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Landscape with Pond and Cabin

An Oil Painting

by

Alexander Wyant

A NOTE ON "LANDSCAPE WITH POND AND CABIN"

WESLEY M. BURNSIDE*

Of the many nineteenth century artists whose style exemplified the tenets of the Hudson River school, Alexander Wyant (1836-1892) is one of the most outstanding. Wyant did not confine himself to the scenes of grand panorama of the Hudson River, however. During his relatively short life span, his style changed from hard-edged foreground forms dissolving in panoramic distance to more intimate, loosely constructed themes of thicket and brook.

Wyant was born in the rural area of Evans Creek, Ohio, and while yet in his youth he determined to become an artist. Before he was twenty he had worked as a sign painter and had begun to idolize the then rising artist, George Inness. His meeting Inness in 1859 while visiting New York proved to be an important stimulus in his early development as an artist.

Another important factor in the development of Wyant's style was the influence of the Dusseldorf school of Germany, one of the most popular schools for American artists around the middle of the nineteenth century. At Dusseldorf the emphasis was placed on sound craftsmanship. Such artists as Emmanuel Leutz and Albert Bierstadt, among numerous other American artists, were products of the exacting demands of the school. Wyant remained only for a short time at Dusseldorf under the tutorship of Hans Friedrich Gude. Shortly thereafter he visited England where the paintings of Constable seem to have affected his style, particularly in the broad brush technique evidenced in his work at the time.

The major change in his style took place after 1874, however, when a stroke left him with a paralysis of his right arm. After he learned to paint with his left hand, his technique became looser and his scenes generally became more intimate in feeling and smaller in size. During the period when "Landscape With Pond and Cabin" was painted, intimacy plus the resurgence of Constable's loose style was being manifested in Wyant's work.

*Mr. Burnside is assistant professor of art at Brigham Young University.



