

Robert J. Wickenden

Robert J. Wickenden was born in Rochester, England of American Parents in 1861. When Wickenden was thirteen his family returned to the United States and settled in Toledo, Ohio. He lived in Toledo until 1880, when he moved to Detroit, Michigan where he began teaching and taking art classes. While in Detroit the artist painted landscapes of local scenes, and began painting portraits of prominent Michigan residents. One of his important subjects was James E. Scripps a wealthy Detroit newspaper publisher. Scripps was instrumental in the founding of the Detroit Museum of Art. Robert Wickenden was chosen to paint a portrait of Scripps, "Not as a publisher or rich business man, but as he preferred to be seen - as a collector and connoisseur of art, architecture and rare books." This portrait was donated to the Detroit Museum of Art.

Wickenden next moved to New York and then on to Paris. In Paris he studied with Herbert Merson. During these years, he was recognized as part of the mainstream of the Academy of Arts.

He debuted in Paris in 1884 and exhibited in the Paris Saloon from 1888-1918. He also exhibited in Munich 1888, Chicago 1893, Lyon 1894, and in Paris in 1900. He gained accolades for two portraits of England's King Edward the VII. Wickenden eventually returned to the United States and settled in Brooklyn, New York where he died in 1931.

Much of Wickenden's work was genre work, work that depicted everyday scenes of life during his times.

Virginia Morgan donated *A Cup of Cold Water* to the KIA in November of 1988. It is an oil on canvas, and has a small engraved plaque that quotes the bible, "Whosoever shall give a drink unto one of these little ones a cup of water only...he shall in no wise lose his reward."

This painting shows a woman, perhaps a grandmother offering a cup of water from a well to a young girl. The artist frames the picture three frames. One a gold ornate frame, a frame of green vegetation, and the well opening. We see the grandmother sustaining the child by offering her water from the well. This gesture may be seen as a metaphor for the passing of nourishment, and sustenance, even knowledge from one generation to another. The child accepts the cup and drinks from it. The artist provides us with wonderful details in the natural setting, as well as insights into human relationships.

