ALICE RAVENEL HUGER SMITH

UNINTENTIONAL FEMINIST

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Advisor: Liana F. Piehler, Ph.D.

Bethany L. Duane

Drew University

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ABSTRACT

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The struggle for women to gain equal rights and positions of influence in society has progressed slowly. However, despite the restrictive culture many women live in, some have managed to rise above these restrictions. These are ordinary women who are not well-known leaders of the women's movement. They may not attend protests or join organizations to advance women's rights. Yet they contribute significantly to the advancement of all women.

This dissertation researches one such woman. It shows how one woman can be a strong influence in a community. It examines the lifestyle and achievements of Alice Ravenel Huger Smith. Born in 1876 and living until 1958, she lived in the same home in Charleston her entire life. Her multiple last names show she was connected to many of the city's elite families. She had a traditional upbringing.

This dissertation examines Smith's life through her memoir, *Reminiscences*, biographies, and her papers archived by the South Carolina Historical Society and the Gibbs Museum of Art, both located in Charleston, South Carolina. It also examines her associates from the Charleston Renaissance, particularly Elizabeth O'Neill Verner. It analyzes Smith's roles as an artist, author, historian, preservationist, and businesswoman. This dissertation also addresses the issue of race.

Her accomplishments exceeded what would have been expected from a woman of her elite class. Without any formal education, she became an artist and an author. This

dissertation analyzes how she developed business skills so she was able to market her paintings and books. It looks at how she arranged for her work to be exhibited. She also lectured on cultural topics. As a successful artist, she mentored other women, encouraging them in their work. She was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Mount Holyoke College.

Her influence is still felt today through her art. Her paintings continue to be shown in exhibitions and her contributions to historic preservation are reflected in the Historic District of Charleston.

This dissertation concludes that Alice could be identified through her work and accomplishments as contributing to the advancement of the place of women in American culture.

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PREFACE

I first came across Alice Ravenel Huger Smith while taking a class in watercolor painting. One of the assignments was to research a famous watercolor artist. At first, I approached Alice Ravenel Huger Smith because I was drawn to her artwork, her beautiful watercolors of the South Carolina Lowcountry. I liked the subtle colors and the representation of nature in its natural state. Alice's art transports the viewer to a Carolina swamp or rice plantation. You can feel the heat and humidity as you look at her paintings. However, as I explored her art in greater detail, I became interested in her as a total person, not just an artist.

I began to feel a kinship with her even though our lives only overlapped by four years. She lived from 1876 until 1958; I was born in 1954. I saw that she was a strong woman, who despite the time and geographical area in which she was living, carved out an impressive life for herself. She identified with her situation where she was, as a woman, a product of the Southern culture of the time. Yet, she was an independent, successful public leader and businesswoman.

I attended high school in the late 1960s—early 1970s. This was a time of many changes for women, including socially acceptable behavior. When I graduated from high school, I attended Katharine Gibbs School, a secretarial school for women. My family believed it was a proper choice for a young lady. It was assumed that I would become an assistant to a successful businessman until I left the workplace to marry. I entered the business world as a secretary. This was not unusual at the time. Jane Bryant Quinn, a well-known finance expert, was encouraged by her father to do the same, although she

chose not to follow his advice (Quinn, 39). It was only later that, on my own, I completed my Bachelor of Science in Business, and eventually, a Master of Arts in Business Education. However, a part of me still struggles with the concept that as a woman, I can achieve academic success. Completing this Doctoral Program at sixty-nine is a gift to me.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation seeks to explore if, through her civic leadership role in Charleston society and through her economic success and social accomplishments in the art world, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith contributed significantly to the widening of a woman's role and place in American society.

The Civil War brought economic devastation to Charleston, South Carolina. The Reconstruction period that followed did not improve the circumstances. The once flourishing city faded in importance; the cotton and rice products no longer flowed through the port. The old white families of Charleston were often living in reduced circumstances, many of them having lost their livelihoods and assets as a result of the war. However, they still took great pride in their heritage (Yuhl 3).

Alice Ravenel Huger Smith was born in 1876 into just such a family. Her name tells us of her prestigious heritage. Her ancestors included a signer of the Declaration of Independence (Eliza Carolina Middleton Huger Smith was Alice's paternal grandmother and granddaughter of Arthur Middleton. Arthur Middleton signed the Declaration of Independence and owned Middleton Place Plantation.) and the first post-Revolutionary Episcopal Bishop of South Carolina (Bishop Robert Smith). Because family names are repeated and some of the people discussed in this dissertation have the same last name, for clarity, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith will be referred to simply as "Alice" for the remainder of this dissertation.

Alice's mother died when she was twelve, and she was raised by her paternal grandmother and her father. The family did have financial difficulties, and there was little

money for extras. Her education was limited, and she had little formal instruction in art (Hunt 2).

However, working often with her father, she slowly established herself in the Charleston art circles. Her first major success as a sketch artist was illustrating the text written by her father in *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston South Carolina*, in 1917. She experimented with different artist techniques including oils, woodblock prints, and etchings. However, she is best known for her beautiful watercolors portraying the lush South Carolina Lowcountry. She eventually extended her influence outside of South Carolina, exhibiting her work across the United States and Europe (Dillingham 5-8).

Her emergence as an artist is intertwined with the emergence of the Charleston Renaissance. The Charleston Renaissance was a period from the 1920s through the Second World War where Charleston saw a flourishing of art, music, and culture. Alice was an active member of this cultural movement. She was one of the women, along with Anna Heyward Taylor and Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, who used their talents to promote Charleston's preservation and culture. She continued to play a role in the art world and Charleston society until she died in 1958 (Hutchisson 35-40). Her art continued to be acknowledged after her death. One of her watercolors appeared on an episode of the Public Broadcasting System's Antiques Road Show in 2013. It was given an estimated value of $85,000 (Chisholm). Online catalogs of works for sale at Bonham's Auction House in New York included examples of Alice's watercolors that sold with prices ranging from $20,000 to $30,000 (Bonham's). In Charleston, a year-long exhibit of Alice's works was mounted at two locations, the Edmondston-Alston House and Middleton Place Plantation, from October, 2016, through the fall of 2017 (Hunt 5).

Alice certainly was a lady of the South. More to the point, she was a Charleston gentlewoman. She was proud of her heritage, dedicating her life to preserving Charleston's unique architecture and historic past. Her art and publications demonstrated her devotion to Charleston's history, society, and culture with all its beauty and traditions.

However, I believe she was more than that. There are aspects of her life that could support the adjective "feminist" being applied to her; a feminist as someone who, through her life, contributes to and participates in the expanding roles of women in society, culturally and economically; a woman who can stand on her own. She certainly held positions of leadership in the Charleston art world. She was a member of the Carolina Art Association, the Poetry Society, and the Historical Society (Dillingham 8).

The Charleston Etchers' Club, of which she was one of the nine founders, was established in Smith's art studio (Hutchisson 40-41). She arranged for her art to be exhibited across the country, and negotiated her own business contracts. Her earnings provided financial support to her family (Yuhl 66-67). As the program for the day indicates, in 1937 she, along with nineteen other women prominent in the fields of art and literature, science, and education, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters from Mount Holyoke College on the occasion of the college's Centenary celebration (Centennial Records). This dissertation investigates her accomplishments to determine whether they warrant the adjective feminist.

Research

There is much information available in books, magazine articles, and newspapers on Alice about her role in the Charleston Renaissance and as an artist. A review of the literature about Alice reveals that the literature fell into several different areas. These areas included books written about the Charleston Renaissance, books Alice produced herself, and biographies of Alice including a memoir written by Alice herself. There are also catalogs and pamphlets from various exhibits of Alice's works and blurbs from auction house catalogs. The archives of the South Carolina Historical Society housed in the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library and the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, South Carolina, and the archives at Mount Holyoke College also contain information on Alice's lifestyle and accomplishments.

Sources concerning the history of Charleston, the Charleston Renaissance, and the role Alice and her associates played in it include *Renaissance in Charleston, Art and Life in the Carolina Low Country, 1900-1940; A Golden Haze of Memory, The Making of Historic Charleston;* and *Where these Memories Grow, History, Memory, and Southern Identity.* The last title gives an excellent critique of how Alice's artwork portrayal of rice production and slavery contributed to an idealized representation of life on a South Carolina plantation. All these books represent the artistic climate in which Alice was immersed. They speak of the role and accomplishments of other members of the Charleston Renaissance with whom Alice associated. For example, these books speak about the group of women responsible for the movement that became known as the

Charleston Renaissance and allow us to see how Alice interacted with and contributed to the leadership of the Charleston Renaissance.

Alice herself was involved in the production of eleven books either as author, illustrator, or editor. The period of her work extended from 1913 with her first publication, *A Woman Rice Planter,* in which she illustrated the text by Elizabeth Waties Allston Pringle, through 1950, when she wrote the preface for *A Charlestonian's Recollections 1846-1913* which her father had written years earlier. Her two best-known books are *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston,* which she produced with her father and published in 1917, and *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties,* published in 1936, with text by Herbert Ravenel Sass. *The Dwelling Houses* contained drawings by Alice, and *A Carolina Rice Plantation* contained thirty watercolor paintings representing her conception of rice production in the South Carolina Lowcountry before the Civil War.

A biography of Alice was published by Martha R. Severens, a well-known regional author, in 1993 entitled *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, An Artist, a Place, and a Time.* Within that volume is an autobiography by Alice, previously unpublished, entitled *Reminiscences.* Because her memoirs are in her voice, it is helpful to examine them. They gave us her perspective on issues. Severens has also written numerous articles on Alice as well as the Charleston Renaissance. There was also a biography compiled and published in 1956 by Alice's friends to honor her on her eightieth birthday entitled *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith of Charleston, South Carolina.* The book showed the influence she had on Charleston society. It also showed an appreciation of her contributions to Charleston from the people she interacted with during her career. The most recent biography of Alice, *Alice, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, Charleston Renaissance Artist,* was published in

2021. Its three authors were all connected to Alice and her family. One author, Dwight McInvaill, is connected by the friendship his parents had with Alice. The remaining two authors, Caroline Palmer and Anne Gaud Tinker, are both great-nieces of Alice. This volume is a more personal account with anecdotes shared that were passed down through family and friends. Severens' work is a more academic volume and seems to present the most in-depth, honest portrayal of Alice's life; however, they all give insight into Alice's place in the community and her reflections on her life.

Information on her accomplishments in the art world is easily accessible. I found one Master's thesis on her entitled *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith and the Development of Charleston Regionalism,* prepared for the Department of Art at the University of South Carolina in 1994. This thesis placed Alice as a member of a group of artists who were influential leaders of the Charleston Renaissance (Eades). Alice was also featured in an art exhibit at the Greenville County Museum of Art in 1986. A catalog of this exhibit, entitled *Eight Southern Women,* was published in book form by the museum. This publication was interesting because it places Alice's work with other successful women of the South. Like the women honored with Alice by Mount Holyoke, these Southern women artists, all in their way, pushed the boundaries of traditional female behaviors of the time to have successful careers and filled leadership roles in society (*Eight Southern Women).*

Internet sources reveal Alice is still known in the art world today. Her work appeared on an episode of Antiques Road Show and in catalogs of works for sale at various auction houses. These sources reflect the long-term influence and popularity of Alice's work.

This dissertation also uses archival information. Brochures and pamphlets from some of Alice's exhibits in the New York metropolitan area were found during a visit to the Frick Art Reference Library in New York City. The archives at Mount Holyoke provided information on the circumstances of Alice's honorary degree. Visits to the Gibbes Museum of Art and the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston provided access to Alice's personal papers. The Gibbes Museum of Art, which grew out of the Gibbes Art Gallery, an organization with which Alice was closely associated, holds some of Alice's papers. The College of Charleston's Addlestone Library houses the South Carolina Historical Society Archives. The Historical Society also has preserved Alice's papers. This research in Charleston, Alice's hometown helped to clarify her position in Charleston society and her long-term influence on the intellectual climate of the city. Other sources of information that were explored included traditional research through databases and national and local newspapers.

This dissertation also explores the concept of feminism and its various meanings, and how those meanings have differed depending on the period. It examines the idea of the First Wave of feminism, particularly since it coincided with the time of Smith's life. This assisted in evaluating her lifetime accomplishments against the accepted meaning of these titles during her lifetime and in the present.

Methodology

Alice started her successful professional career in 1913 when Elizabeth W. A. Pringle requested that Alice illustrate Pringle's book, *A Woman Rice Planter*. By the end of her career, in both art and authorship, she was standing firmly on her own merits. This

dissertation explores her journey through her successful career by examining sources noted in the research section.

The information in this dissertation is organized in the following chapters.

Chapter 1, Early Life, examines Alice's early life and her interaction with her family.

Chapter 2, Developing Professionally, examines her accomplishments in the cultural society of Charleston and how she emerged as a leader in the Charleston Renaissance.

Chapter 3, Alice's Publications, examines the various people and publications with which she was involved.

Chapter 4, Acknowledgments and Awards, examines the accolades Alice received for her artwork and her service to the community.

Chapter 5, In Her Own Words, examines what she had to say about her art and life by analyzing her memoir entitled *Reminiscences* and examining her personal papers in the archives at the South Carolina Historical Society and the Gibbes Museum of Art.

Chapter 6, Alice's Continuing Influence, examines how her work is still relevant today.

Conclusion, examines her legacy as an influential, strong women and makes a statement as to how her lifestyle and accomplishments warrant the description of a feminist.

Purpose

In the present political climate, I believe it is important to demonstrate the strength displayed by women in difficult circumstances and to show the accomplishments and contributions that women have made to our society. Often women are imprisoned by societal expectations, and Alice certainly experienced some aspects of this. However, Alice was about more than her art or her prestigious family. We need to see women as a total picture, the sum of many parts. As a teacher, I believe it is imperative that the young women of today see the vibrant women of the past as role models who inspire them to great achievements of their own.

This research is also important to me personally because of my own experience growing up female in the United States in the 1960s-70s. The opportunities presented to me were certainly far fewer than the opportunities available to young women today. Alice and her contemporaries would have had even more cultural and legal restrictions than I. While opportunities, both economic and political, have increased, I believe there is still much room for improvement.

As a history teacher, I am particularly aware of how much of the history curriculum discusses the achievements of men. For one example, we all learn about the Founding Fathers. It would not be taking away from male accomplishments to also explore the contributions women like Alice made to the development of American culture.

That is the significance of this work—did Alice, without great fanfare, simply through the way she lived her life, make a statement, not necessarily intentional, about what women were capable of achieving? There are many women today who are doing the

same thing. Through their activities and accomplishments, they are quietly demonstrating their strength. Yet, even today there is no universal agreement on a woman's role or legal rights. It took until April, 2018, for New Jersey to enact an Equal Pay Act (Equal Pay).

Alice may have been a pioneer in expanding feminist ideas; we still need pioneers today.

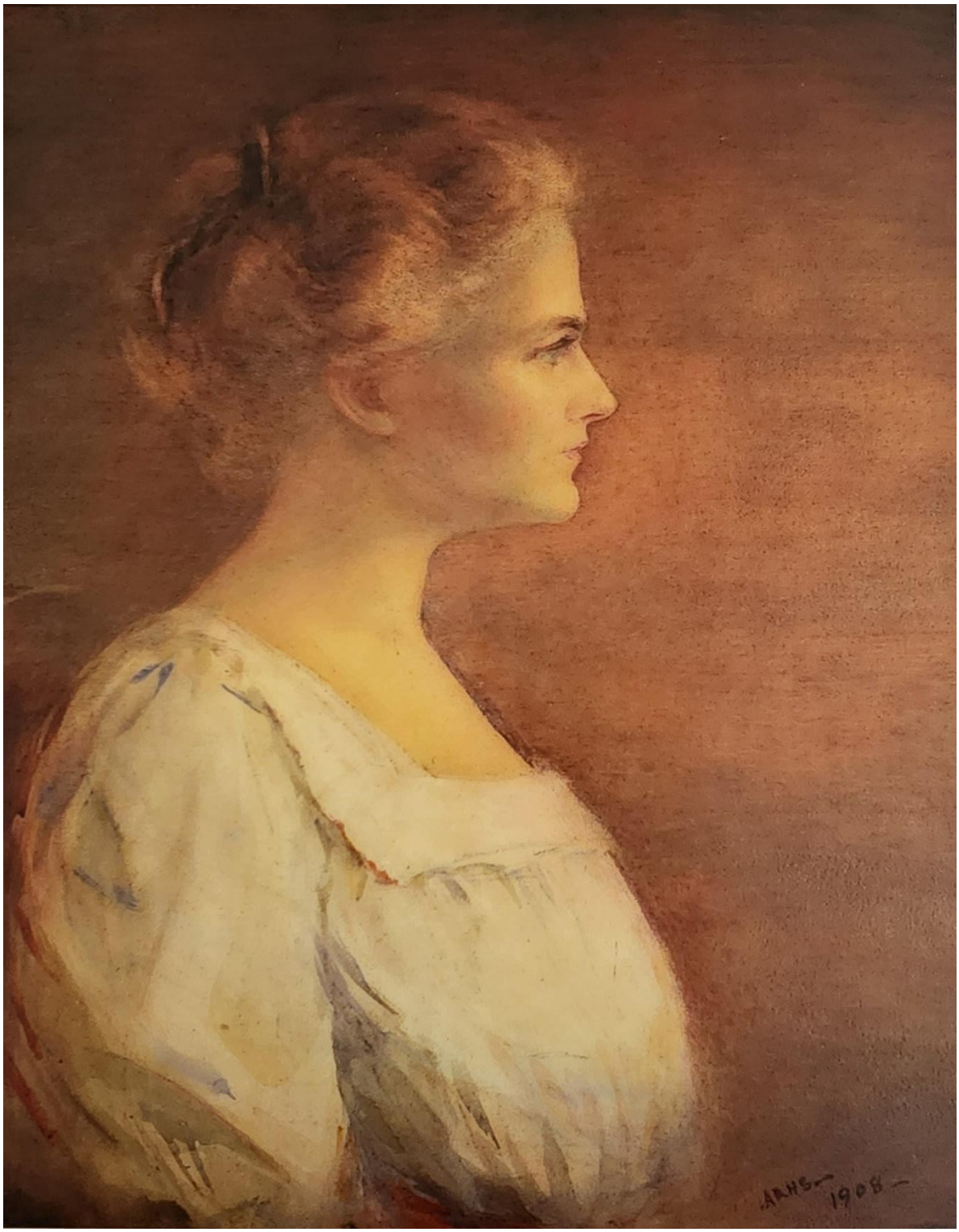

Figure 1. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Self-Portrait*. c. 1908, watercolor on paper, 28 x 20 inches. Collection of Anne Gaud Tinker.

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY LIFE

In 1876, the year Alice was born, Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President of the United States, and the country was still recovering from the Civil War. Women had no political power; the right to vote would not be theirs until the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. There were no women Senators or Representatives, no female Supreme Court Justices, and the appointment of Francis Perkins as the first female Cabinet member was still many years in the future.

That was the situation for women when Alice was born into an old Charleston family. The family was well-connected, but financially challenged. Alice's paternal grandmother was Eliza Carolina Middleton Huger Smith whose father was Daniel Elliott Huger, a United States Senator. Smith's paternal grandfather was William Mason Smith. The family traced their lineage from early English and French Huguenot settlers (McInvaill 7). Alice's maternal grandparents were James and Augustus Ravenel. The grandparents' names reflected their connections to various prominent Charleston families, and the names were repeated in following generations (Smith, *Reminiscences* 109). Alice was proud of her names. In her personal papers was a letter from Alice to Mrs. Martha Foote Crow from August 3, 1915. Crow had requested information on a relative. Alice explained what she knew of the Huger name. She stated, "The name is of French Huguenot origin, but the pronunciation was early and queerly anglicized. It has always been pronounced UG or Eugee" (Smith papers, Historical Society).

Her paternal grandparents owned Smithfield, a rice plantation in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Unfortunately, Alice's grandmother was widowed when she was only twenty-seven. She never remarried, running the plantation and raising six children on her own. However, Smithfield was destroyed during the Civil War (McInvaill 7). For financial reasons, the family moved into Charleston proper to a house at 69 Church Street. Alice's paternal grandmother bought the house in 1869 so her family could all live together and help each other financially. That address is now in what is considered the historic district. Alice's extended family lived there. That included Alice's parents, her siblings, her grandmother, and at various times, various aunts, uncles, and cousins (Severens 73-73). Alice lived in that house her whole life. In her later years, she and her sister, Caroline, would be the last two family members to share the home (McInvaill 1).

Alice's parents were Caroline Ravenel Smith and Daniel Elliott Huger Smith. They had five children; Eliza, Caroline, William (Mason), Alice, and James. Her mother was sickly and spent most of her time in her upstairs room. She died when Alice was twelve. Alice was then raised by her father and her paternal grandmother. They both had a strong influence on her development. In her memoirs, she described them both as having strong personalities. Alice stated her grandmother was "intelligent, determined, broad-minded." She and her siblings felt loved by her; however, her grandmother demanded appropriate behavior. Alice viewed her grandmother as the head of the family who instilled values in them. One of her grandmother's mottos was "Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re" meaning "Gentle in manner, resolute in deed" (Severens 71-72). This motto could be used to describe Alice through her life as she displayed traditional Southern manners yet was steadfast in her various pursuits.

Alice considered her father a strong presence in the home as well. She described him as a stable, moral person, who also expected appropriate behavior from his children. However, she also considered him great fun as he would organize picnics, trips, and other outings for her and her siblings. Alice was close to her father and spent time with him walking through Charleston observing the architecture of the buildings and exploring churchyards for graves of historical figures. They also walked through the surrounding Lowcountry. The Lowcountry refers to the flat land along the coast at or below sea level. Tidal creeks and the Cooper, Ashley, and Wando Rivers flow through it. It contains swamps and salt marshes. Because of the warm weather and access to water, it is the ideal land for rice cultivation. Walking with her father through the countryside exposed Alice to the natural beauty of the Lowcountry's birds, plants, and trees, especially the egrets, herons, oaks, Spanish moss, and cypress. The walks instilled in her a love of the Lowcountry, and it became the topic of her most popular watercolors.

One of these walks, when Alice was sixteen, included a visit to Middleton Place, a rice plantation approximately fifteen miles outside of Charleston proper (McInvaill 8-10). Middleton Place had been in the Middleton family, relatives of the Smiths, since before the American Revolution. The main house had been destroyed by fire by the Union troops during the Civil War. However, the family was able to hold onto the land and eventually restored the plantation (Duell 17). Alice enjoyed visiting Middleton Place throughout her life, and its scenery and natural wildlife were displayed in some of her watercolors. Her description of it was "Middleton Place was beautiful—a jewel thrown down in the green woods" (Severens 82). Today the plantation is preserved as a museum and gardens by the

Middleton Place Foundation, and the public can visit the house and the grounds (Duell 76).

Alice learned the history of Charleston and South Carolina from her grandmother, father, and other family members. It was their influence, particularly that of her father, that encouraged Alice to highly value history, both of her family and of Charleston. Her father, a veteran of the Confederacy (Yuhl 60-63), had a great interest in history and was a member of the South Carolina Historical Society. He eventually became Vice President in 1930 (McInvaill 9). Alice's understanding of the history of her family, Charleston, and life before the Civil War came from the stories told by her family. These stories, however, were slanted to a view of history related to the elite, white citizens' point of view. They were nostalgic for the old ways of the South when, in their memory, life was good and orderly, where everyone had a place. They believed it was a great civilization. They tended to blame their poverty on the Civil War and the unfair, they felt, Reconstruction government that followed. Alice embraced the stories, and they formed the perspectives that are apparent in her paintings and books (Yuhl 60-63). Her book, *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, contained thirty watercolor paintings telling the story of rice cultivation in the Lowcountry during the 1850s, years before she was born. These paintings were created based on the recollections shared in the stories told by her family. The beautiful paintings were an idealistic representation of rice production. They depicted blacks and whites living in happy harmony and showing none of the true living and working conditions of the slaves (69-72).

When Alice was ten, her grandmother encouraged her to study art. This was considered an acceptable pursuit for young Southern ladies of her class, and Alice did not

object. Starting at twelve, the same year she lost her mother, Alice attended Miss Sass's School for Girls in the morning for her general education and the Carolina Art Association for art lessons in the afternoon (McInvaill 5, 13).

Alice would have been exposed to examples of fine art through visits to the homes and plantations of the prominent families of Charleston. Before the Civil War, these families collected both American and European Art. The European Grand Tour, common among both American and European upper-class families, often resulted in purchases of fine art. Travel in the United States and connections to local artists also allowed those with the finances necessary to make purchases to add to their art collections. Alice would have seen this art displayed in the homes of friends and family. Alice had family connections to the art world as well. From the early 1800s, Charles Fraser, John Izard Middleton, and Joseph Allen Smith, all related to Alice, were all important figures in the art world. Joseph Allen Smith was one of the American travelers in Europe who amassed a large collection of European art. His collection was donated to help start the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts which opened in 1805, America's oldest art museum and school. It is still in operation today. John Izard Middleton was a classical archaeologist, who sketched his findings. Charles Fraser was known for his miniature portraits, and Alice, along with her father, published a book about him in 1924 (McInvaill 10, 26).

One of the members of the family living at 69 Church Street was her cousin, Sabina Elliott Wells, who was the same age as Alice. Sabina's father and Alice's father were business partners in a cotton exporting business. Alice and Sabina spent much time together, both of them attending classes at the Carolina Art Association, which was quite near their home. The association was established in 1858 and had a library, organized art exhibitions, and sponsored art lessons. Alice's father was a member of this Art Association. Eventually, in 1893, he was made a director (McInvaill 7-8, 13). The Carolina Art Association became the Gibbes Art Gallery when James Shoolbred Gibbes donated the money to build a permanent home for the Association on Meeting Street in Charleston which opened in 1905 (Gibbes Museum of Art History). In 1988 it became the Gibbes Museum of Art, its present title. This name change was done to clarify its function as a nonprofit, art museum. It is still located at the Meeting Street site today (Severens ix-x).

At the Association, Alice and her cousin were taught by Mademoiselle Lucie-Louise Fery, a French woman whose efforts at the Association led to the art school being quite successful. Fery was an accomplished artist herself. Her work was exhibited in France and England, including being hung at the Paris exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts (Academie des Beaux-Arts). This was considered one of the highest acknowledgments of a person's artistic ability. In 1878 she was living in New York and exhibited at the National Academy of Design there. In the 1880s she moved to Charleston, where she continued to paint and exhibit along with running and teaching at the Art Association. Fery provided basic drawing lessons which were followed by lessons in watercolors, pastels, and oil painting. Lessons were also offered in china painting and

decorative arts, considered appropriate for the girls who attended the school. The girls were exposed to many artistic techniques, and in preparation for exhibitions, learned about arranging and hanging artwork (McInvaill 13-14).

Alice studied with Fery for seven years. Sabina, however, at sixteen, went north to New York to study at the Art Students League. In Alice's family, money was needed for her brothers' education. Finances were not available, however, for Alice to expand her education or to travel. These lessons at the Carolina Art Association were the only formal art training Alice received. She did remain in contact with Fery even after her lessons ended. Later on, Fery and Alice would both display their art at exhibits organized by the Carolina Art Association (McInvaill 11, 15, 19).

Alice's lessons with Fery ended when she was around nineteen. About the same time, her cousin, Sabina, returned to Charleston from New York. The economy of Charleston continued to suffer, compounded by the consequences of the earthquake of 1886, and Alice's family continued to struggle with finances. The young cousins had to find ways to earn money. Alice was encouraged by her grandmother to paint portraits. She practiced by painting her family, starting at fifteen with a portrait of her younger sister, Caroline. Painting portraits was an acceptable way for a young lady to earn money. However, Alice found modest success in painting and selling fans and dance cards. She also sold watercolor sketches of the colorful African American vendors who sold their flowers on the streets of Charleston (5, 22, 17).

Alice and Sabina then had their first venture into the public arena. Together they supported the efforts of the Charleston Exposition of 1901-1902, officially known as the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition. The Exposition's purpose was to

improve South Carolina's economy and business opportunities. Sabina, with help from Alice, planned the official souvenir for the Exposition. It was a pamphlet of poetry entitled *Verses from the Cotton Boll* by Henry Timrod. Sabina illustrated the cover and set up the layout for the pages.

In 1902 when the Exposition ended, Alice and Sabina were twenty-six years old and not married. They needed careers to provide for themselves financially. With the economy in Charleston making it difficult to make a living, Sabina left Charleston, moving to New Orleans to pursue a career as a potter. She entered Sophie Newcomb College, a women's college associated with Tulane University (McInvaill 17-19). Newcomb College had been founded in 1886 through a $100,000 grant from Josephine Louise Newcomb whose daughter, Harriott Sophie Newcomb, died at fifteen of diphtheria. The College was unusual for its time because the donor requested that its art department focus on providing an industrial arts program where students could acquire income-producing skills. The establishment of Newcomb Pottery met this goal. It allowed students to produce pottery they could sell (History of Newcomb College). Sabina was successful in producing and selling her pottery. Her work is shown in major museums (McInvaill 19) and online research shows that her pottery is still sold at auction houses today. One of her vases sold in May, 2023, for $13,860 (Rago Auctions).

Male members of the family were also leaving Charleston, heading to cities in the North for better economic opportunities. Alice's brother, Mason, ended up working as an attorney in New York. This presented an opportunity for his sisters. Caroline, who was a musician, wanted to study piano at the New York College of Music. Alice decided to accompany her to New York, and through their brother's connections, they were able to

secure housing in a boarding house for the summer of 1902. At the boarding house, Alice met Cecile E. Payen. Payen was an established artist who had studied in France. When she returned from Europe, she settled in Chicago where she exhibited her art, particularly miniature portraits. In 1893, she was awarded a medal for her miniature portraits at the World's Columbian Exposition which was held in Chicago. Setting up a studio in that city, she gave lessons on the skill of painting miniatures. By the early 1900s Payen was in New York, painting miniatures of the upper-class notables (McInvaill 23). Today the New York Historical Society Museum and Library owns two of her works, including one of Caroline Astor Drayton (Payen) So while Caroline practiced the piano, Alice learned techniques for using watercolors to paint miniature portraits on ivory from Payen. At the end of the summer, the sisters returned to Charleston. Alice used the skills learned in New York to paint miniatures on commission. This allowed her to earn an income. She had some commercial success. For example, in 1905, Charleston's Mayor paid $50 for one of Alice's miniatures, and in a note, he indicated that more orders were coming her way. An example of Alice's work from her New York lessons is presently owned by the Gibbes Museum of Art (McInvaill 23-26).

Up to this point in her life, Alice led the traditional lifestyle of a young lady from the white, elite classes of the South. She enjoyed the strong support and encouragement of her family in her pursuit of an art career. However, as she moved through her twenties, her lifestyle became a mixture of traditional and progressive ideals. Already connected to the social society of Charleston by her family, Alice began to play her role in Charleston's cultural scene.

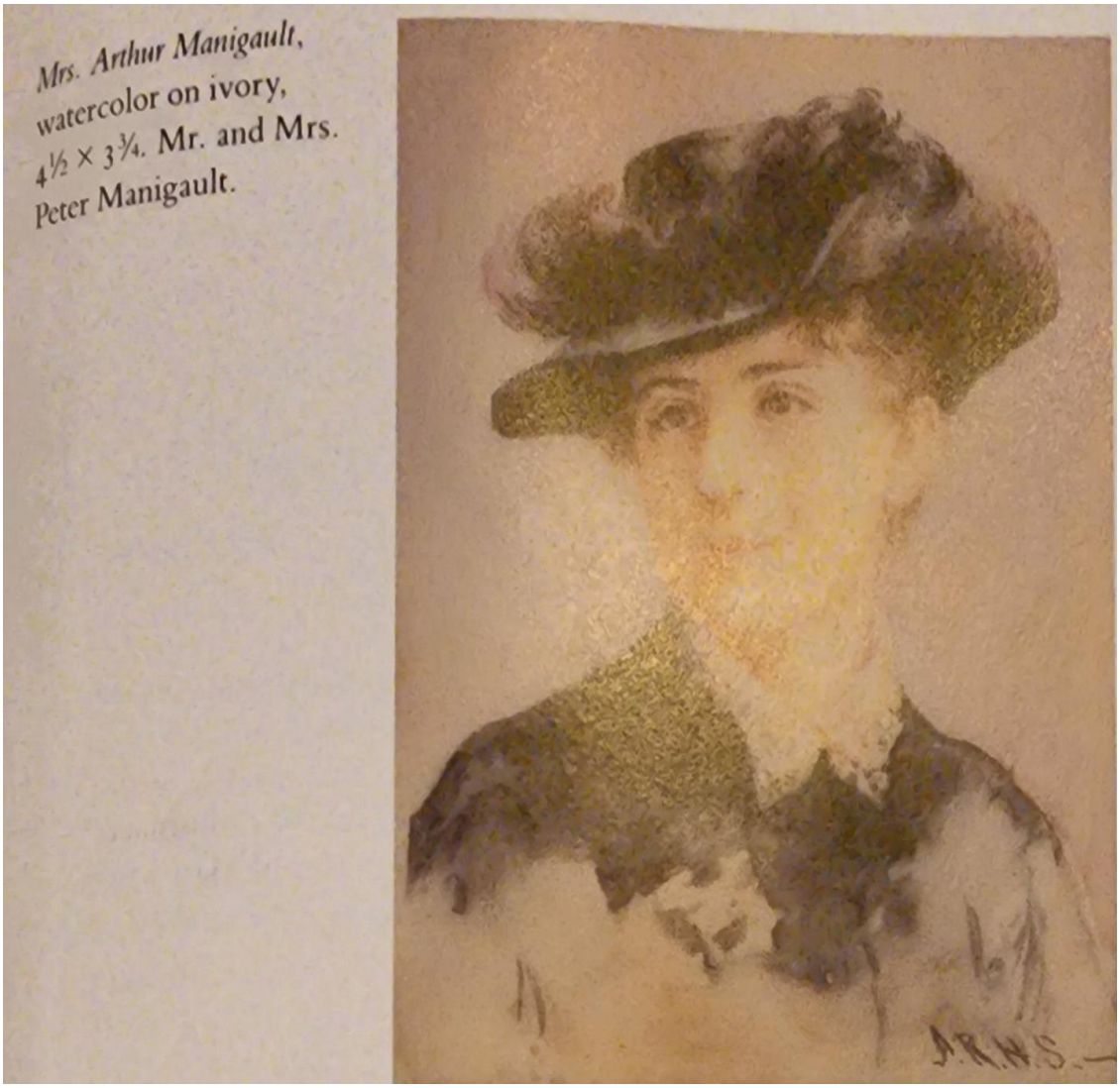

Figure 2. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Mrs. Arthur Manigault*, watercolor on ivory, 4 ½ x 3 ¾ inches. Mr. and Mrs. Peter Manigault.

When Alice returned to Charleston from New York, both she and her sister, Caroline, were once again seeking ways to generate income. They placed side-by-side advertisements in the *News and Courier*, Charleston's premiere newspaper, published today as the *Post and Courier.* The advertisements ran on September 23, 1902. Caroline's offered piano lessons at her studio at 6 King Street. Alice's offered lessons in drawing and

watercolors at her studio at 23 Chalmers Street in the Confederate Home Building. At this point, Alice concentrated mainly on portraits in a variety of genres including watercolors. She was becoming successful at selling her paintings. She had sold six paintings by 1906. More importantly, she was getting more recognition. In 1907, one of her watercolors was accepted for display at a watercolor exhibition put on by the New York Watercolor Club. It was offered for sale at $75 (McInvaill 29).

Alice went through different stages in her development as an artist. In her education under M. Fuery, she was exposed to several mediums. Again, these art lessons she took at the Carolina Art Association were the only formal schooling Alice had. However, she did have a series of mentors. Cecile Payen taught her about painting miniatures, Helen Hyde and Bertha Jaques advised her on etching, and Birge Harrison exposed her to landscape painting (Severens 34, 38, 4).

When the Carolina Art Association received the endowment from James S. Gibbes's will, the will specified that the money be used for the building of a hall to exhibit artwork. In 1905, one of the changes in the organization that accompanied the new building was the admittance of women to the organization. Alice became a member and volunteered at the new museum, using her knowledge and skills to mount exhibitions. She continued to be a strong supporter of the Gibbes throughout her life. The Museum particularly benefited from her donation of the watercolors from her book, *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*. By 1908 she was the chairperson of the committee in charge of hosting art receptions. When the Museum mounted a major exhibition of one hundred paintings, Alice volunteered to help arrange it. Two of the paintings from the exhibition were oils on canvas by Birge Harrison (McInvaill 29).

Birge Harrison was possibly the person who influenced Alice the most in her landscape paintings. He was from the North but spent several winters in Charleston. During the summer, he ran the Summer School of the Art Students League of New York at the Woodstock Art Colony in the Catskill Mountains, a cool country location removed from the heat of the city (31). Here surrounded by nature, he taught artists to paint landscapes in the Tonalist style. This style emphasized the beauty of nature using soft, muted colors and hazy lines similar to the Impressionists. He published a book, *Landscape Painting*, in which he defined his philosophy of painting. While in Charleston, he established his studio in one of Alice's family's outbuildings. His methods appealed to Alice, and when she returned to Charleston, she approached him and asked him if he would give her art lessons. He refused; however, he then made it a habit to visit her studio and offer conversation on her works. As these visits continued over the several winters he stayed in Charleston, he became Alice's mentor. He was known for helping women artists to develop their skills enabling them to advance in the art world, difficult for women to do at that time. He believed that entering paintings in exhibitions was important because it forced the artists to produce their best work since the paintings would be compared to other works in the exhibition. With his encouragement, Alice put her work out for exhibitions, expanding her exposure outside of Charleston and New York. Her work was shown throughout the United States. Alice and Harrison continued to correspond even after he no longer came to Charleston for the winter. In one of the letters Harrison wrote to Alice, he congratulated her on having her watercolors on exhibit in New York and stressed the importance of continuing to submit her work for exhibition (Severens 4-5).

While she never attended the Woodstock Art Colony, she benefited from her association with Harrison. It was from him that she was exposed to the idea of painting from memory. She embraced the idea of immersing herself in nature and absorbing the feelings and emotions that she would later put on canvas or paper in her studio (McInvaill 31).

Figure 3. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Great White Egrets in a July Shower*. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 21 7/8 x 29 3/4 inches. The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, S.C.

Another man who influenced Alice's interest in art was Motte Alston Read. A member of an old Charleston family and a distant cousin of Alice, he was an educated man who had studied at Harvard University. He then became a professor at Harvard,

where he taught physiography, the study of physical geography. In addition, he taught classes at Radcliffe and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Severens 5). He was also a serious collector of Japanese woodblock prints. However, he suffered from severe arthritis (Smith, *Reminiscences* 21). His illness caused him to give up his position at Harvard and return to Charleston, where he took a position at the College of Charleston. Upon his return to Charleston, he became interested in exploring the history of the city and its people. He lived at 8 Atlantic Street with his mother in a house they rented from Alice and her sisters. The three sisters had acquired the house through their grandmother. Alice and Read became close, sharing their interest in Asian Art. As his arthritis worsened, he was forced to give up his position at the College of Charleston.

However, Read continued his interest in Asian art. Over the years, he had amassed a collection of Japanese woodblock prints. Alice helped him catalog them. Through this work and through the materials available to her in Read's library, she became quite knowledgeable about the various techniques and themes of Japanese and Chinese art. Asian art was quite popular in the United States at the time. In Charleston alone between 1905 and 1907, there were three exhibitions of Japanese art, referred to as Japonisme. There was one at the Gibbes Museum of Art, a second at the College of Charleston, and a third at the Charleston Museum. Two artists were particularly associated with Asian landscape painting, and Read had their books on Asian art in his library. Ernest F. Fenollosa had studied history and philosophy at Harvard. He also became knowledgeable in the area of Asian art, studying at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He then traveled to Japan to continue his research into Japanese and Chinese art (McInvaill 40). In her memoir, Alice mentioned that she read and was strongly moved by his *Epochs of Chinese*

and Japanese Art, which described the way the power of nature was reflected in landscapes. It was by reading Fenollosa that Alice was introduced to Kakki, an artist from the eleventh century. She read his *Essay on Landscape*. She was so inspired by his writing that she quoted from it in her memoirs (Smith, *Reminiscences* 90). Kakki's description of how landscapes, with their haze and mist and depictions of birds and animals, can bring peace and joy to humans stuck in their busy working lives affected her way of looking at art. One can see the influence this had on her art, especially her watercolors. She studied Asian techniques and later created her art through woodblocks from 1916 to 1920 (McInvaill 42). This exposure to Asian landscape painting brought an end to her portrait painting. Her focus shifted to landscapes. As she stated in her memoirs, "I left that road for the lovely, winding paths of the country" (Smith, *Reminiscences* 91).

In 1920, Read and his mother died within a short time of each other. Eventually, his sister bequeathed his collection of Japanese art to the Gibbes Museum of Art. The building at 8 Atlantic Street where he and his mother had lived became a studio for Alice and her sister, Caroline. Caroline gave her piano and music lessons upstairs, while Alice had her art studio downstairs (McInvaill 64, 176).

Two women were also influential in exposing Alice to the art of producing woodblock prints. Helen Hyde and Bertha Jaques had both studied the technique in Japan and were familiar with all aspects of the process. They both became mentors to Alice and helped Alice select and obtain the special papers, cherrywood, and other supplies needed for the process of producing the prints.

Alice met Helen Hyde in 1916 at Chicora Wood, one of the plantations owned by Elizabeth Waties Allston Pringle. Alice had illustrated a book entitled *A Woman Rice Planter* that Pringle had written in 1913. Pringle, a widow, had taken to taking in paying guests at the plantation to help with her financial situation, and Hyde was one of those guests. Anna Heyward Taylor had helped to arrange for Hyde to display her work in Charleston. Hyde was already a successful printmaker from Chicago. She had studied Japonisme and had spent an extended time in Japan, studying Japanese techniques. Some of her work had already been shown at the Gibbes Art Gallery. Alice knew Taylor from their common interest in art, and Taylor arranged for Alice and her cousin Sabina Wells to meet Hyde.

Jaques was one of the leaders in the Chicago Society of Etchers. She was in Charleston in 1917 because the Society was placing an exhibition at the Gibbes Art Gallery. Hyde and Jaques shared their knowledge and techniques for woodblock printing with Alice and Wells. Alice became skilled at cutting and coloring her own woodblocks and received highly complimentary remarks on her work from both Hyde and Jacques (McInvaill 59-60). In a letter to Alice in 1918, Hyde expressed her thoughts on Alice's work: "You astound me: yes you do! I was so amazed at your print. It is so sure and finished, beautiful in technique." Jaques commented: "I take off my hat and make a profound obeisance to you and so would the Japanese who would recognize your gift for composition and your skilled craftsmanship." They arranged for Alice's work to be shown at the Art Institute of Chicago (Severens 38-40). Jaques was particularly enthusiastic in arranging for Alice's woodblock prints and watercolors to be shown in Chicago and New York. This included placing Alice's work in art stores as well as

galleries. After Alice's watercolors were exhibited in a gallery in Chicago, Jacques decided to place some of them at the Art Institute of Chicago's juried exhibition in 1919. The Institute approved five of the paintings and purchased one for its permanent collection (McInvaill 62). Alice, along with Mary Hume, Read's sister, took one of her rare trips out of Carolina to Chicago. There Frederick Gookin, one of the curators at the Chicago Art Institute, guided them through the Institute's Japanese prints collection. He then escorted them to a bank where he kept his private collection of prints and shared them and his knowledge of the prints with Alice and Mary (Smith, *Reminiscences* 122.).

Two other women who acted as mentors to Alice and Verner were Ellen Day Hale and Gabrielle Clements. Hale from Boston and Clements from Baltimore spent their winters in Charleston. They met Alice and offered to share their expertise in producing etchings using a printing press (McInvaill 77).

Alice took advantage of the skills and knowledge that her mentors shared with her. She then, in turn, would share this information with others.

Figure 4. Calling cards from visitors to Alice Smith's studio including Alice's in the center, c. 1908-1920. Collection of Dwight McInvaill.

CHAPTER TWO

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALLY

From 1920 through 1937, Alice continued to develop her art. She also continued and expanded her activities related to the preservation movement that was blossoming in Charleston. She was instrumental in establishing groups that supported the preservation movements. She also participated in groups devoted to encouraging the cultural development of Charleston. She continued to heed the advice of Birge Harrison who had encouraged her to submit her work for exhibition (Severens 5) and sent her work out for display in the United States and Europe (Dillingham 13-16). She continued to publish books and articles. She associated with a group of artists, authors, historians, and architects that, among others, included John Bennett, Laura Bragg, Susan Pringle Frost, DuBose Heyward, Alfred Hutty, Nell Pringle, Herbert Ravenel Sass, Albert Simons, Thomas P. Stoney, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, and Robert N. S. Whitelaw (Yuhl 197). The various roles these people played in the cultural life of Charleston will be discussed later in this dissertation. The time period in which she was so active in this cultural movement later came to be known as the Charleston Renaissance (15-16).

Charleston Renaissance

The Southern Literary Renaissance and the Charleston Renaissance were both cultural movements that took place starting after War I in the 1920s and continuing through to the outbreak of World War II. However, neither of these titles were used

during that time period. The authors associated with the Southern Literacy Renaissance, a movement that included the entire South, offered the premise that, because of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the South was lagging behind the rest of the country in cultural development. They believed that the South was stuck in the past. Their works moved away from the traditional presentations of Southern life and strove to modernize their works, portraying realist situations. Authors such as William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, and Tennessee Williams are associated with this movement (College of Charleston).

Conversely, the Charleston Renaissance, limited to Charleston and the surrounding Lowcountry, was dedicated to the preservation of old Charleston's culture and history. The leaders of this movement were authors, artists, poets, architects, and political leaders. They were the power class, the white elite. They were preserving history and culture as interpreted by their class, which was not necessarily wealthy any longer, but definitely possessed power. For example, they did celebrate the Negro spiritual, and they organized the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. They gave concerts presenting the music, but the songs were performed by whites, and African Americans were not allowed to attend. This elite group worked to preserve the culture through their perception of what life was like for the slaves before and after the Civil War. They were nostalgic for an idealize life that never really existed (Yuhl 16-17, 131-134).

The term Charleston Renaissance was not used until 1985 when it was used by the Gibbes Museum of Art in conjunction with their exhibition *Charleston in the Age of Porgy and Bess.* Martha Severens, curator of the museum from 1979 to 1990, stated it was used to promote the presentation. The exhibition celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the novel *Porgy* by DuBose Heyward and the fiftieth anniversary of the opera *Porgy*

and Bess by George Gershwin. Today the Museum has the Charleston Renaissance Gallery where artwork from this period is displayed, and the term has come into common usage to describe the time (Yuhl 15-16, 205).

As Alice continued to develop her art during this time, she became involved in the emerging social and cultural movement that was working to preserve the history and culture of Charleston and the Lowcountry region. This movement also supported the economic development of the area. There was a group of people working toward these goals, and they established committees, clubs, and societies as a way of formally addressing these issues. The membership in these groups often overlapped as they consisted mostly of the white, elite of Charleston. There were some outsiders. These were people who had connections or family members who lived in the area or who came to Charleston from the North for the winter. Alice played a key role in some of these organizations, and she was a founding member of several of the groups.

Charleston Etchers Club

The Charleston Etchers Club was one of these groups. As mentioned before, Alice was acquainted with Helen Hyde and Bertha Jaques and had learned a great deal about Japanese woodblock prints from them. They had helped both Alice and Elizabeth O'Neill Verner with their careers, arranging for Alice's and Verner's work to be exhibited in Chicago and other places in the Midwest. Two other women visiting Charleston also stopped in at Alice's studio and discussed the process of etching to produce prints. Ellen Day Hale and Gabrielle Clements were experienced etchers, and they offered their advice

on etching to Alice and Verner. It was suggested that they get a group together, and Hale and Clements would help them set up a press and demonstrate how to produce finished etchings. Among the nine founding members of the Charleston Etchers Club were Smith, Verner, Hale, Clements, Alfred Hutty, and John Bennett. Seven of the nine were women. The two men were not from Charleston. Hutty was from Michigan. Bennett was from Ohio and only ever produced one print; however, as an author, he brought prestige to the group. He had published a book entitled *Madame Margot: A Grotesque Legend of Old Charleston* in 1921 (Yuhl 17, 195). Although Hutty was from Michigan, he was part of the Woodstock Art Colony in New York. He was instrumental in obtaining the press that all members of the club shared. It was housed in the Charleston Museum (Hutchisson 40-41) where Laura Bragg, a transplant from New England, was director. When she was appointed in 1920, she became the first woman director of an American museum funded through public money (McInvaill 77-78).

Alice only participated in the Etcher's Club from 1923 to 1927, although she was acknowledged as an honorary member for life in recognition of her contributions to the Club. In 1927, she decided that watercolors would be the main focus of her art (Severens 41).

Verner, however, continued to work with etchings and became well-known for her prints. She was widowed in 1925 and had two children to support on her own. It made good business sense to produce prints. The prints were inexpensive to produce and easy to move from one place to another. She could produce multiple copies from one plate (8). The prints could also be used for illustrations in books. She was particularly known for her prints of the African American flower vendors who walked the streets of Charleston.

She would later draw these women in pastels. Like Alice, she was successful in selling her work (Hutchisson 41-43). She stated, “When I became a professional artist, I did nothing else. I hired a secretary, refused to teach, sent my etchings to every show in this country and abroad I knew of, began lecturing and writing—And it all worked, I was lucky” (42).

Figure 5. Elizabeth O’Neill Verner. *The Flower Vendor*. Pastel on silk. 27 7/8 x 23 inches. Provenance: Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Southern States Art League

Alice was also one of the founders of the Southern States Art League (McInvaill 77). This League was established to showcase Southern art through exhibitions to demonstrate that the South had a rich artistic culture of its own and could compete culturally with places like New York, New England, or Chicago. Verner was also a founding member and was active in the League (Yuhl 76). The League had its first exhibition at the Gibbes Museum of Art in 1921. Alice participated in the organization and donated an annual cash prize. This prize was awarded to the best watercolor (McInvaill 77).

Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings

Although the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings had a large membership, three women stood out as leaders of the group. It was co-founded in 1920 by Susan Pringle Frost and Nell Pringle, cousins by marriage, and Alice, also a cousin. They all played prominent roles in working to preserve the houses of the old, elite, white families of Charleston. The movement started when the Joseph Manigault House was scheduled to be demolished to make way for an automobile service station. That was the impetus for the group to devise ways to save homes of architectural significance, particularly ones from the colonial era, before they disappeared forever. One of the techniques they used was to purchase buildings and then bring them back to their former glory. After the structures were restored, they then acquire appropriate furnishings, often from their own families' collections, that represented the period décor of the homes (Brundage 228, 230-232).

However, the members needed to raise money to proceed with their plans. Frost, an independent woman who was a suffragette, focused her efforts on the dwelling at 27 King Street which was her own ancestral home. She also worked to transform Tradd Street in Charleston. This area had become rundown and populated by African Americans. Frost worked to restore the buildings there and have white families move into them. This, unfortunately, drove the African Americans out of Tradd Street (Brundage 246). Neal Pringle addressed the issue of the Manigault House. These preservation efforts were expensive, and both women used their own money for much of the work. They did this to the point where their investments in the project caused them financial distress. This situation led to an interesting economic development. To help meet costs, tours of the restored historic dwellings were offered for a fee. It was even possible to stay as a guest on some of the plantations or at historic houses as the owners often sought ways to raise funds. These tours and stays were very popular with the tourists (232-235). The number of tourists to Charleston had been increasing since the outbreak of World War I prevented Americans from traveling to Europe. Charleston was developing a reputation for its climate as well as its art scene and its historic venues (Yuhl 161). Thomas P. Stoney, Mayor of Charleston from 1923-1931, capitalized on this when he declared Charleston as “America’s Most Historic City” (Brundage 245).

Alice had promoted the idea of preserving Charleston’s architectural past before the Society had been established. In addition to her support to the Society’s various projects, Alice contributed to the spreading of awareness of these fine examples of architecture through her illustrations of them in her books *Twenty Drawings of the Pringle House on King Street, Charleston, South Carolina* and *The Dwellings Houses of*

Charleston, South Carolina. Her father wrote the accompanying text which discussed the historical significance of these houses and the background of the families that had lived in them (Brundage 238). She also wrote an article for *Art in America* in 1916 entitled "Doorways, Gateways and Stairways of Quaint Old Charleston" (McInvaill 178). She stated when she published the *Twenty Drawings of the Pringle House* in 1913, "It is part of a plan of mine to do what I can to preserve some of the stimulating and interesting memories of the state. For some years I have been making drawings of old houses in Charleston and on the coast which are rapidly disappearing" (Severens 12). She and her father continued to encourage the cause of preservation in 1917 in their *Dwelling Houses.* The last paragraph in that book stated,

> Although this Pinckney house and many others of its own and earlier dates have disappeared, yet fortunately much remains in Charleston to mark a continuity in the character of its people as well as in its architecture. May it not therefore be hoped that what has accidentally been preserved may be long retained (Smith, *Dwelling Houses* 375).

The preservation movement was not without controversy. While the members wanted to maintain historical authenticity, they also had to face practical facts. For example, they did not want a gas station in the neighborhood, but they did want the tourists to come by car to spend their money and bolster the economy. There were complaints concerning the African American flower vendors. These women walked the streets of Charleston, peddling their flowers to the citizens and tourists. Some people thought that there were too many of them and that they were too aggressive. Yet the sketches artists made of them, particularly Verner, had made them a part of the charm of

Charleston, and these prints and pastels sold well to the tourist trade. Compromises had to be made since tourism had become a major industry in the city (Yuhl 166-167, 85). The Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings eventually changed its name to the Preservation Society of Charleston. It continues today to work to educate the public concerning historic venues and to support efforts made to preserve the history and culture of Charleston. It also engages in fundraising to back preservation projects (Brundage 245).

Board of Architectural Review

In 1929, Charleston officials, including Mayor Stoney, established the City Planning and Zoning Commission. This Commission, made up of volunteers, was to oversee any building in the older part of Charleston. They then hired a professional city planning firm. The firm suggested that a zoning ordinance be established. In 1931, Charleston officials approved the ordinance. Mayor Stoney also approved it, and the Old and Historic District of Charleston was established. The zoning ordinance also set up the Board of Architectural Review Board whose purpose was to regulate any renovations on the exteriors of the buildings within the Historic District. This was the first historic district established by a government body in the United States. Most of members of Charleston's white, elite class lived within the Historic District. The Board of Architectural Review still functions today to regulate new building and exterior renovations within a much larger historic district. However, the Board was not the last organization established to preserve the historic areas of Charleston. The Historic Charleston Foundation was founded in 1947 (Yuhl 43, 192-193).

The Historic Charleston Foundation

Alice was a founding member of the Historic Charleston Foundation (McInvaill 177). While similar in goals to the Preservation Society, the Historic Charleston Foundation worked to preserve larger areas, including whole neighborhoods. They also considered structures outside the lines of the established Old and Historic District (Yuhl 192-193) which had been set by the Board of Architectural Review in the 1930s (Severens 15).

The Foundation still functions today to promote preservation, affordable housing, efficient transportation, and manageable tourism. The last goal is important because Charleston is "the number one tourist destination in the United States." The Foundation is aware that it can be costly for owners to maintain a historic home. To assist with those expenses, the Foundation has a Revolving Fund program which provides loans and grants to finance exterior renovations on historic buildings. The Foundation grants yearly awards to individuals or organizations whose activities match the goals of the Foundation. They also send representatives to the Board of Architectural Review meetings and collaborate with that Board to work toward consistent, appropriate development in the city (Historic Charleston). Alice's efforts had long-term effects.

The Carolina Art Association, Gibbes Art Gallery, Gibbes Museum of Art

The Carolina Art Association was established in 1858. Alice's father had been active in the Association, serving as a director in the late 1800s. Alice had taken her only formal art lessons there from M. Fery. When the Association opened membership to

women, Alice joined immediately. She played many roles, from hanging exhibitions to acting as a hostess to displaying her own works. The Association had built an exhibition space called the Gibbes Art Gallery. She supported the Association financially and donated the thirty watercolors from her *Carolina Rice Plantation* series to the Gibbs Art Gallery. The Gallery also purchased examples of Alice's artwork for their permanent collection (Severens 25). The Gibbes Museum of Art is still a part of the Charleston art scene today and continues to show exhibitions of Alice's work (Gibbes Museum History).

In the early 1940s Robert N. S. Whitelaw, Director of the Carolina Art Association, organized a group of citizens interested in compiling a record of the notable buildings in Charleston. The group obtained funding from the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, and hired Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. Olmstead was an expert in city planning, serving as Boston's city planner. His advice was to document the existing historic buildings before they started to disappear. The result was *This is Charleston An Architectural Survey of a Unique American City* published by the Carolina Art Association in 1944. This volume was a comprehensive list of the historic buildings in Charleston with photographs of each building. It also contained a history of the city and the buildings by Samuel Gaillard Stoney. Alice was the only woman on the four-person panel who evaluated sites for inclusion in the book. When the volume was reissued in 1960, both the Historic Charleston Foundation and the Preservation Society of Charleston lent their support both in supplying financing and in updating the text (Stoney ix).

The Poetry Society of South Carolina

The Poetry Society of South Carolina started in 1920 when Hervey Allen, John Bennett, DuBose Heyward, and Laura Bragg gathered a group of writers to meet to review and critique the work of other writers. Allen, Bennett, and Bragg came from out of town, although Bennett's wife, Susan Smythe Bennett, was from an old Charleston family. Heyward was from Charleston. The first three were authors. Heyward was probably the best-known of the three. He wrote the well-known play, *Porgy and Bess*. The musical version of the play became an opera and is still produced today. Bragg's contribution to the Society included serving as an officer and supporting literary discussions. She was the driving force behind the establishment of the first public library in Charleston. She also funded a literary prize given by the Society (Hutchisson 199, 200, 202). As the Society expanded, it became a respected organization that supported a literary revival. The membership, overlapping with the other cultural societies in Charleston, came from the white elite class. Alice and her sister Lilli were both members. Lilli wrote plays and poetry and was on the executive committee of the Society (McInvaill 71-73). The Society published a yearbook with poetry, illustrations, articles, editorials, and calendars of cultural activities. Among the members whose works were contained in the yearbooks were Alice, Verner, Bennett, and Hutty. The Society also awarded prizes in several categories. There were prizes awarded to high school and college students. There were also prizes awarded to adults at the regional and national levels (Yuhl 94, 99).

Membership in the Poetry Society was considered quite prestigious. To show the influence that the members of the Poetry Society had in the cultural arena of the city, we

can look at the fact that Charleston Mayor Thomas P. Stoney, when appointing members to the Art Commission, selected them almost exclusively from the Poetry Society (Hutchisson 208-209).

Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals

Another prestigious group in Charleston was the Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals. They were exclusive in their membership. To be a member, a white person from Charleston had to have lived on a plantation or be descended from someone who had (Yuhl 133). Alice was associated with this group when she provided illustrations for their publication *The Carolina Low-Country*.

The purpose of the Society was, as stated in the name, to preserve the musical tradition of the African American spirituals. However, no African Americans were allowed to be members or attend the Society's popular concerts. The members performed in the clothing of the antebellum slave owners. The Society cataloged and wrote down many spirituals. This allowed the songs to be shared and spread. However, no connection between the spirituals and African Americans and slavery was ever shown. These white elite citizens of Charleston admired the African American musical tradition, yet did not acknowledge the talents or rights of the people who created the spirituals (Yuhl 132, 192).

All these various organizations did contribute to preserving the historical buildings of Charleston. They also created a literary and cultural environment in the city. However, they had a strong social aspect as well. A person's place within the Charleston

society could be measured by their membership in certain groups. Alice and her colleagues, by their memberships, were members of the Charleston elite. The following list of people active in the Charleston cultural scene and the groups of which they were members demonstrates this fact.

Alice, Poetry Society, Etchers Club, Regional Planning Committee, Carolina Art Association,

John Bennett, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, Etchers Club

Laura Bragg, Poetry Society, Charleston Museum

Susan Pringle Frost, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings

DuBose Heyward, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals

Alfred Hutty, Poetry Society, Etchers Club, Regional Planning Committee

Nell Pringle, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings

Herbert Ravenel Sass, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals, Historical Commission

Albert Simon, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, Society for the Preservation of Negro Spirituals, Etchers Club, Charleston Museum, Regional Planning Committee, Board of Architectural Review, Carolina Art Association

Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, Etchers Club

Robert N. S. Whitelaw, Poetry Society, Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, Etchers Club, Carolina Art Association (Yuhl 195-197.)

It is important to examine these organizations and Alice's participation in them. It shows how Alice was a participant and a leader in these organizations. Her leadership contributed significantly to the cultural revitalization of Charleston. She retained her

leadership role even after many leadership positions had shifted from the initial majority of women to the majority of men. In 1944, she was chosen as the only woman on the panel of judges to select the historical buildings to be included in *This is Charleston* (Stoney ix-x). In 1947 she founded the Historical Charleston Foundation (Yuhl 192).

Exhibitions

While Alice participated in the activities of the various groups she belonged to, she also continued to paint. By the early 1920s, she had decided, with encouragement from her father, to concentrate her efforts on watercolors (Smith, *Reminiscences* 122). Some of the watercolors she used in her books and articles, others she sent out to exhibitions, and some she offered for sale in her studio. In 1921 she sent out eighty-four pieces of her work, including prints, drawings, and watercolors, on an exhibition that visited nine cities in the South.

In 1922 she established a studio at 8 Atlantic Street, which was within the Historic District as was her home at 69 Church Street. Elizabeth O'Neill Verner's studio was nearby. So were the studios of Anna Heyward Taylor and Leila Waring (Dillingham 13, 27). These women formed their own artistic community which was beneficial to all of them. Alice was gracious, especially to Verner. After visitors finished perusing the paintings in her studio, she suggested they visit the other studios in the area. She would occasionally send Verner's work along with her own as she sent her paintings out for exhibition. The artists exchanged ideas and encouraged each other in their work. They started the tradition of having "teas" where local visitors and tourists could come and see the artists' work and engage in discussions on art and other cultural issues (McInvaill 77).

Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss and Mrs. Marshall Field, both from East Seventieth Street in New York City, were among the visitors to Alice's studio. They were both from prominent American families. Visitors Mrs. and Mr. Herbert Edwin were also from New York City where Mr. Hawkes was Dean of Columbia College, Columbia University. Both Field and Hawkes purchased pieces of Alice's art (Smith papers, Historical Society).

Alice, Verner, Taylor, and Waring joined an informal Society to promote all their careers. By supporting each other, they achieved financial success and professional recognition at a time when men had the lead in the art world (McInvaill 77). Alice and her friends were economic leaders. Their efforts resulted in a brisk tourist trade that benefited the families and the entire city. By selling paying tours and overnight accommodations, selling their artwork, and hosting teas, these women generated income to support their families. They drew people from all over the country to visit this well-preserved, beautiful city by publicizing historical Charleston through articles, books, and traveling art exhibits. While they were there, the tourists spent money in the lodgings, restaurants, antique shops, and other businesses in the city, contributing to the economic growth of the city.

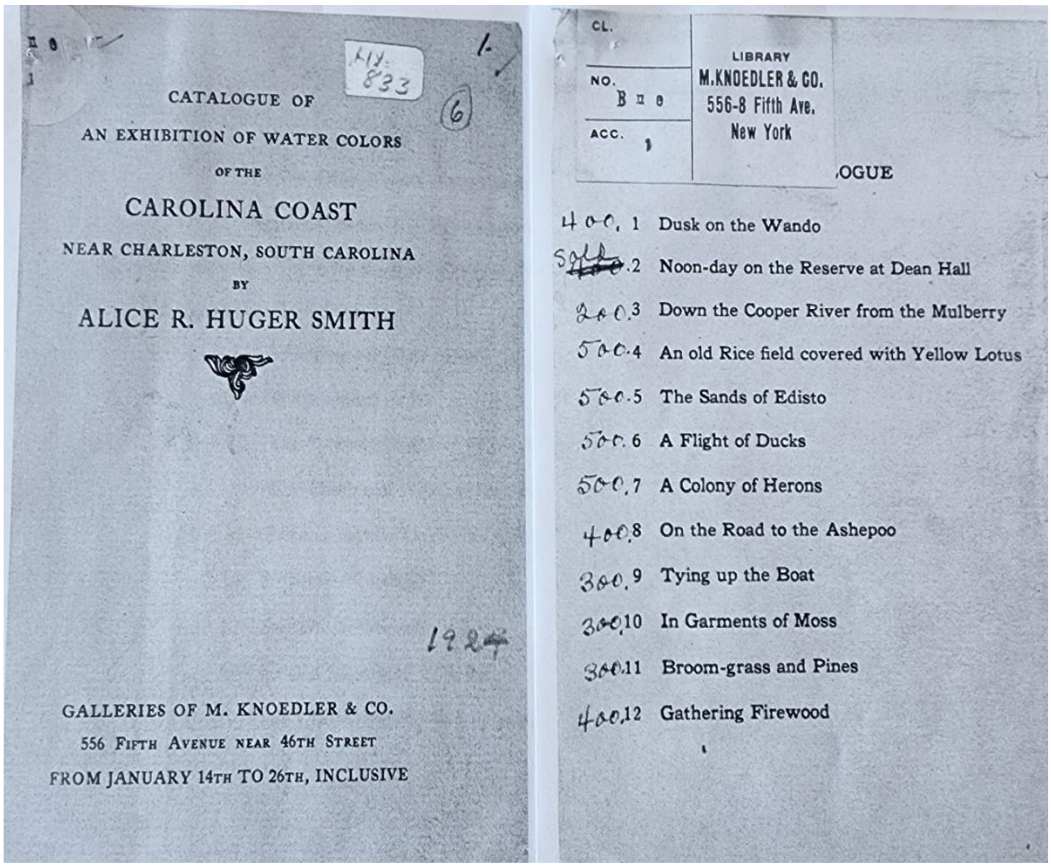

Figure 6. Brochure for an exhibition of Watercolors by Alice R. Huger Smith at the Galleries of M. Knoedler & Co, New York City, including prices. One painting was sold. The Frick Art Reference Library, New York City.

From 1923 through 1937 Alice continually submitted her work for exhibition. At first, the exhibitions were all in cities in the South. She displayed her work in Florida, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. However, in 1924, her paintings were included in art clubs and galleries in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Elmira, New York. From then until 1937, her work was shown at exhibitions throughout the country in many states. She also exhibited internationally when she was chosen in 1927 by the American Federation of Arts to have one of her prints shown with other American printmakers' work in Florence, Italy. She was chosen again in 1928 when a similar exhibition was mounted by the American Federation of Arts in Paris, France (Dillingham 13-15). Alice took

responsibility for arranging the details for the exhibitions including contacting museums, arranging transportation, setting prices, and discussing sales (Severens 20).

There was then a ten-year break before Alice again participated in any exhibitions. In 1947 an exhibition entitled *Retrospective Exhibition of The Work of Alice Ravenel Huger Smith* was mounted at the Gibbes Museum of Art. From 1947 through 1951 her work was part of a permanent exhibition at the Pink House Galleries (Dillingham). The Pink House Galleries had been established by Harry McInvaill and his wife, Talulah. They used the historic building, the Pink House, to house a business where they sold prints, etchings, and paintings by artists from Charleston as well as antiques and small gifts. McInvaill had met Alice and her sister during World War II when he was in the Navy and stationed in Charleston. He was invited to one of the many dinners that the sister gave for servicemen. He was from South Carolina, and he found a common interest in the arts with the sisters. Alice became a good friend and mentor to him. He eventually became a lodger at 69 Church Street and stayed until his marriage (McInvaill 145-149). When McInvaill opened a second location of the Pink House in Myrtle Beach (Dillingham 16), Alice offered to help by spending her mornings at the Charleston location free of charge. (In her Will, Alice, who was never financially able to attend college herself, left funds to pay for McInvaill's four children's college tuition (McInvaill 159, 169). In 1949, fifteen of her watercolors were displayed at the National Audubon Society in New York (160), and the last exhibit of her work during her lifetime was in 1951 at the Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, South Carolina (Dillingham 16).

Figure 7. The Pink House rack card, 1946. Collection of Dwight McInvaill.

Alice's exhibitions certainly helped her financially. They provided greater exposure for her work, and she could expand her market for selling her paintings. Museums in Brooklyn, Albany, Atlanta, Chicago, Chattanooga, New Orleans, Milwaukee, and Charleston all purchased her art for their permanent collections (Dillingham 16, Severens 21). However, the exhibits also helped bring attention to Charleston and helped build an awareness of the Renaissance going on there. The tourist trade benefitted from her exhibits. After viewing her work, people often wanted to know

more about Alice and the lovely Lowcountry she portrayed in her paintings. That led to more people coming to Charleston to experience the cultural scene. Alice welcomed these visitors to her studio. That often led to information about Alice being spread by word of mouth, as her visitors recommended to their neighbors and friends that they also visit Charleston and Alice's studio (Severens 22)

It is important to know what is meant by the word "elite" when it is used to refer to the Charleston elite. During Alice's lifetime, it referred to a group of exclusive families. They were all white Protestants, descended from rice-growing plantation owners and early political leaders and those connected to them by familial ties. Many of the men had fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War (Alice's father had), and some could trace their lineage back to Colonial times and the American Revolution. This standing had little to do with wealth or economic standing. The families may have had wealth at one time; however, in fact, many, like Alice's family, suffered economic hardships as a result of the Civil War and Reconstruction. It was their race, political, and family connections that gave them their status. The family connections were often reflected in the use of multiple last names such as Alice's choice to use Ravenel Huger Smith to show her family ties (Brundage 244).

Elizabeth O'Neill Verner was an interesting example of how the close-knit elite of Charleston viewed themselves. In that closed, elite society, she was not considered one of the crowd. She had been born into an Irish Catholic family whose business was in trade. Her father was in France during the Civil War so was not part of the Confederate armed forces. He was a rice broker and through that activity, the planter elite did visit the

O'Neill home. Verner saw this as her connection to the inner circle. Upon her marriage, she converted to the Presbyterian Church. However, she just did not have the background to be considered one of the elite.

Verner and Alice were both leaders in the Charleston Renaissance. They were founding members of the Charleston Etchers' Club. Verner had more formal education than Alice had. She had studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and traveled to Japan and Europe. She was a successful artist and received honorary doctorate degrees from the University of South Carolina and the University of North Carolina. She was particularly well-known for her portraits of the Charleston Gullah Flower Women. However, while Verner was included in activities of the artistic community, she was never included in the social activities of the elite Charleston society. This would not have been apparent to tourists or others who bought her artwork, but it was apparent to the insiders. Although Verner's artwork and activities promoted the image of Charleston embraced by the elite, Verner was not offered membership in the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, which was considered one of the top cultural organizations that were comprised of the Charleston elite. That Society's membership included only former slave owners or their descendants. Her family background did not fit that profile. However, her work and dedication to supporting the image of the city that the Society put forth were recognized by the Society when they published *The Carolina Low-Country*, a collection of prose, poetry, and music praising the beauty, history, and culture of the Low-Country. Four of Verner's etchings were included in their publication.

Verner was well aware of this situation. She stated in her journal in 1935,

> The social lines are clearly marked but they are lines of blood and breeding and have nothing to do with bank accounts . . . tho' it were a bank account with 10 figures . . . it brings no letters of introduction with it. (Hutchisson 132-133).

When Verner was widowed and left with two children to provide for, Alice helped Verner by encouraging her to continue with her painting rather than take a more stable working position. Alice sent Verner's paintings, along with her own, out to exhibitions and suggested that tourists and others who visited her studio walk down Atlantic Street and visit Verner's studio also (Hutchisson 131). When the Board of the Gibbes Art Gallery chose to purchase examples of Alice's work, she asked Verner's opinion on which of her paintings to select so they would complement the Gallery's collection (Severns 25). Verner's daughter believed that Verner would not have succeeded without the assistance she received from Alice. It is interesting that although Alice made these efforts to help Verner achieve success artistically and economically, Alice saw Verner as a business associate, not a social equal (Hutchisson 131).

Views on Race

All members of these societies, clubs, and committees were white, which would not have been unusual during that time. However, some of the figures from the elite cultural groups were more progressive than others when it came to the issue of race.

DuBose Heyward came from a background similar to Alice's. He was born into an old Charleston family. One of his ancestors signed the Declaration of Independence. Like Alice's family, the Civil War and Reconstruction brought an end to the cotton plantation business for his family. However, he was more aware of the true situation of African Americans than others in his social class. In his novel, *Porgy,* published in 1925, and particularly in his novel*, Mamba's Daughters,* published in 1929, he showed some understanding of the plight of African Americans. In the novels, he describes many of the situations and pitfalls African Americans had to navigate in their daily lives. In *Mamba's Daughters, A Novel of Charleston*, the title character, the African American, Mamba, schemes to make the best possible situation for her daughter and granddaughter. She knows that to do that, she must ingratiate herself with a genteel white family. Heyward also shows the trials of the white families. In the book, the wealthy Wentworth family has moved to Charleston, and Mrs. Wentworth is looking forward to playing a role in society. She assumes she will be invited to social events and balls. She does not understand that she will be considered an outsider because neither she nor her husband come from old Charleston families. It does not matter how much money she has. Heyward also touches on the differences between behaviors in the South versus the North. One of the characters from the South who is visiting New York City debates whether a white man should ever address an African American by the title "Mr." (Heyward ix, xvi-xvii, xxii). When his novel Porgy was produced as a play on Broadway, Heyward and his wife refused to allow it to be performed by whites in blackface. African American actors played the roles (Hutchisson 7). After World War I, Heyward participated in the Interracial Committee (Heyward xxii).

Albert Simons and his wife Harriet Porcher Stoney were active in the social and cultural scene in Charleston. They were known to have “liberal views on race” (Hutchisson 207).

Herbert Ravenel Sass had an antebellum view of Charleston society. He believed that the culture of the rice-growing society was one of a great civilization in which the white plantation owners participated. He believed the slaves were protected and cared for by their white owners, and he felt the whites of the Lowcountry were particularly benevolent to their slaves, thinking of them not as their slaves but as their people. He stated, “Nowhere in America was slavery a gentler, kinder thing than in the Carolina Low Country” (Brundage 241, 248).

Alice’s views on slavery were also more traditional (241). She did view African Americans as inferior to the whites. She saw them as childlike and in need of benevolent protection from the better race. Her book, *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties,* was published the same year as the book *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell. Both publications represent the same ideals of a plantation South where the white slave owners and the slaves interacted in a paternalistic partnership. (240) Alice’s paintings, particularly in *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties,* reflected her attitude in the way she portrayed the workers on the plantation. She did show that the slaves had certain skills and knowledge of growing rice. The white owners and overseers interact pleasantly. White children speak with the slave children. It was a nostalgic, dreamlike portrait of a time without showing any of the cruelty inherent in a slave-owning society. The publication of the *Carolina Rice Plantation* book was successful, and the paintings from the book were exhibited in many cities on a two-year tour (Yuhl 71-73).

As Alice's pictures from her plantation series were shown around the country and as people viewed and read the book, her view of the antebellum South became accepted as the real representation of what life was like during that time.

Reviewers of Alice's book and exhibition of the watercolors confirmed people saw the paintings as an authentic representation of plantation life. Reviewers called them "valuable historical documents." *The New York Times Book Review* stated that Alice "has rendered a special historical service" (Brundage 241). A review in the *Saturday Review* remarked "The book which they adorn, and the pictures themselves, have real historical and sociological value" (Severens 17).

There were, of course, African American artists and authors such as Edwin A. Harleston, who was a portrait painter. His experience, unfortunately, reflected the reality of the art world in Charleston. In 1926, Mayor Thomas P. Stoney reached out to Laura Bragg, director of the Charleston Museum. He suggested that an exhibition of Harleston's work be mounted at the Museum. Stoney believed such an exhibition would help increase the tourist trade, which was important to Charleston's economy. Bragg did approach Harleston and an exhibition was scheduled. However, within a short time, the exhibition was deferred and then canceled. Harleston's paintings were never hung in the Museum. The white elite class generally did not want to acknowledge any African American's work (Hutchisson 176-177). Little thought was given in general to the African Americans. The preservation projects supported by the societies of the elite often caused the inhabitants of African American neighborhoods to be pushed out to make way for the restoration of historic buildings (Yuhl 46).

CHAPTER THREE

ALICE'S PUBLICATIONS

Alice was passionate about nature and her art. Her epitaph was a quote from the English Poet Walter Savage Landor, "Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art." She combined those two loves when she so beautifully portrayed nature in her paintings. These were creations from the heart, yet they were to have a practical side also. Her financial reality was that she needed to find a way to produce income from her artwork. Selling individual drawings, sketches, and paintings was one way to do this, and she successfully did so. However, once a piece of art was sold, it no longer produced income for the artist. Books, on the other hand, depending on the size of the publishing run, could generate an ongoing income, and subsequent editions, additional income. Alice was involved in the publication of twelve books, either as an illustrator, author, or editor, most done in collaboration with someone else, often her father. Her books revealed her knowledge and talents in the field of art. They also showed her connections and interactions with prominent persons both in and outside of Charleston. She also had numerous magazine articles published (McInvaill 172, 178).

A Woman Rice Planter

Her first publication was produced in partnership with Elizabeth Waties Allston Pringle, formally known as Mrs. John Julius Pringle. (Pringle would publish under the penname Patience Pennington.) Elizabeth W. A. Pringle, whom Alice called Cousin Bessie, like some other elite white women of Charleston, was strong on connections but weak in financial resources. Her father, who had been governor, had been a successful

rice planter. He owned numerous plantations, including Chicora Wood, and over 600 slaves. He died in 1864. Unfortunately, he left the family in debt, and her mother was forced to start a boarding school in Charleston to provide financially for her family. Elizabeth taught at the school. Eventually, legal and financial matters were settled, and Elizabeth's mother regained ownership of Chicora Wood. John Julius Pringle lived nearby, and in 1870, he and Elizabeth were married. They then lived at his plantation, White House. They had one child; he died in infancy. After only six years of marriage, John Julius Pringle died of malaria. Through the two familial lines, Elizabeth eventually ended up owning the two plantations; Chicora Woods, which she inherited through her family, and White House, which she inherited from her husband, although she had to pay her husband's family to acquire it. Economically, rice plantations were no longer the financial successes they once were, and she struggled to maintain the plantations on her own. She did this against the advice of the males in her family. Although she did try innovative ways to bring in money, such as growing fruit and renting out land, there was not enough money coming in to meet all the expenses. To raise some income, she successfully sold short vignettes, which she called letters, of life on a rice plantation to the New York *Sun* (Pringle Biography).

In 1913, Owen Wister suggested that Elizabeth W. A. Pringle gather her stories into a book. Owen Wister was a well-known author. He attended Harvard University, graduating in 1882 summa cum laude. He intended to have a career in music as a composer. However, his father believed Wister should engage in a more practical profession. Wister returned to Harvard to attend law school. The stress from being unable to pursue his preferred profession led to mental health issues, and the doctors suggested

he take a trip out West to relax. Wister took several trips to the West. These trips inspired him to write about the American West, and he was generally credited with being the creator of the American Western genre in literature. His most famous volume was *The Virginian,* published in 1902, which also appeared as a play in New York on Broadway in 1904. His mother's side of the family was from South Carolina, and he had spent time there. After his marriage, he spent his honeymoon in Charleston. That is where he found inspiration for his novel, *Lady Baltimore,* which was set, not in the American West, but in the American South. Published in 1906, it reflected views of the Old South and Reconstruction similar to those held by Alice and her friends and family. However, while Wister criticized the effects of Reconstruction, he did not view slavery as a positive institution (Wister).

To support Elizabeth W. A. Pringle's efforts, Wister wrote the introduction for her book entitled *A Woman Rice Planter (*Smith, *Reminiscences* 104). The book expanded on the theme of interesting stories from her life as a woman who oversaw the smooth running of the day-to-day activities on a plantation including managing the large African American labor force. As a widow, she was also responsible for all the business aspects of running a plantation: hiring, paying taxes, ordering supplies, keeping up with new advances in agriculture, and selling the product. These were not typical occupations for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wister's introduction addressed this issue and praised both Elizabeth W. A. Pringle's efforts on the plantations and her efforts as a writer. Because he was so well-known, his association with the book contributed to interest in the volume (Pringle ix, 449-450).

As Elizabeth W. A. Pringle began organizing the book, she approached Alice to create the illustrations for the text in *A Woman Rice Planter*. Alice was delighted to be asked and accepted the challenge (Pringle iii). Wister and Alice were distant cousins through the Middletons, and his family, whom he stayed with part of the year, lived close to the Smiths. He advised Alice on her illustrations and the world of publishing. He also used his connections to spread awareness of her work and, at one point, purchased nine of her watercolors in seven days (McInvaill 54).

To get a feel for plantation life, Alice visited Cousin Bessie at both the Chicora Wood and White House plantations. She produced eighty-six drawings from these visits and from various experiences she had in the Lowcountry. In the drawings, she portrayed the African American workers engaged in the many activities involved in producing rice. She also showed them in their everyday life, doing household chores, walking through the plantation land, and interacting with each other. There were sketches of buildings and the countryside as well (Pringle 178, 187). The printing process by which the drawings were prepared for the book, regrettably, did not show them to their best advantage (McInvaill 55). Alice later took steps so this would not happen again when her drawings and sketches were reproduced for publication.

A Woman Rice Planter was published by MacMillan Company. It was so successful it helped tremendously with Elizabeth W. A. Pringle's and Alice's financial issues. The *Sun* ran an editorial on the book, praising Elizabeth W. A. Pringle and all the Southern women who, because of the economic destruction of the Civil War and Reconstruction, were forced to engage in activities unusual for women at the time. Their

ingenuity, self-reliance, management skills, and business savvy, were all noted, and, the editorial said, they did this all without losing their "feminine grace" (Pringle 450).

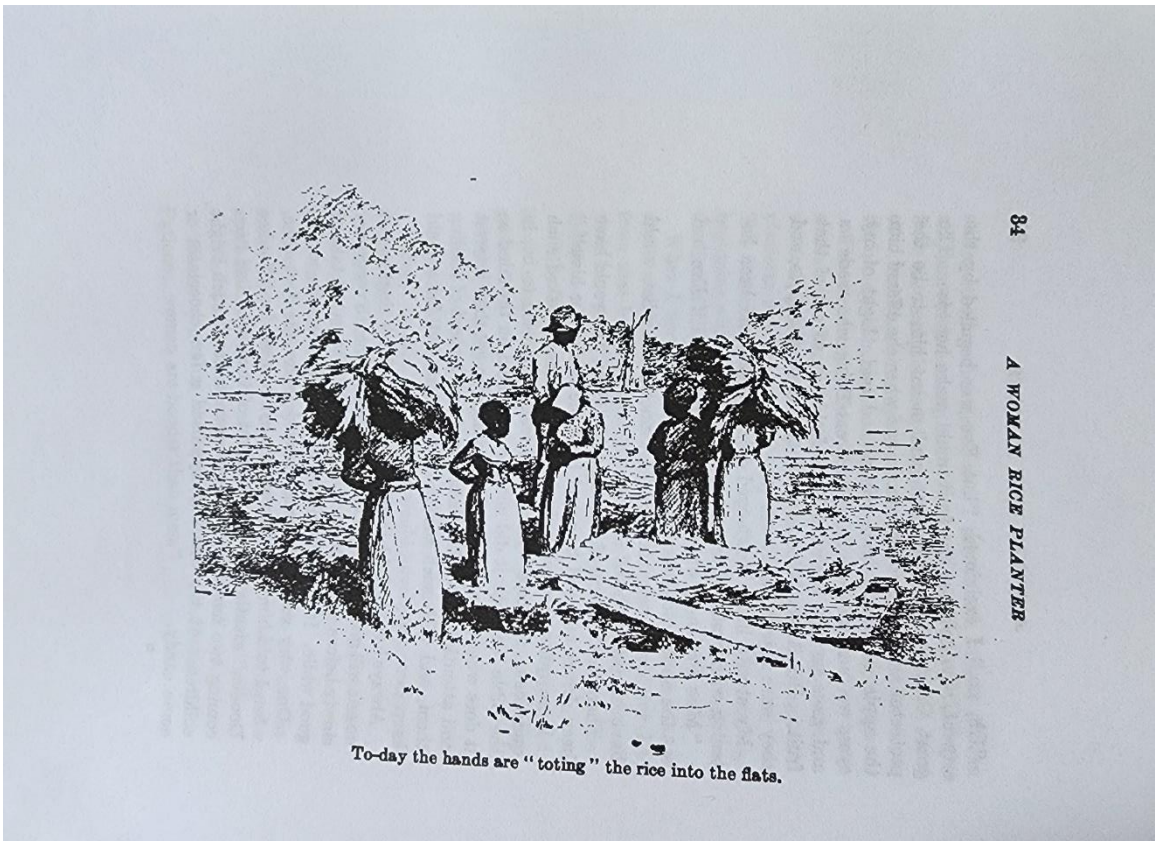

Figure 8. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, sketch from *A Woman Rice Planter*, 1913.

Twenty Drawings of the Pringle House

The success of *A Woman Rice Planter* encouraged Alice to try a similar economic venture. Alice assembled the pamphlet entitled *Twenty Drawings of the Pringle House on King Street, Charleston, South Carolina.* In 1913, she took $400 she had inherited and used it to prepare the work. She negotiated for her investment to be matched by Lanneau's Art Store, the Charleston business that would publish the pamphlet.

The house featured was owned by yet another Pringle cousin, Miss Susan Pringle. She was an elderly lady who had been a bridesmaid for Alice's grandmother (Smith, *Reminiscences* 95-96). The house had been owned, and visited, by a long list of distinguished people. The twenty drawings included views of the gardens and the inside and outside of the home. They included doorways, staircases, chandeliers, and furnishings. Four of the drawings contained figures of African Americans, one showing a woman walking on the street with a full basket balanced on her head and another showing a woman doing the laundry by hand in the kitchen courtyard.

In what became a successful partnership with her father, as Alice made her drawings, he prepared an introduction to them. The house was built circa 1765, and his research led him to the names of the builders and subsequent owners of the house along with some information about their lives and families. He made note of military service and family tragedies. For example, he noted that the builder, Miles Brewton, his wife, and children, all drowned while sailing from Charleston to Philadelphia in 1775. Under Brewton's will, his sisters, Mrs. Charles Pinckney and Mrs. Jacob Motte, inherited the home. The Alston family also owned the building at one time, and their racing stables were noted in the work. He mentioned a visit by George Washington to the area. He described the designs, layouts, notable features, and architecture of the house and its furnishings (Smith, *Pringle House* 1-26). The combination of his narrative and Alice's drawings worked well, and the pamphlet proved quite successful. It encouraged Alice to continue to explore how her art could be used to generate income (Smith, *Reminiscences* 95).

Alice was involved in two other projects by her father. She had always enjoyed the stories her father told her about the past, and she encouraged him to write the history he had imparted to her. As a result of Alice's continued urging, he did this in 1913, producing *A Charlestonian's Recollections 1846-1913*. It chronicled his life from his experiences living on successful plantations through the Civil War and Reconstruction and his struggles with business endeavors (Smith, *Reminiscences* 92). However, the book was not published until 1950, eighteen years after his death. The Carolina Art Association published it with the Preface by Alice (McInvaill 178).

Her father also edited a collection of family letters entitled *Mason Smith Family Letters, 1860-1868.* He was assisted in this editing by Alice and Arney R. Childs. Childs had edited the papers of several other South Carolina families, including the Ravenels. Alice saw this effort as a difficult one for her father, as it caused him to relive the horrors and destruction of the Civil War and the difficult economic times his family suffered. This volume was published by the University of South Carolina Press, also not until 1950, when interest in the history of the area increased (Smith, *Reminiscences* 92-93).

Through 1915 and 1916, Alice sold several articles and sketches to both *Harper's Magazine* and *Art in America*, monthly magazines published in New York. One of the articles was about the artist Charles Fraser, a subject Alice returned to numerous times throughout her career. Another article addressed "Doorways, Gateways and Stairways of Quaint Old Charleston." Again, these efforts produced income for Alice (McInvaill 178).

The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina

About the same time as she wrote these articles, Alice approached her father with an idea for a book. She wanted him to provide the text for her sketches of interesting historic houses in Charleston. At first glance, it appears that Alice was guided and mentored by her father and that he took the lead in their partnership. It is true that they were close and that he contributed greatly to her knowledge of the nature of the Lowcountry and the history of South Carolina, particularly the Charleston area. However, Alice was the one who initiated the ideas for articles and publications and suggested a partnership between the two of them, each using their strengths to produce quality works.

This new book was similar to the *Pringle House*. However, it would be a much larger effort. Her father considered the project, but he thought the work would be overwhelming. Alice told him she had learned enough from him that if he declined to participate, she would produce the book herself. That concerned him because he worried her work would not be as accurate as any text he could produce. So, he agreed to write the narrative. With Alice in her late thirties and her father in his late sixties, they started work on *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston South Carolina.* It would end up being a two-year project (Smith, *Reminiscences* 94). The dwellings they selected to include from the many beautiful buildings in Charleston were mostly homes of family and friends. The book gave a detailed description of the architectural styles of the homes. However, it also included well-researched documentation of the families that owned and lived in the houses from their building through 1917. The book provided a history of the white elite of Charleston. However, it was far from a dry presentation of history. It also included interesting comments on members of the families. For example, it mentioned Mrs. John

Julius Pringle. Pringle was, of course, a prominent Charleston name. Mrs. Pringle was widowed, and then married Mr. Joel R. Poinsett. Mr. Poinsett was a member of Congress, Secretary of War, and Minister to Mexico. It was in Mexico that Poinsett came upon the beautiful red plant, often associated with Christmas, we know today as the Poinsettia. This is just one of the interesting stories told in the book (Smith, *Dwelling Houses* 253).

Alice prepared the visuals to go along with the narrative. She used drawings, photographs, and architectural drawings to complement the text. The book contained 128 illustrations from various sources, including sketches and photographs from archives. Fifty-eight of the drawings were by Alice. She had previously sold some of these drawings of Charleston dwellings to *Harper's Magazine* and *Art in America*. She sought, and received, permission to use these drawings as they were copyrighted by Harper & Brothers in 1915 and Frederic Fairchild Sherman, publisher of Art in America, in 1916. Three watercolor sketches by Charles Fraser, two from 1796, drawn when he was only fourteen years old, and one from 1802, were included in the book (Smith, *Dwelling Houses* 61-63). Alice was related to Fraser, and he was best known for his miniature portraits. As mentioned before, Alice also spent some time painting miniature watercolors on ivory portraits herself (Smith, *Reminiscences* 96).

Many of the photographs in *The Dwelling Houses* were taken by St. Julien Melchers, a well-known Charleston photographer, who made a career photographing historical buildings in the city. The detailed architectural drawings were by Albert Simons. Simons graduated from the University of Pennsylvania where he studied architecture. He lived in Charleston, and he and Alice became acquainted. He visited her studio and shared information about the architecture of Charleston with her. They

discussed the book she was working on, and he ended up producing the architectural drawings for *The Dwelling Houses* (Smith, *Reminiscences* 95). Simons was a member of the American Institute of Architects and a lecturer at Clemson College and the College of Charleston. He formed the architectural firm of Simons and Lapham in Charleston and became active in the effort to preserve and restore the buildings of the city (Simons papers, Historical Society). In 1927, he and his partner, Lapham, published a book of their own entitled *The Early Architecture of Charleston*. This was the first in what was supposed to be a series of books on the architecture of the Eastern part of the United States. However, because of the economic situation during The Depression, only the volume on Charleston was ever published (Hutchisson 115).

The Dwelling Houses of Charleston South Carolina was dedicated to Alice's cousin, Motte Alstead Read, in recognition of his proofreading and editing of the volume. As discussed previously in this dissertation, Read and Alice were close, and he had a strong influence on her study of art, particularly on her interest in Japanese woodblock prints (McInvaill 47, 42).

Alice had many noteworthy visitors to her studio. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. Cass Gilbert. During their visit, Alice and Cass Gilbert were engaged in conversation about architecture when she realized who he was (Smith, Reminiscences 95). He was a well-known, established architect with many buildings to his credit. He had just finished the Woolworth Building in New York City, known as the Cathedral of Commerce, when he visited Alice. He also designed the United States Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. and the United States Federal Courthouse in New York City (Cass Gilbert Society). Gilbert and Alice discussed her work on *The Dwelling Houses,* and after

the visit, Gilbert wrote a letter to Alice commenting on their visit. When she submitted a proposal to J. B. Lippincott in New York to publish *The Dwelling Houses,* she included the letter from Gilbert with her proposal (Smith, *Reminiscences* 95).

Lippincott accepted the book for publishing. It was a literary success and received positive reviews from across the country. It made *The New York Times'* "Five Hundred Leading Books" list (McInvaill 47). It was an economic success also. It initially sold for six dollars a copy but quickly increased to twenty-five. The limited edition had sold out. At one point it rose to $200 a copy. Its publication certainly helped Alice and her father's financial situation (Smith, *Reminiscences* 95). The book, by bringing attention to the historical architecture of Charleston, also helped lead to the growth of the preservation movement in the city. Gilbert wrote to Alice, "You are rendering a real service to the lovers of the old architecture of this country and to those who are interested in its early history" (Severens 15).

It also inspired other volumes on the architecture of Charleston. In 1926 Elizabeth Gibbon Curtis produced the book *Gateway and Doorways of Charleston, South Carolina, in the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth Centuries.* It was published by the Architectural Book Publishing Co., Inc. located in New York. In this book, the author concentrated her research on the columns and porches, doorways, gateways, and beautiful wrought iron work that was unique to Charleston. Sadly, she mentioned that some of the examples she had photographed had already been destroyed. Maxwell Kimball and Arthur C. Holden, both members of the American Institute of Architects, edited the book and wrote the notes and the Acknowledgment. In the Acknowledgment, they mentioned a group of people who helped share information on Charleston's architecture. This group included Daniel E.

Huger Smith, Alice's father. However, Alice was singled out for special recognition. The editors stated "Special acknowledgment must be made to Alice R. Huger Smith's book *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina*" (Curtis VIIXIII).

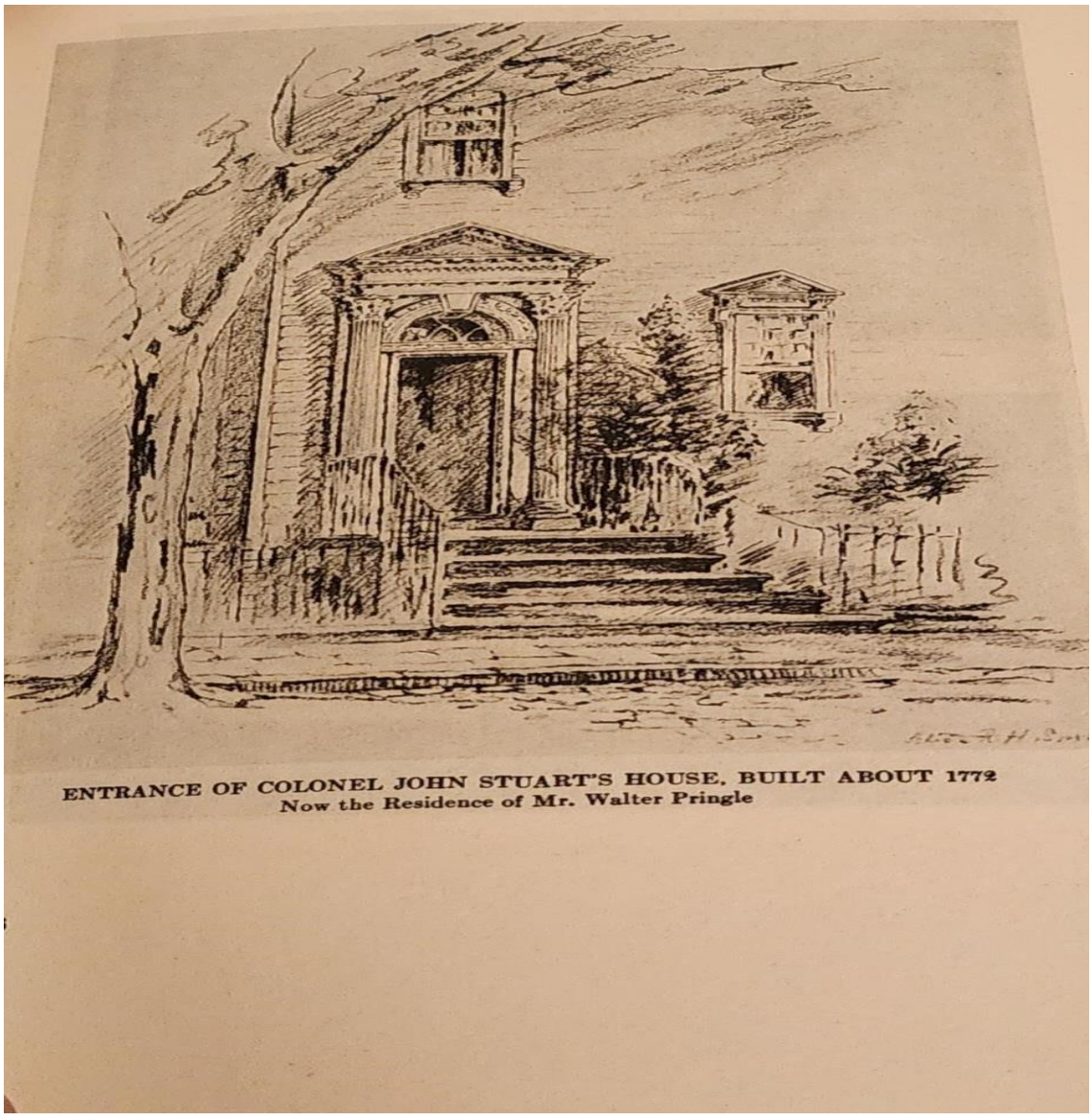

Figure 9. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, Sketch from *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina*, 1917.

Charles Fraser

The success of her books was an impetus for Alice to continue to produce publications. In 1924, Alice, again collaborating with her father, wrote a book on Charles Fraser, entitled *Charles Fraser*, published by Frederic Fairchild Sherman (Smith, *Reminiscences* 96). As mentioned before, Fraser was a distant relative. He was well-known for his miniature portraits painted on ivory, the same technique Alice studied in New York under Payen in 1902. The book produced by Alice and her father did cover his artistic achievements. However, it also discussed the people Fraser painted including their families and backgrounds. This was, again, a similar technique that her father used in *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston* when he spoke about the history of the families that had occupied the houses. While this presented a history of Charleston in general, it was also focused on the history of the white elite of Charleston, which, of course, included Alice's ancestors (Severens 16). The information gained while researching this book was helpful when, in 1934, Alice was instrumental in helping to mount an exhibition of Fraser's artwork at the Gibbes Museum of Art, serving as the chairperson for the exhibition. She served as chairperson again in 1935 for an exhibition of miniatures displaying works by artists from Charleston and its surrounding areas. She chaired yet a third exhibition in 1936, showcasing miniature portraits from a broader area. The Gibbes Museum of Art eventually acquired more than 600 miniatures by American artists. Today the Gibbes Museum of Art still has one of the leading collections of miniatures in the United States (McInvaill 26).

The Carolina Low-Country

By the time Alice became involved in another publication, the Charleston Renaissance was making its mark on the city. *The Carolina Low-Country* was the result of a group effort led by Augustine T. Smythe, a member of the Poetry Society of South Carolina and the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. He wrote the Preface for the book, explaining how it came about. A group of white people from the upper class had gathered together for some time to research and sing examples of Negro spirituals. Eventually, they developed into the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals, performing in concerts in South Carolina and as far away as New York City. After some years, it was decided to produce a catalog of the songs to preserve the tradition. However, as the project began, it expanded to include other aspects of the Lowcountry culture including its history, plantation culture, and art. This group of people decided to produce a book entitled *The Carolina Low-Country* (Smythe v-viii). Published by The MacMillan Company, New York, in November, 1931, and reprinted again in December, 1931, and in January, 1932, the book was a collection of stories, poems, pictures, and music, although the cover of the book carried the crest of the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. The contributing group was composed of leading members of the Charleston Renaissance. The content reflected their appreciation of the Lowcountry and included the following items:

The Preface by Augustine T. Smythe.

An essay, “The Low-Country,” by Herbert Ravenel Sass celebrating the history of the Low-Country and life on the plantations.

An essay, “The Story of the Low-Country,” by Alfred Huger, which was an in-depth study of the history of the Low-Country.

A poem, “The Yemassee Lands,” by Beatrice Ravenel, which describes the seasons in the Low-Country.

An essay, “Charleston: The Capital of the Plantation,” by Thomas R. Waring, relating the history of Charleston.

A story, “Plantation Lights and Shadows,” by Archibald Rutledge, bemoaning the loss the plantation life brought about by the “War for Southern Independence.”

A poem, “An Island Boy,” by Josephine Pinckney, describing life in the Lowcountry region.

An essay, “The Negro in the Low-Country,” by DuBose Heyward, telling the history of Negroes in the Low-Country. Heyward tended to be more sympathetic to the African American cause. He was one of the few to refer to the 1860s war as the Civil War.

An essay, “The Negro Spiritual,” by Robert W. Gordon, giving a detailed report on his research with Africa Americans about the spirituals they sang.

Finally, the words and music for fifty spirituals. These were arranged by Katharine C. Hutson, Josephine Pinckney, and Caroline Pinckney Rutledge (Symthe ix). Alice contributed illustrations to the volume, as did her friend, Elizabeth O’Neill Verner, and Albert Simons, who had worked with her on *The Dwelling Houses.* Four of Alice’s watercolors, four of Verner’s etchings, and two of Simons’ pen and ink drawings were used in the book (xi). Alice contributed the Frontispiece entitled *In the Great Blake Reserve*. Credit was given to Mrs. Walter James of New York City, who owned the painting. The second painting, owned by Mrs. Joseph M. Fox of Philadelphia, was

entitled *The Beach on Edisto Island*. The last two pictures, *An Old Oak at Middleton Place* and *Going Home along the Rice Field Bank,* did not include any credit as they were owned by Alice (85, 144, 220).

Anna Heyward Taylor designed the book jacket. The inside cover with a map of the coastline of the Lowcountry, a map of the layout of a typical plantation, and a two-paragraph overview of the landscape was by Augustine Thomas Symthe Stoney.

The people organizing and contributing to *The Carolina Low-Country* were leading figures in the Charleston Renaissance, and Alice was very much a part of the movement. It is interesting to note the last names of these people as they show how many of them were connected through ancestry and their place in society. This volume shows that Alice had achieved a place among the leading members of this cultural movement.

Adventures in Green Places

Before contributing to *The Carolina Low-Country*, Herbert Ravenel Sass, like Alice, had written stories that were published in various magazines and newspapers, including the *News and Courier* and *Saturday Evening Post*. In 1926, he compiled some of these stories into a volume entitled *Adventures in Green Places*, published by Minton, Balch & Company. The book was a collection of stories set in the Lowcountry that told of the landscape and wildlife of the region. He did this by describing what he saw and experienced as he traveled through the Lowcountry. It also included some of the history of the area. Sass was a naturalist, and he and Alice were cousins (Greene). The volume was quite a success, and a review of it appeared in *The New York Times Book Review* (Smith papers, Historical Society). In 1935, the volume was reissued, this time published

by G. P. Putnam's Sons. (Minton, Balch & Company became part of G. P. Putnam's Sons in 1930.) The new edition contained new chapters continuing on the theme of life on a plantation before the Civil War (Greene). Unlike the original volume, it also contained sixteen watercolors in black and white and a full-color illustration opposite the title page, all by Alice. These beautiful watercolors complemented the text with many depicting the birds of the region. Others depicted palmetto trees and oaks draped in moss or swampland and shorelines. However, Alice did not create these paintings specifically for the volume. She borrowed them from the people who had purchased them. She reached out to the paintings' owners and arranged for them to be in the book. Then she acknowledged their ownership in the volume.

While some of these owners were related to Alice, others were not and included people from New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and New York City. They included well-known, influential people. Mrs. S. R. Guggenheim who, along with her husband, was famous for their art collection, lent her painting *In Radiant Array*, a depiction of snowing egrets. Mrs. Nicholas G. Roosevelt, who was known to support striking workers at a dress factory in Philadelphia and whose husband was related to Franklin Roosevelt, also lent a painting for the book. Alice was building a reputation among and interacting with prestigious people. Again, the volume was a publishing success. It showed the business savvy Alice displayed in contributing to the success of any project on which she worked. It also showed the expansion of the circles in which she interacted. She was becoming known outside the Carolina Lowcountry region (Sass, *Adventures)*.

Figure 10. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Carolina Gold Rice*, from the series *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties,* c. 1935, watercolor on paper, 21 3/4 x 13 3/8 inches. Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties

Alice and her father intended another collaborative effort where her paintings and his narrative would complement each other. However, he died before they had progressed very far. Alice wanted to continue the project and decided to approach Herbert Ravenel Sass. They had worked together before on Sass's *Adventures in Green Places*. She convinced him to work with her to prepare the text to accompany her watercolors (Severens 16). He agreed to the partnership, and in 1936 this led to the production of what is probably Alice's most well-known project, the painting of thirty watercolors for the volume *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties* (Smith, *Reminiscences* 96). These watercolors are beautiful color representations of the landscape of a South Carolina Lowcountry rice plantation. Some of the paintings were simply landscapes. Others show, step-by-step, the process of cultivating rice from preparing the fields for planting, planting the seeds, controlling the water levels in the fields, cutting the rice, moving the rice to boats in the canals, stacking the rice, threshing it, milling it, to finally loading the grain onto the schooners to be shipped to market. They showed the people, mostly slaves, involved in the process (Smith, *Plantation* xiii). The pictures told a factual story. However, they were more than that. In these paintings, Alice displayed her love for the landscape and nature of the Lowcountry. The paintings also represented an idealized portrayal of the plantation system embraced by the white elite.

Alice was not alive during the 1850s, the period she was painting. In the Preface, Alice credited her ancestors with providing insight into life on a plantation engaged in the growing and processing of rice. She particularly mentioned her grandmother and her father who often spoke to her of the past. She talked about the difficulties brought about

by the War between the States (as she referred to the Civil War) and Reconstruction to the rice plantation owners and their families. These difficulties included not just changes in their economic situations but also changes in the culture to which they had been accustomed. She stated that she painted these scenes in part because, after her father's generation passed, there would no longer be anyone who would have personal experience of that way of life (Smith, *Plantation* xi).

The book was divided into three sections. The first labeled "Illustrations" consisted of the thirty watercolors with their titles. The watercolors were beautiful, awash in pastels with almost an impressionist feel. Her use of gold and shades of purple and lavender gives the paintings a glow (xiii). She did not paint while actually viewing a particular vista. She painted from her memory of the Lowcountry landscapes she had enjoyed walking through, from sketches she had created earlier, and from impressions she had from stories told to her by family and friends about that time.

The second section, "The Rice Coast: Its Story and Its Meaning" was written by Herbert Ravenel Sass. Alice had collaborated with him before in *The Carolina LowCountry* and in *Adventures in Green Places.* Both ventures were successful, and Alice felt comfortable working with Sass. When her father died, Charles Duell, with William Morrow Publishers, expressed concern over who would compose the text about rice planting. Alice insisted Sass would be the perfect writer. Duell, another of Alice's cousins, agreed although he was concerned that Sass would ask for higher compensation (Smith papers, Gibbes).

This section contained a detailed description of the rice production process. It also contained high points of South Carolina's history. As he had in his other

publications, Sass stressed, as many in the group of Alice's contemporaries did, the superiority of the civilization represented by life in the antebellum South, particularly South Carolina, and within South Carolina, the Low-Country. This cultured way of life was ended, they believed, by the Civil War. The Reconstruction period that followed is portrayed as a time of hardship that Alice, her family, and the white elite upper class had to struggle through. They were proud of their efforts and believed they were preserving this history and culture while laying down a way of moving forward that was appropriate for such a great civilization.

Sass was very proud of their heritage; he mentioned John Locke's influence on the original organization of the land and hierarchy of the Carolinas back in the 1600s. For a more updated reference, he noted what Frederick Law Olmstead had said about the Carolina landscape. Olmsted, best known as a landscape architect and designer of New York's Central Park during the 1850s, expressed his admiration of the Southern landscape, particularly the stately avenues lined with oaks trees leading up to the plantation Great Houses (Smith, *Plantation* 3-4). This was particularly interesting because Olmsted was also recognized as a social critic and was critical of the Southern way of life in the 1850s.

This section also presented information about some of the rice plantations in the Lowcountry and described the Great Houses with their beautiful gardens and landscapes. Sass described how they were always placed near a river. The placement was for irrigation, since rice growing required flooding the fields at certain times within the growing season, and for easy transportation for the finished product to market. Sass also

described the nature of the Lowcountry landscape: the oaks, the swamps, and the wonderful birdlife (13-38). He does not address the ethical issue of the slave labor used on the plantations. He represents this slave labor as a benign institution where the slaves were content working for their benevolent masters (McInvaill 122).

Figure 11. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Carting Rice from a Small Field*, from the series *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, c. 1935, watercolor on paper. Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

The third section of the book, "A Plantation Boyhood from the Unpublished Memoirs of D. E. Huger Smith," contained Alice's father's memories of growing up on the family's plantation, Smithfield (Smith, *Plantation* 59-63). Alice had strongly encouraged him to write this memoir, and in 1913 when he was sixty-seven, he did so (McInvaill 121). As mentioned before, although Alice and her father had hoped to work on *A Carolina Rice Plantation* together, he died March 5, 1932, at the family home at 69

Church Street. Alice wrote his obituary for the South Carolina Historical Society. Alice dedicated the book to the memory of her father (Smith, Obituary).

In her father's memoir, he gave detailed descriptions of what he remembered from his experiences on the family plantations. Alice's paintings *Sunday Morning at the Great House, The Parish Church, The Plantation Church,* and *Loading a Rice Schooner* all depict the scenes her father described so clearly in his text (Smith, *Plantation* 65, 74-75. 62-63).

The preparation for this book demonstrated Alice's assertive, businesslike behavior. She negotiated with William Morrow & Company, the company that published the book. She handled all the details (Severens 16). She insisted, against the company's advice, that the thirty watercolors in the book be reproduced in full color (Smith, *Reminiscences* 97). The book received positive reviews and was an economic success (Severens 16). Alice felt that her series would be the last that would represent the period of the rice plantations from before the Civil War. The people who could recall and share that experience were dying out, and she believed it was important that the public be able to view the paintings that showed life on a rice plantation.

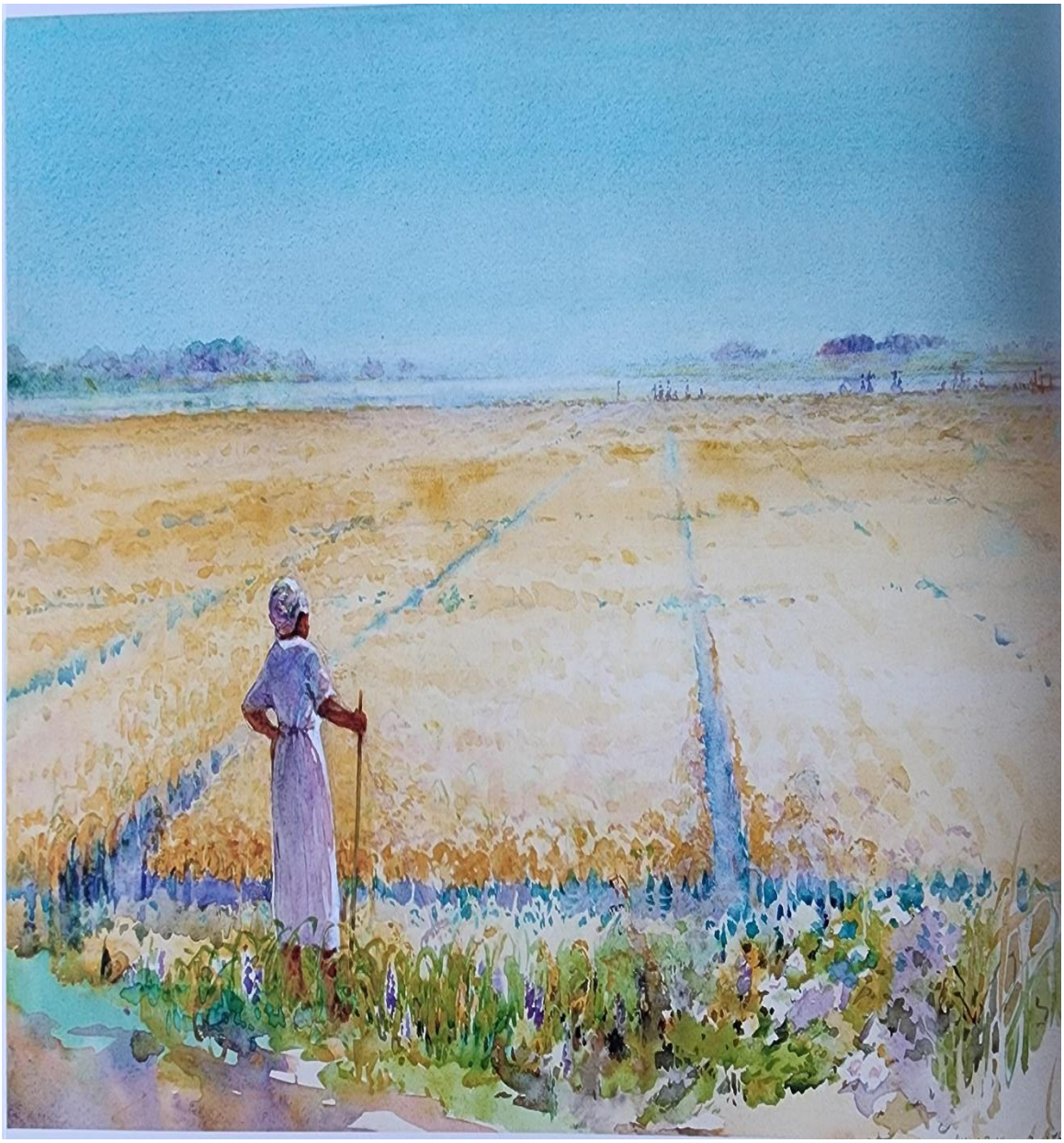

Figure 12. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Ready for the Harvest*, from the series *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, c. 1935, watercolor on paper, 17 x 22 inches. Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

Figure 13. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *A Lagoon by the Sea*, from the series *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, c. 1927-1935, watercolor on paper, 17 x 21 5/8 inches. Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

Alice donated the thirty watercolors to the Carolina Art Association (Smith, *Reminiscence* 97). The Association still owns them today. Over the years, exhibitions of the paintings have helped the Association economically by providing funds for the running of the Gibbes Art Museum which is maintained by the Carolina Art Association (Gibbes).

A Charleston Sketchbook 1796-1806, Forty Watercolor Drawings of the City and Surrounding Country by Charles Fraser.

In 1940, Alice returned to Charles Fraser as a topic for a publication. She owned Fraser's sketchbook. She had received it from one of his relatives and had used some of his sketches in *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston*. In 1940, she chose forty of his watercolors from his sketchbook and assembled them into a book entitled *A Charleston Sketchbook 1796-1806, Forty Watercolor Drawings of the City and Surrounding Country by Charles Fraser.* She composed an introduction, and using the technique that had become the process for her publications, wrote a historical background on the subject of the sketches (Severens 19). This title was published by the Carolina Art Association, Gibbes Museum of Art (McInvaill 26).

This is Charleston, an Architectural Survey of a Unique American City

There was one more book that Alice was associated with during her lifetime, although neither as an artist nor a writer. *This is Charleston, an Architectural Survey of a Unique American City* was published by the Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina, in 1944. A group of leaders, often associated with the Charleston Renaissance, determined it was important to document the historical architecture of the city. They hoped this action would encourage the preservation of the many historic buildings throughout the city. They were particularly concerned that the old would be needlessly destroyed as the city's economic structure changed and modernized. This was the first such project attempted by an American city. It became a model for preservation

movements in other cities and for the establishment of historic districts such as Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. This group formed a committee, and the Director of the Carolina Art Association, Robert Whitelaw, was selected to head the project. Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. was consulted to help formulate a plan (Stoney ix). Olmstead, Jr.'s father was the well-known landscape architect who designed New York's Central Park. Olmstead Jr. was the city planner for Boston. He suggested that a photographic record of buildings of interest should be compiled. The committee believed the publication of this photographic record would fulfill their mission.

However, an endeavor such as this required money. The group sought funding from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rockefeller Foundation. They were granted financial assistance from both. The committee's secretary, Helen Gardner McCormack (later Director of the Carolina Art Association), worked for fifteen months reviewing the buildings of Charleston. By 1941, 1,168 buildings had been evaluated, written up, and photographed.

The panel chosen to decide which of these buildings were to be included in the volume of photographs was made up of four people. Three of them were male architects; the fourth was Alice. John Mead Howells was a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. Samuel Gaillard Stoney, who contributed the text for the volume, had a B.S. in Architecture from the Georgia Institute of Technology. Albert Simons, who had worked with Alice on *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston South Carolina* in 1917, was also a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. (Simons also wrote the foreword for the 1964 Edition of *This is Charleston*.) Alice, as was mentioned before, had no formal training or education, although by this time, she had received her honorary Doctor of

Letters from Mount Holyoke. However, by the 1940s, based on her work on *The Pringle House* and *The Dwelling Houses,* combined with her participation in various art, historical, and cultural groups, Alice was recognized as an expert on the history and architecture of Charleston (Stoney ix-x).

The final selection for inclusion in the volume totaled 572 photographs of buildings from pre-revolutionary times to the 1940s. The entries were listed with the year they were built or, if the year was not known, by era. The rating each building was awarded by the four judges was then listed. The buildings were rated according to the following groups: Nationally Important, Valuable to City, Valuable, Notable, Worthy of Mention. The buildings were organized in the volume to make it easy for people to find and view them from the outside. The streets they were located on were listed alphabetically, and then on each street, numerically by the building's number (x). Alice's home at 69 Church Street and her studios at 8 Atlantic Street and the Pink House on Chalmers Street were all included in the volume. Her home at 69 Church Street from 1745 was deemed Nationally Important. The two studios were both labeled valuable, the Pink House from the prerevolutionary era, 8 Atlantic Street had no age given (29, 8, 23).

The book was originally published in 1944 by The Carolina Art Association. There was a Second Edition in 1960, a Third Edition in 1964, a Fourth Edition in 1970, and a Revised Edition in 1976. Unfortunately, the original committee's concern that buildings would be destroyed did prove to be justified. By 1976, 50 of the original buildings shown in the book were gone (x). (Alice's home at 69 Church Street still stands. It was offered for sale in 2020 for 10 million dollars (Flamer 1). The volume was reprinted in 1984 and 1987. Although it was a successful publication, as the numerous

editions show, this publication was not just about economics. Just as *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties* sought to record the history of the culture of the Lowcountry plantations, *This is Charleston* was a drive to preserve the city's architecture (Stoney vi-viii).

The Mason Family Letters and A Charlestonian's Recollections

As mentioned before, in 1950, Alice organized and published her father's work on the family's correspondence entitled *The Mason Family Letters, 1860-1868*. This collection of correspondence of her grandmother had at one point been destined to be destroyed. However, Alice saw the value of them for their description of life in the Lowcountry and for their historical value. She worked to have the letters preserved. She convinced her father to look at them. He annotated them; however, they were just held by the family until Alice organized them and published them years after her father's death. This volume was issued by the University of South Carolina Press. Also in 1950, Alice took her father's memoirs entitled *A Charlestonian's Recollections 1846-1913,* wrote a preface for the piece, and had the resulting volume published by the Carolina Art Association (McInvaill 163, 178).

Reminiscences

About the same time, Alice also wrote her memoir entitled *Reminiscences.* Harry McInvaill encouraged her to do so. He was one of the soldiers Alice and her sister entertained in their home during World War II. Harry and Alice became good friends, and *Reminiscences* was dedicated to him. Alice wrote at the top of the memoir, "Written at

Harry's Behest—For him if he wishes it." (Dwight McInvaill, who published *Alic*e, *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith Charleston Renaissance Artist* in 2021, is Harry's son.) Alice was almost seventy-five years old when she wrote the piece, and although she completed it in 1950, she never published it in her lifetime. After her death, the composition was held by the South Carolina Historical Society. It was finally published in 1993 when Martha Severens included it in her book, *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith An Artist, a Place and a Time* (Severens ix). The memoir is an interesting mix of family history, her Grandmother's memories, the culture she was brought up in, her take on new inventions, stories of the activities of African Americans, and comments on her artwork.

The Heron Book

Alice produced one other book. It started out as a letter written in 1912 to her brother Mason's children who were living in New York City. The letter was decorated with watercolors of the landscape of the Lowcountry, particularly of a place called Heron Island (McInvaill 50). There was concern over the endangerment of herons, particularly snowy egrets, and other birds native to the Lowcountry. Hunters killed them for their feathers, which were used in ladies' fashions at the time. As land was cleared to expand agriculture, the birds' nesting territory was shrinking. A group of citizens, including Alice's cousin Herbert Ravenel Sass, a naturalist, worked together to raise funds to purchase and preserve this island. The land was then given to the Charleston Museum which guaranteed its preservation (Bulletin of the Charleston Museum).

Alice took the letter and developed a book entitled *A Letter from Heron-Island* that used her illustrations and told of the conservation effort. With the help of her sister-

in-law, Mabell Shippie Clarke Smith, her brother James' wife, she attempted to have it published. Mabell Smith, working as an editor in New York, had connections in the publishing field. They offered the book to Macmillan Company and one other publisher. However, the book was not published. In 2016, family members allowed the original letter with Alice's illustrations to be published by the Middleton Place Foundation. This version can be purchased through the Foundation under the title *The Heron Book* (McInvaill 49-51).

Reviewing Alice's publications allows one to track her experiences as she developed as an artist and community leader. The publications reflect the group of people with which she associated and worked. Many of these people were prominent in their fields. Alice showed a talent for knowing with whom she should collaborate and for knowing how to develop connections to her advantage. She also showed an understanding of the business end of the art world, and she had a talent for negotiating the terms of her contracts. When Alice started her endeavors in publishing, it was primarily for economic reasons. However, as she became better known and more active in community activities, her publications, while still producing income, also contributed to the causes of historic preservation and environmental conservation.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AWARDS

Alice was acknowledged by numerous organizations for her accomplishments in art as well as her contributions to the community. These are some of those acknowledgments.

Charleston Etcher's Club

Alice was one of the founding members of the Charleston Etcher's Club in 1923. In 1927 she resigned when she decided to focus on her watercolors. However, she was acknowledged as an honorary member for life in recognition of her contributions to the Club (Severens 8).

Culture in the South

The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina Press published a book in 1934 entitled *Culture in the South.* The book gave detailed descriptions of various areas of Southern culture as presented by economists, sociologists, educators, artists, and writers (Couch). In the volume, Alice was noted as one of fifteen artists from the South who were recognized as being known nationally for their work. She was the only artist from South Carolina who was so noted (McInvaill 177).

Gibbes Museum of Art

In 1936 Alice donated her paintings from *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties* to the Gibbes Museum of Art. The Museum named her a Benefactor in appreciation (McInvaill 177).

Mount Holyoke

One of Alice's greatest awards was receiving an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Mount Holyoke College at the college's Centenary Ceremonies on May 8, 1937. Alice's relationship with Mount Holyoke began with an invitation in 1932, possibly through a connection with one of her neighbors in Charleston, Mrs. Francis C. Whitinar, who lived at 59 Church Street (Smith papers, Historical Society). She was invited to come to the campus and give a lecture on art at the Alumnae Weekend Conference on Modern Art. She accepted, and in October she traveled north to the campus in Massachusetts to join Arthur Pope and Grant Reynard in presenting talks. Reynard from Leonia, New Jersey, spoke on *The Ways of the Etcher.* Pope, a professor in the Department of Fine Arts at Harvard University, spoke on *The Significance of Modern Painting*. Alice spoke on the *Interest and Beauty of the Carolina Coast*. Examples of her and Mr. Reynard's art were on display the week before and during the conference at the college galleries. On Saturday a luncheon and a reception were held in the artists' honor. Groups invited to attend were the Mount Holyoke Friends of Art, faculty, guests, art students, and alumnae. (Alice Smith)

In 1937 Mount Holyoke, as an all-women's college, was in the middle of much controversy. Founded in 1837, the President of the college had always been a woman. In 1937 Mary Woolley was President and had been since 1901. She was an accomplished person, active in many organizations that promoted education including serving as President of the American Association of University Women from 1927-1933. She had been the first woman to attend Brown University. She was chosen by President Herbert Hoover in 1932 to represent the United States at the Conference on Reduction and Limitation of Armaments in Geneva, Switzerland, the only woman to do so. However, Woolley was a close friend with Jeannette Marks who was active in the theater department on Mount Holyoke. Some questioned this relationship, and a movement was started at Mount Holyoke to replace her as President with a "family man." Although there was resistance, particularly from students, that Woolley should have to retire and a man should be appointed, the Trustees did select a man, Roswell Ham, a professor from Yale, to assume the duties of President. This was complicated by the fact that 1937 was the Centenary of the founding of the college and an appropriate celebration was being planned. When it was made known that groups were working to remove her, Wooley initially refused to participate in the celebration. However, at some point, she was persuaded to change her mind, and she took charge of the planning, using the opportunity to select women who were successful in their fields to be the speakers and recipients of the honorary degrees. Woolley had the support of Frances Perkins, an alumna and a Trustee of Mount Holyoke. Perkins had been the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet when Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed her as Secretary of Labor in 1933. She felt strongly that appointing a man as President of the College did not reflect the

ideals and aims that Mount Holyoke as a women's college represented. Perkins sat with Woolley at the ceremony (Mary Woolley).

Because it was the Centenary Ceremony, there were to be twenty women granted honorary degrees, Doctor of Letters, Doctor of Science, or Doctor of Laws. It was interesting to look through the Mount Holyoke archives and see the letters suggesting the names of women who might be considered for this honor. The list of possible nominees was quite impressive. There was a reference to a cable from Madame Chiang Kai-Shek stating that she could not attend the ceremony due to problems in China. Willa Cather sent a letter declining the invitation because she would be in England. Mary Cassatt and Georgia O'Keefe were also suggested to the committee for consideration. Alice, who had no formal schooling, was included in a group of accomplished, well-known, influential women. She was granted a Doctor of Letters. Of the twenty women receiving the honorary degrees, only Alice and Malvina Hoffman, a sculptor, did not have college degrees. Five of the recipients were heads of American women's colleges, and many already had advanced degrees.

This celebration was quite a gala, with representatives from over a hundred colleges, universities, and prominent organizations attending. (Drew University sent a representative.) The program listed the colleges, universities, and organizations represented by the date they were founded. The first few were Oxford University, XII Century, University of Rome, 1303, and Harvard University, 1636. The speakers spoke of the inequality between men and women in the academic world, timely given the appointment of Ham. The point was made that few women scholars would be able to

obtain positions as professors and that the situation for women seeking positions in business and government was similarly difficult. (Centennial Records).

Once again, Alice was in a situation where she was in the company of, and recognized with, accomplished women with influence. Alice's reaction reflected on that. Her comment on being seated among these women was:

> I sat on the stage with graduates of many colleges and universities and I could not help chuckling to myself there. I—I who had never been to college, never even to a boarding school, never to a big public school—only to a small private school for thirty or forty girls from the alphabet up to sixteen or seventeen years of age (Smith, *Reminiscences* 84).

Distinguished Service Certificate

Alice and her sister Caroline were patriotic and supported the war effort in World War I. They opened their home to the military men who were stationed in Charleston during the war. They provided food and entertainment for them. They also followed the progress of the war and kept up-to-date on the activities of the various military groups from Charleston. Their brother James served in the Tank Corps in World War I. Their cousin, Edward Wells, also served. Unfortunately, Wells was wounded and died in France on October 4, 1918, just before the end of World War I. The sisters repeated these open houses during World War II, and Alice made some life-long friends from among these men (Smith, *Reminiscences* 149).

For their efforts to provide rest and entertainment for servicemen during World War II by opening their home to the military stationed in Charleston, Alice and her sister

Caroline were awarded a Distinguished Service Certificate from the United Service Organizations (USO) on December 21, 1947 (Smith papers, Historical Society).

Charleston Federation of Women's Club

Alice was inducted into the Charleston Federation of Women's Clubs in 1962. She was in good company. Susan P. Frost and Josephine Pinckney were inducted in 1959, and Elizabeth O'Neil Verner was inducted in 1960 (Smith papers, Historical Society).

Who Was Who in American Art

Alice was acknowledged for her artwork by being listed in this publication (Smith papers, Historical Society).

Alice Ravenel Huger Smith of Charleston, South Carolina, An Appreciation on the Occasion of Her Eightieth Birthday

Alice continued to be a well-respected figure in Charleston, even into old age. For her eightieth birthday on July 14, 1956, a group of over 300 people contributed to privately publish a limited edition of 800 copies of a small volume in Alice's honor. While most of these "Friends of Alice Ravenel Huger Smith" were from South Carolina, particularly the Charleston area, there were contributors from other Southern and Eastern states and even two from Canada. The Preface mentions that Alice was an artist, historian, author, and friend to many. In addition to a short biography and a chronological list of her exhibitions and publications, the volume contained some positive critiques of

her artwork from various sources, including *The American Magazine of Art* and *The New York Times*, from 1922 through 1950.

Following that section was a series of appreciations from leaders from Charleston's cultural elite including Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, Herbert Ravenel Sass, Albert Simons, and Robert N. S. Whitelaw. These appreciations spoke of her art, but they also spoke of how Alice was an inspiration to others. They spoke of how she was generous with her time in giving guidance to others. Other adjectives used to describe Alice were admirable, influential, courageous, gracious, and selfless. Herbert Ravenel Sass mentioned her service to both Charleston and South Carolina. Robert N. S. Whitelaw, Director of the Gibbes Art Gallery, talked about Alice's dedication to the cultural history of the past but stressed that she was also concerned about the cultural future of Charleston. Arthur R. Smith of the 56th Signal Battalion Outpost spoke of her and her sister's efforts to feed, entertain, and comfort servicemen in their home on Church Street during World War II.

The appreciations were followed by a list of all her works; portraits, woodblock prints, etchings, mahogany panels, and watercolors with information as to who originally owned the artwork. This list was a testament to the number of pieces of artwork she created as well as to the widespread dissemination of her work. Finally, the eleven books she was associated with, either as the author, illustrator, or edited were listed. This book is a testament to the volume of work she produced. It also shows the great respect and admiration she had gained from her work within the Charleston community both through her art and through her community service (Dillingham).

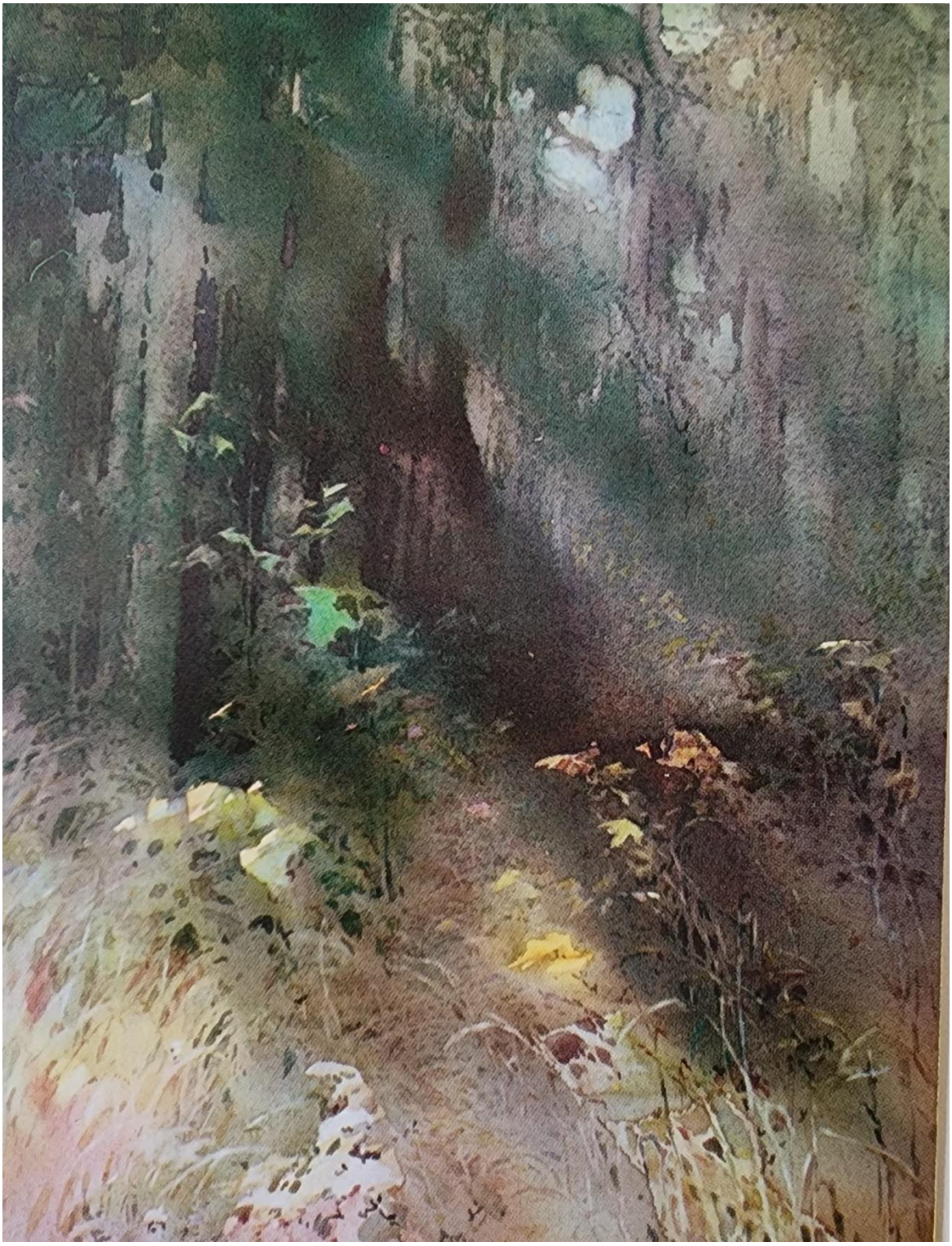

Figure 14. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Pineland*, shown in *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith of Charleston, South Carolina, An Appreciation on the Occasion of Her Eightieth Birthday.*

Alice continued to paint into her eighties. Her last picture, painted in 1956, was of a white heron flying over what looked like dunes along the coast with a stormy sky. Its title is, ironically, *Final Flight*. Alice died on Monday, February 3, 1958, from cardiac arrest (McInvaill 172-173). Her obituary appeared the next day in Charleston's premier newspaper, *The News and Courier* (Smith papers, Historical Society). She was laid to rest in Charleston's Magnolia Cemetery (McInvaill 172-173).

CHAPTER FIVE

IN HER OWN WORDS

To better understand Alice, it is important to explore what were her thoughts and what she had to say in her own words. Alice's memoirs, which she entitled *Reminiscences*, give insight into her personal thoughts about her life and accomplishments. Her memoirs and her personal papers, archived at both the South Carolina Historical Society Archives at the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library and the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, give us a better understanding of how she viewed gender, roles in the community, and the changes in culture and society. Her memoirs begin with an interesting anecdote about an interaction between Alice, when she was middle-aged, and a younger woman. Alice took umbrage when the young woman questioned her on the custom from Alice's youth of women always being escorted by a male relative when leaving their homes at night. The young woman implied that Alice was timid. Alice declared it a sensible decision to be escorted based not on being less than a man or on being timid but rather on safety. Without streetlights or headlights of cars to light the way, she stated, it was dangerous for anyone to walk alone after dark (Smith, *Reminiscences* 65).

Growing Up

In *Reminiscences,* Alice talks about what her life was like from childhood through adulthood. Alice commented that she believed her birth order influenced her behavior.

She was born between her two brothers and was lumped with them as a child, separated from her older two sisters. She enjoyed the more physical games her brothers engaged in over the sedate activities of her sisters (74-76).

Alice stated that the girls of her class did not engage in physical activities. They did not play golf or tennis. She did walk, often with her father, throughout the countryside. She tied up her ankle-length skirts to make the trekking through the grasses and damp lands easier. Once bicycles became available, she liked to use them to explore the countryside (82).

The lack of money prevented the family from leaving the hot city in the summer for the cooler locales. Alice believed this contributed to their health by making them stronger and better able to resist diseases such as yellow fever. Even when she had a better financial situation, she continued to spend the vast majority of her summers in Charleston (86).

As far as her schooling was concerned. Alice believed the education she received in Miss Sass's School for Girls (McInvaill 176) was basic but good. It included arithmetic, but did not advance to mathematics. The girls studied history, literature, chemistry, philosophy, French, and religion. They received marks on their daily work, but unlike the boys, they were never subjected to examinations (Smith, *Reminiscences* 84).

As young ladies of their class did, Alice and her sisters all had their "coming out." Their dresses were all created by dress-makers for each young lady individually. Alice mentioned two balls and described her dresses. The first dress was white silk that was embroidered; the second dress was green silk and she wore green ostrich feathers in her hair. It was interesting that although the family had little money, they did spend on

dresses and coming-out dances for the girls. The coming-out dances presented the girls to society as ready for their fathers to accept marriage proposals on their behalf. However, although both of Alice's brothers married; none of the sisters did (85).

Alice had fond memories of her experience in Charleston during the Spanish-American War. She was in her twenties and enjoyed the activities that were the result of having the young naval men in town. She said there was boating, bicycling, and dancing. However, she does mention there were no cocktails for the girls (80).

Because of her family's financial situation, Alice was not able to travel and study at the art schools and art galleries of the larger American cities or Europe. She did not see this as a negative. Rather she turned what might be viewed as a disadvantage into her strength. She focused her artistic expression on the beautiful environment of the South she lived in, making her paintings of the landscapes she loved, the woodlands, swamps, rice fields, and the wildlife that inhabited them (91). Reflecting on her art and its effect on others, she stated, "A little paper, a little paint, and why should I not try to tell others of the wonderful, breathless moments I passed" (88).

Her Views on Changes in Society and Inventions

Alice viewed the introduction of the car into American society as having a strong effect on American culture. She thought cars were a positive invention making traveling long distances much easier and faster (123). Although she never learned to drive, she appreciated the convenience of traveling by auto (127). However, she felt cars and their speed did cause people to lose their connection to nature (123).

Living in the South, she particularly appreciated the introduction of screens as protection against mosquitoes. She also saw the advantages of refrigerated trucks for the transportation of fresh fruits and vegetables (86).

Finally, she felt one of the greatest changes in American culture during her lifetime was the role of women in society (64).

Women Role Models

In her memoirs, Alice talked extensively about the influence various women had on her. Alice's paternal grandmother was a strong role model for her. She remarked that she did not believe her grandmother and other ladies of her day were subjugated to the males in society. Although they could not vote, she felt they were active participants in society and could hold their own with the males. She considered her grandmother to be the head of the family. The grandmother lost her husband when she was twenty-seven. Left with six children to raise, she did what was necessary to make sure they, and later their families, had what was needed. She did not have it easy. She lost two of her sons; the remaining two served in the Confederate army. She had run the family plantation until the Civil War destroyed it. There was not much money; however, she bought the house at 69 Church Street, Charleston, in 1869 which became home for the extended family. Alice, her parents, her four siblings, along with several of her aunts, uncles, and cousins live there until they could manage to become financially stable. When Alice's grandmother died in 1919, Alice's brother Mason, who had moved to New York and was a successful lawyer, purchased the house from her estate so the family could continue

living there. Eventually, all the family members moved out or died, but Alice and her sister, Caroline, continued to reside at 69 Church Street until their deaths (70-75).

Alice also felt Mrs. John Julius Pringle, the author of *A Woman Rice Planter* for which Alice drew the illustrations, was an example of a strong, independent woman. Alice believed she learned a great deal just by being in her company and listening to and watching Mrs. Pringle's activities (103).

Relationship with her Father

Alice was close to her father and had great respect and admiration for him. She felt he had taught her many things in general and he had been particularly strong in exposing her to nature and history. However, she was the motivating force behind their projects when it came to writing and publishing.

Alice took full credit for convincing her father to write from his extensive knowledge of the history and culture of the South, particularly Charleston and South Carolina. She believed it was her encouragement that motivated him in 1913 to write *The Recollections of a Charlestonian: 1845-1913*. She was also the motivation for another of her father's works. When her grandmother mentioned she was about to destroy old family letters, Alice insisted that her father do something to document the background history of these letters. The result was the volume *Mason Smith Family Letters, 1860-1868.* Alice acted as his assistant/editor on the volume. Neither of these manuscripts was published until 1950, eighteen years after Daniel Elliott Huger Smith's death. Alice was instrumental in getting them published and wrote the Preface for *The Recollections of a Charlestonian: 1845-1913* (92).

When Alice wanted to take the sketches she had drawn of various houses in Charleston and put them together for a book, she hoped her father would compose a text about the history of the houses and the families that had lived in them. He initially refused. However, when Alice said she believed she had enough knowledge of local history and could do the research herself to write the text, he changed his mind. He did not feel a woman could do a thorough job. He stated, “There is nothing worse that can happen to a man, than to be quoted by inaccurate females.” Alice jollied him along, but she never gave up on her idea to produce the volume, and in 1917, *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston South Carolina* was published. Again, Alice was the driving force behind the publication (94).

However, the relationship worked both ways. Alice credited her father with giving her the push she needed to focus her work solely on watercolors. He had suggested that her excursions into many different interests would take away from her strength as a watercolorist (122).

Alice and Nature

In her memoirs, Alice spoke of how she enjoyed being in the countryside and observing the beautiful landscape. She commented on how a scene could change depending on the time of day or the weather. She was fascinated by the many different impressions she might have of a scene. She would absorb all those impressions and the next day or the next week, paint a scene from memory (98).

Trips with friends, for various reasons, were opportunities to observe different landscapes. Alice once took a trip by river to a funeral service. She described the

beautiful landscape of the rice country they passed through. She was particularly enthralled with the abundance of color in the rice fields and in the grasses and flowers. She described another journey by ferry boat also through plantation land. She commented on the green of the grasses and the pine trees, the crimson of the oaks, the blue of the sky, and the white sand. While she accepted the new methods of transportation and other labor-saving inventions, she bemoaned the fact that humans were becoming more and more distant from nature (105-106).

Alice mentioned her trips to New Orleans to visit with Alston Read's sister, Mary Hume. The Reads were cousins of Alice's. Mary's husband, Dr. Joseph Hume, was also Alice's cousin, and she had other cousins who lived in New Orleans. Alice had many connections as her father had sixty-five first cousins. These trips exposed Alice to the landscape of the bayous and swamps of Louisiana, similar to the Lowcountry of the Carolinas (140).

On another occasion, Alice and her friend Marie Heyward took a trip to Canada to visit friends. It was just the two of them with Heyward driving them in her car, traveling from Charleston to Quebec. It was unusual at that time for two women to travel alone, especially by car. Initially, Alice was content to just view the Canadian scenery. However, as the group she was visiting took Heyward and Alice out into the unsettled areas, she could not stop herself from sketching the beautiful landscape and animals and when she returned to Charleston, she did produce paintings based on what she saw on her trip. (142).

Alice and Her Art

Lack of formal education did not prevent Alice from becoming knowledgeable about her craft. She used all resources available to her to learn as much as she could to produce her beautiful artwork. She considered several people her mentors. She also listened to the various visitors to her studio and considered their comments and suggestions, rejecting some but implementing those she felt had merit. Alice considered herself a professional artist and took all aspects of her art seriously. One of those aspects was selecting the best supplies. For example, she used the advice of Helen Hyde and Bertha E. Jaques when selecting the best materials for her woodblock prints including the special tools and cherry wood blocks. She then arranged for the special paper used in this process, in various types, to be sent to her from Japan through a missionary (117-118, 121).

One area in which she did much research was in her choice of paints, particularly her watercolors. She was concerned that her watercolors should stand the test of time and remain bright and clear. She did rigorous tests with Winsor and Newton pigments. Winsor and Newton paints were considered the best for professional watercolor paintings. They are still considered one of the top brands. First, she read all the information she could from the producers. Then she eliminated pigments that did not pass Winsor and Newton's twenty-year durability test. Next, using information she gained from her reading, she eliminated pigments affected by chemicals in the air (Smith, *Reminiscences* 117). Finally, she ruled out any pigment that reacted when used with another pigment. After she was finished with this research, she was left with a narrow number of paints to use (Severens 43). Alice's paintings maintained their vibrant colors because of her stringent application

of this concept. Even with all Alice's precautions, the paintings from her plantation series, after many years, began to be affected by the acidic boards on which they were mounted. A five-year restoration effort by the Straus Center for Conservation at Harvard University Art Museums was successfully undertaken by the Gibbes Museum of Art. All thirty of the watercolors were restored and stabilized for the future (Gibbes, A Commitment).

Alice was proud of the variety of types of art with which she experimented. In addition to the portraits, miniatures, sketches, woodblocks, oils, etchings, and watercolors, she spent a short time working at bookbinding. She was proud of the fact that she was a dedicated, committed worker (Smith, *Reminiscences* 121).

Alice commented on the difficulty she had at the beginning of her career to sell enough of her artwork to cover the costs of her materials. She sold whatever she could including fans, dance cards, place cards, and small sketches of street scenes. However, she stated that she persisted, and although it was slow progress, she learned through experimentation. She made her way in the art world, step by step, until she "got along really quite well" (119).

Business Skills

Alice's personal papers show the business skills she had acquired to market her artwork, and she kept detailed records of her sales. The South Carolina Historical Society and the Gibbes Museum have stored many of her letters, and they tell the story of some of her business transactions. She did not use a business agent but rather negotiated her contracts herself.

The following section contains information from the Alice R. Huger Smith Papers at the South Carolina Historical Society except where noted.

There are letters from Alice to the Ann Arbor Art Institute and the Milwaukee Art Institute (now the Milwaukee Art Museum) discussing details of shipping her artwork to these Institutes for exhibitions. The letters covered shipping, cataloging, printing, insuring, and moving the artwork from one exhibition to the next.

There are letters to her publishers concerning sales and payments. She wrote to Harper and Brothers looking to sell illustrations. In September, 1911, Alice had a series of communications with *Colliers* magazine. She received $100 for an article and the use of eight pictures. However, *Colliers* never published the article. Displaying excellent negotiating skills, Alice bought it back from *Colliers* in 1914 for $15. She was then free to use it any way she wished. She used the article and illustrations in 1916 when *Art in America* published her "Doorways, Gateways and Stairways of Quaint Old Charleston." Other communications included a document from *House Beautiful* from 1919 stating she would be paid $25 for her work that would appear in their magazine. Her papers include her contract from 1916 with J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia for *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston, South Carolina* witnessed by her sister, Caroline Ravenel Huger Smith. She also wrote to Lippincott pointing out that a commission of $32 was missing. A check stub indicated that it was subsequently paid.

On September 9, 1931, she wrote a letter to Elizabeth Verner responding to a proposal. Although she did not include any specifics about the proposal, she did say, "My reason for not caring to enter into the arrangement is purely the business one. I do not see that the proposed plan will be to my advantage."

The archives also include correspondence about arrangements for various exhibitions and lectures in which Alice was involved. She presented a lecture to the Women Decorators Club of New York at the Junior League Hall through the Ackerman Gallery in New York City. The archives also had a brochure for The Decorators Club of New York, Plaza Building, Madison Avenue. The brochure listed a series of six lectures. The first was to be on November 18, 1930. Alice was to give a talk on Carolina Houses (Smith papers, Historical Society). The third in the series was on January 13, 1931. Harvey Wiley Corbett was to give a talk on Trends in Modern Architecture. He was an architect well-known for his design of skyscrapers in New York City. It is interesting that he and Alice were presenting in the same series since he apprenticed with Cass Gilbert, the architect of the Woolworth Building who had visited with Alice in her studio in Charleston (The Master). Gilbert had written to Alice after the visit commenting positively about her work.

Another letter concerned displaying her art at the Albany Institute of History and Art. She wrote to the Art Club of St. Petersburg, Florida, where an exhibit of her work was being shown. She requested suggestions about where she might send the artwork next.

Alice was a member of the American Federation of Arts. In 1927 the organization held its Second International Exhibition of Modern Engravings in Florence, Italy. Alice was asked to submit examples of her work. She chose to submit three woodblock prints. She continued to send other works on tour with this organization. This exposure helped her to sell her work. In 1928 the American Federation of Arts with the l'Association Francaise d'Expansion e+ d'Exchanges Artistique, its French equivalent, sponsored the

Exposition de la Gravure Moderne, Americaine, Bibliotheque Nationale, in Paris. Alice's work was displayed along with works by Childe Hassam, Alfred Hutty, Mary Cassatt, and J. M. M. Whistler.

In December, 1934, she wrote an article on Charles Fraser published in the magazine *Art in America and Elsewhere*. In 1949, Alice negotiated for an exhibition of her art at The Audubon Society of New York. In 1951 she wrote an article on an exhibition of Japanese prints at the Gibbes Gallery.

Research at the Gibbes Museum of Art's archives also confirmed Alice's skills as a businesswoman. The following information was taken from those archives.

When in 1936 she arranged with William Morrow to publish her book *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, Alice was particularly concerned about the color reproductions of her paintings. She corresponded back and forth to negotiate typeset, color, and paper for watercolor reproduction. She received one dollar per book from the original selling price of ten dollars. The paintings were exhibited in Washington, Charlotte, Savannah, and Charleston in 1936. Alice donated the thirty paintings to the Carolina Art Association.

Alice wrote an introduction and notes for *A Charleston Sketchbook 1796-1806* that had been written by Charles Fraser but never published. Fraser was a distant relative of Alice, and she owned the sketchbook. With her additional input, the sketchbook was published and sold for five dollars a copy.

Examining her papers shows how involved Alice was in the business end of the art world. She was a talented artist. She was just as talented as a businesswoman.

CHAPTER SIX

ALICE'S CONTINUING INFLUENCE

Alice's art continues to be on display today. Her artwork is shown, not surprisingly, on the covers of the two biographies written about her, *Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, An Artist, a Place and a Time*, by Martha Severens published 1993, and *Alice, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith Charleston Renaissance Artist* by Dwight McInvaill published 2021. In addition, her artwork graces the covers of *The Making of Historic Charleston, A Golden Haze of Memory*, published in 2005 and *Landscape of Slavery The Plantation in American Art* published in 2008.

Alice's artwork also appeared on an episode of Public Broadcasting Services' television show *Antiques Roadshow*. The episode was filmed in Richmond, Virginia, on August 17, 2013. The show's guest who brought the painting to be appraised stated that her mother had owned the painting. Her mother was from Charleston, and Alice had been a friend of the family. The family owned other examples of Alice's work; however, the guest chose this one as it was her favorite. The picture was representative of Alice's best-known style. It was a hazy landscape watercolor of the Lowcountry with an African American woman fishing. The woman looks relaxed underneath her turned-down hat. The appraiser noted that human figures were rare in Alice's landscape paintings.

The appraisal was made by Nan Chisholm of Nan Chislom Fine Art, Ltd., New York. After giving a short biography of Alice's background and her emergence as a painter of landscapes in watercolors, she estimated its value at $85,000 (Chisholm).

Alice's paintings continue to be sold at several major auction houses. As one might expect, her work has been sold at leading Southern fine art houses. These houses included Brunk Auctions of Asheville, North Carolina; Charlton Hall of West Columbia, South Carolina; Neal Auction Company, New Orleans, Louisiana; and Charleston Estate Auctions, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina. However, her art was also available for sale outside of the Southern region at art houses that have a broader reach. Some examples include Bonhams, Doyle, and Sotheby's, all located in New York, and Eldred's in East Dennis, Massachusetts. In an inventory from 2020, Invaluable.com listed nineteen auction houses selling Alice's works. One of their inventories from 2024 indicated that in the last ten to fifteen years, ninety-seven pieces of Alice's work have been offered at auction. The estimated prices for these pieces went as high as $30,000-$50,000 (Alice Auction).

It is interesting to examine the prices and the provenance of Alice's works that were offered for sale. Some of her paintings had been owned by influential, well-known people. At Bonhams, New York, several of Alice's works were sold. In 2010 her painting, *Gone Fishing*, sold for $51,850. In 2011 her *Snowy Egrets Deep in the Swamp* sold for $27,500 with a provenance from Pink House Galleries, the art store established in 1946 by Harry McInvaill, Jr., Alice's friend she had met during the war years, and in 2019 her *In the Great Blake Reserve* from a private collection of a Newport lady sold for $40,075. All three of these paintings were watercolor on board. In 2022 her *In a Low Country Forest*, a watercolor on paper which had been owned by her nephew, William Mason Smith, Jr. and his descendants, sold for $24,225 (Bonhams). This example of her work was also part of the exhibition in 1986 entitled *Eight Southern Women* which is examined

later in this dissertation (*Eight Southern Women* 40). In 2019 Sotheby's offered at auction *A Collecting Legacy: Property from the Collection of Nelson and Happy Rockefeller*. Nelson Rockefeller was a politician who served under several Presidents in numerous government positions. Two of Alice's woodblock prints on Japan paper were among the works offered. They were framed colored prints from 1917-1918, and Alice had signed them in pencil. The estimate for these two prints was $2,500-$3,500. They sold for $4,750 (Sotheby's). One of the prints, *Celestial Figs*, was acquired by the Johnson Collection of Spartanburg, South Carolina, and was part of the exhibit *Central to Their Lives: Southern Women Artists in the Johnson Collection* in 2018, also discussed later in this dissertation (Blackman 37). In 2023 Doyle Auctions sold Alice's *A Landscape in South Carolina*, a watercolor on paper for $15,120. It had come from an estate of direct descendants of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (Doyle).

In addition to being offered at auctions, Alice's work continued to be included in exhibitions. These exhibitions generated funds for various museums as well as exposed the public to her works. Through these exhibitions, her work and story continued to influence the world of art and the general public. They told a story both of her artistic competence and her role in promoting Southern art and culture. Her bequest of her works to the Gibbes Art Gallery often makes these exhibitions possible. This section examines several exhibitions, starting in the 1980s and continuing to the present, where her work was displayed. Some of them were group shows, and it is interesting to note what other artists' work is exhibited side by side with Alice's.

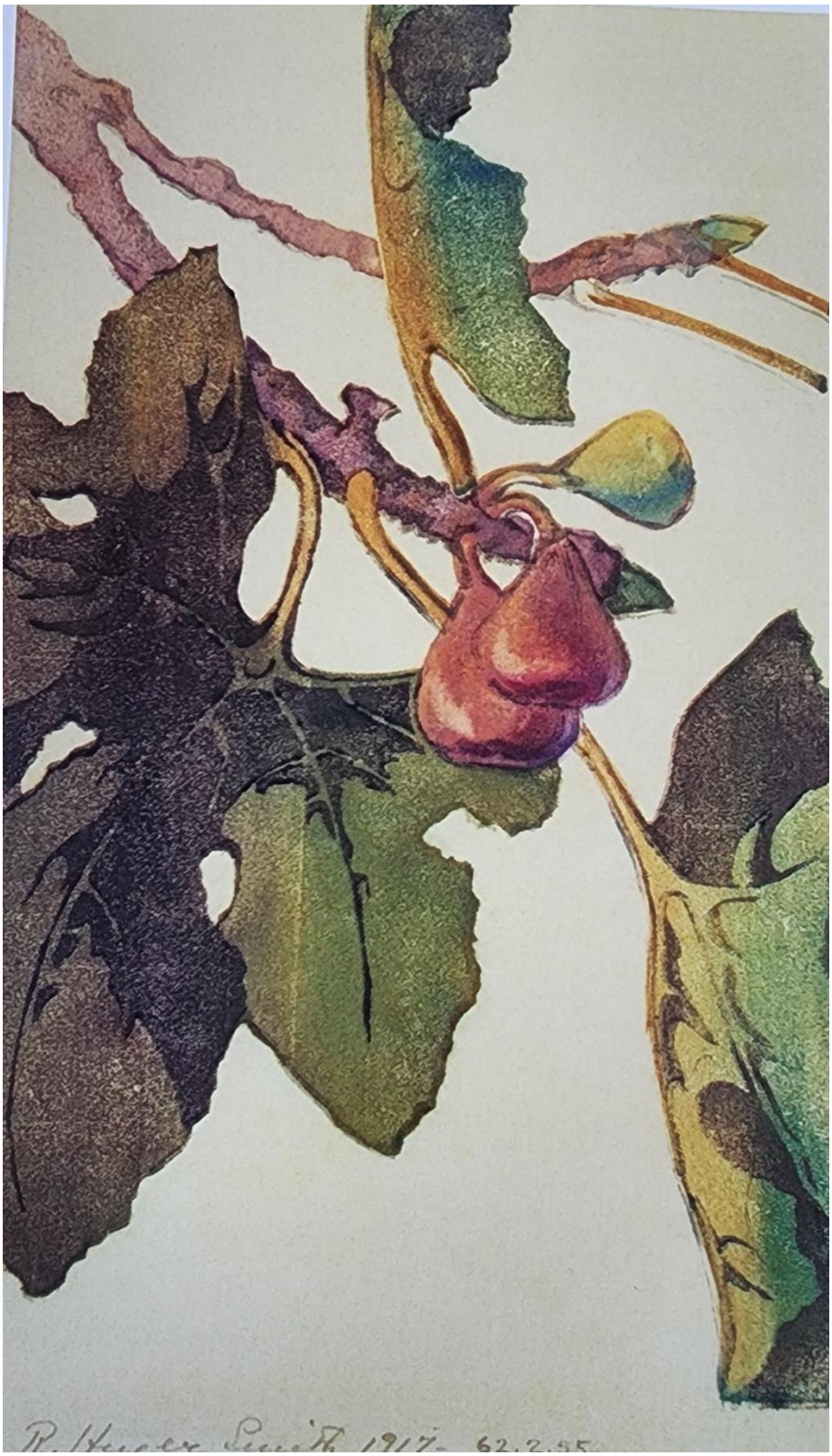

Figure 15. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *Celestial Figs,* woodblock print on paper,12 x 6 ¾ inches, c. 1917. Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina.

Art and Artists of the South, The Robert P. Coggins Collection

Art and Artists of the South, The Robert P. Coggins Collection was an exhibition assembled by the Columbia Museum of Art in South Carolina in 1984. As its name indicated, it featured Southern artists, whose artwork had been amassed by Robert P. Coggins. Coggins felt that Southern Regional artists had not been given the recognition they deserved, and that by sharing his collection, he could expose greater numbers of people to the wonderful and unique representation of Southern landscapes, culture, and history. The exhibit traveled from June, 1984, through January, 1987, and was displayed in Tennessee, Texas, Alabama, Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Arkansas. The catalog that accompanied the exhibition included essays and catalog entries by Bruce W. Chamber, Ph.D. and was published by the University of South Carolina Press (Chambers v-vii).

The catalog was divided into different categories, and each artist was represented by one or more of their works and a brief biographical sketch. The art represented spanned over 150 years from the early 1800s through the 1950s (v). One of Alice's paintings was placed in the category of Symbolist Landscape. She was the only woman whose work was shown in that category. The other works were by George Inness, Jr., Elliott Daingerfield, Alexander John Drysdale, and Charles Ephraim Burchfield. These Southern artists produced artwork during the same period as Alice. Except for Burchfield, whose pencil sketches were shown, all the artists' paintings had the same ethereal, poetic, almost eerie feeling. The artists used some of the techniques of the impressionists; however, they had their way of interpreting the beautiful nature of the South, especially the Lowcountry, swamps, and bayous. In these examples, artists used oil and watercolor

to express their feelings for the landscapes. Alice's work was a watercolor entitled *Bayou Scene*, and it showed her style of an ethereal landscape with wildlife egrets. The palette is of yellows, off-white, and blue-greens. You can barely make out the egrets as they perch within the grasses (83-92).

Not surprisingly, some of the work of the artists who were associates of Alice's in Charleston were included in the Coggins Collection and were shown in the exhibition. Alfred Hutty (103-105), Elizabeth O'Neill Verner (128-129), and Anne Taylor Nash (133-135) all had examples of their work displayed. While Hutty and Verner are associated with the Charleston art scene, Nash was only in Charleston for a limited time. She had moved to Charleston after she married. There, at the urging of Verner, she started her study of art and continued it in Europe and Mexico. She did display her work with the Charleston art clubs; however, in 1937 with her family's move to Savannah, she no longer pursued her interest in producing art.

Charles Fraser, who Alice wrote extensively about, was also represented in this exhibition (6). Nell Choate Jones (142-144) and Anne Goldthwaite (124-125) also had works shown. Jones and Goldthwaite are discussed in the following section about another exhibition. This one also showcased Southern artists; however, they were all women.

Eight Southern Women

In 1986 two organizations in South Carolina, the Greenville County Museum of Art and the Gibbes Art Gallery, mounted an exhibit entitled *Eight Southern Women*. Alice was one of the women whose work was selected for this exhibition. In the catalog that accompanied the exhibition, each artist was represented by an essay concerning her life

and work followed by examples of her work. With the growing interest in Southern artists and their works and the regional culture in general, the Greenville County Museum of Arts had made it their goal to amass a collection of art by Southern artists and to make that collection available for viewing and research to the public. This exhibition was a part of that goal. The focus was on women artists, their works, and their experiences, as they overcame some of the obstacles women of their time would have experienced as they worked to achieve success as artists. The artists were Josephine Crawford and Helen M. Turner, both of New Orleans, Louisiana; Anne Goldthwaite of Montgomery, Alabama; Clara Weaver Parrish of Selma, Alabama; Neil Choate Jones of Hawkinsville, Georgia; Blanche Lazzell from rural West Virginia; Mary Harvey Tannahill, North Carolina; and Alice (*Eight Southern Women* 3-4).

All eight women were born in the Old South between 1858 and 1879. At least four of their fathers served as officers in the Confederate military, so they were contemporaries living during Reconstruction. Only two of the eight married. However, they were living in a changing culture. During their lifetimes, the ideology of the New South was emerging. Again, they were all born in the South, but, although they considered themselves Southerners, some did live in other areas of the country at various points. Although the women had much in common, Alice did stand out among them. While she did achieve the same level of success as the other women, she did not have the same educational or experiential exposure as they did. The other seven all studied abroad, often in Paris. Some of them studied in New York and attended the Woodstock, New York, artist colony or the Provincetown Art Colony. Alice did not partake in any such

travels. Keeping to her beloved Lowcountry, her expertise came from studying on her own and making good use of the various mentors that became available in Charleston.

While the women artists represented different artistic styles, they all had the same challenges of being a woman in the art world. The vignettes on each woman stress what these ladies were up against. Josephine Marien Crawford, as many genteel Southern ladies did, created art as a ladylike activity. However, she did attend Newcomb College (The same College Alice's cousin Sabina Wells attended.) In the 1920s, as she became more serious about her work, she joined the Arts and Crafts Club of New Orleans. She did travel and study in Europe and saw works by the modern artists of the time, particularly embracing the ideas of the Cubists. When she returned to the United States, she exhibited her work through the Arts and Craft Club and in New York and Philadelphia (6-11).

Anne Goldthwaite was also born into a world where young ladies dabbled in artistic pursuits. However, when her parents died, her guardian aunt encouraged her to develop her talents as a way to produce income. A generous uncle financed her studies. Beginning those studies in New York, Goldthwaite attended sessions at the National Academy of Design. She traveled to Paris, staying at Mrs. Whitelaw-Reids's Club for American Girls where the guests continued the appropriate activities that genteel young ladies would have participated in the United States. Concerts, ballets, and sketching walks were among these activities. She did meet Gertrude Stein and visited her apartment where she saw the modern and controversial works of art by Picasso, Cezanne, Matisse, and Gauguin. However, Goldthwaite stuck with a more traditional lifestyle. She returned to New York and continued her art. In 1915 she won a prize at the National Association

of Women Painters and Sculptors art show. She did not like that her work was often considered “women’s art.” In 1934 she said, “We want to speak to eyes and ears wide open and without prejudice, to an audience that asks simply—is it good, not—was it done by a woman” (12-17)

Although born in Georgia, Nell Choate Jones spent the majority of her life in Brooklyn, New York. She was married to a painter, Eugene A. Jones, and her first profession was as a teacher. It was later in life that she turned her attention to painting. She studied art both in Brooklyn and in Europe, and she and her husband participated in the Woodstock Art Colony. On a trip in 1936 back to the South, she became intrigued by the working blacks and painted them at their everyday work activities. In the 1940s and 1950s, she supported the arts by being involved in the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Society of Artists. Acting as the president of the National Association of Women Artists from 1951-1955, she received their Medal of Honor in 1956 and was named their Woman of the Year in 1975.

Blanche Lazzell was the most educated of the women. She attended West Virginia Wesleyan, South Carolina Co-Educational Institute, and West Virginia University. Her courses focused on drawing, painting, art history, and English literature; and she held three degrees by 1905. This level of education was quite unusual for a woman at that time. She continued mastering her craft at the Art Students League in New York. There she worked with William Merritt Chase. She then taught art in West Virginia; however, from 1912 through 1914 she was in Paris where she became acquainted with the Cubist movement, a technique she embraced. With the advent of World War I, she returned to the United States and participated in the founding of the art colony at Provincetown. She

was always open to new ideas in art and began to experiment with the one-block woodcut technique, which she blended with the Cubists' ideas. Throughout her life, she continued to study and experiment, working in New York, the Woodstock Art Colony, Paris, Italy, and Provincetown, where at seventy-one her work was shown at an exhibition of abstract art (24-29).

Clara Weaver Parrish, like Alice, was born into a prominent Southern family whose finances were negatively affected by the Civil War. She showed a talent for art early on, and her family sent her from Alabama to the Art Students League in New York, where like Lazzell, she met William Merritt Chase. Interestingly, one of the examples of her work shown in this exhibit is *Portrait of Anne Goldthwaite,* which she painted in 1890. She and her husband moved to New York in the 1890s where she began to work for Louis Comfort Tiffany. With Tiffany, she worked on designing stained glass windows. Unfortunately, she was widowed in 1901. She then traveled and studied in Italy and France, even establishing a studio in Paris. In addition to her portraits and stained glass, she also worked on color etchings. Always still at heart a Southerner, her will left money for a hospital, an orphanage, and a museum, all in Selma, Alabama (30- 35).

Mary Harvey Tannahill was born on her family’s North Carolina plantation. After the Civil War her father moved the family to New York where he worked as a cotton factor, eventually becoming the president of the New York Cotton Exchange. She showed an interest in art early in her life and her family encouraged the interest. She studied with several different teachers. Like Alice, her first financially successful venture was producing watercolors on ivory miniatures. However, she did work in a variety of mediums and techniques. Many of her paintings had a folk-art quality to them. Like the

other women in this exhibition, she traveled and studied in Europe. She returned to New York and started a long-term relationship with the Provincetown Art Colony, where she exhibited her art for many years. She played an active role in promoting art through her memberships in the National Association of Women Artists and the North Carolina Professional Artists' Club (42-47).

Helen M. Turner was born into a distinguished New Orleans family. The Civil War brought financial difficulties to the family. For Turner these were compounded by the death of her parents when she was thirteen. A widowed uncle took her in, and they lived in genteel poverty. When she was twenty-two, she started her art studies by taking classes at the New Orleans Artists' Association. These classes were given with no fees. Eventually, she was able to sell some of her work. Like Alice, this was necessary to produce income. Again, like Alice, she supplemented that income by selling painted fans and charcoal sketches. When her uncle died, she took an assignment teaching art in Dallas, Texas. After two years, she left Dallas and took the bold step of moving to New York. She was thirty-seven, quite old for this venture, when she started classes at the Art Students League and forty when she attended classes at the Women's Art School of the Cooper Union. At the same time, she completed four years of study at the Fine Arts Department at Teachers College at Columbia University. She took a teaching post at the Art School of the New York Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). The purpose of classes at the YMCA was to provide women with the skills necessary to have a career where they could support themselves. Turner's classes focused on costume drawing where the students practiced designing and illustrating. While she taught, she continued to produce and exhibit her work. Three times she took advantage of student

summer trips to Europe offered by William Merritt Chase. During these trips, she would have seen many examples of various styles of painting, and there was an Impressionist quality to her paintings, especially with her use of light (48-53).

Of these eight women, seven had some formal art training. Alice did not. She was matter-of-fact about the family's financial situation that prevented her from formal study. What money there was had to be spent to provide an education for her brothers. Mason became a lawyer and James became a civil engineer. They both moved north, married, and settled in New York, unlike their sisters who all stayed in Charleston and never married (McInvaill 86). While some commented that it was a shame she missed out on the opportunity of a formal education, there was also the thought that it was a good thing. The thought was that formal training could have ruined her unique perspective and techniques. Alice herself told of a conversation between her mentor Birge Harrison and a Professor of Art from Dartmouth, Homer Keyes. They were analyzing her artistic abilities and debating whether the fact that she had not traveled and studied in Europe had hurt her career. Harrison thought it a shame she had not had the opportunity to travel. Keyes thought that remaining in the Lowcountry and immersing herself in nature is what gave her the ability to produce the paintings she did (Smith, *Reminiscences* 119-120). Elizabeth O'Neill Verner makes a similar statement in her Appreciation in Alice's eightieth birthday book. Verner felt that by staying in the Lowcountry and developing her watercolor skills, Alice was able to achieve that special way of depicting the nature that surrounded her (Dillingham 28).

Alice Ravenel Huger Smith: Sharing Her Legacy

Alice Ravenel Huger Smith: Sharing Her Legacy was a solo exhibition in Charleston that was originally scheduled to be shown from October 23, 2016, through June 17, 2017. However, the exhibit proved so popular, that it was extended for several months. Alice's art was displayed at two locations, the Edmondston-Alston House and Middleton Place House Museum. Both of these locations were owned and occupied by members of the same family, cousins of Alice. The Middleton Place Foundation, a nonprofit educational trust, presently maintains the properties. Middleton Place was granted National Historic Landmark status in 1972, and the Foundation, founded in 1974, aims to protect the history of both locations (Duell 76-77).

The Edmondston-Alston House is located on the East Battery overlooking Charleston Harbor. The house is steeped in history. It was built by Charles Edmondston in 1825. However, economic circumstances led him to sell the house to Charles Alston in 1837. Alston was part of the rice-growing culture of the Lowcountry, and the family has maintained ownership of the house since 1837. Again, the house is presently owned by the Middleton Place Foundation (Edmondston).

Middleton Place has a long history and was occupied by several historic figures including Henry Middleton, who served in the First Continental Congress, and Arthur Middleton, who signed the Declaration of Independence. It was a rice-producing plantation and was known for its beautiful gardens. Although destroyed by the Civil War, it has now been restored and the grounds, gardens, and house are open for tours.

The exhibit contained appropriately fifty pieces of Alice's work. Examples included her watercolors, oil paintings on mahogany panels, sketches, and a children's

book. The pieces were on loan from the private collections of friends and family members. Some of the pieces had never been seen before in public. The artwork was hung in the rooms as part of the décor as it might have been during Alice's lifetime (Hunt). I was fortunate to be able to attend this exhibition in person and stay overnight on the grounds of Middleton Place.

The owners of these two properties were cousins of Alice, and she had visited them there. Middleton Place particularly was a favorite of hers. She mentioned in her *Reminiscences* that one Sunday when she was sixteen, she, her father, and a cousin walked from their house in Charleston out to Middleton Place. The walk was about fifteen miles each way. She describes Middleton as "beautiful—a jewel thrown down in the green woods (Smith, *Reminiscences* 82)."

Figure 16. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *After the Storm at Folly Beach*, c. 1926.

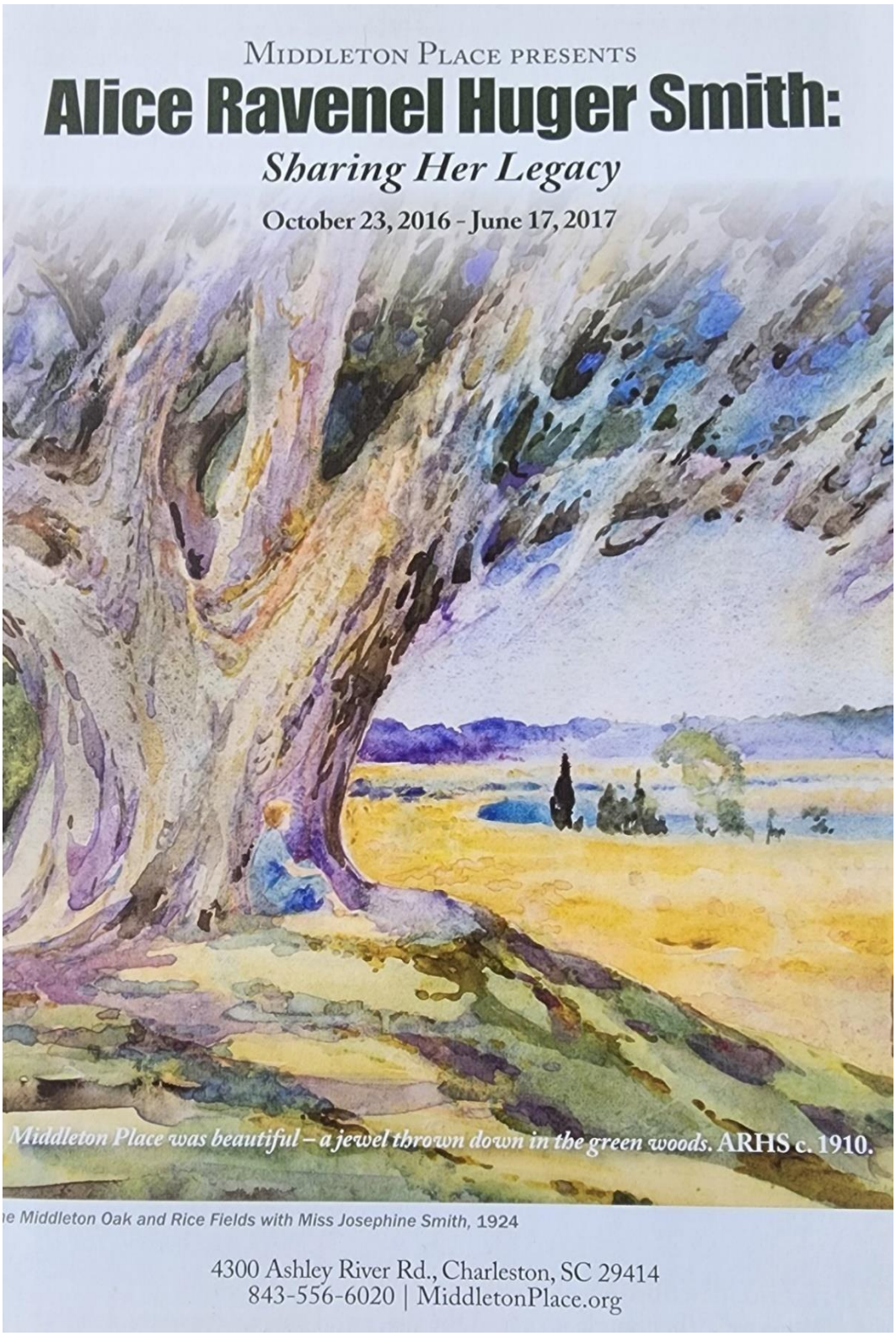

Figure 17. Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, *The Middleton Oak and Rice Fields with Miss Josephine Smith,* 1924. Charles Duell.

She visited there and sketched the gardens and landscape. Later in her studio in Charleston, she would use her memory technique to create watercolors based on what she remembered of the oaks, egrets, herons, and other plants and animals she had observed at Middleton.

The art hanging at Middleton Place reflected her connection to the plantation and her love of nature. Included in the exhibition were her works entitled *Springtime: Reflection Pool at Middleton Place, Mill Pond and Butterfly Lake, Middleton Oak and Rice Field with Miss Josephine Smith, Heron Over River, Birds Alighting on a Lilly Pond, Peacock on a Live Oak Bough,* and *Colorful Swamp* (Middleton Place).

Alice is still giving back to the community as this exhibition raised money for the Middleton Place Foundation to help with their preservation efforts, an endeavor close to Alice's heart. Visitors experienced her art and the history of the two properties and the people who had lived there. It exhibition made it possible for more people to become aware of her work and the beauty of the Lowcountry.

Central to Their Lives, Southern Women Artists in the Johnson Collection

While the Robert P. Coggins Collection focused on seeing that the Southern artists, and the culture they represented, received the recognition they deserved, the Johnson Collection of Spartanburg, South Carolina, mounted an exhibition focusing on the artwork of Southern women and the strength they demonstrated as they pursued their interest in art in an atmosphere where their efforts were considered unequal to men's. The Johnson Collection was founded in 2002 by Susu and George Johnson, adopting the motto "A Private Collection for Public Good." Their mission was to bring attention to the

artists of the South. They felt, like Coggins, that Southern artists had been neglected. Susu Johnson and her daughter, Susanna Johnson Shannon, worked particularly to examine the women artists of the South (Johnson Collection).

In 2018 this Collection presented the exhibition *Central to Their Lives, Southern Women Artists in the Johnson Collection*. The book that was published to accompany the exhibit has the same title. The exhibit traveled starting at the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, Georgia, in June, 2018. It then went on to the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson, Mississippi, the Huntington Museum of Art in Huntington, West Virginia, the Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee, the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, South Carolina, the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens in Jacksonville, Florida, and ended in June, 2021, at the Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Virginia. Not surprisingly, seven of the eight women included in the *Eight Southern Women* exhibition all have works in the Johnson Collection, and the eighth, Mary Tannahill is mentioned in the text.

This exhibition focused on the achievements of Southern women artists from the late 1890s through the early 1960s. The Foreword of the book addressed several issues relevant to women. One issue was the barriers women had to overcome to successfully study the process of producing artwork. Educational opportunities were limited during this time, particularly in the more conservative South. After the Civil War, some art schools did start to allow women to attend classes. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, and Cooper Union and the Art Students League in New York opened their doors to women (Blackman ix).

There were women's colleges in the South, such as Newcomb College, that focused on helping women to develop their artwork and craft to be able to support themselves financially (History of Newcomb College). Spartanburg also had Converse College, a Liberal Arts women's college founded in 1890. Susu Johnson, the chief executive officer of the Johnson Collection, graduated from Converse College (Johnson Collection). (Converse is now a coeducational college. It accepted its first undergraduate male students in 2020.) Both Susu Johnson and her daughter had a particular interest in the obstacles facing women artists and were instrumental in organizing this exhibition on women and their experiences in the art world.

This exhibition explored all aspects of what it took to be a Southern women artist, including what makes someone a Southern woman. For example, Georgia O'Keefe had ties to the South. She had studied at a boarding school in Virginia and later was an instructor at Columbia College in South Carolina. Would these credentials warrant her being considered a Southern artist (Blackman ix).

The book that accompanies the exhibition was divided into three main sections. After the Foreword and Introduction, there was a series of six essays addressing issues, concerns, and organizations that were pertinent to women artists of the South. The second section included examples of the paintings of forty-two women artists along with a short biography for each. The third section included an exhaustive list of women artists from the South, along with their birth and death dates, where they were born and died, and the state with which they were associated. Also included in the notes section were portraits or photographs of the forty-two women whose artwork was shown in the book (viii, 151-205).

The book's text explored the struggle that women artists experienced during the years that the exhibition covered. In the Introduction to the book, Susanna Johnson Shannon, daughter of the founder of the Johnson Collection who is also involved in the Collection, made the following statement. She mentioned the artist Nell Blaine but was referring to women artists of the South in general.

> In many aspects, Blaine's struggle is not singular, but rather typical, especially in the conservative American South in the late nineteenth and nascent twentieth centuries. Whether constrained by family responsibilities, societal expectations, or a narrow menu of professional tracks, women have perpetually needed a sustained and sturdy sense of purpose when it comes to composing, studying, or selling art (xi).

In the essay that Martha Severens wrote for the book, she stated that in the late 1800s through the middle half of the 1900s:

> While many women studied art and contributed significantly to the incomes of their male instructors, they often encountered prejudice and severe competition at exhibitions, where men dominated juries and controlled the awarding of prizes (10).

However, women did continue to create their art. Severens acknowledged:

> By the 1950s, however, women artists had made significant inroads and had gained wider representation in museum collections, exhibitions, and academe.

> Those from the South and those working there faced additional challenges, as the region clung to conventional beliefs about the role of the fairer sex (1).

All three of these statements could be applied to Alice. She did have to use all her resources and connections to start her career. However, with hard work and perseverance, she did gain recognition for her art, for her historical knowledge, and for her community service.

The volume accompanying this exhibition also looked at what methods these women artists used to promote their art. One way was to organize clubs for women. The South Carolina Federation of Women's Club had an Art Chair and encouraged every local chapter to have an Art Society. The Club, and other Women's Clubs throughout the country, sponsored art exhibitions giving women the opportunity to display their artwork. Many of the Women's Clubs were members of the Southern States Art League. This connection often led to combined exhibitions. Alice did participate in these exhibitions (24-25).

Alice's work continues to be shown in exhibitions. Paintings from the Johnson Collection were exhibited in the Knoxville Museum of Art in Knoxville, Tennessee in 2018. The exhibition was entitled *Scenic Impressions: Southern Interpretations from the Johnson Collection.* Works by Alfred Hutty and Alice were among the artwork shown in this exhibit (Johnson Collection).

In 2019, the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia, organized an exhibition entitled *The Charleston Renaissance: Art, Architecture, Literature and Music.* The art displayed included works from the Museum's permanent collection and from the South Caroliniana Library of the University of South Carolina. Some of the artists included in

this show were Alfred Hutty, Anna Heyward Taylor, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, and Alice (Morris Museum).

In 2022, the Johnson Collection in Spartanburg, South Carolina, displayed Alice's art portraying Charleston and the Lowcountry in an exhibition entitled *Nature I Loved: Alice Ravenel Huger Smith and the Carolina Lowcountry.* The title is part of a quote from Alice's gravestone "Nature I loved and next to Nature, Art" (Johnson Collection).

These exhibitions are discussed here because they demonstrate the continuing interest shown in Alice's work. They are evidence of the relevance of Alice in the world of art and in the continuing effort to gain equal recognition for women artists.

Where the Crawdads Sing

In 2022, Alice's artwork from the Johnson Collection was used in the movie, *Where the Crawdads Sing.* The Collection focuses on regional art and possesses numerous examples of Alice's work. The movie was based on *The New York Times* bestselling book of the same name by Delia Owens published in 2018. The action is set in the marshes of North Carolina, which is part of the Carolina Lowcountry. The director of the movie, Olivia Newman, looked to Alice's watercolors to gain a feeling for the landscape of the Lowcountry. In the movie, several of Alice's paintings were hung on the walls of the house the main character, Kya, lived in (Art of the Carolina Lowcountry). Kya was abandoned by her family and lived alone in a rundown shack in the marsh. She loved the surrounding landscape and drew pictures of the nature in which she lived. Alice's pictures represent Kya's drawings. In the story, Kya successfully sells her drawings compiled in books, just as Alice had (Owens).

Landscape of Slavery The Plantation in American Art

While Alice's artwork continued to be shown in exhibitions, her representation of plantation life was not without controversy. Her paintings were beautiful and well executed. However, they did not tell the complete story of life on a plantation. One of her paintings graces the cover of the book, *Landscape of Slavery, The Plantation in American Art.* The book was copyrighted by the Carolina Art Association and published by the University of South Carolina Press to accompany an exhibition that examined the portrayals in art of life on a plantation. The exhibition was shown at the University of Virginia Art Museum in Charlottesville, Virginia; the Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia; and the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston. It was issued in 2008, 150 years after the founding of the Carolina Art Association, now operating through the Gibbes Museum of Art (Mack xiii-xiv).

As discussed earlier in this paper, Alice was very active in these organizations during her lifetime and had bequeathed some of her artwork, including the thirty paintings from *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties,* to the Gibbes Museum. In that series of paintings, Alice chose to show a nostalgic, romantic image of life on a plantation embraced by many Southerners who subscribed to the "Lost Cause." They looked back on the antebellum era as a stable period ruined by the Civil War and Reconstruction. Most of Alice's paintings were of beautiful landscapes. Those that did have people did not show slaves in backbreaking labor but rather in pleasant interaction with the white owners and their families. Her painting, *Sunday Morning at the Great House,* would be an example of this. In this painting, the white masters are engaged in conversation with nicely dressed slaves. The white children are talking with the children of slaves, and the

white minister and his wife look on with approval (8-10). One of the cover paintings for the exhibition book was a painting from the *Plantation of the Fifties* series entitled *Mending a Break in a Rice-Field Bank*. The painting depicted African American slaves working to repair the damage with a white overseer watching over them with his horse behind him. While four of the figures in the picture are working with the other slaves standing and watching, the overall feeling is of a relaxing working atmosphere with no threat from the overseer (Smith, *Plantation*).

Alice's painting is set in contrast with the more recent painting (1982) by Benny Andrews entitled *Plower*. This painting, like Alice's, was also part of a group of paintings. Andrews' group was entitled *Southland Series*. Andrews was an African American artist (1930-2006) born in Georgia whose work included depictions of African American farmers. His painting shows an African American man standing in a cotton field next to a plow with a row of rundown small houses in the background. His paintings show a more realistic portrayal of African Americans working as farmers even now in some parts of the South. His experience as an African American man led him to use his art to make political statements. Like Alice, he saw his art as something more than achieving success for himself. He saw his art as a way to advance the causes of equality for all (Mack 78-80).

Landscape of Slavery acknowledges that Alice's artwork and her father's text do not accurately depict what life on a plantation was like for the slaves. The book explores the representation of the plantation in American art. Its text is presented in a series of essays with accompanying artwork. The cover has two images. Those two views

represent the romantic and the realistic. Alice's paintings are still part of the conversation on art today.

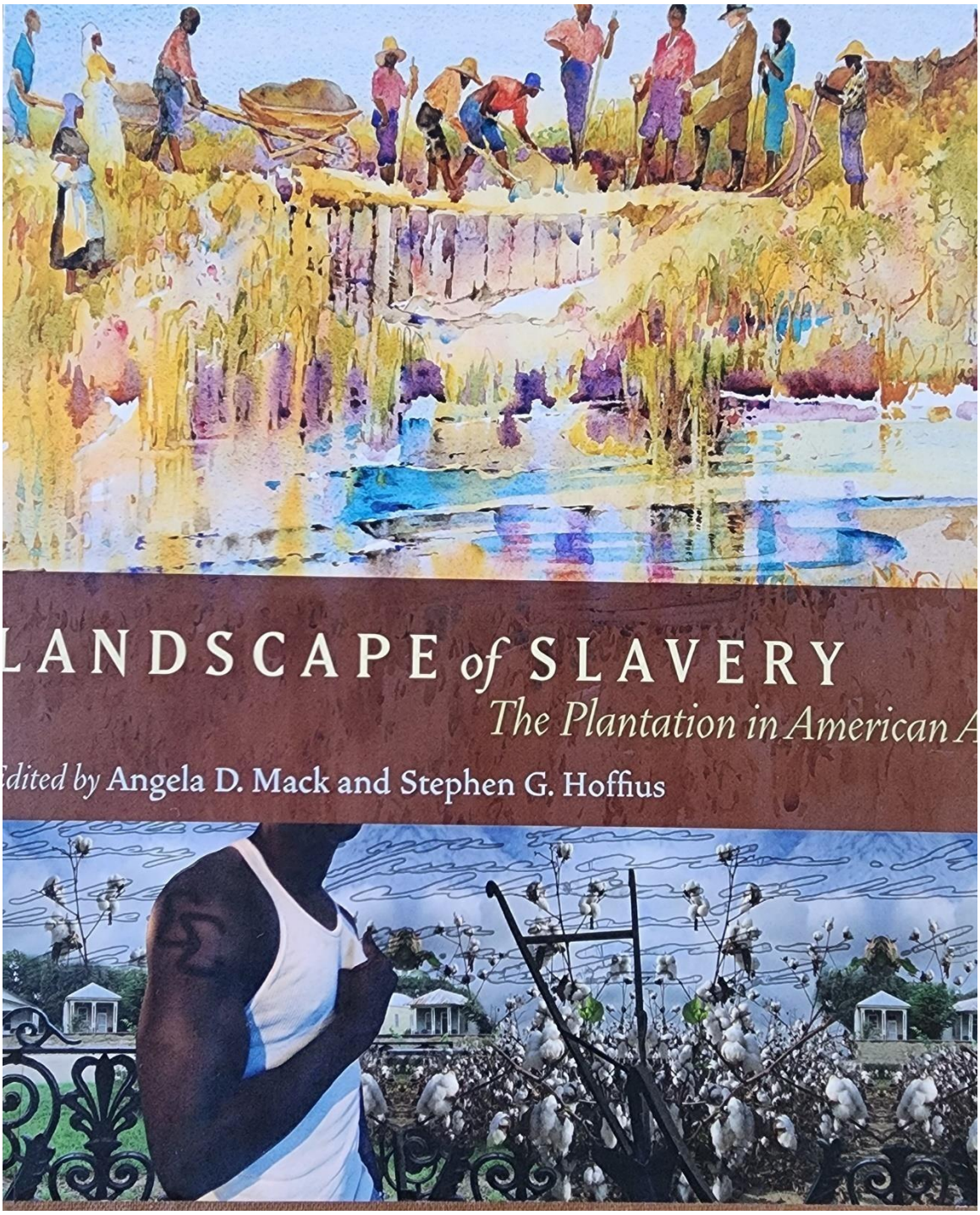

Figure 18. Cover Art for *Landscape of Slavery, The Plantation in American Art* with paintings by Alice Revenel Huger Smith and Benny Andrews.

CONCLUSION

When one examines Alice's life, the way she lived, her activities, and her associations, several arguments could be made for the claim that she could be considered a feminist. Since this dissertation examines whether Alice could be considered a feminist, it is necessary to define the term and what it represents. The idea of feminism can be traced back to Mary Wollstonecraft, and the book she published in 1792, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She questioned women's role in society and believed that men and women should have equal access to education. The history of the term feminism goes back to when Charles Fournier first used it in 1837. He was an advocate for more equality for women and believed that marriage at that time was a type of slavery.

The idea of feminism continued to be debated and supported through the years. Feminism in the United States is usually divided into four waves. The First Wave included the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 and continued with the fight for voting rights for American women. The Second Wave appeared in the 1960s with the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement and the establishment of the National Organization for Women. This movement fought for equality in education and employment. Around the 1990s the Third Wave addressed the issue of equality for women of all races and gender identity (History.com Editors). The Fourth Wave, starting in the 2010s, called attention to sexual assault and harassment. The #MeToo movement is identified with the Fourth Wave (Encyclopedia Britannica). Alice only experienced the first wave.

When Alice was born in 1876, a movement already existed to gain more equality and rights for women in America, particularly the right to vote. The women fighting for the right to vote were known as suffragettes. There was no evidence that Alice engaged in activities with the suffragettes, although some of her associates did. Susan Pringle Frost, who was active in the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings with Alice, was a suffragette (Hutchisson 201). The suffragette leaders used a variety of methods to make their philosophy known to the general public. One was to start a publication that had articles concerning women's issues.

The Woman Citizen was a weekly magazine originally published in 1870 in New York in support of women's suffrage by the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). After American women were granted the right to vote through the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the NAWSA became the League of Women Voters. *The Woman Citizen* continued to be published, although less often, until 1931 when it ceased publication entirely (Women Citizen). However, through the 1920s, the magazine presented information of concern to American women. It reported on political issues such as the role women should play in political conventions, the positions of both political parties, and the ways to encourage people to vote. It also carried articles about prominent women. In the July 12, 1924, issue in the section entitled "World News About Women," Alice was featured along with her picture. Although there is no evidence that Alice was a member of the League of Women Voters of Charleston County, the women she associated with were. In the archives was a letter from Charlotte R. Dillingham, Finance Chairman of the League in Charleston, written on September 11, 1953, asking Alice for a donation for the League (Smith papers, Historical Society). Dillingham was the driving force

behind the movement to publish the tribute book to Alice on her eightieth birthday, and she held the copyright on the book.

Education

Alice's experience with education did demonstrate the gap in equality in education between men and women. You can see this pattern in her family. Her brothers were both given advanced education. Alice's formal education stopped when she finished attending Misses Sass's School for Girls and the art classes she took with Lucie-Louise Fery at the Carolina Art Association. She made it clear there was no financial backing available for her to continue her formal education or to travel. Instead of traveling to Europe or New York or studying at the Art Student League or other schools or art colonies, she set her mind to take advantage of the opportunities closer to home. She worked extensively with her father, Daniel Elliott Huger Smith, who lived from 1846 to 1932. Alice gained a great deal of her knowledge of history from him. She also shared a love of nature with him. He was active in the cultural scene in Charleston, serving as the director of the Carolina Art Association (McInvaill 13). Alice collaborated on several publications with him.

She was resourceful in finding ways to expand her knowledge in art and in business. Her work with Elizabeth Waties Allston Pringle on *A Woman Rice Planter* gave her an introduction to the publishing world. She used her friendship with Birge Harrison to further develop her painting technique. She assisted her cousin Motte Alston Read in cataloging his collection of Japanese woodblock prints. That work, along with access to his extensive library, led to her experimentation with woodblocks herself. Helen Hyde

and Bertha Jaques shared their knowledge of woodblock prints with her. Ellen Hale and Gabrielle Clements encouraged Alice to start the Charleston Etchers' Club. Visitors to her studio, such as Owen Wister, helped give her pointers on her work and helped her to develop her negotiating skills. She was also exposed to different ideas through the various societies to which she belonged.

Her energetic pursuit of greater knowledge in both her art and in her business acumen ending up placing her with other accomplished women in receiving her honorary doctorate from Mount Holyoke College.

As she became skilled and experienced herself, she then in turn shared her knowledge with others, becoming a mentor to other women artists.

Feminism

Alice was not a suffragette nor did she participate in protests for women's rights. She could not be labeled a New Woman. She did not bob her hair or shorten her skirts in defiance of traditional ways. However, although her art and preservation work were connected to the past, her actions were more of a modern woman.

The definition Merriam-Webster Dictionary presently gives for feminism is "belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests." If we examine Alice's life, we can see many examples of her actions that parallel this definition.

Political

Alice did participate in the cultural and artistic movements taking place in Charleston. She was associated with the Carolina Art Association and became a formal member as soon as they accepted women as members.

She did take a leadership role in the preservation movement in Charleston, drawing attention to the need for preservation through her books even before the various societies for preservation were established.

The preservation movement was originally driven by the white elite women of Charleston. However, as it was more formalized with the government becoming involved, the situation changed. With the passing of the legal ordinance and establishment of the Old and Historic District, there was a shift from female leadership to male. As tourism played a larger and larger role in the city's economy, public officials were inclined to support historic preservation and cultural activities that attracted visitors to the city. Albert Simons, architect and member of the Board of Architectural Review and Thomas P. Stoney, Mayor of Charleston, took over leadership roles. They did not ignore the women, but the power to legally enact change was solidly in the hands of the men (Yuhl 42-43) However, Alice continued to be a leading force. In 1947, she helped found and served on the Historic Charleston Foundation. When the book *This is Charleston* was produced by the Carolina Art Association to catalog the historic buildings of the city, Alice was selected as an expert to be on the panel of judges who approved and classified buildings included in the volume. The panel consisted of three men and Alice (Stoney ix).

Economic

Alice was an advocate for equality in the business world, and she demonstrated it in her own business dealings. She demonstrated that a woman did not need to look to a man for economic stability. She created her own income and helped to support her family.

She developed and successfully used her business skills. Early in her career, she persuaded the Lanneau Art Store in Charleston to partner with her financially to produce *Twenty Drawings of the Pringle House.*

When Alice decided to assemble a book using her art, she convinced magazines which had used her articles and artwork in their publication to allow her to use those same articles and art in her books. She also convinced clients who had purchased her artwork to allow her to photograph them for use in her publications.

She had the ability to make connections through her family, friends, and members of the associations to which she belonged. She established relationships with people who visited her studios. She used these connections to promote her work and the work of other women artists.

She sought opportunities to show her work, and she negotiated the terms and conditions for the numerous exhibitions of her work and book contracts.

She contributed financial support for organizations to which she belonged and funded awards and prizes to encourage others in their work. She donated her paintings to benefit the Gibbes Museum of Art.

Social

During the World Wars, Alice and her sister did not go into the factories to work nor did they act as nurses. Those activities would not have been typical for ladies from their class. Instead, they pursued more traditional activities to do their part for the war effort. They offered hospitality. They opened their home to the military men stationed in Charleston during both wars. They offered teas and dinners as a respite for the men from the duties of war. They even set up beds in their drawing room as a makeshift dormitory for the men to stay overnight. (McInvaill 141-145).

She lent her support and encouragement to other women artists by sending out their work with her for exhibitions. She encouraged visitors to her studio to visit the studios of other artists.

She participated in organizations whose activities benefited the community, and she cofounded several groups to support both the artistic and preservation movements in Charleston.

She held her own in the company of men considered experts on the historic architecture of Charleston, and she was continually in the company of people who had more formal credentials than she did.

These examples confirm Alice was an advocate for political, economic, and social equality. Yet, she accomplished all these things without any formal education and while living in the same town in which she was born. Examining her life is relevant because we can learn from it. Her influence is still felt today through her legacy of art, historic preservation, and generosity.

That is the significance of this work—Alice, without great fanfare, simply through the way she lived her life, made a statement, not necessarily intentional, about what women were capable of achieving.

Her strength was she never doubted that she could accomplish what she set out to do, and she did not let anything stop her from reaching her goals. She encouraged other women to do the same.

She lived by her grandmother's motto.

She was "Gentle in manner, resolute in deed."

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VITA

Bethany L. Duane

Bennington, Vermont, December 4, 1954

Robert and Gertrude Duane

Educational Institutions:

Pequannock Township High School	Pequannock, NJ	Diploma	1973
Caldwell College	Caldwell, NJ	BS	1981
Montclair State University	Montclair, NJ	MA	1990
Drew University	Madison, NJ	D.Litt.	2024