

# A Lasting Impression



The following information about Pennsylvania Impressionism and the *A Lasting Impression* Traveling Trunk will help teachers learn more about the contents of the trunk and the objectives of the Traveling Trunk program.

## What is Pennsylvania Impressionism?

The Pennsylvania Impressionists were a group of Impressionist painters who were influenced by the French Impressionists in the late 19th century. Impressionism was a style now greatly admired that shook the foundations of European art in the late 19th century and had a profound impact on all art that happened after it. The subjects of Impressionist painters are delightful to this day. At the time, however, they were a great affront to accepted standards of painting. Impressionists often painted entire work outdoors or *en plein air*, (as opposed to sketching outdoors and then creating the final work in the studio), unusual in itself at the time. Using bright colors and painting with very visible brushstrokes, they sought to capture immediate sensations, quickly observed. They were particularly interested in light as it struck various surfaces in different weather and at different times of the day. The impressionists' concept of realism was to paint the reflected light, and to capture the effect light has on a landscape, a person's face, or still life objects.

## Who were the key Pennsylvania Impressionists in the New Hope area?

Edward Redfield was one of the most prominent landscape painters to settle in Bucks County. He was the leading figure in the Pennsylvania School of Landscape Painting, also known as Pennsylvania Impressionism. Other Pennsylvania Impressionists include William L. Lathrop, Henry B. Snell, Walter E. Schofield, Daniel Garber, Charles Rosen, Robert Spencer, George Sotter, Rae Sloan Bredin, Walter Baum, John F. Folinsbee, Fern Isabel Coppedge, M. Elizabeth Price, William Taylor, Mary Perkins Taylor, Roy Nuse.

Learn about many of these Impressionist artists at Michener Art Museum's [Bucks County Artists' Database](#).

## Who were William L. Lathrop and the New Hope School of Impressionists?

Born in 1859, William Langson Lathrop was popularly considered the dean of the New Hope art colony. He was instrumental in establishing this community of artists soon after he moved into Phillips' Mill in 1899. His home and studio quickly emerged as the intellectual and spiritual center of the art colony, as he ferried students to his studio and his wife Annie hosted weekly teas for his colleagues. A dedicated teacher, Lathrop mentored several members of the New Hope School's first and second generation of painters. Lathrop taught year-round classes in outdoor landscape painting, sometimes using his barge as a floating classroom on the Delaware Canal.

The New Hope group was an alliance of six Bucks County artists formed in 1916. They were also a part of the larger group known as the Pennsylvania Impressionists. This group was significant because the member artists exhibited their work together in the cities in the U.S. and Europe, and thus came to represent the regional school of landscape painting in the larger art world.

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In 1929, Phillips' Mill was purchased for \$5000 and became a community art center. Its art committee began to organize annual exhibitions which continue to this day. Lathrop served as the organizations first president.

In his work, Lathrop created poetic and evocative paintings in muted shades, often in earth-browns and blue-grays. Most often he painted simplified rustic landscapes, in oils or occasionally in watercolors. Although Lathrop sometimes worked in direct contact with his subject, in the manner of many Pennsylvania Impressionists, he deemed it important to complete his paintings in the studio, drawing also upon memory. In his later years, Lathrop developed a more impressionistic style, expanding the colors in his palette. An avid sailor, Lathrop tragically died when his boat, *The Widge*, sank in a hurricane off Long Island in 1938.

### **How can students learn about their local Pennsylvania Heritage using the Traveling Trunk?**

Using the resource materials in the kit, (the scrapbook, Lathrop's letter and journal entries), the hands-on artifacts such as period clothing, tea set, etc., and the teacher's guide containing the lesson plans, will allow the student to learn and understand the rich artistic heritage of Pennsylvania.

### **What grade level is targeted with the Michener Art Museum's *A Lasting Impression* Traveling Trunk?**

The James A. Michener Art Museum's traveling trunk is especially designed for elementary age students. It can also be successfully enjoyed by learners of all ages, since it explores the theme of Pennsylvania Impressionism using authentic artifacts, historical photographs and challenging activities. Lessons in this curriculum may be adapted for different grade levels, and may be shortened, skipped or extended depending on the needs of the teacher and students.

### **How can I incorporate this trunk into my curriculum?**

This unit of study from the Traveling Trunk contains 8 interdisciplinary lesson plans, each containing information that can be adapted to any classroom. The teacher may choose one, two or all of the lessons to be included in his or her curriculum depending on the needs of the teacher. One suggestion includes dovetailing this unit with a teacher in another subject area.

- *Lesson One: First Impressions.* Students are introduced to the theme of the Traveling Trunk.  
Suggested classroom: Art or Social Studies.
- *Lesson Two: Perfecting the Portfolio.* Students make a portfolio based on a theme.  
Suggested classroom: Art.
- *Lesson Three: Telling Tales.* Students use their imagination to create a play to explore the theme.  
Suggested classroom: English, Writing, Art, Theater, or Social Studies.
- *Lesson Four: What's Your Impression?* Students apply the theme to their personal lives.  
Suggested classroom: Art or Social Studies.
- *Lesson Five: Meet the Masters.* Students are introduced to two key artists.  
Suggested classroom: Art or Social Studies.

- *Lesson Six: Very Impressionable.* Students make artworks that express the theme of the unit.  
Suggested classroom: Art.
- *Lesson Seven: Michener Museum Impressions.* Students visit the Michener Art Museum and respond to their artwork in the form of a text panel.  
Suggested classrooms: Art, English or Writing.
- *Lesson Eight: Your Last Impression.* Students evaluate their work created in the unit and put together an exhibition of their work.  
Suggested classroom: any classroom is suitable.

### **How does this Traveling Trunk meet National Art Standards?**

Each lesson written in the unit, *A Lasting Impression*, meets National Art Standards. Please refer to each lesson to see which standard is being met.

### **What is Inquiry-based learning and how is it used in this Traveling Trunk?**

The lessons in the unit, *A Lasting Impression*, can be used with an inquiry-based approach to help students learn. By posing basic questions, students begin to search for answers in their own experiences and by consulting research sources. Inquiry-based learning has been used successfully in museum education to assist learners to make connections between visual objects and the visitor's own experiences. Dr. Mary Erickson from *ArtsEdNet* suggests that the inquiry-based approach enhances learning because it puts control and direction in the hands of the learner, it provides focus for comparison and generalization, it guides investigation into the unknown, and it stimulates imagination about possibilities.