



Boston School Paintings The Collection of Dr. and Mrs. James R. Taylor

by Emily Weintraub

When James R. Taylor (1887–1962) of Boston began acquiring paintings and decorative objects in the first quarter of the twentieth century, it was an ideal time and place in which to embark on building a collection. The city’s vibrant art community included the Boston School artists, whose

achievements in portraiture and genre depictions earned the admiration and praise of critics and collectors.¹ Led by Edmund Tarbell, painters of the Boston School included Joseph DeCamp (Fig. 1), William Paxton, Frank Benson, and two artists of particular interest to Dr. Taylor: Arthur Merton Hazard and William Worcester Churchill.

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Fig. 1: Joseph R. DeCamp (1858–1923)
The Blue Veil (aka *The Blue Lady*), ca. 1913
Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inches. Signed upper left
Private collection. Courtesy of John G. Hagan

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Fig. 2: Arthur M. Hazard (1872–1930)
Reverie, ca. 1905
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches
Signed lower right. Courtesy of Brock & Co.





Fig. 4: Arthur M. Hazard (1872–1930)
Woman Reading in an Interior, n.d.
 Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches
 Signed lower left
 Courtesy of Brock & Co.

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Fig. 3: William W. Churchill (1858–1926)
Leisure, 1910
 Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches
 Signed and dated lower left
 Courtesy of The Museum of Fine Arts,
 Boston. 12.325

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Fig. 5: Arthur M. Hazard (1872–1930)
The Letter, 1903
 Oil on canvas, 29 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 24 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches
 Signed and dated lower right
 Courtesy of Brock & Co.

Dr. James Taylor was a prominent physician and native Bostonian. In 1922, at the age of thirty-five, he married Mable Sealy, a nurse and native of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The union was a happy one, particularly for Mable, who in 1909 had suffered the loss of her first husband, John Ludeman, after just two months of marriage following a tragic railroad accident. Her brief marriage to John Ludeman produced a daughter, Cathryn Ludeman, born in 1910. Mable and Cathryn's new life in Boston with Dr. Taylor was privileged. Their well-staffed home at 124 Commonwealth Avenue in Boston's

affluent Back Bay neighborhood contained objects and antiques found in only the finest Boston homes of the time: silver, crystal, paintings, and Japanese decorations, the latter reflecting the strong link that Boston maintained to popular styles in Europe.

Refined interiors like the Taylors' were as much the subject of Boston School paintings as the sitters themselves. Domestic settings gave the Boston School painters compositional and atmospheric control in their works, and allowed them to demonstrate achievement in rendering the human form and effects of light through a window. Many

of the school's paintings also appealed to their audience's taste for *Japonisme*, including Arthur Hazard's *Reverie* (Fig. 2), with its ornate Japanned secretary, and William Churchill's *Woman Reading on a Settee* (Fig. 8), where a Japanese screen located behind the settee adds pattern and richness to the scene. A similar screen is part of the composition of Churchill's *Leisure* (Fig. 3), in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. These paintings by Arthur Hazard and William Churchill extol the pleasures of everyday life enjoyed in beautiful spaces, and perfectly mirrored the elegance

and leisure of the Taylors' lives. In this way, the Taylors were the quintessential collectors of Boston School paintings.

Arthur Merton Hazard (1872–1930) was born in North Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and like many artists of his generation, studied abroad in Paris at the Académies Colarossi and Julian. Upon his return to Boston he studied under renowned painters Joseph DeCamp (1858–1923) (fig. 1) and Frank Duveneck (1848–1919). Hazard made his career in Boston, where he focused on landscape and portrait painting, including commissioned portraits of prominent Bostonians. His interior *The Letter* (1903) (Fig. 5), shows that Hazard responded early to the Boston School trend of painting women in richly appointed interiors. Many of his colleagues began this style of painting after 1905. On February 25, 1906, the *Boston Evening Transcript* took note of the vogue and suggested it originated with Edmund Tarbell, the leader of the movement, writing: "...the fashion for painting interiors which is just now prevailing in Boston studios is a thing to be cordially encouraged. If we owe the prevalence of this fashion to Mr. Tarbell he is to be thanked for it."

In November 1914 Hazard received considerable press for the opening of his art gallery at 64 Commonwealth Avenue, just one block from Dr. Taylor's apartment. The townhouse included commercial galleries, a school of drawing and painting, and Hazard's studio. The inaugural installation was impressive. Hazard exhibited twenty-seven portraits and two murals painted in the previous ten years, many of which were being shown for the first time. According to a November 5, 1914, article in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, the state-of-the-art galleries were, "artificially lighted by an indirect system which approximates as closely as possible the effect of daylight." Dr. Taylor may have purchased one or more works by Hazard at this exhibition. *Reverie*, *Woman Reading in an Interior*, and *The Letter* (Figs. 2, 4, 5) are rare, early interior scenes by Hazard, and are strong examples of Boston School painting in their classicism and handling.

Hazard's later years were spent in Los Angeles, California, where he moved in 1923 for health reasons. He continued to paint portraits and landscapes there. *Hunting Scene* (Fig. 6) was most likely painted by Hazard before his departure for California. The light effects that are so successful in his interior scenes are visible in this expansive landscape, as is his loose impressionist brushwork that recalls the dress and hat in Hazard's early painting *The Letter* (fig. 5). *Sailboats Through the Trees* (Fig. 7), with its soft suffused sunlight, shows Hazard's talent for translating what he saw in nature to the canvas.

William Worcester Churchill (1858–1926) was born in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, and studied briefly at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before entering the inaugural class of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1877. He studied under Emil Otto Grundmann before departing for Paris, where he was a pupil of Leon Bonnat from





this studio that Churchill painted *Woman Reading on a Settee* (fig. 8), which shows his talent for portraying light and conveying atmosphere. Like other Boston School painters, Churchill's interior scenes recall Dutch Old Master paintings in their quiet, restrained elegance, streaming light, and studied placement of objects. Churchill's refined brushwork, particularly his graceful handling of the model's face, bears similarities to that of a younger Boston School painter, William McGregor Paxton (Fig. 9). In landscapes like *Pond with Sailboats* (Fig. 10), Churchill continued to focus on effects of light and on the play of light and shadow on water. As in his interior paintings, the scene is thoughtfully composed: indicated by the graceful arch of the tree, the strong vertical of the sailboat at the center of the composition, and the gentle curve of the perimeter of the pond, dotted with boathouses.

In 1927, the now-retired Dr. Taylor and his wife moved west, to homes in Borrego Springs and Julian, California. Their Hazard and Churchill paintings were hung in the Taylors' formal, winter home in Borrego Springs, remaining there until 1975, when some of the paintings were

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Fig. 8: William W. Churchill (1858–1926)
Woman Reading on a Settee, ca. 1905–10
Oil on canvas, 23 x 30 inches
Signed lower right. Courtesy of Brock & Co.

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Fig. 6: Arthur M. Hazard (1872–1930)
Hunting Scene, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches
Signed lower left. Courtesy of Brock & Co.

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Fig. 9: William M. Paxton (1869–1941)
The Note (Mrs. Ernest Major), ca. 1902
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches.
Signed lower right. Private collection.

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Fig. 7: Arthur M. Hazard (1872–1930)
Sailboats Through the Trees, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches
Signed lower left. Courtesy of Brock & Co

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Fig. 10: William W. Churchill (1858–1926)
Pond with Sailboats, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches
Signed lower left. Courtesy of Brock & Co.



1878 to 1885 and of Edmund Tarbell from 1884 to 1885 in Paris, and again in Boston from 1885 to 1888. Churchill was an active member of the Guild of Boston Artists, the St. Botolph Club, and the Boston Art Club. His first studio was on Irvington Street, where he received students on Saturday afternoons. He then moved to the Harcourt

Studios, where the disastrous 1904 fire destroyed much of his life's work.

Following the fire, Churchill served on the five-person committee that organized the construction of the new, more spacious Fenway Studios on Ipswich Street, where he enjoyed a corner unit on the top floor of the building until his death. It was in

moved to Cathryn (Ludeman) Mahoney's home in Boston, and others to Cathryn's son and daughter-in-law's home in Guilford, Connecticut. Cathryn's death in 1985 reunited the paintings in Guilford, where they have remained until the present time. The collection is distinguished by an uninterrupted descent of nearly a century within the Taylor, Ludeman, and Mahoney families.

It is not surprising that Dr. Taylor identified with works by Arthur Hazard and William Churchill. Their paintings exemplify the beauty, refinement, and elegance that were central to his life with Mable Taylor. They invite the viewer into a private sphere of domesticity, one in which books, letter writing, collecting, and art play a central role. Similarly, the Taylors' appreciation of leisure time spent at their farm in New Hampshire, and later in Julian, California, is represented in Hazard's and Churchill's landscape paintings. The collection was an important part of the Taylors' lives and formed an indelible impression on Cathryn Ludeman, her children and grandchildren, and their families. It also represents a rich period in American art and in Boston's art history. [AEV](#)

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I. Patricia Jobe Pierce, *Edmund C. Tarbell and the Boston School of Painting* (Hingham, Mass.: Pierce Galleries Inc., 1980).

