Young at Art!

Picture This: The Story of a Souvenir

How are memories made in your family? How are they kept alive?

Carr-Todd Reunion, 1914. Arthur J. Telfer. Glass plate negative, 11.25" x 14." Fenimore Art Museum.

In carts pulled by oxen traveling dirt roads and forest floor, Jehiel Todd moved his family of nine to establish a new village along Oaks Creek, a hamlet later known as Toddsville, NY. Robert Carr settled nearby, building the above house in 1825. The families of these two men constructed a series of successful mills along Oaks Creek, including a cotton mill, a paper mill, and a sawmill. Marriage between two children, Sally Todd and Ephraim Carr, formalized the partnership these families had long practiced.

For four generations the Todds and Carrs reunited to share family news, review records, and renew vows of friendship and loyalty. The Carr-Todd Reunion of 1912 welcomed one hundred fifty descendants of Todd and Carr – almost as many needed to power the mills of Toddsville! Descendants of the first families had dispersed and settled into the surrounding towns of Central New York, from Norwich to Albany to Gloversville. A glimpse of this long weekend of stories, speeches, and songs was preserved in this masterfully composed and developed photograph by Arthur J. Telfer. Importantly, a simpler photograph of the house was given as a memento to family members present at the reunion.

Washington G. Smith and Arthur J. Telfer operated a successful photography studio in Central New York, coating glass plates with light-sensitive chemicals that captured images when exposed to light. Working for nearly one hundred years as photography developed as an art form, the brilliant works of Smith and Telfer help us to remember the innovations and business endeavors that we carry forward with the help of our families today.

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Picture This: The Story of a Souvenir

How might we commemorate life's many transitions as we gain new titles and roles?

Baby Bonnet, 1847-1854. Anishinaabe or Odawa. Birchbark, porcupine quills, root, 5.5" x 4.5" x 6."

This delicate baby's bonnet was made using porcupine quills. Dyed in a rich array of hues, the quills were fitted into birch bark and clipped at the back, with a second lining of birch inserted underneath. Quillwork has long been used as a traditional embellishment of leather and bark items by eastern Native people, including the Anishinaabe or Odawa woman who made this souvenir bonnet, purchased for the Lady Elgin in 1850. Women of both cultures appreciated the unparalleled beauty of this work of fine art, which calls to memory both the legacy of Native artisans and an important season of Lady Elgin's life.

As wife of the Lord Elgin, who served as the British administrator of the province of Canada from 1847—1854, Lady Elgin negotiated her identity through the expectations of custom, especially those associated with the royal line. Lady Elgin was expected to establish relationships with those whom her husband oversaw, including Natives in Canada. Another important expectation was that of motherhood, which was thought to mark the success of a woman's life. An elegant art object in the form of a baby bonnet may have helped to commemorate this successful period of Lady Elgin's life, coinciding with the birth of her son, Victor Bruce, the 9th Earl of Elgin. The family line survives in Scotland today.

Young at Art!

Manuscript Painting

How might we embellish records to enhance their effect?

Campbell Family Record, 1816. William Murray. Pen and Ink, Watercolor. 16" x 13." Fenimore Art Museum.

Illuminated manuscripts using pen, ink, and watercolor have enlivened prayer books and official documents from Europe to Asia for over one thousand years. An early American style of painted manuscript is called the *fraktur*: a family record of marriages, births, and baptisms drawn by a calligrapher, often a schoolmaster, and decorated with formal, stylized elements that transform the document into a work of art.

Having deserted the British Army to join the Patriot cause, schoolmaster William Murray was unable to return to England following the American Revolution. Like other fraktur artists, Murray traveled Central New York during summer months to create and complete family documents such as the *Campbell Family Record*, charging ten cents for each name and date added. The *Campbell Family Record* features bright, symmetrical motifs such as the clover and pinwheel, a delicate floral border, and masonic symbols that acknowledge the Campbell family's role in the community.

Frakturs served as both official documents to record rites of passage and as good luck charms, imbued with the ability to positively affect the one named on the record when displayed publicly, similar to diplomas issued by school administrators today.

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Manuscript Painting

How might we arrange symbolic elements to express a narrative through time?

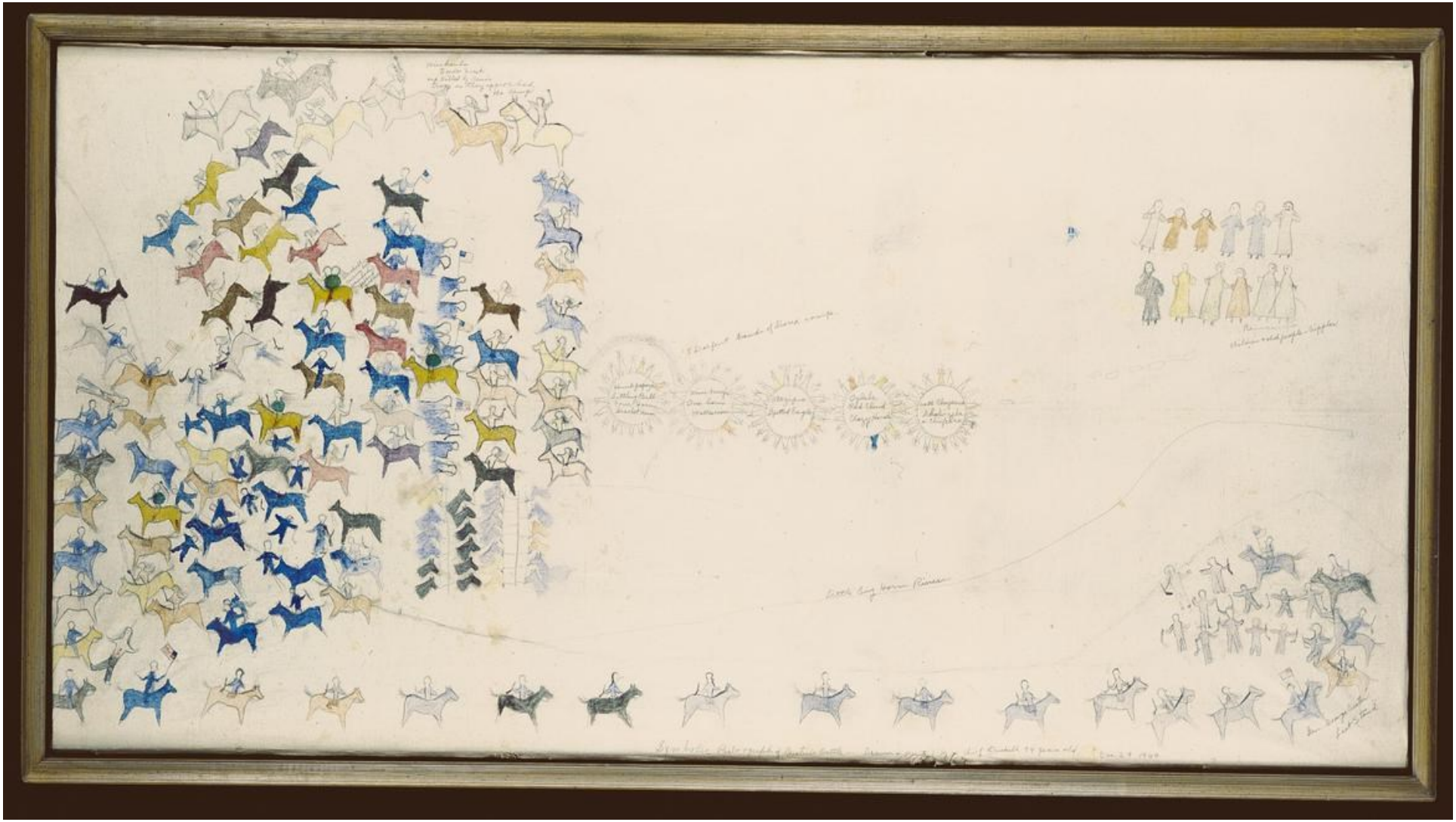
Detail: *War Record: Battle of the Little Big Horn*, 1940. Chief One Bull. Pencil and Watercolor on Cotton. Fenimore Art Museum.

"It was the time when ponies are young. During a sun dance held on Rosebud Creek ten days earlier, my uncle, Sitting Bull, had offered a hundred pieces of his flesh to Wakantanka and had been granted a vision of white soldiers falling upside down into camp. He told me that this vision was a promise of a great victory yet to come." — Chief One Bull

In 1876, the United States Army dispatched 700 cavalry soldiers to forcibly confine Plains Natives to established reservations. Unknown to the Cavalry was the yearly gathering for the Sun Dance, which had attracted 8,000 Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho to the Little Big Horn River where five summer encampments were made.

In *Battle of the Little Big Horn*, One Bull recounts his heroic role. Given his uncle Sitting Bull's painted shield as a mark of his position of command, One Bull engaged in the thick of the conflict, rescued his friend Good Bear Boy – pictured here riding double with One Bull on a yellow horse — and then chased the Cavalry to the dangerous ridge of "Custer's Last Stand," represented by the line of men separated from the encampments at the bottom of the painting.

Lakota men acquired and preserved prestige by heroic feats in battle and by visionary experiences. Two-dimensional, representational forms were painted rhythmically across negative space to narrate the movements of the events that gave men their power.



War Record: Battle of the Little Big Horn, 1940. Chief One Bull. Pencil and Watercolor on Cotton, 36.25" x 73.5". Fenimore Art Museum.

The battle of the Little Big Horn is remembered as an impressive victory for Plains Natives, who defeated five of the seven cavalry regiments that sought their captivity. The leadership and commitment to traditional lifeways, as evidenced in One Bull's work, continue to inform and serve as a source of strength for Lakota people.

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Memorials

How might art promote healing in times of grief?

Memorial to Herself, 1813. Eunice Griswold Pinney. Watercolor on paper. 14.5" x 18." Fenimore Art Museum.

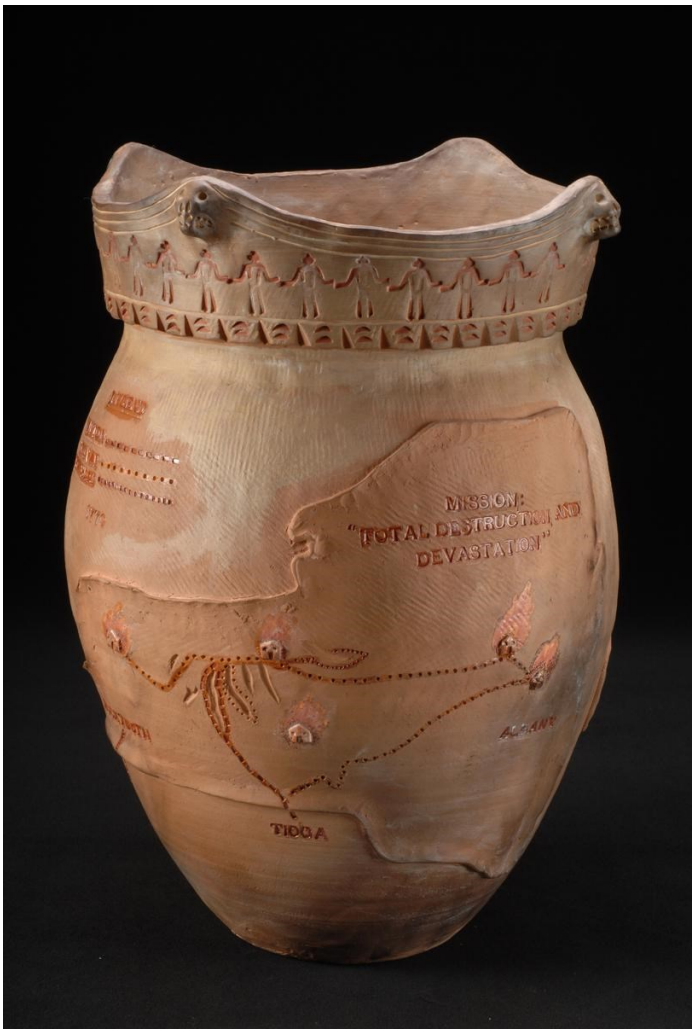
We remember Eunice Pinney (1770–1849) as one of the most remarkable early American watercolor painters. The daughter of wealthy parents and the sister of a bishop, Pinney was well-educated, energetic, and influential. She came of age during the American Revolution, and with her generation, she advocated the importance of the common man. Her first husband died in his twenties while fording the Connecticut River. By the age of thirty, Pinney was remarried with three children. She began painting for pleasure in middle age.

Over fifty watercolors spanning a variety of subject matter have been attributed to Pinney, distinguished by their bold style, saturated colors, and well-proportioned compositions. *Memorial to Herself* was painted by Pinney at forty-three years old, with space on the tombstone for the painting to be completed with Pinney's age and year of death. In the 19th century, death commonly visited siblings, parents, and grandparents. Preparing for death in advance helped to ease the burden of illness. Mourning rituals united communities in mutual care and concern. Memorial paintings served as substitutes for the departed, preserving the memory of a life well-lived while providing testimony to the enduring nature of love.

Young at Art!

Memorials

How might line and form be used to communicate memories that are beyond words?



Untitled, 2005. Peter B. Jones (Onondaga, Beaver Clan). Clay. 15.25" x 10.75". Fenimore Art Museum.

Traditional Haudenosaunee pottery is made by kneading ground shells into clay, shaping clay slabs with bone paddles, and baking the vessel in a fire-covered pit. The rounded bottom, four-pointed collar, and effigy figures evident in Peter Jones' *Untitled* typify the historic Onondaga form.

Peter Jones works to preserve traditional culture in an age that runs from its past. Having once occupied present-day New York State from the Mohawk River to Niagara Falls, the Haudenosaunee were greatly reduced in population by a series of wars through the 18th century. Jones' pot, *Untitled*, conveys the story of the Clinton-Sullivan campaign, a military attack on loyalist Native villages conducted by the Continental Army. The path of 4,500 soldiers and the burnt Native villages are indicated on the pot with incisions and in relief.

Although the campaign called for "total destruction and devastation," the preservation of the memory of this event on an enduring Haudenosaunee art form communicates the resilience and power of the Haudenosaunee people.

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Picture This: A Painted Dream

How might dreams help us to access memories beyond our reach?

Self-Portrait, Asleep with Creatures. 1943. Lawrence Lebduska. Oil on Board. 37.25" x 43."

Lawrence Lebduska (1894 – 1966) studied stained glassmaking during his formative years in Czechoslovakia. His confident use of color drew early attention to his works. The folk-like scenes that Lebduska painted fascinated audiences, transporting viewers to simpler, more pleasant worlds.

Self-Portrait, Asleep With Creatures portrays Lebduska as having fallen asleep in the midst of painting a canvas. The landscape that he sought to represent in the miniature painting awakens around him as he sleeps: botanicals grow and bloom in colorful splendor; wild animals surround Lebduska in an ambiguous manner. By surrendering control of his mind – by falling asleep – Lebduska invites the memories of a mythic world to transport the viewer to a more perfect place.

Young at Art!

Picture This: A Painted Dream

What dreams have influenced the course of history?

Joseph's Dream, 1810. Sophia Witherbe. Watercolor and Needlework on Satin. 27.5" x 34.25" x 1.75".

In the early years of the American Republic, private boarding schools for girls prepared young women for the challenging role of motherhood on the frontier. The girls' skillful command of a broad array of subject matter would help to promote the intellectual development of the next generation of children. Housework, gardening, and the raising of children were solitary, tedious tasks; to prepare girls for such a life, schools trained them in the art of self-discipline. Complex, delicate works of art such as watercolors, needleworks, and hand-drawn maps demonstrated the girls' understanding of historical and literary themes while revealing important character traits such as patience and precision.

In *Joseph's Dream*, the 13-year old Sophia Witherbe illustrates her familiarity with an important story from the book of Genesis. Sophia's artwork depicts Jacob's favored son Joseph dreaming in a field, a circle of wheat sheaves bowing to his wheat sheaf. The memory of this ancient chronicle is transported to a graceful New England landscape by Sophia's skillful needlework and imaginative representation.