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Library News



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Winslow Home Painting Featured at Art Institute of Chicago

The best-known painting in the Plainfield Public Library's collection is now on loan to the Art Institute of Chicago. *Looking Over the Cliff*, a watercolor by American painter Winslow Homer in 1882 will be part of a new exhibit: *Watercolors by Winslow Homer: The Color of Light*, which opened February 16th and will run through May 10th, 2008.

Library Director Joe Da Rold has been working with the exhibit curator at the Art Institute since October of 2006. The library's painting is one of 130 watercolors, drawings and oil paintings in the exhibit. Under tight security, the painting left Plainfield in early February and arrived in Chicago in the middle of a winter storm that delivered 15 inches of snow. Joe and two Board members traveled to Chicago to represent the Plainfield Public Library at the Lender Luncheon & Preview.

Homer's imagery of two women standing together is repeated in many of the works from his Cullercoats (England) series. This particular painting has found great popularity in art circles and has been exhibited widely: at the **National Gallery of Art**, the **Whitney Museum**, the **Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**, and the **Center for the Fine Arts** in Miami. The **Art Institute of Chicago** is recognized as one of the great museums of the world.

A color reproduction of *Looking Over the Cliff* appears in the current exhibition catalog by Martha Tedeschi, "*Watercolors by Winslow Homer: The Color of Light*", the 2001 book, "*The Watercolors of Winslow Homer*" by Miles Unger, and the 1986 exhibition catalog by Helen Cooper, "*Winslow Homer Watercolors*." An image of the same work will be appearing in a catalog being prepared by Harvard University Art Museum, entitled "*American Paintings at Harvard: Artists Born from 1826 to 1856*," in juxtaposition with a similar wash drawing by Homer in their own collection.

The three original artworks by Winslow Homer owned by the Plainfield Public Library were donated to the library in 1931 by Benjamin F. Day, who had spent his boyhood in North Plainfield before moving to New York City. The library also owns more than 50 original engravings by Homer that were published in Harpers Weekly magazine in the mid-1800's.

Joe, who is also Chairman of the Plainfield Cultural & Heritage Commission, says he is always delighted when the quality of the library's art collection is recognized. In 2002, the U.S. Department of State borrowed one of the library's paintings by John F. Carlson to hang in the American Embassy in Stockholm.

In his 14 years as Library Director in Plainfield, Joe has developed the collection with works of local artists. Many are on public view in the conference rooms on the lower level of the library. The images of many of the library's paintings can be seen on its website at www.plfdpl.info.

BIO: Homer was born in Boston in 1836 and died in Maine in 1910. He began his career as a free-lance magazine illustrator in 1857 and won praise for many of his paintings, his watercolors in particular. His first mature oil paintings, dating from 1862, were of Civil War subjects. In these, he was concerned with the effect of light and shade, much like the early French Impressionists of the same period.