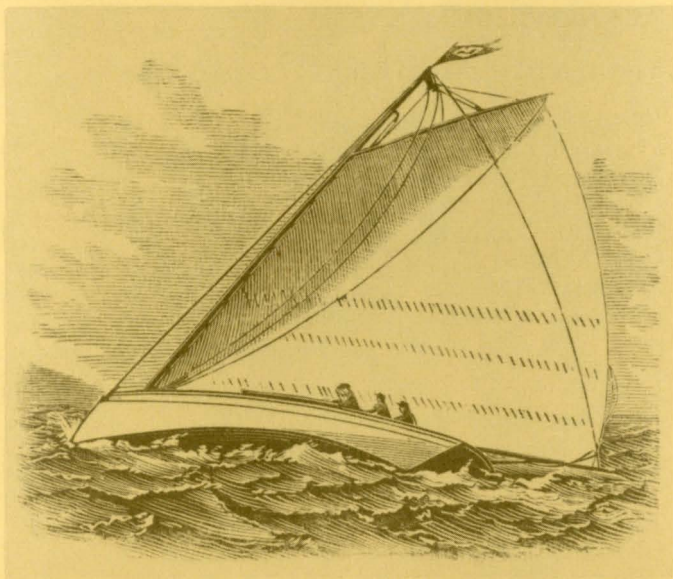
Flush with the wealth of a burgeoning industrial economy, Americans came away from the exhibit of European paintings at the Philadelphia Centennial hungry for all things European. They traveled abroad in droves to get an additional infusion of European culture and among them were artists. Some of these painters, like James MacNeill Whistler, a Lowell native, remained in Europe and taught European techniques to American painters studying abroad. Others returned to America to pass on their skills. In Lowell, William Phelps, recently returned from studies in Munich and Paris, formed a lively atelier, which John Coggeshall joined. Coggeshall himself made two painting trips abroad, one in 1878 to England, Ireland and Wales, and a second in 1903, to Italy, Spain and Morocco.

Museums and art schools sprang up around the country to house European collections and to teach European ways of painting. The Whistler House, birthplace of James MacNeill Whistler, opened in Lowell, in 1908 as an art museum and school and the permanent home of the Lowell Art Association. John Coggeshall had students in Lowell and in 1905 founded a summer art school, Camp Coggeshall, on the seacoast near Gloucester.

Perhaps the most important influence on nineteenth century painting in America was photography. Although it put many portrait painters out of business, for other artists it proved a boon. Almost immediately with the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839, artists began using photography as an aid to painting. Thomas Cole, Frederick Church and Albert Bierstadt all used photographs to help them with the detail in their work.

At mid-century fidelity to nature dominated painting on both sides of the Atlantic. Many artists left off working outside altogether in favor of painting from photographs which they felt imitated nature more accurately. By the 1870s, photography had advanced to such a degree that artists could finally see the difference between recording nature with a camera and through the artist's own selection and imagination. A switch occurred as photographers began to imitate painters and attempted to create a painterly impression with photographs.

Photography was also a vital factor in the art of wood engraving, invented in the late eighteenth century, and widely used to illustrate books and magazines. As the demand for illustrated periodicals increased, competition for circulation pushed engraving technology forward. By the 1880s photography had led to the process of phototransfer which allowed photographs to be transferred directly to the wood block and then engraved, yielding images of remarkable subtlety.



Engraving of sail boat

John Coggeshall came to maturity during this exciting and bewildering time of change for the arts in America and in Lowell. As a practitioner of painting, photography, and engraving, Coggeshall comfortably reconciled traditional American landscape painting with these new visual technologies.

HIS WORK

Painting

Although he sketched from nature from the age of nine, John Coggeshall never attended art school. He felt compelled to learn a trade due to family financial difficulties. But once he had established his engraving firm in Lowell, there was time to pursue his first love, painting.

It was the French Barbizon and Munich painters who attracted American interest and American money in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. American painters hoping to sell their art imitated these popular European styles and techniques. John Coggeshall was strongly influenced by William Phelps, whose European training favored the tonal quality of the Barbizon School combined with the looser paint handling characteristic of the Munich School. The paintings were representational, and Coggeshall, like most American painters of this period, preferred marine and landscape subjects over the historical and genre themes of his European counterparts.

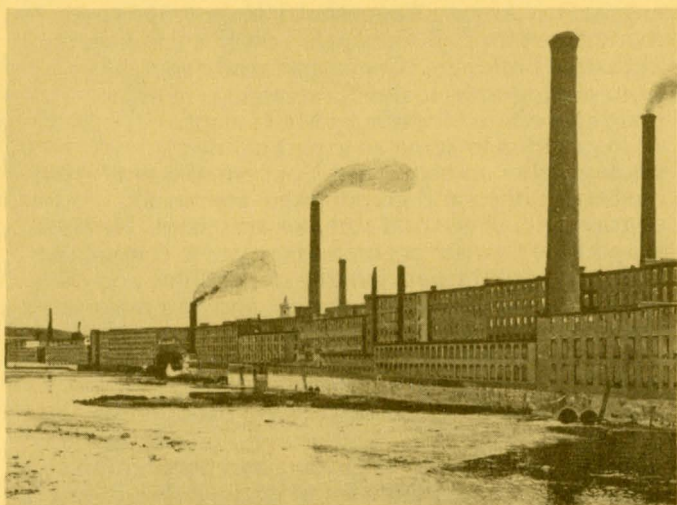
Coggeshall's palette became brighter as he was exposed to artists who returned from European studies, but he never wholeheartedly embraced impressionism. He was most representative of those American painters who straddled the middle ground

between the Hudson River School and American Impressionism. He emphasized form and persisted with the "quiet observation of fact" typical of much American painting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although Coggeshall's interest in light and atmosphere increased, his work is suffused with that very American reverence for the forms of nature born of nineteenth century philosophy and the Luminist and Hudson River painting movements.

By the turn of the century urban scenes were finally considered worthy subject matter by artists, and Coggeshall began to portray them in his work. In 1913 he completed a commission for the Lowell Sun, *Cause and Effect*, two twelve-foot long paintings depicting the Pawtucket Dam and the "mile of mills." Painting industrial subjects probably came easily to this artist who had spent years creating engravings of Lowell's factories, and who had a photographer's and printer's interest in technology.

John Coggeshall frequently sketched outdoors in pencil and watercolor. He often went with William Phelps to areas around Lowell and to the Monadnock region of New Hampshire. During the summer he did much of his creative work on the ocean near Boston Harbor and later, in Gloucester. One Lowell critic felt that Coggeshall succeeded best "in the strong light of day and in the open spaces of sea..."

Coggeshall exhibited widely during his lifetime, primarily in Lowell and Boston. An invitation from one of his summer school students also resulted in exhibits in the mid-west. The artist was prolific and sold much of his work but unfortunately the whereabouts of the majority of his painting is unknown. By today's standards, the prices received by the artist seem low. In 1901 several oil paintings sold for between \$50 and \$75 each, and watercolors, for \$5 to \$7 apiece.



Mile of Mills



Coggeshall with camera on tripod

Photography

John Coggeshall used photography in a variety of ways. Many of his photographs, including city scenes, churches, group portraits, and interiors, are documents of the life around him. He also used photographs to help with detail in his paintings and sometimes created an entire painting from a photograph. During his lifetime, photography was elevated to the status of art, and many of his pictures evidence his intense interest in this new art form. Among the hundreds of glass plate negatives, some are studies for paintings while others record the people and places of his world, but many are simply beautiful pictures.

Engraving

Coggeshall practiced engraving during America's heyday of illustration. His engraving business, first with James Rice and later, Joseph Piper, produced advertising and logos for many businesses in Lowell and elsewhere. The heading for the first issue of the Lowell Sun was printed from a Coggeshall 1878 engraving. Among Coggeshall's photographs are many taken for E. B. Conant, a Lowell auctioneer of industrial buildings. Coggeshall made engravings from photographs to illustrate catalogs of the buildings offered for sale by Mr. Conant.

In addition to being an expert painter, photographer and engraver, Coggeshall was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He ran an engraving business and summer art school. He also found time to write poetry and essays, to charter and lead a boy scout troop, join the state militia, and the Sons of the American Revolution, and be a member of the Kirk Street Congregational Church.

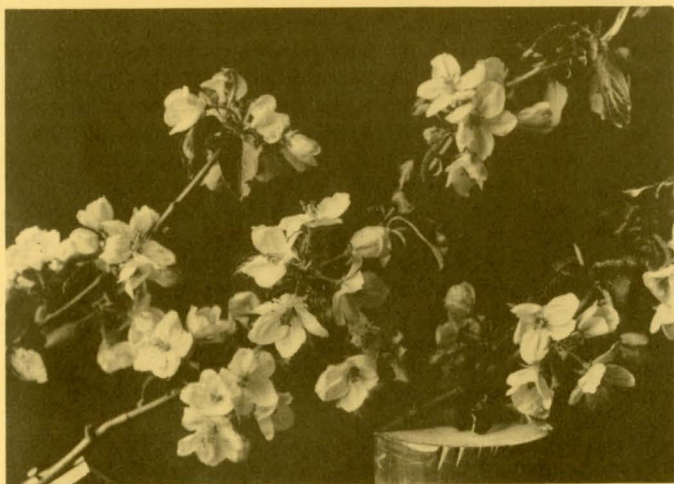
John Ingersoll Coggeshall was indeed "a man of strong light...and...open spaces". These were the environments in which he chose to paint, photograph and spend time. Like many artists of his era, he welcomed the new engraving and photographic technologies engendered by an unstoppable industrial progress, even as he depicted the wide American landscapes being lost to it.

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Archives of American Art, Boston, MA
George of Lowell
Godwin Gallery, Pepperell, MA
Lowell Camera Club
Lowell Gallery
Lowell Historic Preservation Commission
Lowell Historical Society
Lowell National Historical Park
Lowell Sun
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Whistler House Museum of Art



Apple Blossom

THE PATRICK J. MOGAN CULTURAL CENTER

The mission of the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center is to "tell the human story found in the history of the United States as an industrial nation, especially by concentrating on the lives of the working people of Lowell, Massachusetts." The Center, which opened in 1989, is named in honor of Lowell's former Superintendent of Schools who developed the concept of an urban park focused on Lowell's unique heritage.

This former Boott Mills boardinghouse, built around 1837, was rehabilitated by the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior. It is an appropriate setting for the Lowell National Historical Park's interpretive exhibits on the theme of the Working People: Mill Girls, Immigrants, and Labor. A wide variety of cultural programs is offered here throughout the year. The Center also houses the University of Massachusetts at Lowell Center for Lowell History, and the University's Downtown Center for Continuing Education.

LOWELL HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Lowell Historic Preservation Commission was authorized in 1978 "to tell the human story of the Industrial Revolution in a 19th century setting by encouraging cultural expression in Lowell." Its historic preservation program works to preserve historic buildings and create a recreational trail along Lowell's canals. Its cultural programs interpret the Commission's themes through public art, performing arts, cultural grants, exhibits, conferences, publications, folklife, oral history, ethnic heritage and labor projects. For further information, call (508) 458-7653.

LOWELL OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Lowell Office of Cultural Affairs co-sponsors temporary exhibits at the Mogan Cultural Center through its Cooperative Agreement with the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission.

The mission of the Lowell Office of Cultural Affairs (LOCA) is to identify the ways and means to expand cultural opportunities and choices. LOCA manages the Lowell Museum Cultural Fund which provides a financial resource for those who create, present, and preserve the culture of the city through exhibits at the Mogan Cultural Center. For information or to receive The Local, a bi-monthly calendar of Lowell events, call (508) 459-9899.

TEMPORARY EXHIBITS

Any organization, group, or individual interested in developing an exhibit at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center on its themes, should contact the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission at 222 Merrimack Street, Suite 310, Lowell, MA 01852, (508) 458-7653. A staff member will send you an application and if approved, your proposal will then be recommended to the Mogan Community Advisory Board.