This exhibition presents paintings by early professors, their students, and friends, selected from the College’s art collection. For over a century, Sweet Briar’s lovely and extensive campus has captured the attention of many artists, both established professionals and eager students. So too have the faces and personalities of professors, staff, and neighbors attracted the artist’s eye. Together they provide a glimpse into our shared history, echoes of which inform the character of campus life today.

In many cases, accession records are unclear as to the exact provenance of the paintings, as these often made their way into the collection by informal, undocumented means, sometimes migrating from friend to friend over the years. In other cases, titles have become confused as multiple generations of record-keepers and researchers have tried to make sense of each others’ cryptic notations or an artists’ use of variations of the same title for several different works. These works on view are a representative cross-section of a larger body of early images associated with the College, many of which are today not in a condition to exhibit publicly (though they are always available for study by students and professors), as time has taken its toll on canvases and frames. Exhibitions such as this provide an overdue opportunity to study and appreciate all these works and to undertake much needed research.

This is the first installment of a series of three Sweet Briar Creates exhibitions planned for this gallery in 2012-2013. The next shows will feature work by students and by current Sweet Briar staff and faculty.

Preparation for this exhibition benefitted from the research of Arts Management practicum student Caroline Bailey ’13, who spent weeks in the spring of 2012 tracking down references on artist Elizabeth Hunt Barrett and searching for her elusive Amherst County dwelling.

The following checklist is in alphabetical order by the artist’s last name, then by the title of the work.
Elizabeth Hunt Barrett  1863-1955  
*Beech Trees (Autumn Woods)*  ca. 1920  
gouache on paper  
19 ¾ x 17 ½ inches  
Gift of an unidentified donor  
ACG.1966.024.e

A native of Bedford Station, New York, Barrett trained at the National Academy of Design. Though detailed information is scarce, it appears that she also studied in France. She continued to visit Europe regularly to paint throughout her long career. Barrett exhibited in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington for decades. She showed her work under the name E. Hunt Barrett.

She and her husband, Edward Barrett, also a painter, moved to the Amherst area in about 1913 and settled in a farmhouse near Sweet Briar’s sister estate, Mt. St. Angelo—property now occupied by the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, across U.S. Rt. 29. The Barretts forged close ties with the Sweet Briar community and welcomed generations of students into their home, which became a favorite destination for walking excursions. Countless students, professors, alumnae, and staff bought Barrett’s paintings of campus, which she exhibited annually at the Boxwood Inn (now home to the alumnae office and the Sweet Briar Museum). Her Sweet Briar paintings, chiefly Impressionistic studies executed *en plein air*, fall into two distinct subjects: views of the College buildings as seen from the perspective of the Mt. St. Angelo hilltop, and tree studies in Sweet Briar’s abundant woodlands.

Elizabeth Hunt Barrett  1863-1955  
*Dusk over Sweet Briar from Mt. St. Angelo*  1931  
oil on board  
16 x 20 inches  
Gift of an unidentified donor  
ACG.1966.024.d

Elizabeth Hunt Barrett  1863-1955  
*View of Sweet Briar*  ca. 1913-1950  
gouache on paper  
20 x 26 inches  
Gift of an unidentified donor  
ACG.1966.024.i

Elizabeth Hunt Barrett  1863-1955  
*View of Sweet Briar*  1928  
oil on board  
12 ¾ x 15 inches  
Gift of Jessie L. Coburn Laukhuff, Class of 1933  
DC.1993.008
Elizabeth Hunt Barrett  1863-1955  
Woods in the Snow  ca. 1913-1950  
oil on board  
16 ¾ x 22 ¼ inches  
Gift of Lynn Prior Harrington, Class of 1958, and Kay Harrington  
DC.2000.017

Jean (Janet) Imbrie  
Portrait of Lucy Shepard Crawford  ca. 1935  
oil on canvas board  
25 ¼ x 21 inches  
Gift of the artist  
ACG.2012.002

The artist, Jean, or Janet, Imbrie Frey, was a member of the Class of 1935. She did not become a professional artist, so it is assumed that this and the portrait of Sterling Jones also in the exhibition were painted while Imbrie was still a student. She kept these paintings all her life and gave them to the College a few years ago. As a student, her art teachers would have been Professors McLaws and Wilcox, whose work is included in this exhibition.

The sitter, Lucy Shepard Crawford, was Professor of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education 1923-1956. She shared the brick house called Red Top, on Elijah Road, with Harriet Rogers, long-time head of physical education and the namesake of the present-day riding center. Widely admired for her kindness, open-mindedness, keen intellect, and great appreciation for all members of the College community, Professor Crawford was nevertheless nicknamed “Lucifer” by her friends. As a sign of their enduring affection, her colleagues and former students published a memory book honoring her wit and wisdom, The Best of Lucifer: From the Life and Thought of Lucy Shepard Crawford 1890-1963, a few years after her death.

Jean (Janet) Imbrie  
Portrait of Sterling Jones  ca. 1935  
oil on canvas board  
24 x 20  
Gift of the artist  
DC.1995.008

The sitter, Sterling Jones, began working for the College in 1905 and would be a campus fixture for more than 50 years, assigned to what was then known as the maintenance department (now called the physical plant office). He was one of the men who made bricks for the earliest campus buildings, including this one (originally called “Academic”). In the company of President Anne Gary Pannell and other dignitaries, Mr. Jones helped lay the cornerstone of Dew Dormitory in 1956 (the College’s 50th anniversary) as the representative of his fellow employees.

He and his third wife, Aurelia, and their numerous children were the last residents of the former slave cabin located behind Sweet Briar House. They moved out of the cabin in the 1920s and the College’s alumnae association moved in, making the cabin its first home. The Sales building on
Sweet Briar College Art Collection and Galleries

The campus is named in honor of one of his daughters, Dorothy Jones Sales, who also worked for the College all her adult life. Many of Mr. Jones’s descendants still live in the Amherst area.

Virginia Randall McLaws  1872-1967
Portrait of a Boy   ca. 1931
oil on canvas
24 x 18 inches
Gift of Mary Kendrick Benedict, President of the College and Professor of Philosophy and Psychology 1906-1916
ACG.1952.001

The sitter is probably a local child, perhaps from Amherst or another neighboring community. His particular name is not known. In the past this has been confused with a portrait of a boy called Cecil Hunt that was owned by President Meta Glass and also with a portrait of another local child named Gordon Allison. The whereabouts of those two paintings remain a mystery.

This painting was given to the College by its first president in 1952, decades after she had left office. President Benedict remained very interested in the school’s progress and returned to campus on a number of occasions in the 1930s and 1940s. She became quite ill the year this painting came back to campus and passed away in 1956 just after Sweet Briar celebrated its 50th anniversary. This building is named in her honor.

Virginia Randall McLaws  1872-1967
Stone House at Chester Springs (Street Scene)   ca. 1938
oil on canvas
16 x 22 inches
Gift of the artist
ACG.1938.002

The artist was Professor of Art 1908-1938. A native of Savannah (and the daughter of Confederate general Lafayette McLaw), she studied at the Charcoal Club in Baltimore and at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 1899-1903. In addition to establishing a solid foundation for the studio art and art history programs at Sweet Briar, McLaw drew the original template for the College’s official seal and was a key volunteer in the early days of the College book shop.

This painting depicts a scene in Chester County, Pennsylvania, the site of the summer school of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Virginia Randall McLaw  1872-1967
Untitled (Landscape)   ca. 1908-1938
watercolor on paper
14 x 10 inches
Gift of an unidentified donor
DC.1997.073
Dorothy Carnine Scott 1903-1993
*Cow Hill, Sweet Briar* 1937
oil on canvas
29 x 24 inches
Gift of Eugenie M. Morenus, Professor of Mathematics and Latin 1909-1946
ACG.1973.055.a

The artist’s husband, Ewing C. Scott, was a Professor of Chemistry at Sweet Briar 1927-1944.

Born in North Dakota, the artist spent a nomadic childhood in the West. Her father was a Presbyterian minister. She graduated from Colorado College in 1924 and earned an MA from the University of Chicago as well as a BS in library science from Syracuse University.

She did not begin painting in earnest until her family settled at Sweet Briar, studying with Elizabeth Hunt Barrett, a professional painter who was a close neighbor of the campus. While in Virginia, Scott exhibited with the Lynchburg Art Club as well as farther afield. Indeed, *Cow Hill* was shown in Washington, DC, at the Corcoran Gallery of Art biennial exhibition of contemporary painting in the mid 1930s. Scott was also featured in a solo exhibition, one of a series highlighting Virginia artists, at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in the late autumn of 1944.

Scott continued to paint long after she and her husband left campus and she eventually settled in Estes Park, Colorado, where she helped establish a vibrant arts community.

Dorothy Carnine Scott 1903-1993
*Fall Colors (Landscape with Corn Shocks)* 1937
oil on board
23 ½ x 17 ½ inches
Gift of an unidentified donor
ACG.1973.055.b

Helen Maria Turner 1858-1958
*The Old House* 1919
oil on canvas
30 ¼ x 24 inches
Gift of the artist in honor of Dr. Mary Harley, College Physician and Professor of Physiology and Hygiene 1906-1935
ACG.1933.001

A native of Louisiana, Turner was educated at Louisiana State Normal School in New Orleans. In the 1880s she took art classes at the Artists’ Association of New Orleans and at Tulane University. After a few years teaching art at a women’s college in Texas, Turner moved to New York to study at the Art Students League. She also studied at the Cooper Union and earned a degree from Teacher’s College, Columbia University. She would spend much of her career teaching art at the New York YWCA. By the 1910s Turner was exhibiting her work at major commercial galleries in New York and at high-profile venues such as the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, where she showed *The Old House*.
Exposition in San Francisco. She was elected to full membership in the National Academy of Design in 1921, the first artist from Louisiana so honored. Later in life, she was recognized with two retrospective exhibitions, at the High Museum in Atlanta in 1929 and at the New Orleans Museum of Art (then called the Delgado Museum of Art) in 1949. Turner was most recently the focus of a travelling exhibition organized in 2010 by the Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, and co-curated by Sweet Briar alumna Maia Free Jalenak ’88, Helen M. Turner: The Woman’s Point of View.

This painting is thought to depict the artist’s sister Lettie at their summer home, “Takusan,” at the artist’s colony at Cragsmoor, New York. It was at Cragsmoor that Turner and Sweet Briar’s resident physician, Mary Harley, became fast friends. The artist donated this painting in Dr. Harley’s honor just a few years before she retired.

Lois Wilcox 1889-1958
Sweet Briar Cornfields ca. 1933-1940
oil on canvas
20 ½ x 29 ½ inches
Gift of Laura Buckham
DC.1995.006

A native of Tryon, North Carolina, Wilcox was Assistant Professor of Art 1933-1940. She began her art training as a teenager, studying in Old Lyme, Connecticut, with the Impressionist master Willard Metcalf (whose sardonic portrait of her, Poor Little Bloticelli, is owned by the Florence Griswold Museum there). She studied at the school of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, at the Arts Students League in New York, and in Paris. In the 1920s she exhibited on several occasions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Details of her career after Sweet Briar are unknown.

Suggested Reading


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