

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: "LIVE IN THE COUNTRY WITH FAITH":  
JANE AND RALPH WHITEHEAD, THE  
SIMPLE LIFE MOVEMENT, AND ARTS  
AND CRAFTS IN THE UNITED STATES,  
ENGLAND AND ON THE CONTINENT,  
1870-1930

Heidi Nasstrom, Doctor of Philosophy, 2008

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American artist Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead (1858-1955) and her English husband Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead (1854-1929) are best known for co-founding the Byrdcliffe Art and Crafts school and colony in Woodstock, New York, which was active from 1903 into the present. Long before Byrdcliffe, however, the Whiteheads formulated plans for an "art convent" founded on principles of the simple life movement. A rejection of repressive social mores and materialistic behavior and a critique of social inequality in the modern world, the Whiteheads' simple life was enacted in rural places where nature served as a model for spirituality and aesthetics in art and the built environment, and where handwork in the form of art and craft and working the land were balanced with intellectual activity, leisure time and socializing in order to improve physical and psychological well being. This dissertation uses the wealth of primary source material on the Whiteheads—their personal papers, photographs documenting their lives, arts and

crafts by them and their circle, built environs and landscapes—to trace the evolution of simple living as it was holistically expressed in the lifestyle and environs they constructed in their early years abroad; their first attempt at simple living as a married couple at Arcady in Montecito, California; and finally, their mature expression at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York. Incorporating an interdisciplinary methodology involving a material culture approach that looks at the man-altered world as evidence for social and cultural history, this is the first scholarly effort to explore what simple living meant and looked like to these particular individuals, and the first project to look at the interconnectedness of simple living on a bi-coastal United States and trans-Atlantic scale between 1870-1930. It also seeks to restore an understanding of Jane's contributions to the simple life environs and art schools she formulated collaboratively with her husband, which were previously attributed solely to Ralph.

“LIVE IN THE COUNTRY WITH FAITH”: JANE AND RALPH WHITEHEAD,  
THE SIMPLE LIFE MOVEMENT, AND ARTS AND CRAFTS IN THE UNITED  
STATES, ENGLAND AND ON THE CONTINENT, 1870-1930.

By

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## Foreword

It is only fair to start this paper with a confession that it addresses a highly personal topic. Born in 1967, I moved to the Woodstock, New York area where the Whiteheads' Byrdcliffe is located with my parents who became craftspeople and went "Back to Nature"—as the cultural moment is remembered—from New York City in 1971. Growing up in the area, I was initiated early on to the beauty of the natural world that attracted my parents and the Whiteheads before them to the place. To this day, the smell of the earth and the plants and the look of the mountains there have a powerful physical effect on me. At the time, people in the area were in the habit of simple living—a conscientious choice to make do with less possessions and material wealth in order to live in the country, spend more time with their family, among like-minded people. In my mind's eye, I remember it being a place where materialistic behavior and showing one's wealth was considered vulgar, where people lived close to the natural world and reveled in its beauty, a place where architecture, art, and culture were inspired by local nature and highly valued. It was all a bit Arcadian; intellectualism was frowned upon and folk culture and lifeways were appreciated. Residents tended to be proud of and sometimes even protective and elitist about their special way of life. To this day, I consider the Woodstock area nestled in the Catskill Mountains to be one of the most special places on earth, an Eden to which I long to return, but one that no longer seems tangible. I think it was a utopia as only a child without responsibility or awareness of the problems in the world can imagine it. The lifestyle I remember is one that evolved from the Whiteheads' impetus at the turn-of-the-century.

As an adult and a historian of nineteenth and twentieth century visual culture, I've been trying to figure out why the social world and the cultural moment of my childhood felt so special. I have wondered what my family was doing there and what their (and my) life there meant, hence, my choice of this dissertation topic.

I came to the topic over the course of many years. First as an undergraduate intern at the Albany Institute of History and Art, curator Tammi Groft sent me off to Woodstock to collect information about artists in the area for an upcoming exhibition. In retrospect, she was a very thoughtful mentor who directed me toward a project she knew would be meaningful to a slightly clueless but eager and interested student. At the Woodstock Archives, Sam Klein gave me access to his wonderful archives. He let me copy everything I needed and told me to make an extra copy for my personal files. He gently and knowingly suggested I should at some point in the future use the material to write about Woodstock. I still have the photocopies he allowed me to make and never forgot his words. Later, I worked as an intern under Catherine Hoover Voorsanger in the Department of American Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Catherine was a very special person in my life. She collected Byrdcliffe objects for the Met and I think she took a special interest in me because I was from the area. We shared a love of things from Woodstock, the Arts and Crafts movement, and decorative arts and design from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Eventually finding myself in a Ph.D. program, I came to my topic during a course on Victorian Women with Gay Gullickson at the University of Maryland, College Park. I chose to write a paper on Jane Whitehead with the hope that she might be a good dissertation topic. My initial research trip to Winterthur's Byrdcliffe Collection revealed a world of primary source material that had

never been looked at with particular interest in Jane. That was the beginning of what you see here. Since that time, countless people have guided, aided, helped and inspired me. As many individuals as I can remember are mentioned in the acknowledgements below.



# **Dedication**

To Mark Willcox, Jr.

## Acknowledgements

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- 4.30. The Charles Frederick Eaton Estate, *Riso Rivo* (today El Mirador), Montecito, California, [date?], in G. Stickley, "Nature and Art in California," *The Craftsman* (July 1904) v. 6, p. 370.
- 4.31. Charles Frederick Eaton and Robert Wilson Hyde, *Wedding Album*, exterior, 1903, with marriage certificate for Robb de Peyster Tytus and Grace Selley Henop, May 19, 1903, hinged brass covers with mother-of-pearl, windowpane oyster, natural suede, and ink and paint on vellum, 12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr., Collection, Courtesy of The Wolfsonian Foundation, Miami, in K. Trapp, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts movement in California*, 187.
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## **Chapter 1: Introduction.**

This dissertation analyzes Jane and Ralph Whitehead as a test case for what we know, or think we know, about the simple life movement in the period between 1870-1930 in the United States, England and on the Continent.<sup>1</sup> It traces its evolution as an aesthetic and philosophy in the lifestyle, material culture and cultural landscapes Jane and Ralph constructed in their early years abroad; their first attempt at living the simple life together as a married couple in Montecito, California; and finally, their mature expression at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York. This is the first effort to explore what simple living meant and looked like to these particular individuals. It is also the first project to look at the interconnectedness of simple living on a bi-coastal United States and trans-Atlantic scale between 1870-1930.

### **Section 1: Introduction to Topic.**

American artist Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead (1858-1955) and her English husband, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead (1854-1929) are best known for co-founding the Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts School and Colony in Woodstock, New York, which was active from 1903 into the present. Long before Byrdcliffe, however, the Whiteheads formulated plans for an “art convent” founded on principles of simple living. These plans were the basis for the couple’s marriage and artistic partnership first imagined during their 1891 courtship in Florence, Italy, and published in their 1892 book *Grass of the Desert*. While their art convent was most fully realized at Byrdcliffe in 1903, the Whiteheads “live[d] in

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<sup>1</sup> The simple life described in this dissertation is a constructed movement that is defined in the following pages and Chapter Two. While it is called the simple life movement here and in the title of this paper, it is referred to as the simple life or simple living from this point onward.

the country with faith”—an inscription surrounding a landscape sketch by Jane [Illustration 1.1.]—in England and Europe before they were married in 1892, and at the home and art school, Arcady, in Montecito, California, where they lived from 1894-1903.

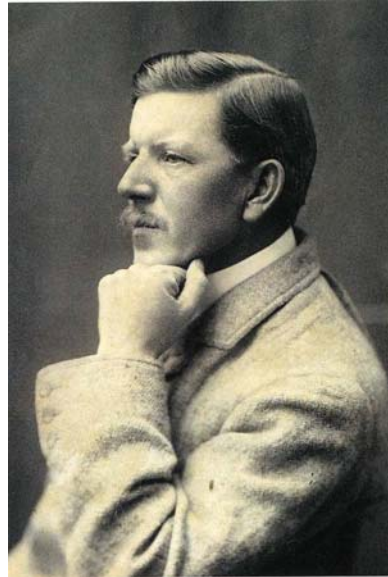
1.1. Jane Whitehead, *Landscape Sketch*, inscribed “Live In The Country With Faith. Byrdcliffe,” watercolor from vellum covered book, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Jane, born Jane Byrd McCall, came from Philadelphia’s social and intellectual elite. [Illustration 1.2.] A descendant of founding fathers such as William Byrd and George Mason, Jane’s own father, Peter McCall, was mayor of Philadelphia and a prominent professor of civil law at University of Pennsylvania. From an early age, Jane traveled back and forth from Europe, where she studied art at Oxford with John Ruskin and fine arts in Paris at the Académie Julian. After her presentation to Queen Victoria in 1886, Jane practiced art and held a salon for European nobility and gentry, intellectuals and artists at Albury House in Surrey, where she lived until 1891.

1.2. Eva Watson-Schütze, photographer, *Madonna and Child: Jane Whitehead (wearing now missing C.R. Ashbee brooch) and son, Ralph Jr. or Peter at Byrdcliffe*, ca. 1905, platinum print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

Ralph Whitehead came from a successful Yorkshire felt manufacturing family. [Illustration 1.3.] A student of Ruskin’s in the 1870s, Ralph participated in the famed Hinksey Road project, where privileged students learned stewardship and empathy for the working class through manual labor fixing the road. He accompanied Ruskin to Venice in 1876 and was mentioned in W. G. Collingwood’s Ruskin biography as a pupil working

on copies of pictures and records of architecture.<sup>2</sup> After an unsuccessful attempt at applying Ruskin's theories to his family's Royal George Mills—he had wanted to make it a “cooperative enterprise”—Ralph split with his family, and lived extravagantly all over Europe, including at a castle he bought and restored in Styria.<sup>3</sup>



1.3. J. Caswall Smith, photographer, active ca. 1890s, *Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead*, ca. 1895, platinum print, collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild.

Jane met Ralph at an opulent dinner held at Ralph's Florentine palazzo on the Turnabuoni, where Ralph later lamented he had “liveried servants, the extravagances and inanities of a society life.”<sup>4</sup> Jane and Ralph's mutual rejection of society life and the ills they associated with modern industrial society brought them together and served as the basis for a partnership devoted to simple living.

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<sup>2</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., London: Methuen & Co., 1905, 323, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Whitehead, *Grass of the Desert*, 61.

<sup>4</sup> Hervey White, “Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead,” 18.

Although they sought to reject the undemocratic aspects of the social world of their time, the Whiteheads' simple life had an undeniable internal contradiction: the extreme wealth that made and sustained their lifestyle was based on the exploitation of workers—the very situation that spawned the theories and social criticism on which simple living was based. Jane and Ralph were extremely privileged individuals. At every moment of their history covered in this dissertation, racial and class privilege was present.

In an attempt to renegotiate the social world according to their own ideas, they chose to sequester themselves with like-minded people in rural places, where nature served as a model for spirituality and aesthetics in art and the built environment. The Whiteheads imagined their simple life environments as centers where a healthy body would become the house for a reasonable soul through handwork in the form of art and craft, farming, gardening, communal living, leisure time and pursuits, classical education and music. Materialistic behavior was avoided and social interaction was governed by a strong sense of community and collaboration modeled in part on their hopes for the future, but they also nostalgically looked back to traditional folk lifeways. Both Arcady and, especially, Byrdcliffe were not just academies where artists trained and produced art, they were experiments intended to embody simple living as holistically as possible in artistic environs. In essence, they were attempting to live “The art that is life,” to quote the Whiteheads' Pennsylvania peer, architect Will Price, and make life a work of art that was beautiful to live and to look at.

Simple living and the Arts and Crafts movement were interrelated Romantic responses to the dehumanizing effects and ecological devastation caused by

industrialization in England. Two Englishmen were particularly important in the development of these movements: John Ruskin (Jane and Ralph's mentor) was an influential social critic with a belief in Christian socialism and the power of art's moralizing agency to transform society. William Morris, a student of Ruskin's, turned Ruskin's philosophy into a lifestyle and gave it aesthetic form. He inspired the Arts and Crafts movement.

Ruskin's essay "On the Nature of Gothic," published between 1851-53 within *The Stones of Venice*, is a synopsis of his philosophy. In it, he establishes a pedigree for Gothic aesthetics, making them morally and culturally superior to Classical aesthetics. He links Gothic aesthetics with a right approach to labor. And lastly, he establishes an aesthetic standard for imperfection which governed the Arts and Crafts movement in years to come.

From Gothic aesthetics, Ruskin idealized the working conditions of the past over those of the present and proposed a Christian socialist alternative to the current industrialized world of international economic competition driven by laissez faire capitalism. He says of England, "we manufacture everything . . . Except men; we bleach cotton and strengthen steel and refine sugar and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit never enters into our estimate of advantages."<sup>5</sup> Ruskin idealized a simpler, insular Medievalized past, where class conflict was overcome because all people labored toward a common good—an ennobled population where all people were allowed to exercise independent thought. Ruskin said, "You must either make a tool of the creature or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools. . . . The workman ought to be

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<sup>5</sup> John Ruskin, "On the Nature of Gothic," 261.

thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best sense.”<sup>6</sup>

Ruskin’s aesthetic predilection for imperfection is tied to his labor argument. If all men are laboring toward a common good and exercising independence in their thoughts there are natural discrepancies in the quality of what is created. To Ruskin, imperfection as the outcome of righteous working conditions was noble in its beauty. Ruskin’s idealization of imperfection inspired William Morris, the PreRaphaelite Brotherhood of painters with whom Morris worked, and Arts and Crafts aesthetics which self-consciously highlighted hand-worked qualities, signs of handcraftsmanship, and imperfections.

Many proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement sought to live simply. Conversely, many advocates of simple living believed that individuals had a right to joy in labor, handcraftsmanship was ennobling, and handcrafted environments were beautiful and inspiring to the point they had agency to transform the social world. Simple living, however, need not be associated with the Arts and Crafts movement. Thus, it is important to define it separately from the Arts and Crafts movement. Simple living could be a lifestyle, social cause, philosophy, and a source of aesthetics to its proponents in the United States, England, and on the Continent. It was a highly individualistic movement and meant different things to different people depending on their social and geographical location and the time period. All advocates consciously identifying with the movement lived in industrialized or industrializing nation states. And, they were all skeptical of the human costs associated with its by-products. These people sought revolution, reform, or individual transformation. Most organizers came from the privileged social classes.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 258.



Social reform efforts tended to be the point of entry for any advocates from the lower classes. This tended to be the case since those who set out to transform society through reform were often focused on elevating the living and working conditions of the working classes and the poor. As a vehicle of social revolution simple living was concerned with creating an egalitarian society. Individuals seeking simple living as therapy sought to transform and regenerate their spiritual and physical lives. Nonmaterialistic behavior, direct contact with the natural world, working with one's hands on the land or in the production of arts and crafts were advocated as remedies for unhealthy urban lives—considered unhealthy because of disease coming from overcrowded conditions but also because of the rapid pace of life, focus on material possessions, and sedentary lifestyles and occupations experienced by upper class urbanites.

Jane and Ralph had some level of concern for their working class brothers and sisters. For the most part, however, their simple lifestyle was individualistic and therapeutic. This dissertation sets out to prove that simple living for the Whiteheads evolved over time, being enacted differently in each phase. This argument can be extended to illustrate the way simple living was practiced by other advocates as well. Visually, a progression toward absolute naturalism and greater austerity is seen. Jane went from hosting lavish fetes in a leased English country house in Albury, Guildford, Surrey in the 1880s--a stone's throw away from the sophisticated London city center--to life on the edge of the earth in southern California in the 1890s. Here, an Arcadian model was the foundation for the Whiteheads' simple life. They lived in a Spanish Mission/Mediterranean style villa surrounded by naturalistic outbuildings and rich landscaping in Montecito. At Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York, the naturalism

spearheaded at Arcady outbuildings became the primary mode of expression after 1903. Here, an entire community and art and craft school was intended to be an organic part of the surrounding landscape. Views were cut and gardens were made to look as though they had always been there. Austere interiors were fashioned to free inhabitants of unnecessary possessions so they could concentrate on their work. At Byrdcliffe, simple living reached maturity.

### **Section 2: Statement of Argument and Methodology.**

Why is this study important? First, as a history, this study of Jane and Ralph Whitehead documents the lives of two charmed individuals. They were the living proof of the small world phenomenon--six-degrees of separation--of their era. Truly, they seemed to know everyone, be involved with everything and have their finger in every pie related to simple living and Arts and Crafts in the United States, England and on the Continent during the period of this study. Using the amazing wealth of primary source material that exists on them--their personal papers, photographs documenting their lives, arts and crafts by them and their circle, built environs and landscapes—we are granted a clear lens into the past, which gives us access to the ways in which they and their circle experienced the world.

This study is especially relevant to those involved and interested in material culture studies—an approach that uses the man-made and man-altered material world as evidence of social and cultural beliefs and history. There has probably never been an art movement before or since simple living and the related Arts and Crafts movement that so fully believed in the power and agency of material culture. Advocates thought the built environment had an incredible influence over the beliefs, morals, ethics as well as the

physical and spiritual well-being of its users and audience. In turn, they thought the simple life as applied to the built environment had agency--could effectively change--their immediate and broader social world for the better.

This material culture study uses as evidence the Whiteheads' built environs, including landscape and architecture. These are coupled with arts and crafts by the Whiteheads and their circle, self-stylized photographed portraits and images of the places, information from letters, diaries, business records, publications and other ephemera. My use of all these forms of evidence makes this study unique. When all of it is seen together the picture of the past that is revealed differs from previous histories written about the Whiteheads and their circle.

Past studies of the Whiteheads mostly focused on the arts and crafts produced in the artistic environment they established in Woodstock, New York, and to a much lesser degree the one they formed in Montecito, California. In contrast, this study uses the arts and crafts as one type of evidence among many to better understand the Whiteheads' simple life philosophy and how that philosophy was translated into an aesthetic in the built environment and a lifestyle. While the arts and crafts produced at these places are exceptional, this study looks at them as an integral part of the simple life rather than as products to be judged on their artistic merit. In this view, the arts and crafts made by the Whiteheads and their circle make little sense—aesthetic or otherwise—outside of their social context.

Period photographs are particularly important points of comparison with the places as they exist today. They are analyzed as performances: staged dramatic backdrops that were meant to be symbolically loaded. Coupled with the personal

thoughts of the Whiteheads and their circle captured in written documents, they tell us a world about the experience, thoughts, beliefs and goals of Jane and Ralph and their circle. This study seeks to understand the simple life and the world as these performers understood it and on their terms. Each chapter uses these materials to define the aspects that made each phase of the Whiteheads' simple life unique.

While Ralph's early life has received some degree of attention, Jane's early life has not. This is the first study to look at her early life in Philadelphia, in England and abroad prior to her marriage to Ralph.

Previous scholarship attributed the Whiteheads' collaborative achievements solely to Ralph. Jane's contribution to the conception and realization of the Whiteheads' simple life philosophy and the related artistic environments they established has been largely overlooked or dismissed until now because all the evidence was not looked at together. Her calendars and correspondence bring to light her very active role in these things, which was purposefully kept private by the Whiteheads. My work seeks to restore an understanding of Jane's contributions to the art schools they founded in California and New York, the arts and crafts produced there, and the lifestyles practiced there. It also shows that Jane formulated a simple life and enacted it before she met or was influenced by her husband. My account, based on a careful reading of Jane's calendars (diaries), correspondence, personal ephemera, business records, and material culture, documents Jane's artistic and intellectual achievements and traces the cross-Atlantic and bi-coastal exchange of ideas she initiated with her contemporaries.

The aforementioned resources are part of the Byrdcliffe Collection of the Joseph Downs Collection at Winterthur's Library. This collection is enormously important for

so many reasons and to many people—not just Byrdcliffe scholars, but also to those interested in the Arts and Crafts movement in general or artistic life in the United States around the turn-of-the-century and into the early twentieth century. Its size alone is awesome. When its thoroughly descriptive finding aid was first assembled, 165 cubic feet of material were present. Since that time the collection continues to grow. Designs, drawings, and paintings; reproductions and prints; design books; periodicals; monographs and trade catalogs; business and real estate records, printed ephemera; photographs, glass plate negatives, photo albums, and post cards; letters; calendars (like diaries); maps; newspapers and miscellaneous items make up this collection, which is complemented by Byrdcliffe art objects held in Winterthur's Museum and books and records from Jane's family the McCalls, held in the Winterthur Library. Covering a time span between 1869 to the present, the sum of these things brings the Whiteheads back to life. People and events gain dimension when Jane's calendars, which are like diaries, are read alongside correspondence from and with her husband, family and friends. Comparisons with other materials in the collection, like photographs, designs, business records, etc., add additional flesh. Jane's descendants Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr. along with Arts and Crafts historian and dealer Robert Edwards saw to it that these holdings stayed together and went to the Joseph Downs Collection at Winterthur from Byrdcliffe after Jane and Ralph's son Peter died. For history's sake, we can only hope that other enlightened descendants, historians, dealers, and collectors will exhibit similar foresight about the importance of keeping collections together rather than letting them be dispersed. Furthermore, we hope that other institutions similarly rise to the occasion like Winterthur

did when they took on the responsibility to organize, care for, and make available their vastly important Byrdcliffe collection.

Within American Studies, historian David Shi is the preeminent simple life scholar, having authored and edited two books on the subject. His work deals broadly with simple living as a philosophy within a United States context that covers a broad period of time. He traces the phenomenon from the Puritan ethics of early American colonists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the post-World War II era ending in the 1970s. My work departs from Shi's in a number of important ways. First, it is much more particular. It traces the experience of Jane and Ralph Whitehead and their circle. Second, it expands the geographic boundaries beyond the United States to look at simple living in England and on the Continent. Third, it conceptualizes simple living as much more than a philosophy. In this dissertation, simple living is viewed as a lifestyle, philosophy, social cause, and a source of aesthetics. It is also considered to be in the course of evolution rather than static in the period covered, 1870-1930. The chapters of this dissertation trace the ways in which simple living evolved over time in the built environments and lived experience of the Whiteheads and their circle.

Another source that looks at simple living as a philosophy associated with an important aesthetic dimension, and being associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, is Fiona MacCarthy's work on C. R. Ashbee, *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds*. MacCarthy looks at Ashbee and his circle's particular experience. Ashbee and the Whiteheads were contemporaries. Ralph visited Ashbee in England in 1901 when he and Jane were planning Byrdcliffe. Conversely, Ashbee visited Byrdcliffe in the

United States after his Guild of Handicraft in Chipping Campden was forced to close for financial reasons in 1908. Neither party was too impressed with the other.

This study differs from MacCarthy's approach in its attention to identifying and defining simple living as a philosophy and lifestyle with an aesthetic dimension. Being a study of Ashbee, MacCarthy's work is primarily based in England. My study looks at the English underpinnings of simple living but also looks at important influences and parallels coming out of Russia, in France and the United States. This study of Jane and Ralph Whitehead looks at their simple life in a trans-Atlantic, and bi-coastal American context by tracing the way Jane and Ralph enacted it in England, California and New York.

Within the scholarly conversations in American Studies, Maureen Montgomery's work on late nineteenth-century upper class American women and their search for titled English and European husbands addresses the same period of time and social circle covered in this project.<sup>7</sup> Like Montgomery's work, this dissertation looks at the trans-Atlantic nature of the social world of elite society in the late nineteenth century. Taking a detour from traditional definitions of high society, it looks at the ways in which its members rejected and renegotiated their social world. Jane and Ralph, for example, rejected the materialistic lifestyle and social conventions of high society in favor of the simple life. However, nobody but the wealthiest members of society could afford to do what they did. Jane and Ralph made simple living available to people of their choosing, many of whom would not have otherwise been able to afford it. In this way, they renegotiated society by changing the rules of entry. Their home-made elite society was expanded to include established and promising artists, writers, musicians and dancers,

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<sup>7</sup> See Maureen Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution and Displaying Women*.

intellectuals, social reformers and educators. And, while they chose to live in self-imposed isolation in rural places with other like-minded people, the Whiteheads conveniently had access to sophisticated city centers via the railways and oceanliners.

### **Section 3: Chapter Summary and Literature Review.**

In Chapter Two, simple living in its trans-Atlantic context in the period between 1870-1930 is defined and explored in its multiple dimensions as a lifestyle, philosophy, aesthetic and as social reform. Simple life figureheads who were contemporaries of Jane and Ralph are compared and contrasted with the Whiteheads in order to better understand how closely the Whiteheads' experience matches what we know or think we know about the simple life during this period. American figureheads covered include Transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau and his landlord at Walden Pond, Ralph Waldo Emerson; their second generation, naturalists like John Burroughs and John Muir; George Ripley's Brook Farm in West Roxbury, Massachusetts; and a Ruskin Colony in Tennessee. English inspiration and examples covered include John Ruskin, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, C. R. Ashbee, Edward Carpenter, and Matthew Arnold. Russian anarchist socialist Peter Kropotkin and the author and anarchist socialist Leo Tolstoy were both prominent proselytizers of the simple life. The pronounced impact of their work in England, the United States and on the Continent is discussed in Chapter Two. The efforts of painters at French art colonies associated with the Barbizon school style to record the lifeways of French peasant culture are also considered within the simple life context.



Chapter Two gives an overview of the evolution of simple life aesthetics. Simple living as a philosophy suggested that a person's surroundings had a pronounced impact on their beliefs, behavior, well-being and state-of-mind. Therefore, knowledge of the aesthetics of simple living is integral to understanding the philosophy. Here, they are traced from their source in the style developed by William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelite painters in mid-nineteenth-century England. Described as "simplicity or splendor" by Morris's peer and Arts and Crafts colleague Walter Crane, Morris's aesthetic was a model for Jane and Ralph's earliest expression. In the years to follow, the look of things became more and more austere and reliant on nature rather than the past as its model. In its mature phase at Byrdcliffe, it closely resembles and I argue it was inspired by the hand-hewn cabin retreats of American Transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau, and naturalists like John Burroughs.

The most useful sources consulted in researching this chapter include, first and foremost, cultural historian David Shi's classic, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*. As mentioned earlier, it is probably the only study that looks at simple living as a philosophy.

Fiona MacCarthy's *The Simple Life: C.R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds*, Sheila Rowbotham and Jeff Weeks's *Socialism and the New Life, The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis*, and Rowbotham's short article "Commanding the Heart' Edward Carpenter and Friends," were the most useful English sources for exploring the potential differences between United States and English simple living. MacCarthy's book is a biography and does not explicitly tell its reader what the simple life was to Ashbee. However, one can develop an understanding of it through the

book. Rowbotham and Weeks, on the other hand, do explore the philosophical dimensions of Carpenter's New Life. Missing and still greatly needed is a broad study of the development of simple living in England that addresses its origins, underpinnings, figureheads, the vehicles and venues that spread the philosophy to its proponents, and how it played out over time.

Chapter Three, "Precursors to Simple Living: Jane and Ralph Whitehead's Years Abroad," describes Jane's early years growing up in Philadelphia, living abroad in England, and studying art in France and on the Continent. Born into a patrician, intellectual Philadelphia family Jane's young life closely followed the prescribed schedule for that city's high society. This chapter examines her participation in high society in the United States and abroad, her choice to live abroad and study art. These things are addressed in order to better understand her motives for adopting the simple life and becoming an artist. It argues that her early high-society life and later simple life are not incongruous. Rather, they were part-and-parcel of the cultural moment, one of many responses to feelings of dissatisfaction with the status quo that were shaped by particular national circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

Here, simple living makes its first appearance as "country life" enacted by Jane and her circle in an English country house, Albury House, in Guildford, Surrey between 1886 and 1890. At Albury House, Jane is skirting between the high society lifestyle into which she was born and raised and the simple lifestyle she would soon adopt. Gardening and farming, raising poultry, practicing crafts with local village women, painting plein-air in the surrounding countryside are "country life" endeavors that would evolve into the simple life in the years to come. In subsequent decades, they would become: living close

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<sup>8</sup> For more on this line of thinking see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 4-5.

to nature, working the land with one's hands, practicing traditional crafts and fine arts in rural settings where aesthetics were meant to be governed by simplicity, nonmaterialistic, and were reflective of the surrounding natural world. For Jane at Albury House, her simple life philosophy was in its infancy.

Chapter Three was especially hard to write because little primary source evidence is currently known to exist on Jane's early life in Philadelphia and abroad prior to 1886—the earliest dates of her calendars, most of her correspondence, and an amazing scrapbook she assembled in England and Europe in the Joseph Downs Collection at Winterthur Library. *The Heroines of '76: Their Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs . . . Written by A Soldier Man, A Sailor Man, and A Railroad Man and Edited by the Editor* (Philadelphia, 1876) in Winterthur's Library (a recent gift from Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr.) tells us Jane attended this watershed event. A McCall family photo album from about 1879 (also a recent gift to Winterthur's Library from Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr.) shows us that Jane also traveled abroad at this time. At this point, however, we are still lacking the breadth of primary source material we have for the post 1886 era, which makes it difficult to know the full story about Jane in these early years. Chapter Three focuses on Jane rather than Ralph's early life because nothing has ever been published on her youth. While Ralph's early history could be expanded through further research, it has been explored by scholars such as Alf Evers, Robert Edwards, and Nancy Green.

Because little primary source material is known to exist for this time period, key secondary sources were indispensable for making educated guesses about important questions on Jane's life prior to 1886—the year her calendars start. Questions addressed in Chapter Three include the following: what was life like for the social elite in

Philadelphia during Jane's early years? What was the social milieu and context in which Jane found herself in the United States and abroad? Why did someone like Jane want to become an artist? Was her art education for vocational or avocational purposes? Why did she travel abroad? What was the social calendar of the social elite to which she belonged? What were the nuances of distinction among the social elite? How did the social elite differ in the United States and abroad? How did Jane's social standing differ in those places? Why did she reject the society life in which she grew up in order to live the simple life? Was simple living a rejection of society life? And, what did all of these things mean when looked at through a gendered lens?

Especially vital for answering these questions was E. Digby Baltzell's *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class*, his subsequent, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia*, and Sylvia Yount's doctoral dissertation, "'Give the people what they want': The American Aesthetic Movement, Art Worlds, and Consumer Culture, 1876-1890." They put Jane's hometown, Philadelphia, into perspective on several levels: social, educational, and artistic.

Maureen Montgomery's books were so helpful. It was as if *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914*, and *Displaying Women: Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* were written to help me answer my questions about Jane's social status in the United States and abroad, the social calendar she followed, what it meant to be a part of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's court circle, as well as what seemed like her desire to marry from the gentry, aristocratic, or royal English or European classes.

When it came to figuring out why Jane wanted to be an artist and what it meant to be one if you were a woman, Tamar Garb's writing was key. Her "Gender and Representation," and "'Men of Genius, Women of Taste': The Gendering of Art Education in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris," were particularly useful for understanding Jane's art studies in general and in France in particular. Garb focuses on what the image of the female artist symbolized—how it was read as an image—by people in the second half of the nineteenth century. Garb also addresses life for the female art student and artist at this time. Jane studied painting at a number of Parisian, English and European ateliers in the 1880s and '90s. Among the most prominent of these ateliers was the Académie Julian in Paris, a topic given particular focus in Gabriel Weisberg's, "The Women of the Académie Julian"; Catherine Fehrer's "History of the Julian Academy," *The Julian Academy, Paris, 1868 – 1939*; and Fehrer's, "Women at the Académie Julian in Paris."

Fortunately, by the mid-1880s primary source documentation on Jane's life becomes more abundant, making it possible to write more definitively about the particulars, and details of her experience. By the 1890s, when she met her future husband, the dimensions of her life get fully fleshed out with meaning when her words can be checked against his correspondence, the photographic record, art and collaborative publications from the same time. Aspects from this period of Jane's life covered in Chapter Three include her first known experiment in simple living, which she called "country life," enacted at Albury House in Guildford, Surrey, England. At Albury House between 1886 and '90, Jane held lavish entertainments, was host to an artistic salon, and participated in Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's court circle. She traveled regularly to

London and Paris and other major European cities, and, all the while, practiced and studied art. As mentioned earlier, at this moment, Jane was skirting between conventional high society life and what would become the simple life to her in the years that follow.

After Albury House, Jane departed for Italy, where she studied art and met her future husband in Florence. Their tumultuous courtship, forced separation, and their vow to live a simple life and formulate an “art convent” are recorded in Chapter Three. Part of their simple life plan from the outset was to work collaboratively. During their courtship they initiated their first project together: the publication of two books, *Grass of the Desert* and the *Vita Nuova*, published in 1892 by the Chiswick Press in London. The essay “Work” in *Grass of the Desert* records the plans they made in Italy that became the blueprint for the Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts school and colony they founded in Woodstock, New York in 1903. These books were produced through the mail while Jane was in Colorado and Ralph was in Germany securing a divorce from his first wife, Marie. After Ralph’s divorce was settled, he met Jane and the couple toured the American west, visiting the area in California where they would soon settle.

In Chapter Three I argue Jane and Ralph modeled their “new life” (another term for the simple life) on Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet, Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s translation of Dante Alighieri’s *Vita Nuova*. In general and especially in this formative period of their life together, Jane and Ralph made liberal use of metaphor from art and literature of the period in fashioning their corporate symbolism.<sup>9</sup> The symbols they

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<sup>9</sup> Here, the term “corporate” means to combine into one body. It refers to the word’s Latin roots, *corpus* or body, rather than the more widely used, modern definition of the word, incorporation, that relates to business. See Corporate, Dictionary.com, *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*,

established at this formative moment were used to mark the couple's collaborative simple life projects throughout their life. These symbols are introduced and explored here in art, their publications, and in photographed portraits from the period.

The following Chapter Four, "Jane and Ralph Whitehead's Pacific Arcadia in Montecito, California" and Chapter Five, "Mature Simplicity at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York" are filled with new facts and interpretations of writings, images, art and preexisting ideas that emerge from careful examination of the tremendous amount of primary source material available on the years covered here.

Chapter Four covers the beginning of the Whiteheads' life together starting after their marriage in 1892 and extended European honeymoon. This chapter argues that Barbizon school painters Birge and Eleanor Harrison played a significant role in leading Jane and Ralph from France and Europe to settle in Montecito, California in 1894. This dissertation's examination of painters Lovell Birge Harrison's and his wife, Eleanor Ritchie Harrison's, role in bringing the Whiteheads to Montecito from France and its documentation of the time they spent together there is based on points of comparison between Jane and Ralph's letters and calendars and information within Andrea Husby's doctoral dissertation, "Birge Harrison: Artist, Teacher and Critic." Husby's work is a key source on Birge, of course, and it introduced Eleanor, of whom little is known. She was an accomplished painter, a very interesting woman, a contemporary and friend of and very interesting point of comparison to Jane Whitehead. Jane Clark, Deputy Chairman, Sotheby's Australia, shared images of the few paintings by Eleanor that are known to

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*Fourth Edition.* Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/corporate>, accessed October 24, 2007.

survive. They are illustrated here for the first time. More work on Eleanor needs to be done. Her story is one that should be developed and published.

The years Jane and Ralph spent at Arcady, the name of their Montecito estate, and the simple life they lived there are documented herewithin. At Arcady, as its name suggests, Jane and Ralph premised their first collaborative attempt at giving simple living form on a broad scale on an Arcadian model. In fact, at the time, southern California was known as the Pacific Arcadia. Ancient Greek, Italian Renaissance, and Italian/Mediterranean symbols and aesthetics were intermingled with indigenous and preexisting aspects of Southern California landscape and culture. The grand villa they constructed on their Montecito estate, for example, is a Mediterranean/Spanish Mission hybrid and, thus, reflects these influences. Landscapes integrated local plant and rock forms as well as exotic and tropical plantings. The rich results are not natural to the arid mountains of Montecito that abut the Pacific Ocean. Major efforts at irrigation were needed to entirely transform the appearance of things. To modern eyes these follies seem staged, dramatic and artificial. Yet, to their contemporaries, Jane and Ralph's Arcady villa and landscape seemed in concert with nature and the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement.

There were smaller outbuildings constructed on the estate that pointed in the direction simple living would take as it evolved for the Whiteheads. For quiet contemplation, work or socializing in an intimate (rather than grand) setting, Jane and Ralph had numerous naturalistic outbuildings rendered on the property that were small in scale, of unfinished wood, and made to emerge from rather than sit upon the land. These buildings are extremely important in the evolution of the aesthetics of simple living. I



argue that their naturalistic, austere style would become the primary architectural expression of simple living at Byrdcliffe in the years to come. In the early 1890s, when the Whiteheads had these buildings built, they were pioneering an aesthetic, the simple life style, that became a more popular movement after the turn-of-the-century. This project is the first to associate the style of these buildings with the naturalists, people like John Muir and John Burroughs, with whom the Whiteheads were acquainted. These naturalists followed the pioneering efforts of American Transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau in building hand-hewn retreats that were made of local natural materials often left in an unfinished state. Intended to spiritually rejuvenate and reunite the maker or occupant with the beauty and lessons of the natural world, these places were meant to be outcroppings—part and parcel with the landscape on which they were placed. While these findings are original to this author, as is often the case, the idea was in the air. So I learned at a recent conference “Regionalism and Modernity: the Arts and Crafts movement in San Diego and Environs” where I presented my findings and another author, Leslie Freudenheim, “Correcting the Record: the Arts and Crafts movement traveled from West to East, not Vice Versa,” presented similar ideas about the impetus for the simple life aesthetic of Bernard Maybeck and the San Francisco Bay area circle originating with the naturalists via the Swedenborgian Reverend Joseph Worcester.<sup>10</sup> Her ideas are published in *Building with Nature: Inspiration for the Arts and Crafts Home*--an update of her earlier published thinking on the topic *Building with Nature; Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region*.

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<sup>10</sup> This conference was sponsored by Initiatives in Art and Culture, Department of Art History, University of Minnesota and took place on June 21-24, 2007 at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego in La Jolla.

Most significant in Chapter Four is the more fully documented history of the Whiteheads at Arcady in Montecito. This project adds quite a bit of new information to Tom Wolf's recent research and writing in "Byrdcliffe's History: Industrial Revolution", and to David Myrick's thorough and extremely rich book, *Montecito and Santa Barbara: The Days of the Great Estates*. Myrick's book has a chapter devoted to the Whiteheads at Arcady. It also looks at their neighbors including the craftspeople and social peers of the Whiteheads, Charles Frederick Eaton and his talented daughter, a contemporary of Jane, Elizabeth Eaton Burton. And, Myrick really gives you a sense of what was important to these people at that time—the importance of water, for example, was a big surprise for this writer from the east coast—who was doing what, and where everything is located. The book is a local history and not an art history or even a cultural history. So, the types of evidence that art or cultural historians are interested in are not given the attention one would hope for. Nonetheless, it is one of the most important sources for this chapter.

A small but rich complement to Myrick's book is a short article written by Patricia Gardner Cleek, "Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara: The Tale of Two Studios." In it she discusses the Whiteheads to a small degree, and introduces new ideas about them. Most useful for this project, however, was her discussion about the builder of Arcady, craftsman Christopher Tornoe, who had a studio on the grounds of the Eatons's Montecito estate, Riso Rivo. Tornoe's studio was very similar looking to the outbuildings he built on the Arcady estate for the Whiteheads. This dissertation builds on Cleek and Wolf's initial writing on Tornoe and the Eatons, adding to them findings about

Tornoe's role in the development of the naturalistic aesthetics that the Whiteheads spearheaded in Arcady outbuildings in the 1890s.

The loss of Jane and Ralph's first child shortly after birth in 1896 and subsequent births of two healthy sons Ralph Jr. in 1899 and Peter in 1901, are documented in Chapter Four. These events had a profound impact on the course their simple life would take. Ultimately, it was their main reason for moving from California to New York in order to found the Byrdcliffe arts and crafts school and colony. California had been an Arcadian refuge for two cultured adults. However, Jane and Ralph felt their sons needed to be located closer to cosmopolitan centers and Europe. In California, the education of children at the Arcady school established in 1898 on the Whiteheads' estate was the couple's first attempt at forming an arts and crafts school that was primarily for the education of children. It served other functions as a center for adult art education and an artistic salon. The Arcady school was a Sloyd school which taught handcraftsmanship in woodwork and ceramic modeling to children to develop their mental, moral and physical senses. The Sloyd method originated in Sweden and spread throughout Europe and the United States in the later nineteenth century. The Whiteheads' Sloyd school combined Sloyd teachings with the educational philosophy of John Dewey from Chicago and J. Liberty Tadd from Philadelphia. The Whiteheads were active in the Chicago Arts and Crafts circle of Dewey, including Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr's Hull House, and they knew Tadd from Jane's hometown, Philadelphia. Arcady school teachers were imported from Hull House in Chicago and Tadd's wife and daughter came from Philadelphia to teach. Implicit in the formation of the Arcady school and the Byrdcliffe

art and crafts school and colony was the Whiteheads' belief that the changes they wanted to see take place in society had to begin with the education of children.

Jane and Ralph's publishing efforts are also documented and analyzed in this Chapter. Three essays under the title *Arrows of the Dawn* were published on topics ranging from the application of socialist principles in dealing with unemployment in California; to the pursuit of the Beautiful as a virtuous path and basic guiding principle in life; to the importance of making quality reproductions of "Great" art works available to school children.

And, still, the subject of the Whiteheads in Montecito is not yet exhausted. More time spent in Montecito area archives and historical societies, and reading the old, local periodicals from the time the Whiteheads were in residence there would certainly reveal more material.

Chapter Five "Mature Simplicity at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York" focuses on the expression and experience of simple living at Byrdcliffe that make it a unique phase in the evolution covered in this study. As mentioned previously, at Byrdcliffe the lifestyle and aesthetics of simple living grew more austere and relied more heavily on direct inspiration from the surrounding local nature of the place than had been the case in California or England. Also at Byrdcliffe, simple living became a communal experience. It was an art school and colony inhabited by like-minded people who were invited to reside, rent or own there. The entire built environment including its landscape was meant to be in harmony and reflective of the residents' shared commitment to a simple life. Here simple living included the following aspects: making art organic as a part of life; living within nature; beauty as a revelation; individual freedom; a concern for social

justice; daily work in the arts and in the outdoors; collaboration; using the beauty of the natural surroundings as inspiration for the simple and naturalistic architecture, art, and arts and crafts produced there; and socializing with and learning from like minded people.

People have been writing about Byrdcliffe since the time it was founded in 1903, and the most recent project, a 2004 traveling exhibition and exhibition catalog, curated and organized by Nancy Green, senior curator at Cornell University's Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, titled *Byrdcliffe: An American Art and Craft Colony*, was a huge project to which this author contributed. In this dissertation, I built on my work from this earlier project but sought to avoid repeating what others have already said. For a chronological list of publications by and on the Whiteheads and Byrdcliffe see the Appendix at the end of this dissertation.

Initially wary of relying on a series of published remembrances by Byrdcliffe craftspeople disseminated by the Woodstock Historical Society largely in the 1930s, I came to find them to be great points of comparison with Jane and Ralph Whiteheads' personal documents—their letters, calendars, business records, etc. My initial caution was based on their almost complete dismissal of Jane's contribution. Despite their omissions, oversights, inaccuracies and, in some cases, overt dismissals of Jane's role, I came to learn these essays often relate to notations in letters and events in Jane's calendars, and letters to Ralph, as well as to exhibitions listed in business records. Often, too, they offered a different perspective—that of a resident Byrdcliffe craftsman rather than that of Byrdcliffe's owners. Together, all these things often shed a more balanced and nuanced light on topics.

Bolton Brown's essay, "Early Days at Woodstock," helped develop the connection made in Chapter Five between Byrdcliffe and Hudson River School artist Thomas Cole. The very look out on Overlook Mountain where Bolton Brown wrote about seeing "like Balboa from his 'peak in Darien'" his "South Sea"—the place where he would help Whitehead found Byrdcliffe—describes one of the vistas Cole himself painted over half a century before Brown stood there.<sup>11</sup> [Illustration 5.10. and 5.11.] Brown's description sounds like a Cole painting: "indeed it was as wide and almost as blue as the sea, that remote haze, those farthest and faintest humps along the horizon being the Shawangunk Mountains."<sup>12</sup> Despite the decline in popularity the Hudson River School suffered during the time Brown explored the Catskills, it seems the magnificence of the spot was not lost on Brown, whose "modern Woodstock" carried on its legacy into the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup>

Carried over from the preceding chapter on California, the comparison of the Whiteheads' mature simple life aesthetic, which was naturalistic, is linked to Jane and Ralph's friend and Byrdcliffe visitor John Burroughs and his hand-made cottage, Slabsides, located just a short distance from Byrdcliffe outside West Park, New York. Here, Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley's book, *John Burroughs's Slabsides*, was a wonderful resource, as was a letter from Burroughs describing his experience on a visit to Byrdcliffe, which is in the Joseph Downs Collection's Byrdcliffe Collection at Winterthur.

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<sup>11</sup> Bolton Brown, "Early Days at Woodstock," 27.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Despite the wondrous coincidence that both artists surveyed the surrounding land from precisely this vantage point, I have found no evidence to date that Brown was familiar with Coles' painting.

Other excellent documents that helped in the writing of Chapter Five on Byrdcliffe include two unpublished manuscripts by the Thompson sisters, Annie and Bertha, which are kept with the Thompson Family Papers at Harvard's Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Bertha was a metals craftsman and long term Byrdcliffe resident who rented homes and eventually bought land and built her own home there. And, Annie, her schoolteacher sister, came to Byrdcliffe during the summer months to live close to nature and rejuvenate her spirit before reentering the trials of the outside world. Annie, too, became a craftsperson at Byrdcliffe. She took up basketmaking and eventually taught classes on the craft at Byrdcliffe. In her lengthy handwritten and undated essay, "Bertha and Byrdcliffe" she talks about the way she brought the Byrdcliffe lessons and lifestyle back into the world. In sharing these things with her students, Annie insinuates that social reform was taking place and that the insular and exclusive Byrdcliffe environment did in fact have a positive effect on the outside world. Annie's essay was crucial evidence for writing about the experience and lifestyle of Byrdcliffe participants other than the Whiteheads.

Chapter Five on Byrdcliffe provides a more in depth look than has heretofore been written into the ongoing relationship between the Whiteheads and Montecito, California, in the Woodstock years. They continued to own their grand Arcadian villa in Montecito until 1911 at which time they built a smaller Byrdcliffesque hacienda, named Neroli, on another property they owned in the town. They wintered at Neroli and Jane worked there on her pottery until that too was sold in 1926. Even then, it is said the Whiteheads maintained a residence in Carmel, California. This chapter looks at Neroli as a Woodstock/Montecito hybrid in the way it carries on the naturalist architectural

tradition the Whiteheads spearheaded first in Arcady outbuildings and which they more formally and fully developed as the architectural style of the entire Byrdcliffe compound. Hybrid is a word introduced in this chapter to describe a number of art works by Jane and Ralph that reflect their bicoastal lifestyle. Information presented on Neroli and Arcady was largely drawn from the rich collections at the Montecito Library and Santa Barbara Historical Society.

From Neroli, Jane studied pottery and socialized with the great art potter, Frederick Hurten Rhead. His influence on the Whiteheads' collaborative pottery project, White Pines Pottery, is examined in detail in this chapter. Usually excused as amateurish and experimental, White Pines Pottery is treated here as a mature and fully conceived simple life project. Here, the Whiteheads most fully lived "the art that is life," working in partnership, with their hands, close to nature on ceramics. In the past, their use of traditional Far and Near Eastern forms was treated as if it were imitative and not original--a negative. Here, I apply Leslie Greene Bowman's hypothesis on art potters of the period to the Whiteheads. Greene Bowman's essay "The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland," in *Living the Good Life: The Arts and Crafts movement in California* describes Jane's teacher Frederick Hurten Rhead's adoption of art potters like Charles Fergus Binn's preference for the "oriental tradition—unity of form and glaze without applied decoration," where exotic glazes were the only decoration on classic Far Eastern shapes.<sup>14</sup> Rhead adopted this approach during his Santa Barbara years while Jane was his student. It only makes sense that Jane, in turn, adopted her preference for this very approach from Rhead. While Bowman's essay makes minor mention of the Whiteheads'

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<sup>14</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman, "The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland," 195.



activity in Montecito and Santa Barbara, nobody before now has looked at White Pines Pottery through the lens she describes.

In Chapter Five on Byrdcliffe, the Whiteheads' essay "Work" from their 1892 publication *Grass of the Desert* is examined as the model for Byrdcliffe. Attention is paid to what was maintained and what changed from the initial model. Additionally, the Byrdcliffe model and reality is compared and contrasted with other period models and ideas, namely, the rural utopian future presented by William Morris in his book *News From Nowhere*, and Frank Lloyd Wright's progressive views on machinery presented in his speech, "The Art and Craft of the Machine." Byrdcliffe, it seems, was as close as one could get to Morris's utopia in the United States or probably anywhere. At the same time, the Whiteheads shared many of the progressive views Wright and their Chicago collaborators, colleagues, and peers held. In this way, Byrdcliffe was an English/United States hybrid.

All the chapters in this dissertation include visual analysis of symbolism in photographed portraits of Jane. In the Byrdcliffe chapter, photosecessionist Eva Watson-Schütze's ethereal apparitions of Jane and Byrdcliffe participants are examined. Here, Jane as Holy Mother continues the secular, spiritual thread of symbolism first encountered during Jane and Ralph's courtship, at which time, they imagined Jane as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*--symbolic of the heaven on earth, the New Life or *Vita Nuova* made possible. Thus, the conclusion to this dissertation is an appraisal of these images. Using key photographed portraits, it reviews the phases and aesthetic evolution of simple living examined more broadly in this project.

## Chapter 2: What was the simple life movement?

*Yes, dear, a simple life is the best worth living. So few people understand even the idea of it. I am so glad we feel it in common. No matter how often I have strayed off to get new experiences I have always come back to it as the mean. The center where dwells harmony. We are all groping. [What] do we ever find? All one wants to be armed with is a little love, a little health, and a good deal of nature out of doors.”*

--Jane Byrd McCall to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, 1891.<sup>15</sup>

*Since I have known thee a vain longing for a simpler life has grown into very plastic form, and plans that were mere dreams before now seem realities waiting merely for energy to put them into action. Let us go to that new land of thine where some others at least are living natural healthy lives, even if thereby we miss some of the surface refinements of a more polished but effete society.*

--Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead to Jane Byrd McCall, 1891.<sup>16</sup>

This chapter defines and explores the simple life movement as a lifestyle, philosophy, an aesthetic, and as social reform in its trans-Atlantic context in the period between 1870-1930. American, English, Russian, and French simple life figureheads and advocates who were contemporaries of Jane and Ralph are compared and contrasted with the Whiteheads in order to better understand how closely the Whiteheads' experience matches what we know or think we know about the simple life in this period.

Because the aesthetic dimensions of simple living were tied to its other elements—lifestyle, philosophy, and social reform--an overview of the evolution of simple life aesthetics is provided. Jane and Ralph and their simple life contemporaries believed the way a person's surroundings looked had a profound influence on their spiritual, moral, physical well-being and character. Simple life advocates were committed to a nonmaterialistic approach to life, direct contact with the natural world,

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<sup>15</sup> Jane Byrd McCall to Ralph Whitehead, letter inscribed "2-3 April 1891," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>16</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Byrd McCall, letter inscribed "April 7, San Gimignano," transcription by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

working with one's hands on the land or in the production of arts and crafts. These aspects were considered remedies to unhealthy urban lifestyles. They governed the development of simple life aesthetics. Starting with the rich medievalizing style developed by William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelite painters in mid-nineteenth-century England, this chapter traces the growing austerity of the look of things through to the turn-of-the-century, when naturalism, simplicity, and a nonmaterialistic approach were taken to an extreme. The mature phase covered in this study owes a great deal to the precedent set by American Transcendentalists like Henry David Thoreau and naturalists like John Muir and John Burroughs. Their hand-made cabin retreats in the woods are addressed here as models of inspiration for the Whiteheads' Byrdcliffe.

From at least the 1880s into the middle of the twentieth century, Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead lived a simple life in artistic, rural settings removed from the urban landscape. For most of this period, from 1891 until 1929, she did this collaboratively with her husband, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead. After his death in 1929, she continued to “live in the country with faith”<sup>17</sup> at Byrdcliffe until her death in 1955. [Illustration: 1.1.] Simple living as a philosophy is briefly summarized by Jane and Ralph in the quotation from the preceding sentence and in the two quoted passages beginning this chapter. Jane describes it as a commitment involving a “little love, a little health, and a good deal of nature out of doors.”<sup>18</sup> In turn, Ralph concurs that it involves a natural and healthy

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<sup>17</sup> Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, *Landscape Sketch with Tree*, inscribed “Live In The Country With Faith. Byrdcliffe” from sketchbook, 1894 – 1903, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>18</sup> Jane Byrd McCall to Ralph Whitehead, letter inscribed “2-3 April 1891.”

lifestyle removed from “the surface refinements of a more polished but effete society.”<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps their most adroit description was published in a 1907 Byrdcliffe prospectus:

There is a growing number of those who would like to liberate their children and themselves from the slavery of our too artificial and too hurried life, to return to some way of living which requires less material apparatus, and to throw off the weight of custom which is laid on them by the society in which they have been accustomed to live. . . . We would like our children to care more for the beauty of the sunrise and the twilight, of the trees and the fields, than for the passing excitement of the Broadway plays and the paltry satisfaction of the desire to get on in ‘society.’ We would like them to be able, when the time comes for them to work, to earn sufficient for a sane human life in country places. . . . In this endeavor, both in the education of our children and in our own daily life, we shall give more time to manual and to muscular work than is usually done, recognizing the joy which there may be in simple labor under healthy conditions, and the regeneration of nervous tissue which muscular work alone can give. . . . Weaving, modeling, designing, woodcarving, artistic photography, and pottery are all represented in the work which goes on in the various shops and studios.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, painting, carpentry, metalwork, including jewelry and enameling were also in practice. In the Whiteheads’ description of their simple lifestyle at Byrdcliffe, we see a dedication to a natural healthy outdoor life in an artistic setting. And, while they chose a path of enlightened material restraint, they certainly were far from ascetic in their approach to the good life. Interestingly, their vision of this ideology remained fairly constant throughout the years covered in this dissertation; however, the aesthetics of their interpretation evolved over time in the simple life environs they established in England and on the Continent (1870s – 1894); at their Arcady estate in Montecito, California (1894 – 1903); and at their Byrdcliffe art school in Woodstock, New York (1903 – 1929/1955).

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead to Jane Byrd McCall, letter inscribed “April 7, San Gimignano.”

<sup>20</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, *Byrdcliffe 1907*.

### *Section 1: Simple Living in a Transatlantic Context, 1870-1930.*

What is the simple life? Books have been written on the subject. David Shi's classic *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* is probably the only one that looks at simple living as a philosophy, tracing it from the Puritan ethics of early American colonists in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries through the post-World War II era ending in the 1970s. His chapters on Transcendental Simplicity, Patrician Simplicity—At Bay, and Progressive Simplicity are particularly relevant here because Jane and Ralph's simple life and its aesthetics relate to aspects of these forms of simple living and to Shi's chronological framework.

Like the Transcendentalists—a group of poets and philosophers centered in Concord, Massachusetts, which included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and others--Jane and Ralph were Romantic in their approach and

sought to transcend the limitations of Lockean rationalism and penetrate the inner recesses of the self. To them, intuitive truths were ultimately more meaningful than empirical facts or entrenched conventions. The Transcendentalist Emerson explained, "believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration and in ecstasy." . . . . As interpreted by the Transcendentalists, [Reverend Dr.] Channing's ethic of self-culture entailed a Pythagorean simple life of material self-control and intellectual exertion. It also implied a reverential attitude toward the natural world. Where Enlightenment simplicity found its guiding impulse primarily in classical philosophy and Protestant simplicity looked to Jesus' example, the romantic sensibility saw nature as the source of aesthetic pleasure, moral goodness, and spiritual inspiration.<sup>21</sup>

As you will see in this chapter, Jane and Ralph's simple living was firmly rooted in the Transcendentalist reverie for the natural world; remember the quotation from Jane's small sketch in Illustration 2.1.: "Live in the country with faith. Byrdcliffe." However,

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<sup>21</sup> David Shi, *The Simple Life*, 126-127.

the constant references to classical philosophy in their collaborative publications link them to the Enlightenment simplicity Shi mentions above, and their work ethic involving a daily commitment of time to manual work and working the ground certainly relates to Shi's description of Protestant simplicity. Like the Transcendentalists, Jane and Ralph's simplicity was primarily an exercise in self culture rather than a mission to reform social standards or a revolution to overthrow current social institutions.

George Ripley's Brook Farm (1841-49) in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, was a utopian community formed on Emersonian principles.<sup>22</sup> In many ways it was similar to the Whiteheads' Byrdcliffe founded over half-a-century later in 1903. As would be done at Byrdcliffe, Brook Farmers set aside time in the day to work the soil and the intellect.

The Brook Farmers were not countenancing primitivism, but hoped to provide "all the elegances desirable for bodily and spiritual health: books, apparatus, collections for science, works of art, means of beautiful amusements." . . . The community was not intended to be a pastoral retreat but a revived "city on the hill."<sup>23</sup>

The same could be said about Jane and Ralph's earliest descriptions of their "art convent" published in *Grass of the Desert* in 1892 and its realization at Byrdcliffe. The Whiteheads and Byrdcliffe residents believed the lessons of simple living would be carried into the world and would ultimately have an effect in it through example and through the work Byrdcliffers carried on in the outside world. One particularly potent example of this belief was recorded in the writings of Byrdcliffe visitor Annie Thompson, who came to Byrdcliffe in the summer to rest and build up her strength. When she

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<sup>22</sup> Even though Brook Farm was inspired by Emerson's teachings, Emerson did not believe living in an isolated community was a particularly fruitful exercise. Furthermore, he feared that perfectionist communities would inevitably become asylums. See David Shi, *The Simple Life*, 135.

<sup>23</sup> David Shi, *The Simple Life*, 134. In relation to this passage and its quotations, Shi cites "Plan of the West Roxbury Community," *The Dial* 2 (Jan. 1842): 364; Henry L. Golemba, *George Ripley* (Boston, 1977), 66; Georgiana Bruce Kirby, *Years of Experience, An Autobiographical Narrative*, Boston, 1887: 98-105; John Van Der Zee Sears, *My Friends at Brook Farm*, New York, 1912; Lindsay Swift, *Brook Farm*, New York, 1900; Zoltan Haraszti, *The Idyll of Brook Farm*, Boston, 1937.

returned “to more drab surroundings,” working as a school teacher during the rest of the year, she passed on to her students the lessons she gained from her time at Byrdcliffe.<sup>24</sup>

In matters of social class and presumed intellectual superiority, Jane and Ralph also fit neatly into Shi’s chapter on “Patrician Simplicity,” which covers the period following the Civil War. In it he identifies a group of patrician class intellectuals like Jane and Ralph who

practiced a refined simplicity that combined attributes of both conservatism and romanticism . . . these ‘best men’ considered themselves a natural aristocracy of virtue and culture . . . [and] saw their role as that of a saving remnant, imbued with an abiding sense of public duty and a presumptive sense of moral and intellectual superiority. . . . These custodians of culture, much like their counterparts in England—Matthew Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin—were intent upon asserting their authority as moral spokesmen for the nation . . . Their goal was to promote political honesty and high culture, not proletarian causes; they had little interest in, or understanding of, the untutored masses . . . They usually combined support for a public policy of economic liberalism with a personal ethic of cosmopolitan simplicity. . . . Yet if these Brahmin intellectuals were conservative elitists in their social outlook and political gentility, preferring the security of tradition over the idealism of revolt, they were romantic individualists in their stress on the desirability of personal freedom (within prescribed bounds) and in their fondness for country life. They reflected a transcendental distaste for organizations and institutions.<sup>25</sup>

One could argue that through their publications and leadership at the Arcady school in Montecito, California, and the Byrdcliffe art school in Woodstock, New York, the Whiteheads expressed their sense of public duty to act as cultural custodians. At Byrdcliffe, for example, they created an idyllic environment where people came and went at the pleasure of their hosts. By providing the land, building the structures, formulating the curriculum, and monitoring the free time spent by their self-selected participants, Jane and Ralph’s Byrdcliffe was the realization of a personal vision, not to be confused with a socialist utopia.

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<sup>24</sup> Annie Thompson, “Bertha and Byrdcliffe,” 18-19.

<sup>25</sup> David Shi, *The Simple Life*, 156-58.

During the era of Progressive Simplicity between 1900 and 1920—a period of “reforms and reformers, as activists energetically set about reining in a runaway urban-industrial society”<sup>26</sup>—we find the Whiteheads quietly living apart from the mayhem of the moment in their Byrdcliffe retreat, where they continued to practice a simple life philosophy reflective of the prior decades characterized by Shi as Transcendental Simplicity and Patrician Simplicity. Yet, many of their guests hailed from Chicago’s Hull House and when they weren’t taking it easy at Byrdcliffe, they were active social reformers. Certainly, the Whiteheads shared the social reform values of their Hull House guests. They felt, however, that they could not reform the world, and only aimed to reform a small part of it.

Their aesthetic interpretation of simple living at Byrdcliffe corresponds with the contemporary trends popularized among the middle classes by people like Gustav Stickley. As we will see, the austerity and rustic naturalism that characterize visual qualities associated with simple living of the Progressive era were perfected by the Whiteheads at Byrdcliffe and were first developed by them and an avant-garde group in California in the 1890s.

In practice and within a transatlantic context, simple living ran the gamut of extremes. If we turn to France during Jane’s early life and academic study at Paris’s Académie Julian, themes of convergence can be seen between the Barbizon art colony movement and simple living.<sup>27</sup> Some of Jane’s American peers, such as Birge and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>27</sup> *The connection between the Barbizon art colony movement, simple living and Arts and Crafts is too complex to be dealt with at length in this paper. Those interested in American participation in the Barbizon and French art colony movement can consult Hardy George, “The Search for the Authentic and Spiritual;” and Kathleen Adler, Erica Hirshler, Barbara Weinberg, et. al., Americans in Paris 1860-1900; Michael Jacobs, The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America.*



Eleanor Harrison--people who later practiced art with her in California and Woodstock--were active in the Barbizon school and French art colony movement during Jane's years of Parisian art study in the 1880s. Perhaps because of schisms between fine art and decorative art history, little scholarly attention has focused on the ways in which the Barbizon focus on peasant life and life in the rustic countryside relate to trends in simple living and how they parallel similar veins of thought and activity practiced by Arts and Crafts advocates. Nevertheless, both movements reveal that similar sources of inspiration were active throughout the industrial and industrializing Western world.

Hardy George's essay "The Search for the Authentic and Spiritual: Americans in Paris and the French Countryside in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century" is about Americans painting at art colonies in the French countryside. It reveals that the impulses that inspired simple living within the Arts and Crafts movement—in part a reaction against industrialization and urbanization—also fueled the development of the Barbizon painting style, which was typified by tonalist, simplified, picturesque peasant imagery.

George explains,

Pont-Aven and Concarneau were the most remote artists' colonies frequented by Americans. Compared with Barbizon and [Grèz-sur-Loing, Cernay-la-Ville, and Etaples], Pont-Aven's peasant life, the habits, superstitions, and religious practices of its inhabitants were quite distinct, mysterious, and medieval . . . . [Pont-Aven's charm] not only had to do with the total absence of the transformation of progress; it was also an area associated with ancient Celtic, Druidic, and medieval Christian civilizations.<sup>28</sup>

George speculates that artist Paul Gauguin's interest in isolated people, like those he painted in Breton and Polynesia, whose uncorrupted creativity and way of life were in harmony with nature, may have influenced artists that moved to Taos to portray the life

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<sup>28</sup> Hardy George, "The Search for the Authentic and Spiritual: Americans in Paris and the French Countryside in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," 84, 90.

of the Pueblo and Navajo Indians. American painter Birge Harrison, for example, exemplifies George's point. Harrison moved from France to live the simple life with Jane and Ralph in California and Woodstock. He is best known for his tonalist landscapes from this period, but early on in his lauded career he was recognized for his paintings of French peasants. [Illustration 2.1.] And in the early 1880s, he and his wife Eleanor were among the earliest Anglo-artists to travel and paint in the great plains of the American Southwest. This passage in Harrison's life is recorded in Andrea Husby's doctoral dissertation on Harrison.<sup>29</sup> The Harrisons' move to the Southwest from Europe was done in an effort to cure Birge's recurring malaria. During this time, Birge wrote and illustrated an article titled "Espanola and Its Environs" for *Harper's* on his New Mexican travels. He and Eleanor painted side by side in New Mexico where they were interested in recording the picturesqueness of Native American and Hispano life. They also traveled by train to visit the Navajo Indians in Arizona and stopped briefly in Colorado Springs, Colorado. After nine months in the Southwest and little improvement in Birge's health, the Harrisons returned east, where Birge exhibited *Friends and Foes*, an unlocated painting on a North American Indian subject, at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. Of artists like the Harrisons, George says,

This interest in the peoples of Oceania and the southwestern United States can be traced back to earlier Romantic concepts of the exotic and picturesque, which, in the late nineteenth century, were transformed into a spiritual quest for a 'primitive' state of existence that was thought to survive among indigenous people living in distant regions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> All information on the Harrisons in this paragraph is based on Andrea Husby's doctoral dissertation, "Birge Harrison: Artist, Teacher and Critic," pp. 75-78. Birge's article "Espanola and Its Environs," appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 70 (May 1885): 826. The exhibition of his painting *Friends and Foes* in 1883 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art is recorded in Peter H. Falk, ed., *The Annual Exhibition Records of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art*, Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1989, 2:236.

<sup>30</sup> Hardy George, "The Search for the Authentic and Spiritual," 90.



2.1. Lovell Birge Harrison, *Novembre*, 1881, oil on canvas, 132 x 248 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes, pictured in Kathleen Adler, *Americans in Paris*, 200.

While George's discussion focuses exclusively on painters, it beautifully informs the activities of simple life advocates involved in the Arts and Crafts movement in England and America. People like the Harrisons, Jane and Ralph, and many of their colleagues were involved in both the Arts and Crafts movement and Barbizon and French art colony movement. They did seek the spiritual in primitive or simplified existences; those leading the simple life sought to emulate aspects of the lifeways of nonindustrialized peasant and exotic cultures in order to achieve this goal, while those painting peasant subjects in the Barbizon and French art colony movement sought to capture on canvas the spiritual essence they saw embodied in the traditional lifeways and people they painted.

Arts and Crafts attention to preserving the traditional crafts of peasant cultures undergoing various stages of industrialization in countries such as those in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Switzerland, and even Japan, as well as the settlement house movement's interest in teaching the urban poor and immigrants how to make money from traditional crafts, and the preservation and promotion of the traditional crafts of indigenous peoples whose heritages were threatened by assimilation or extinction parallels and relates to the preoccupation at French art colonies associated with the

Barbizon school with French peasants and the Arts and Crafts' interest in simple living. In all cases, we see a desire to connect or reconnect with "authentic" or "pure" experience, defined as life untouched or barely touched by the effects of industrial capitalism.

Jane's earliest recorded attempts at simple living were called "country life." As early as 1888, three years before she met her future husband, Jane with her mother and sister experimented with country living at Albury House in Guildford, Surrey, England. In addition to raising bees, pigeons and poultry at Albury House, Jane did her own gardening, including hoeing the beds, and practiced home industry with village women, including seamstressing, smocking, and making counterpanes.<sup>31</sup> At this early date, however, country life was a complement to, rather than a substitute for Jane's urbane and sophisticated high society life. She also hosted lavish entertainments for British and European aristocrats, gentry, intellectuals and artists; made regular visits for social and art study purposes to London and Paris and other European cities; attended events at Oxford; and toured the Loire valley by boat with her cousin.

Early on in my research, I was advised that simple living in relation to the Arts and Crafts movement was different in the United States and England.<sup>32</sup> Given the esteem with which I hold the bearer of this insight, I set out to find out what these differences were. Jane's country living in England problematized my understanding of national qualities associated with simple living. Her elite position in society and socioeconomic class allowed her to move fluidly and without hindrances between nation states. For Jane

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<sup>31</sup> Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, calendars, 1888-1890, Byrdcliffe collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

<sup>32</sup> James Benjamin, discussion with author, n.d.

and others in elite society, I found it was hard to pin down national differences that distinguish simple living in one country versus another.

Fiona MacCarthy's book *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* was a hopeful start.<sup>33</sup> It is biographical, describing the simple life of Ashbee and his circle. Yet, MacCarthy never takes on simple living as a term or philosophy in need of explanation. Ashbee's experience as recorded by MacCarthy was primarily a commercial business venture in its simple life phase in the Cotswold town of Chipping Campden starting in 1902. His commercial approach and quasi-socialist goals, which involved bringing young, urban working class men, women and children to the country for employment in his Guild of Handicraft, was just as mired in capitalism and cultural elitism as anything America had to offer. Unfortunately for Ashbee, it seems that his well-meaning utopian socialist experiment was interpreted as business-as-usual and an arrogant imposition of his cultural superiority among a number of his craftsmen, such as Alex Miller who wrote Ashbee,

The Guild was never a real Guild . . . since I knew it in 1902. Most of the Guildsmen . . . regarded the Guild as a nuisance . . . The higher ideals of Craftsmanship also, as I soon saw, were not in the craftsmen—but were in you—and, if you as a director said that beaten and hammered silver work was better than spun work they accepted it . . . The Guild never produced things co-operatively since I knew it—it produced things working under your direction.<sup>34</sup>

In 1901, when the Whiteheads began searching for a suitable location for their art convent, Henry Rolfe, Ashbee's agent in America, wrote to the Whiteheads suggesting Ashbee's Guild as a model: "Ashbee is living the life that you and I would lead if we could, more exactly than any one else I know. He is a good man to be with. Do not fail

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<sup>33</sup> For more on Ashbee, see Alan Crawford, *C. R. Ashbee*.

<sup>34</sup> Alex Miller to Ashbee, letter, 1911, quoted in C. R. Ashbee, *Memoirs*, typescript in the Victoria and Albert Museum, v. 1, p. 45, quoted in Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 158.

to see his book, *The Endeavor toward the Teaching of Ruskin and Morris*, which is coming out soon.”<sup>35</sup> Soon afterward Ralph traveled to England to investigate his family’s felt making factory, the Royal George Mills, and its workers in his hometown Saddleworth on the River Tame in the West Riding of Yorkshire as a possible location and population for his and Jane’s art convent—an idea that was quickly extinguished by its location and lack of artfulness; Jane to Ralph, “It is a pity that we could not find the much desired industry in ‘The Royal George.’ It is a pity it is situated where it is and that it is not artistic.”<sup>36</sup> During this trip Ralph visited Ashbee at his home and at the Guild of Handicraft, which was operating out of Essex House in London. Ralph’s letters to Jane describe his jewelry commissions with Ashbee and suggest that Ashbee’s model for life and work was removed from the Morrisian ideal Jane and Ralph were imagining for themselves. Illustration: 1.2. shows a photograph of Jane wearing a now missing Ashbee brooch Ralph commissioned for her. Ralph wrote Jane,

I went down to Chelsea on Wednesday to lunch with them [the Ashbees]; they have a charming house in what is always to me the prettiest part of London, near where Morris used to live. He has taste and a good deal of knowledge, but I find that Marshall and [Halsey] Ricardo both smile rather sardonically when he is mentioned. It seems he is rather a poseur and does a good deal of lecturing and making himself important . . . then again his furniture is not very good. But still he has absorbed some of Morris’s view of life and [is] doing some fine work in metal and has forty men working for him at Essex House in Whitechapel where he spends two days a week . . . .<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Henry Rolfe to Ralph Whitehead, letter, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 51.

<sup>36</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, July 9-11, 1901, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 51.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, July 12, 1901, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 52. Halsey Ricardo was an English architect who entered a partnership with famed ceramist William De Morgan at Sands End in Fulham from 1888 to 1898. De Morgan is best known as the maker of William Morris’s Isnik inspired lustered ceramics. The Marshall mentioned in Ralph’s letter is unknown at this time.

Perhaps Ashbee's mentor and friend Edward Carpenter's utopian approach to simple living relates more closely to that of Jane and Ralph. Sheila Rowbotham and Jeff Weeks's book *Socialism and the New Life, The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* looks at Carpenter's simple living, which he and others called the New Life.<sup>38</sup> In the early 1880s, Carpenter was involved in the formation of "The Fellowship of the New Life," a socialist group with a commitment to simple living and emphasis on personal and spiritual change. In 1884, the group splintered when reform-minded members who wanted to work with the established government in order to effect organized socialist change left to form the Fabian Society, precursor to today's Labour Party. Sheila Rowbotham explains,

According to its constitution the Fellowship was to be based on the 'subordination of material things to spiritual' and aimed at 'the cultivation of a perfect character in each and all.' Through discussion, simple living, manual labour and religious communion, members hoped to lay the basis of a new life.<sup>39</sup>

It is possible that the term "New Life" was inspired by Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti's translation and 1850s interpretation of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, the Italian poet's account of his love for Beatrice and of her premature death. In his translation, Rossetti insisted that Dante's title be translated into the "New Life" rather than its typical translation as the "Early Life." In 1864, Rossetti painted a portrait of his late wife Elizabeth Siddal as Dante's Beatrice, using iconographic metaphor to describe his love for her in Dantesque terms. [Illustration: 2.2.] It seems Jane and Ralph drew on

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<sup>38</sup> For more on Carpenter and the simple life, see Sheila Rowbotham's short article "'Commanding the Heart' Edward Carpenter and Friends;" Linda Dalrymple Henderson's "Mysticism as the 'Tie That Binds': The Case of Edward Carpenter and Modernism,"

<sup>39</sup> Sheila Rowbotham, "'Commanding the Heart,' Edward Carpenter and Friends," 42.

Rossetti's painting and interpretation of the New Life in the expression of their corporate identity and the way their union relates to the simple life.



2.2. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Siddal as *Beata Beatrix*, 1864, Tate Gallery, London.

In addition to collaborating on a translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, which was written in Florence in 1891 and published in London by the Chiswick Press in 1892, Jane and Ralph commissioned, painted, and photographed portraits of Jane in poses very similar to Elizabeth Siddal as *Beata Beatrix*. [Illustration: 2.3. and 2.4.] In *Beata Beatrix*, the death of Beatrice is symbolized by a sudden spiritual transfiguration. A bird (Jane's symbol and nickname based on her family name Byrd), acts as a messenger of death, dropping a white poppy between her open hands. In Rossetti's and, perceptibly, in Jane and Ralph's interpretation, they adopted Dante's philosophy of spiritual marriage in which woman as heart and man as intellect unite through Beauty to transform earthly into heavenly love—ideals that resonate with those of John Ruskin, with whom Rossetti, Jane



and Ralph studied at Oxford.<sup>40</sup> Rather than being on Dante's ideal level, their conception is earthly, requiring physical and sensual experience. Through her rebirth, Beatrice, like Christ, brings salvation and earthly love is transformed into divine love. Here, ideas about the attainability of heaven on earth fuel simple living—or the New Life, as it was also known—with its spiritual associations and religiousness. In letters, such as the following one from 1891, Jane and Ralph described their New Life in these terms:

the future is no longer in the hands of fate to make or mar us but it is in our own hands and our hands are strong when they are joined together, as thy soul and mine are joined till I hardly know what is mine and what is thine in our common life. Florence saw the birth and growth of our “New Life,” but all the world shall be the scene of its fullness, for wherever life leads us we will no longer go out alone.<sup>41</sup>

According to art historian Ronald Johnson, these conceptions of divine earthiness were Symbolist rather than conventionally Christian.

2.3. The Cameron Studio (London: 70 Mortimer St. Regent So. W.), *Photograph of Portrait of Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead (now missing) by Madeleine Fleury*, late 1880s, silver print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

2.4. H. J. Mendelssohn, S. Kensington, London & Newcastle, *Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead*, ca. 1891, studio card, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Like Jane and Ralph, Carpenter and other New Life or simple life advocates sought spiritual and physical health and transformation in union with nature and in anti-materialist settings governed by aesthetics of simplicity and utility. But, while Jane and Ralph were dissatisfied with the inequities of their social world, their focus was primarily on themselves and their immediate circle. They were not outspoken activists like

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<sup>40</sup> Ideas in this paragraph on Rossetti's translation and reinterpretation of Dante's New Life are based on Ronald Johnson's "Dante Rossetti's Beata Beatrix and the New Life."

<sup>41</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, April 4, 1891, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, quoted in Nancy Green, "The Reality of Beauty," 43.

Carpenter whose other commitments included socialism, feminism, support for democratizing personal relationships, promotion of sexual liberation and homogenic love. Nevertheless, at their art convent Byrdcliffe and before it at their home in California and during their years on the Continent, Jane and Ralph surrounded themselves with a variety of simple life advocates, many of whom promoted or lived lifestyles overlapping with one or several of Carpenter's causes. By comparing Jane and Ralph with figures like Carpenter and Ashbee it is clear that simple living was a highly individualistic undertaking that varied from advocate to advocate. Rowbotham suggests,

Other late Victorian rebels busied themselves with many of the causes which Carpenter espoused—though no one was quite so all embracing. There were utopian land colonies and communal houses. Craft guilds promoted aesthetics based on simplicity and utility. Progressive schools tried to put democratic co-operation into practice. Settlements of middle-class intellectuals in slum areas attempted to overcome class divisions . . . . The ferment was more cultural than political.<sup>42</sup>

In keeping with Rowbotham's viewpoint, cultural historian T. J. Jackson Lears describes simple living as one among many responses to feelings of dissatisfaction with and suffocation within the overcivilized, secularized, and liberalized late nineteenth-century modern transatlantic culture characterized by "its ethic of self control and autonomous achievement, its cult of science and technical rationality, and its worship of material progress."<sup>43</sup> Modernity had promised greater autonomy but had produced moral impotence and spiritual sterility.<sup>44</sup> Impulses of discontent with the status quo led to drastically different outcomes that were shaped by particular national circumstances. For example, in Europe, where dissatisfaction with liberalism was more openly voiced than in

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<sup>42</sup> Sheila Rowbotham, "Commanding the Heart," 45-46.

<sup>43</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 4-5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

America, the same impulses led both to communitarian critiques of capitalism, such as John Ruskin's Guild of St. George, as well as to fascist and Nazi ideology.

Carpenter's writing from the period supports Lears's appraisal; he described the 'Victorian Age' as:

. . . a period in which not only commercialism in public life, but cant in religion, pure materialism in science, futility in social conventions, the worship of stocks and shares, the starving of the human heart, the denial of the human body and its needs, huddling concealment of the body in clothes, the 'impure hush' in matters of sex, class division, contempt of manual labour, and cruel barring of women from every natural and useful expression of their lives, were carried to an extremity of folly difficult for us to realize.<sup>45</sup>

No analysis of simple living in England can overlook the influence of John Ruskin and his disciple William Morris. Ruskin's philosophies about art and life were a primary inspiration for simple living and the Arts and Crafts movement. As stated in the preceding chapter, the Arts and Crafts movement and simple living were interrelated Romantic responses to the dehumanizing effects and ecological devastation caused by industrialization first in England and, later, in other Western countries that were industrialized or in the process of becoming industrialized. The Arts and Crafts movement grew out of the idea that all people had a basic right to joy in labor, which led to the development of aesthetics that self-consciously highlighted hand-worked qualities, signs of handcraftsmanship and imperfections. Simple living shared Arts and Crafts commitment to social justice, and both relied on nature as a model for aesthetics based on a belief that connecting with it inspired physical and spiritual well-being. The Arts and Crafts movement started in the city and took place in both the city and the country. While many proponents sought to live simply in urban environments, simple living was ideally enacted in the countryside where direct experience within nature was more readily

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<sup>45</sup> Edward Carpenter, 1914, quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, "'Commanding the Heart,'" 41.

possible than in the city, and where the entire cultural landscape, including architecture, landscape, arts and crafts, lifestyle, and community, could be incorporated.

Since both Jane and Ralph studied with Ruskin, ideas like those conveyed in the following passage from Ruskin's 1849 *Seven Lamps of Architecture* certainly impacted their early thinking about the aesthetics of simple living:

I am no advocate for meanness in private habitation. I would fain introduce into it all magnificence, care and beauty, where they are possible; but would not have that useless expense in unnoticed fineries and formalities . . . I speak from experience. I know what it is to live in a cottage with a deal roof and a hearth of mica slate; and I know it to be in many respects healthier and happier than living between a Turkey carpet and gilded ceiling, beside a steel grate and polished fender . . .<sup>46</sup>

In the 1870s, Ruskin started the Guild of St. George, an experiment in simple living in an ideal agrarian environment devoid of steam power where men and women assumed social roles and lived moral lives based on mutual aid that were meant to be determined by biological needs. Calling it old-school Communism, Ruskin envisioned participants being as happy as European peasants in their cooperative environment, where property belonged to everyone and everybody's property was collective. It was intended to be a place free from the evils of urban city life and the debasement of the poor associated with industrial capitalism.<sup>47</sup> Ruskin's Guild of St. George never became viable but its influence was profound. His published letters *Fors Clavigeras* documented his socialist activities including the Guild of St. George and inspired people across class lines at Ruskin reading groups. Similar colonies were established as far away as

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<sup>46</sup> John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Sacrifice," in John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849; reprint London: Everyman's Library, 1956: 17-18. Historian Alan Crawford shared this passage with the author; he importantly notes that its context is not about the simple life *per se*; rather, it is about the virtue of putting rich materials into a church. Alan Crawford, e-mail to author, 9 July 2004.

<sup>47</sup> John Ruskin, "Charitas," *Fors Clavigera*, 1871, in John D. Rosenberg, ed., *The Genius of John Ruskin: Selections from His Writings*, Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1998: 374-377; Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America*, 6-7.

Tennessee in the United States. Ralph visited the Tennessee “Ruskin” colony in 1897 on a scouting trip for a location for his and Jane’s art convent. As scout for the couple, Ralph wrote Jane letters about what he saw and experienced and she wrote back her thoughts. They would make decisions through the mail this way. Jane did not go on scouting trips for new properties probably because of her frail health, social norms for women of her social class, and later because she was caring for their children and running their art schools in Ralph’s absence. Ralph to Jane:

“Ruskin” was very interesting to me. You know that I don’t believe in “colonies” solving the social problem, which is to me an economic one. Nothing but capitalization of labor can do that and how much state interference will be necessary to attain to that is the crux of socialism. . . . “Ruskin” has been running for three years and has been through some hard times. There are sixty members each of whom has paid \$500 per membership. They have bought land and farm it and besides this run some printing machines, make suspenders and chicory gum (!) They print their own paper and do job printing as well. . . . They work nine hours a day all with being paid equally! . . . It is very well managed and the people are very intelligent as to economics and I hope they may succeed. Why it is that I and you too I suppose don’t want to join them I can’t tell. I suppose we require more of life’s appliances than they have and more beauty of surroundings.<sup>48</sup>

Jane and Ralph were both students of Ruskin and acquaintances of Morris. Not much is known of her study with the master since her calendars and personal correspondence in Winterthur’s Joseph Downs Collection do not begin until 1886. However, family history supported by nature studies by Jane and Ruskin, along with a photograph of her at Oxford, correspondence with Oxford professor Max Müller and other documentation of time spent at Oxford suggests she studied with him at Oxford in the 1880s. [Illustration 2.5., 2.6. and 2.7.] Ralph was his student at Oxford’s Balliol College in the 1870s when Ruskin was at his most outspoken on subjects relating to

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<sup>48</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, April 9, 1897, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 50.

socialism. Not only was Ralph a participant in Ruskin's 1874 Hinksey Road project—where privileged Oxford students learned stewardship and empathy for the working class through manual labor involved in repairing “a bad bit of road on the Hinksey side”<sup>49</sup>—he also unsuccessfully attempted to change his family's wayward business practices by turning the Royal George Mills into a “cooperative enterprise where contented workers would make beautifully designed and colored textiles amid charming and healthful surroundings.”<sup>50</sup> Accompanying the master to Venice, Italy in 1876, Ralph is mentioned in W. G. Collingwood's biography of Ruskin as one of several Oxford pupils who Ruskin set to “work on copies of pictures and records of architecture, the legacy of St. Mark to St. George.”<sup>51</sup> In the 1880s, it is possible that Ralph attempted something along the lines of Ruskin's Guild of St. George at a castle he bought and restored in Styria, Austria; information about this venture, however, seems to be based more on hearsay and gossip than on actual evidence.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 8-9, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 38-39.

<sup>50</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “Work,” in *Grass of the Desert*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *The Life of John Ruskin*, 323, quoted in Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 40.

<sup>52</sup> Ralph's Styria project is recorded in Hervey White, “Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead.” Alf Evers explains that White's recollection and other stories about the Whiteheads were all bits of gossip (see Alf Evers, *The Catskills*: 604). Nancy Green repeats this information in “The Reality of Beauty,” 42. Cheryl Robertson thinks research on the Styria project could yield valuable information about Ralph's early simple life experiments.



2.5. John Ruskin, *Nettle Study*, dated May 1883, pencil, 8 7/8 x 5 1/4 inches, Private Collection.



2.6. Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, *Nettle Study*, 1883, watercolor and pencil, 8 7/8 x 5 1/4 inches, Private Collection.

2.7. Marsh Brothers, Henley on Thames, British, active 1870s – '80s, *Jane Byrd McCall and Gertrude McCall and Friends at Balliol College, Oxford*, 1883, Albumen print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

With regards to Jane and Ralph's relationship with William Morris, it appears they were merely acquaintances and did not socialize together. From what they said about him in their earlier quoted letter about Ashbee, the fact they chose to furnish their home with Morris & Co. objects bought during their courtship in London, and that Ralph unsuccessfully sought Morris out as a teacher, Jane and Ralph certainly looked up to and were inspired by Morris.

Despite their allegiance to the ideals of these cultural ideologues, Jane and Ralph's approach to simple living and involvement in Arts and Crafts was more individualistic and therapeutic than Ruskin's and Morris' socialist agenda which sought to change social relations in the Western world. It seems Jane and Ralph set out to live the philosophy with a select few, rather than proselytize for broader social change. Art historian Roger Stein eloquently explains the way in which Ruskin, and, thus, Morris, understood art to be a liberating tool as a repository of religion and spirituality (in Ruskin's case) and socialist ideals (in Morris's case). For Ruskin, and, thus, for Morris, art as a repository of spiritual values was a forerunner for a healthy society in which truth to nature--the integrity of an unaltered, natural universe--was maintained and was expressive of a divine plan in the realm of Beauty.<sup>53</sup> For different reasons, religious and socialist, respectively, both Ruskin and Morris believed that workers had a right to joyful work. In turn, joyful work became a central tenet of the Arts and Crafts movement and simple living.

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<sup>53</sup> Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," 25. It may be helpful here to explain why beauty was considered important, in fact divine. In Jane and Ralph's 1892 *Grass of the Desert* they interpret Ruskin's use of beauty in "Modern Painters" using Plato to make sense of Ruskin. Plato explains that true beauty is divine and simple. When beheld by the mind's eye, it brings forth no images but realities that nourish true virtue, realities that allow the living man to be a friend of God and be immortal. In this sense, beauty and the aspects necessary for realizing it, i.e., artistic labor, are necessary for a divine life on earth—the ultimate goal of simple living in its New Life guise. See Plato quoted in Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, "Modern Painters," in *Grass of the Desert*, 127; and Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," 25.



In Ralph and Jane's collaborative essay "Work," they map out the artistic convent they planned at the start of their relationship in Italy in 1891, which became realized at Byrdcliffe in 1903. On socialism, the essay says,

When I [Ralph] was twenty, imbued with the republican and socialistic theories of Mill and Mazzini and others, I wanted to learn the business of our country-side and to become in time the head of the factories which our family possessed in those days in Yorkshire, with a view to the gradual introduction of real cooperation . . . Now I think not of such large beginnings, but of quietly finding out something which I shall be capable of doing as an individual.<sup>54</sup>

And, on religion,

[E]ach will be unhindered in his own form of it; but we will have no missionaries among us, and no priest. Each man must, in the end, stand or fall by his own merits; none can bear the innermost burden of another. In order to be capable of the strongest personal passion, in order to appreciate to the full the beauty and good that is in nature and in the heart of man, who is but a part of larger nature, we have need of a faith in something greater than our own personality, and the expression of this faith in divers manners, and the signs of it,—to one in the voice of the birds of spring, to another in the thunder of the heavens,—is religion. Let each be glad he is capable of such a feeling, and rejoice that his neighbour is capable of it too, even if in a different way.<sup>55</sup>

Clearly, their positions on matters relating to socialism and religion were different from those held by Morris and Ruskin, respectively. And yet, they saw themselves as descendants if not disciples of Ruskin and Morris's creed. Hence, it does not seem outrageous to suggest that differences of opinion in these sensitive areas did not divide simple life and Arts and Crafts advocates.

Since most accounts of simple living mention--usually in passing--the influence of the Russian anarchist socialist Peter Kropotkin on simple living, especially in England and, to a degree, in America, it is important to describe his philosophy and try to make sense of his impact. Kropotkin was exiled to London in the 1880s by the French

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<sup>54</sup> Ralph Whitehead, "Work," 61.

<sup>55</sup> Ralph Whitehead, "Work," 69-70.

government; at this point, he was no longer welcome in his homeland. He is known to have associated with English simple life and Arts and Crafts advocates such as Edward Carpenter, William Morris, the socialist book binder T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, and the PreRaphaelite painter, Ford Madox Brown. In London, Kropotkin joined the Freedom Group and became associated with the Socialist League, a breakaway group from the Marxist-oriented Social Democratic Federation that was led by William Morris.<sup>56</sup> Morris's well-known printing activities facilitated Kropotkin's publication of *Freedom* between 1886 and 1888.

In studying Kropotkin, one quickly learns that all socialisms were not created equal. His anarchist socialism was different from Morris's practical socialism, on the one hand, and, on the other, Kropotkin thought of institutional forms of socialism such as Marxism as evil tools of domination on par with industrial capitalism. Anchored in social thought of the Enlightenment, Kropotkin's anarchist socialism was based on the laws of mutual aid, an evolutionary concept opposed to Darwin's theories, which argues that cooperation is far more important than the law of mutual contest in success in the struggle for life.<sup>57</sup> Here, Kropotkin envisioned a post-Revolutionary future in which an ethical cooperative society with no hierarchical authority whatsoever would supplant the present-day, immoral competitive society led by government and political authority and enforced by institutions like marriage, education, and the church of the present. His alternative society included the following:

1. The end of foreign trade as the source of enrichment: all countries produce everything themselves that they need, partly via industrialization. . . .

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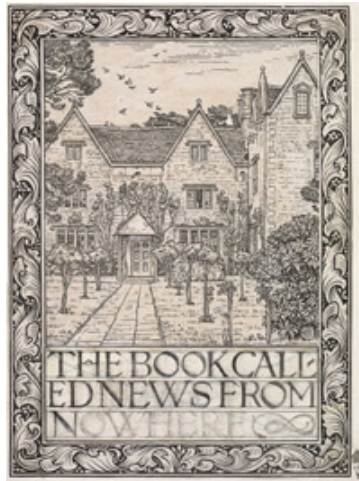
<sup>56</sup> Martin Miller, *Kropotkin*, 167.

<sup>57</sup> Martin Miller, *Kropotkin*, 182.

2. In England it is possible to feed twice as many inhabitants (this has been confirmed by the latest agricultural experiments) by utilizing intensive cultivation, which requires less time.
3. Industry must be decentralized according to personal interests. It must take agriculture into account. A factory is all right only among the fields.
4. It is possible to give to everyone a universal education and [for each] to learn a trade. This would be advantageous for science as well as for industry.<sup>58</sup>

Morris's utopian socialist novel *News From Nowhere*, first published as a serial in *The Commonweal*, the journal of the Socialist League, reads like a literary interpretation of Kropotkin's theories [Illustration: 2.8.] In *News From Nowhere*,

[Morris's] vision of the future rejects state socialism in favor of a system by which people live in harmony with the natural world. Capitalism has been eradicated by a workers' revolution, property is communal, and money unnecessary. The citizens take pleasure in their work, which they regard as a form of creative expression. Crime is virtually nonexistent in their perfect world, and women enjoy complete equality.<sup>59</sup>



2.8. William Morris, author and cover design; Charles M. Gere, drawing of Morris's Home, Kelmscott Manor, Cover: *News From Nowhere*, Kelmscott Press, 1893.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Kropotkin to Grave, 1889 (day and month not indicated, Institut francais d'histoire sociale (Paris), fonds Jean Grave (14 As. 184a), item no. 671, quoted in Martin Miller, *Kropotkin*, 172. Miller describes the social theory of anarchist communism on pages 182-183.

<sup>59</sup> Editor quoted on book jacket, William Morris, *News From Nowhere or An Epoch of Rest Being Some Chapters From "A Utopian Romance,"* (1890), reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004. This author does not agree with the editor's contention that women were equal. Rather, women were treated as sexual objects within the book and labor was largely gendered. Only one woman character stepped outside the gendered sphere of traditional feminine pursuits to be a mason working with stone. Nevertheless, the editor did a great job condensing most of the defining aspects of Morris's utopian society. That is why I quoted it here.

While Morris contended that anarchism was impossible, he described his alternative, practical socialism, in similar terms:

What I mean by Socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers, nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all—the realization at last of the meaning of the word “commonwealth.”<sup>60</sup>

It is interesting to note, despite the obvious similarities between Kropotkin's and Morris's theories, Kropotkin was of the opinion that England had little in the way of revolutionary gumption. Martin Miller, Kropotkin's biographer, writes,

[His] disenchantment with British radicalism emerged less than a decade after his optimistic assessments of “a great movement.” In the spring of 1895, the mechanics of the British political system became clear to him. He lamented . . . over the situation, in which socialist agitation merely produced a reaction that helped the Conservatives regain power . . . this was partly due to the unsuccessful tactics of British socialists; but he also recognized the reformist mood of the British labor movement, which tended to remain loyal to the existing political order. . . . He called British anarchism “anarchie de salon—epicurean, a little Nietzschean, very snobbish, very proper, a little too Christian.”<sup>61</sup>

One wonders if Kropotkin considered Morris and Carpenter and other British radicals in this light. Certainly Jane and Ralph's thoroughly bourgeois, self-help simple lifestyle can be seen as fitting into Kropotkin's critical estimation of “anarchie de salon.”

In the decade of the 1890s, Kropotkin enjoyed fame in London and, to a degree, in America. Oscar Wilde said Kropotkin had the soul of a “beautiful white Christ” and

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<sup>60</sup> William Morris, “How I Became a Socialist,” first published in *Justice* (London, 1894), introductory note in *News From Nowhere*, v-vi .

<sup>61</sup> Peter Kropotkin, Letter to G. Herzog, May 23, 1904, Wintch Collection, IISH, quoted in Martin Miller, *Kropotkin*: 169.

Kropotkin made lecturing trips to the United States around 1897 and in 1901.<sup>62</sup> In an era in which the avant-garde celebrated many forms of cultural radicalism, Kropotkin was influential among those who did and did not share his zeal for revolution.

Another Russian influence on simple living in England during the period of this study was the establishment of anarchist socialist Tolstoyan communities. Russian author Leo Tolstoy “lived an ascetic life; he ate vegetables and porridge, drank water only, chopped his own wood, and quit fashionable society.”<sup>63</sup> Beyond his life as an individual, he advocated Christian communitarianism, a form of anarchist socialism, as a model for society. His ideas on the subject were written in *What Then Must We Do?* from 1882:

He wanted a new Christian organic society, self-governing, composed of cooperative units in a federation. Such units would be small communities, each with a close line to nature motivated by Christianity without its dogma, institutions, and mysticism but instead with joy and bliss in spirit and directed to the unification of human kind.<sup>64</sup>

Exiled Tolstoy supporters sent to England set up a number of colonies there. One called the Purleigh Colony was established in 1897 by Tolstoy biographer J. C. Kenworthy in Malden, England. As suggested by Tolstoy, Purleigh was small, self governing, self sustaining, organized on principles of brotherly cooperation, and its members worked as closely with nature as possible.<sup>65</sup> Purleigh colonists raised crops in greenhouses and outdoors on four acres of land.<sup>66</sup> They were successful in their gardening enterprises but conflicted about many other causes and issues. The colony disbanded by 1899. “In the

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<sup>62</sup> Oscar Wilde, original source not cited, quoted in Martin Miller: 169, 171.

<sup>63</sup> R. C. S. Trahair, “Tolstoy, Leo,” in *Utopia and Utopians: A Historical Dictionary*, 404.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> W. H. G. Armytage, “J. C. Kenworthy and the Tolstoyan Communities in England,” 391.

<sup>66</sup> R. C. S. Trahair, “Purleigh Colony,” in *Utopia and Utopians: A Historical Dictionary*, 326.

end several more enthusiastic founders quit the colony and rode their bicycles from London to the Cotswolds where they founded another community.”<sup>67</sup>

Another Tolstoyan community at Croyden had similarly broken up a year earlier in 1898. They too rode bicycles and went “home to the land” to the Cotswolds, establishing a communist settlement in Whiteway.<sup>68</sup> Bicycles were the preferred mode of transportation for many Tolstoyans, who in their aim for a “better and truer humanity” had many causes, one being a protest against the railways.<sup>69</sup> Around the turn-of-the-century, the Cotswolds became a simple life center within England. Tolstoyans and advocates of the Arts and Crafts movement, including the aforementioned C. R. Ashbee, moved there.

Jane and Ralph never lived an ascetic life like Tolstoy. But, they described their ideal in very similar terms in a letter from 1900, which was written when they were rethinking their approach to simple living in Montecito, California prior to moving to Woodstock, New York. Jane wrote Ralph that their home and life in California were too grand, that they needed to “strive” in the direction of greater simplicity: “keeping early hours, eating simple food and working the ground.”<sup>70</sup> Evidence suggests the hours they kept, the way they ate, and the amount of work they did on the land did not alter too dramatically after they moved from Montecito to Woodstock. But, the aesthetics of the Byrdcliffe community did reflect the ideals they wrote about. The Byrdcliffe colony was austere and naturalistic. It was meant to blend in with the preexisting nature of the place. In this way, it contrasted the grand Mediterranean/Spanish Mission model they centrally

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Mary Greensted, “Nature and the Rural Idyll,” 96.

<sup>69</sup> R. C. S. Trahair, “Purleigh Colony,” 326.

<sup>70</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed “July 14<sup>th</sup> 1900. Saturday Night.” [on Arcady, Sta. Barbara letterhead], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

employed at Arcady, which seems like an imposition on, rather than an organic part, of the landscape.

### Section 2: Aesthetic Considerations.

As demonstrated in the preceding paragraph, the aesthetics of simple living were sometimes more efficient communicators of philosophical ideals than the lived experience of its proponents. The following section traces the evolution of simple life aesthetics over the period covered in this study, starting with Morris's early Aestheticism, called "simplicity and splendor" by Crane, and ending with the austere simplicity and greater naturalism inspired by Thoreau and the naturalists, which became the standard at Byrdcliffe in 1903.

While there is little evidence to support the claim that Jane and Ralph's simple life was directly influenced by the theories of the English critic Matthew Arnold, his thinking more closely relates to theirs than Kropotkin's revolutionary vision.<sup>71</sup> For the most part, they shared Arnold's liberal reformist views. Stein tells us,

Nineteenth-century society had 'fetishized' the mere accumulation of material goods, and Arnold called instead for 'sweetness and light,' an expansion of consciousness that would give people a fuller grasp of the ideal intellectual and aesthetic potential of the human spirit . . . He offered a way of believing in the visual, in the power of feeling and of art to arrive somehow at ideal goals, without really challenging, as had Ruskin, Morris, and especially Marx and Engels, the structure of traditional capitalist work relationships.<sup>72</sup>

In art history, Arnold is perhaps best known for his influence on the Aesthetic movement; in fact, his 1896 *Sweetness and Light* became a pseudonym for Aestheticism.<sup>73</sup> So, if

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<sup>71</sup> Jane mentioned Arnold in her European scrapbook in a list of "Celebrities I have met." Ruskin precedes and Pater follows Arnold on this list. Jane Whitehead, McCall scrapbook, 1883-1890, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>72</sup> Roger Stein, 'Artifact as Ideology,' 25.

<sup>73</sup> See Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement, 1860-1900*.

Jane and Ralph's politics and approach were more liberal, more individualistic and therapeutic, more about art and personal betterment, and less about social goals, why are they associated with the Arts and Crafts movement and not the Aesthetic movement? Or, why do we fail to understand the degree to which these movements were interrelated?

Design historian Paul Greenhalgh's essay "*Le Style Anglais: English Roots of the New Art*" tells us:

Despite many of its leading figures' admiration for the products of the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, and the Arts and Crafts movement, the outlook of the Aesthetic movement was very different. Aestheticism was essentially a manifestation of the idea of *l'art pour l'art* (art for art's sake). First fully articulated by Théophile Gautier in the preface to his novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* in 1835, and developed later by Charles Baudelaire, this philosophy crossed the Channel in the second half of the century. It quickly became central to the vision of those artists and writers who believed art to be an end in itself, with no wider social or moral implications.<sup>74</sup>

Yet, if we look at the statement art for art's sake in a Ruskinian context, which was a widely held position by educated intellectuals of the period, art as a vehicle of Beauty held divine insight and transformative power. The Aesthetic movement's most famous and infamous popularizer Oscar Wilde concurred with this position in his denial that

in its primary aspects has painting any more spiritual message for us than a blue tile from the walls of Damascus or a Hitzen vase. It is a beautifully-coloured surface, nothing more, and affects us by no suggestion stolen from philosophy, no pathos pilfered from literature, no feeling filched from a poet, but by its own incommunicable artistic essence.<sup>75</sup>

The implication of Wilde's statement is that art didn't need to do anything other than be, it could simply be a vehicle of aesthetic beauty and, in this way alone, it could have a transformative effect upon its witness. While Wilde and others had little use for repressive Victorian morality and ethics, they, like Ruskin, thought art had agency in the

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<sup>74</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, "*Le Style Anglais: English Roots of the New Art*" in *Art Nouveau, 1890-1914*, 138.

<sup>75</sup> Oscar Wilde, quoted in Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau*, 111, quoted in Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," 26-27.



material world and the power to affect people. Because he and other Aesthetes made statements such as “this love of art for art’s sake, is the point in which we of the younger school have made a departure from the teaching of Mr. Ruskin—a departure definite and different and decisive”<sup>76</sup> and “No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style,”<sup>77</sup> and because Arts and Crafters were known to accuse Aesthetes, Symbolists and other proponents of the New Art of the *fin-de-siecle* of decadence, we in the present-day often erroneously overlook the obvious convergence of their ideas and aesthetics, despite their differences—differences that became vocalized as the nineteenth century came to a close. Like simple living, or Arts and Crafts, Aestheticism was a highly individualistic movement in which advocates could carry one or many torches, some of which could overlap with each other. Take Walter Crane’s 1911 essay on the Morrisian Method, entitled “The English Revival in the Decorative Arts,” which shows that Aestheticism and Arts and Crafts were not mutually exclusive during the period:

The great advantage and charm of the Morrisian method is that it lends itself to either simplicity or splendour. You might be almost plain enough to please Thoreau, with a rush-bottomed chair, piece of matting, and oaken trestle table, or you might have gold luster . . . gleaming from the sideboard, and jeweled light in your windows, and walls hung with rich arras tapestry.<sup>78</sup>

Here the aesthetic of simplicity, “plain enough to please Thoreau,” definitely resonates with Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism. Thomas Matthews Rooke’s 1898 painting of Pre-Raphaelite and Morris colleague Edward Burne-Jone’s dining room at his home the Grange in Fulham, England, illustrate the simplicity and splendor described by Crane. In

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<sup>76</sup> Oscar Wilde, “L’Envoi,” in *Art et décoration* (London, 1920): 122-23, quoted in Paul Greenhalgh, “*Le Style Anglais*,” 138.

<sup>77</sup> Oscar Wilde, 1890, quoted in Paul Greenhalgh, “*Le Style Anglais*,” 138.

<sup>78</sup> Walter Crane, *William Morris to Whistler: Papers and Addresses on Art and Craft and the Commonweal*.

this painting we see simplicity taking the form of rush-bottomed chairs produced by Morris and Co. as well as splendor in the rich display on the sideboard and the jeweled light in the stained glass windows that Burne-Jones often designed. [Illustration: 2.9.]

Greenhalgh tells us,

The Aesthetic object, be it a painting, a piece of furniture, ceramic, clothing or an entire interior, usually combined a number of sources in a quiet eclecticism. These might include decorative elements of Attic or Etruscan pottery, Hellenistic and Roman painting, Pre-Raphaelitism, Impressionism, Near Eastern design, and most importantly, all things Japanese . . . The sources and symbols used were less important, however, than what might be described as the overall sense of charged simplicity. The central aim of the Aesthetic artist or designer was to achieve maximum effect through an absolute economy of means, to exercise restraint in order to achieve opulence.<sup>79</sup>



2.9. Thomas Matthews Rooke, artist, *Edward Burne-Jones's Dining Room, The Grange, Fulham, England, 1898*, pictured in Charlotte Gere and Michael Whiteway, *Nineteenth Century Design: From Pugin to Mackintosh*, 1993, 290.

Crane's description of the artfully eclectic arrangement of rush-bottomed chairs, and oaken trestle tables amidst gold luster, jeweled light and rich Arras tapestry shows a great concern for aesthetics and doesn't even hint of anything related to political views. It is

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<sup>79</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, "Le Style Anglais," 138.

what we expect to see when we look at the earliest interiors designed by proponents of Arts and Crafts, people like William Morris and Crane, who were devout socialists and partook in scathing denouncements of Aestheticism's decadence and hedonism.

[Illustration: 2.10.] Even Ruskin's devotion to the right to joyful labor had an element of Aestheticism to it. His main priority was truth to nature and the attainment of beauty, which he believed was only possible in a healthy society where joyful labor existed. In this context, Ruskin's socialism could be read as a means to an end rather than an end unto itself.



2.10. Walter Crane, *The Capitalist Vampire*, in *Justice* (journal of the Social Democratic Federation), 1885.

Aestheticism's association with decadence divorced it from the moral component of self- or social-betterment advocated by Arts and Crafts. And, thus, it was widely criticized in the English Arts and Crafts movement. This hurdle seems arbitrary, however, when one recognizes the similarities between points of view as well as the

aesthetics shared by Arts and Crafts practitioners like Jane and Ralph and Aesthetes, who were considered decadent like Oscar Wilde and James Abbott McNeil Whistler.

Whistler's widely publicized 1878 lawsuit against John Ruskin is another major reason why we have come to believe that Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism were divorced from each other. Ruskin accused Whistler of flinging a pot of paint in the public's face in his painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* which was exhibited at London's Grosvenor Gallery that year. [Illustration: 2.11.] The Pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones defended Ruskin with claims that Whistler was without principal, denouncements that were being and would be applied to other Aesthetes, including Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, in the following years. Burne-Jones said, "scarcely anybody regards Whistler as a serious person . . . being notoriously without any principle or sentiment of the dignity of his art,"<sup>80</sup> and in 1890, none other than William Morris claimed,

You will find clever and gifted men at the present day, who are prepared to sustain a theory, that art has no function but the display of clever executive qualities . . . . No wonder that this theory should lead them into the practice of producing pictures which we might pronounce to be clever if we could understand what they meant.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Edward Burne-Jones, quoted in Paul Greenhalgh, "*Le Style Anglais*," 138.

<sup>81</sup> William Morris, *Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry*, Edinburgh Meeting 1890, London, 1890: 199.

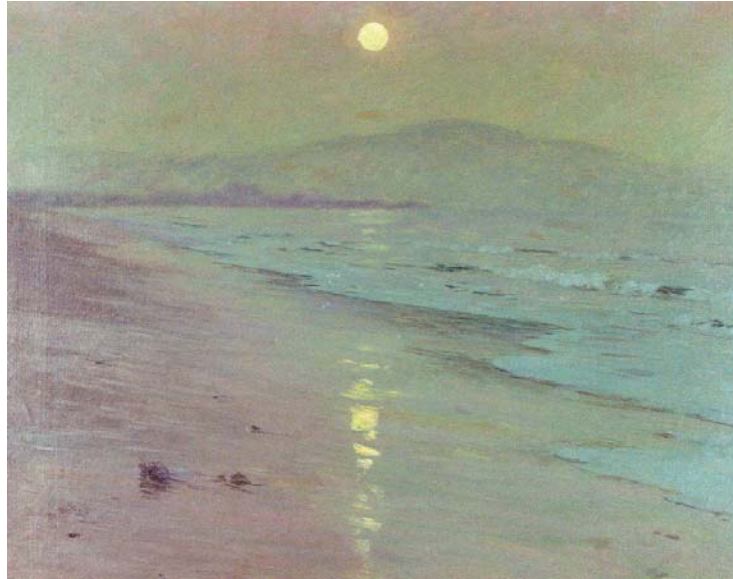


2.11. James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1874, Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit.

In defense of the aesthetic view, Whistler upheld the integrity of the picture as an independent visual statement.<sup>82</sup> Despite the bickering that took place between these artists and thinkers, these Aesthetes and Arts and Crafters, we see pronounced similarities when we place Whistler's *Nocturne* next to Lovell Birge Harrison's 1896 *Moonrise on the Sea*. [Illustration: 2.12.] Lovell Birge Harrison was a tonalist landscape painter associated with the Arts and Crafts movement through his involvement with the Whiteheads first in California and then in New York. Like Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts interiors from the pre-turn-of-the-century, these paintings share very similar aesthetic qualities; they are all exercises in restraint to achieve opulence and charged simplicity.

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<sup>82</sup> Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," 25.



2.12. Lovell Birge Harrison, *Moonrise on the Sea*, 1896, oil on canvas, 19 x 24 inches, Collection of Jill & Mark Willcox Jr., pictured in N. Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*, 182.

In much the same way as Crane's earlier description of the Morrisian method and the corresponding illustration of Edward Burne-Jones's dining room at the Grange, Jane's descriptions of the interior design and accompanying period photographs of her California home Arcady belie the overlap between Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism before the turn-of-the-century. She writes her mother about the dining room [Illustration: 2.13.],

[Abalone shells] will be let into the chimney piece, all round probably there will be a border of "rough cast" outside the tiles, the chimney itself being of stone in Gothic shape, coming out into the room like the chimneys at Blois . . . . The chimney piece in the dining room took us ages to plan, but I think it will come out all right. It is very wide and has two seats inside it opposite each other of dark stained wood. The chimney breast projects into the room and has no mantel shelf on it, only built into it, is one large round Luca della Robbia Madonna of blue and white . . . . Canta Galli is sending it to us, with blue tiles to match around the hearth where the fire goes. The colouring of the room is the Morris blue and pink "honeysuckle" cretonne, like the big screen you know.

We are designing the end of this dining room with a view to your blue china . . . . There are cupboards in the wall with glass doors. I want everything in the way of decoration to have a meaning and what has not a meaning to be

beautiful in the way of colour or form, and the forms of decoration I shall take as much as possible from the common things of the country, as in the case of the abloni [*sic*] shells, Eucalyptus leaves, etc. I insist on Ilseley [*sic*] not giving us one commonplace stock machinery door and he complies very kindly.<sup>83</sup>

2.13. Ralph Whitehead, attributed photographer, *Living/Dining Room at Arcady, Montecito, CA*, ca. 1895, silver print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, pictured in N. Green, *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*, 66.

Jane's comments about wanting "everything in the way of decoration to have a meaning and what has not a meaning to be beautiful in the way of colour or form" restate William Morris's adage "have nothing in your home that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful."<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, the aesthetics Jane and Ralph applied to their Montecito home Arcady—a name referring to Arcadia, a place in ancient Greece whose people were noted for simplicity and contentment—just as clearly draw upon Wilde's call to Americans for "the union of Hellenism—with intense individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit"—with an appreciation of "the natural forms abundantly present in the landscape and to reform the American urban and domestic environment."<sup>85</sup>

Arcady outbuildings like Jane's studio "the Moon," the Giglio (a small retreat on the property), and the Arcady School, a Sloyd School for Manual Art, contrasted the Mediterranean/Spanish Mission aesthetics of the main Arcady villa and its Eden-esque landscaping made possible only through intensive irrigation. These buildings were the forerunners of the woodsy naturalism and simplicity of the architecture and landscape of

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<sup>83</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd McCall, letter, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.—March [illegible number], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>84</sup> William Morris, "The Beauty of Life."

<sup>85</sup> Oscar Wilde, quoted in Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 111, quoted in Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," 26.

Byrdcliffe. They reflected a trend toward naturalism and austerity in the aesthetics of simple living. By the turn-of-the-century, Arts and Crafts interiors and their fittings were becoming more austere. In painting, the style was tonalist and Impressionistic, having very little to do with the earlier Romanticism of the Pre-Raphaelites and everything to do with the precedent set by painters like Whistler, coupled with influences from French Impressionism.

For the Whiteheads, the Spartan naturalism of the aesthetics they spearheaded in Arcady outbuildings became the standard at Byrdcliffe. Here, it seems the model for simple living, philosophically and aesthetically speaking, was drawn from naturalists and their hand-hewn cabins in the woods. Their neighbor and friend, John Burroughs at Slabsides; John Muir in California; and the simple life mentor of these naturalists, Henry David Thoreau, and his experiment at Walden pond seem to have provided models for emulation. At Byrdcliffe, the Whiteheads named their home White Pines, a possible reference to Thoreau's *Walden* (1854). [Illustration: 2.14. and 2.15.] Thoreau wrote,

Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall, arrowy, white pines, still in their youth, for timber. . . . They were pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began to stretch itself. . . It appeared to me that . . . if they [Man] should feel the influence of the spring of springs arousing them, they would of necessity rise to a higher more ethereal life. . . .

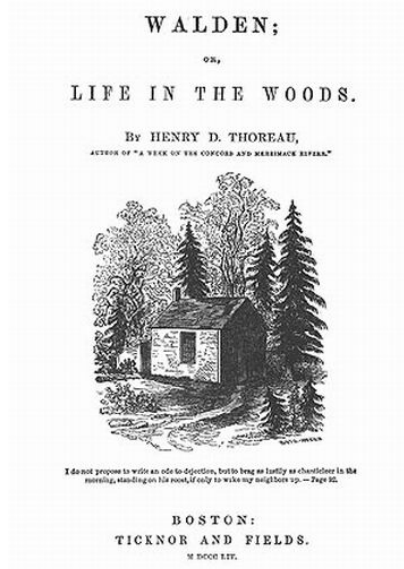
I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Henry David Thoreau, "Walden" (1854) in *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906: 2:44-46, 100-102, 355-56, quoted in David Shi, ed., *In Search of the Simple Life*, 168.



2.14. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *White Pines*, south façade, the home of Jane and Ralph Whitehead at Byrdcliffe, 1909, titled “A nature lover’s home” in Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” *American Homes and Gardens* (October 1909) and *House and Garden* (January 1910), print in Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.



2.15: Title page, Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, first edition, 1854, with drawing of Thoreau’s cabin by his sister, Sophia, pictured in David Shi, ed., *In Search of the Simple Life*, Salt Lake City: Peregrine Books, 1986: 169.

A comparison between the Giglio on the Whiteheads’ Arcady estate and Ernest Gimson’s 1898 Stoneywell cottage, a summer home in Leicester, England, which similarly appears to grow from rock outcroppings, illustrates the transatlantic trend toward greater naturalism and austerity in the aesthetics of simple living. [Illustration 2.16. and 2.17.] True, the building materials are very different: one is rock, the other is wood. Yet, both hold true to the doctrine of fidelity of place promoted by Arts and Crafts architects:

A house that is built of stone where stones are in the fields, of concrete where the soil is sandy, of brick where brick can be had reasonably, or of wood if the house

in the mountainous, wooded region, will from the beginning belong to the landscape.<sup>87</sup>

2.16. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers; Christopher Tornoe, builder, *The Giglio* (with Ralph Whitehead seated on front steps), Arcady, Montecito, CA, ca. 1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.



2.17. Ernest Gimson, *Stoneywell Cottage* (near Leicester), England, 1898, image source: <http://www.arch.mcgill.ca/prof/schoenauer/arch528/lect10/a06.jpg>, accessed 4/17/06.

Both use local materials, rural traditions in architecture, and the physical attachment of the building to nature in very similar ways. Stoneywell cottage's rock structure and thatch roof refer to local English traditions in vernacular architecture. The Giglio's simple plan of redwood logs with their bark left on is at once indigenous in material and possibly reflective of California miners' shanties, like those in Yosemite, which were "half-log half-board, logs chinked with clay and roofed by a tent, or stone, roofed with thatch or shingle."<sup>88</sup> Architectural historian Cheryl Robertson suggests a relation between the Giglio and European peasant architecture "of the weather-boarded structures

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<sup>87</sup> Gustav Stickley, Introduction, *More Craftsmen Homes*, 1911, quoted in Barry Sanders, ed., *The Best of Craftsman Homes*, Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1978: 7, quoted in Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 193.

<sup>88</sup> Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sacks Sussman, *Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition*, 11.

by Styrian peasants in the vicinity of Graz.”<sup>89</sup> Prior to his marriage to Jane, Ralph spent time in Styria, where he reportedly lived in a castle and made plans to start something along the lines of Ruskin’s Guild of St. George.

Architectural historian Peter Davey describes Stoneywell cottage as “Arts and Crafts architecture at its most earthy”—how it would look if “nature made buildings.”

It cranks up and round the curve of one of the heathery Charnwood hummocks and grows out of the rock more like a series of imposed strata than a building. Great flat stones project from the masonry both outside and in (where they are used as shelves). It was roofed in dark thatch which rose to a ridge capped with straw, giving the back of the building the impression of a crested and amiable dragon worming its way round the hill. Inside, the bare rock was exposed in the sitting room, and partitions were made of halved tree trunks with plaster and lath between.<sup>90</sup>

The similarities of their architectural interpretations and date ranges, the Giglio may predate Stoneywell cottage by four years, coupled with Ralph’s British reverie for the American West--“that new land of thine where some others at least are living natural healthy lives”--makes one consider the possibility of shared aesthetic inspiration or at least the notion of *Zeitgeist*, meaning the spirit of the time.<sup>91</sup> Their mutual devotion to the cult of nature belies a mature simple life aesthetic; in turn, this aesthetic reflects the simple life’s spiritual even religious dependence on nature first inspired by American Transcendentalists like Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman, and English Romantic poets like Wordsworth, and Browning.

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<sup>89</sup> Ludwig Boltzman, “Summer in Berkeley—1904,” trans. Irene Jerison, *Westways* 68/9 (September 1976): 78, quoted in Cheryl Robertson, “Nature and Artifice in Architecture at Byrdcliffe,” 143-144.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 163.

<sup>91</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Byrd McCall, letter, inscribed “April 7, San Gimignano,” transcription by Tom Wolf, Letters from Ralph to Jane and Others, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

In an 1891 essay entitled “Art and Life,” in the Whiteheads’ *Grass of the Desert* publication, Ralph turns to Whitman’s prose and ancient Greek precedent in a description of the art of the New Life—the perfection of man so that he becomes divine on earth:

As Walt Whitman says, there are objects, lower in the scale of organic Nature, which bring to man tokens of himself.

It may be, after all, that intellect is not the criterion of truth; man’s unconscious being, which he knows only dimly as he knows Nature, may be a better guide at times. . . . I care not if this is called mysticism; there are truly more things known to us in our experience than mere intellect can account for, and all poetry, all religion is mystical in the sense of dealing with objects beyond the reach of logical analysis. . . . Hence in old days the close connection between Art and Mythology, and hence in our own time the weakness of Art, from the want of a common Mythology, acceptable to us all; each artist has now, so to say, to create his own mythology, “Whoever asks how the Greeks with the cultivated intellects could believe in the gods, only shows that he has not attained that point of culture, from which the ideal has reality a thousand times more cogent than the realities of common parlance. As the common intellect believes in the reality of material objects, so those men believed in God.”

The art of the future must be simple and naïve, as children are, and this can only be attained by those who patiently seek for what is good, making not money but health, not possessions but energy, not luxury but peace, the end and aim of life. . . .

“A strong-fibred Joyousness and Faith, and the sense of Health al fresco, may well enter into the preparation of future noble authorship. . . . The question to ask respecting a book is, ‘Has it helped any human soul?’ . . . A fitly born and bred race, growing up in right conditions of outdoor as much as indoor harmony, activity, and development, would probably from and in those conditions, find it enough merely to live,—and would in their relations to the sky, air, water, trees, etc., and to the countless common shows, and in the fact of Life itself, discover and achieve happiness,—with Being suffused night and day by wholesome ecstasy, surpassing all the pleasures that wealth, amusement, and even gratified intellect, condition, or the sense of Art can give.”<sup>92</sup>

Thus, Jane and Ralph’s ultimate goal in simple living was happiness and the attainment of a divine life on earth. Because beauty in nature and art were vehicles

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<sup>92</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “Art and Life,” in *Grass of the Desert*: 172, 174-176. In this passage, the first quotation appears on page 174 and cites Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*; the second quoted passage is, in part, from Walt Whitman’s *Democratic Vistas*, reprint from Walt Whitman, *Prose Works*, Philadelphia: David McKay, 1892: paragraphs 112-114, <http://www.bartleby.com/br.229.html>, accessed 5/23/05. However, Whitehead does not cite this passage’s author and artificially inserts Whitman’s “The question to ask respecting a book is ‘Has it helped any human soul?’” into the middle of this passage.

toward the attainment of divinity in its earthly guise, aesthetics and the material world were inseparable components of Jane and Ralph's simple life. Thus, a study of the evolution of these aesthetics is integral to understanding the larger simple life philosophy. With that said, we could safely say that everyone involved chose to avoid being materialistic in an attempt to free themselves, if not society itself, from perceived harms associated with urban, industrialized society. In the end, however, and as the aforementioned examples illustrate, it seems that simple living in a transatlantic or even in an American context, for that matter, cannot be explained as one thing. And while many period articles and books were written on simple living or the New Life as it was sometimes called in England, there seems to be no cohesive master plan. It was a highly individualistic movement that evolved over time.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation analyze the philosophical and aesthetic evolution of Jane and Ralph's exercises in simple living, looking at three phases of their lives that cover the period between 1870 and 1930: Jane's early life in Philadelphia, England and on the Continent is the focus of Chapter Two; Jane and Ralph's Arcady estate in Montecito, California in Chapter Three; and their Byrdcliffe art colony in Woodstock, New York in the final Chapter Four. In doing so, this dissertation traces their commitment to an ideal as it visually evolved over a sixty year period.

### **Chapter 3: Precursors to simple living: Jane and Ralph Whitehead's Years Abroad.**

Chapter Three describes Jane's earliest years growing up in Philadelphia, living abroad in England, and studying art in France and on the Continent. This chapter examines her participation in high society in the United States and abroad, her choice to live abroad and study art. These things are addressed in order to better understand her motives for adopting the simple life and becoming an artist. Here, simple living makes its first appearance as "country life" enacted by Jane and her circle between 1886 and 1890 in an English country house named Albury House in Guildford, Surrey. At Albury House, Jane was skirting between the high society lifestyle into which she was born and the simple lifestyle she was in the process of adopting. After Albury House, Jane departed for Italy, where she studied art and met her future husband in Florence. Their tumultuous courtship, forced separation and their vow to live a simple life and formulate an "art convent" are recorded in this chapter.

The aesthetics of simple living introduced in this chapter date from the late 1880s and early 1890s. In England and Europe, Jane's earliest expression of simple living was decidedly artistic, being based on the Aestheticized artist's studio model and the precedent set by William Morris at his home Kelmscott Manor. The "simplicity and splendor" of these aesthetics, to borrow Walter Crane's astute characterization of them, are still part-and-parcel of the Aesthetic Movement.<sup>93</sup> Arts and Crafts, in its infancy as a movement at the time, did not splinter with its forefather Aestheticism until the eve of the turn-of-the-century. The austere and naturalistic aesthetics we associate with the Arts

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<sup>93</sup> Walter Crane, *William Morris to Whistler*.

and Crafts movement and mature simplicity at Byrdcliffe, for example, were not yet part of the aesthetic vocabulary. They would be introduced on a small scale in the next phase of evolution, when the Whiteheads moved to California.

Here too, the social reform aspect of the Whiteheads' simple life is seen in their written words in *Grass of the Desert* (1892) but not expressed in the aesthetics of the built environment. While the austere naturalism of mature simplicity at Byrdcliffe visually communicated a commitment to a more egalitarian society through living simply so others may simply live, simple living in its earliest phase of expression at Albury House was not much more than an artistic approach to high society living. Because it seems the aesthetics had not yet caught up with the ideas, which were just beginning to clarify themselves, this is an interesting moment in the evolution of simple living.

Ralph Whitehead's early life is examined in a number of studies. Alf Evers's *From Wilderness to Woodstock*; Robert Edwards's "The Utopias of Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead;" and, most recently, Nancy Green in *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony* are good places to start. In contrast, Jane's early life has received little attention. Yet, it is an extremely interesting story and important to this study on the evolution of the simple life. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect is the way it seems to contradict the lifestyle and values she later held dear. This chapter examines the earliest years of Jane's life in order to better understand her motives for becoming an artist and adopting the simple life.

Because there is scant discovered evidence about the earliest years of Jane's life before 1886, it is difficult to reconstruct this part of her history. Thus, this dissertation chapter heavily relies on secondary source evidence about Jane's peers coupled with the

little known documentation about Jane and her family in order to make educated guesses about her motivations and actions.

### **Section 1: Early Life in Philadelphia**

Jane was born into Philadelphia's cultural elite. Her father, Peter McCall, was a member of the city council for several years and mayor of Philadelphia in 1844-45. A professor of law and a trustee at University of Pennsylvania, McCall also served as vice-provost of the Law Academy of Philadelphia for thirty years. He authored *Rise and Progress of Civil Society* in 1838 and was an active, civic-minded and highly respected leader within the community.<sup>94</sup> Her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, was of distinguished lineage, being a descendant of Jane Byrd (born 1729), daughter of William Byrd, a celebrated colonial writer, planter, and government official. Jane Whitehead also inherited the Jane Byrd namesake.

Known as Byrd to family and friends, Jane Whitehead used her middle name as a personal symbol in numerous photographed portraits, where she is pictured with caged birds, as well as in the corporate identity she developed with her husband— Jane designed their collaborative mark, a wing-and-arrow motif. [Illustration: 3.1. and 3.2.] Even the name Byrdcliffe incorporates the name with the second half of her husband's middle name, Radcliffe.

3.1. W. J. Jordan (Washington, D.C.), *Jane Byrd McCall with Bird*, 1880s, silver gelatin photograph on studio card, 6 ½ x 4 ¼ inches, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

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<sup>94</sup> See Ancestry.com, "Peter McCall," *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans: Volume VII*, database: Biographies of Notable Americans, 1904, accessed at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, accessed 7/11/2005.



3.2. Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, *Loose Page from Sketchbook showing Stamped Wing-and-Arrow Motif*, 1891-1903, ink and graphite on card with ink stamp, 3 1/16 x 4 1/4 inches, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

In searches of Federal Census records, a person appearing to be Jane is mentioned three times in the 1860, 1870, and 1910 records. A one-year-old infant named Jenny is mentioned in the 1860 census within the household of Peter McCall, a 50 year old attorney-at-law, whose real estate holdings are valued at \$100,000 and personal estate is recorded to be \$20,000. Other inhabitants include Jane, a thirty eight-year-old woman, apparently Jenny's mother; Mercer, a nine-year-old boy, probably a brother; Eda an eight-year-old sister; Gertrude, a six-year-old sister; and Robert, a four-year-old brother.<sup>95</sup> [Illustration: 3.3.]



3.3. Unknown photographer, *Robert McCall*, Son of Peter and Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, n.d., hand colored photograph, collection of Mark Willcox, Jr.

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<sup>95</sup> The 1860 Federal Census also lists eight domestic servants from Ireland in the Peter McCall residence, including seven women between the ages of sixteen and thirty nine, and one male, age twenty five, who is listed as a waiter.

While we certainly have the right family, there are some confusing discrepancies between the 1860 and 1870 census records. Come 1870, Peter McCall is still listed as a fifty year old lawyer, and his wife, “Jane B.,” whose occupation is now characterized as “keeping house,” has only aged two years. This census tells us she was born in Maryland, whereas she was listed as being born in Pennsylvania in the former census. The children all aged give-or-take ten years; they now include Mercer (twenty one), Edith (probably Eda, now seventeen), Gertrude (fifteen) and Jane (probably Jenny, now twelve). The inconsistencies between the 1860 and ’70 census lead one to wonder why the ages seem skewed and what happened to Robert? Was he a victim of one of the terrible cholera epidemics that regularly attacked nineteenth-century Philadelphia? Do the aging parents, Peter and Jane B. McCall, want to appear youthful forever? Certainly we can assume that people, at least those of Jane’s family’s social status, felt relaxed about the accuracy of information they provided census takers.<sup>96</sup> At times, the immediate family did not even provide their own information to census workers.<sup>97</sup>

The 1870 census’s listing of Jane and Gertrude’s occupation, “at school,” suggests that the two sisters were not living at home. It is possible the girls were being educated at boarding school as was the norm for Philadelphia high society.<sup>98</sup> Or, it is possible they were “at school” abroad, an assumption related to a 1902 passage in a letter

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<sup>96</sup> In the 1870 Federal Census, four female domestic servants from Ireland ranging in age from forty to eighteen are engaged in the Peter McCall residence. None of the servants from 1860 appear to remain employed.

<sup>97</sup> Historian Mary Corbin Sies informed the author that servants sometimes provided the information to census workers.

<sup>98</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 24.

from Ralph to Jane, “For you dear were brought up in Europe too” and further evidence about the McCall family’s European travels.<sup>99</sup>

Another document supporting the idea that early in life Jane was already well acquainted with European living is a small period photograph supposedly from the early 1870s of Jane as a youngster with two other girls, all of whom are holding what appear to be croquet mallets and fashionably dressed. [Illustration: 3.4.] Based on Jane’s childish likeness in the photograph—her hair is loose, held back by a ribbon, rather than pulled back and up like a woman would wear it, and her dress is knee length rather than full length—it probably dates from the same period as the 1870 census records, making Jane twelve at the time.<sup>100</sup> The photo is marked “Photographie/F. DE JONGH/Entre deux villes/VEVEY” and inscribed on the back “Jeanie McCall/& the Alard children/Vevey Swiss.” Perhaps Jane was visiting or living abroad, maybe attending a boarding school in Switzerland or in a neighboring European country and visiting Vevey—a tourist town on Lake Geneva that was particularly popular among the fashionable set in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. American novelist Henry James confirms Vevey’s popularity in *Daisy Miller* (1878), which is set there:

It told the story of a headstrong young woman on the Grand Tour who broke the rules of propriety by visiting the Château de Chillon unchaperoned, and so got her comeuppance – in Vevey, specifically at the *Hôtel des Trois Couronnes*, which is much the same now as it seems it must have been in James’s day.<sup>101</sup>

James’s satirical stories about Jane’s social milieu pay special attention to the behavior of American high society abroad. His novels and those of his contemporary Edith Wharton

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<sup>99</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed “May 13, 1902. Blowing rock, N.C.” Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>100</sup> If the census records are correct and Jane was born in 1858, the historical record which says she was born in 1861 is off by two years.

<sup>101</sup> Switzerland is yours, website, [http://switzerland.isyours.com/e/guide/lake\\_geneva/vevey.html](http://switzerland.isyours.com/e/guide/lake_geneva/vevey.html), accessed 7/13/05.

are vivid with telling points of comparison to the times and places encountered during Jane's early life.

3.4. "Photographie F. De Jongh, Entre deux villes, Vevey," "*Jeanie McCall and the Alard children, Vevey, Swiss,*" scan of photocopy of photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

A McCall family photo album from about 1879 includes pictures of other trendy late nineteenth-century Swiss tourist destinations. They support the contention that the McCalls, including Jane, spent a considerable amount of time in Switzerland during this decade. Besides Vevey, the McCalls visited Geneva, the Grimsel Pass, Interlaken, Mont Blanc, Carven (France) and Chillon, which is also known for its literary associations, in this case, Lord George Gordon Byron's poem "Prisoner of Chillon." A picture in the McCall photo album shows tourists hiking through glaciers in the Swiss Alps. The women's gowns have tight fitting bodices, sleeves and collars with full skirts; they wear tiny hats perched on the top-front of their heads and shoes with rather high heels. The loose fitting artistic dresses Jane would later wear in her simple life environments are nowhere in sight. As for the men, they don formal suits and hats.

By at least 1876—the year the great Centennial exhibition took place in her hometown in the United States—we know Jane was moving in the social circles of Oxford University's intellectual elite. She was eighteen at the time. A calling card in Jane's scrapbook is from Mrs. Max Müller, 7 Norham Gardens, dated June 29 with the year 1876 inscribed in pencil afterward. Max Müller was a famous Orientalist and philologist, who published extensively on Eastern religions and philosophy. Jane remained lifelong friends with the Müllers. How she became friendly with them is still

unknown. Since we do know Jane attended the opening ceremonies of the Philadelphia Centennial that took place on July 3, and 4, 1876, dates which precede Mrs. Müller's calling card by just a few days, we can assume that the Müllers were in the United States at the time rather than Jane being at Oxford.<sup>102</sup>

Jane's participation and presence at the Centennial's inaugural events is documented in a humorous publication titled *The Heroines of '76: Their Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs . . . Written by A Soldier Man, A Sailor Man, and A Railroad Man and Edited by the Editor*, dedicated "To the Ladies. Whose kindly interest ensured the success of various expeditions herein chronicled, and who thereby conferred so much pleasure upon their attendant cavaliers. This unworthy tribute is, with profound respect, Dedicated."<sup>103</sup> Only twenty-five copies of this privately published remembrance were printed. It pictures Jane and her sisters Gertrude and Edith and recounts various outings and events, such as the failed organization of the Tortoise Walking Club, a barge ride on the Schuylkill River, a military parade, and the fizzled July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks, spoiled by rain.

[Illustration: 3.5.]

3.5. Unknown photographer, Jane Byrd McCall pictured in *The Heroines of '76: Their Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs . . . written by A Soldier Man, A Sailor Man, and A Railroad Man and Edited by the Editor*, Philadelphia, 1876, Winterthur Library, Gift of Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr.

According to a number of city directories, the McCall family resided in Philadelphia's still-elite Rittenhouse Square at 2012 De Lancey Place through the

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<sup>102</sup> *The Heroines of '76: Their Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs . . . Written by A Soldier Man, A Sailor Man, and A Railroad Man and Edited by the Editor*, Philadelphia, 1876. The book was given to Winterthur's library by Jane's descendant Mark Willcox, Jr. Jane, and her sisters Gertrude and Edith are pictured on pages 21-22, 66, 70, and 76.

<sup>103</sup> *The Heroines of '76*, 5.

1870s.<sup>104</sup> [Illustration: 3.6.] Sociologist and Philadelphia historian E. Digby Baltzell analyzed Philadelphia's neighborhoods and their class structure in his 1958 classic *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class*. Here, Baltzell's overall argument is that aristocracies such as Philadelphia's upper class naturally form over time in all stable societies where successful people band together.<sup>105</sup> They marry, live, socialize, go to school and church together. Through the networks they form, members and their children are granted access to leadership positions in all realms of the social matrix including the civic arena, and the worlds of politics, business, and the arts.



3.6. *Former Home of Peter McCall and Jane Whitehead, 2012 Delancey Street Place, Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, photograph by Robert Edwards.*

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<sup>104</sup> Ancestry.com, Gopsill's Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, *General and Business Directory for 1875*, Philadelphia: James Gopsill, 1875, accessed at the National Archives and Records Administration, 7/11/2005.

<sup>105</sup> Baltzell continues with a similar argument in his later publication, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia*.

Rittenhouse Square is located between Walnut Street, Broad Street, the Schuylkill River, and De Lancey Place—De Lancey Place is the street where Jane lived. George Wharton Pepper, author of *Philadelphia Lawyer*, describes its aura in the following way:

To mention Walnut Street to an old Philadelphian is to awaken memories of a departed glory. On bright Sundays, after church, there was always an informal parade of fashion on the south side of this thoroughfare. There the city's Four Hundred could be seen to great advantage. They were the blended congregation of half a dozen mid-city churches. They made upon the onlooker an impression of urbanity, of social experience and of entire self-satisfaction.<sup>106</sup>

Baltzell talks about the exclusivity of this elite neighborhood where “wives and children lived in a money-insulated world of the great houses, private school, and fashionable churches surrounding the Square.”<sup>107</sup> Marked privatization of the community occurred, Baltzell contends, due to increasing ethnic diversity as greater numbers of immigrants moved to the city. This close-knit community socialized and created social networks at the fashionable churches and boarding schools they and their children attended. Jane's family was Episcopalian and attended St. Peter's, and, perhaps, Holy Trinity—another fashionable Episcopal church in Jane's neighborhood mentioned by Baltzell.<sup>108</sup> Architectural historian Theo. B. White said of Holy Trinity, “The whole [Rittenhouse] square was dominated by Holy Trinity and its seemly tower, the church of Quakers turned Episcopalian. It was from the pulpit there that the *obiter dictum* was pronounced: ‘I have always felt that Our Lord was a gentleman’—comfortable words for the dwellers nearby.”<sup>109</sup> Apparently, according to Baltzell, religion could even be

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<sup>106</sup> George Wharton Pepper, *Philadelphia Lawyer*, Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1944: 17, quoted in E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 185.

<sup>107</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 188.

<sup>108</sup> Mark Willcox, Jr., telephone conversation with author, October 2, 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Theo. B. White, ed., *Philadelphia Architecture in the Nineteenth Century*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1953: 9, quoted in E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 182.

fashionable. Of all the Protestant denominations, it was most fashionable to be Episcopalian,

Following its reverence for British traditions of all sorts, members of the American upper class of second- and third-generation wealth quite naturally prefer the Episcopal Church to the more aggressively Protestant denominations. In the “good taste of its architecture, the dignity and breeding of its clergy, and the richness of its ritual,” the Episcopal Church reflects the values of the cultivated classes in this country.<sup>110</sup>

As was typical of the wealthiest and oldest families, Jane’s family had country places they visited in the Philadelphia suburbs and in other areas along the Eastern Seaboard.<sup>111</sup> One family home, Ivy Mills in Wawa, was settled in the early part of the nineteenth century and is still occupied by descendants by Jane’s forefather Thomas Willcox, who established there the second paper mill in Pennsylvania. Into the late nineteenth century, Ivy Mills was one of the leading paper manufacturers in America, being “best known as the primary manufacturers of paper currency for the national government (from its founding until 1878).”<sup>112</sup>

Sylvia L. Yount’s doctoral dissertation “*Give the People What They Want*”: *The American Aesthetic Movement, Art Worlds, and Consumer Culture, 1876-1890*, describes the social and cultural reform movement headed by Philadelphia’s gentry classes after the Civil War. According to Yount, this movement was the established upper class’s effort to maintain cultural power when political power fell out of their control and went into the

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<sup>110</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 226.

<sup>111</sup> Photograph albums picturing Jane and her family at Philadelphia area country homes are located in the Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Jane also spent time as a child at family country houses such as Morven in Leesburg, Virginia; and a seaside home belonging to her Mother’s family in Kittery, Maine. During her Byrdcliffe years, she visited on several occasions a family property in Aiken, South Carolina.

<sup>112</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 218.



hands of newly wealthy entrepreneurs and industrialists in the decades of and following the Civil War.<sup>113</sup>

This crusade for municipal reform, implemented through an institutionalization of culture, found its spearhead in the private men's clubs of University of Pennsylvania intellectuals and businessmen (women's clubs were a post-Centennial phenomena . . . ) and, in this sense, was not a broad-based popular reform movement. However, these men fervently believed that in order to fight the political machine and to draw the working classes away from its control, the electorate had to be educated and given access to information.<sup>114</sup>

Yount's passages about the gentry class and municipal reform through the institutionalization of culture could easily correspond with Jane's family history. Remember, her father was mayor in 1844-45 and her mother was a descendant of colonial forefathers, members of the gentry class who were politically empowered prior to the Civil War. Furthermore, her father was a member of the city council as well as vice-provost of the Law Academy of Philadelphia for thirty years, and professor of pleading and practice in the law department of the University of Pennsylvania and a trustee of the university from 1861-80<sup>115</sup>--thus, in the period following the Civil War, he remained empowered through cultural institutions. He also authored a number of speeches that correspond with Yount's assertion that the gentry class sought to educate the electorate in order to keep the working classes away from the political machine of the industrial and entrepreneurial class. *Progress and Influence of the Society of Friends in Philadelphia* (1832), *Rise and Progress of Civil Society* (1836), and *History of Pennsylvania Law and Equity* (1838) all predate the Civil War period, but indicate McCall's preexisting commitment to equity within a civil society. Jane's father's work in these areas was no doubt a powerful influence on her; perhaps it was the the basis for her

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<sup>113</sup> Sylvia Yount, "Give the People What They Want," 23-25.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>115</sup> See Ancestry.com, "Peter McCall," database: Biographies of Notable Americans, 1904.

belief in the need for greater equality in society, which inspired her commitment to simple living.

According to Yount, “during the 1870s, the municipal reform crusade in Philadelphia was linked with a concomitant movement to increase art awareness and to encourage the formal study of industrial design.”<sup>116</sup> Influential Philadelphia reformers like Unitarian Reverend William Henry Furness, a close friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Furness’s architect son, Frank, who designed Philadelphia landmarks like the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, were involved in a circle devoted to the causes of industrial art education and civic reform. [Illustration: 3.7.] They sought to transform Philadelphia’s Normal School of Design and model the Pennsylvania Museum School of Industrial Art’s training programs after design programs at London’s South Kensington Museum, where they emphasized the aesthetic and commercial value of industrial art education. Yount asserts that the British model benefited Philadelphia’s mercantile upper-class in two ways, by helping them maintain their city’s industrial supremacy in the nation, and by placing them in the position of cultural caretaker in opposition to the newly enriched and empowered post-Civil War industrialist/entrepreneurial class and the political machine.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Sylvia Yount, “*Give the People What They Want*,” 31.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



3.7. Frank Furness, architect, *Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts* (Broad and Cherry Streets., S.W. corner), photograph by Robert Newell, Library Company of Philadelphia, ca. 1875, P.9062.21b (Brenner), 7 ½ x 9 ½ inches, [http:// www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/nwl/Newell.html](http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/nwl/Newell.html), accessed 3/23/06.

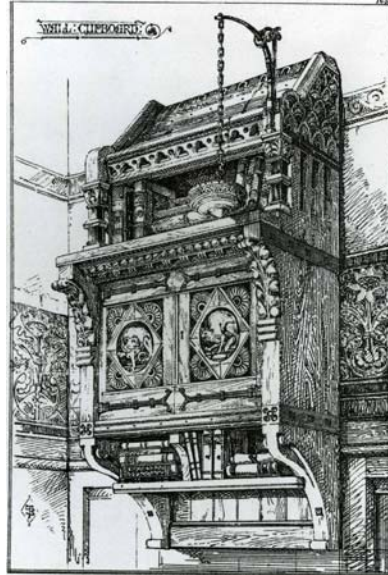
In this period, the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition was the pinnacle of cultural and design reform associated with the allied agendas of elevating the quality of industrially manufactured goods and increasing the consumption of these well-designed goods. In addition to culture, art and design, the Centennial showcased technological, civic and scientific achievements from around the world. At this venue, American people could compare and contrast themselves with the best the world had to offer.

The progressive self-image the Philadelphia Centennial projected was mirrored in Frank Furness's uniquely personal style architecture that was transforming the Philadelphia urban landscape. Progressive and conservative at the same time, it stood for the new age of industry, science and technology—the continuation of Philadelphia's industrial supremacy in the nation. Modern yet traditional to Philadelphia, industry, science, and technology were historically associated with the city: from its founders,

inventors and statesmen like Benjamin Franklin; to painter and natural historian Charles Wilson Peale; on down the line to Jane's era, to the naturalist/realist artist Thomas Eakins, whose insistence on the importance of studying from nude models led to his dismissal from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1886. Furness's architectural aesthetics drew from many sources, including Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, and English medievalism. In the other design arts, similar aesthetics were referred to as Modern Gothic.<sup>118</sup> At the time, these aesthetics symbolized honesty, truth, straightforwardness, and simplicity, associations inherited from the Gothic Revival style. Visually these aesthetics have little to do with the Gothic past, as can be seen in B.J. Talbert's wall cupboard from his 1873 publication *Gothic Forms Applied to Furniture, Metalwork and Decoration for Domestic Purposes*, which relates quite closely to the aesthetics of Furness' Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. [Illustration 3.8.] The Modern Gothic style tended to be architectonic. Aesthetics included ornament that was two-dimensional (non-illusionistic), conventionalized rather than naturalistically rendered, integral with an object's construction, and reflective of an object's intended purpose. In contrast to the earliest Gothic Revival fantasies from the late eighteenth century and later efforts toward archaeological correctness that date from the mid-nineteenth century, Modern Gothic aesthetics, popular in the 1870s and '80s, were meant to embody the spirit rather than the aesthetics of the Gothic. As will be explored in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, the aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts movement, to which Jane later ascribed, were derived from the same Gothic spirit of design reform that inspired the Modern Gothic.

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<sup>118</sup> The Modern Gothic style was imported to the United States from England, where it was spearheaded by B. J. Talbert, Charles Lock Eastlake and others. Eastlake's publication *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) popularized the style and its moral associations in the United States, where it was and is still commonly called the "Eastlake" style. American writers like Harriet Spofford and Clarence Cook called the style "Modern Gothic" and further advanced Eastlake's ideas in the United States.



3.8. Bruce J. Talbert, “Wall-Cupboard,” *Gothic Forms Applied to Furniture, Metal Work, and Decoration for Domestic Purposes* (1876; 1<sup>st</sup> Amer. Ed. Boston, 1873), Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, pictured in Doreen Bolger Burke, et. al., *In Pursuit of Beauty*, 146.

In Edith Wharton’s novel, *The Age of Innocence* (1920), she used the style to symbolize the “good in the old ways” of the old elite which was being displaced in the 1870s—the changing of the guard also documented by Sylvia Yount in her dissertation. In Wharton’s book, Newland Archer’s East thirty-ninth street home had a library with an “old Eastlake writing-table,” “dark embossed paper, Eastlake book-cases and ‘sincere’ arm-chairs and tables”—in the United States the Modern Gothic style was called both Eastlake and Modern Gothic. “Eastlake” refers to English design reformer Charles Locke Eastlake’s 1868 publication *Hints on Household Taste*, which featured the Modern Gothic style and popularized it in the United States. Archer’s library is symbolically “done over” by his architect son “with English mezzotints, Chippendale cabinets, bits of chosen blue-and-white and pleasantly shaded electric lamps” to illustrate the change in

values between the old and new generations.<sup>119</sup> A portrait from one of Jane's family photo albums shows a small boy in a velvet suit seated in a Modern Gothic interior probably within one of the family country houses. We can only speculate about what the style meant to Jane and her family.

While we don't know for certain if the McCall family was involved in Philadelphia's design reform movement, we know Jane attended the fair. Since it appears she had been traveling to Europe since she was a young child, we can assume she was already acquainted with the best Europe had to offer by this date. Thus, the Centennial probably wasn't the crucial event that led her to study art in Paris and London. However, given Jane's social standing in Philadelphia society, it is possible that interests in civic, design and cultural reform spearheaded in the city by her father and social peers may have provided the inspiration that led her to become an artist living abroad in Great Britain and Europe.

By 1883, it is widely believed that Jane, now twenty-five, was attending classes at Oxford's Balliol College, an assertion supported by a dated photograph of Jane and Gertrude with classmates at Balliol and two dated and fairly identical nature studies of nettles, one by Jane and the other by her mentor, the Oxford professor John Ruskin. [Illustration: 2.5., 2.6. and 2.7.] Ruskin's philosophy about simple living shaped the artistic environments Jane later formulated with her husband Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead.

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<sup>119</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, NY: Charles Scribner's sons, 1921, reprint, New York: The Library of America, 1985: 1178, 1289-91, quoted in Maureen Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, 69.

## **Section 2: Jane's Participation in High Society in the United States and Abroad.**

The social calendar of her peers provides insight into the frenetic pace of Jane's schedule of travel up and down the eastern seaboard and to and from Europe in the 1880s.

Unfortunately, her calendars only begin in 1886, when she was already twenty-seven years old. We can assume that her schedule had been similar for a number of years, probably dating to her "coming out" in society. This event in a young woman's life typically took place when her mother thought she was ready to become a woman and go on the marriage market. One can assume that Jane had "come out" by the time she was eighteen in 1876, when she was pictured in *The Heroines of '76*—the book mentioned earlier that commemorated her outing with other young Philadelphians on the eve of the inauguration of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Prior to a young woman's debut, she probably wouldn't have attended events like this in mixed company with young men who were not her relatives and publications about society would not have mentioned her. For example, Mrs. Burton Harrison reported on the lives of society girls to *Ladies Home Journal* in 1892, "until the age of 18 she's brought up in comparative seclusion from the world in which her mother takes conspicuous part; she is trained by experts in every detail of the accomplishments specified."<sup>120</sup>

Maureen Montgomery's *Displaying Women: Spectacle of Leisure in Edith Wharton's New York* gives a sense of the social calendar, the female world of ritual and etiquette, and the experiences leisure class women like Jane had abroad. Montgomery

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<sup>120</sup> Mrs. Burton Harrison, "The New York Society Girl," *Ladies Home Journal* (October 1892): 7, quoted in Maureen Montgomery, *Displaying Women*: 46. Montgomery cites two other interesting articles by Mrs. Harrison in her bibliography: "The Well-Bred Girl in Society: First Paper—The Young Girl and Dancing," *Ladies Home Journal* (November 1892): 4, and "The Well-Bred Girl in Society: Fourth Paper—Social Laws at Opera, Theatre and Public Places," *Ladies Home Journal* (February 1893): 4.

writes about the fixed nature of the social seasons in the 1870s and '80s, which were divided into winter and summer:

The winter season was marked by the opening of the opera season . . . It was a period of formal entertainments, particularly coming-out receptions for debutante daughters in December and balls and dinners after Christmas. Those in society might remain in town until the summer months, when townhouses were closed and families moved to summer resorts . . . . [Mrs. Astor's Charity Ball] held in early February, signaled the end of the winter season proper and the onset of Lent . . . . Social events during Lent were far less public, less "general," and less showy than those during the winter season. The Lenten period was a time when society took stock of itself while enjoying some respite from the daily, if not nightly, formal entertainments of the winter season.<sup>121</sup>

Montgomery writes about Newport, Rhode Island being the center of events during the summer season enjoyed by leisured New Yorkers, and she describes a European Season in which

Americans moved around Europe enjoying social seasons at different locations, in London and Paris in the spring or in Rome and on the French Riviera in the winter . . . a common itinerary was to travel to Europe in late spring to participate in the Parisian or London seasons, spend the summer months touring Italy or visiting a German spa such as Baden Baden, and then return to Paris in early autumn to pick up their orders from the ultrafashionable couturiers in the rue de la Paix, cross the Channel, and embark at Liverpool on a steamer headed back to New York.<sup>122</sup>

While Montgomery's description is meant to be particular to New York's elite, it applies equally well as a guide for better understanding the travels Jane describes in her calendars. In comparing Montgomery's examples with Jane's life, Jane's amazing schedule seems to trump even the most socially active New Yorkers. In 1886, for example, Jane was in Philadelphia on January 2<sup>nd</sup> and in New York by January 6<sup>th</sup>, where she attended Bigelows Theatricals on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Thomas Concert and Remson Ball on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and an Astor Dinner on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Come February 3<sup>rd</sup> we find her back in Philadelphia before she departs for and arrives in Washington, DC on February 6<sup>th</sup>. In

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<sup>121</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, 19-20, 24.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.



Washington, she visits the White House and attends the Laughton Cotillion on February 26<sup>th</sup>, the Corcoran Gallery on March 4<sup>th</sup>, the Walters' collection of paintings en route back to Philadelphia on March 17<sup>th</sup>. Arriving home on March 27<sup>th</sup>, she is in England by May, where she is presented by Mrs. Phelps to Queen Victoria on the 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>123</sup> In May she attends a Shakespeare reading at Lady Holliburn's home on the 25<sup>th</sup>, visits Folkstone, 4 Whitehall yard, Oxford on the 26<sup>th</sup>, a Greek play on the 27<sup>th</sup>, Lady Roseberry on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and Cambridge on the 31<sup>st</sup>. June begins with a State Ball at Buckingham Palace on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. She's looking for a country house in which to reside come June 4<sup>th</sup> and visits Oxford for a day on the 5<sup>th</sup>. June through August includes many references to balls, fêtes, and garden parties and socializing with Ladies, Viscounts, and other titled people. She's in Paris come September working on art at an atelier and "l'Académie"—possibly a reference to the Académie Julian—and visiting her friends the Fleurys. Jane was close friends with a painter Madeleine Fleury, who is believed to be the sister of the painter Tony Robert-Fleury, who taught at Académie Julian.<sup>124</sup> Between September and December, Jane also visited the French Riviera, noting Biarritz in her calendar. From this point onward, she remains in Europe, residing mostly in England and in Paris but also in Italy, and traveling throughout other European countries until November 1891, when she returned to the United States for a much needed "rest cure."<sup>125</sup>

Jane's social schedule in 1886 follows Montgomery's description fairly closely: the winter season is filled with formal entertainments, balls and dinners. By the end of

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<sup>123</sup> Jane's social patron, Mrs. Phelps, is recorded on presentation cards in her scrapbook. See McCall Scrapbook, 1883-1890, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>124</sup> Didrichsen Art and Cultural Museum (Helsinki, Finland) website, Queen Margrethe II: Her Paintings and Ecclesiastical Textiles – Artistic family, [http://www.didrichsenmuseum.fi/kuningatar/taiteellista\\_sukua\\_e.html](http://www.didrichsenmuseum.fi/kuningatar/taiteellista_sukua_e.html), accessed 2/6/2006.

<sup>125</sup> Jane Whitehead, 1886 calendar, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library; and Jane Whitehead, scrapbook, 1883-1890.

February, her schedule is less ambitious, mentioning visits to art galleries but not much else until she arrives in England in May; this corresponds with Montgomery's appraisal of the Lenten period and Americans moving abroad in the spring to enjoy the social seasons around Europe, in Jane's case, London and Paris. After the State Ball at Buckingham Palace at the beginning of June, Jane searches for a country house, where we can assume she resided until September when she took up residence in Paris for the purpose of art study; Montgomery described Paris as an early fall destination and the French Riviera, which Jane visited in November, as a resort in the wintertime.

Given the prestigious events she was invited to attend—Astor dinners and State Balls at Buckingham Palace, for example—and the ease and fluidity with which Jane traveled within the United States and Europe, it is safe to assume that she was among the *beau monde*. Her invitation to Astor events points to her inclusion in the Four Hundred—Mrs. Astor's invite list, which was strictly regulated to include society's so called best people. The Four Hundred was comprised of members of old established families like Jane's, as well as newly monied plutocrats who could pass Mrs. Astor's strict requirements in social etiquette. While the Four Hundred was predominated by New Yorkers, prestigious people from cities like Boston, Jane's hometown Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, were also included.

Jane's social success was not limited to the United States, however. The media's and Queen Victoria's response to Jane and her sister Gertrude's presentation to the Queen on May 8, 1886, indicates her ease in assimilating into Court society. A newspaper clipping about the presentation notes, "The Misses McCall, two distinguished American ladies, attracted much notice by the simple elegance of their Court gowns, the pearl

embroideries being very beautiful.”<sup>126</sup> [Illustration: 3.9.] After her presentation, Jane was invited by the Countess of Rosebery to meet the Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales on May 9th and to celebrate her Majesty’s birthday at the home of the Countess of Rosebery on May 29<sup>th</sup>. As mentioned earlier, Jane also attended a ball at Buckingham Palace on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The invitation for this event states “The Lord Chamberlain is commanded by The Queen to invite Miss G. [Gertrude] and Miss B. [Byrd, Jane’s middle name] to a Ball on Wednesday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1886, at 10 o’clock. Buckingham Palace. Full Dress.” A newspaper article from June 3<sup>rd</sup> lists the guests of the ball. The Misses McCall are mentioned under the heading of “the Corps Diplomatique and other foreigners of distinction.”<sup>127</sup>

3.9. H. S. Mendelssohn, *Jane Byrd McCall in Presentation Dress for Queen Victoria*, 1886, albumen print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library, photograph in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*, 57.

In Maureen Montgomery’s *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870 – 1914*, she makes it clear that Americans did not always gain easy entry into the closed circles of Great Britain’s peerage, let alone the Court of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. While admission for businessmen of great wealth and American women became easier after 1870, American women, in particular, were often branded outsiders, met with prejudice and suspicion, and were stereotyped as title seeking, adventuresses, and “forward hussies.”<sup>128</sup> Montgomery suggests the reason for

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<sup>126</sup> Newspaper clipping, unidentified newspaper, McCall scrapbook, 1883-90, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>127</sup> Newspaper clipping, unidentified newspaper, dated “June 3, 1886,” McCall scrapbook, 1883-1890.

<sup>128</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 85.

this was that American women and women from the British peerage were competing for marriage with the same pool of men—peers and landed gentlemen. Jane and her sister Gertrude, however, did not seem to meet with this reception. Rather, it seems they were welcomed as foreigners of distinction—a title that corresponds with her future husband’s estimation of her as an American “princess,” which he wrote about in a letter to their eldest son, Ralph, Jr., in 1902 [Illustration: 3.10.]:

[Writing from Leesburg, Virginia] I have been to Morven. . . mother’s old home where she knew summer days when she was a little child . . . it is a great big house such as princes live in Europe, for mother was a princess too, you know, only in this country [the United States] [such names don’t exist] . . . an old house so full of dignity and repose . . . Well, dear, it is beautiful to have been brought up in such a place but alas all the world cannot have such palaces and for the sake of those who have too little you and Angelo and mother and I are going to live in a little cottage somewhere in the mountains or in Italy, or both sometimes.<sup>129</sup>

Another letter from Ralph describing his meeting with one of Jane’s father’s former pupils may provide insight into Jane’s social standing in the United States and abroad. Ralph writes, “It gives me quite a thrill to find any man who knew your father. Each one of them repeats the same story of his gentleness, his intellectual power, his nobility, and refinement of manner, his command of our English speech.”<sup>130</sup> Not only was Jane’s father born into one of America’s established patrician families, but he was a civic minded leader as Mayor of Philadelphia, and as a lawyer and professor of law at University of Pennsylvania. His publications on civic law (listed earlier in this chapter) were well-known in the United States and perhaps abroad. It is possible that Jane’s universal reception by society at home and abroad rested on her father’s reputation as well as her own grace, wit, charm, and intellect. A double-edged sword of sorts, her

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<sup>129</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Ralph, Jr., letter inscribed “May 21, 1902. Leesburg, Virginia,” transcribed by Tom Wolf and the author, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>130</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed September 11 [1901], transcribed by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

father's much-respected thoughts and writings on civil equity and society opened doors for her in society and, at the same time, probably inspired Jane's growing discomfort with high society and her eventual departure from it. In her chapter on "The London Marriage Market," Montgomery explains,

In the case of a prospective bridegroom from outside the peerage, his credentials would be considered with regard to his conformity to the gentlemanly code of conduct, his social background and career, and his capacity to maintain an aristocrat's daughter in the style to which she was accustomed. In the case of a prospective bride, the subject of scrutiny was more likely to be her father, because women generally took their status from men.<sup>131</sup>

In this case, Jane's father's status approximated that of Great Britain's landed gentry—a class of commoner that was part of aristocratic circles and often married into titled families in Great Britain. His law profession was traditionally considered gentlemanly as was his sizeable, inherited land holdings<sup>132</sup>—the 1860 United States Census reported him having \$100,000 value in real estate and \$20,000 value of personal estate, significant numbers considering the date.<sup>133</sup>



3.10. *Morven Park*, Leesburg, Virginia, family home of Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, <http://www.virginia.org/images/Morven.jpg>, accessed 3/23/06.

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<sup>131</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*: 86.

<sup>132</sup> Maureen Montgomery, Chapter 5, "The London Marriage Market," in *Gilded Prostitution*: 85-107, especially 86-90.

<sup>133</sup> United States Census, 1860, "Value of Estate Owned," Peter McCall Family, dwelling 376, family 556, 090 5<sup>th</sup> Ward North District Philadelphia, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC., Microfilm.

One might assume Jane's mother took her daughters, Jane and Gertrude, abroad to find them aristocratic foreign husbands. Montgomery tells us it was a popular thing for elite Americans to do at the time. It is also possible that Mrs. McCall decided to look outside of the United States for suitable mates for her daughters, who weren't meeting with much success there. Remember, Jane was twenty-eight in 1886 and didn't marry until 1892, when she was thirty-three. If Jane made her coming out around 1876 at the age of eighteen, she was on the marriage market for sixteen years—a long time by the standards of society in the period. Montgomery explains, "A daughter's entrance into society was a liminal period fraught with anxieties both for the debutante as well as for her family and social circle. The desired outcome was marriage, as this would reaffirm the social order and traditional gender hierarchy as well as consolidate kinship networks of those of class and economic interests."<sup>134</sup> In many respects, marriage was a vocation for women of the leisure class. The rigid and rigorous social etiquette and schedule they were brought up to live in accordance with prepared them to fulfill this role.

Additionally, there were few alternatives available to them. According to Montgomery,

Changes taking place in the educational and employment opportunities for middle-class women scarcely altered the attitudes of the elite towards women's role in life . . . . The flourishing of women's colleges from the 1850s onwards, e.g. Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, and Bryn Mawr, did little, in their early years at least, to alter the obdurate habits of a plutocratic class which viewed its daughters as collateral . . . . One of the few professions compatible with genteel status was writing, though even that was considered bohemian and outlandish in certain quarters.<sup>135</sup>

Considering how closely Jane's life seems to correspond with the schedule and rituals of the Gilded Age's elite class, Jane probably felt pressure to marry well. Nevertheless,

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<sup>134</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Displaying Women*: 50.

<sup>135</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*: 51, 52.

when one considers Jane's eventual marriage to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead it seems like he gained more social status in the exchange than she. Whitehead was a well-educated and wealthy, landed Englishman—he held a degree from Oxford and could afford to live a life of leisure because of inherited wealth based on his family's generations of ownership of successful textile mills in Saddleworth, Yorkshire. However, he had a few strikes working against him. For starters, he wasn't titled, but by the 1880s and '90s that distinction was not as crucial. Even though his wealth was based on manufacturing, he would have been considered landed gentry because of his education, leisure lifestyle, inherited wealth and landholdings. The kiss of death, so to speak, however, was the divorce he had to undergo in order to marry Jane. Seeing that divorces were not easily granted at the time, we can assume that a divorced individual, especially a man like Whitehead who deserted his wife for another woman, would have left some conspicuous mud on his face. England, France, and the United States had strict requirements, which made them out of the question for Whitehead, who ultimately had to naturalize in Germany, requiring a year of residence, before a divorce was granted. The black mark divorce made on Whitehead is further evidenced by Jane's family prohibiting him from contacting their daughter until he was divorced. In the close-knit, ever watchful, and competitive social world in which they lived, the McCall clan perhaps rightfully anticipated social fall out through their association with Whitehead.

Given the outcome that they let her marry him at all leads one to wonder if they were worried she'd never marry if she didn't marry Whitehead, and to speculate why the beautiful and talented Jane was still single at the age of twenty-eight. Did she have a prolonged and ultimately unsuccessful courtship or an erased marriage in America before

moving abroad? Or, perhaps the McCalls were not as conventional as they seemed. Author E. Digby Baltzell called the Willcox branch of Jane's family "less conforming, more intellectual" in his book, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*.<sup>136</sup> It is possible the McCall's secure position in the upper class gave them more maneuvering room with regards to behavior and appearances. Both Jane and Ralph considered their adoption of the simple life to be a rejection of society. Jane's willingness to do this may have been inherited from her family.

### **Section 3: Jane as Artist.**

Whatever the case, marriage hunt or not, Jane assumed the identity of an artist in her years abroad. While the study and mastery of certain painting genres was considered an accomplishment contributing to a single woman's marriage-ability, it is possible that Jane's art studies in Paris and Europe in the 1880s were intended to provide her with a socially acceptable career for a woman of her class in case she ended up remaining single—"living on an allowance in the ignominious position of an 'old maid' (as it was negatively characterized at the time)."<sup>137</sup> Art historian Tamar Garb's work on "Gender and Representation" and "The Gendering of Art Education in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris" offers insight into factors that may have motivated Jane to move abroad to live the life of an artist. In both accounts, Garb is careful to distinguish between professional women artists such as Rosa Bonheur, and amateur and semi-professional women artists for whom art was a personal accomplishment, an amusing past time, and even, to a limited extent, a way of making a modest living. The former were accused of gender

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<sup>136</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 220.

<sup>137</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*: 52



inversion because their work and some of their subject matter took them into the male realm. Here, the act of painting heroic themes executed on a grand scale and available for viewing and sale in the public, commercial sphere took women away from the domestic arena in which “respectable” women operated. The latter—amateur and semi-professional women artists--working “demurely within the private space of the studio or foyer, protected from the gaze of the public and the compromising spaces of urban life, presented an ideal vision of femininity in nineteenth-century Paris.”<sup>138</sup> In 1860 Léon Legrange reported to readers of the *Gazette des beaux-arts* that the woman artist was actually protected by her occupation: “as a young woman, ‘she could be concealed, chaste and pure, in the corner of a solitary living room,’ married she would not disclose her smiles and affections to others, as a mother she would not bring shame to her offspring.”<sup>139</sup>

While portraits of Jane in the act of painting that predate her marriage to Ralph have not surfaced, given the evidence we have about her active social life and artistic pursuits in the 1870s and ‘80s, it is easy to imagine her in settings similar to those presented on the cover of *La Gazette des femmes* (24 -25 December, 1866), and the mid-nineteenth century lithograph *La Peinture*.<sup>140</sup> [Illustration: 3.11. and 3.12.] In the former,

a number of small vignettes [show] a range of legitimate social activities for women . . . Her musical accomplishment is endorsed, her position at the front of the opera box, replete with the stock props of fan, flowers, binoculars and chaperoning menfolk situated behind, is reinforced, and her realm as an artist is

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<sup>138</sup> Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste,” 115.

<sup>139</sup> Léon Legrange, “Du Rang des femmes dans les arts,” *Gazette des beaux-arts* 8 (October – December 1860): 30-43, quoted in Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste,” 117-118.

<sup>140</sup> Cover of *Gazette des femmes*, 24 – 25 December, 1866, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, pictured in Tamar Garb, “Gender and Representation,” 259, and Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste,” 114. *La Peinture*, mid-nineteenth century, lithograph, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Photograph Bibliothèque nationale de France, pictured in Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste,” 116.

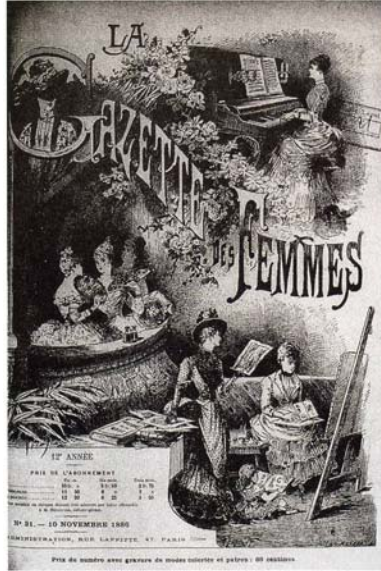
circumscribed within the comfortable domestic interior, the easel existing in the same sphere as the child with her letters.<sup>141</sup>

In the latter, “a young female artist painting arrangements of flowers and fruits at an ornate easel placed in a well-ordered and ornamented interior, her corseted figure and placid countenance providing a suitable counterpoint to the active engagement of her older companion.”<sup>142</sup> These pictures could easily be of Jane either in Philadelphia in the 1870s or living abroad at that time or in the 1880s. In all of these likenesses, those of Jane after her marriage and the French mid-nineteenth century representations, the women share certain attributes: their eyes averted, they are the subjects of gazing onlookers, serving an allegorical or ornamental function, or being socially educational about proper gendered behavior. This is the vision of the woman artist that Jane presented to the world in numerous photographs from the period. [Illustration: 3.13. and 3.14.] Images of Jane seated at an easel either in her studio or painting plein-air also show her as the embodiment of the feminine ideal: eyes averted, the viewers eyes (those of the photographer, her husband) are invited to caress her beautiful, chaste and solitary figure. In these secluded domestic environments, she is an allegory for refinement, dignity, grace, and charm. Largely taken by her adoring husband, these pictures present Jane as the couple’s muse—the embodiment of the highminded idealism, spirituality and morality they saw captured in the art they loved best as well as in the process of artistic creation.

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<sup>141</sup> Tamar Garb, “Gender and Representation,” 258-259.

<sup>142</sup> Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste,” 215.



3.11. Cover of *La Gazette des femmes*, n.d., photograph Tamar Garb, in Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste: The Gendering of Art Education in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris,” in Gabriel Weisberg and Jane R. Becker, eds., *Overcoming All Obstacles*, 114.



3.12. *La Peinture*, mid-nineteenth century, lithograph, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, photograph Bibliothèque nationale de France, in Tamar Garb, “Men of Genius, Women of Taste,” 116.

3.13. Attributed to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, *Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead Painting Eucalyptus in an Arcady (CA) Studio*, ca. 1895, silver gelatin photograph, 4 1/8 x 8 1/2 inches, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

3.14. Attributed to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, *Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead Painting Plein-Air in California*, ca. 1895, silver gelatin photograph on paper, 3 1/8 x 2 1/8 inches, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

Family history along with Jane's personal papers suggest she studied at the Académie Julian in the 1880s. Evidence of art studies predating her earliest known calendars from 1886 is not presently available. Yet, we know she was painting before 1886 from her watercolor of a nettle with John Ruskin which is dated 1883. [Illustration: 2.5. and 2.6.] It can therefore be assumed that her 1886 calendar does not mark the beginning of her artistic education, but, rather, records her progress in an endeavor that began years before. For example, her 1886 calendar records her visit to Paris from September onward. She visits with the Fleurys in October. As mentioned earlier, Tony Robert-Fleury taught at Académie Julian and Jane was friends with his sister Madeleine Fleury, an impressionist artist, who is believed to have studied with Claude Monet.<sup>143</sup> Jane's calendar entries record an intimate relationship with these people and with Paris, mentioning salons and ateliers. On May 2, 1887, she writes about a model at l'Académie—in all likelihood, a reference to l'Académie Julian.

The Académie Julian belonged to Rudolphe Julian, who ran female ateliers at 27 Galerie Montmartre, Passage des Panoramas, Paris 2e, starting around 1873 when Tony Robert-Fleury directed the class.<sup>144</sup> Due to popular demand, Julian's second studio for women opened around 1880 at 51 rue Vivienne, Paris 2e, near the Palais Royal not far from the fashionable art galleries. Jean-Paul Laurens, one of Jane's teachers, taught

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<sup>143</sup> Madeleine Fleury executed several portraits of Jane, her mother, and Ralph Whitehead. Extensive documentation of her friendship with the Whiteheads exists in their personal papers. While little information about Madeleine Fleury has been found, it is believed that she was a pupil of Claude Monet, and that Crown Princess Margareta of Sweden studied impressionist techniques with her. See The Didrichsenin Museum of Art and Culture website, [www.didrichsenmuseum.fi/kuningatar/taiteellista\\_sukua\\_e.html](http://www.didrichsenmuseum.fi/kuningatar/taiteellista_sukua_e.html), accessed 2/6/2006.

<sup>144</sup> Catherine Fehrer, "Women at the Académie Julian in Paris," 755.

popular women's classes there until the beginning of World War I.<sup>145</sup> By 1888 Julian opened a location at 28 rue de Faubourg St. Honoré, Paris 8e. It was subsequently replaced by studios at 5 rue de Berri, in Paris's aristocratic eighth arrondissement. These classrooms were popular among the beau-monde and student lists include aristocratic names. William Bouguereau, Henri Chapu, Raoul Charles Verlet and Paul Landowski taught there.<sup>146</sup> We know Jane studied at 5 rue de Berri in November 1892, while she was on her honeymoon. Both the 5 rue de Berri and the 28 rue de Faubourg St. Honoré locations closed in 1896. In 1890 ateliers for women opened at 28 rue Fontaine (St. Georges), Montmartre, Paris 9e. Classes there were taught by Jules Lefebvre and Tony Robert-Fleury.<sup>147</sup> Additional studios for women operated at 55 rue du Cherche-Midi, Paris 6e, starting in 1896.<sup>148</sup>

From as early as 1873 men and women studied together in Julian's academy. However, classrooms soon became segregated due to perceptions of impropriety at the thought of men and women viewing nude models together. Nevertheless, Julian was a pioneer in and remained committed to the professional education of women artists. In an 1893 interview with *The Sketch*,

Julian pointed out that women "were given none of the opportunities which each male artist claims as his right" and that "few artists care to have the responsibility of taking ladies into their ateliers." It was not surprising, he felt, that, with one or two exceptions, women had made no great name in art and that "most women who have become famous in French art belonged directly to an artistic family."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 755-756.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> For information on the location of Julian's ateliers for women, see Gabriel Weisberg, "The Women of the Académie Julian," 2.

<sup>149</sup> Rudolphe Julian quoted in "Julian's Studios. An Interview with their Creator," *The Sketch* (June 1893), quoted in Catherine Fehrer, "Women at the Académie Julian in Paris:" 752-57.

Into the mid-1880s, his ateliers were among the only ones in the Western world where women could study from nude models. A pencil sketch of a nude boy playing a flute executed by Jane at Académie Julian attests to her access to nude models while in residence at Julian's ateliers.<sup>150</sup> [Illustration: 3.15.] Interestingly, a sketch of the same boy was recently offered for sale at an auction of the contents of Hewnoaks, the Maine estate of American portraitist Douglas Volk (1856-1935). [Illustration 3.16.] The sketch is said to be by Volk, who is not known to have studied or taught at Académie Julian. Rather, he is known to have studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts under Master Jean-Léon Gérôme. By February 1893, the date of Jane's sketch, Volk was an established artist. He founded the Minneapolis School of Fine Art in 1886 and in 1893 he was on the "selection committee at the Columbian Exposition where he exhibited three paintings and won his first major award."<sup>151</sup> If the sketch is by Volk, it is possible he visited the class in which Jane made her sketch. This would mean Volk may have been visiting as an instructor. If he was there as a student, it means strict gendered segregation of classrooms was not always observed. On the other hand, it is possible Julian used the same model in a number of classes, or that the model was used by a number of different studios.<sup>152</sup> And, finally, it is also possible the sketch is not by Volk at all. Rather, it could have been done by another female student and somehow it made its way into Volk's collection. Regardless, it is interesting that over one-hundred years after they were drawn these two sketches would resurface. Clearly, Paris was a popular destination for American artists.

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<sup>150</sup> For a reference to this drawing in Jane's calendars, see Jane Whitehead, calendar entry, February 12-18, 1893, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>151</sup> Cyr Auction Company, Estate of Douglas Volk, Hewnoaks, Center Lovell, Maine, auction catalog, July 19, 2006, [www.cyrauction.com](http://www.cyrauction.com), accessed 10/3/07. Many thanks to Robert Edwards for bringing the attributed Volk sketch to my attention.

<sup>152</sup> French decorative arts historian Anne Marie Quette, conversation with the author, October 2007.

3.15. Jane Whitehead, *Academic Study of Nude Boy Playing Flute*, 1893, pencil, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe*, 62.



3.16. Attributed to Douglas Volk, *Academic Study of Nude Boy Playing Flute*, 1893, pencil, photograph taken at Cyr Auction Company Estate Sale of Douglas Volk's Hewnoaks, Center Lovell, Maine, July 19, 2006, photograph courtesy of Robert Edwards.

In general, women pupils, especially those coming from America to study in Paris, were wealthy. Women paid double the tuition of their male classmates. Given their access to world class instructors like William Bouguereau, Tony Robert-Fleury, Gustave Boulanger, Jules Lefebvre, and Jean-Paul Laurens, and their opportunities to compete with male students in monthly critiques where the name and sex of the student was withheld, few who could afford to go turned down the opportunity because of the cost.

#### *Section 4: Jane's Studio Salon and Simple Living at Albury House*

Jane's calendars suggest that her extended visits to Paris involved taking an apartment as an atelier and studying with various teachers, including those at the Académie Julian but not exclusively with them. Here and elsewhere throughout her life, Jane established studio-salons: sites for painting and exhibiting artwork, centers for artistic exchange and intellectual activity, and places for entertaining. These studio-salons were central fixtures in the simple life environments Jane established first at Albury House between 1887-91 and thereafter. They followed an established stylistic model called the "aestheticized studio"<sup>153</sup>:

Typically, it [the studio-salon] was a tall room with a balcony from which hung oriental rugs or textiles. The walls, too, were adorned with textiles, rugs or tapestries. The work of the artist, and that of his or her friends, covered the walls or was found casually arrayed on chairs and, more formally, set on easels. Large storage pieces and chairs in the style of the sixteenth to seventeenth century were common furnishings. Exotic touches appeared in the form of oriental brass work lamps or braziers. Oriental rugs or animal skins often lay scattered about the floor.<sup>154</sup>

Additionally, the high ceilings in these spaces accommodated tall windows allowing in natural light, preferably from the north. Urban studios were obviously more densely packed than those located outside the city. Clearly, only wealthy and/or successful artists and students could afford luxurious and spacious studios.

Established artists of the late nineteenth century often used their elaborate studios as venues for generating popularity and sales. Open houses, parties and entertainments were held there. English painter and leader of the London art world Lord Frederic

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<sup>153</sup> Karen Zukowski uses this term to describe this type of late nineteenth-century artist's studio in her dissertation "Creating Art and Artists: Late Nineteenth-Century American Artists' Studios."

<sup>154</sup>Cynthia R. Field, Amy Ballard, and Robert J. Orr, "The Historic Interior Spaces of Barney Studio House. A Nomination Submitted by the Smithsonian Institution, 16, May 1994," 11.



Leighton for example, held formal dinners and opened his London home and elaborate studio to visitors on Sunday afternoons.

The most important figures from literary, music and art circles were often to be found at the house, along with politicians, and even royalty. He held musicales, the most formal being at the end of March, to celebrate his artistic output of the year. Distinguished musicians like Piatti and George Henschel played in the studio in the gilded apse or the balcony.<sup>155</sup>

Leighton's studio extravagantly followed the aestheticized studio model being

forty-five by twenty-five feet, with a seventeen-foot ceiling, it had a small balcony at its east end, and a gilded domed apse at its west end. A glass alcove facing north broke the plane of the garden façade. The walls were painted Pompeiian red, which served as a foil for the display of Leighton's art. . . . By the early 1880s, . . . along the south wall were a long cast of the frieze from the Parthenon and other casts of Greek and Roman statues; works by Leighton's contemporaries, including a version of Watt's *Hope* (replica of 1886, Tate Gallery, London); and a diverse array of smaller objects: Persian tiles and props like a lyre and stuffed leopard.<sup>156</sup>

In fact, Leighton's studio and its fittings and uses seem to relate quite closely to the studio-salon Jane established first at Albury House in England, and later at Arcady in California, and possibly at the atelier apartments she took in Paris and elsewhere beforehand. A reference to Leighton, under the heading "celebrities I have met" in Jane's European scrapbook infers Jane's first-hand familiarity with the artist's studio-salon.<sup>157</sup>

Period photographs of Jane's Albury House studio are not known to exist. This seventeenth-century house still stands, however, and Jane's calendar entries describe her residence at Albury House.<sup>158</sup> [Illustration: 3.17. and 3.18.] The existing house is decidedly picturesque with the additive red brick form of medieval vernacular

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<sup>155</sup> Karen Zukowski, "Creating Art and Artists," 31.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>157</sup> Jane Whitehead, scrapbook, 1883-1890, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum..

<sup>158</sup> Albury walks, "A stroll along 'The Street,'" Albury Village website, <http://www.albury.org.uk/localwalks/walk5print.htm>, accessed 2/15/06.

architecture, a roofline with asymmetrical gables and low hanging eaves in keeping with the artistic character of William Morris's Red House. [Illustration: 3.19.] By 1864, an Albury House owner Martin Tupper noted on the illustrated cartes-de-viste of Albury House that it was "decidedly scarce if not unique."



3.17. Unknown photographer, *Albury House*, back view, ca. 1864, marked: Martin F. Tupper (former owner of Albury House), photograph courtesy of Denise Chamberlian, Albury History Society.



3.18. Unknown photographer, *Albury House*, ca. 2006, photograph courtesy of Denise Chamberlain, Albury Historical Society.



3.19. Phillip Webb, architect, *Red House at Bexleyheath* (built 1859 for William Morris), online photograph, photograph Andrew Butler, National Trust, <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-redhouse/>, accessed 9/19/07.

Tupper, a writer of patriotic poems commemorating Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and popular philosophy, and “Victorian do-gooder,” owned and lived at Albury House in the 1840s into the ‘60s when financial difficulties forced him to lease and mortgage it and move into a series of smaller, rented houses.<sup>159</sup> He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and was a close friend of Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone, who granted him a controversial Civil List pension to ease his financial problems. Both Tupper and Gladstone are mentioned in Jane’s European scrapbook under the heading “Celebrities I have met.”<sup>160</sup> Tupper’s 1838 book *Proverbial Philosophy. A Book of Thoughts and Arguments, originally treated, by Martin Farquhar Tupper Esq. M.A.* was well received and believed to “epitomize the moral and evangelical spirit of the mid-nineteenth century.”<sup>161</sup> Queen Victoria and Prince Albert greatly admired the book. It was translated into several languages and was even more popular in the United States

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<sup>159</sup> Margaret Prentice, “Martin Tupper.” Thanks to Mary Greensted for sharing this article with me. All biographical information on Tupper is from the Prentice article unless otherwise cited.

<sup>160</sup> Jane Whitehead, scrapbook, 1883-1890.

<sup>161</sup> Margaret Prentice, “Martin Tupper.”

than it was in England. He died in 1889. Jane resided at Albury House between 1887 and 1891.

Interestingly, William Morris poked fun at Tupper's patriotic poems of royal commemoration in an 1887 letter to his daughter Jenny, "I am sorry poor old Tennyson thought himself bound to write an ode on our fat Vic's Jubilee: have you seen it? It is like Martin Tupper for all the world."<sup>162</sup> Morris biographer Fiona MacCarthy calls Tupper "the Patience Strong of his day" in her book *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, where she points out that "Morris disliked ceremonial verse as a genre, seeing it as empty rhetoric."<sup>163</sup> Like so many of the intersections between people Jane knew, this example is an illustrative one. At this moment at Albury House, Jane was standing on the line between the high society life of her upbringing—Tupper and Gladstone's world--and the simple life associated with Morris's Arts and Crafts movement. It wouldn't be long before she gave up the former for the latter.

Walking distance from Guildford, Surrey, the town of Albury is ancient, picturesque and conveniently situated for easy access to and from London. Its church dates to Saxon times and the manor house named Albury Park dates back to the Tudor period and was rebuilt in the seventeenth century for the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>164</sup> Jane's friends the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland resided at Albury Park while Jane lived in the town. A sketch of their home from 1888 documents one of Jane's visits there.

[Illustration: 3.20] Between 1846 and 1852 none other than the father of Gothic revival, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, added sixty-three chimneys among other things to the

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<sup>162</sup> William Morris to Jenny Morris, letter, quoted in Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 632. Thanks to Mary Greensted for pointing out Morris's reference to Tupper in MacCarthy's book.

<sup>163</sup> Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris*, 632

<sup>164</sup> Albury, "Present Day Aspect and Character," The Good Move Guide, <http://www.thegoodmoveguide.com/Locations/Surrey/Boroughs/Guildford/Guides/villages>, accessed 2/15/06.

structure, “all different and all researched from genuine Tudor originals” for its then owner Henry Drummond, who was a banker and politician.<sup>165</sup> [Illustration 3.21.] Pugin’s additions to the town also include picturesque chimneys throughout the main street, Weston Street, and the refurbishment of the south transept of the old church as a mortuary chapel for the Henry Drummond family, who owned the manor house between 1819 until 1890 when it passed into the hands of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, its present owners.<sup>166</sup>

3.20. Jane Byrd McCall, *Sketch of Albury Park*, 1888, pencil, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.



3.21. Albury Park Mansion after 1846, from <http://www.alburychurches.org/history/history.html>, accessed 3/29/06.

Artwork, elaborate social events and musicales held at Albury House during Jane’s residence there between 1887-1891 closely approximate descriptions of Leighton’s home and studio. While period documentation revealing Albury House’s

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<sup>165</sup> “The Parish of Albury, Surrey,” Albury History Society webpage, <http://www.alburychurches.org/history/history.html>, accessed 2/14/06.

<sup>166</sup> “A brief history of Albury,” Albury History Society webpage, <http://www.alburychurches.org/society/brief.html>, accessed 2/8/06.

interiors during Jane's residence have not surfaced, her scrapbook includes pictures of interiors from the neighboring country houses of her friends. [Illustration: 3.22.]

Sommerset Beaumont's, for example, may give us some idea about what could be found inside Jane's home. On the other hand, it is possible that the aesthetics of Jane's Albury House interiors were more artistic, more closely approximating those at Arcady, than those of her friends. Beaumont's palatial interior is packed with architectural decoration, portraits of ancestors, elaborate lighting fixtures, an abundance of comfortably stuffed furniture, large scale plants, decorative items covering every surface, coats-of-arms, armor and even weaponry adorning the walls. Unmistakably Victorian country house is this room's cluttered appearance. It is very different from the simple life aesthetics Jane would institute at Arcady just a short time later, which were conceived along Morrisian lines: "everything in the way of decoration [was] to have a meaning and what has not a meaning [was] to be beautiful in the way of colour or form, and the forms of decoration . . . [were to come] from the common things of the country."<sup>167</sup>

3.22. Sommerset Beaumont's country house interior, *Shere Manor*, near Guildford, ca. 1890, photocopy of photograph in Jane Byrd McCall's scrapbook, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

Jane's stay at Albury House is her first recorded experiment in simple living, called "country life" in her papers. Here, she raised bees, pigeons, and poultry; did her own gardening with the help of a professional gardener, which included hoeing the beds; and practiced home industry such as seamstressing, smocking and making counterpanes, sometimes with village women.

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<sup>167</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd McCall, letter, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.—March [illegible number], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum; and William Morris, "The Beauty of Life."

Surrey became a place where simple life Arts and Crafters settled in the 1890s and thereafter. Ethel and Godfrey Blount settled in Haslemere, Surrey, in 1894, following Ethel's sister, Maude, and her husband Joseph King's relocation to the town earlier in the year.<sup>168</sup> Maude was a weaver and set up Haslemere Weaving Industry, a workshop that "provided an alternative to shop work or domestic service for young girls and experienced seamstresses."<sup>169</sup> Meanwhile, Ethel Blount translated her husband Godfrey's designs into "peasant tapestries" produced using a simple appliqué method.<sup>170</sup> Godfrey was a "painter and committed Christian," who "promoted the simple life as a reaction to the materialism of society."<sup>171</sup> The Blounts set up Haslemere Peasant Industries to promote the importance of native peasant arts and the use of these crafts in the home.<sup>172</sup> At Blount's Wheel and Spindle Club, "a Saturday craft club," children learned folk songs collected by Cecil Sharp.<sup>173</sup>

In their wake, teacher A. Romney Green was "attracted to the craft workshops and the atmosphere of radical, reforming zeal in the village" and "set up as a gentleman carpenter" there.<sup>174</sup> And, architect Alfred Powell "developed his woodworking skills by taking up employment as a carpenter in Surrey in the 1890s."<sup>175</sup>

Mary Watts, wife of the famous painter G. F. Watts, moved to Compton, Surrey, in 1895, where her major project was the Watts Chapel which was decorated by local

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<sup>168</sup> Mary Greensted, "Nature and the Rural Idyll," 106.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 97. After 1903, Jane published her own book of *The Morning Stars Sang Together: Folk-Songs and Other Songs for Children*, which she collected from Great Britain, Europe, and America.

<sup>174</sup> Mary Greensted, email with author, July 24, 2007; and Mary Greensted, "Nature and the Rural Idyll," 94.

<sup>175</sup> Mary Greensted, "Nature and the Rural Idyll," 96.

villagers working under her direction.<sup>176</sup> The skills villagers learned modeling the terracotta decorations facing the chapel were later used in Mary Watts Potters' Art Guilds set up in Compton in 1901.<sup>177</sup>

A Tolstoyan community existed in Croydon, Surrey, before they “set out on bicycles to go ‘home to the land’” in 1898, when they moved to Whiteway in the Costswolds to establish a communist settlement.<sup>178</sup>

All this simple life activity post-dates Jane's residence in the area, however. In the late 1880s and earliest years of the '90s there doesn't seem to be any simple life activity in its Arts and Crafts guise taking place. It seems to have been just too early. However, it must be remembered that Jane took classes in seamstressing and smocking from village women. This traditional form of philanthropy had been practiced by aristocratic ladies like Jane for years.<sup>179</sup> It helped preserve dying folk traditions and supplement the incomes of rural women. It was an expression of the spirit that fueled the development of the simple life and the Arts and Crafts movement before they were formalized.

At this point in Jane's history, country life was a complement to, rather than a substitute for, her incredibly busy, urbane lifestyle. In fact, she never seemed busier. In addition to hosting and performing in musicals, she was entertaining British and European gentry, intellectuals and artists, including Ethel and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema; she made regular visits to London and Paris where she went to important museum collections and studied painting at the Académie Julian. She attended events,

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<sup>176</sup> Mary Greensted, email with author, July 24, 2007, and Mary Greensted, “Nature and the Rural Idyll,” 106.

<sup>177</sup> Mary Greensted, “Nature and the Rural Idyll,” 106.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>179</sup> On the subject of Victorian philanthropy and rural crafts see Ibid.



studied at Oxford, and toured the Loire Valley by boat with her cousin, the Arts and Crafts tile-maker and archaeologist, Henry Chapman Mercer. All the while she was in residence at Albury House, she kept a studio and painted there pretty much on a daily basis. A small, dated watercolor was executed plein-air in the surrounding countryside.<sup>180</sup> [Illustration 3.23.]

3.23. Jane Whitehead, *Landscape Sketch of Albury Countryside*, dated 1888, watercolor, 5 3/8" x 9," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

What did Jane mean when she wrote “country life”? Certainly her efforts to live close to nature—working the soil with her own hands and raising bees and poultry—relate to what she would later call simple living. Could she have been expressing shared beliefs with the Country Life Movement that gained popularity in the United States after 1900? In his essay on the Country Life Movement, Dennis Roth refers to “urban agrarians” who may have shared common concerns with Jane,

[being] believers in the “agrarian myth” of the farmer as the bulwark of republican moral virtues and feared that migration to the cities would corrupt those virtues. They wanted to find ways to make country life more attractive so that farmers would not feel compelled to leave and thus would continue to provide the cities with their moral examples and their agricultural products. As William Bowers has pointed out, these country-life reformers were caught in a permanent contradiction. They wanted to resurrect a mythologized rural past, while at the same time advocating ideas that would inevitably bring urban influences into the countryside.<sup>181</sup>

Roth’s urban agrarians were Progressive Era social reformers, whereas Jane’s approach to country life and later, to simple living, was therapeutic and individualistic. As far as

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<sup>180</sup> Albury is known for its beauty and interesting geography. The rolling hills of Albury seen in Jane’s landscape were formed by the same earth movements that created the Alps millions of years ago.

<sup>181</sup> Dennis Roth, “The Country Life Movement,” citing William L. Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America: 1900-1920* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1974), p. 132, United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Library website, [http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/rural\\_development\\_chap1.pdf](http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/ricpubs/rural_development_chap1.pdf), accessed 2/20/06.

one can tell, she never seemed especially concerned with the preservation of agrarian culture and peasant lifeways. For example, her calendars and personal correspondence reveal that when she engaged in agrarian practices at Albury House her hands touched the soil under the supervision and guidance of a professional gardener. When she learned traditional sewing techniques from village women, it was in order to improve her personal skills rather than preserve their way of life. Later, at Byrdcliffe, she and her husband purchased their land from local farmers, thus, displacing them and their traditional lifeways. Also, at Byrdcliffe, Jane published a book *The Morning Stars Sang Together: Folk Songs and Other Songs for Children (The Morning Stars Sang Together)*. Like Cecil Sharp's work with children and folk music at the Blount's Wheel and Spindle Club in Haslemere, Surrey, it seems Jane's efforts in this area were considered an appropriate occupation for Arts and Crafts ladies.<sup>182</sup> Published under her own name, it is probably the only time she took credit for any of her work in the arts. It seems Jane appreciated the virtues she associated with peasant people, their rural lifeways and the handicrafts they produced. By following their model (albeit not too closely) it was as if she thought she could absorb and pass along the health and peace of mind she imagined them having.

Rather than the Progressive Country Life Movement's use of the term, it is more likely that Jane is referring to a strictly British practice or interpretation of the words "country life." She is probably talking about the longstanding tradition of English country house life. In the social and architectural history, *Life in the English Country House*, architectural historian Mark Girouard traces the development of country house living in England from the Middle Ages into the mid-twentieth century. The Victorian

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<sup>182</sup> Mary Greensted, "Nature and the Rural Idyll," 97.

period in which Jane lived at Albury House was the golden age of the country house, a movement that began in earnest toward the end of the eighteenth century. Girouard tells us,

The development was a gradual one and was part of a change common to all Europe but pioneered in England. The upper and upper-middle classes had reached the stage of sophistication at which they could react against their own civilization and endeavour to go back to nature. They found nature both in the countryside, preferably in as wild a state as possible, and in the man in the countryside, preferably in the supposedly unconstrained, passionate and pure state as presented in the myth or model of the Noble Savage.<sup>183</sup>

A number of developments encouraged land owners to spend time at their country houses. One relating to Jane's attraction to the country was the development of "a network of excellent turnpike roads and fast coaches" at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>184</sup> Idyllic solitude became much more appealing after country house living became less remote. Elaborate house parties like those hosted by Jane became part and parcel of country life by the end of the eighteenth century. In the country, land owners or leasers like Jane could enjoy the gaiety and camaraderie found in town life like never before.

Maureen Montgomery reminds us that prestige played a role in acquiring a country house:

Americans entered London society, moreover, for virtually the same reasons as plutocrats from other countries, namely, to affirm their social status and to identify themselves with a well established elite long used to deference and respect. In much the same way as the British themselves and other foreign millionaires, Americans bought or rented country mansions, competed for presentation at court, and provided expensive entertainments for the Prince of Wales.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 214.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>185</sup> Maureen Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 79.

Records of Jane providing expensive entertainments for the Prince of Wales are not known to exist. However, the rest of Montgomery's characterization seems to fit. Jane was active in London society and was presented at court. She leased a country mansion, and provided expensive entertainments for royalty, aristocrats, intellectuals and artists. So, we might assume Jane's taking of a country house to be standard for the social elite to which she belonged.

Montgomery associates country house living with affirmations of social status— attempts to identify with a well established and respected elite, i.e., England's landed gentry and aristocracy. What better way to look like the landed elite than to live like them in a country estate. Land in England had always been a sign and source of wealth, power and prestige. Based on Jane's adherence to the rigors of high society's social calendar, we can assume that all levels of society, even the patrician class to which she belonged, felt it necessary to affirm their social status in noticeable ways. Nevertheless, country house life had been the norm for her even as a child in the United States. Around Philadelphia, Jane's family owned a number of country villas: Ivy Mills in Delaware's picturesque Brandywine River Valley and Morven in Leesburg, Virginia, among others. It appears Jane's "country life" was an extension of the lifestyle she knew from home enacted on British soil.

### **Section 5: Jane and Ralph's Courtship and the Beginning of Their Simple Life.**

Jane's July 22, 1890 calendar entry says, "left Albury House. Said fairwell [sic]." At this point, she heads to Italy to study art and travel in Florence, Venice, Bologna, and Lake Como. [Illustration: 3.24.] By October 1890 she "settled into the apartment" at "22

Lung Arno Acciaiuoli [sic Lungarno Acciaiuoli]” overlooking the Arno River and took a studio probably located at “6 Piazza Donatello” in Florence.<sup>186</sup> During this time we know she worked on a watercolor of an “Arab” and other paintings or sketches of an “old man,” lilies of the valley, an olive branch, and orange blossoms.<sup>187</sup>

3.24. Unidentified photographer, *Jane Byrd McCall with Her Mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, and Sister, Gertrude McCall in Venice, Italy*, ca. 1891, albumen print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

This was not Jane’s first trip to Italy, but it signaled a turning point in her life. On this visit she met her soon to be husband, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, with whom she conceived and executed a plan for a simple life and an art convent that took her out of the mainstream of high society and placed her in rural retreats where she would live in self-imposed, semi-isolation in artistic environments of her own design, surrounded by like-minded, self-selected inhabitants who shared her wishes for healthful and artistic living. In these places, it seemed as though Jane stopped running at the dizzying pace of the social calendar. Life slowed down and, as we will see, simple living evolved in theory, practice, and aesthetically.

Jane’s calendar first mentions Ralph in January 1891. The months to come are filled with his name. For example, it appears he hosted a musicale on January 14<sup>th</sup> and a dinner on February 28<sup>th</sup>. A 1933 essay on Ralph Whitehead by Chicago Hull House reformer turned Byrdcliffe cofounder Hervey White mentions a palace on the “Turnabuoni [sic]” with “liveried servants, the extravagances and inanities of a society

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<sup>186</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendar entry, October 16, 20, 1890; January 1, 1891, March 1891, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

life.”<sup>188</sup> In all likelihood, this is where he held his musicale and the dinner mentioned above.

After leaving her studio on April 9<sup>th</sup>, she visited Venice and copied Carpaccio in the Gallery (probably a reference to Carpaccio’s paintings in the Galleria dell’Accademia) and practiced etching. In June, she was invited to Corfu on the 9<sup>th</sup>, visited through the 14<sup>th</sup>, and then departed for Milan, and Lake Como, spending several days in between visiting Serbelloni. Referencing an old Milanese family name, there is a palazzo Serbelloni in Milan, a Grand Hotel Serbelloni in Bellagio on Lake Como, and several other locations near Milan bearing the name Serbelloni. Because the reference is vague, it is hard to tell which Serbelloni site Jane was talking about. According to historian Robert Edwards, Serbelloni was the place where Jane and Ralph swore their allegiance to the perfect Arts and Crafts life<sup>189</sup>—the simple life—thus, renouncing the extravagant high-society life they were no longer finding pleasurable. Hervey White wrote that Ralph remembered his gay living from the period as “something to be forgotten, to be ashamed of.”<sup>190</sup> At this moment, Jane and Ralph supposedly conceived the ideas later published in the Whiteheads’ essay “Work” in *Grass of the Desert* (1892)—ideas that guided the Whiteheads through the rest of their life together, forming the basis for their simple life and the “art convent” they eventually founded at Byrdcliffe in 1903.

You smile, but our “convent” shall not be a mere *Château d’Espagne* [sic] [*château en Espagne*/castle in the sky]. . . . one thing I know, that you and I, before many years are past, shall start some rational life of our own, and through that life we shall form around us a community, . . . whose lives shall be happy and reasonable because of the reason and happiness of our own.

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<sup>188</sup> Hervey White, “Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead,” 18.

<sup>189</sup> Robert Edwards, “Byrdcliffe: Life by Design,” 4.

<sup>190</sup> Hervey White, “Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead,” 18.

The idea of doing something useful, and living a life healthy in body and thought and emotion, is no new one; but custom and the weight of the weary “world” hinders most of us in its realization. . . .

. . . . In the community we spoke of . . . there will be room for all kinds of work; you talked as if you thought the scheme might fail from degenerating into dilettante art and learned leisure. No; you have your painting, that is work enough for you; another may have his music; but to others, such as myself, who have no particular artistic or literary faculty, simpler crafts are still open. . . .<sup>191</sup>

Written in correspondence with Jane and located and dated in Florence in April, 1891, “Work” presents a vision of life very different from the ones they had been living. In it Whitehead describes every facet and nuance of the art convent he imagined with Jane and their friend Madeleine Fleury on “the hill” in April 1891.<sup>192</sup> Healthful living in a communal farm setting would involve hand work and manual out-door labor for both male and female residents.<sup>193</sup> Intended to be good for the body and keep people in touch with nature and simplicity of life, the Whiteheads envisioned their convent in the New World—the United States. They imagined who should marry, how much each individual must contribute, when people should go to bed, and what they should wear at work and at rest. Even the role of religion and the education of children is addressed. Specifics of

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<sup>191</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “Work,” *Grass of the Desert*, 59, 62.

<sup>192</sup> “The hill” is inscribed in Jane’s calendar on June 22, 1891. The days surrounding this inscription include references to Milan and Serbelloni, an old Milanese family name, leading one to believe the location of this event was in or around Milan. However, Robert Edwards referring to a now missing letter in his “Byrdcliffe: Life by Design” essay (p. 4) says “We cannot scrutinize their relationship until a meeting in 1891 in Serbelloni, Italy. There, one June afternoon on a hillside overlooking the Arno, with Madeleine Fleury as witness, they swore allegiance to Whitehead’s version of the perfect Arts and Crafts life.” Here, Edwards’ use of “Arts and Crafts” is interchangeable with the simple life, and what Edwards calls “Whitehead’s version” this author attributes to Ralph and Jane. Facts seem to slightly conflict when comparing information between the three sources—Jane’s calendar, the essay “Work” as published in *Grass of the Desert*, and Edwards’ reference to the now missing letter. It is impossible at this point to know for certain if their meeting on the hill was in April or June, in or around Florence or Milan. To complicate matters even more a letter from Ralph to Jane, inscribed “Paris. March 4<sup>th</sup> ‘92” mentions “Le Menardo’s” cottage as the place they made their vow to one another. The location of the cottage is not divulged. See Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, folder: letters from Ralph to Jane, March 1892-Dec. 1896, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>193</sup> Communal is used here as a reference to community rather than “collective ownership.”

“Work” and how closely it relates to reality at Byrdcliffe are discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

Several of Jane’s calendar entries from July refer to “cloud studies,” and “pine trees.” They are possible references to a panel she painted to commemorate the mutual love, commitment, and goals she shared with Ralph. The panel remained with the Whiteheads throughout their lives, showing up in period photographs in Europe while they were on their honeymoon, at their home in California, and later in Woodstock.

[Illustration: 3.25. and 3.26.] It was even replicated to serve as the drop front on a now missing desk made at Byrdcliffe. [Illustration: 3.27.] Today, the original panel remains at Byrdcliffe, part of the collection of the Woodstock Guild, Byrdcliffe’s steward. Sadly, it is in such bad condition it doesn’t merit illustration. It pictures sun streaming through the clouds over a landscape of rolling hills and pine trees; a pair of disembodied wings descending from the sky. It seems the landscape commemorates the day they spent on the hilltop site where they swore their allegiance to one another and to their vision of a simple life.

3.25. Photograph attributed to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, *Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead in Artistic Room on Continent* [commemorative panel pictured on easel], ca. 1892, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

3.26. Unidentified photographer, *Ralph Whitehead in Arcady Den, “the Sunset,”* [commemorative panel on wainscot beneath Birge Harrison seascape], ca. 1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, pictured in Robert Edwards, *Byrdcliffe: Life By Design*, 6.

3.27. Jane Whitehead, painting on drop front panel, unknown Byrdcliffe cabinetmaker, *Byrdcliffe Drop Front Desk* [now missing], ca. 1904, photograph in Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library, pictured in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe*, 84.



Around the edges of the panel are the words, “*Tu ne cede malis, Sed contra audentior ito. Qua Tua te fortuna sinet.*” This may be the first of a number of times the Whiteheads appropriated and used art and literature as metaphor for their lives. The quotation comes from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Book Six, 95-96: “You [Aeneas], do not surrender to evils, but continue to go more boldly where your fortune will allow you.”<sup>194</sup> Here, the sibyl of Cumae delivers Apollo’s prophecies exhorting Aeneas to face a journey to the underworld to reunite with his father Anchises, who will reveal Rome’s future to his son. Aeneas was the son of Anchises, a Trojan prince, and Venus the Roman goddess of love. He was destined to found a new Trojan state and is portrayed as the embodiment of Roman virtues, particularly in his devotion to family, country, and mission.

The Whiteheads’ plaque compares visually with particular aspects of Book Six of the *Aeneid*. For example, “While hacking pine trees to construct a proper funeral pyre for Misenus, Aeneas sees twin doves, which he instinctively knows were sent by his mother, Venus. The doves lead him to the golden bough, and Aeneas seizes it and takes it to the sibyl’s cave.”<sup>195</sup> Here, perhaps, the disembodied wings which carry a bough and fly over pine tree covered hills in Jane’s panel may refer to the above quoted passage. The sibyl’s exhortations lead Aeneas to reunite with his dead father Anchises, who resides in the Blessed Groves, a region within Elysium, the Roman equivalent of heaven or spiritual perfection, where beautiful meadows are inhabited by blessed spirits. Aeneas needs the golden bough he received from Venus in order to enter Elysium. Within the Blessed

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<sup>194</sup> Many thanks to Sergio Cortesini, fellow Smithsonian American Art Museum Fellow, for sharing this translation and its context within Vergil’s *Aeneid*. Sergio Cortesini, conversation with author, February 2, 2006.

<sup>195</sup> Richard McDougall and Suzanne Pavols, Summary of Book VI, *CliffsNotes on Aeneid*, <http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/LitNote/id-3, pageNum-28.html>, accessed 2/28/2006.

Groves of Elysium, Anchises reveals Rome's future to his son. Here, within Book Six of the *Aeneid*,

Virgil's imagination and intellect create an otherworldly vision that invites readers to accept it as a symbolic statement concerning the nature of life after death. The possibility of reincarnation, which provides a philosophical basis for the pageant of souls about to be reborn as personages in Roman history, fuses Virgil's speculations on the afterlife with the national theme that lies at the heart of the epic and is its whole reason for being.

The essential philosophical message of Book VI is that the soul, contaminated by its association with the body during mortal life, undergoes purgation after death. Passing on to Elysium, it remains there for a thousand years and is then reborn into the world. . . . This cycle of death, purgation, and rebirth is the general interpretation that many commentators have given to the speech Anchises delivers to his son concerning the souls in Elysium. However, because Virgil is dealing with spiritual concepts that by their very nature do not permit a precise, literal expression, no common agreement exists as to these concept's exact meanings. They can be stated only in terms of symbols and metaphors that stand for a reality that lies beyond ordinary experience.<sup>196</sup>

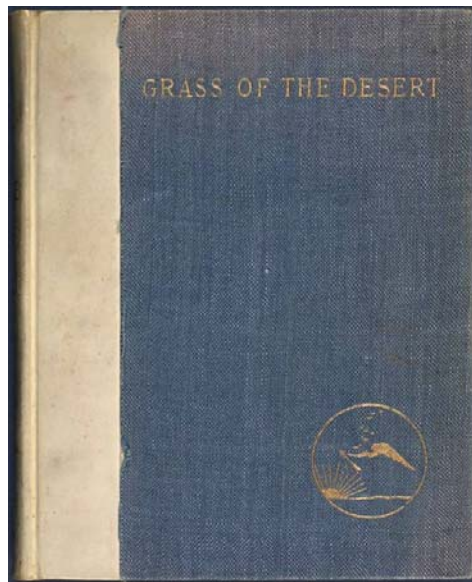
Here, it seems likely that the Whiteheads were using Virgil's *Aeneid* to refer to the "New Life" they envisioned together. Borrowing iconography and meaning from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's interpretation of Dante Alighieri's *Vita Nuova*—the Rossetti example is discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation--the Whiteheads' New Life was premised on a spiritual marriage in which woman as heart and man as intellect unite through Beauty to transform earthly love into something divine, thus making heaven on earth possible. Virgil's discussion of the passage and rebirth of souls in Elysium seems to closely relate, as does Jane's ascending or descending disembodied bird and bough imagery.

The wing imagery used in this panel along with several other symbols—the arrow, and the fleur-de-lis or Florentine lily—sometimes used alone or in combination with one another, were used from this point forward to symbolize the Whiteheads'

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

corporate identity, standing for their relationship and identifying their collaborative artistic and intellectual projects. In these symbols, the wings are meant to refer to Jane, whose middle name and pet name was Byrd, and the arrow symbolizes Ralph. The fleur-de-lis or Florentine lily refers to the couple's meeting place, Florence, Italy. Jane developed several design motifs featuring these symbols to mark their work. *Grass of the Desert's* cover, for example, has their circular emblem with the wing and arrow over a sunrise (or sunset?) stamped in the lower right hand corner of its cover. [Illustration: 3.28.]



3.28. Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead in collaboration with Jane Byrd McCall, *Grass of the Desert*, London: Chiswick Press, 1892. 3.32. Jane Byrd McCall, *Colorado Landscape*, signed and dated 1891, oil on canvas, 14 ¼ x 18 ¼ inches, collection of The Woodstock Guild.

Beyond the already mentioned associations with Virgil's *Aeneid*, it is possible to read the Whiteheads into another storyline within the epic. In another episode, Aeneas falls in love with Dido, the founding queen of the North African city Carthage. Because he is duty bound to fulfill his destiny in Italy, Aeneas leaves Dido, who goes mad from

grief for her lost love and kills herself on a funeral pyre, committing suicide with Aeneas's sword. Could the arrow in Jane and Ralph's wing and arrow imagery refer to Aeneas's sword? The likelihood seems greater when one considers the terrible grief and collapse Jane suffered after separating with Ralph in July 1891. This was the time she was making preparatory studies for and executing the panel. As Jane's letters to Ralph from later that year indicate, the lovers were kept from each other by Jane's concerned mother and first cousin Henry Chapman Mercer. It was a separation deemed necessary, no doubt, in order to keep Jane and her family's name in good standing. Ralph was not supposed to see Jane again until he secured a divorce from his first wife, Marie. However, divorces were not easily obtained during their day and age and were out of the question for Ralph granted in England, other countries in Europe, or in the United States. In order to accomplish his task, Ralph had to move to and reside in Germany for one year in order to naturalize.

In the meantime, Jane began a "rest cure" in England in August that lasted through the end of the year. Jane's calendars from her rest cure are filled with frightful references to "electricity," apathy, bad days, and recovery. A victim of the repressive expectations and pace of high-society life in the modern, urban world, Jane, not surprisingly, became a textbook example of the type of person in need of simple living: an overeducated neurasthenic, wanting the regenerative, calming effects of the countryside. Country living soon became a way of life, rather than a mere complement to the sophisticated lifestyle Jane experienced at Albury House. Her life changed forever.

On November 11, she said goodbye to Ralph and sailed for home, ending up in Colorado Springs by December 5th. A long sought destination for ailing individuals, the

Springs in this town are thought to be restorative to this day. Letters between Jane and Ralph from as early as their first meeting in January 1891 suggest that Jane had been planning to travel there for awhile. So, it seems, Jane's trip to Colorado Springs was not initially intended as a continuation of her rest cure. Rather, it seems Jane's plans were predicated on her wish to spend time in the American West.

In Ralph's January 1891 letters to Jane he talks about the American West, particularly, Colorado and California, as if it was a simple life Mecca. He says he is excited to visit Jane in Colorado, he hopes to take a side trip to California, and explore possible locations where they could live. He discusses his health, saying it has been poor and how he thinks a good remedy for it and his anxiety is the healthy outdoor life. "In any scheme for our future it is as important for me as for thee; we are one again even in [two], my darling Byrd. This granted, I care not whether we live on a Greek island, or in Tuscany, or in the West."<sup>197</sup> At this point, the couple was still considering all of these locations. In April 1891, Jane writes to Ralph,

Thou are not Hamburg and London. Thou art Arcadia for me—the sweet country side, and a path that lead to a height. . . . Yes, dear, a simple life is the best worth living. So few people understand even the idea of it. I am so glad we feel it in common. No matter how often I have strayed off to get new experiences I have come back to it as the mean. The center where dwells harmony. We are all groping. [What] Do we ever find? All one wants to be armed with is a little love, a little health, a little philosophy, and a good deal of nature out of doors . . . .<sup>198</sup>

"A little love, a little health, a little philosophy, and a good deal of nature out of doors":

this letter is a quintessential expression of Jane and Ralph's approach to the simple life.

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<sup>197</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed "Jan. 25. Evening," ca. Jan. – Nov. 1891, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>198</sup> Jane Byrd McCall to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, letter inscribed "April 2-3, '91," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Jane's only known signed and dated painting is a Western landscape possibly documenting her stay in the Colorado Springs area. [Illustration: 3.29.] Keeping their passion for each other and for Beauty alive, Jane and Ralph collaborated overseas on the publication of two books while she was in Colorado Springs and he was in Germany. *Grass of the Desert* and *The Vita Nuova of Dante* featured Jane's wing-and-arrow designs. Both were produced by the famed London Arts and Crafts publishing house the Chiswick Press in 1892.



3.29. Jane Byrd McCall, *Colorado Landscape*, signed and dated 1891, oil on canvas, 14 ¼ x 18 ¼ inches, collection of The Woodstock Guild.

Ralph received his divorce in March 1892 and was in New York by April.<sup>199</sup> Jane's calendars from May document a trip to California, including visits to San Francisco, Santa Barbara, where they would later settle, and Sierra Nevada, where they met Mohawk and Comanche Indians, and visited the desert. Winding their way back to Colorado Springs, they stopped at Glenwood Springs, Colorado, for restorative hot baths.

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<sup>199</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed "Berlin. March 19<sup>th</sup> '92," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Her calendars make no mention of Ralph on this trip, but it is likely he was there. His daily letters to her end in March, and do not resume until after their marriage in November 1892. And a letter from Ralph to Jane, dated “Jan. 20.” (probably 1892) announces “I have written to G. [Jane’s sister Gertrude] saying that reckon on her to arrange a tour to California and [illegible word] that we should start in April.”<sup>200</sup> Even though their official wedding was August 23, 1892, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, across the river from Jane’s mother’s summer home in Kittery, Maine,<sup>201</sup> a calendar reference to a “Night Wedding” taking place May 9-12 somewhere on the coast of California may refer to a private ceremony the couple had in a simple life setting.

Jane and Ralph’s overseas honeymoon lasted well over a year. Setting sail from New York on September 28, 1892, the couple spent time in London, Paris, Barbizon, Grasse and Cannes, where Jane set up a number of ateliers, painted daily, and studied with various people, including “Julian’s studio Rue de Berr[i],” in Paris and Miss Mercier in Cannes.<sup>202</sup>

Portraits of Jane from this point in their relationship portray her as the Pre-Raphaelite ideal. In looks, manner and clothing, the Pre-Raphaelite ideal was Romantic, combining artistic, unconventional and emotionally intense attributes.<sup>203</sup> A letter describing Jane at this time says,

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<sup>200</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed “Jan. 20. Evening,” ca. Jan. – Feb. 1892, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>201</sup> Nancy Green, “The Reality of Beauty,” 48, footnote 65, page 55 describes a “Deed of Trust, dated August 23, 1892 (their wedding day),” which gave Whitehead \$125,000 upon their marriage. The money was deeded to go back to Jane in case of separation or divorce. Robert Edwards, “Byrdcliffe: Life by Design,”<sup>5</sup> says Mrs. McCall’s summer house in Kittery, Maine, was across the river from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where Jane and Ralph were married on August 25, 1892.

<sup>202</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendars, 1892-1893, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>203</sup> Debra Mancoff, *Jane Morris*, 3.

In fancy I see you always as you have been in Florence the first return of your wedding-day: young, lovely, with aureola of golden curls around your head and with gracious movements of a fairy! Adorable garments from Paris, Ruskin jewels in your hair, the lute in your arm, old folksongs on your lips—I was perfectly drunk of so much perfection and shall never forget that.<sup>204</sup>

In Chapter Two of this dissertation, similarities between Madeleine Fleury's portrait of Jane and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's portrait of Elizabeth Siddal as *Beata Beatrix* were examined. [Illustration: 2.2. and 2.3.] Siddal like Jane Morris, William Morris's wife and perhaps the quintessential Pre-Raphaelite model, and Jane Whitehead, for that matter, all share a moody, intelligent beauty that challenged the Victorian ideal. Even though Jane's anonymity in publicity about her and Ralph's artistic environs and some of the more conventional roles she played as wife and mother in their relationship make her seem less revolutionary than some culture radicals from her day and age, her equality and influence in her relationship with her husband and in the establishment of art schools in California and New York, among other things, was unconventional, a challenge to the status quo.

As discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, it seems the Whiteheads modeled their New Life after the Pre-Raphaelite precedent set by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in his translation of medieval Tuscan poet Dante Alighieri's *Vita Nuova* translated as "The New Life" in 1861. Art historian Ronald Johnson explains,

In Dante, Rossetti found a new sublimation of love in which the differing states of the poet's soul were expressed through a perfect woman. The poet's soul experienced each spiritual sphere through his various visions of Beatrice. Thus Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven were all brought into present experience, down to earth, through an essentially ideal love. Human love was transformed into heavenly love and Beatrice guided Dante to the higher mysteries and all-

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<sup>204</sup> Toni Henschel-Dracht to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed "February 1, 1939," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, quoted in Nancy Green, "The Reality of Beauty," 48.



transforming experience. Divinity is thus not conceived as an object but as an experience whose only knowable form is beauty.<sup>205</sup>

The New Life, therefore was a form of spirituality, where advocates sought divinity on earth through love and Beauty. For the Whiteheads, Jane stood for the perfect woman, the beauty necessary for divinity on earth.<sup>206</sup>

By the time the Whiteheads published their own translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova* in 1892, during their overseas courtship and separation while Ralph secured a divorce from his first wife, Pre-Raphaelitism had passed from being revolutionary to fashionable. By 1892, Rossetti had been dead ten years (he died in 1882) and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood's foundation was in the distant past (the Brotherhood was formed in 1848).

It seems the Whiteheads combined a Pre-Raphaelite model of beauty in the form of Jane with the storyline from Dante's *Vita Nuova* in a self-referential way. In the Whitehead edition, Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* accompanies the title page.

Quoting from Amelia Barr's chapter "The Parting" within *The Daughter of Fife*, Ralph used poetry to refer to his relationship with Jane in the dedication of the publication,

Can there be  
At length some hard-earned heart-won home,  
Where, -- exile changed for sanctuary,  
Our lot may fill indeed its sum,  
And you may wait and I may come?<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Ronald Johnson, "Dante Rossetti's Beata Beatrix and the New Life," 551.

<sup>206</sup> In William Michael Rossetti, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti. His Family-Letters with a Memoir*, vol. 1, Ellis, 1895, 135, Rossetti Archive Textual Transcription, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/pr5246.a43.rad.html#>, accessed 3/15/06: "That the Preraphaelites valued moral and spiritual ideas as an important section of the ideas germane to fine art is most true, and not one of them was in the least inclined to do any work of a gross, lascivious, or sensual description; but neither did they limit the province of art to the spiritual or the moral. I will therefore take it upon me to say that the bond of union among the Members of the Brotherhood was really and simply this—1, To have genuine ideas to express; 2, to study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; 3, to sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and 4, and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues."

Clearly, this is a reference to the “parting” or forced separation that sent Jane to Colorado Springs and Ralph to Berlin. Here, the couple describes their desire for reunion in a home that is the equivalent of sanctuary. All of this parallels Dante and Beatrice’s story within the *Vita Nuova*, where Dante, who was never able to consummate his love for Beatrice in life, is reunited with her in heaven.

In Ralph’s many letters leading up to their marriage, he writes about Jane’s role in their “New Life.” “Byrd shall be the poet-painter of whatever I and she lives in,” on one occasion.<sup>208</sup> On another, “I was asking myself all day [illegible word] what it was I wanted to find for our surroundings in the country, for us to live amongst, for Byrd to paint. Let us talk of those things together.”<sup>209</sup> Jane was the muse of their corporate identity throughout their lives. The act of her painting (rather than the results of her painting, i.e., works of art) embodied their ideals. Like their mentor John Ruskin, the Whiteheads believed,

Great art is only possible as the expression of a noble humanity; that a great artist is a great teacher, seeing and making us see new realms of the unseen; that the highest art is attainable only when there occurs combined in the individual an enthusiastic love of what is good, a wide grasp of the facts of nature, and a power of sifting and ordering these into a harmonious whole; while in humbler spheres the perception of the true beauty even of a flower depends on some share in this same faculty of the imagination, which is impossible except to those whose hearts are not yet chilled by custom or by sin.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Amelia Barr, Chapt. V, “A Parting,” *A Daughter of Fife*, 1886.

<sup>208</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed “Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>,” folder: letters from Ralph to Jane, Jan.-Feb. 1892, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>209</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed “Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> ’92,” Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>210</sup> Ralph Whitehead, “Modern Painters,” *Grass of the Desert*, 110.

The Whiteheads understood Beauty to be inseparable from goodness, and that man was gradually developing a sense of Beauty corresponding to something in the Divine order of the universe.<sup>211</sup>

The image of the artist, specifically of Jane the artist, was symbolic of their beliefs and communicated this aesthetic ideal, their New Life philosophy. “As the poet-painter of whatever I and she lives in,” Ralph describes her painting as if it were part of the place in which they would live and as though it created their home.<sup>212</sup> Photographs of artistic settings from their honeymoon feature Jane as part of the atmosphere; she was a necessary component in the message these images were meant to convey. [Illustration: 3.25.] In one image from their honeymoon, Jane sits on a daybed turned away from her audience; she is an ornament in a room where everything is present for a reason. Here, she wears a high-collared Pre-Raphaelite styled dress based on Elizabethan models from the sixteenth century—a time period corresponding with the Renaissance and Shakespeare. A portrait of Jane Burden by her adoring husband William Morris similarly casts her in the past as a Medieval *Queen Guenevere*, a star of Arthurian legend and, thus, Shakespearean as well. [Illustration: 3.30] In 1858, when Morris painted his queen, he was working closely with the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter inscribed “Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>,” folder: letters from Ralph to Jane, Jan. – Feb. 1892, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.



3.30. William Morris, *Queen Guenevere (La Belle Iseult)*, 1858, oil on canvas, 28 ½ x 20 inches, Tate Gallery, London, online photograph, [www.all-art.org/history392-6.html](http://www.all-art.org/history392-6.html), accessed 9/10/2007.

In the photograph, Jane Whitehead sits on silken pillows and a tiger skin in a room that is Aesthetic and artistic. Copies of Renaissance masterpieces hang on the walls alongside an iron bat (seen to the right of Jane). Nocturnal animals, bats were often present in Japanese art popular in the Aesthetic period. They were also featured in the dreamscapes of the Symbolists, which probed the unconscious mind. The commemorative panel on the easel refers to the newlywed couple's marriage vows and to their mutual goal to live a New Life—the simple life—and form an art convent. On the far right, a caged bird sits on a wooden stand with a carved fleur-de-lis emblem—a romantic reference to the sitter.

In the 1890s, highly refined artistic environments, such as this, represented the simple lifestyle and philosophy of the Whiteheads. Here, the good life involved enlightened material restraint, high thinking, “the freedom of the city, freedom of the

earth, traveling, machinery, the benefits of science, music and fine arts, the best culture and the best company.”<sup>213</sup> By the 1890s, this conception seems dated, relating to views held at mid-century by American Transcendentalists, such as the just quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson, as well as by the mid-century lifestyles of English Arts and Crafts movement figureheads like John Ruskin and William Morris, and the Pre-Raphaelites. By the 1890s, William Morris had lost faith in the ability of art to change the world for the better and had devoted himself to socialist causes. The Whiteheads, however, never seemed to lose their faith in art. While they made casual references to socialism from time to time and interacted with some of the most Progressive reformers in the United States, it seems the extent of their socialism was to live simply so that others may simply live. They also seemed to hold a belief that their students would carry the benefits of simple living back with them into the real world. Primarily, the Whiteheads’ pursuit of simple living was always therapeutic and individualistic. Their politics varied little, but their aesthetics evolved over time, becoming more austere in California in the 1890s and downright Spartan at Byrdcliffe after the turn-of-the-century. As this dissertation shows in later chapters, these austere aesthetics which became associated with socialism and, later, with Progressive Era social reform, were spearheaded in the 1890s in California by the Whiteheads and their circle.

After their honeymoon, the Whiteheads settled in Montecito, California, where they established an Arcadian shrine to the simple life. Arcady, the name of their Montecito estate, marks the next phase in the philosophical and aesthetic evolution of simple living in the artistic environs of Jane and Ralph Whitehead. It is the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation.

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<sup>213</sup> David Shi, *The Simple Life*, 132.

## **Chapter 4: Jane and Ralph Whitehead's Pacific Arcadia in Montecito, California.**

Chapter Four covers the beginning of the Whiteheads' life together starting after their marriage in 1892 and extended European honeymoon. Here, I argue that artists Birge and Eleanor Harrison played a significant role leading Jane and Ralph from France and Europe to settle in Montecito, California in 1894. A significant amount of time is spent at the outset of this chapter covering the Whiteheads' biography from this period. Much of this biographical material was discovered during research on this project and has not been published before. It includes documentation about the loss of Jane and Ralph's first child and a rest cure Jane took with Silas Weir Mitchell, about whom Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote the groundbreaking feminist story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Jane and Ralph's position on women's rights is also explored here. It gives insight into the reasons Jane avoided taking credit for her art work as an artist and as a founder, administrator and participant at arts and crafts schools she established with Ralph in California and New York.

The years Jane and Ralph spent at Arcady, the name of their Montecito estate, and the simple life they lived there are documented in this chapter. At Arcady, as its name suggests, Jane and Ralph used an Arcadian model in their first collaborative attempt at simple living on a broad scale. Here, the simple life was holistically expressed as a philosophy serving the basis for a lifestyle which was part and parcel of an aesthetic experience given form in the built environment and social circle they established.

Their grand villa was based on a Mediterranean/Spanish Mission model. In it Jane's enormous art studio followed the aestheticized model analyzed in the preceding chapter. In this and many respects, the Arcady villa continued the European Aesthetic

model of simple living they lived in the 1880s and early '90s. Something new in the aesthetic evolution of things, however, is revealed in the smaller outbuildings of unfinished wood they had built into the land like natural outcroppings. These buildings were blueprints for the shape of things to come. Their austerity, naturalism and integration with the surrounding landscape would become the mature simple life aesthetic at Byrdcliffe after Jane and Ralph moved there in 1903. This model is the one we associate with simple living in its maturity when it became a popular movement in the United States through publications by exponents like Charles Keeler in California, Gustav Stickley on the East Coast, and others.

Landscaping at Arcady integrated local plant and rock forms as well as exotic and tropical plantings. The rich results were not natural to the arid, sun drenched mountains of Montecito that abut the Pacific Ocean. Radical excavation and intensive irrigation were needed to transform the grounds to give it an Eden-esque appearance.

At Arcady, the Whiteheads had two children, Ralph Jr. (born 1899), and Peter (born 1901). These boys became the impetus for the Whiteheads' ultimate move from California to New York. California was an Arcadian refuge for two cultured adults. But, for their sons the Whiteheads wanted closer proximity to cultural centers and Europe. Concern about the education of their children led them to establish the Arcady School, a Sloyd school for manual art, in 1898 on the grounds of their Arcady estate. This school was the Whiteheads' first attempt at forming an arts and crafts school. It combined Sloyd teachings with the educational philosophy of John Dewey from Chicago and J. Liberty Tadd from Philadelphia. The Whiteheads were active in the Chicago Arts and Crafts circle of Dewey, including Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr's Hull House, and they

knew Tadd from Jane's hometown Philadelphia. Implicit in the formation of the Arcady school and later, the Byrdcliffe arts and crafts school and colony was the Whiteheads' belief that the changes they wanted to see take place in society had to begin with the education of children. Jane and Ralph published a series of small books called *Arrows of the Dawn* during the Arcady years that documented this belief.

Although they continued to spend time in California after their move to Woodstock to found Byrdcliffe in 1903, this chapter addresses their early years of full time residence and analyzes the simple life they created for themselves in their Pacific Arcadia. Later visits to California and the second home they built in Montecito in 1910 named Neroli are covered in the following chapter.

### **Section 1: Southern California: The Pacific Arcadia**

Arcady, the name the Whiteheads chose for their California estate, refers to Arcadia, a province in ancient Greece whose people were noted for their remote pastoral lifestyle, simplicity, and contentment. [Illustration 4.1.] During the Renaissance, the name became synonymous with Utopian rustic bliss after Sir Philip Sidney used it to title a 1590 romance.<sup>214</sup> Sound familiar? It should, because Arcadian qualities were those sought by nineteenth-century seekers of the simple life like Jane and Ralph.

4.1. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers; Samuel Ilsley, architect; Christopher Torno, builder; *Arcady*, ca. 1894, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

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<sup>214</sup> "Arcadia." *Encyclopedia Mythica* from Encyclopedia Mythica Online, <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/a/arcadia.html>, accessed October 10, 2007.



In ancient Greece, Virgil wrote the *Eclogues* about Arcadia of Peloponnesus, the domain of Pan, god of the forest. A virgin wilderness, Pan's Arcadia was home to his court of dryads, nymphs, and other spirits of nature. Virgil's poems inspired artists and poets for centuries to come. Through him, Arcadia became a symbol of pastoral simplicity. For example, Dante's *The Divine Comedy* in the middle ages, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and Nicholas Poussin's *Et in Arcadia ego* (*I too once lived in Arcadia*) in the Renaissance all helped codify Virgil's initial vision. [Illustration 4.2.] Don't think this historiography was lost on the Whiteheads in their choice of "Arcady" as the name of their home and estate in Montecito. As seen in previous chapters, the Whiteheads made use of their extensive knowledge of art, literature, and poetry in crafting their corporate identity.



4.2. Nicholas Poussin, *Et in Arcadia ego* (*I too once lived in Arcadia*), 1637-38, oil on canvas, 33 ½ x 47 5/8 inches, Musée du Louvre.

During their 1891 courtship, Jane wrote to Ralph “Thou art Arcadia for me—the sweet country side, and a path that lead to a height.”<sup>215</sup> Prior to the Whiteheads’ marriage, they considered Greece, Italy, and the American West as locations for their New Life. Ralph wrote to Jane, “I care not whether we live on a Greek island, or in Tuscany, or in the West.”<sup>216</sup> In the Whiteheads’ time, the American West, particularly the California coast, where Montecito is located, was thought of as an American Mediterranean paradise, a Pacific Arcadia.

At this moment in the 1880s and ‘90s America had Italy on the brain. Certainly, the Whiteheads had Italy on their minds. After all, they met in Italy and considered Tuscany as a site for their Arcadia. Historian Kevin Starr suggests,

Much of the Mediterranean metaphor subsumed by the Southern California mission myth originated in a genuine, complex cultural response on the part of the upper-middle-class Protestant American imagination in its Mediterraneanizing mode. It partook of the Italianizing impulse that pervaded genteel America in the 1880s and 1890s, a sensibility characterized in its finer moments by certain novels of William Dean Howells and Henry James, the fledgling connoisseurship of young Bernard Berenson [with whom the Whiteheads were friends], the founding of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the architectural creations of McKim, Mead, and White, and other instances of what is now known as the American Renaissance style. *Our Italy* (1891) by Charles Dudley Warner of Hartford, Connecticut—a friend of [Charles Fletcher] Lummis’s, to whom Lummis dedicated his own *A Tramp Across the Continent* (1892), his compilation of *Times* pieces—represents the most elegant sort of genteel Eastern American Mediterraneanizing into Southern California. Warner encouraged Southern Californians to develop a regional culture based upon the implications of its Mediterranean topography and climate: to become, that is, a society that mediated between American efficiency and Latin *dolce far niente*, a society having time for both productivity and leisure, the indoor life of manufacture and the outdoor life of the sun.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Jane Byrd McCall to Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, letter inscribed “April 2-3, ’91,” Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>216</sup> Ralph Whithead to Jane Byrd McCall, letter inscribed “Jane. 25. Evening,” folder: letters from Ralph to Jane, Jan.-Nov. 12, 1891, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>217</sup> Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era*, 76-77.

The Lummis to whom Starr refers in the just cited passage was one of California's major promoters in this period. Lummis's Arcadian vision of California and the larger American Southwest was similar to that held by the Whiteheads when they moved there in 1894. Charles F. Lummis promoted the natural and cultural attractions of the American Southwest in *The Land of Sunshine*, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce's magazine which was renamed *Out West* in 1902.<sup>218</sup> Lummis became *The Land of Sunshine's* editor in 1894. Before that, starting in 1885, he was the city editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, a job he received after walking cross-country in an effort to recuperate from malaria he contracted back East. It was at the *Los Angeles Times* that he published a series of travel dispatches about his cross-country expedition. Lummis described his experiences in the Southwestern landscape and with the Pueblo and Spanish-speaking peoples, experiences which left him feeling like "a man who got outside the fences of civilization and was glad of it."<sup>219</sup> He argued in racialized terms that in the Southwest, the Anglo-Saxon race was encountering both a temperate Mediterranean climate, and a Latin Catholic culture for the first time. Saxons could thrive as never before, if they learned to temper the excesses of modern materialism and the Protestant work ethic with an outdoor life-style and the Spanish generosity of spirit, personal restraint, social purpose, and joy in life.<sup>220</sup>

In all likelihood, Lummis and the Whiteheads moved in the same close-knit circles and probably knew one another. For example, Lummis was friends with Jane's close friend from her hometown, the novelist Owen Wister, who authored *The Virginian*, among other well-known titles dealing with Western themes. Lummis and Wister were classmates at Harvard, where both studied art history with Charles Eliot Norton. The Whiteheads

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<sup>218</sup> Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating A Modern Regional Tradition*, 89.

<sup>219</sup> Charles Lummis quoted in Turbesé Lummis Fiske and Keith Lummis, *Charles F. Lummis: The Man and His West*, 119-20, in Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 88.

<sup>220</sup> Charles Lummis quoted in Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 89.

interacted with Norton after their move to Byrdcliffe through their involvement with the Boston Society for Arts and Crafts. Like the Whiteheads, Norton was a friend of John Ruskin and shared many of his values and beliefs. Norton taught Lummis and Wister that art could “shape and sustain emerging social patterns and institutions through moral uplift”<sup>221</sup>—a central reason for the important position art held in the Whiteheads’ conception of simple living. Ruskin wrote, “Taste is not only a part and index of morality, it is the only morality. The first, and last, and closest trial question to any living creature is ‘What do you like?’ Tell me what you like, I’ll tell you what you are.”<sup>222</sup> People like the Whiteheads, Norton and, thus, his students like Lummis and Wister believed Ruskin’s theory that art and a person’s surroundings had a powerful influence on individual and national character.

Both Lummis and Wister moved to California in the 1880s for health reasons. In all likelihood, Jane’s search for improved health played a role in the couple’s decision to move there. By the 1880s, the State had become a Mecca for health seekers. Other friends, including feminist author Charlotte Perkins Gilman and painter Birge Harrison, migrated to California in search of remedies for their maladies.

### **Section 2: The Harrison’s Role Bringing the Whiteheads to Montecito**

Eleanor and Birge Harrison, in fact, may have played a larger role in the Whiteheads’ decision to move to Montecito than has heretofore been recognized. After spending nearly two years abroad on an extended European honeymoon, the Whiteheads made an

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<sup>221</sup> Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 81.

<sup>222</sup> John Ruskin quoted in Patricia Likos Ricci, “Ruskin Reconsidered,” *Nineteenth Century* v. 25, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 4.

almost immediate departure for the West Coast after their arrival back in New York on May 6, 1894. Stopping in Chicago and Las Vegas on the way, they arrived in Los Angeles on June 8<sup>th</sup>. By July 14<sup>th</sup>, they were staying at the San Marcos Hotel in Santa Barbara, neighboring the Montecito hillside they'd soon make their home. Painting with Eleanor commenced July 21<sup>st</sup>, the same date the Harrisons are said to have returned from an extended trip to France which began in the autumn of 1892.<sup>223</sup>

At this time, Birge was a celebrated American painter, one of few Americans in the late nineteenth century who managed to matriculate into the painting school of Paris's École des Beaux-Arts and secure a position in the annual, state sponsored Salon. Harrison was also an American staple in the Barbizon school and French art colony movement. He is perhaps best known for his winter snow scenes and Barbizon school paintings of French peasants, such as *Novembre*, which won a silver medal at the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris and was purchased by the French government. His less known California seascapes from circa 1896, when he worked and lived with the Whiteheads in California, epitomize the beauty of the place both he and the Whiteheads chose to call home at that time. [Illustration: 4.3., 2.1. and 2.12.] The moody, atmospheric qualities of *Moonrise on the Sea* associate it with the poetic landscapes of

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<sup>223</sup> Andrea Husby notes July 21, 1894 as the Harrisons' return date to Santa Barbara. In her dissertation on Birge Harrison, Husby cites this date as the one "when Birge closed on a contract for the construction of several stone houses, including a studio on a previously purchased five acre parcel of property near Cold Springs in the nearby town of Montecito." She cites "La Lomita Notes," unidentified newspaper clipping dated July 21, 1894, in the Birge Harrison File, Archives of the Montecito Historical Society, Montecito, California. However, the studio on the five acre parcel of property near Cold Springs could not have been included in the July 21, 1894 contract because it refers to the Whiteheads' Arcady property, which wasn't purchased until Fall 1894 from William Gallaher. Interestingly enough, it says "commenced painting with Mrs. Harrison" on July 21, 1894 in Jane's calendar. This was a week after arriving in Santa Barbara on July 14<sup>th</sup> from their honeymoon. See Andrea Husby, "Birge Harrison," 108, and David F. Myrick, *Montecito and Santa Barbara: The Days of the Great Estates*, 305.

American tonalism—a style characterized by “attention to tonal gradation, value, the ‘lost-edge’ and its resulting atmospheric effects, and refraction.”<sup>224</sup>



4.3. Lovell Birge Harrison, *Winter Sunset*, 1890, oil on wood, 15 1/4 x 23 3/8 in. (38.7 x 59.4 cm.), Smithsonian American Art Museum.

While much is known about Birge—he was celebrated in his day and even now he is well known through histories on American tonalist artists and American painters in France<sup>225</sup>—little is known about his first wife Eleanor, who was a successful, professional painter in the period. Eleanor Harrison was Eleanor Henderson Ritchie, an Australian painter whose work was shown and praised at the Paris Salon and in many Australian exhibitions. [Illustration: 4.4, 4.5. and 4.6.] In the 1886 Paris Salon, for example, she showed *A Study of a Peasant* “which was well received and hung on the line.”<sup>226</sup> In Australia, where she was “considered among the most talented women artists,” she participated in exhibitions at the Victorian Academy of Arts in 1883 and

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<sup>224</sup> Andrea Husby, “Birge Harrison,” 34.

<sup>225</sup> See Wanda M. Corn, *The Color of Mood: American Tonalism 1880-1910*; William H. Gerds, et. al., *Tonalism: An American Experience*; and Kathleen Adler, Erica Hirshler, Barbara Weinberg, et. al., *Americans in Paris 1860-1900*.

<sup>226</sup> “Australian Portraits: Mrs. Birge Harrison,” *The Sun* (April 11, 1890): 13. Andrea Husby notes that *The Sun* was an Australian journal that featured a series of biographical sketches of prominent artists. See Andrea Husby, “Birge Harrison,” 80, 97.

1884, the Victorian Artists' Society in 1888, and the International Exhibition marking the centennial of Australia in 1888.<sup>227</sup> She met her husband-to-be in 1882 while she was studying art at either Concarneau or Grez, France, both being French art colonies associated with the Barbizon school tradition. By that time, Birge was already a well-known painter. Like Jane, Eleanor was a privileged society woman. The daughter of Frances Ann Chrisp and John Miller Ritchie, ranchers near Melbourne who moved to Australia from England in 1842, Eleanor (like Jane) began her art studies in London and Paris around 1876. "She began her art studies at the South Kensington School in 1878 but left after nine months, and entered the Heatherley School. Becoming ill, she was ordered to journey to the Continent and stopped in Paris where she spent two years studying art with Arthur Loureiro and Edith Huybers."<sup>228</sup> According to an 1890 article, titled "Mrs. Birge Harrison," Eleanor's "active and independent nature made abhorrent to her the conventional lot of the society young lady."<sup>229</sup> Given her position in and rejection of high society and pursuit of a professional art education and career, it seems likely that Eleanor had a lot in common with Jane.

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<sup>227</sup> Andrea Husby, "Birge Harrison," 87.

<sup>228</sup> Andrea Husby, "Birge Harrison," 62.

<sup>229</sup> "Mrs. Birge Harrison," *Table Talk* (April 25, 1890): 9, cited in Andrea Busby, "Birge Harrison," 62.



4.4. *Eleanor Harrison*, born Eleanor Henderson Ritchie, image from unidentified period newspaper, n.d., image courtesy of Jane Clark, Deputy Chairman, Sotheby's Australia.



4.5. Eleanor Harrison, *Helping Grandmother*, n.d., oil on canvas (?), private collection, image courtesy of Jane Clark, Deputy Chairman, Sotheby's Australia.





4.6. Eleanor Harrison, *The Poacher's Daughter* (*La Fille du Braconnier*), 1886, oil on canvas, 78.5 x 59.0 cm, inscribed l.l. in red brown paint: E. Ritchie Harrison. / 86; on stretcher reverse, in ink on paper label: 17. / the poachers daughter, Private collection, Adelaide, image courtesy of Jane Clark, Deputy Chairman, Sotheby's Australia.

Jane's calendar entries from June and July 1894 mention several painting lessons with Mrs. Harrison on the beach and painting thistle. It seems teaching was one of Eleanor's professional goals. In fact, her "apparent inability to establish a teaching career to supplement their income" has been cited as a reason why the Harrisons decided in 1891 to leave Australia, where they went to live at the end of 1889.<sup>230</sup>

The Harrisons had moved to Santa Barbara from Eleanor's homeland Australia, in 1892, the year Jane and Ralph were married. After establishing their residence in Santa Barbara in August 1892, the Harrisons, like the Whiteheads, embarked on an extended visit to France of the same exact duration. Both couples spent time in Paris and Barbizon school locations and both appear to have shown up in Santa Barbara around July 21,

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<sup>230</sup> Andrea Husby, "Birge Harrison," 85, 95.

1894—the date Jane “commenced painting with Mrs. Harrison.”<sup>231</sup> It seems hard to believe this was a coincidence, especially when one considers that the Whiteheads gave a parcel of property to the Harrisons (which the Harrisons used as the location for their painting studio) as soon as the Whiteheads purchased the land that would become their Arcady estate in the Fall of 1894; and that when the Harrisons lived in the Santa Barbara/Montecito area they spent a lot of time painting with Jane and socializing with the Whiteheads. Several 1895 letters from Jane to her mother attest to their friendship. In one from April 1895 she writes,

I am beginning to paint a little now [she was recovering from surgery at the time], which delights Ralph and encourages me. Mr. Harrison heard of it the other day and came up to correct me. Fancy he that would rather die than give a lesson! It was very kind of him. Of course I had fifty things to ask him about—house paints, cretonnes, designs, bookplates, everything that related to artistic taste, and he spent the morning. Ralph sees him almost every day. They are tremendous friends.<sup>232</sup>

Perhaps the Harrisons convinced the Whiteheads to investigate Santa Barbara and Montecito as a possible place to settle. After all, Jane and Ralph were already planning to live or at least considering living in the American West. Additionally, Jane could have been the answer to Eleanor’s unrequited wish to teach, which would give the Harrisons a supplemental income allowing Birge to paint full time.

A letter to Jane’s mother talks about several California locations the Whiteheads were considering including Pasadena and San Diego.<sup>233</sup> Certainly the beauty of Santa

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<sup>231</sup> Jane Whitehead, 1894 calendar, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>232</sup> Jane Whitehead, letter dated April 15-17, 1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>233</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, letter, inscribed “July 12<sup>th</sup> Pasadena. Los Angeles. Sta Barbara,” Letters from Jane from Mother, Sister, Sons, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Barbara and Montecito were deciding factors. As described by simple life proselytizer, Gustav Stickley:

Montecito, a settlement lying along a scenic drive among the foot hills of the Sierra Santa Inés. It is a locality of many trees, accented, as its Spanish name implies, by little elevations, and reaching down to the yellow beach of the Pacific. In the springtime, having been watered by the winter rains, it becomes a labyrinth of natural growth and a fascinating, bewildering scene of color. The picture—with its great spots of brilliant red and yellow, each supported by modified tones of the same color, with superb greens, dark chocolate shades and creamy whites winding through the landscape—seems one which might have recurred again and again to the imagination of Titian, as he fixed upon his canvases his intricate orchestrations of color.

At Montecito, the golden brown of the live oak forms a charming background for the red clusters of the pepper trees. The yellow notes proceed from the oranges, lemons and the acacia blossoms, contrasted with which we find the soft lilac of the Ceanothus. The cream-tints are added by masses of eucalyptus flowers, and the varied greens by the foliage of the trees already mentioned, together with that of the olives, and of innumerable shrubs mingled with lush grasses like the alfalfa and luzerne grass.

Away from the picture, the eye travels southward to the sea, pearly-faced and glistening in the sun, and still onward to the Channel Islands,—Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa, Anacopa, San Miguel—lying at a distance of twenty miles from the shore. To the northward, the Sierra justifies the Spanish meaning of its name, as it projects against the intense cobalt of the sky its sharply pointed steel blue peaks, bare of all vegetation.<sup>234</sup>

Whether it was the location's natural beauty or Montecito's status as a "resort community patronized by wealthy easterners"<sup>235</sup> that led the Whiteheads to settle there, they and the Harrisons could never have realized that their time together in California would be short lived and that it would end in tragedy. In February 1895 Jane wrote her mother,

Mrs. Harrison—She is very original. She is always surprising people with one thing or another. Her last feat is to be on the verge of an "accouchement" after twelve years of married life—over forty years of age. What do you think of that! I think it's the climate as much as anything else.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Gustav Stickley, "Nature and Art in California," 374-375.

<sup>235</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman, "The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland," 186.

<sup>236</sup> Jane Whitehead, letter, dated February 2-6, 1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum

Later in April 1895, Jane wrote, “She [Eleanor Harrison] goes on as ever—more than two weeks over her time, driving, visiting, and painting, as if she had nothing in store for her. A constitution made of rock.”<sup>237</sup> Jane’s calendar entry for May 1, 1895 states, “Mrs. Harrison died.” Apparently, Eleanor died giving birth to a stillborn son, Linton Ritchie.<sup>238</sup>

Jane, who had moved to California to regain her health and had undergone surgery in 1894 to remove stomach tumors, became pregnant shortly after Eleanor’s death. She, Ralph, and Birge must have felt uneasy about her pregnancy, especially in the wake of Eleanor and Linton Ritchie’s deaths. In spite of their fears, they may have seen Jane’s pregnancy as a sign of hopefulness after such a great loss. Birge spent a great deal of time with the Whiteheads as Jane’s due date approached. On May 24, 1896 they “sat in [the] moonlight.”<sup>239</sup> [Illustration 4.7.] Gazing up at the ever watchful disengaged moon, the one that witnessed Eleanor and Linton Ritchie’s deaths one-year earlier, Jane, Ralph, and Birge must have prayed for a kinder fate. The following day on May 25th, Jane gave birth to a baby boy, who died on May 27<sup>th</sup> at 8:10 am, only thirty-two hours and ten minutes after he was born. Birge Harrison left to settle on the East Coast in July. Never again did he mention Eleanor and their life together in his subsequent writings.<sup>240</sup> He married Jenny Seaton Harrison, the stepdaughter of his uncle, Alexander M. Harrison in November of that year. The couple settled in Jenny’s hometown Plymouth,

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<sup>237</sup> Jane Whitehead, letter, dated April 1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>238</sup> See Andrea Husby, “Birge Harrison,” 111. Husby cites *1895 Record of Deaths for Santa Barbara Country*, County Court House, Santa Barbara, California (see Husby, 137), and an obituary from “La Lomita Notes,” unidentified newspaper clipping, Montecito Historical Society, dated May 2, 1895 (see Husby, 137).

<sup>239</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendar, May 24, 1896 entry, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>240</sup> Andrea Husby, “Birge Harrison,” 111.

Massachusetts. In early 1899 the Harrisons were back at Arcady; perhaps Birge was teaching painting classes at the Whiteheads' new Arcady school.<sup>241</sup> Later, Birge and Jenny would reunite with the Whiteheads at Byrdcliffe, when Birge became the head of its art school in 1904.



4.7. Lovell Birge Harrison, *The Hidden Moon*, after 1902, before 1910, oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 30 1/8 in., The National Academy, New York.

### **Section 3: A European Sojourn and Jane's Rest Cure**

As for the Whiteheads, Jane took some time to recover her health after the loss of her child but with her baby's passing and Ralph's very public affair with Montecito local Louise Hart, Jane and Ralph seemed to feel a need for new surrounds. The rapid pace of city life, which they left behind upon their move to California, may have been a very much welcome and needed distraction. Temporarily, they said goodbye to the simple life and their Pacific Arcadia. After visiting Chicago, Boston, and Philadelphia, the

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<sup>241</sup> Jane Whitehead, 1899 calendar entries April 2, May 5, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Whiteheads set sail for England via Hoboken, arriving in Southampton October 28, 1897. Their ultimate destination was Paris, however. After visiting Bath, and the National Gallery, they arrived in Paris in early November. Jane spent the month working in the atelier of symbolist painter Edmond Aman-Jean. Inscriptions in her calendar from that time refer to Jane's dreams of birth, prophecies by clairvoyants and presentiments—preoccupations that may reflect Jane's exposure to fin-de-siècle Paris, where symbolist interests in mysticism and Sigmund Freud's recent discoveries about the unconscious mind were current. Spending December in the studio of "Laurent," Jane probably studied with Ernest Joseph Laurent, an Impressionist painter who worked with and befriended symbolists, including Aman-Jean.<sup>242</sup> Jane left Paris come January. Heading for warmer climes, the Whiteheads spent much of January 1897 in the exotic French colony, Biskra, Algiers, commemorated by French Orientalist painters such as Emile Boivin, Philippe Pavy, and Henri Matisse. While there, Jane painted model "Ben [A]lah" and a perspective of the street—commemorated in Jane's calendars; the current location of these paintings is unknown. Come early spring, the Whiteheads were in fashionable French towns including Nice and Monte Carlo. Ralph departed for New York in February arriving March 13<sup>th</sup>. Jane stayed on ending her trip in April 1897 in the couple's beloved Italy, where she stayed in Florence and Milan. Switzerland, Frankfurt, Berlin, London and Southampton were also visited in April before Jane set sail for the United States. Arriving on April 29<sup>th</sup>, Jane was met by Ralph. On this same date in Jane's calendar an inscription "9 a.m. Harrison picture" probably refers to an exhibition

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<sup>242</sup> See Jane Whitehead, calendar, December 1896, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Nancy Green associated the "Laurent" entries in Jane's calendars with J. P. Laurens. See Nancy Green, "The Reality of Beauty," 50. See E. Benezeit, *Dictionnaire des Peintures, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs*, 1999 ed., v. 8, 334; and Laurent, Ernest (Joseph), *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, <http://www.artnet.com/library/04/0496/T049607.asp>, accessed 7/25/06.

of paintings by Birge Harrison and his famous brother Alexander. Of the exhibition and the scene in New York City upon Ralph's return in March 1897, Ralph wrote Jane,

[Harrison] is going to have an exhibition along with his brother Alexander. I am afraid of the comparison. I saw a very beautiful picture of Alexander H's at Charles Gould's where I dined the other night. He [Alexander] has more virility and more grit than B.H. [Birge Harrison]. Charles Gould is a sort of old ape, who lives as an Italian prince of the time of Cellini . . . drinking priceless wine out of the most beautiful Venetian goblets, the rooms lit with electric light through Tiffany's choicest morsels of glass. He has a few lovely things in the museum which is his house. It is one of those beautifully proportioned colonial houses in Washington Square—and as full of despair as Aldie [referring to Jane's first cousin, the sculptor, William Mercer's home and studio in Doylestown, Pennsylvania<sup>243</sup>] . . . The materialism and vulgarity and luxury of this place [New York] is beyond all measure.<sup>244</sup>

The “materialism and vulgarity and luxury” of the Gould's home may have been “beyond all measure,” as Ralph stated, but it was certainly not too far off from the society and surroundings in which they often found themselves. While they chose to socialize with artists, intellectuals, musicians, and Bohemians, they also remained connected through family and personal history to high society.

Upon her return from Europe, Jane was suffering from ill health. It seems the rapid pace of city life and intercontinental travel was taking its toll again. May and June of 1897 were spent taking “rest cures” in Rosemont, Philadelphia, and the Adirondacks. Jane's poor health was ongoing and appears to have had a number of causes. We know she had stomach tumors, which may refer to uterine fibroids, removed when she first moved to California in 1894. Interviews with Montecito locals who knew the

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<sup>243</sup> For more on Jane's cousin, the sculptor William Mercer, see Oliver Coleman, “A Studio in Pennsylvania: The Workshop of Mr. Wm. S. Mercer, Jr.,” *House Beautiful* 15/6 (May 1904): 364-365 and “Cement Casting at ‘Aldie,’” *House and Garden* (October 1903): 175-180, cited in Cheryl Robertson, “Architecture at Byrdcliffe,” 148, footnote 68 & 177.

<sup>244</sup> Ralph to Jane Whitehead, letter, dated “March 23, 1897” from New York, transcription by Tom Wolfe, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Whiteheads often refer to her as an invalid.<sup>245</sup> Later, references in her calendars to rheumatism and neuralgia suggest she suffered from chronic pain. Neuralgia, believed to be a form of rheumatism, is a pain disorder associated with inflamed nerves.

According to her calendars, her 1897 rest cure was the last of its kind. She had several beforehand that we know of. Rest cures, exclusively given to women, were criticized even in the nineteenth century because they treated all patients the same, as hysterics, rather than treating their symptoms.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's well-known feminist tract, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1899), written and published several years after Jane's last rest cure, criticized Silas Weir Mitchell's rest cure involving seclusion and constrained activity and diet. A reference to the "Mitchells" in Jane's calendar corresponds with her 1897 rest cure and raises the specter that she was under the care of Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell himself.<sup>246</sup> In fact, Jane would have known Mitchell from the close-knit social circle she was a part of growing up in Philadelphia, where he was greatly respected for his foundational neurological studies on nerve damaged Civil War soldiers, and where his work with hysterical women and development of rest cures situated him among those who paved the way for Sigmund Freud's development of psychoanalysis.<sup>247</sup> *Of The Yellow Wallpaper* (1899) Gilman said its real purpose was to reach Mitchell,

and convince him of the error of his ways. I sent him a copy as soon as it came out, but got no response. However many years later, I met someone who knew close friends of Dr. Mitchell's who said he had told them that he had changed his

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<sup>245</sup> Gail Harrison, interview typescript, n.d., p. 9, Ralph Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society, published in part as "Recollections of Gail Harrison in the 1880s," *Noticias* (Spring 1977).

<sup>246</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendar, May 2, 1897 entry, Byrdcliffe Collections, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>247</sup> E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentleman*, 154-155.



treatment of nervous prostration since reading *The Yellow Wallpaper*. If that is a fact, I have not lived in vain.<sup>248</sup>

In addition to knowing Mitchell, Jane and Ralph were good friends with Charlotte Perkins Gilman, formerly Charlotte Perkins Stetson. Before Byrdcliffe, the Whiteheads spent time with her in Chicago (in the Hull House/John Dewey circle) and in California, where Charlotte (like Jane) had moved for health reasons. Charlotte's first husband Charles Walter Stetson was a painter in Pasadena, California, where he and his second wife Grace Channing—a good friend of Charlotte's—lived in Grace's father's house and raised Charlotte's and Charles's daughter with Charlotte's approval.<sup>249</sup> “In March 1900 Stetson executed several decorative paintings for one of the Whiteheads' outbuildings at Arcady, including a panel of Tuscan Fleur de Lys that the artist described as ‘Very directly painted but about as good as any thing I've done.’”<sup>250</sup> Stetson and two other Pasadena based painters, Leonard Lester and William Wendt, were part of the Whiteheads' California circle. Later in Woodstock, Charlotte often came to stay at Byrdcliffe. And during the acquisition of Byrdcliffe properties, the Whiteheads used Charlotte's second husband Gilman, as their lawyer.<sup>251</sup>

In October 1897, shortly after her rest cure and en route to Arcady, Jane attended a lecture on dress reform. Jane and Ralph moved in progressive circles concerning

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<sup>248</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, quoted in Julie B. Dock, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and the History of Its Publication and Reception*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998: 89, quoted in Jessica Ames, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*,” student project, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, <http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~clit121/AmesYel/weir.html>, accessed 7/25/06.

<sup>249</sup> Tom Wolf, “Art at Byrdcliffe,” 94.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid. Wolf cites Charles Walter Stetson, in a record book of his paintings, Archives of American Art, Roll 3211, frames 285-86, and notes that Stetson also describes painting an “orange tree, anemones under it, mts. & bay beyond,” and “some slight scaffitto work in the gables . . .”

<sup>251</sup> Another intriguing passage in Jane's calendar from February 1897, just prior to her rest cure, mentions shopping with Miss Ibsen in Nice or Paris. Miss Ibsen may have been related to Henrik Ibsen the author of the play *A Doll's House* (1879). *A Doll's House* parallels *The Yellow Wallpaper* in its critique of patriarchal control of women in Victorian culture. Perhaps Jane discussed her rest cure experiences with both Ibsen and Gilman.

women's rights. They invited single female artisans and female artisan couples to reside at Byrdcliffe, and read feminist texts as indicated by numerous titles in their library. This evidence as well as their friendship with Charlotte Perkins Gilman and interaction with the Hull House circle suggests they were sympathetic with the women's movement.

However, Jane's approach to her own life was surprisingly conventional. She considered her artwork secondary to her marriage and her children, she did not sign her artwork, and did not take credit for her intellectual, organizational, and artistic achievements and role in the Whiteheads' collaborative undertakings at Arcady and Byrdcliffe. Furthermore, Jane's calendar and letters did not even mention the granting of women's suffrage come 1920. It is uncertain if she even took her liberty to vote. Like so many aspects of the historical past, seeming incongruities between Jane's words, thoughts and actions are not easily understood or reconciled in the present day but may have made perfect sense at that time. For example, in one letter she writes about the place her art held in relation to her family:

I want to paint a little in the next few years. This and the housekeeping to say not of the boy and you, is as much as ever I can do, and I want to do it so that at the end—both at the end of the life phases or at the end of life itself—I do not want to blush at the blank.<sup>252</sup>

Here it seems art was on par with, or maybe even secondary to housekeeping and taking care of her children and her family. Nevertheless, her art was such an inseparable part of her family life—it was the basis of her relationship with her husband and the homes they built together—there really is no way to separate it from her life. That being the case, we may interpret her words to mean she didn't plan to pursue art as a profession beyond its total integration in her family life. Moreover, her embracement of her marital, motherly

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<sup>252</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, July 14, 1900, Byrdcliffe Collections, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

and homemaking roles were in keeping with certain positions we would call feminist of the day.

For example, in William Morris's 1890 utopian novel *News From Nowhere*, he imagined a future egalitarian society living in a rural, simple life paradise. Here, women embraced the social roles for which Morris and like minded people believed they were biologically best suited: homemaking, nurturing others, and service. In his chapter "Concerning Love," Morris as the hero of the novel asks about the position of women in the future society in which he found himself. He is told: "The men have no longer any opportunity of tyrannizing over the women, or the women over the men; both of which things took place in those old times [the nineteenth century]. The women do what they can do best, and what they like best, and the men are neither jealous of it nor injured by it."<sup>253</sup> Morris then notes he saw women waiting on men, a comment that is answered in a perhaps cloaked condemnation of certain nineteenth-century positions on women's rights: "perhaps you think housekeeping an unimportant occupation, not deserving of respect. I believe that was the opinion of the 'advanced' women of the nineteenth century, and their male backers."<sup>254</sup>

Later, in the chapter "Concerning the Arrangement of Life," Morris situates his argument within his socialist politics, stating that tyranny over people, citing women, ended with the abolishment of private property:

[M]any violent acts came from the artificial perversion of the sexual passions, which caused over-weening jealousy and the like miseries. Now, when you look carefully into these, you will find that what lay at the bottom of them was mostly the idea (a law made idea) of the woman being the property of the man, whether he were husband, father, brother, or what not. *That* idea has of course vanished with private property, as well as certain follies about the 'ruin' of women for

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<sup>253</sup> William Morris, *News From Nowhere*, 53.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

following their natural desires in an illegal way, which of course was a convention caused by the laws of private property.

Another cognate cause of crimes of violence was the family tyranny, which was the subject of so many novels and stories of the past, and which once more was the result of private property. Of course that is all ended, since families are held together by no bond of coercion, legal or social, but by mutual liking and affection, and everybody is free to come or go as he or she pleases.<sup>255</sup>

Advanced for his time, but, nonetheless, seemingly naïve and a bit disappointing in its oversimplification, Morris assumes the abolition of private property will bring out the best in all people. Since the demise of the ruling classes, capitalism, private property, and government, women no longer felt the need to reject social roles once considered demeaning. Being followers of Morris's mentor Ruskin, who shared a similar stance on the subject, and advocates of Morris's work, it is possible the Whiteheads held similar views.

Interestingly, Ruskin held the belief that in an ideal society, such as the one he hoped to create at his Guild of St. George, labor would be governed by biological necessity and men and women would naturally assume the roles for which they were best suited. And, while Morris seemed not too radical in his dismissal of early feminists when he described housekeeping as a respectable occupation for women despite the opinions of nineteenth century "advanced women and their backers," it must be said, his relationship with his wife, Jane Burden Morris, was less conventional than that of the Whiteheads. It seems Morris did not interfere in a long running love affair between his wife and his friend, the PreRaphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Morris wrote similarly about families being "held together by no bond of coercion, legal or social, but by mutual liking and affection, and everybody is free to come or go as he or she pleases" in *News From*

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

*Nowhere.*<sup>256</sup> In contrast, Ralph's extramarital affairs that Jane, who seemed to remain monogamous, put up with until they became embarrassing were not smiled upon during the period but they certainly were not outside the norm.

#### **Section 4: Arcady and the Simple Life Ideal**

The Whiteheads returned home to Arcady in February 1898. The place they had left behind was architecture, landscape, and lifestyle fashioned into a cohesive whole. The Arcadian ideal analyzed here combined an outdoor lifestyle with aesthetics drawn from nature. But, in this phase of simple life aesthetics, nature was modified to fit into an idealized image of the Ancient past. This phase of simple living was a continuation of the Aesthetic European model the Whiteheads had been living in Europe prior to their marriage. Morris's "simplicity and splendor" intermingled with Wilde's call for "the union of Hellenism—with intense individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit" with an appreciation of "the natural forms abundantly present in the landscape."<sup>257</sup> At the same time, however, we also see a glimmer of what was yet to come. In the roughly hewn naturalistic outbuildings on the Arcady estate, the Whiteheads spearheaded the mature simple life aesthetic and lifestyle that became their standard at Byrdcliffe.

Their seventy acre Montecito estate was bought in four parcels by the Whiteheads from William Gallaher's [*sic?*] ranch on September 28, October 5, October 29, and

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Walter Crane, "The English Revival in the Decorative Arts." Oscar Wilde, quoted in Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 111, quoted in Roger Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," 26. These sources are contextualized in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

December 31, 1894.<sup>258</sup> Shortly after the Whiteheads' initial land purchase, the local paper had the following to say:

One of the most important real estate transactions made recently was the purchase by R. R. Whitehead of a portion of Wm. Gallagher's [*sic?*] ranch in Montecito and certain water rights in connection with it. Mr. Whitehead will devote considerable time to the improvement of the place and will spare no expense in making it one of the most beautiful in the valley.<sup>259</sup>

Located on an arid mountainside graced by warm winds from the Pacific, Montecito became the fertile oasis it is today when fresh water was brought to the area. The lush gardens of Arcady were possible because the Whiteheads ran a sixty-foot tunnel under the mountains to their property.<sup>260</sup> The water tunnel entailed the purchase of twenty-eight additional acres and, later, an additional two-hundred and fifty acres for additional water access.<sup>261</sup> No easy feat, this was the product of great expense. In fact, everything the Whiteheads did at Arcady was terribly expensive. At the time, they imagined it was possible to live the simple life in a grand manner as long as it was close to nature and removed from the city. Their views on the subject changed dramatically over time resulting in their move from Montecito to Woodstock and a corresponding shift from a grand Mediterranean/Spanish Mission architectural model to the grand, but more woodsy naturalism comprising Byrdcliffe architecture, modeled after Arcady outbuildings like Jane's studio "the Moon," the Giglio, and the Sloyd school for manual art they built on their property.

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<sup>258</sup> Security Title Insurance Company Files, cited in Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society; *The Morning Press*, Santa Barbara, Oct. 23, 1894, quoted in Ralph Whitehead files, Santa Barbara Historical Society; and David Myrick, *The Days of the Great Estates of Montecito and Santa Barbara*, 305. Myrick spells the name Gallaher in his book and above cited *Morning Press* article spelled it Gallagher.

<sup>259</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping (possibly the Santa Barbara *Morning Press*), dated Sept. 30, 1894, in Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

<sup>260</sup> *The Morning Press*, Santa Barbara, October 23, 1894, in Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society; and David Myrick, *The Days of the Great Estates of Montecito and Santa Barbara*: 305.

<sup>261</sup> David Myrick, *The Days of the Great Estates of Montecito and Santa Barbara*: 305.

Characterizing the villa as a Mediterranean/Spanish Mission hybrid in style may appear awkward until one considers the Whiteheads' inspiration from Italy. While they wanted to live in Italy, they chose the United States because it seemed more democratic and less weighed down by social hierarchies and tradition than the old world; and, they thought Montecito's climate, topography and vegetation were similar to Italy's. In the period, Southern California was thought of as a Pacific Arcadia and parallels were drawn between it and the Mediterranean. Combining "Mediterranean" with "Spanish Mission" to describe Arcady's style seems like an appropriate description when one looks at photographs belonging to the Whiteheads of Tuscan villas like Villa Salviati and local Spanish Missions like the one in Santa Barbara, both of which seemed to have provided elements incorporated into Arcady.<sup>262</sup> The picturesque quality of Villa Salviati's asymmetrically placed windows and doorways of rectangular and arched shapes and colonnaded loggia of various lengths and at both levels are similar to Arcady's. [Illustration: 4.8.] The red tiled roof, open ground floor loggia and stucco exterior of the Santa Barbara Mission would have been a readily available model and are in fact quite similar to the same features at Arcady. [Illustration: 4.9.] Pictures of the Santa Barbara Mission are in a Whitehead family photo album. One of Father Fox standing within the colonnaded ground floor loggia is similar in feeling to a Romantic image of Jane wearing

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<sup>262</sup> Art historian Tom Wolf cites photographs of rustic Italian architecture such as the Villa Salviati from Jane and Ralph's personal collection as models for Arcady's exterior. See Tom Wolf, "Byrdcliffe's History, Industrial Revolution," 17. A 2002 historical and architectural resources report also describes the architecture in the same hybrid terms set forth here, observing inspiration in part from the "architecture of colonial California, specifically the façade of Mission San Luis Obispo (the mission features a long corridor, supported by circular columns, and is flanked on one side by a two story volume [like Arcady])," as well as from aspects derived from the rural architecture of Tuscany: "stucco walls, terra cotta tiled roofs, unfluted Doric style columns and the use of decorative casts of Classical and Renaissance sculptures." See Post/Hazeltine Associates, "Phase I/II Historical and Architectural Resources Report for 833 Knapp Drive, Santa Barbara County, CA," draft, March 29, 2002, 4, in Montecito Library files.

a black cape and carrying a basket within the ground floor loggia—they called it a “stoa”-  
-at Arcady.<sup>263</sup> [Illustration: 4.10. and 4.11.]

Arcady’s aesthetics set a standard in the area:

Tiles for roofing are becoming very popular not only because of their attractiveness but for the coolness they afford a house in hot weather. The new residences of Mr. Hayne and Mr. Whitehead in Montecito present a handsome appearance with roofs of this material.<sup>264</sup>

The Arcady villa was designed by the Whiteheads with architect Samuel Ilsley and built by Christopher Tornoe. Ilsley was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1863.<sup>265</sup> He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), where he graduated in 1884. In 1889 health concerns brought him to Santa Barbara, where he lived until 1903 and later returned in 1913. In Santa Barbara, Ilsley designed Arcady for the Whiteheads, Glendessary for Mr. and Mrs. R. Cameron Rogers, Miradero for Miss Blake and several other smaller houses in Santa Barbara and Montecito.<sup>266</sup>

4.8. Flli. Alinari, Italian, 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Villa Salviati*, albumen print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 17.

4.9. *Santa Barbara Mission* (exterior), Photo Album of Arcady and Byrdcliffe, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

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<sup>263</sup> On several occasions Whitehead photographs look as though they were modeled on compositions from other photographs. Another instance discussed in the following chapter on Byrdcliffe is a Jessie Tarbox Beals view taken from the porch of the Whiteheads’ Byrdcliffe home, White Pines. [Illustration: 5.4.] The empty chair on the edge of the porch sits next to a structural column and is framed by the building structures in almost the same way as a photograph of the Whiteheads’ friend John Burroughs’s nearby home Slabsides. Eerily, the empty chair in the White Pines picture is mirrored with a chair in use, occupied by John Burroughs, in the Slabsides image. The comparison is startling. [Illustration 5.3.]

<sup>264</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping (possibly the Santa Barbara *Morning Press*), dated Sept. 29, 1895, in Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

<sup>265</sup> Biographical information on Ilsley in this paragraph is based on notes in the Ilsley file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

<sup>266</sup> Miss Blake may be Anna Susan Cabot Blake who came to Santa Barbara from Boston to found another, larger Sloyd school for manual art. Blake’s school eventually became University of California Santa Barbara.



4.10. Santa Barbara Mission, loggia, inscribed “*Father Fox, Corridor, Santa Barbara Mission, no. 106,*” Photo Album of Arcady and Byrdcliffe, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

4.11. Ralph Whitehead, attributed photographer, *Jane Whitehead on Stoa at Arcady*, ca. 1894, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

The Whiteheads’ larger estate, also named Arcady, included several rustic outbuildings, including the Giglio, the Moon, and the Arcady school—a Sloyd school for manual art added in 1898—which were also built by Tornoe, a Danish metalworker, who had trained in architecture and construction in Germany in 1897. [Illustration: 4.12.] Tornoe built his own studio, which is similar to the Arcady Sloyd school for manual art in style on Charles Eaton’s Riso Rivo estate. [Illustration 4.13.] Neighbors and friends of the Whiteheads, Charles Eaton and his daughter Elizabeth Eaton Burton were craftsmen involved in the local Arts and Crafts movement--more on them later in this chapter. Given the similarity between Arcady’s outbuildings and its builder’s studio, it is probable that Tornoe exerted some aesthetic influence on them. In fact, I argue here that Tornoe played a significant role in the Whiteheads’ development of simple life aesthetics in their California home and outbuildings.

4.12. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, Christopher Tornoe, builder, *The Moon*, Arcady, Montecito, CA, ca. 1900, from a family photo album begun in 1892, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, pictured in N. Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 145.



4.13. Christopher Tornado, *Tornado's Studio*, illustrated in Patricia Gardner Cleek, "Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara," 14.

The buildings at Arcady suggest that enormous cross-beams in open, vaulted spaces seem to have been a Tornado hallmark. The similarity between Tornado's beams and ones in the Gamble House (1908) and other Greene and Greene designs in Pasadena has been noted.<sup>267</sup> In Greene and Greene's case the inspiration is believed to have come from Japanese construction techniques. Arcady predates the Greene brothers' mature work in Pasadena by eight years making them an unlikely source of inspiration. It seems Tornado's beams may have been inspired by local sources reflecting the Spanish Colonial presence in the area. His vaulted spaces and their massive beams also reflect Morris's appreciation of late Medieval English and European secular architecture, including barns and country cottages like the Great Coxwell barn in Gloucestershire, England. Its massive structural beams and spacious vaulting could have been a model familiar to Tornado through Morris, who said it was "unapproachable in its dignity, as beautiful as a

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<sup>267</sup> Two members of my dissertation committee—cultural historian, Mary Corbin Sies, and architect and art historian, Isabelle Gournay—noted the similarity between Tornado's cross beams at Arcady and those in Greene and Greene's architecture in Pasadena.

cathedral, yet with no ostentation of the builder's art."<sup>268</sup> Morris promoted these "unpretentious buildings" as models for a "new and genuine architecture."<sup>269</sup> Tornoe's beams and interior spaces at Arcady conform with Morris's call for a "clean sparseness" which lent itself to "simplicity of life, even the barest, is not misery, but the very foundation of refinement."<sup>270</sup> Born in Denmark, trained in architecture and building in Germany (where Morris's thinking was highly appreciated), and involved in Santa Barbara's Arts and Crafts movement, Tornoe most likely was familiar with Morris's thinking on the subject as well as with the type of medieval secular examples Morris considered the height of simplicity and refinement.

In the Giglio, which was meant to be rustic, the beams are irregularly embellished with adze markings and have functional yet decorative wrought metalwork, probably iron, straps holding them together, which feature a hand-hammered surface treatment. It is probable that Tornoe executed and at least partially designed both the woodwork and metalwork for these impressive supports because he was involved in both fields.

[Illustration 4.14.] As mentioned previously, he studied architecture and construction in Germany in 1897, and operated a metalwork studio out of nearby Mission Canyon where he worked in both silver and architectural metals.<sup>271</sup> Jane's grand studio within the Arcady villa features similar cross-beams and metalwork straps within a much grander vaulted space. Here, however, the surfaces were not rusticated as they had been in the Giglio, and the beams on the gallery side of the space incorporate impressive S-shaped

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<sup>268</sup> William Morris, quoted in Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 32.

<sup>269</sup> William Morris, "Address to Birmingham Art Students," 1894, in May Morris, *Works of William Morris*, Vol. XXII, p. 429, quoted in Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 30.

<sup>270</sup> William Morris, "The Prospects of Architecture," in May Morris, *Works of William Morris*, p. 149, quoted in Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 30.

<sup>271</sup> Patricia Gardner Cleek, "Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara: The Tale of Two Studios," 15; and unauthored typescript about Glendessary from Samuel Illsley file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

bracket supports. [Illustration 4.15.] Interviews with Montecito locals and local histories attest to the quality, beauty, and ingenuity of Tornadoe's buildings, as well as his arts and crafts.



4.14. Christopher Tornadoe, builder, *Cross Beams within the Giglio*, Arcady Estate, ca. 1975, photograph, Montecito Library.

4.15. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, Samuel Ilsley, architect, Christopher Tornadoe, builder, *Jane Whitehead's Arcady Studio*, view of cross beams and S-bracket supports, ca. 1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Architect Samuel Ilsley's influence, on the other hand, may have been more peripheral. Letters to Jane's mother inform her that she and Ralph are doing a great deal of designing. In one she notes, "Ilsley [*sic*] is extremely conciliatory for we took the entire plan into our own hands and simply left him proportions and interior comforts such as cupboard[s]."<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, letter dated "7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1895. Montecito"; and Jane Whitehead to her mother, letter inscribed "Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Ilsley's other Santa Barbara area commissions vary aesthetically. They were "often grand and expansive," and were "noted for their simplicity and sense of domestic scale, an aesthetic inspired by the emerging Arts and Crafts style."<sup>273</sup> Tornoe was builder on at least one other Ilsley commission. Since little is known about Ilsley, it is hard to distinguish how much of the look of things is Ilsley in his commissions and how much can be attributed to other people working with him: the people who commissioned the structures—the Whiteheads for example—and his builder on more than one occasion Tornoe.<sup>274</sup>

Glendessary bears little to no visual relation to Arcady. [Illustration: 4.16. and 4.17.] This grand timber framed Tudor style manor house was built in the Mission Canyon area for the Robert Cameron Rogers family in 1899. As at Arcady, Ilsley was architect, Tornoe was the builder, and the patrons—in this case the Rogers—played a large role in the style of the home. According to local history, the Rogers couple commissioned Ilsley to build a replica of an Elizabethan manorhouse they fell in love with on their honeymoon in England and Scotland.<sup>275</sup> In response, Ilsley suggested the timber framed Tudor style that was used. A dedication speech commemorating Glendessary's designation as a county Historical Landmark highlighted Tornoe's use of novel construction techniques in his work on the house walls, windows and doors. Tornoe rather than Ilsley is lauded for his work on the project.

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<sup>273</sup> Post/Hazeltine Associates, Phase I/II Historical and Architectural Resources Report for 833 Knapp Drive, 5.

<sup>274</sup> It is surprising that little information on architect Ilsley was found because he worked on a number of important local commissions. Sources consulted include the scholarship files of the Santa Barbara Historical Society, David Myrick's *The Days of the Great Estates of Santa Barbara and Montecito*, or in the Post/Hazeltine Associates Historical and Architectural Resources Report for Arcady. Biographical notes in the Ilsley file at the Santa Barbara Historical Society include a paragraph long biography.

<sup>275</sup> Information on Glendessary in this paragraph is based on Keith Gledhill's dedication of Glendessary as a county Historical Landmark, June 14, 1980, notes in Samuel Ilsley file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.



4.16. Samuel Ilsley, architect; Christopher Torno, builder, Glendessary, Robert Cameron Rogers home, exterior, 1899, illustrated in Bob Easton and Wayne McCall, eds., *Santa Barbara Architecture*, 52-53.



4.17. Samuel Ilsley, architect; Christopher Torno, builder, Glendessary, Robert Cameron Rogers home, interior, 1899, illustrated in Bob Easton and Wayne McCall, eds., *Santa Barbara Architecture*, 53.

Ilsley's connection to the naturalist author of *The Simple Home* (1904), Charles Keeler—Ilsley and Keeler were first cousins<sup>276</sup>--may provide a connection between the Whiteheads and central figureheads in the California simple life movement. Ilsley's work on the Arcady commission may have led Keeler and his wife Louise to use Arcady as the illustration beginning their Santa Barbara chapter in *Southern California*, a tourism

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<sup>276</sup> Cheryl Robertson, conversation with author, n.d.

guide published in 1899 by the Santa Fe railway.<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, both the Keelers and the Whiteheads were friends with naturalist figurehead John Burroughs. Keeler and his circle are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Jane and Ralph deliberately chose Montecito because of the qualities--aesthetic and philosophical---they believed it embodied. But at this stage in the aesthetic evolution of simple living, they took tremendous liberties when it came to modifying nature to meet their Arcadian ideal. In contrast, in the later mature phase of simple life aesthetics the fidelity of the local nature and topography was preserved. This is an important point of distinction between this and the next phase of simple life aesthetics.

For example, landscapes were designed to accentuate the place's natural topography and vegetation. But, these gardens would have been impossible without the importation of fresh water. Gazing toward the Pacific from his Arcadian hillside, Ralph once told Hervey White, whom he met at Hull House and who would later help found Byrdcliffe, "Aegean . . . Some day we must go on to the Isles of Greece. There is the perfect blue of all the seas. But there are moments when this Californian sea approaches it."<sup>278</sup> The Whiteheads henceforth imposed their Arcadian vision on the surrounding landscape.

Mr. Whitehead was digging for a terrace wall two hours a day. I was to learn then the importance of a curve that would bear out the contour of a hill. The naturalness of every detail of that garden that with an Italian was the result of right feeling, but with him was acquired by long study and experiment. He thought nothing of taking out a terrace wall and moving it a foot or two to right or left to change the curve, but the final result was right. The absolute was attained.

That garden was an epitome of the author's character. I might go further and say, of his life.

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<sup>277</sup> I first learned of this illustration from Cheryl Robertson, "Nature and Artifice in the architecture at Byrdcliffe," f.n. 153, 158. Upon inspection, the illustration was small and not a very readable drawing, which is why it isn't illustrated here.

<sup>278</sup> Hervey White, "Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead" 18-19.

Consciously unostentatious to a degree that an ordinary tourist might hurry over it without realizing there was a garden there at all; yet every point studied from all directions, every shrub or tree selected for its year round colour or contour. The very cabbage beds fitting into aid the colour scheme, for this was a garden of usefulness, as well as beauty. In fact, usefulness was the apparent aim in its creation and beauty the inevitable correlative.<sup>279</sup>

In one of many letters describing Arcady's plantings and landscapes, Jane writes about the construction of the terraced gardens,

They [the terraces] are to be a mass of vegetables and flowers . . . At intervals the big rocks are left, and they are allowed to be backgrounds for tall holly hocks, Easter lilies, one or two seats. Most of the things are to be perennial. One couldn't be bothered in this country with the labour that annuals would cost. A hedge of roses is to be on the edge of one terrace, a row of mandarin trees on the other. One ends in a bay, a rounded wall, and here is a mass of southern tropical looking trees and plants, palms, yuccas (the blue kind), figs, bananas, and masses—hundreds of plants of iris white and pearl. Following the orchard [possibly olives] is a ridge of geraniums. Ralph has ordered these things of an old English gardener named Spence . . . Ralph will use the gang of Mexicans now making the road to dig and plant and will learn himself how to prune grape vines and attend to olive trees and all that sort of thing. It greatly interests him, when he is so engaged I believe he entirely forgets that there are any difficult problems in life, that he ever learned languages, or studied Homer, or fretted about politics or anything else.<sup>280</sup>

The Whiteheads' relationships with the Mexican laborers with whom Ralph worked side by side on the road and terraces mentioned above, the Chinese servants that worked in their home, the children's nannies, and Woodstock locals employed in the construction of Byrdcliffe are vaguely mentioned in the Whiteheads' correspondence and Jane's calendars. Unsurprisingly, these records show the Whiteheads did not socialize with the laborers, servants, or the people taking care of their children. A peculiar aspect of the Whiteheads' belief that labor was ennobling coming from their involvement in the

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, letter, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.—March [illegible number], Letters from Jane Whitehead to RRW & Family 1902, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. While this letter is in a folder with letters from 1902, it certainly dates earlier, probably between 1895-1896.



Arts and Crafts movement led them to engage in work alongside hired, working class people. Ralph most certainly got his hands dirty in the above mentioned road project and the terracing of the landscape. Earlier in life, as a student of Ruskin, he participated in the Hinksey Road project where privileged Oxford students mended a patch of road in order to develop sympathies for the working classes (described in detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation). Ralph never forgot this lesson. Furthermore, he appreciated the healthful benefits of physical exertion involved in laboring in the out of doors. In the case of their nannies, Jane was concerned about their lives. She planned their Byrdcliffe home White Pines to have the nanny's bedroom on the same floor as her own, and wished to give the nannies they employed opportunities to socialize and marry. In California and later in New York, the Whiteheads invited people of lesser means than themselves, artists, musicians, intellectuals, into their schools and to the social functions they hosted. It would seem they socialized with people situated socially below them if those people were educated in the areas in which they were interested, primarily, the arts and intellectual pursuits.

The Whiteheads upheld the ethos of labor associated with the Arts and Crafts movement in the way they worked with their hands on the land and on Arts and Crafts, and in their commitment on a certain level to a more democratic or egalitarian society where everyone shared a right to joyful labor. However, it appears they did not go out of their way to socialize with laborers. This was certainly not out of the norm for people of their social class. As far as can be told, the same could be said of social peers like Charles Robert and Janet Ashbee in England whose work in the English simple life and Arts and Crafts movement was introduced in Chapter Two of this dissertation. In starting

the Guild of Handicraft, the Ashbees worked to elevate the working conditions of London's urban working class. But, as craftsman Alex Miller recalled there was never parity between the guildsmen and the Ashbees. "The higher ideals of Craftsmanship also, as I soon saw, were not in the craftsmen—but were in you." (a more lengthy piece of this letter is quoted in Chapter Two)<sup>281</sup> In Chipping Campden, where the Ashbees and their Guild moved in 1902, the Ashbees were in charge of the way people lived, their social lives, the work they did and the way things looked, including the built environs and the arts and crafts they made. The paternalism inherent in Ashbee's relationship with his Guild was very similar to the Whiteheads' relationship with Byrdcliffe residents.

Grand in the European tradition is the best descriptor of Jane's grand studio in the Arcady villa. Chapter Three on Jane's early life abroad described grand studio spaces in Paris and London, citing Lord Frederic Leighton's studio in London as a pinnacle of the aestheticized studio model and in its use as a social space. Leighton's studio was forty five by twenty-five feet with seventeen foot high ceilings, a balcony at its east end, a gold domed apse at its west end, and a glass alcove facing north, with walls painted Pompeiian red providing a backdrop for Leighton's art, casts from the Parthenon frieze on the south wall and casts of other ancient Greek and Roman statuary, along with contemporary art by friends like George Frederick Watts. Decorative objects like Persian tiles, musical instruments like a lyre, and a stuffed leopard added to the exotic ambiance of Leighton's studio-salon, where he hosted musicales for the "most important figures from literary, music and art circles alongside politicians and royalty."<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Letter from Alex Miller to Ashbee, 1911, quoted in Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture*, 158.

<sup>282</sup> Karen Zukowski, "Creating Art and Artists: late Nineteenth-Century American Artists' Studios," 30-31.

At Arcady Jane's studio reverberated the scale and use of Leighton's, being roughly forty feet by twenty-five feet and "double in height" with "an open vaulted wooden roof, and underneath the gallery there is a dais crossing the entire room."<sup>283</sup> In the aestheticized studio-salon tradition, Jane's Arcady studio served as a library, music gallery and social space: the library was located on top of the balcony and the music gallery was underneath it. In a letter to her mother, Jane wrote, "Don't you like the idea of my having a music gallery in the [illegible word] of my studio. It will have round arches, and under these—let into the wall—are three original size casts of Lucca Della Robbia's singing boys."<sup>284</sup> Pictures show a grand piano to the left of the door on the gallery, and Jane's mandola on the wall to the right. In a circa 1892 portrait, Jane chose to be illustrated playing this instrument.<sup>285</sup> [Illustration 4.18.] Numerous references in Jane's calendars and letters refer to visiting musicians, performances held there, as well as to grand entertainments, especially during the Arcady Sloyd school for manual art period starting in 1898.

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<sup>283</sup> Jane to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, undated letter, Letters from Jane Byrd to RRW & Family, 1891-1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Post/Hazeltine Associates, "First Floor," Figures and Maps, Phase I/II Historical and Architectural Resources Report for 833 Knapp Drive, n.p.

<sup>284</sup> Jane to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, undated letter, from Jane Byrd to RRW & Family, 1891-1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>285</sup> The instrument pictured in this portrait and another similar instrument that belonged to her are now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection of musical instruments. Byrdcliffe historian Robert Edwards believes the dress Jane wears in this picture may have been her wedding gown.



4.18. Unidentified artist, *Jane Whitehead with Mandola*, ca. 1892, charcoal highlighted with chalk and bronze powder, in original Morris and Company frame, 23 ½ x 17 ¼ inches (framed), collection of Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr.

While this grand studio served much the same purpose as Leighton's, the aesthetics are quite different but equally Aesthetic. Where Leighton's studio is rich and jewel-like, Jane's is earth-toned and natural materials are highlighted. As she noted in a letter to her mother, Jane borrowed from the "common things of the country," integrating abalone shells and Eucalyptus leaves. She also insisted on having the details be all made by hand, insisting on "Isleley [sic] not giving us one commonplace stock machinery door."<sup>286</sup>

The balcony was opposite large, tall north facing windows; on a grand scale here, north facing windows are considered ideal for allowing daylight into an artist's studio. It had an enormous Gothic-style hooded fire mantel protruding into the center of the space, and walls adorned with textiles, rugs and tapestries. Exotic touches appear in the form of

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<sup>286</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, letter, dated 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb.—March [illegible number], Letters from Jane Whitehead to RRW & Family 1902, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

animal skins on the furniture. As was typical, the work of the artist and that of her friends covered the walls and was found casually arranged on chairs and more formally set on easels. These contemporary artworks were intermingled with reproductions of ancient and Renaissance artworks, including a cast of the *Winged Victory* perched over the doorway entrance.

Like Leighton, the Whiteheads inset plaster cast reliefs of horsemen from the Parthenon frieze into the walls of an exterior loggia. The addition of unfluted Doric style columns alongside Romanesque niches featuring intertwined rampant lions with eagles certainly made the Whiteheads' Arcadian agenda overt. Here, symbolism from the Ancient Mediterranean world referred to the Whiteheads' wish to live the lifestyle of repose advocated in Ancient Greece. Called "the stoa," the exterior loggia ran outside Jane's studio and offered her beautiful views of the Montecito countryside. Ivy growth on the building added to the ancient associations as it anchored it to its site and connected it to the extensive landscaping integral to the overall design. In a letter to her mother, Jane wrote,

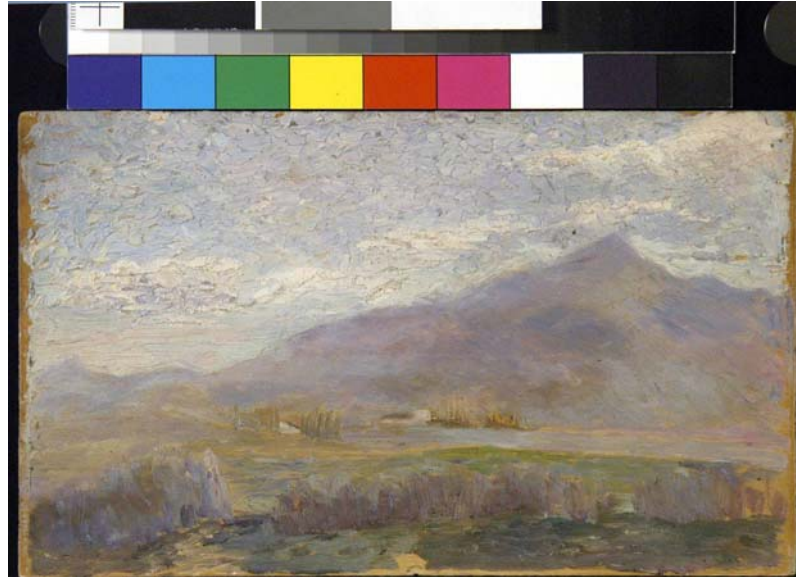
I am lying on the loggia, and she [a visiting pianist] is playing in the studio with the windows open so I get all the brilliance and speech of Chopin as I look at the blue mountains and blue sea and feel the sunshine and breeze at the same time. It all comes up to me! She makes color and form. What a power!<sup>287</sup>

Here, Jane expresses her devotion to a lifestyle of repose as well as her passion for Chopin's music played by an inspired pianist. Lyrical interpretations of the blue mountains and sea, sunshine and breeze to which Jane refers are seen in her paintings of California. [Illustration 4.19.] This is one of many examples illustrating the Whiteheads'

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<sup>287</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, letter dated, 20 April 1896, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

holistic approach to their simple life in which lifestyle and social circle are fully integrated with the landscape, built environment, fine arts and music.



4.21. Attributed to Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, *Montecito Mountain View*, ca. 1895, oil on wood panel, 9 ¼ x 5 ½ inches, collection of author.

A series of numbered photographs describing mainly architectural aspects of Arcady were prepared by Jane to describe the house to her mother who was back in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, the location of only one of at least three photos is known. It is numbered two and describes the back of the house [Illustration 4.20]:

The arched door is the front door. Over it is the window of the gallery in the studio. The little round hole at the end is the heart shaped window I got out of Balzac. There is a lot of debris around and you can't see the giant bamboos that are growing finely. Big square openings are in wood house [sic]. Three windows above have not their shutters yet and look very bald. They are servants rooms and sewing room. On the right, projecting, is Ralph's Den—or what we call "the Sunset." This is seen better in no. 3. You will observe there are five different roofs on the house. The kitchen is under the servants bedrooms and the kitchen yard wall is not to be seen from here. This looks up to the Moon and the barn, the wood house is floored and has a laundry and servants porch under its roof. The front door is inside beyond the arch between on the right DeMorgan tiles of "Troy

Town” are let into the stucco and on the left is written “chairete” written in Greek meaning “Hail.”<sup>288</sup>

Describing mainly the servant quarters, this photo gives details about the original structure, which has been modified over time by subsequent owners. Other period photographs offer rich documentation of the architecture, landscapes and interiors of Arcady in its original state.

4.20. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers; Samuel Ilsley, architect; Christopher Tornoe, builder, *Arcady*, Montecito, CA, view from the back, ca. 1894, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

Ralph’s den, mentioned above as “the Sunset,” is pictured in another period photograph. [Illustration 3.26.] Two paintings hanging on the wall to the far right offer visual metaphors to the room’s given name, “the Sunset.” On the chair rail, the panel Jane prepared to commemorate her and Ralph’s meeting (described in detail in Chapter Three) pictures disembodied wings descending from the sky as sun streams through the clouds and is bordered by an inscription from Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Above and to the right, is Birge Harrison’s *Moonrise on the Sea* from 1896. [Illustration 2.12.] Set on a platform, a cozy inglenook included a hooded open hearth fireplace, a built-in bench and a frieze level Latin inscription--an early model for Arts and Crafts interiors following the turn-of-the-century. “ILLE TERRARVM MIHI/PRAETTER OMNES ANGULUS RIDET”/“This spot smiles at me more than any other” quotes the Roman poet Horace who lived in the period of Augustus.

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<sup>288</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, photograph of Arcady with writing on verso, inscribed on verso “No. 2. The back of the house,” Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Small scaled art works sit atop the bench. Here, real paintings intermingle with reproductions of Renaissance Madonnas and there is even a likeness (probably a reproduction) of Jane Morris by Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti. These artworks illustrate the Whiteheads' belief in surrounding oneself with quality reproductions of masterpieces from throughout the ages as well as real works of art. As they explained in their 1901 publication, "Pictures for Schools," the Whiteheads thought both quality reproductions and original art works from all periods embodied Beauty which held agency in its power to influence viewers in a positive way.<sup>289</sup>

A ceramic tile landscape plaque designed by Halsey Ricardo, the Whiteheads' friend who worked with English Arts and Crafts ceramic luminary William De Morgan, hangs on the wall to the left of the fire hood. [Illustration 4.21.] In Jane's above listed passage, she mentioned other De Morgan tiles of *Troytown* (also designed by Ricardo) which were inset in the entrance to the house. Ralph sits at his desk in the far left. [Illustration 4.22.] Bulbous legged furniture like the desk where Ralph is shown sitting was made at Arcady to Jane and Ralph's specifications. Jane in a letter to her mother said,

Ralph has brought me up a piece of work to do. It is to draw out the contours of table legs from the books of decoration we collected. He gets a drawing board and pins up on it architectural paper and indicates the proportions. I then fill in, as a child does in a drawing book the table leg, which he takes to a mill and has turned. There is a carpenter living up at the Moon now making odd things, and he puts the table tops on the legs. In this way we get things that are entirely individual and I must say that those already planned and made are a great improvement on what was made in Paris.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, "Pictures for Schools," *Arrows of the Dawn*.

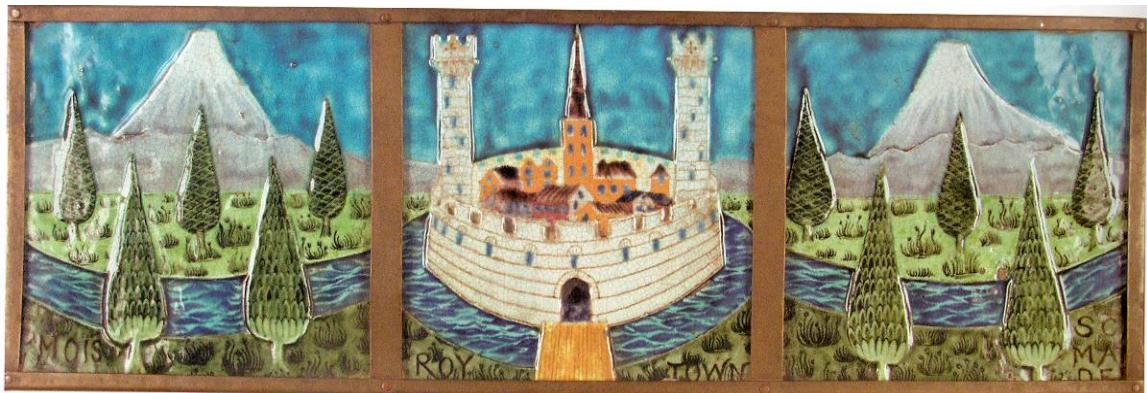
<sup>290</sup> Jane to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, undated letter, inscribed "Wednesday, no. 1," Letters from Jane Byrd to RRW & Family, 1891-1895, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.



The carpenter to whom Jane refers may have been their contractor Tornoe, who is said to have lived in the Moon during Arcady's construction.



4.21. Halsey Ricardo, designer, William De Morgan, Sands End, Fulham, *Ceramic Tile Landscape*, 1888-1892, 18 x 23 ¼ x 1 inch, collection of Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr., in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 203.



4.22. Halsey Ricardo, designer, William De Morgan, Sands End, Fulham, *Troytown*, 1888-1892, ceramic tiles, 9 ¼ x 28 x 1 inch, collection of Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr., in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 202.

**Section 5: Arcady Outbuildings.**

Arcady outbuildings like Jane's studio "the Moon," the Giglio, and the Sloyd school for manual art, contrasted the Italian Mediterranean/Spanish Mission aesthetics of the Arcady villa. Anticipating the woodsy naturalism and simplicity of the architecture of Byrdcliffe, these buildings were inspired by their site and were meant to be integral outcroppings. They deferred to nature, especially its ideological and aesthetic connections to simplicity. For example, the Giglio was a summer house built into the huge rocks "on a hill across the road from the main residence, and partly hidden among the trees;" its "sides and roof were fabricated from redwood logs and slabs with the bark still adhered."<sup>291</sup> [Illustration 2.17.] These outbuildings were the beginning of what would become the mature simple life aesthetic incorporated at Byrdcliffe.

By 1901 the Whiteheads were making plans to move in order to further simplify their ideal into something more austere and naturalistic. At this time in a 1901 publication dedicated: "To My Wife to whose knowledge of Art I am indebted for whatever is most useful in this lecture," Ralph described the spiritual basis of art and architecture inspired by nature and its role in simple living. He quoted from William Blake, "To see the world in a grain of sand, And a heaven in a wild-flower, To hold infinity in the palm of the hand, And eternity in an hour," and his "old master," Ruskin:

Beauty is to be found in the leaf that fades and falls to the passing wind; in the smallest pebble which rolls down from the mountain; in the frailest reed which bends over the water. . . . In each of these things the eye of an artist discerns the signature of the Supreme Artist. . . . Only a hill, and a recess of calm water, and a breath of mist and a ray of sunset. The simplest things, the frequentest, the dearest; things that you may see any summer evening, by a thousand streams, among the low hills of old, familiar lands; love them and see them rightly—Andes and Caucasus, Amazon and Indus, can give you no more.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Cheryl Robertson, "Nature and Artifice in the Architecture at Byrdcliffe," 146.

<sup>292</sup> Ralph Whitehead, "Pictures for Schools," *Arrows of the Dawn*, 34-35.

Gone are references to Ancient Greek culture, to Renaissance and PreRaphaelite art works, to the cultural highpoints of civilization that we see in earlier descriptions and expressions of simple living, such as that showcased in the Arcady villa, which I've been referring to as Aesthetic in the European context and Aestheticized Arcadian in the Californian context. In contrast, the above cited descriptions of simple living are thoroughly nature based. Cultural references are downplayed and Nature is presented as the direct conduit to spiritual fulfillment and peace of mind. The Whiteheads' philosophy of simple living at this point seems to be getting its inspiration from the naturalist movement in California.

While in general, architects associated with the Arts and Crafts movement in America and England did not work in the understated, rustic, naturalistic even primitive mode incorporated in Arcady outbuildings until shortly after the turn-of-the-century, naturalists like John Muir and John Burroughs and the Transcendentalists that inspired them, Henry David Thoreau and his cabin on Ralph Waldo Emerson's estate at Walden pond, established early precedents.<sup>293</sup> In fact, it is possible to trace a direct aesthetic lineage from the American Transcendentalists via their second generation, naturalists like Burroughs and Muir, to the Whiteheads and the mature simple life aesthetic realized in the Giglio.

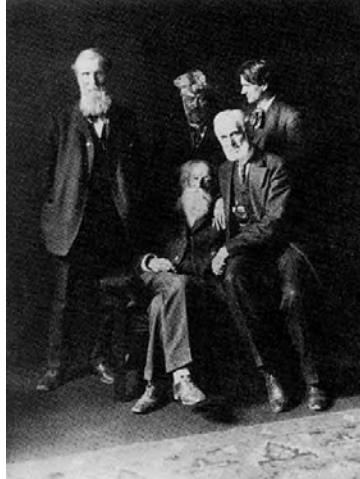
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<sup>293</sup> Another early precedent was the rustic retreats of the Adirondacks. However, the sympathy for nature, quietude, and effort to have home harmoniously emerge from nature shown in Arcady outbuildings and later at Byrdcliffe and other simple life architecture is more akin to the naturalists's architecture, being gentler, less pretentious and imposing than most Adirondack style rustic architecture. In Adirondack examples, rustic/primitive styled structures sit upon the land rather than attempting to be an extension of the land. In most respects, Adirondack style rustic architecture was closely allied with conventional period architecture except that the furnishings and structure were made of unfinished or roughly finished members and materials. Architectural historian Richard Longstreth described the "overscaled logs, roots, and boulders" of Adirondack camps as "applied decoration," he continues, "These are primeval versions of gilded Edwardian rooms, where rusticity was pursued with a vengeance, only to result in a rarefied display . . . the largest Adirondack camps tend to perpetuate a sense of struggle and conquest." He describes them as contrasting the "compatibility between civilization and nature" illustrated in the more sophisticated California mountain getaways he examines. See Richard Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World*, 175-76.

The Whiteheads were friends with simple life icon John Burroughs, who lived for a time in Pasadena Glen near Sierra Madre and was associated with proponents of California's simple life movement and other naturalists like Charles Keeler (author of *The Simple Home* (1904)), Arcady architect Samuel Ilsley's (Keeler's first cousin), John Muir, and the painter, William Keith. [Illustration 4.23.] While it is uncertain if Burroughs knew the Whiteheads in California, we know he was friendly with them in Woodstock, where he had a nearby mountain cabin named Slabsides which was the embodiment of rustic austerity in the tradition of Thoreau, being built by his hand of unfinished wood and local, irregular stone in 1895-96. [Illustration 4.24.] Burroughs was associated with Candace Wheeler's Onteora Park in Tannersville and the Pakatakan Mountain art colony in Arkville, New York, simple life retreats to which the Whiteheads were also connected. In 1905, he compared his Slabsides with Byrdcliffe architecture and talked about the simple life being led there: "the various cottages and buildings are as picturesque as "Slabsides" both outside and in; low and rambling[,] of undressed boards and timbers, and stained a rich tan color . . ."<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> John Burroughs, August 30, to "My Dear Friend" [unknown] from West Point, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, quoted in Nancy Green, "Cast of Characters," 225. A slightly different transcription of this letter is quoted in Cheryl Robertson, "Nature and Artifice in the Architecture of Byrdcliffe," 128. Robertson cites Burroughs to "My Dear Friend" [RRW], August 30, 1905, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, and identifies Slabsides as the point of comparison to the Byrdcliffe cottages.



4.23. *John Muir, William Keith, John Burroughs (seated), Francis Brown, Charles Keeler*, ca. 1905, photograph probably taken in William Keith's studio, possibly in Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California, <http://www.oregoncoast.net/simplehome.html>, accessed 4/17/07.



4.24. John Burroughs, *Slabsides*, 1895, West Park, New York, <http://lancemannion.typepad.com/.../07/slabsides.html>, accessed 4/17/07.

Bolton Coit Brown is another figure that connects the Whiteheads in California to the still-embryonic simple life scene burgeoning in response to influences from naturalists like Burroughs and John Muir. Brown was a charter member of Muir's Sierra Club and an avid hiker. He was the "first to explore, map and write of the Upper Basin of the South Fork of the King's River" canyons: "a region of unspoiled beauty and, even

more important, of precipitous canyons and unclimbed peaks that could provide the challenge of physical hardship (and danger) that Brown required.”<sup>295</sup> For his efforts, a peak in those mountains now bears his name, “Mt. Bolton Brown.”

Brown moved to Palo Alto, California from the East Coast in 1891 in order to establish Stanford University’s department of drawing and painting. His plans for making the school co-educational and insistence on life drawing from nudes were revolutionary for the time and place. In the end, his insistence on the commingling of these two things lost him his job. He hoped not only to teach artists about art but to give them a liberal education as well in order to “know what art is.”<sup>296</sup> Brown’s vision about the necessity of an artist’s total education and belief in the value of art to society was akin to values held by the Whiteheads, who would later employ him at Byrdcliffe.

Also in line with the Whiteheads’ values was Brown’s love of nature and life in the out-of-doors albeit Brown’s version was far more rigorous than that of the Whiteheads. Brown’s simple life involved removing himself from civilization for periods of time when he hiked the Sierras alone and with his wife Lucy Fletcher Brown.

Lucy met Bolton at Stanford. A graduate of Radcliffe College, she had been brought West to direct Stanford’s Castilleja School, a preparatory school for girls. Of Lucy, who would accompany Bolton to Byrdcliffe in later years, and her marriage to Bolton, Bolton’s sardonic sister Ellen Coit Elliott had the following to say: “Perhaps it was inevitable that Bolton should fall in love with Lucy Fletcher, she being the most

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<sup>295</sup> Chester Versteeg, “The Peaks and Passes of the Upper Basin, South Fork of the King’s River,” *Sierra Club Bulletin* II (1923): 425-426; and Bolton Brown to “Friends All,” 26 August 1895, quoted in Clinton Adams, *Crayonstone: The Life and Work of Bolton Brown*, 39, 51.

<sup>296</sup> Bolton Brown, “What Should an Art School Be?” *Overland Monthly*, ser. 2, 19 (March 1892): 307, quoted in Clinton Adams, *Crayonstone*, 35.

beautiful thing in sight. . . . The wedding was strictly characteristic. Bolton managed everything,” and afterward, he,

carried off the bride (like a cat with a captured mouse) for a two-months’ honeymoon in the high Sierra, where they camped and tramped and lived their arduous solitary days according to his plan. We have no reason to doubt the sympathetic co-operation of his bride—else why did she marry him?<sup>297</sup>

Alone and with Lucy, Bolton would leave civilization and immerse himself in the awesome terrain of California’s untamed mountain ranges. He would expose himself to the elements, wildlife, and would purposefully take risks in hiking precarious spots. His rigorous exercise in the mountains and direct contact with nature at its most awesome freed his spirit and inspired his artwork.

As is discussed in the following chapter of this dissertation, Brown was primarily responsible for scouting the site for the Byrdcliffe arts and crafts colony he helped the Whiteheads establish in 1903.<sup>298</sup>

In Palo Alto, Brown built a dark wood shingled cottage that was quite similar to the rustic outbuildings under construction on the grounds of the Whiteheads’ Arcady estate. [Illustration 4.25.] Brown’s Palo Alto home was built to incorporate a mature white oak, which grew through the porch and its roof. “A rustic ladder led to the roof, where the artist was wont to retire for rest and inspiration. From the central apex of [a] brick chimney, the roof curved down on four sides with a Japanese grace of line.” Every room but the kitchen featured a fireplace.

The big one in the living-room, however, was the glory of the place. Made of boulders carefully selected by the owner himself, for shape, color, and in some

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<sup>297</sup> Ellen Coit Elliott, *It Happened This Way*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1940, 256, quoted in Clinton Adams, *Crayonstone*, 40-42.

<sup>298</sup> One wonders if Bolton Brown’s Sierra Club connections put him in touch with Burroughs and directed him to look for Byrdcliffe’s site in the Catskill Mountains, where Burroughs already resided at his naturalistic retreat Slabsides.

instances for polish . . . . The mantelpiece with the board above it was made of weathered redwood, as gray as certain Oriental woods, but owing to the fine veining far more beautiful. How the artist got this soft “old” shade I do not know, but they say he experimented a long time before getting the exact tone he wanted. The rest of the house was in natural redwood.

The big western window with book-shelves at either end, and the long window seat under it with its nice high “rest,” divided honors with the fireplace for beauty and utility.<sup>299</sup>

Architectural historian Cheryl Robertson identifies Brown’s cottage and the Whiteheads’ outbuildings at Arcady as bungalows—the quintessential American Arts and Crafts housing form that was developed in California and popularized after the turn-of-the-century by Gustav Stickley and others and which became symbolic of simple living.

Robertson describes Brown’s cottage and relation to the Whiteheads as follows:

By 1898 Brown occupied [a quaint] one-story “house of redwood within and without;” in other words, horizontally boarded on the interior and shingled outside. The relatively large living room focused on a boulder-faced fireplace, nearly identical to the one Brown later built in his Carniola residence at Byrdcliffe. The low-pitched roof doubled as a sleeping porch of sorts, reached by means of an opening made in the porch overhang to accommodate a white oak growing through it. Brown’s “New Homie” was actually an early rendition of the fully developed California bungalow, highlighted by architectural historian Karen Weitze for its “retreat-to-nature quality . . . paralleling and possibly even contributing to the maturing of rustic design for the Victorian camps in the Adirondack and Catskill mountains in New York State. The bungalow in Palo Alto is among the earliest designs to establish a clear connection between Arts and Crafts centers on the East and West coasts.”

Bolton Brown was key, no doubt, in the implementation of Byrdcliffe’s distinctive rustic architecture, dubbed “Edwardian redwood” by Woodstock locals and “bungalows” by Poultney Bigelow. But Ralph and Jane Whitehead merit credit as California bungalow innovators, too. The redwood outbuildings they conceived for their Arcady estate (1895-98) were clearly forerunners of Byrdcliffe’s straightforward wooden studio-residences.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> E. A. Needles, “A Little House with Five Fireplaces,” 62.

<sup>300</sup> Cheryl Robertson, “Nature and Artifice in the Architecture at Byrdcliffe,” 144-45. Quotations within Robertson’s passage include: Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” 389; William Claiborne, “Byrdcliffe at Crossroads: Utopian Art Colony in the Face of Reality,” *The Washington Post*, March 16, 1976: B1, and Karal Ann Marling, *Woodstock: An American Art Colony, 1902-1977*, n.p.; Dimitri Shipounoff, “Introduction,” in Charles Keeler, *The Simple Home*, xii; Clinton Adams, *Crayonstone*, 53; E. A. Needles, “A Little House with Five Fireplaces,” 23-24.



Robertson identifies Brown and the Whiteheads as early innovators of the mature simple life aesthetic associated with the California bungalow. But, where did their aesthetic inspiration come from? I argue it came from the naturalists. Given his relationship with Muir's Sierra Club and the time he spent hiking the Sierras, Brown's aesthetic could very well have come from his experience in Yosemite in the Sierra Nevadas. For example, the live tree Brown integrated into his structure may have been inspired by the Big Tree Room--the sitting room, built around a large Incense cedar (*Libocedrus decurrens*)—in the Hutchings House, also called the Upper Hotel, at Yosemite, which James Mason Hutchings took over and remodeled for comfort between 1864-66.

In the *Souvenir of California*, 1894, Mr. Hutchings says: "This cedar, 175 feet high, was standing there when the room was planned. I had not the heart to cut it down, so I fenced it in, or rather, built around it . . . the base of the tree, eight feet in diameter, is an ever present guest in that sitting room. . . . The large, open fireplace was built with my own hands. . . . Travelers from all climes and countries welcomed the sheltering comfort and blazing log fire of this room."<sup>301</sup>

By the time Mrs. Henry James Taylor wrote the above noted quotation in 1936, she stated "his cabin, with its comfortable living room and great fireplace, was known to thousands of tourists."<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Mrs. Henry James Taylor, chapt. 3, "James Mason Hutchings, 1820-1902," *Yosemite Indians and Other Sketches*, 1936, Yosemite Online Library, [http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite\\_indians\\_and\\_other\\_sketches/james\\_hutching](http://www.yosemite.ca.us/library/yosemite_indians_and_other_sketches/james_hutching), accessed 11/12/07.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.



4.25. *Bolton Brown House*, Palo Alto, California, 1895, pictured in E. A. Needles, “A Little House With Five Fireplaces,” *House Beautiful* (April 1907): 23 in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 143.

While it is possible that Brown may have influenced the Whiteheads, given the simultaneity within which both came to reside in California in 1894 it is more likely that their reverie for nature’s subtle beauty and wish to preserve and celebrate those qualities in the built environment was mutual and came from similar sources—the naturalists associated with the second generation of Transcendentalists. It should be no surprise to find that other figureheads associated with simple living in its Arts and Crafts expression in California shared the naturalists’ reverie for the environment and chose to illustrate their concern through the development of an aesthetic that embodied this ideal.

Take for example, Brown’s neighbors in nearby Berkeley, California the architect Bernard Maybeck and promoter of Maybeck’s vision and naturalist Charles Keeler. [Illustration 4.26.] Charles Keeler, author of *The Simple Home*, commissioned Maybeck to design his own home in 1895 and promoted Maybeck’s architecture in Berkeley

through The Hillside Club he helped found; Keeler described Maybeck's house as a "hand-made home" in 1895:

His house was something like a Swiss chalet. The timbers showed on the inside and the walls were of knotted yellow pine planks. There was no finish to the interior, for the carpenter work finished it. There was a sheet iron, hand-built stove, open in front and with brass andirons. Most of the furniture was designed and made by Mr. Maybeck himself. It was a distinctly hand-made home.<sup>303</sup>

In 1895, Maybeck built Keeler a home in a similarly naturalistic style—it was Maybeck's first independent commission--Keeler described its interior in the following way

[Illustration 4.27. and 4.28.]:

All the timbers were exposed on the inside, and upon them on the outside were nailed redwood planks which made the inside finished. The living room library was designed like a little chapel, opened into the peak. It was only one story, jutting out from the two-story part of the house back of it. The windows were all hinged French windows opening out, and the doors were all specially made in single-panel redwood design. One fireplace was of rough purplish clinker bricks, the other of buff-colored tile. The ground plan of the house was in the form of a cross; the elevation rose with the ascending hill. When it was done, with a green dome of the live oak back of it, we thought we'd never seen so simple and yet so uniquely charming a home, blending with the landscape.<sup>304</sup>

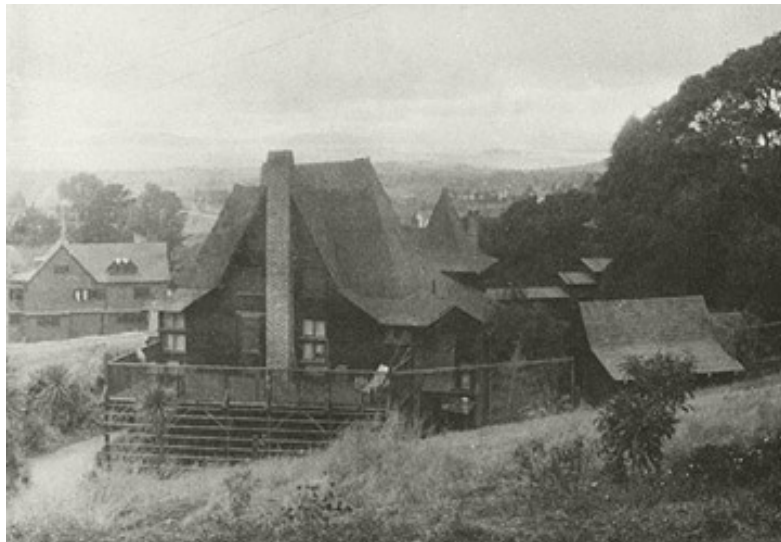
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<sup>303</sup> Charles Keeler, quoted in Daniella Thompson, "Maybeck's First Home Was A Design Laboratory," [http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/maybeck\\_on\\_grove.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maybeck_on_grove.html), accessed 4/17/07.

<sup>304</sup> Charles Keeler, quoted in Daniella Thompson, "Charles Keeler House and Studio, 1770 & 1736 Highland Place, Berkeley, CA," [http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/keeler\\_house.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/keeler_house.html), accessed 4/17/07.



4.26. *Bernard Maybeck Home*, Berkeley, California, as seen in 1902 from rear, Dimitri Shipounoff collection, BAHA archives, [http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/maybeck\\_on\\_grove.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maybeck_on_grove.html), accessed 4/17/07.



4.27. Bernard Maybeck, architect, *Charles Keeler Home*, exterior, Berkeley, California, 1895, as seen in 1902, Dimitri Shipounoff collection, BAHA archives, [http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/maybeck\\_on\\_grove.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maybeck_on_grove.html), accessed 4/17/07.



4.28. Bernard Maybeck, architect, *Charles Keeler Home*, interior, 1895, as seen in 1902, Dimitri Shipounoff collection, BAHA archives, [http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley\\_landmarks/maybeck\\_on\\_grove.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/berkeley_landmarks/maybeck_on_grove.html), accessed 4/17/07.

In *Building With Nature*, architectural historians Leslie Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sacks Sussman argue Maybeck and others involved in the development of the Hillside Club/simple life aesthetic were inspired by Reverend Joseph Worcester, who built early naturalistic homes in the area in the late 1880s and established the area's well-known Swedenborgian Church, "The Church of the New Jerusalem" (1894), which is an homage to the spiritual in nature.<sup>305</sup> [Illustration 4.29.] A. Page Brown is the architect of record for the church, and Maybeck, who was an assistant in his office during the project, is believed to have worked on it too. Some have credited Maybeck with the design of the prototypical Mission style chair used in the commission. However, Worcester is recognized as the visionary behind the building's design.

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<sup>305</sup> The following depiction of Worcester's Church of the New Jerusalem is largely drawn from chapt. 1, "Joseph Worcester: Religious Philosophy becomes Architecture," in Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sacks Sussman's *Building with Nature*, 6-31.



4.29. A. Page Brown, architect, with Reverend Joseph Worcester, Church of the New Jerusalem, interior, San Francisco, California, 1894, Treadway/Toomey Galleries online catalog, <http://www.treadwaygallery.com/ONLINECATALOGS/Sept2005/salecatalog/0301-0350.html>, accessed 11/12/07 .

The exterior is an unassuming design based on northern Italian churches with California Mission elements. But, the inside the church makes a departure into a naturalistic vaulted space which is more residential, like a living room, than ecclesiastical. Enormous gnarled madrone trees with their bark left on were felled in the Santa Cruz mountains to use as interior supports for the church's ceiling. Wild flowers and tree branches hung from the rafters complemented other interior details by Worcester's artist friends Bruce Porter, who designed two stained glass windows and William Keith, who painted four murals depicting the seasons.

Freudenheim and Sussman describe Worcester's views of Divinity and its revelation in nature as being similar to those of Worcester's friend John Muir, who "equated his explorations of Yosemite with acts of religious devotion." Of Yosemite, Muir wrote in 1870,

[T]his glorious valley might be called a church, for every lover of the great Creator who comes within the broad overwhelming influences of the place fails

not to worship as he never did before. The glory of the Lord is upon all his works; it is written plainly upon all the fields of every clime, and upon every sky, but here in this place of surpassing glory the Lord has written in capitals.<sup>306</sup>

In Arts and Crafts scholarship, Maybeck is generally credited as the father of a mature simple life aesthetic that “epitomize[d] a thoughtful approach to the land itself” and represented “a sociopolitical mind-set shared by Arts and Crafts architects and clients.”<sup>307</sup> Rather than leaving the starting point there, my findings and those of Freudenheim and Sussman trace the inspiration for these mature simple life aesthetics to the same source—naturalists like Muir and Burroughs, whose work was anchored in the precedent set by Thoreau at Walden pond, and their friends and associates. This aesthetic was in its infancy when Maybeck built his home around 1892 and Keeler’s in 1895, and when the Whiteheads built their similarly naturalist inspired outbuildings at Arcady in 1894—an early date to see such a thoughtful and literal integration of architecture into the landscape. Arcady outbuildings emerge from, reflect and preserve the preexisting beauty of the place—an aesthetic that would be primary versus secondary at Byrdcliffe and one that would become popularized at the turn-of-the-century. These and other buildings sharing similar inspiration established the mature simple life aesthetic discussed in the following Chapter Five.

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<sup>306</sup> John Muir, quoted in William Bade, *The Life and Letters of John Muir*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924, 1:209, quoted in Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sacks Sussman’s *Building with Nature*, 10.

<sup>307</sup> Karen Weitze, “Utopian Place Making: The Built Environment in Arts and Crafts California,” 60.

### *Section 6: Social Dimensions of Simple Living at Arcady.*

Certainly the social scene and especially the art scene in Santa Barbara and the surrounding area were part and parcel of the Whiteheads' initial interest in the place they chose to call home and the simple lifestyle they created there. As can be seen from their relationship with Bolton Brown in Palo Alto; artists like Charles Stetson, Leonard Lester and William Wendt in Pasadena; and others in California, the Whiteheads' social and artistic circle extended beyond Santa Barbara's city limits.<sup>308</sup> Artists, friends, art centers, social and musical events in Pasadena, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco area were visited regularly by Jane and Ralph. As seen earlier in this chapter, the Whiteheads regularly traveled between the East and West coasts, maintaining ties with friends and colleagues in Chicago, New York, New England, and Philadelphia, not to mention their almost annual voyages to England and France.

At their home Arcady, the Whiteheads approached their social life as they did the landscape. Drawing upon the preexisting character of the place, one could say the Whiteheads added to and modified it for their own purposes. Interviews with locals who knew Jane and Ralph described the lavish parties they held for Santa Barbara's "best" people, a "cultured" and "refined" group. One remembrance from Gail Harrison describes a dinner held at Arcady:

When I came back the first time from New York, after taking my B.S. Mrs. Whitehead was still living up on that beautiful mountain top, hill top, and she said "Oh, you must come to dinner, and it is a full dress dinner." And I had a simple

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<sup>308</sup> Stetson, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's former husband, was discussed earlier in Chapter Four. Leonard Lester's murals for the Arcady School are described later in this chapter. Wendt was mentioned in Jane and Ralph's letters; Art historian Tom Wolf writes about his relationship with the Whiteheads in "Art at Byrdcliffe," 95.



little low neck and short sleeved dress that I'd worn at carnival time and all and my sister Effie and I went out, and it was the first time I had sat at quite so palatial a dinner table. It was very exquisite, I was very impressed and I tried to live up to it. But there was shad . . . And I had never had shad that wasn't filleted, and I had the most difficult time: it was full of bones and I was sitting [next] to quite a distinguished gentleman who was trying to be very nice to a young girl and make her feel at home, but I gave up eating so I could talk coherently. Afterwards Mrs. Whitehead had great fun out of that and teased me a lot about it—my debut into shad. The meal was served with great beauty with beautiful dishes and they had a butler. I was terribly impressed because we drove out along the sea on a night with a beautiful sunset reflected. She sent her carriage for us, Effie and me, and we walked into this very palatial house--from an artistic standpoint not showy, but artistic. It was stucco—one of the first stucco houses . . . Effie and I are sitting on the terrace and I'm thinking I am in fairyland, is this Santa Barbara?<sup>309</sup>

As with Arcady's architecture, this party seems more reminiscent of European high society life than the simple life. More intimate meals were had on the porch of Jane's scaled down Moon studio, which featured naturalistic aesthetics. In this way Arcady and the Whiteheads' years of residence there can be considered a transitional period between European high society life and the simple life they would live at Byrdcliffe. At Arcady, both were possible.

Charles Frederick Eaton and his daughter Elizabeth Burton Eaton were an influential part of the Whiteheads' California circle. The Eatons's estate Riso Rivo was situated close to Arcady. [Illustration: 4.30.] Christopher Tornoe, the aforementioned builder of Arcady and its outbuildings, had a studio on Riso Rivo. Charles's and Elizabeth's social class and educational backgrounds are similar to those of Jane and Ralph.

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<sup>309</sup> "Recollections of Gail Harrison in the 1880s," *Noticias* (Spring 1977): 7, and typed interview, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.



A colonnade of palms: garden of Mr. Charles Frederic Eaton, Montecito, near Santa Barbara, California

4.30. The Charles Frederick Eaton Estate, *Riso Rivo* (today El Mirador), Montecito, California, [date?], in G. Stickley, “Nature and Art in California,” *The Craftsman* (July 1904) v. 6, p. 370.

Charles came from New England. His father had been a horticulturalist and his mother “a woman of much cultivation.” He traveled through Europe, particularly in France and Italy, where he learned the art of landscape gardening and lived for nearly twenty years. Like Jane and Ralph, and other late nineteenth century artists, Charles revolted against the formality and traditions of the well-established European art education system. The French and Italian schools of landscape gardening, he thought, repressed nature as well as the landscape artist. His rejection of establishment traditions led him to Montecito in 1886, where “with the passage of years he . . . [became] more and more the advocate of the simple, as he has remained constantly in the presence of Nature, without subjecting himself to the influence of men and books.”<sup>310</sup> Charles’s philosophy of development was based on learning from nature—a facet of “the simple” highlighted in the aforementioned quotation by Gustav Stickley. Charles said,

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<sup>310</sup> Gustav Stickley, “Nature and Art in California,” 376.

When I began my work here at Montecito . . . I arranged my lawn with geometrical flower beds, and soon I had an Italian garden. I saw my error quickly. My effects were too formal and artificial. I was misapprehending Nature, repressing her and following the example of those whom I had sharply criticized. As a measure of reform I removed the beds; resolving for the future to control Nature, but never to resist her.<sup>311</sup>

As described earlier in this chapter, Jane and Ralph employed a similar landscape philosophy at Arcady. Both the Whiteheads and the Eatons aimed at developing a harmonious landscape composition which complemented the preexisting color, shape, and textures of the place. However, these landscapes neither excluded the addition of foreign plants and forms, nor precluded modifications to the topography. In this way, their style can be seen as part and parcel of the Aesthetic tradition, where a combination of sources was combined in a “quiet eclecticism,” to quote art historian Paul Greenhalgh.

The sources and symbols used were less important, however, than what might be described as the overall sense of charged simplicity. The central aim of the Aesthetic artist or designer was to achieve maximum effect through an absolute economy of means, to exercise restraint in order to achieve opulence.<sup>312</sup>

From 1891 to 1896, Eaton organized flower festivals in Montecito—a tradition he imported from Nice, France.<sup>313</sup> The Whiteheads helped salvage the 1895 festival after the fairground pavilion burned down just before the event’s opening.<sup>314</sup> And, in early 1896, Jane was on the float committee just before the loss of her first baby in May of that year. She worked on the program and many costumes.<sup>315</sup> The *Primavera Float* Jane worked on in 1896,

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<sup>311</sup> Charles Eaton, quoted in Gustav Stickley, “Nature and Art in California,” 378.

<sup>312</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, “*Le Style Anglais*,” 138.

<sup>313</sup> Patricia Gardener Cleek, “Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara,” 12.

<sup>314</sup> David Myrick, “The Flower Festivals of the 1890s,” *Montecito and Santa Barbara: The Days of the Great Estates*, 117.

<sup>315</sup> Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, letter on “Arcady, Sta. Barbara” notepaper, dated April 20, 1896, transcribed by Tom Wolf; and Jane Whitehead, 1896 calendar, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Garden.

[was] covered with sod planted with pink daisies; a woman dressed as Spring stood under a baldacchino accompanied by children holding garlands of daisies. A team of four chestnut horses was rented to pull the float, wearing harnesses that three women spent five days covering with green silk. When the horses balked and a pair of “ugly old cart horses” had to be substituted, [Jane] was distressed that this would cost the Whiteheads the first prize—in fact, they won second.<sup>316</sup>

In addition to his work as a landscape artist, Charles Eaton was also a painter and a craftsman. As a craftsman, he received acclaim. Numerous articles from the turn-of-the-century describe his metalwork and craftsmanship in leather. Best known for his lamps and lighting fixtures, bookbindings and illuminated manuscripts, coffers and screens, Charles’ work often highlighted the beauty of humble materials from Montecito’s indigenous nature. [Illustration 4.31. and 4.32.] His “abundant and ingenious decoration with California products—the streaked abalone shell, or stones found on the Pacific beaches,” red cedar, sequoia, and scales from giant pine cones--was cited as the novelty defining his work.<sup>317</sup> His studio, located above his carriage house,<sup>318</sup> must have been of great interest to Jane and Ralph. [Illustration 4.33.] A Charles Eaton binding belonging to the Whiteheads was used as a photo album. [Illustration 4.34.] Roughly stamped and finished metalwork Fleur de Lys embellishments feature abalone inlay and include the binding’s lock and decorative strap hinges. The fleur-de-lys, or Florentine lily, was one of the Whiteheads’ symbols. The front and back cover were made of a spectacularly veined but presently unknown variety of wood. Santa Barbara historian Patricia Gardner Cleek speculated that Charles’ use of native woods may point to a working relationship or acquaintance with Julius Starke, a “woodworker and

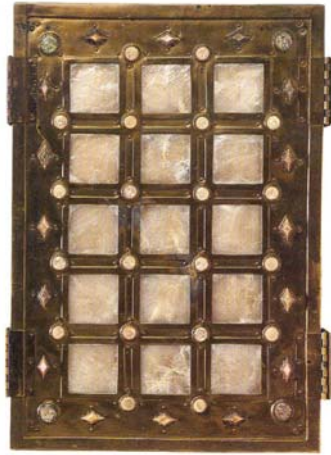
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<sup>316</sup> Tom Wolf, “Byrdcliffe’s History: Industrial Revolution,” 20. Information in the Wolf quotation is cited as coming from a letter from Jane to her mother, see Jane Whitehead to her mother, Jane Byrd Mercer McCall, letter on “Arcady, Sta. Barbara” notepaper, dated April 20, 1896, transcribed by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>317</sup> Isabelle McDougall, “Some Recent Arts and Crafts Work,” *The House Beautiful* (July 1903): 74-75, cited in Patricia Gardner Cleek, “Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara,” 17.

<sup>318</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman, “The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland,” 186.

furniture maker in Santa Barbara, who collected regional woods, especially from Yosemite, to use in his craftwork.”<sup>319</sup>

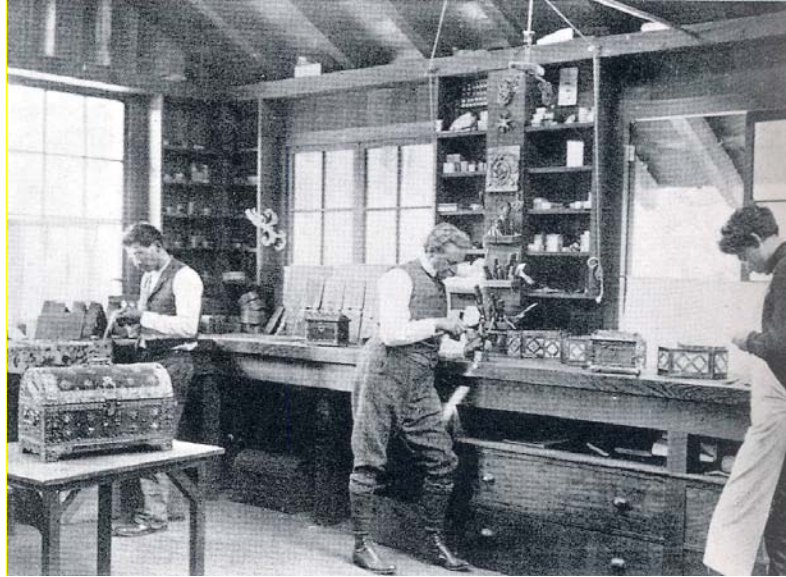


4.31. Charles Frederick Eaton and Robert Wilson Hyde, *Wedding Album*, exterior, 1903, hinged brass covers with mother-of-pearl, windowpane oyster, natural suede, and ink and paint on vellum, 12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr., Collection, Courtesy of The Wolfsonian Foundation, Miami, in Kenneth Trapp, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California*, 187.



4.32. Charles Frederick Eaton and Robert Wilson Hyde, *Wedding Album*, interior, 1903, hinged brass covers with mother-of-pearl, windowpane oyster, natural suede, and ink and paint on vellum, 12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr., Collection, Courtesy of The Wolfsonian Foundation, Miami, in Kenneth Trapp, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts Movement in California*, 187.

<sup>319</sup> Patricia Gardner Cleek, “Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara,” 17.



4.33. *Charles Federick Eaton in His Studio at Riso Rivo* from *Craftsman* (July 1904) reproduced in Leslie Greene Bowman, “The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland,” in Kenneth. Trapp, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts movement in California*, 186.

4.34. Charles Frederick Eaton, *Photograph Album*, belonging to Jane and Ralph Whitehead, ca. 1900, metal, wood, shell, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, pictured in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*: 20.

Other Eaton bindings in the Whiteheads’ collection were made by Charles’s daughter Elizabeth Burton Eaton. [Illustration 4.35. and 4.36.] Mostly featuring irises, depicted in either a representational way as illustrated or stylized as a Fleur de Lys symbol (as in the aforementioned photo album by her father), Elizabeth’s bindings for the Whiteheads were made of the softest suede which seems to have originally been green with leather and shell appliquéd decorations.<sup>320</sup> The craftsmanship is rough, one might say it is even a bit crude or amateurish. However, this effect was probably intentional because Elizabeth was a trained, practiced and award winning artist and craftsman. In all likelihood, the obviousness of the handwork was an aesthetic decision, because those

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<sup>320</sup> Evidence of the color green was found on one of the Whiteheads’ bindings by Elizabeth. These bindings have faded to brown. The green color was present on an area that had not been exposed to light. It was either the original color or it had changed to that color over time.

involved in the Arts and Crafts movement valued and attributed beauty to signs of handwork in the same way they appreciated the application of hours of handwork applied to the most humble materials from nature. An article entitled “The Californian Art of Stamping and Embossing Leather” discusses the adaptation of traditional Mexican leather techniques by American Arts and Crafts ladies. “As the work does not demand any great amount of physical strength, but rather delicacy and deftness, it is well suited to women, and several Californians have taken it up with notable success.” Elizabeth is one of the women highlighted:

Mrs. Burton of Santa Barbara, much of whose work has for some years been sold in New York, combines pyrography with tinted and appliqué leather. She uses calf and sheep skins, but does the piecing necessary in large panels and screens so neatly, that it almost defies detection. Several of Mrs. Burton’s designs are quite daring, . . . The flowers in her work are applied with fine machine stitching, and are then tinted or etched with the hot iron to heighten the effect. Mrs. Burton, in fact, employs any method or material that seems likely to contribute to a desirable result. For instance, on a small chest of dark green leather she has inlaid mother-of-pearl.<sup>321</sup>

The Whiteheads owned at least four bindings by Elizabeth.<sup>322</sup> All of them incorporate many of the attributes described above. Only one, featuring an appliquéd orchid, is marked with Elizabeth’s initials, “EEB.” [Illustration 4.35.] The others are not signed.

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<sup>321</sup> Arthur Inkersley, “The Californian Art of Stamping and Embossing Leather,” 52.

<sup>322</sup> Two of four Elizabeth Eaton Burton bindings possessed by the Whiteheads are in the Winterthur Byrdcliffe collection. Included in Series VII, photographs, these bindings have never been attributed to Elizabeth. Historian and art dealer Robert Edwards has a related one and a photograph of the illustrated one marked “EEB,” which belongs to Mark and Jill Willcox Jr. At present, the location of the initialed photo album is unknown.



4.35. Attributed to Elizabeth Burton Eaton, *Binding*, ca. 1900, leather, marked “EEB,” photograph courtesy of Robert Edwards.



4.36. Attributed to Elizabeth Burton Eaton, *Binding for Jane and Ralph Whitehead with Fleur-de-lys and Iris Decoration*, ca. 1900, tooled and appliquéd leather, photograph by author courtesy of Robert Edwards.

Published in Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman* magazine, the aforementioned article ends with a moralizing quotation about the virtues of hand work. Quoting R. Maulde de la Clavière in the *Art of Life*:

Earnest work gives us a value in our own eyes, and, consequently, peace of mind: it weds us, so to speak, to ourselves, and saves us from that double-mindedness to



which feeble or excitable natures are subject. If you drink out of a glass, it becomes empty; if you drink at the spring itself, you will never exhaust it.<sup>323</sup>

Ending an article on stamped and embossed leatherwork in this way emphasizes the connections Arts and Crafters and seekers of the simple life—Stickley’s intended audience—made between hand work, the simple life, nature, and spirituality. Seen in this light, a handmade leatherwork binding like the ones Elizabeth made for the Whiteheads is so much more than the sum of its parts. They were honest and compelling tools of spiritual communication.<sup>324</sup>

Elizabeth Eaton Burton was born in Paris in 1869 and received her artistic training abroad. She was married in Santa Barbara in 1893 and played an important role in Santa Barbara’s Arts and Crafts movement there well into the twentieth century.<sup>325</sup> During the years of Jane and Ralph’s residence in Montecito, Elizabeth participated in art classes held at the Whiteheads’ Arcady School. [Illustration 4.37. and 4.38.] Being a Sloyd school for manual art, the Arcady school classes were intended for children but adults and established artists such as Elizabeth participated and taught classes there as described in the following letter from Ralph to Jane:

Yesterday I had Mrs. Tallant and Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Eaton at the drawing class, and we decided to shorten the time of the mechanical drawing to half an hour and to use the other half in drawing from an object. Almost all the children get tired and bored by the mechanical drawing after the first half hour. Miss Butler [the Arcady school’s teacher] is coming up today to see about their making little easels . . . for themselves and Lester [painter, Leonard Lester] will carry on the class till the end of June.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Arthur Inkersley, “The Californian Art of Stamping and Embossing Leather,” 53.

<sup>324</sup> Wording borrowed from Edward R. Bosley, “Western North America: Nature’s Spirit,” in Karen Livingstone and Linda Parry, eds., *International Arts and Crafts*, 190.

<sup>325</sup> For more on Elizabeth Eaton Burton’s career in Santa Barbara see Patricia Gardner Cleek, “Arts and Crafts in Santa Barbara.”

<sup>326</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, dated May 22, 1900, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

4.37. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers; Christopher Tornoe, builder, *Arcady School* (with students and teachers on front steps), Sloyd School of Manual Art established by Jane and Ralph Whitehead, Arcady Estate, Montecito, California, ca. 1898, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

4.38. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers; Christopher Tornoe, builder, *Arcady School*, interior, Sloyd School for Manual Art established by Jane and Ralph Whitehead, Arcady Estate, Montecito, California, interior view of Leonard Lester's frieze level landscape mural, ca. 1898, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

### **Section 7: The Arcady School.**

Describing the Arcady school as “a William Morris Cult school,” Gail Harrison the starstruck Arcady dinner guest quoted earlier, said she didn’t “know what they did at that school,” she only knew “they gathered around them the choice people of the town.”<sup>327</sup>

Elizabeth Eaton Burton, Leonard Lester and other artists, as well as friends from high society fit her description.

The Whiteheads’ Arcady School was added to the part of their estate fronting on Sycamore Canyon Road in 1898.<sup>328</sup> With its addition and Jane’s grand Arcady studio acting as a studio-salon which was regular host to musical performances and social gatherings, Arcady was beginning to approximate the “art convent” the Whiteheads planned at the inception of their relationship recorded in their 1892 publication *Grass of the Desert*. Once the Sloyd school opened, Jane’s calendars regularly mention receptions for as many as one hundred people at a time. Additionally it looks like exhibitions, sales, classes in design and drawing were held at Arcady during the Sloyd school years between

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<sup>327</sup> “Recollections of Gail Harrison in the 1880s,” page 6 of typed interview.

<sup>328</sup> The whereabouts of the Arcady school is presently unknown. Believed to have been moved or integrated into another structure, David Myrick says it was originally located “on the part of his property fronting on Sycamore Canyon Road almost opposite the entrance to Mira Vista.” See David Myrick, *The Days of the Great Estates of Montecito and Santa Barbara*: 306, 308.

1898 and 1903. Since Ralph was often away from Arcady, making trips around the United States and to England, we can assume that Jane planned, managed and organized many Arcady events.

The Whiteheads' efforts to form a school for local children along Arts and Crafts movement lines were a preparation for the education of the two sons they would soon have in 1899 and 1901. In fact, the birth of their sons, concern for their future and the opinion they would hold of their parents became a central impetus for the Whiteheads' subsequent simple life endeavors at Arcady and Byrdcliffe.

The Sloyd method of teaching originated in Sweden under Otto Salomon and spread throughout Europe and the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. In keeping with the tenets of simple living and the Arts and Crafts movement, woodcarving and joinery were taught as exercises that satisfied childrens' need for activity and desire for knowledge, and helped them develop their mental, moral and physical capacities.<sup>329</sup> Eventually, the Sloyd method was transformed on American soil, "becoming the inspiration for public school manual training and home economics classes."<sup>330</sup>

As they did with Arcady, the Giglio, and the Moon, the Whiteheads employed Christopher Tornoe in the construction of their Sloyd school. Because it is so similar to Tornoe's own studio on the Eaton's neighboring Riso Rivo estate, Tornoe probably designed as well as built the Whiteheads' Arcady school. Both structures bear a striking similarity to the buildings constructed later at Byrdcliffe. Thus, I argue it is probable that Tornoe directly or indirectly influenced the mature simple life aesthetic the Whiteheads

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<sup>329</sup> Hans Thorbjörnsson, "Otto Salomon, 1849-1907," 3.

<sup>330</sup> Maria Churchill, "Browsing with Maria Churchill: Sloyd School flourished briefly in Montecito."

spearheaded with his help in California and instituted on a large scale at Byrdcliffe in 1903. Architectural historian Cheryl Robertson describes the Arcady school in the following way:

The shingle-clad school, really a woodworking studio, sported a low gable roof and diamond-mullioned sliding windows in three- or four-unit sets, with at least one companionate built-in seat on the inside. A projecting bay, evidently built around a large picture window, sprouted from one of the gable ends and lent support for an arborlike framework on either side. The rustic bench circumscribing a tree added interest to the entryway, which gave immediate access to the unpartitioned workroom. A broadly proportioned front door communicating directly with the primary interior space, as opposed to a vestibule or intermediate hall, was characteristic of California bungalows.<sup>331</sup>

The Whiteheads began looking for a site for their Arcady school in July and August 1898. By September, the Tornoe family was staying in the Moon, signaling the onset of the Sloyd school's construction. Jane designed the door of the school, and mentions "designs by Mr. L. for decoration of school" in her September calendar entries. "Mr. L." was the British painter, Leonard Lester. He decorated the Arcady school's interior with a now missing almost twenty foot long frieze level landscape mural of the California coast. The painting's rolling hills with trees and flattened perspective is reminiscent of landscapes from early Renaissance Siena. [Illustration 4.38. and 4.39.] Art historian Tom Wolf relates the mystical effect created by "light infused colors, glowing pink at the horizon" of the mural with "landscapes painted by members of the Point Loma Theosophical group, with whom Lester would associate in his San Diego days."<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Cheryl Robertson, "Architecture at Byrdcliffe," 146-147.

<sup>332</sup> Tom Wolf, "Art at Byrdcliffe," 95.



4.39. Leonard Lester, *Study for Arcady Mural*, ca. 1898, oil on linen on board, 6 x 27 7/8 inches, in James R. Bakker, *Byrdcliffe 2005*, 13.

An October 1898 newspaper announcement stated the “new school is nearly finished. It is nicely arranged and very attractive.”<sup>333</sup> It appears classes commenced in January 1899 with Miss Butler as teacher of the school. Said to have come from the “East,” and given Jane and Ralph’s connections with John Dewey and his circle, and several references to Dewey in Jane’s calendars from this time, it is possible she was associated with Dewey.<sup>334</sup> Additionally, Miss Langley associated with the Chicago Hull House and John Dewey’s circle and Miss Sullivan are mentioned in Jane’s letters as teachers at the Sloyd school. Corresponding dated letters from Ralph date their tenure at the Arcady school to 1902.<sup>335</sup>

In 1900, the Whiteheads introduced J. Liberty Tadd’s teaching method in the Arcady School’s classes. Tadd was a well-known arts and manual training instructor from Jane’s hometown Philadelphia. His 1899 publication, a *New Method in Education*,

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<sup>333</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping, possibly from *The Morning Press* (Santa Barbara), dated October 9, 1898, transcription from Ralph Whitehead files, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed “Arcady. 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Sunday and Monday a.m. [no year]; and Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed “Arcady. 18<sup>th</sup>” [no year], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, inscribed “Indianapolis. May 6, 1902,” Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

placed emphasis on drawing, clay modeling and wood carving. In 1901, after visiting with Tadd on the East Coast, his daughter and mother came to Santa Barbara to instruct local teachers and teach at the Arcady School.<sup>336</sup> Of Miss Tadd's teaching engagement the Santa Barbara *Morning Press* had the following to say about the "New teacher in Arcady Sloyd School in Montecito":

This school will be fortunate in the coming year in having as teacher Miss Tadd, a daughter of J. Liberty Tadd, principal of the well known Philadelphia Manual Training School and originator of the ambidextrous system. The school will open sometime in October.<sup>337</sup>

Upon their move to Woodstock in 1903, the Whiteheads were prepared to give the use of the Sloyd building and its equipment to the people of Montecito if they funded the employment of a teacher.<sup>338</sup> This does not appear to have happened. Perhaps it seemed unnecessary given the presence of another larger Sloyd school for manual art, founded in 1893 by Miss Anna Susan Cabot Blake, in Santa Barbara.

### **Section 8: The Birth of Two Sons and Plans for the Future.**

Ralph Jr. (Bimbo) was born September 27, 1899 and Peter (Angelo) was born June 20, 1901. Both sons were born healthy and Jane seems to have had no problem delivering or recovering after either birth. Jane and Ralph were thrilled to be parents. [Illustration 4.40. and 4.41.] In fact, the well being and education of their children became the guiding force in their lives from this point on. Planning a family led them to form a Sloyd school for manual art at Arcady and educating their boys and creating a non-

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<sup>336</sup> Patricia Gardner Cleek, "Art and Crafts in Santa Barbara," 12.

<sup>337</sup> "New Teacher in Arcady Sloyd School."

<sup>338</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping, possibly *The Morning Press* (Santa Barbara), dated September 4, 1903, in Ralph Whitehead file, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

materialistic artistic environment for them to grow up in played a large part in forming the Byrdcliffe art school. Ultimately, these were among the primary reasons the Whiteheads decided to leave California for Woodstock, New York. It seems, the Whiteheads thought California was ideal for raising children as “healthy animals” but it was lacking the artistic and intellectual fodder necessary for developing the souls of their boys.<sup>339</sup>

4.40. Ralph Whitehead, attributed photographer, *Jane Whitehead Holding Baby (Ralph, Jr., or Peter)*, Arcady, Montecito, California, ca.1899 or ca. 1901, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

4.41. Jane Whitehead, attributed photographer, *Ralph Whitehead Holding Baby (Ralph, Jr., or Peter)*, Arcady, Montecito, California, ca.1899 or ca. 1901, photograph, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

In a letter of reply to Ralph, Jane voiced her thoughts on their life at present and what she wanted for their future. This letter also illustrates the Whiteheads’ process of intellectual collaboration. For their son’s sake (Ralph Jr. was the only son born at the time of the letter in July 1900), “we want to start him as a healthy animal for some years to come and he is in an ideal environment for that, but as there is a bare possibility that we may want to help him to become something more—a man and a soul—we shall have to keep in touch with Europe.”<sup>340</sup> For herself, Jane wanted

to paint a little in the next few years. This and the housekeeping to say not of the boy and you, is as much as ever I can do, and I want to do it so that at the end—both at the end of the life phases, or at the end of life itself—I may not blush at the blank. I do not want to make housekeeping an occupation, but no house runs itself and every one is its own mistress’ machine.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed “July 14<sup>th</sup> 1900. Saturday Night.” [on Arcady, Sta. Barbara letterhead], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

For Ralph, she agreed with his wish to pursue a writing career. Although she questioned his ability to write on economics “without a practical experience of the working man’s world,” saying “I always have a doubt in my own mind when I look at books of mens [sic] opinions and theories. And yet so many men, like Swift, etc., who have the personal knowledge are unreliable because they have let the subject run away with them.” Jane thought Ralph’s occupation of writing combined well with the “principle of living like a peasant”—a.k.a. the simple life—and thought of Ralph’s lack of a set occupation, “no profession to engross you,” as a good thing because it would give him time to spend with his children.<sup>342</sup>

**Section 9: Views on Social and Cultural Reform published in *Arrows of the Dawn*.**

In truth, Ralph had a writing career, albeit a part time one that was never a sole occupation, and which was never especially concerned with economics, focusing rather on social issues. He wrote and published several lectures during his residence in Montecito in a series entitled *Arrows of the Dawn*. They are published as a series. Knowing Jane and Ralph’s predilection for literary metaphor, there is no doubt that *Arrows of the Dawn* refers to some yet unknown source. In terms of corporate imagery, the arrow in *Arrows of the Dawn*’s meaning is clear. It refers to Ralph in the Whiteheads’ wing and arrow motif illustrated on the cover of “Pictures for Schools” and used elsewhere by the couple. [Illustration 4.42.]

4.42. Ralph Whitehead, “Pictures for Schools,” *Arrows of the Dawn* no. 3, 1901, Montecito, California.

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.



Looked at together, the *Arrows of the Dawn* series features principles of central importance to the European Aesthetic and Arcadian Aesthetic model of simple living illustrated by the Whiteheads at Arcady in California. Socialist underpinnings similar to those proposed by Ruskin; Ancient Greek models for lifestyle; and the importance of Ancient, Renaissance, and modern-day master artworks are all described in the series. As discussed at length in this chapter, these aspects factored heavily into the Aesthetic model of simple living for the Whiteheads first in Europe and then in California.

“The Unemployed” (1895) was the first *Arrows of the Dawn* publication. “Laborare est orare,” meaning “work is prayer” subheads the book’s title. The book argues for public works funded by taxpayer dollars—an unpopular idea at the time in the West. According to the author, public works were considered synonymous with socialism (another unpopular concept).

The majority of us are afraid of socialism, and even of the thin end of its wedge, which is seen in the providing of labor by public authority for those who can find none in the ordinary way we shrink from the possible financial consequences of such action and yet we are responsible for the social and industrial system, which has rendered such action necessary. For it is our system of free business competition—of *laissez faire*—under which capital and managing intellect take the lion’s share of the product of the world, leaving the crumbs to those who do the manual work, which has produced the growing discontent of the masses; with greater freedom and more intellectual training than they had a century ago, they are beginning to chafe under a system which produces two such absurdities as the millionaire and the pauper, and which keep providing us with crowds of the unemployed.<sup>343</sup>

Understanding the root of the problem from a removed and safely superior social position, Ralph belies his Ruskinian roots--Christian socialism--and his intellectual ties with the east coast in his analysis. He notes that policies similar to his own were adopted in “Boston, Lowell, Cambridge, Lawrence, Providence, Cincinnati, New York and many

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<sup>343</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “The Unemployed,” *Arrows of the Dawn*, 2.

other cities,” where charitable organizations work together with public authorities to “cure” this “social evil.”<sup>344</sup> Ultimately, he thinks only a more enlightened view of education will solve the social problems associated with unemployment. This was in all probability another impetus for his and Jane’s activist role in education.

“The Power of Hellas” published in 1896 as part of the *Arrows of the Dawn* series is credited to a pseudonym, Prospice. Prospice, meaning “look forward” or “look ahead,” is also the title of a poem by one of Jane and Ralph’s favorite authors, Robert Browning.<sup>345</sup> In “The Power of Hellas,” Prospice, a.k.a. Ralph, is thinking about the future. He seeks to shed light on the present and possibly improve the future through an analysis of the past, looking at the individual, and the State in Ancient Greece.

If we contemplate the manifestations of Greek genius from its first conscious presentation in the Homeric poems down to its culmination in the art of Pheidias [*sic*], in the orations of Perikles, in the life and death of Sokrates, and in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, we shall find certain characteristics which distinguish it from that of all other nations.

The first of these is in its *unity*. The second is dependent on the first, and is in reality the same regarded from another side: I mean the *sense of proportion* and fitness. The third is closely connected with the last, namely, *simplicity*, or directness. Two other marked characteristics it shares with great art and life of all time: they may be classified as *repose*, and the sense of *infinity*, or the universal, or ideal element of life, without which repose is impossible.<sup>346</sup>

Here, as in earlier publications like *Grass of the Desert*, Ralph ties together the history of ideas in an analysis of the present moment. Looking at Greek art as the unity of beauty and truth he dissects present understandings of “Art for Art’s sake.” Criticizing “a sickly and emasculate aestheticism” that pursues beauty apart from Truth, and honoring the “true and noble meaning” which “demands recognition for beauty as an

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<sup>344</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “The Unemployed,” 8.

<sup>345</sup> Browning’s “Prospice” is about facing death with sheer courage. The poem was written shortly after his wife Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s death in 1861. It refers to her in its ending: “O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again, And with God be the rest.”

<sup>346</sup> Prospice (Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead), “The Powers of Hellas,” *Arrows of the Dawn*, 8-9.

expression of truth”—he promotes the foundation stone of Platonic idealism in which “the *Idea* of Beauty” is “the supreme type of an *Idea*” and, thus, should be the basis of “the first education of children.”<sup>347</sup> Here, Ralph sees the pursuit of the Beautiful as a virtuous path that should be a basic guiding principle in life.

And Platonic aesthetics, remember! As such, are ever in close connection with Plato’s ethics. It is life itself, action and character, he proposes to colour; to get something of the irrepressible conscience of art, that spirit of control, into the general course of life, above all into its energetic or impassioned acts.<sup>348</sup>

In looking at the relation of the State to the individual, Ralph shows his critical eye is not only set on the present but is capable of seeing fault with the idealized Ancient past. On a Marxist note, he criticizes Aristotle’s lack of capacity to see beyond the politics of his day to understand that a wider humanity existed beyond the state and its citizens. The non-citizens who did the “rough, common every day work of the world, which keeps its culture sane, and himself in touch with Nature” needed to be recognized in order to attain the fullest development of man.<sup>349</sup> And, thus, with education serving as the cure-all we are back to the story of “The Unemployed.”

Ralph’s final California period publication, “*Pictures for Schools*,” put an end to the *Arrows of the Dawn* series. Its 1901 publication corresponded with a gift of Braun reproductions of the “most famous paintings of the world” the Whiteheads made to local schools in the city and county.<sup>350</sup> Dedicated “To My Wife to whose knowledge of Art I am indebted for whatever is most useful in this lecture,” “*Pictures for Schools*” was intended to promote the introduction of reproduced masterpieces from the past into the

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>350</sup> *The Morning Press* (Santa Barbara), October 4, 1904, n.p., transcription in Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead files, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

present into the children's classroom. Ralph describes his purpose, proposes a selection of artworks, and explains why they should be good reproductions, and how they should be hung and framed. Picking up on the running theme of the *Arrows of the Dawn* series, the underlying argument of "Pictures for Schools" is that education would lead to the fullest development of man, and that education should be based on the Platonic ideal in which Beauty was the highest form of truth.

As an introduction for young children to the beauty of the human form which was felt so keenly, and loved so truly, by those old masters, we have chosen a few examples as good to live with, believing that from their presence, as from the sunrise, or the spring, there may pass into the soul of the child a love of Beauty which may help to make more beautiful the life of every day . . . . And so Art is not something separate from our common life here, but may become to us, even if we are not ourselves artists, a real factor modifying and refining life by its constant influence. Thus Art for Art's sake is in the highest sense no false cry, for in Art are visualized and made manifest to us some of Nature's most noble works. Man, too, is a part of Nature, and a *Madonna* of Raphael is as real a part of the work of her hands as are the lilies of the field.

Some of the wiser of our educators seem to be becoming aware of the importance of the early training of the senses as the firmer foundation on which the health of soul of grown-up manhood may rest more securely. Now, although the training of the senses is undoubtedly to be effected chiefly through the motor activities, yet the mere presence of Beauty is not without its effect, if we are to believe the words of our master, Plato.<sup>351</sup>

In California, the Whiteheads engaged a broader public through publications like the *Arrows of the Dawn* series, the enrollment of local children of all social classes in the Arcady School, and acts of *noblesse oblige* and philanthropy such as donating a collection of art reproductions to the local school.<sup>352</sup> Upon founding Byrdcliffe, their aspect seems to have become more insular and less community minded and Ralph's writing career seems to have come to an end.

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<sup>351</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, "Pictures for Schools," 7, 11-12.

<sup>352</sup> The readership of the *Arrows of the Dawn* series and other Whitehead publications is unknown.

In a letter, Jane articulates the direction their simple life would take in its next phase of evolution:

Taken as we are at this time of life and in this house we could not carry it out very far but at any rate we can strive in that direction. Keeping early hours, eating simple food and working the ground, as if it were someone else we were doing it for, which if done—without fretting—results in health.<sup>353</sup>

The house would have to go. Arcady was too grand. In order to live “like a peasant” and educate their son to be a “man and a soul” things were going to need to change. And, thus, the search for Byrdcliffe began in earnest. Ralph set out with Hervey White, whom the Whiteheads affectionately called Niccolo, and Bolton Brown to find a new location for their “art convent.” Meanwhile Jane did as she said she’d do in her previously quoted letter, she practiced her art and took care of her family. Yes, she painted. She also worked in linen and other art media, took care of Ralph Jr., had their second son Peter in June 1901, ran the Arcady Sloyd school for manual art and the Whiteheads’ artistic salon in Ralph’s absence.

At Arcady the Whiteheads lived a simple life that began as a continuation of the Aesthetic European model they were involved with in England and on the Continent prior to their marriage, which was associated with Morris’s “simplicity and splendor” and Oscar Wilde’s call to Americans for a “union of Hellenism—with intense individualism, the passionate colour of the romantic spirit”—with an appreciation of the “natural forms abundantly present in the landscape.”<sup>354</sup> In California the European approach was adapted to a Southern Californian ideal based on an Arcadian model. Here, California’s cultural roots—its Native American and Spanish Colonial heritage—were combined with

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<sup>353</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed “July 14<sup>th</sup> 1900. Saturday Night.” [on Arcady, Sta. Barbara letterhead], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>354</sup> Oscar Wilde, quoted in Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement*, 111; quoted in Roger Stein, “Artifact as Ideology,” 26.

Ancient Greek references, and California's awesome natural world. The result was a simple life aesthetic, lifestyle and political standpoint that reflected Charles Fletcher Lummis's thoughts about the American Southwest's promise as a center for a cultural Renaissance if its Anglo-Saxon settlers combined their Protestant work ethic with the advantages the Southwestern world had to offer: a temperate Mediterranean climate that allowed for an outdoor life-style, and a Latin Catholic culture characterized by the Spanish generosity of spirit, personal restraint, social purpose and joy in life.<sup>355</sup> In Montecito the Whiteheads' built environs, lived a lifestyle and made efforts at social reform that embodied these ideals. They modified and sculpted the natural and social world to fit their ideal. The amount of liberty they granted themselves in the modification of nature is a major point of distinction between the Arcadian phase of simple living and the mature phase they employed at Byrdcliffe. At Byrdcliffe nature to the detriment of culture was the center of aesthetics. As explored in the pages in this chapter, this model was spearheaded by the Whiteheads in Arcady outbuildings. It reflected the influence of naturalists and their circle in California and the United States, people like John Muir, John Burroughs, Reverend Joseph Worcester, and James Mason Hutchings explored in this chapter. Their spiritual reverie for the natural world inspired aesthetics that sought to be an organic part of the surrounding landscape rather than an imposition upon it.

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<sup>355</sup> Charles Fletcher Lummis quoted in Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 89.

## Chapter 5: Mature Simplicity at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York.

The Whiteheads achieved the simple life “art convent” they imagined back in 1892 in *Grass in the Desert* at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York, where they lived from 1903 onward. [Illustration 2.14.] Their 1907 prospectus attests:

There is a growing number of those who would like to liberate their children and themselves from the slavery of our too artificial and too hurried life, to return to some way of living which requires less material apparatus, and to throw off the weight of custom which is laid on them by the society in which they have been accustomed to live . . . . We would like our children to care more for the beauty of the sunrise and the twilight of the trees and the fields, than for the passing excitement of the Broadway plays and the paltry satisfaction of the desire to get on in ‘society.’ We would like them to be able, when the time comes . . . to work, to earn sufficient for a sane human life in country places.<sup>356</sup>

Painting, woodcarving and woodwork, metalwork, pottery, weaving, modeling, designing and artistic photography were all represented in the Byrdcliffe shops and studios.

Byrdcliffe was founded as an arts and crafts school and colony in 1903 and continues to operate in a related way into the present under its steward the Woodstock Guild. Jane and Ralph ran Byrdcliffe together until Ralph died in 1929 shortly after the death of their eldest son Ralph Jr. After Jane’s death in 1955, the Whiteheads’ youngest son Peter took over until he passed away in the ‘70s at which time the Woodstock Guild took over as steward.

The register for the Whiteheads’ Byrdcliffe dormitory the Villetta sheds some light on the number of visitors that came to Byrdcliffe between 1903 and 1925.<sup>357</sup>

However, we know there were plenty of visitors that didn’t sign the book. Sometimes

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<sup>356</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, *Byrdcliffe 1907*.

<sup>357</sup> The guest register for the Villetta is in the Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Laura Parrish, who works in the Downs Collection and knows the collection inside and out, provided the list of numbers of guests registered at the Villetta recorded in this paragraph. Laura Parrish, email with author, 11/14/2007.

only one person per party or family signed. In 1903 fifty five people signed in. These numbers grew slightly over the years. By 1912, 103 people signed the book. After that year the number of guests registered in the book was in that same range through 1925. Interestingly, Byrdcliffe's earliest residents remember its glory days falling between 1903 and the outset of World War I, when, according to one Byrdcliffe craftsperson, the "War cast a shadow over life everywhere."<sup>358</sup> However, some have argued that things unraveled long before then. For example, the precious and rare Byrdcliffe furniture the colony is best remembered for was produced for a brief time between 1903 and 1905. But, if numbers are any indicator of success, the art school and colony had many more visitors in the years following 1912.

The history of Byrdcliffe has been written time and again. Although Byrdcliffe history still lies far beyond the periphery of popular knowledge people have been publishing their thoughts about it since its inception in 1903 and thereafter into the present. For a history of what has been published on the colony see the Appendix at the end of this dissertation. Rather than reiterate the history of the arts and crafts colony, and what has been said most recently in the 2004 Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University exhibition catalog, this chapter's focus is on the experience of simple living at Byrdcliffe—as far as I can tell, a unique contribution.

Here, arts and crafts, architecture, landscape, and lifestyle are examined holistically as part and parcel of the simple life rather than as distinguishable elements—furniture, ceramics, fine arts, architecture, etc. It is my contention that this is the way these things were envisioned in the period by the Whiteheads and their circle. I argue the products made by Byrdcliffe craftspeople and the place's commercial success in

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<sup>358</sup> Bertha Thompson, "Byrdcliffe 1904," 4.



marketing them to the outside world is only a minute fraction of the story. When the colony's arts and crafts objects are viewed outside of the social context of the place they get lost. They were humble on purpose and often unattributable to any one person. The spirit in which they were made was as vehicles to a richer, spiritual, joyful and possibly, more democratic life. They were byproducts of "the art that is life" to return once again to Will Price's quintessential phrase.

Jane and Ralph's White Pines Pottery project, for example, ran from about 1913 into the 1920s. The pottery has not received much attention for its artistic merit. Rather, it is lovely most only to those who appreciate the purpose of its making: it allowed the Whiteheads to work together on handcrafted arts within their rural haven. In pottery, the Whiteheads worked collaboratively in media that highlighted their individual strengths—Jane's prototypes for pots and her decorations, and Ralph's emphasis on the chemistry and science of clay and glaze recipes. On this project, the Whiteheads consulted with almost every art potter in the United States. Never before were Jane and Ralph's mutual art projects so long-term and fully integrated into their life. The story of White Pines pottery is covered here within.

What was simple living at Byrdcliffe? Here simple living involved a concern for individual development and freedom; working collaboratively and openly sharing ideas with others in the community; nonmaterialistic living; an awareness of social justice issues affecting the outside world but remaining blissfully uninvolved in the resolution of those problems; scheduling artistic activity, work in the outdoors, and socializing into daily life; living within the wooded natural world and referring to its beauty for spiritual and artistic inspiration and revelation. At Byrdcliffe the lifestyle and aesthetics of simple

living grew more austere and relied more heavily on direct inspiration from the surrounding local nature of the place than had been the case in California or England.

At Byrdcliffe the Whiteheads formed a colony of like-minded individuals and families inviting people to stay at the dormitory, renting cabins to craftspeople and visitors who planned to spend more time, and selling lots of lands to people who wanted to settle or, at least, spend a good deal of the year in residence. At Byrdcliffe, the Whiteheads did not live alone. This was new.

In terms of the physical plant, the landscape and geography was new. It wasn't Europe or Southern California's Pacific Coast at Montecito. It was the heart of the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. Architecturally speaking, the Whiteheads' arts and crafts colony was like a college campus, with a dormitory, workshops, a studio, a library, a public dining room, guest houses, even a working farm. Here, the aesthetic was at its most Spartan and naturalistic. Like Arcady outbuildings, the entire campus was rendered in dark stained natural wood cabins that sympathetically blended into the mountainside. Unlike Arcady outbuildings, many of these structures, like the Whiteheads' home White Pines, the studio, and dormitory were large structures. Here, the naturalist aesthetic was writ large. This was new.

Lifestyle and socializing was also enacted differently in Woodstock. People worked earnestly during the day on their art, craft, music, writing, gardening, etc. In the evenings, interaction among residents was encouraged to the degree it was almost enforced. They visited with one another in their homes, which were also their studios. In that way, they were informally introduced to new ideas and ways of thinking about their work and their homes. A lot of time was spent outside enjoying the beauty of the

surrounding nature on hikes, picnics, outings to nearby events, such as the Maverick Festivals hosted by Byrdcliffe cofounder Hervey White after he left the Whiteheads' arts and crafts colony to found his own art settlement called the Maverick. There were dinners to attend, musical events, theater performances, dances, etc. They exhibited together at Byrdcliffe and elsewhere as they concurrently pursued independent careers. All this was new because at Woodstock the Whiteheads were directing the activities of a large group of inhabitants on their land.

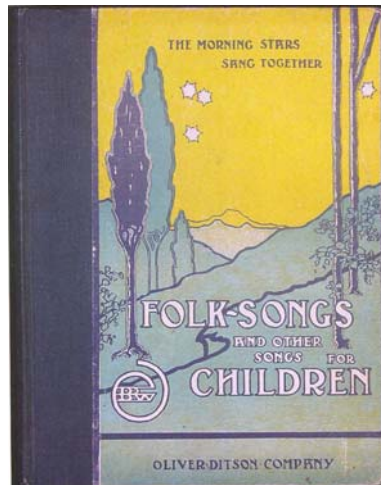
Jane continued to paint. But, at Byrdcliffe, she and Ralph got involved in new art and craft media. Jane even published a book under her own name at Byrdcliffe. In 1903, Boston's Oliver Ditson Company published Jane's *The Morning Stars Sang Together: Folk-Songs and Other Songs for Children*. [Illustration 5.1.] Its cover was designed by Jane. One of a number of California/Woodstock hybrids covered in this chapter, *Morning Stars* pictures a star-studded early morning California landscape with mountains in the distance and tall cypress-like trees in the foreground. This publication corresponded with the Whiteheads efforts to make music part and parcel of the simple life experience at Byrdcliffe. Bertha Thompson recounts,

At White Pines we gathered frequently for music, sitting about on the terrace or in the garden to listen. Music was an important part of life in "Byrdcliffe"—then and all through the years . . . . Every Saturday night there was a dance in the Studio—sometimes in costume. Fancy dress—as only those of artistic temperament know how to use it—was the order of the day on all possible occasions . . . . The Dolmetsches were there one year and gave concerts on the claverchord [one was purchased for Byrdcliffe] and harpsichord . . . . Mr. Whitehead brought over from England one summer, Evelyn Perry, to teach folk-dancing to the children . . . <sup>359</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Bertha Thompson, "Byrdcliffe—1904," 2, 4. Arnold Dolmetsch was a "pioneer in the revival of performances of early music (particularly instrumental) on the original instruments and in the style of the period." Dolmetsch, *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com>, accessed 11/18/07.

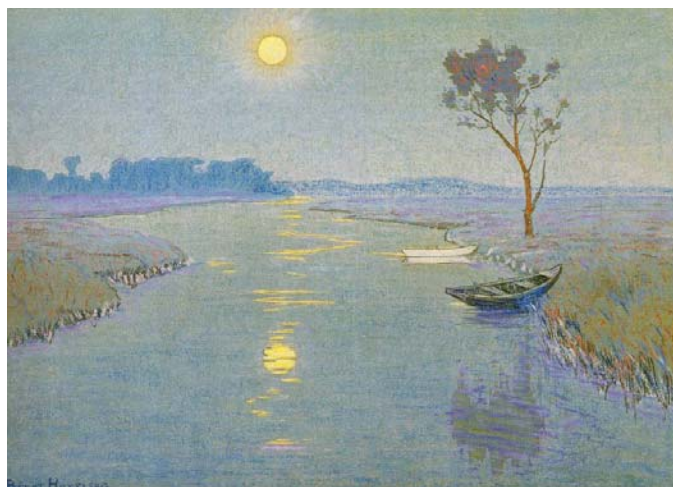
Weaving, furniture making (or at least decoration), and, finally and most fully, pottery were among the Whiteheads' new art and craft media.



5.1. Jane Whitehead, *The Morning Stars Sang Together: Folk-Songs and Other Songs for Children*, 1903, cloth-bound book with paper cover design by Jane Whitehead, 11 15/16 H x 8 9/16 W x 13/16 D inches, Collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild, pictured in Nancy Green, et. al, *Byrdcliffe*, 165.

Byrdcliffe was an oasis to the Whiteheads and their guests and residents from many of the social problems in the outside world. It was experienced as a utopia by many of its participants. Nevertheless, Byrdcliffe residents were sometimes dismissed or they got sick of the Whiteheads' paternalism and left the place. Many moved down the mountain into the town of Woodstock, where they started their own simple life and arts and crafts projects. For example, the longtime friend of the Whiteheads, tonalist landscape artist Birge Harrison was Byrdcliffe's first painting teacher. [Illustration 5.2.] Harrison founded the Arts Student League's summer school in Woodstock. His school brought countless innovators to the town and led to a schism between the landscape artists he inspired and modernists such as German born Konrad Cramer. Cramer spearheaded a style of combining landscape with Modernism in the 1920s; he resided in

Woodstock among the Rock City Modernists who lived down the mountain from Byrdcliffe in a group of houses and barns just north of Woodstock at the intersection of Rock City Road and Glasco Turnpike.<sup>360</sup> [Illustration 5.3.] Even the great Woodstock concert of 1969, the event for which the town is most popularly remembered, would have been impossible without Byrdcliffe. When Byrdcliffe co-founder Hervey White left Byrdcliffe in 1904 to found the Maverick colony several miles away, he inaugurated a tradition of musical concerts, called Maverick Festivals, for which train loads of Bohemian artist types traveled great distances to attend. [Illustration 5.4.] Today, the Maverick still holds chamber music concerts in the naturalistic outdoor amphitheater White fashioned in the woods. This all happened because the Whiteheads founded Byrdcliffe in Woodstock. The cumulative affect resulted in the formation of a distinctive American cultural movement, maybe a counterculture, which is still active in Woodstock to this day and is based on principles of simple living.



5.2. Birge Harrison, *Untitled (View of a Stream)*, ca. 1904, pastel and graphite over woodblock print in grayish black ink, 10 13/16 x 15 3/8 inches (sight), collection of Douglas C. James, in Patricia Phagan, *Made in Woodstock*.

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<sup>360</sup> Patricia Phagan, *Made in Woodstock: Printmaking from 1903 to 1945*, 24.



5.3. Konrad Cramer, *Country Church*, 1921, crayon and tusche (with dry brush) lithograph in black ink on cream wove paper, 11 1/8 x 14 (sheet), printed by the artist, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, in Patricia Phagan, *Made in Woodstock*, 25.



5.4. Unidentified photographer, *Maverick Festival* (partial view of a much larger photograph), ca. 1920, silver print, 6 x 36 inches, The Jean Gaede Archives, Center for Photography at Woodstock, Permanent Print Collection, on extended loan to the Samuel Dosky Museum of Art, State University of New York at New Paltz, in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 196.

**Section 1: Byrdcliffe, Burroughs, Beals and Bigelow.**

Naturalist John Burroughs was an icon of the simple life. He visited Byrdcliffe, lived nearby and eloquently described the Whiteheads' art colony in the following way:

You ask me to tell you about my visit to "Byrdcliffe." Well, I spent a thoroughly enjoyable ten days there . . . The situation is very beautiful, high on the flank of Overlook Mountain above the small and picturesque Woodstock valley and commanding a superb mountain panorama. . . [The place] shows a delightful mingling of the sylvan and the pastoral. The various cottages and buildings are as picturesque as "slabsides" both outside and in, low and rambling, of undressed boards and timbers, and stained a rich tan color. The landscape has been nowhere marred or defaced; The modesty and privacy of nature has in all things been guarded. . . . And the people, upwards of fifty of them, go well with this kind of background: very democratic, free and informal in their intercourse and thoroughly serious and earnest, each one with some work or pursuit that occupies the greater part of each day—Young men and women painting landscapes or portraits or modeling in clay or working in leather or in metals, or weaving, or designing or taking music lessons or working at cabinet work in carpentry—public school teachers spending their vacation learning some craft, some well known artists with their families, two or three women authors . . . all happy and all too busy to loan one idle hand to the devil. I liked the whole spirit and atmosphere of the place immensely.<sup>361</sup>

Burroughs described the "large solid library," as well as the dance room and art gallery, where Saturday morning art critiques were led by established artists. [Illustration 5.5.]

In conclusion, he said that "Mr. and Mrs. Whitehead are the perfection of host and hostess, and their hearts are thoroughly in [their] work."

5.5. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *Byrdcliffe Library*, 1909, silver print, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

A photograph of Burroughs sitting on the front porch of his hand-made home Slabsides seen alongside a similar view from the front porch of the Whiteheads' home White Pines by photojournalist Jessie Tarbox Beals is an interesting and haunting

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<sup>361</sup> John Burroughs to "My Dear Friend," letter, dated and inscribed: "West Park, NY, Aug. 30, '05," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

juxtaposition. [Illustration 5.6. and 5.7.] A comparison of these images invites the viewer to take note of the similarities between the structures, the photograph's composition, as well as Burrough's absence in the Byrdcliffe image. This absence says a couple of things at once; first, it encourages the viewer to think Burroughs should be there and second, it alludes that Byrdcliffe is an homage to Burroughs or the spirit of what he stood for. Beals took pictures of Burroughs and Byrdcliffe around the same time in her early career. It is entirely possible she was familiar with the illustrated 1896 Burroughs portrait by Clarence Lown, a friend and neighbor of Burroughs at Slabsides in West Park, New York and that she knowingly or subconsciously drew upon it in the Byrdcliffe composition.<sup>362</sup>



5.6. Clarence Lown, photographer, *The Swamp before Cultivation*, John Burroughs seated on the porch at Slabsides, June 5, 1896, reprinted in Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley, *John Burroughs' Slabsides*, 26.

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<sup>362</sup> At this point in my research, I am not certain if Clarence Lown's photograph, titled, *The Swamp Before Cultivation*, June 5, 1896 (in Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley's *John Burrough's Slabsides*, 26) was ever published. If so, it may have been a familiar image in the cultural consciousness, making Beals's use of it as the format for her Byrdcliffe composition more likely. If not, she still may have been familiar with it through her photography of Burroughs at Slabsides, and may have drawn upon it because it resonated with her as an inspiration for Byrdcliffe.



5.7. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *View from Porch at White Pines*, 1909, titled “There is no more delightful objective on the slopes of the Catskills than the neighborhood of Woodstock, Ulster County,” in Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” *American Homes and Gardens* (October 1909), print in Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

The Byrdcliffe image was part of a series published with an article by Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” featured in the October 1909 issue of *American Homes and Gardens*. In fact, Beals’s photos were the basis for the article. Bigelow was invited by the editors of the magazine to “write something worthy of these illustrations.”<sup>363</sup> In his essay, Bigelow calls Byrdcliffe a “city of the forest where every tree is a soul in sympathy with the workers under its branches.”<sup>364</sup> In drawing a parallel between the art colony and John Winthrop’s 1630 “city on the hill” sermon to Puritan settlers in New England, Byrdcliffe is positioned as a model for the world. Bigelow refers to the Whiteheads’ home White Pines as “A nature lover’s home,” describing the view from the front porch seen in the illustration along with the aesthetics of the larger built environment and social atmosphere:

Byrdcliffe proper is the summer and winter home of the Whitehead family, a home in the best old sense of that word, the house of massive timber, the interior made by artists in woodwork, the whole a thing which appears to have grown out of its happy environment [sic]. The view from the front takes in an immense range of mountain and valley, blocked to the south by the range of Lake Mohonk. In the foreground is the great barn . . . All the buildings are in harmony as to color and design with the main house, none painted, merely stained to preserve the wood in its natural beauty of color . . . . These bungalows are scattered, some forty or fifty it would seem to me, throughout this great forest demesne, and the inmates live in sandals, short skirts, sailor jumpers, gypsy attire; the men mainly in the comforts of outdoor camp-life. The inmates of this great park . . . are here to draw inspiration from nature; nature is their mother; they love her and make her their model. And thus it happens that a stranger might easily drive past the whole colony and ignore its presence.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” 389.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 390, 392.

Beals's photographs of Byrdcliffe cottages and their interiors show them to be closer akin to Slabsides in scale and naturalism than the Whiteheads largescale home White Pines. [Illustration 5.8., 5.9., 2.15. and 4.24.] Even though White Pines's scale went way beyond that of Slabsides, qualities about the compound make them kindred. In its deference to nature, its use as an artists' retreat, and a place to host guests, Byrdcliffe was in the tradition of Burroughs's summer-home-retreat Slabsides. Built in 1895 in the woods near Burroughs's more formal home, Riverby, Slabsides and Riverby are in West Park, New York, situated along the Hudson River, only a short distance from Woodstock and Byrdcliffe. The building, its relation to nature, and its purpose to Burroughs was described in Francis Whiting Halsey's *American Authors and Their Homes*:

“Slabsides,” a house built of stones culled from the near-by ledges and of timbers cut in the surrounding woods. It is covered with rough-barked slabs laid horizontally as if they were real logs, and has a broad, elevated porch, whose posts are rough cedar-trunks shrouded in growing vines. Into this house Mr. Burroughs put days and weeks of labor, with such help as he could get; but it is the massive chimney—rough stone outside and in—that is his special pride. Of this the present writer has said elsewhere: Few are the philosophers who could have done it, for the hardened muscles of a man familiar with outdoor work were needed to handle these heavy stones. . . . No wonder, then, that Mr. Burroughs talks with pride of his chimney and conjures up recollections of adventure with each old rock that faces him as he sits before a blazing fire, watching his black tea-kettle hissing on its crane, and the gnarled old peat roots consume into coals above the roasting potato from his dooryard patch. By the warmth and light of this great fire the inside of the house was finished by the writer's own hands—finished to suit himself. From the deep ravine at the head of the swamp he brought dozens of large, straight sticks of the beautiful yellow birch, whose bark consists of thin, papery layers that are greenish-gray and silvery and golden and reddish, according to the light, and as lustrous as satin. Straight and smooth are these beautiful golden birches, and of their trunks, standing side by side, he built a partition, half hiding his birchwood bunk, a stairway to the capacious loft, and an ornamental mantel shelf. Two sumachs, branching into tripods, were cut off and set upside down as legs for a study table of plain boards, and out of curiously twisted stems and elbows from the woods were constructed a settee and other quaint bits of furniture. . . .<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Francis Whiting Halsey, *American Authors and Their Homes*, 37-38.

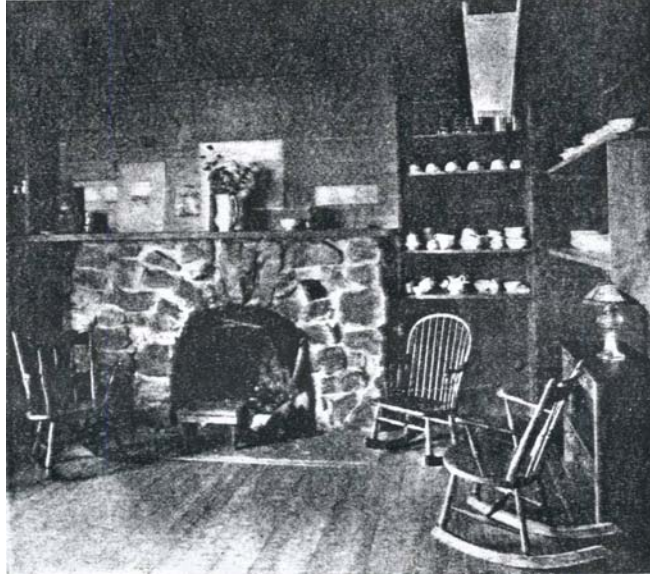
The description goes on to discuss Burroughs's use of the cabin as a place to do his writing and in which to host his many visitors, "men and women from distant corners of the country, friends from near by, picnic parties of young people from along the river, bands of school teachers and student girls from Vassar College, slow-moving neighbors . . . Few authors have so many friends."<sup>367</sup> Built by the author's hands of natural materials found in the surrounding landscape for the purpose of providing a summer retreat for writing and for hosting his many visitors, Slabsides, it seems, provided a local model for the Byrdcliffe built environment, its artistic and social function. As for Burroughs's model for Slabsides, Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley convincingly argues that Henry David Thoreau's cabin on Walden pond on the Ralph Waldo Emerson estate similarly served each author as a retreat that was walking distance from their homes and town, where they could do their writing, visit with guests, have a garden and be close to the nature from which each drew inspiration.<sup>368</sup> Aesthetically and in terms of use the precedent for Byrdcliffe seems to be located within the naturalist tradition inspired by the American Transcendentalists that preceded them.

5.8. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *The Bungalows are Tinted the Color of Partridge*, the Angelus at Byrdcliffe, 1909, published in Poultney Bigelow, "The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts," *American Homes and Gardens* (October 1909), print in Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>368</sup> Elizabeth Burroughs Kelley, *John Burroughs's Slabsides*, 17.



5.9. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *A Use of Native Stone*, unidentified Byrdcliffe cottage interior, 1909, published in Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” *American Homes and Gardens* (October 1909).

As at Slabsides, the Whiteheads placed a heavy emphasis on the value of the social lives of Byrdcliffe inhabitants. Bigelow described an evening there,

It is all a beautiful dream to me, that final dance of last autumn, the exquisite taste, the simplicity, the absence of money-display, and then the refreshments were not at a long bar, but each bungalow spread a carpet under the trees, hung Chinese lanterns in the branches, and there they entertained the guests who reclined like the gods of Homer and forgot the hours in the joy of festive relaxation.<sup>369</sup>

Drawing on the model of Ancient Greek culture associated with simple living, the Whiteheads viewed repose and enjoying life to its fullest—the beauty, tastes, sensual pleasures and company that surrounds us--as part and parcel of the simple life. Modern was their thought that this luxury should be enjoyed by everyone and not just the privileged few. Given the state of the industrialized world, this simple life was not

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<sup>369</sup> Poultney Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” 392.

available to all people. But, it was available to the people the Whiteheads invited to stay with them at Byrdcliffe.

In truth, Byrdcliffe was less democratic than Burroughs makes it sound. Bigelow called it a “benevolent despotism” in which “Whitehead is the absolute monarch, and no one is tolerated who is not in sympathy with his rule. No idlers or mere pleasure-seekers are allowed to encumber these classic shades.”<sup>370</sup> Students and guests came and went at the pleasure of their hosts, who, in all probability, modeled their utopian community on Romantic Ruskinian notions of medieval society, where the lord of the land was a beneficent ruler operating according to unwritten laws of *noblesse oblige*. Jane and Ralph’s art convent at Byrdcliffe was a carefully planned haven, where like-minded people could live the simple life in a beautiful and artistic rural setting secluded from the ills they associated with modern industrial society.

### **Section 2: Searching for Byrdcliffe.**

This section steps back in time to consider the planning stages Jane and Ralph underwent in their search for Byrdcliffe. The Whiteheads thought of their “art convent” as a contribution to society and in service to humanity. It would replace their “dilettante” efforts at the Arcady school in California with “real life” and “world’s work” which required sacrifices.<sup>371</sup> The Whiteheads spent several years searching for Byrdcliffe. While Jane remained at Arcady running the Arcady School and caring for their sons, Ralph searched for a location with Bolton Brown from California (introduced in Chapter

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>371</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, June 10, 1902, New York, transcribed by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Four) and Harvard educated Hervey White who joined Whitehead from Chicago where he was active in the Hull House circle. With his comrades, Whitehead looked all over the United States, thought about England, Italy and other European locations. While both Jane and Ralph yearned for Tuscany and Ralph went so far as to investigate his family's Yorkshire textile mills as a possible location, the search for their new location was largely limited to the United States because Jane and Ralph thought the United States was more right-minded in its democratic castelessness. Ralph communicated with Jane about the places he explored from the field; on one occasion he wrote, "What is it we want from democracy,"

All men are not-equal nor can they have equal respect from us . . . It seems to me that what we want is more social justice; a better opportunity for every child that is born to make the most of what nature has given him; less privilege for birth and wealth . . . The reason why we came to America is because here there is less weight of a privileged class sitting on the necks of the rest and because although the Latin [people] have more charm and more talents, and the English [have the] refinement of [their] culture, yet the American has more ready adaptiveness to circumstances and the average man and woman [are] more for it.<sup>372</sup>

They searched in Oregon, Asheville, North Carolina, the Poconos in Pennsylvania, the American South, and contemplated the Adirondacks. The East Coast's proximity to city centers such as New York City, which isn't far from Woodstock, offered them the opportunity to educate their sons and gave them access to art students and teachers, as well as exhibition and sales venues for their "art convent."

Initially, they avoided the Catskills because of associations with materialistic lifestyles and Jews—yes, Ralph and Jane were anti-Semitic. Byrdcliffe historian Tom Wolf explains the cultural complexity informing the Whiteheads' anti-Semitism describing it as social and elitist, and widespread in the United States during these

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<sup>372</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, inscribed "May 13, 1902. Blowing Rock, N.C.," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

years.<sup>373</sup> It should also be understood as part of the larger race and class privilege they enjoyed and took for granted.<sup>374</sup> Even though they sought to reject undemocratic aspects of the social world of their time, they were naïve about the role of their prejudices and their own complicity in a system that propagated the inequality and exploitation of workers the simple life and Arts and Crafts movements sought to protest and eradicate. The wealth, race and class privilege that made the Whiteheads' simple life possible and sustained it throughout their and their children's lifetime was based on generations of exploitation of those less privileged than themselves--the workers at the Whitehead family Royal George Mills (a felt making factory), and the slaves that must have worked on plantations owned by Jane's colonial forefathers.

Despite their aversion to Jews, the Whiteheads were eventually convinced to settle in the Catskills by Bolton Brown, who explored every inch of the Woodstock region on foot until he found the Byrdcliffe site. Brown, it must be remembered, was a founding member of naturalist John Muir's Sierra Club. Never before, however, had he explored land so seemingly impenetrable. Cutting his way through the thick, sharp growth he wound his way up the back of Overlook Mountain, "emerging into the notch at Mead's Mountain House."

Exactly here the story of modern Woodstock really begins, for it was just at this moment and from this place that I, like Balboa from his "peak in Darien," first saw my South Sea. South indeed it was and wide and almost as blue as the sea, that remote haze, those farthest and faintest humps along the horizon being the Shawangunk Mountains.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> Tom Wolf, "Byrdcliffe History," 23. Wolf cites Byrdcliffe cofounder, Hervey White's description of Ralph as "a Socialist, a radical, an idealist . . . to the day of his death," in tandem with White's observation that "he [Ralph] hated Germans and Jews from tradition, but always seemed to have them for companions."

<sup>374</sup> Renee Ater, author's doctoral dissertation defense, University of Maryland College Park, December 17, 2007.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

Brown perceived an “earthly paradise.”<sup>376</sup> His first impression has a noticeable air of religiosity to it. In this case, however, he refers to historical explorers rather than to biblical figures. Darién is the region of Panama where in 1513 Spaniard Vasco Núñez de Balboa became the first European to view the Pacific Ocean from the New World.<sup>377</sup> Perhaps Brown’s biblical overtones point to his knowledge of the area’s art historical significance as well as allude to his own role in the continuation of that legacy. Brown’s reactions may have reflected his knowledge of and reverence for similar vistas painted in the nineteenth century by Hudson River School artists like Thomas Cole. Cole’s *View of the Round-Top in the Catskill Mountains* from 1827, for example, typically encompasses the Hudson River School’s “union of the picturesque, the sublime, and the magnificent”<sup>378</sup> and illustrates a kindred vision to Brown’s. [Illustration 5.10.]



5.10. Thomas Cole, *View of the Round-Top in the Catskill Mountains*, former title: *Sunny Morning on the Hudson River*, 1827, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Darién, *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, Columbia University Press, 2005, <http://columbia.thefreedictionary.com/Dari%E9n>, accessed 1/2/07.

<sup>378</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, Works of Art, American Paintings and Sculpture, Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836, [http://www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_of\\_Art/viewOne.asp?dep=2&viewmode=0&item=08.228](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/viewOne.asp?dep=2&viewmode=0&item=08.228), accessed 10/17/06.



Between 1825 and his death in 1848, Cole visited the same places Brown surveyed in the spring of 1902. During Cole's sketching treks of the Catskills, he often stayed in the Catskill Mountain House--the very hotel Brown stood near when he saw his "South Sea." Cole painted several images of the Mountain House. [Illustration 5.11.] *Catskill Mountain House: The Four Elements* was painted between 1843-44--three years before Cole climbed his last Catskill Peak on Overlook Mountain.<sup>379</sup> While the Hudson River School was not in fashion when Brown was searching for a site for Byrdcliffe, it is possible Cole's legacy was not lost on Brown, who, in addition to being an artist and naturalist, was originally from nearby Schuyler County New York.



5.11. Thomas Cole, *Catskill Mountain House: The Four Elements*, 1843-44, oil on canvas, 28 ½ by 36 ½ inches, location unknown.

After assuring the Whiteheads that Woodstock was a Catskill location unusually free of Jews, Brown got Ralph and Hervey White to see the place for themselves. "On the way . . . we came to one of those sightly spots from which all the world was visible,

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<sup>379</sup> Timothy J. Mallery, Thomas Cole, The Catskill Archive website, <http://www.catskillarchive.com/cole/cole.htm>, accessed 10/17/2006.

and there sat down on the grass to talk and rest . . . pulling spears of grass, gazing at the view.”<sup>380</sup> Following their visit, on June 5, 1902, Ralph wrote Jane,

We have found a country with a sky,—such beauty of sky I have not seen except in France . . . Here is atmosphere for you, dear, which I did not hope for. And the beauty of the landscape is very great. I have picked out a couple of little farms with real woods on the hillside . . . You have the wooded hills behind you and to the South and the South East a distant horizon of blue wooded country sixty miles away, then to the S.W. and W. some mountains, not like the Alps but like the Scotch hills, and at one place at the edge of the woods a clump of pines for Bimbi and me, and for you too, dear, for they are our own white pines, though not such ancient trees as those we photographed and drew at York. Shall we call it “White Pines” for the sake of York. I like the “White,” it reminds me of “white nights”—you remember in “Marius” the Umbrian farm where he spent the happy days when his faith in Beauty was unshaken. Our house then “White Pines”! . . .

The only thing wanting is a stream, trickles there are, but only small ones and a stream one mile away. The height is 1,000 ft. above sea level and four hundred above the Valley. In the valley is a little village, Woodstock by name, with a hotel, a post office, telegraph and telephone (which latter we could connect to), and a country doctor, also two stores and a butcher. All this 1 ½ miles away. Then the station is 6 ½ miles from “White Pines;” and it is half an hour’s ride to Kingston by rail; or 14 miles to drive from “White Pines.” Kingston is 2 ½ hours by express and 3 hours by other trains from New York. So that from New York to “White Pines” is only 4 ½ to 5 hours. . . .

The wooded hill behind “White Pines” sheltering it from the north rises to 2,000 ft. wooded to the top with maple and hickory and chestnut; though the trees throughout the wood are not very fine, yet here and there are beautiful spots in the edge of the wood, with large chestnuts and maple and butternuts. The woods smell so sweet; and there are blue berries and wintergreen and a few fine azaleas and ferns, and one old orchard with appleblossoms in May, to make up to us for leaving the ranges of California.

One of the two farms is higher up than “White Pines,” at about 1400 ft. and we could make that our home if you preferred it. It is difficult to find all the things we want in any one spot: We have hunted far you know dear and this place is on the whole by far the best, although it is not quite so high as I wanted to be, nor has it a stream. But the air is very fine and smells of the mountains and the woods, the immediate surroundings are very beautiful and the distant landscape of exceeding beauty. My companions are both of the satisfied and I too. Well we are going to the Pennsylvania Mountains near Pocono above the Delaware Water Gap tomorrow and who knows whether our home will be there or here! So to Angelo on his birthday I send “Hope.”<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Bolton Brown, “Early Days at Woodstock,” 28.

<sup>381</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, June 4, 1902, Woodstock, transcribed by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Ralph’s reference to “white nights”

In reply on June 13th, Jane wrote Ralph from Arcady,

I have thought of nothing but “White Pines” for 24 hours. I like everything you say about it. . . . I am quite in favour of going this autumn . . . I have taken the trouble to get the house ready to some extent. . . . I shall love living on a real farm, with an orchard. . . .<sup>382</sup>

### **Section 3: Establishing Byrdcliffe.**

Through correspondence such as the letters quoted above, the Whiteheads collaborated on plans for the development of their new art colony. Subsequent to his above cited letter, Ralph returned to California leaving Brown a cache of money in the Kingston bank to draw upon when he purchased the six or seven farms (equaling about twelve hundred acres) Whitehead wanted for the colony.<sup>383</sup>

Even before land was secured, the Whiteheads imagined the place inhabited by people of like mind, functioning as a summer art school, with a series of private and community buildings set on the landscape and connected by roads. Structures would

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and “Marius” in the first paragraph of the letter which is quoted above is to Walter Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Set in second-century Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius, Pater writes a story about Marius’s search for a philosophy to live by. The story has been called “a more personal version of Winckelmann’s discovery of the diaphanous unity of form and religious sentiment in Greek art, and of the relevance of that ideal to his own development as man and writer.” Jane and Ralph, of course, were also interested in merging form and spirituality. The same basis supports their simple life philosophy. See William B. Thesing, “Walter Pater,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* v. 57, The Gale Group, 1987, pp. 216-239, University of Maryland, Literature Resource Center, [http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/servlet/LitRC?YBE=A.D.&locID=umd\\_um&srchtp=advathr&c=1&NR=pater%2C+walter&ai=U13602590&bConts=278191&vrsn=3&OP=contains&YDE=A.D.&DYQ=is&ca=1&ste=5&BYQ=is&tbst=arp&tab=1&n=10&GD=any](http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/servlet/LitRC?YBE=A.D.&locID=umd_um&srchtp=advathr&c=1&NR=pater%2C+walter&ai=U13602590&bConts=278191&vrsn=3&OP=contains&YDE=A.D.&DYQ=is&ca=1&ste=5&BYQ=is&tbst=arp&tab=1&n=10&GD=any), accessed 11/19/07.

<sup>382</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed “Arcady. Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup>. 4 p.m.,” Letters from Jane Whitehead to RRW and Family 1902, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>383</sup> Bolton Brown, “Early Days at Woodstock,” 28.

include single family residences, a boarding house for students, art studios, working buildings such as a library, dance hall, eating house, and large barn.<sup>384</sup>

That so many important artists and individuals signed on from the outset, making plans to uproot their families and move, lock-stock-and-barrel, to Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York (a.k.a. the middle of nowhere), upon the Whiteheads' say so, before a location was secured or the place was even built, is a testament to their faith in the Whiteheads' vision and, to some degree (probably a large one) in their generosity. The Whiteheads funded the whole undertaking and leased Byrdcliffe homes and sold houses on adjoining land at a low cost to individuals with whom they wanted to surround themselves. People came from California, Chicago, New York, Boston and elsewhere. "White Pines" would be the main family residence belonging to the Whiteheads. "Carniola" was designed by and for Bolton Brown and his family. Hervey White and Fritz Van der Loo moved into the enormous farmhouse that was built. Birge Harrison reentered the Whiteheads' life, buying adjacent land and building a residence—he and Bolton Brown were set to become the art teachers for Byrdcliffe summer school's first season in 1903.<sup>385</sup> The Swedish expatriate painter Carl Eric Lindin came from Chicago where he was a part of the Hull House/Arts and Crafts circle of Hervey White. At Byrdcliffe, he married and started a family with Louise Hastings, who was also from Hull House. "With four hundred dollars," Lindin "bought his church and surrounding land." He and his family turned their old German Lutheran church in a pine grove about a mile east of Byrdcliffe into an Arts and Crafts home named "Talledungen," which they decorated with glazed tiles, carved stair posts and Lindin's paintings set into the local

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 33.

Chestnut wood walls.<sup>386</sup> Extant farmhouses were transformed into Byrdcliffe structures: the Snyder homestead became Camelot, and the Risely farmhouse the Lark's Nest, an artist's studio and quarters for women participants, subsequently and sarcastically called the "Wasp's Nest." The "Studio" and library, as well as the "Villetta," the student dormitory, were among the initial Byrdcliffe structures.<sup>387</sup>

According to Brown, he was also awarded the task of architect—a believable contention given the similarities between his home in Palo Alto, California (illustrated and described in the preceding chapter) and Byrdcliffe structures.<sup>388</sup> Certainly the Whiteheads played a role in the look of things as well. Their Arcady outbuildings (also described and illustrated in the preceding chapter) seem to have provided the simple life ideal on which Byrdcliffe was modeled. Jane and Ralph didn't give architect Samuel Ilseley free reign over Arcady's design. And, there is no reason to believe this couple, who had very strong opinions about the way they wanted things to look, would have given over complete aesthetic autonomy to anyone.

With building already underway, Ralph returned to the yet unnamed Byrdcliffe site from California in October 1903 at which time he was shocked by the illogical way in which things were being done. At that point it seems he transferred some of Brown's responsibilities to himself, especially those relating to engineering—one of Ralph's strengths. Hervey White, who had remained on site with Brown in Ralph's absence, gained homebuilding responsibilities. And, Brown, who apparently was not an easy

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<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 33; Lucy Brown, "The First Summer in Byrdcliffe, 1902-03," 41; Tom Wolf, "Byrdcliffe's History: Industrial Revolution," 29.

<sup>387</sup> Cheryl Robertson mentions the Studio and the Villetta as initial Byrdcliffe structures in her essay, "Nature and Artifice in the Architecture of Byrdcliffe," 129, where she cites Hervey White's "Autobiography," 152-53; and "Woodstock in 1902—Enter the First Art Immigrants," typescript of paper read to the Woodstock Historical Society (1938): 6-7.

<sup>388</sup> Bolton Brown, "Early Days at Woodstock," 31, 33.

person to work with, rubbed his employer the wrong way and began to focus on the interiors of the buildings.<sup>389</sup> Brown more than gradually worked his way out of the Whiteheads' favor. By the time the campus was completed and the Byrdcliffe summer art school had its first season in 1903, Brown, who left his post at Stanford University and moved his family East with the understanding he would be in charge of the whole art school was demoted to the drawing instructor.<sup>390</sup> Soon thereafter, Ralph gave Brown notice terminating his appointment altogether. "The first man in, I now became the first man out," Brown recollected about his early days in Woodstock:

I said to him [Ralph], "If I go out and buy land in the neighborhood, am I to meet with oppositions and unpleasantnesses from here?" He [Ralph] replied, "I don't know anybody that would not be glad to have you settle in the neighborhood." So I went a mile to the east and bought forty acres of land from Ella Riseley for six hundred dollars. I built a house and we lived in it. Also a studio forty rods back in the woods in which for seven years I painted.<sup>391</sup>

Nevertheless, the Byrdcliffe built environment, from the site, to the structures and down to their interior fittings, bears Brown's indelible signature. Like much art and design produced at the colony, architecture at Byrdcliffe was a collaborative undertaking.

Jane participated in this undertaking largely through the mail first from Arcady and later from a family camp in Aiken, South Carolina. Apparently, a building site in the woods of upstate New York was not considered a safe or suitable place for a proper lady like Jane who had two small children. Ralph Jr., born in September 1899 would have been about three, and Peter, born in June 1901, was little over a year when they left the comforts of Arcady in October 1902 for permanent relocation on the East Coast.

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<sup>389</sup> In her essay, "Nature and Artifice in the Architecture of Byrdcliffe," (pages 129-131) Cheryl Robertson attempts to make sense of the patchwork of documentation, which includes Ralph and Jane's letters, and published memories by Brown, White, and other Byrdcliffers, in order to figure out who was the architect of Byrdcliffe.

<sup>390</sup> Tom Wolf, "Byrdcliffe's History: Industrial Revolution," 27.

<sup>391</sup> Bolton Brown, "Early Days at Woodstock," 35.

Several drawings for White Pines interiors were executed by Jane early in 1903, while she was living at the Aiken camp.<sup>392</sup> [Illustration 5.12.] One for the first floor's south-east room, now the living room alcove, includes green walls with orange lily decoration and a fireplace faced in purple and green glazed bricks with an inscription overhead. Built-in drawers for storage and a bench similar to those found in inglenooks, cozy corners popular during the Arts and Crafts movement, surround the hearth. A less ornamental variation of Jane's scheme was executed and remains intact in White Pines. It preserves the architecture of the design but substitutes a natural wood finish, plain walls, and a teal colored brick fire surround for the vivid color scheme and floral wall ornament shown in the drawing. [Illustration 5.13.]

5.12. Jane Byrd McCall Whithead, *Design for Alcove in Living Room* (1st floor southeast room), White Pines, Byrdcliffe, Woodstock, New York, 1903, pastel and graphite on paper, 5 ½ x 16 ¼ inches, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

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<sup>392</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendar, January 8, 1903, "At work. 5 pastel interiors," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. The basis for this passage on Jane's interior drawings was first published in this author's "Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead: Idealized Visions about Simple Living and Arts and Crafts," 19-20. Three of the five interiors have been published. The one included here and two others pictured and discussed in Cheryl Robertson, "Architecture of Byrdcliffe," include the nanny Mackie's room on the second floor of White Pines, p.133, fig. 11 and an elevation for the hall in White Pines, p. 150, fig. 33.



5.13. *White Pines Living Room Alcove*, 1980, 8 x 10 inches, photograph courtesy of Robert Edwards.

These interiors were most likely inspired by a 1901 special edition of the London based Arts and Crafts periodical called *The Studio* edited by Charles Holme called “British Domestic Architecture and Decoration,” which Jane and Ralph wrote about to each other at the time she prepared her interior drawings around January 1903.<sup>393</sup> An annotated copy of this edition was in their Byrdcliffe library.<sup>394</sup> In her essay on the architecture at Byrdcliffe, historian Cheryl Robertson described the way Jane’s “White Pines Hall Elevation” was indebted and relates to M. H. Baillie Scott’s dining-room scheme for Winscombe house, which appeared in the special edition of *The Studio*.<sup>395</sup>

[Illustration 5.14. and 5.15.]

5.14. Jane Whitehead, *White Pines Hall Elevation*, 1903, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, published in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 150.

<sup>393</sup> See Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter[s], dated and inscribed “January 20, 1903, Byrdcliffe”; and “February 1, 1903, ‘Westover,’” Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>394</sup> Today, it is in the Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

<sup>395</sup> Cheryl Robertson, “Architecture at Byrdcliffe,” 150-151.





5.15. M. H. Baillie Scott, designer, *Dining Room for Winscombe House*, ca. 1901, published in *Modern British domestic Architecture and Decoration*, special edition of *The Studio*, 1901, pictured in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 151.

In the end, color and ornament in White Pines interiors ended up being far more reductive and subtle than that illustrated in Jane’s drawings and the examples of “British Domestic Architecture and Decoration” in *The Studio*, as illustrated in the comparison between Jane’s drawing of the living room alcove and the space as it was realized. Subtle colored stains were rubbed into wood surfaces, walls and floors were covered with burlap, which was sometimes colored, and, oftentimes, wooden surfaces were left natural.

In the living hall entrance to White Pines the Whiteheads installed a tile fire surround by Jane’s first cousin Henry Chapman Mercer the archaeologist, antiquarian, folklorist and founder of the Moravian Tile Works in Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

[Illustration 5.16.] During a February 1903 visit to Mercer, Jane picked out the tiles describing them and her experience in a letter to Ralph the following way:

He [Mercer] had taken me all thro’ his works in the afternoon and I had chosen a tile fire place of green blue oblong small brigs with occasional square tiles with a

design on them. Two birds and a fleur-de-lys. I am almost certain you will like it and that I need not send you a sample.<sup>396</sup>

Slightly different in appearance from Jane's description, the fire place tiles as they were installed and remain in White Pines include green-blue rectangular and square bricks rather than the oblong ones Jane mentioned. Here, the green-blue glaze is transparent and irregularly pooled on the red clay body of the bricks. The occasional tiles with designs she described picture the Fleur de Lys, as specified, surrounding the mouth of the fireplace, and two rectangular bricks with Ralph's initials, "RW," one in an upper corner and one in the opposite lower corner.<sup>397</sup>



5.16. Henry Chapman Mercer, Moravian Tile Works, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, *Fireplace Surround*, Living Hall, White Pines, Byrdcliffe, Woodstock, New York, 1903, pictured in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe*: 68.

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<sup>396</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed "27<sup>th</sup> February," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

<sup>397</sup> The passage on the Mercer fireplace surround is based on this author's essay, "Jane Whitehead: Cofounder of the Byrdcliffe Art School." Thanks to Byrdcliffe exhibition curator Nancy Green for noticing the differences between the actual fireplace surround and the one described in Jane's letter.

In Aiken, Jane started work on a frieze of pine trees for the Whiteheads' Byrdcliffe home White Pines.<sup>398</sup> Her calendars and letters record her work on the frieze from December 1902 through February 1903, at which time she moved from Aiken to Woodstock. In letters to Ralph she described her preparation and execution of the frieze. In one letter, she wrote:

I worked in pastel on a conventionalized frieze of pine trees. I found I cd. [could] get the result I was thinking of with [five] colours: 2 blues, 2 greens and a red brown. There is an upper sky, a lower sky, hills, near trees and far trees. Each mass of things having a flat tint and in some cases [. . . unreadable . . .] tints, one over another, for instance the lighter green of the farther trees coming down over the hills, under one tint of upper blue. The further trees having under their own tint a green one of the sky above. It was quite fun. The beauty of it will depend a good deal in the drawing.<sup>399</sup>

The letter and another description of the frieze, which mentions dye cards, seems to imply the frieze was meant to be a printed textile.<sup>400</sup> Jane wrote "sitting in pine tree room" in her April 1904 calendar, for example, and in October 1905 she noted her work on "baskets at home in Pine tree room." The room is mentioned two more times in December of that year. Unfortunately, the location of the frieze and room are now unknown.<sup>401</sup> If the frieze was a printed textile that was applied to the burlap covered walls of White Pines, it is no longer there or it remains undiscovered.

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<sup>398</sup> The following passages on the pine tree frieze, furniture making, weaving and pottery are based on the author's essay "Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead: Cofounder of the Byrdcliffe Art School."

<sup>399</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, undated letter with corresponding envelope postmarked January 21 and 23, 1903, Aiken, South Carolina, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>400</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter dated "27<sup>th</sup> Feb.," Letters from Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead and Family, 1903-09, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>401</sup> Carla Smith, Director of the Woodstock Guild, conversation with author, White Pines, Byrdcliffe, Woodstock, New York, June 13, 2002.

#### *Section 4: Arts and Crafts at Byrdcliffe.*

Records of Jane's participation in Byrdcliffe's formation and, once established, its administration and the arts and activities of daily life practiced there give access into the past, allowing us to see the way the simple life was lived there. For example, by December 1903, she was engaged in collaborative art projects. Her calendars record her staining "green furniture" and working on stained furniture between 1903 and 1905, the height of Byrdcliffe furniture production. Her participation on this project seemed to culminate in January and February 1905, when she wrote "staining sassafras," and "getting furniture ready." Pieces stained with a transparent green color and a cabinet with delicately carved panels featuring sassafras motifs are among the loveliest in the Byrdcliffe oeuvre. [Illustration 5.17.] Based on her calendar notations, the furniture appears to have been exhibited February 7-9. The Whiteheads held exhibits at Byrdcliffe and also showed their work outside the colony. While the exhibition venue for the February 1905 furniture show is presently unknown, we know they showed work at the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, the National Society of Craftsmen in New York City, at Candace Wheeler's Onteora Park, and many other venues on various occasions over the years.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Jane mentions an exhibition at Onteora Park in her 1906 calendar. See Jane Whitehead, calendar, August 14-15, 1906 entries. Byrdcliffe craftspeople are known to have participated in at Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, in 1907. Their presence in this show is recorded in Eva Lovett, "The Exhibition of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston," xxix discussed later in this chapter. The National Society of Craftmen in New York City is mentioned along with many other exhibition venues in Byrdcliffe business records on sales of their weavings from 1908 discussed in a footnote later in this chapter. In her term paper, "The National Society of Craftsmen: Education and Fellowship for the Advancement of the Art," (written in fulfillment of requirements for this author's course "The Arts and Crafts movement in the United States and England" at the Corcoran College of Art and Design's Masters Program in the History of Decorative Arts, Summer 2007, page 17) Sandy Jenkins notes a 1911 exhibition of Byrdcliffe arts and crafts at the National Society of Craftsmen, which was recorded in an article by H. H., "At Byrdcliffe, N.Y.," 2.



5.17. Edna Walker, designer of carved panels; Jane Whitehead, staining of wood; unidentified Byrdcliffe craftspeople; *Sassafras Cabinet*, 1904, oak, tulip poplar, brass, 55 x 41 x 18 3/4 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Another example, a small stained chiffonier with inset painted panels of golden fields is a manifestation of the Whiteheads' thinking on art and life. [Illustration 5.18.] A truly collaborative work of art—the unsigned paintings of golden fields were executed by Jane in California in the Montecito area, and the case was built and stained by one or more anonymous Byrdcliffe craftspeople—this cabinet's emphasis on communal handcraftsmanship, simple forms, and natural imagery and materials is an essay on simple life and Arts and Crafts ideals, the embodiment of “the art that is life.” Like most of Jane's artwork, the panels are not signed. Their attribution is based on their similarity to her other work and the fact they were executed on the French academic board we know she used. Like this piece, other art works by the Whiteheads, most notably Jane's eucalyptus series in pottery (discussed later in this chapter), were similarly hybrid, reflecting the Whiteheads' bi-coastal relationship with Woodstock, New York, and Montecito, California.



5.18. Jane Whitehead, attributed painter of landscape panels; unidentified Byrdcliffe craftspeople, *Chiffoier with Landscape Panels of Golden Fields of Montecito, California*, ca. 1904, stained oak, metal hardware, oil on wood panel, 27 ¼ x 35 x 13 ¾ inches, Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Weaving, basketry, painting, drawing, and design are other art forms in which Jane engaged. Her 1906 calendar mentions weaving, working with “Miss Little” [Marie Little]—a notable textile artist employed at Byrdcliffe—and activity in the Loom Room. [Illustration 5.19.] In fact, establishing the loom room, and accomplishing “some good rugs and bags” are among the year’s highlights she listed at the end of her calendar. There are also notations about basket making, “arranging showrooms,” “preparing for Onteora,” and “ticketing weavings” that show Jane’s involvement went beyond craft practice to organization of exhibitions and sales.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendar, 1906, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. For references to Onteora, see calendar entries from August 14-15, 1906. Jane’s 1907 calendar is missing from the Byrdcliffe Collection at Winterthur. Its earliest entries may include some valuable information about the authorship of the weavings shown under Ralph’s name at the society of Arts and Crafts in Boston exhibition on February 5-26, 1907. Jane’s mention of Onteora is one of many references to her interaction with Candace Wheeler and her daughter, who is described as “Miss Wheeler” in Jane’s calendars. Miss Wheeler may be Candace Wheeler’s youngest daughter Dora, who was a painter and designer of textiles. On Dora Wheeler, see Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, Candace Wheeler entry, “Dictionary of Architects, Artisans, Artists, and Manufacturers,” in Doreen Bolger Burke, et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, 482. Karal Ann Marling describes Onteora Park as “a cottage colony for city dwellers in comfortable circumstances with a desire to retreat to the woods to meditate on art, nature, and



5.19. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *Loom Room in White Pines*, 1908, silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ½ inches, Collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild, in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe*, 189.

A letter from Jane to Ralph describes her relationship to the weavings produced at Byrdcliffe:

We had such a time with the blue warp on the little loom today! . . . Had to work for hours and when they were most confused, I had the lack of tact to give your message . . . saying that they might dye another warp if they got through with the one they had on. You can imagine that they felt a little pushed and I am telling you because you don't realize how long things take and how breathless it makes one to be told a shorter time rather than a longer time . . . for we think you expect so much more than you get.<sup>404</sup>

On the one hand, Jane is working on the loom with Byrdcliffe craftspeople. She is very aware of the time considerations involved in weaving and dyeing. On the other hand, Ralph is removed from the scene; in this case, his request for faster production reveals little awareness of the limitations of his craftsmen.

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society" that was founded around 1883. See Karal Ann Marling, "Heavens on Earth," *Woodstock: An American Art Colony, 1902-1977*, n.p. For some more recent thinking on Wheeler, see Amelia Peck and Carol Irish, *Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875-1900*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001.

<sup>404</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed "Tuesday night," n.d, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

Historically, Byrdcliffe scholarship described weaving as the realm of Ralph and Marie Little with no mention of Jane. [Illustration 5.20.] However, evidence in Jane's personal papers leads one to speculate that the award winning "finely coloured rugs and cushions" shown under Ralph's name at the 1907 Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, exhibition were products of collaboration rather than of any one individual.<sup>405</sup> In this case, Ralph's name may have been applied to weavings by his wife, and maybe even those by Marie Little—a contention that is backed up by Byrdcliffe summer visitor turned craftsman Annie Thompson, sister of Byrdcliffe metalsmith Bertha Thompson:

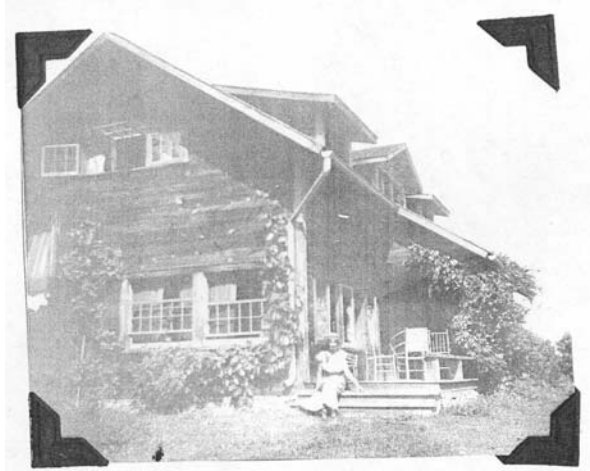
Miss Little was the weaver and she dyed her own lovely colors. She got quite an inspiration from the Fall colors. As we passed the house [named "The Looms"] we'd see quantities of material hanging in chunks on the line. After a while this material became finished products and we'd wander in to see what she had made. Mr. Whitehead started a loom room for himself [attached to White Pines] but I think a lot of his work was done by others under his direction. He got some lovely colors in things. I didn't do any weaving at that time, but I got a lot of inspiration from many things I had seen, and I learned more about color harmony than I had known before.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Eva Lovett, "The Exhibition of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston," xxix. Other artists associated with Byrdcliffe are mentioned in this article: "Misses Edith Penman and Edith Hardenbergh, of New York, had some odd-shaped little bowls, with decorations of ships and of flowers" (p. xxviii); a lovely medievaesque silver box by Lauren Martin is shown on p. xxviii; Jane Whitehead's first cousin, Henry Chapman Mercer of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, showed "A display of tiles for roofs and walls," "floors" and "fireplaces" some featuring "Byzantine, Gothic and Egyptian designs" "came from the Moravian Pottery" [Mercer's pottery] (p. xxix); "Miss Z. R. Steele had a kimono, with design of oats, hand painted, and screen with flower patterns" (p. xxix); book bindings by Ellen Gates Starr are illustrated and described on p. xxx, "No less remarkable were some specimens of bookbinding, which are the work of Miss Ellen gates Starr. One of brown pigskin, decorated in mosaic, several in dark green morocco, with fine tooling, and one blind-tooled in white pigskin," "Some handsome picture and mirror frames, carved and gilded, were by Hermann Dudley Murphy, of Boston" (p. xxx); and "Edmund B. Rolfe had necklaces and rings of silver and pale gold, set with cornelian, topaz and chrysolites, lapis lazuli, jade and azurite" (p. xxxii). Since Byrdcliffe was a summer residence for many of its students and teachers, people exhibited as individuals rather than under the Byrdcliffe name. While they could have made the exhibited items at Byrdcliffe, it is also possible they made them at other non-Byrdcliffe studios.

<sup>406</sup> Annie Thompson, "Bertha and Byrdcliffe," 18-19.





5.20. Unidentified photographer, possibly Jessie Tarbox Beals or Bertha Thompson, *Marie Little on Front Steps of Her Byrdcliffe Home and Studio, The Looms*, in Bertha Thompson, “Byrdcliffe”—1904, typed, unpublished manuscript, n.d. (after 1958), p. 7, Thompson Family Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

### **Section 5: The Simple Life Experience at Byrdcliffe.**

Annie Thompson’s unpublished, handwritten manuscript titled “Bertha and Byrdcliffe,” quoted above, gives a great picture of the communal environment at Byrdcliffe and the ways in which life, learning, work, and fun were self-consciously and holistically incorporated into the everyday experience of all involved.<sup>407</sup> At the time she wrote the above passage, she was making baskets, a craft she undertook one summer at Byrdcliffe. From her account that she later became a teacher of basketmaking, a class that met on the front porch of the student dormitory, the Villetta, and that her baskets were exhibited and sold, we can assume Annie was a talented craftsperson--like her sister the metalworker Bertha Thompson. Unlike Bertha, Annie was not a craftsperson by occupation, but rather by vocation; her primary occupation was school teacher. However, her thoughts on the

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<sup>407</sup> The word “communal” is used here to mean “community,” but not “collective” in the sense of implying “group ownership and control of goods and property.” Communal, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2006, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/communal>, accessed 11/19/07.

therapeutic, regenerative benefits of simple living and, more broadly, on the greater social implications involved in bringing these benefits out of Byrdcliffe and into the “real” world, tell us a lot about what the philosophy of simple living meant to its advocates. Annie said,

After each busy year summer in Byrdcliffe brought me rest and built-up my strength. After I had returned to more drab surroundings my mind would often dwell on things seen or done during the resting time. It was always something bright to look back to. What I had gained from the life there was passed on to my students whenever opportunity offered. It had altered my valuation of a lot of things.<sup>408</sup>

Implicit in this passage is Jane and Ralph’s belief, “For to you and me Beauty is a revelation and in it and in a sense of Justice our philosophy is grounded.”<sup>409</sup> The Beauty of the natural world at Byrdcliffe along with the Beauty of the built environment and the art which was modeled and crafted by people to be in sympathy with the surrounding nature was a “revelation”—meaning it revealed the higher truths normally associated with God’s wisdom. The “Justice” of which Jane and Ralph spoke was social justice: by teaching society the truths revealed by Beauty, society, in turn, might choose Beauty over materialistic lifestyles and decadence, which was hard-won from the labor of less fortunate people. On the verge of Byrdcliffe’s foundation, Ralph wrote Jane in June 1902:

For their [Jane and Ralph’s children] sake what has been in us merely sentimental must now become real and you and I will make an art of life at last.

With all our contempt for modern Christianity with its bishops and its parsons, its flunkeys and its parasites, and the coarse selfsatisfied respectability which is its bulwark, we have to admit that the new thought which shall make the future of society brighter than the past, and perhaps save our race from decadence is in great measure to be found in the sayings of Christ as it to be found in the sayings of Buddha and of Socrates . . . it is only through the prospects of the

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<sup>408</sup> Annie Thompson, “Bertha and Byrdcliffe,” 39-40.

<sup>409</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letter, dated November 23, 1902, transcribed by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

whole society that the beauty of the individual can be insured and enhanced, for the mass of sordid humanity drags down and chokes so many who are born of finer fibre, the commonplace and materialities of the masses rich and poor acts consciously and unconsciously on the gifted child. The pride of position, of business success, of the material prosperity which money gives must be crushed, as the pride of race and of caste had to be crushed in order that many may recognize himself as fashioned.<sup>410</sup>

In this passage, the Beauty of the individual becomes obscured to its owner because of the current social order—the class system structured on the producing class laboring against their best interest for the owner class in a laissez-faire capitalist system. In this way of thinking, if simple living became more broadly realized and appreciated the individual and the whole society would benefit because the social relationships would become transformed and gifted people would have every opportunity to realize their innate potential, something akin to the utopia William Morris wrote about in his 1890 novel *News from Nowhere*.<sup>411</sup>

In *News from Nowhere*, England of 2012 has been completely transformed into a state of total Communism brought about by revolution. Industry has disappeared. People live an Arcadian existence, close to nature, which is beautiful and which they love, where work is a pleasure which is unremunerated. Intellectual pursuits and bookishness are secondary to physical and sensual work and pleasures. People adorn themselves and their surroundings because they like things to be beautiful. The Parliament buildings have been converted into a dung market. Government is through consensus it seems and is enforced through a strong sense of community—everyone labors toward a common good. But, there is still room for individualism: people are free to pursue the life that allows

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<sup>410</sup> Ralph to Jane, letter, dated June 12, 1902, transcribed by Tom Wolf, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>411</sup> See William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, first published as a serial in *The Commonweal* (the journal of the Socialist League; London, 1890), and later published in book form by Longmans, Green & Co. (London, 1896), Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004.

them to do the work that brings them the greatest satisfaction. While the Whiteheads did not follow Morris's *News from Nowhere* as a manual for Byrdcliffe, they certainly envisioned a similar existence.

Because relaxed and friendly social relations among residents were advocated and, one might say, enforced by the Whiteheads, people were welcomed into each other's homes and studios, where, as in Annie's case, she learned about color harmony and became inspired to try her hand at weaving. In this way, the social aspect of Byrdcliffe life was part and parcel of the educational life. This model extended beyond residents to include the guest artists, musicians, dancers, writers, and intellectuals the Whiteheads invited to visit, thus, expanding the knowledge as well as the number of contacts artists and craftspeople-in-residence had available to them. It was, if you will, a built in networking system. Annie described the way in which this process took place during the time she summered with her sister Bertha in the Byrdcliffe cottage called "The Angelus" [illustrated earlier in this chapter], nicknamed "The Attic," which was initially built as a studio for and by designers Zulma Steele and Edna Walker on the hillside west of White Pines:<sup>412</sup> "At the Angelus we had all that we needed for comfort, and refreshment of spirit but were not cluttered up with things. The studio room was simple but beautiful and not difficult to take care of. Mr. Whitehead liked to bring his friends to see it and that gave us many interesting contacts."<sup>413</sup> This short passage and the rest of Annie's manuscript gives insight into the above mentioned educational philosophy as well as into the simple life as it was lived at Byrdcliffe. Annie continues,

Students, craftsmen, artists, musicians, and writers were there, and I think that part of the quality of the community was due to the fact that it was not merely a

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<sup>412</sup> Bertha Thompson, "Byrdcliffe—1904," 1, 3.

<sup>413</sup> Annie Thompson, "Bertha and Byrdcliffe," 13.

play place as so many summer resorts are. After working hours recreation was enjoyed and people seemed to be interested in what everyone was doing.

Some of the things that impressed me that first visit [summer 1908] were really part of the spirit of the place: There was a lack of superficial things—a more natural atmosphere; a sharing of interests; simple living; colorful dressing but nothing pretentious; community gatherings for pleasure. This may have been partly because there were no automobiles then; it was also due to Mr. Whitehead's desire to draw around himself and his family worthwhile people and things, and in these the community share of. There was an absence of the usual clutter which accompanied so much of social life then.<sup>414</sup>

Annie's sister, Bertha, is an interesting case history that illustrates the simple life led by Byrdcliffe craftspeople. [Illustration 5.21. and 5.22.] She is an especially good representation of the single women that gravitated to the place who, with the support of the Whiteheads, led successful careers there and outside of Byrdcliffe. This is a truism perceptible in the here illustrated photograph of the Byrdcliffe metal shop, whose forge—an area of any metalshop which tended to be gendered male--is left unmanned in the foreground while two women, neatly dressed, are seen from behind tapping out small scale metalwork or perhaps jewelry on work tables in front of the windows at the back of the room.

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 4-5.



5.21. Unidentified photographer, *Bertha Thompson in Her Boston studio*, ca. 1906, silver print, Thompson family papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 242.



5.22. Jessie Tarbox Beals, photographer, *Byrdcliffe Metal Shop*, 1908, silver print, 7 ½ x 9 ½ inches, collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild, published in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 189.

Like many of the first Byrdcliffers, Bertha went to Woodstock from Chicago, where she maintained ties, especially to Hull House. Later, in the early years of World War I, she reportedly returned to her hometown to study bookbinding with fellow

Byrdcliffe summer resident, Hull House cofounder Ellen Gates Starr.<sup>415</sup> At that time, Bertha also learned to weave at Hull House.<sup>416</sup> After attending the Byrdcliffe summer school in 1904, she returned in 1907 to spend the better part of her career there. And, according to her sister Annie she was the last craftsperson residing at Byrdcliffe.<sup>417</sup> It seems that World War I and personal reasons led many craftspeople away from Byrdcliffe in the years after 1914.

During her first summer at Byrdcliffe in 1904, Bertha was a student in design, probably studying with Zulma Steele and Edna Walker, and metalwork, most likely under Laurin Martin from Chicago and Ned Thatcher, who was a protégé of artist and educator Arthur Wesley Dow.<sup>418</sup> While Thatcher stayed at the Byrdcliffe dormitory, the Villetta in 1903, 1904, 1906, he also had a metalshop near Birge Harrison's home, which was on the road to Bearsville. Thatcher often worked in wrought iron, and lesser metals, like pewter. Around 1911, he opened his own summer school of metalworking, where jewelry making, enameling and handwrought metalwork were instructed.<sup>419</sup> In summer 1904, Bertha often went to Birge Harrison's criticisms in the Byrdcliffe studio—that summer Birge Harrison was assisted in the art class by Herman Dudley Murphey, who came to Byrdcliffe with his family from Boston where he taught art at Harvard.

Between 1904 and 1907, Bertha went to Boston to study metalwork under master silversmith George Gebelein.<sup>420</sup> She may have also studied there with the jeweler and

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<sup>415</sup> Nancy Green, "Cast of Characters," in N. Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe*, 242.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Annie Thompson, "Bertha and Byrdcliffe," 53.

<sup>418</sup> Unless otherwise footnoted, information about Bertha Thompson from this point forward is based on her unpublished typescript, "Byrdcliffe—1904." Bertha's typescript mentions Ned Thatcher as a Byrdcliffe metalsmith but doesn't mention Laurin Martin. The Martin reference was found in Nancy Green's "Cast of Characters," 242.

<sup>419</sup> Nancy Green, "Cast of Characters," 242.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

painter Edmund B. Rolfe, who followed Laurin Martin as the Byrdcliffe metals teacher in 1905, and died early in his promising career. Rolfe built a home at Byrdcliffe on the mountain above Zulma Steele and Edna Walker's "The Angelus," a.k.a. "The Attic." Some beautiful examples of Rolfe's work in jewelry featuring filigree gold and silver with semiprecious stones, such as jadeite, freshwater pearls and green opals, were exhibited in the recent Byrdcliffe exhibition curated by Nancy Green. A Laurin Martin *Covered Tazza* in copper dating to 1897-1902 was also shown in the Nancy Green Byrdcliffe exhibition. Its organic form and vine-like tendrils look Art Nouveau in style. However, the copper material it is made of and the hand-hammered surface are decidedly Arts and Crafts. Bertha probably studied with or at least worked with both Laurin Martin and his friend H. Stuart Michie, whose copper metalwork and stenciled linen wall hanging were exhibited at Byrdcliffe in 1905. [Illustration 5.23.]



5.23. H. Stuart Michie, *Byrdcliffe Exhibition* showing *H. Stuart Michie's Copper and Enamel Charger and Stenciled Linen Wall Hanging*, 1905, silver print, collection of Thomas Michie.



Almost all of Bertha's teachers, mentioned above, and other Byrdcliffers, including Ralph Whitehead, participated in the 1907 exhibition of the Society of Arts and Crafts Boston. An article on the exhibition was published in the March 1907 edition of *The International Studio*, and describes the work they exhibited: a silver box with arabesque decoration by Laurin Martin is pictured; Zulma Steele showed a kimono with a hand painted oat design and a screen with flower patterns; Ellen Gates Starr's book bindings are pictured and described as remarkable—including "one of brown pigskin, decorated in mosaic, several in dark green morocco, with fine tooling, and one blind-tooled on white pigskin."<sup>421</sup> Herman Dudley Murphey showed carved and gilded picture and mirror frames. While Murphey is described as being from Boston, he also made frames at Byrdcliffe. "Edmund B. Rolfe had necklaces and rings of silver and pale gold, set with cornelian, topaz and chrysolites, lapis lazuli, jade and azurite."<sup>422</sup>

While silver vessels and jewelry with semiprecious stones are the examples of Bertha's work shown in the recent Nancy Green Byrdcliffe exhibition we also know Bertha worked in copper. For example, Annie's essay "Bertha and Byrdcliffe" describes copper lanterns Bertha made for the Byrdcliffe Studio.<sup>423</sup> [Illustration 5.24. and 5.25.]

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<sup>421</sup> Eva Lovett, "The Exhibitiion of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston," xxx.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., xxxii.

<sup>423</sup> Annie Thompson, "Bertha and Byrdcliffe," 7. Janet Keep was the only source of Bertha Thompson metalwork art historian Tom Wolf was able to find when he worked on the 2004 Byrdcliffe exhibition with Nancy Green. Tom Wolf, email with author, August 2, 2007. Arts and Crafts metalwork expert W. Scott Braznell concurred with Wolf that little is known about the whereabouts of Bertha's metalwork. In an email with the author, dated Septmeber 10, 2007, Braznell shared: Bertha exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago's Arts and Crafts annuals between 1906-1914; that a letter opener by her was published in *Palette & Bench* 1 (Feb. 1909): 121; and that she wrote "Diversional Occupations in a Tuberculosis Sanatorium," *Public Health Nurse* 12 (April 1920): 311-313.



5.23. Bertha Thompson, *Sugar Bowl and Creamer*, n.d., silver, bowl: 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  h x 5  $\frac{1}{4}$  w x 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  diameter, creamer: 2  $\frac{5}{8}$  h x 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  w x 3  $\frac{1}{4}$  diameter, collection of Janet Keep, in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 178.



5.25. Bertha Thompson, *Brooch*, n.d., silver and cabochon, 2 inches diameter, collection of Janet Keep, in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 179.

A description by Annie tells of her sister's success during the years she resided at "The Angelus." "Bertha turned an extra room—separate from the house—into a workshop, and that soon sent out her pleasant tap-a-tap, tap, tap, tap as she beat the metals into shape. She made lovely things, had increased her skill a lot, and was able to sell much."<sup>424</sup> According to Annie, "crafts flourished in Byrdcliffe and we had a splendid

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<sup>424</sup> Annie Thompson, "Bertha and Byrdcliffe," 15.

chance to show things privately or in a general exhibition.”<sup>425</sup> In another account, Bertha confirms Annie’s praise of the Whiteheads’ exhibition and sales program: “exhibitions and sales of pictures and craft-work were held in the Studio every summer until we began to open our individual work-shops to visitors.”<sup>426</sup> The support of the individual careers of Byrdcliffe craftspeople provided by the Whiteheads may not have been in the colony’s self-interest, however. In fostering individualism and autonomous careers, the Whiteheads may have ultimately discouraged the group solidarity needed to support the art colony. This and disagreements with the Whiteheads may be the reason most Byrdcliffe artists and craftspeople eventually parted ways with the Whiteheads to embark on their own paths. Many settled in the surrounding Woodstock area. Certainly, their descent from the Byrdcliffe colony into the Woodstock Valley below was the catalyst that made the town the center for the arts it continues to be.

Bertha lived and worked in several Byrdcliffe houses—the Serenata, Yggdrasil, and the Angelus (mentioned above where she resided for three years), which she rented from the Whiteheads. Eventually, in 1913, the Whiteheads sold her some land and she built her own home and studio. It was the Whiteheads’ policy to rent houses to those with whom they wanted to surround themselves. Selling a parcel of land to someone was another level of commitment altogether. Initially Bertha asked for and was promised one site, but for some unknown reason the Whiteheads changed their minds and offered her the one she accepted and built upon. “Mr. Whitehead not only gave her a generous piece

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>426</sup> Bertha Thompson, “Byrdcliffe—1904,” 4.

of land at a low price, but included the spring which the farm had been using, and made the road past the farmhouse up to where her latest workshop was put.”<sup>427</sup>

When it came time to clear the land, Bertha planned to orient the house in order to get the best views and plenty of air and sunshine. Trees were cut in order to open up a view of the mountains to the west and the village. Bertha’s sister Annie described the landscaping of the site in sculptural terms:

It was because of her careful consideration of each tree and bush in relation to the whole that she has such a beautiful setting for her house. People have often said that she knew how to pick out a beautiful site; they don’t know that she really made it out of a piece of forest woodland. Her artistic sense has always guided her about what to cut and what to leave.<sup>428</sup>

Initially the house was small. Made soundly of good materials and good work, Annie described it as “a little brown cabin on a hillside surrounded by woods.”<sup>429</sup> Every one admired the “good stain” applied to Bertha’s home and the shiny wood floors which were left uncovered with rugs.<sup>430</sup> It seems Bertha was a good colorist working in a naturalist’s palette, staining her home and floors, as well as fashioning restfully colored curtains and throw pillows. With her dye pot, Bertha gave the textiles in her home “rich colors which added to the beauty of the room[s].”<sup>431</sup> The house was originally composed of a front room that was Bertha’s workshop, a bedroom, bathroom, a small studio kitchen, an unfinished attic and porches. Eventually, as Bertha’s funds permitted, she added to the house: a separate studio, additional living space, and a terrace Bertha hand built with stones on the site. “Her friends were much interested in her progress” on the terrace and “sometimes lent a hand by adding some stones to the wall after they had been having tea

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<sup>427</sup> Annie Thompson, “Bertha and Byrdcliffe,” 42.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*

on the porch with us.”<sup>432</sup> Additionally, they added to the beauty of Bertha’s home with gifts of art: a rich golden brown hand-woven couch cover from Marie Little, who “got quite an inspiration from the Fall colors”--and an oil lamp from Zulma Steele and Edna Walker.<sup>433</sup>

Little furniture and amenities were “adequate for the simple living planned.”<sup>434</sup> Water was pumped in from the spring. There was no electricity or refrigeration. Oil lamps and a wood stove in the kitchen were used along with an oven for baking and a small oil stove for quicker cooking.

The little furniture Bertha had in the house besides her metalworking bench were primarily built-in. Built-ins included book and other shelves, a fireplace, a long window seat. A local woodworker named Fordyce Herrick, who is associated with the building of the Whiteheads’ Byrdcliffe home, White Pines, and some Byrdcliffe furniture, built Bertha’s home from her plans.<sup>435</sup>

Material possessions were avoided in Bertha and Annie’s simple life because they contributed to housework—a primary occupation for many women in their day and age. In contrast, Bertha and Annie found they had time for other things because they were not consumed with the responsibility of housework. Annie wrote, “We had all that we needed for comfort, and refreshment of spirit but were not cluttered up with things. . . . somehow furniture and eating and sleeping were things our minds didn’t much dwell on. There was work to be done and we did it, but there was little housework.”<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 19, 48.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 47; and Nancy Green, “Cast of Characters,” 231.

<sup>436</sup> Annie Thompson, “Bertha and Byrdcliffe,” 49.

Bertha and Annie's lives at Byrdcliffe were unconventional. Unmarried and living independently, Bertha was entered as the "head" of her household in the 1910 Federal Census for the town of Woodstock, New York.<sup>437</sup> Her sister Annie is listed under Bertha's name as a resident in her household. Bertha's occupation is described as a "craftsman" in "metal work" and Annie is listed as a school teacher. Head of household, crafts-MAN, metal work, all of these descriptors were unconventional for women of any social class at the turn-of-the-century in America or anywhere. Far more typical for a single woman at this time is Annie's occupation as a school teacher. In fact, being a school teacher was one of the only occupations considered socially acceptable for single women of gentle birth. This career was reserved exclusively for single women; most had to leave their posts when and if they married. Head of household, crafts-MAN, and metal work: now these were occupations that were completely out of the realm of possibilities for all but the most progressive, liberated, and iconoclastic women of the day. As a point of comparison, the Whitehead family entry listed directly above Bertha Thompson in the 1910 Federal Census was far more typical. It positions Ralph as the head of household with "literature" as an occupation. Jane is positioned below Ralph as a resident in his household with the word "NONE" inscribed under the heading "occupation." Even though she cofounded Byrdcliffe and was a practicing artist who exhibited her work, she assumed a more typical public persona for women of her social class. Jane's listing was far more typical than Bertha's. Yet, Byrdcliffe offered Bertha, Annie and other single women often living as couples, including Zulma Steele and Edna Walker, Edith Penman and Elizabeth Hardenburgh, a place where they could make sense and do the work they

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<sup>437</sup> Department of Commerce and Labor—Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 Population Town of Woodstock, New York, Ulster County, Microfilm, Series T624, Roll 1084, Page 356, accessed at the National Archives, Washington, DC.

did best and in which they found the most satisfaction. In Bertha's case, she was able to overcome the odds against having started life with polio in order to make a living and a successful career for herself.

**Section 6: Jane and Ralph's Swan Song: White Pines Pottery.**

Pottery is first mentioned in Jane's 1901 calendar, when she was still living in California. In 1908, she described a kiln on the grounds at Byrdcliffe. Slowly but steadily a growing passion for pottery is revealed in her calendars. Jane and Ralph worked collaboratively on White Pines Pottery from about 1913 until his death in 1929. By 1913, pottery appears to be Jane's primary artistic occupation. She took lessons from Byrdcliffe potters Edith Penman and Elizabeth Hardenbergh, Frederick Hurten Rhead in Santa Barbara, and William Whitford in Chicago, among others.<sup>438</sup> Noted potters Maud Mason, Mary Sheerer, the director of Newcomb Pottery in New Orleans, and Dr. Herbert J. Hall, the founder of Marblehead Pottery outside Boston, visited Byrdcliffe between 1916 and 1920.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> Jane Perkins Claney laid the groundwork for analysis of White Pines Pottery in "White Pines Pottery," 5-20; see also Ellen Paul Denker, "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," 113.

<sup>439</sup> Ellen Paul Denker, "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," 114. Less well known are the connections between the Whiteheads and other well known Arts and Crafts potters and potteries. Numerous entries in Jane's calendars, correspondence, and business records discuss lessons with and trips to Mrs. Warren at Dedham, Massachusetts (1904); Mrs. Crosse in Boston (1910); studies in Deerfield, Connecticut (1903); and pottery in New Orleans, including a visit to the Newcomb pottery at the women's division of Tulane University, the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College (1917). Jane and Ralph's pottery notes from 1921 to 1924 show they consigned White Pines Pottery to galleries all over the United States, including the Woodstock Art Gallery, the galleries of the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston, the Handicraft Club in Baltimore, the Crafter's Company in Cincinnati, the Pottery Shop on Madison Avenue in New York City, the Artist's Guild in Chicago, unnamed galleries in Cleveland, Ohio, and the Arden Gallery in Arden, Delaware. Records of interaction with other individuals around the United States abound. Ralph Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, Jr., letter, dated and inscribed "February 23, 1917, New Orleans," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. "Mother came along here with me because she wanted to see the Newcomb Pottery which is in the University here. They do some very good work and mother is satisfied to have made the long journey, 22 hours for the purpose." Thanks to Nancy

Jane developed a stylized white pine motif that was often featured on the circular paper labels used on this pottery. [Illustration 5.26.] Some pieces are not labeled, but have a wing and arrow, Jane and Ralph's collaborative mark, etched into or painted in black onto the bottom. Others bear no marking other than a series of numbers and a letter, such as "371B," which correspond to records in their pottery production notebooks. Ceramic historian Ellen Paul Denker made sense of the Whiteheads' numbering system in her essay "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," where she said, in addition to test tiles and a glaze formula book, the Whiteheads seem to have kept a record of every vase they made:

Although the sequence of these records is incomplete, it appears that vases were numbered consecutively beginning with one and going up to 999. At that point the consecutive numbering began with one again, but with a capital "A" appended to the number. When 999A was reached, the numbering system started from one again, but with a B added to the number. Records go up to 802B, suggesting that a total of about 2,800 pieces was entered into his system. The number may also represent the extent of the White Pines Pottery's total output.<sup>440</sup>

5.26. Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead, *Design Drawing for White Pines Motif*, n.d., pencil, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

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Green for sharing her notes about this letter. This passage and others on White Pines pottery were first published in my essay, "Jane Whitehead: Cofounder of the Byrdcliffe Art School," 56-73. My earlier published ideas have been greatly expanded in this dissertation. Pottery Notes and Dyeing and Weaving Information, and Pottery Notes, 1921-23, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. Arden is a community that was founded in 1900 by sculptor Frank Stephens and architect Will Price. For more information on Arden, see Mark Taylor, "Art, Craft and the Utopian Ideal: Arden, Delaware, 1900-35," exhib. cat, Wilmington, DE: Delaware Art Museum, 2000. Byrdcliffe business records on the sale of weavings from 1905-21 include many additional Arts and Crafts venues and names of individuals with whom Jane and Ralph were in contact. See Byrdcliffe business records, 1905-21, and Ledger of Weavings Sold, 1907-11, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum. The following names are in the same order they appear in the Byrdcliffe business records. Some entries incorporate addresses and dates, which are included here: Society of Arts and Crafts Detroit; National Society of Craftsmen, Art Club Studios, 119-121 East 19<sup>th</sup> Street, New York; Louise Garden Arts and Crafts Work, St. Louis; Arts and Crafts Studio, 811 Vermont Avenue, Washington, DC; The Arts and Crafts Society, Room 208, Altman Building, Kansas City; The Crafters Company Cincinnati, 142 Fourth Avenue, East; Boston Arts and Crafts (1907); Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, 1 Knowlson Building, 22 Farmer Street (1907); Miss Katharine Dillon, Toledo, Ohio (1907); National Society of Craftsmen, New York (9/19/1908, 11/13/1908, 11/24/1908); Mrs. F Guild, Santa Barbara (January 12, 1909); Mrs. Thayer, Boston (February 2, 1910); Mrs. John Cuyler, Princeton (May 19, 1910); W. M. R. French, Chicago Art Institute (October 1909); Edna Walker, Colony Club.

<sup>440</sup> Ellen Paul Denker, "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," 116.



It was in pottery that Jane and Ralph most fully realized the integration of art into their simple life. Here, they fulfilled their wish to work in partnership with their hands, in communication with nature--in this case, the earth that is used to make ceramics--in order to make art and, thus, make art organic, part and parcel of life. Truly, their White Pines pottery was the embodiment of Arts and Crafts principles and ideals. In this way, it doesn't matter whether or not the pots were lovely or if they sold. Because, art in and of itself, was not the goal.

In Ruskin's "On the Nature of Gothic" (also discussed in Chapter Two)—"the book that was to form the cornerstone of Arts and Crafts beliefs"<sup>441</sup>--Ruskin linked aesthetics (those of the Gothic) with a right approach to labor and established an aesthetic standard for imperfection which informs our understanding of the Whiteheads' White Pines pottery project.<sup>442</sup> In linking aesthetics to an argument about labor and the proper working conditions necessary to maintain or, rather, create a humane humanity, Ruskin asserted that if all men labored toward a common good and exercised independence in their thoughts, discrepancies in the quality of what was made would be a natural and good outcome. In this line of thinking, imperfection as the outcome of righteous working conditions was noble in its beauty. Hence, because White Pines pottery was made with joy in the most ideal working conditions, it was inherently beautiful regardless of what it looked like. [Illustration 5.27. and 5.28.]

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<sup>441</sup> Gillian Naylor, *The Arts and Crafts movement*, 27.

<sup>442</sup> John Ruskin, "On the Nature of Gothic," 255-261.

5.27. Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, attributed photographer, *Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead Potting in White Pines, Byrdcliffe, Woodstock, New York, 1913-1925*, silver gelatin photograph on paper, 2 ¾ x 4 ½ inches, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

5.28. Jane Whitehead, attributed photographer, *Ralph Whitehead Working on White Pines Pottery at Byrdcliffe*, n.d., 1913-1925, print in Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum and Library.

In all honesty, some White Pines pottery approaches beauty in its humble simplicity. [Illustration 5.29. and 5.30.] But, in all fairness to those with a strong visual sense or knowledge of the technical and aesthetic virtuosity of some art potters of the era, a lot of it is not too good looking and/or does not reflect years of technical training or mastery. Nonetheless, when you see one of their better pots next to a perfect watermelon rind Grueby example, the White Pines pot nobly and humbly stands its ground.

[Illustration 5.31.] It is vital where the perfect pot seems almost sanitized and still; it sparkles like a stone in a country brook. Hence, Ralph's praise of Jane's work when he wrote, "I am quite charmed with some of your pots . . . I think some of your pots are little poems."<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Ralph Whitehead to Jane Whitehead, letters dated October 19 & 29, 1915, quoted in Jane Perkins Claney, "White Pines Pottery" 18.



5.29. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, *Vase with Purple-gray Glaze, White Pines Pottery, Byrdcliffe*, n.d., 1913-25, glazed ceramic, collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild, pictured in Nancy Green, et. al, *Byrdcliffe*, 117.



5.30. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, *Vase with Sumac glaze, White Pines Pottery, Byrdcliffe*, n.d., 1913-25, glazed ceramic, collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild, pictured in Nancy Green, et. al, *Byrdcliffe*, 117.



5.31. Ruth Erickson, modeler, Greuby Faience Company, *Vase*, 1905, stoneware, 16 ½ x 18 ¼ inches, collection of Joe Cunningham and Bruce Barnes, pictured in Wendy Kaplan, et. al., *The Arts and Crafts movement in Europe and America*, 283.

Forms were based on ancient, near and far Eastern examples. They were often cast, but also thrown and hand built. One might say cast examples display little regard for the hand craftsmanship of the potter--working in clay. And, with little applied ornamentation to speak of, their appeal and emphasis is largely in their simplicity of form as well as in color and textural variations found in the glazes. Clay and glaze recipes were based on extensive experimentation with glazes and consultation with master potters of the period like Frederick Hurten Rhead, with whom Jane studied, Adelaide Alsop Robineau, Arthur Baggs, William Jervis and Charles Fergus Binns, among others.

It seems the Whiteheads followed Binns's subscription to the "oriental tradition—unity of form and glaze without applied decoration," where exotic glazes were the only decoration on classic Far Eastern shapes.<sup>444</sup> Frederick Hurten Rhead adopted this

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<sup>444</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman, "The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland," 195.

approach during his tenure in Santa Barbara, the years Jane studied with him there.

According to decorative arts historian Leslie Greene Bowman,

Rhead was introduced to the possibilities of exotic glazes by Taxile Doat when the two worked together from 1909 to 1911 at Edward Lewis's state-of-the-art laboratory pottery, University City Pottery, near St. Louis. Doat's approach had long been preached in America by the pioneering ceramist Charles Fergus Binns.<sup>445</sup>

It is hard to know if the Whiteheads' adoption of this approach to their ceramics was directly inspired by Binns or Rhead since the Whiteheads were in contact with both, taking lessons from Rhead, and borrowing glaze recipes from Binns. It is just as possible that the Whiteheads came to appreciate this approach to pottery on their own and sought out people sympathetic to it.

Jane became a student of the famous Arts and Crafts potter Frederick Hurten Rhead in 1913, which was a pivotal moment for Rhead. In 1913, Rhead moved from San Francisco where he had worked at Arequipa pottery—a philanthropic effort established to provide occupational therapy and income to women suffering from tuberculosis—to Santa Barbara to open his own pottery, the Rhead Pottery, also called the Pottery of the Camarata, which operated from 1914 until 1917. The Whiteheads and Christopher Tornoe, the Santa Barbara craftsman who built Arcady for the Whiteheads and had a studio on Charles and Elizabeth Burton Eaton's estate, Riso Rivo (discussed in the last chapter), were both shareholders in Rhead's pottery—the Whiteheads' investing \$250 in January 1914,<sup>446</sup> and Tornoe, a sizeable \$1,750.<sup>447</sup> Given Tornoe's considerable contribution, he clearly was a strong supporter of Rhead's work and career. In fact,

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Ellen Denker, "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," 113.

<sup>447</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman, "The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland," 193. For more on Rhead at Arequipa, see Kenneth Trapp, "The Arts and Crafts movement in the San Francisco Bay Area," 149-151.

Rhead's pottery was located on land owned by Tornoe in "artist-frequented Mission Canyon"<sup>448</sup>—Mission Canyon is located to the North, behind the Santa Barbara Mission, which is a distance from Arcady in Montecito.<sup>449</sup>

By the time Jane began studying with Rhead she was already fervently working on pottery and a *Eucalyptus Series* that occupied her from 1912 through at least 1915. It was an ongoing series, which seems to have been exhibited first in Woodstock in August 1913, and again in California in April 1914.<sup>450</sup> [Illustration 5.32., 5.33., and 5.34.] Jane's *Eucalyptus Series* included both pots and paintings. She started her paintings in 1912, before she began her serious studies in pottery. It seems she switched her media from painting to pottery but continued working on eucalyptus in 1913. *Eucalyptus Series* pots were decorated in a number of ways. Most are traditional Near and Far Eastern forms, which would remain the primary model for Jane and Ralph's White Pines pottery. However, some shapes were original. In Jane and Ralph's larger practice, Jane threw pots which Ralph, in turn, slip cast in plaster of Paris as models for production.<sup>451</sup> Additionally, some forms were based on photographs of Near and Far Eastern pots and models for plaster casts were turned from wood.<sup>452</sup> In the case of the *Eucalyptus Series*, it seems that both original and traditional forms were also employed. In some cases, eucalyptus leaves were painted on as part of the glaze decoration. These examples tend to be traditional Near and Far Eastern forms. In other cases, eucalyptus leaves and plant

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<sup>448</sup> Leslie Greene Bowman, "The Arts and Crafts movement in the Southland," 193.

<sup>449</sup> Thanks to Santa Barbara resident Dean Severson for clarifying the location of Mission Canyon, email with author, 7/20/2007.

<sup>450</sup> Jane Whitehead, calendars, 1901, 1904, 1908, 1912-1918, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.

<sup>451</sup> Ralph to Jane Whitehead, letter, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, quoted in Ellen Denker, "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," 114.

<sup>452</sup> Ellen Denker, "Purely for Pleasure: Ceramics at Byrdcliffe," 115.

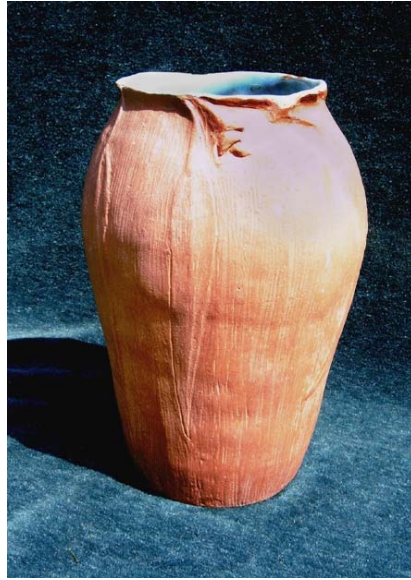
parts were sculpted into the clay, some being raised, others being carved and incised and at least one example being pierced. Here, the forms appear to be mostly original.



5.32. Jane Whitehead, possibly made with Ralph Whitehead, *Eucalyptus Series Vase*, 1913-1916, glazed ceramic, collection of the Joseph Cunningham and Bruce Barnes, ADA 1900.



5.33. Jane Whitehead, *Eucalyptus Series Painting*, ca. 1912 possibly as early as 1895, unknown medium on paper, collection of the Byrdcliffe Art Colony of the Woodstock Guild, pictured in Nancy Green, et. al, *Byrdcliffe*, 71.



5.34. Jane Whitehead, *Eucalyptus Series* vase, va. 1913, redware with sculpted and incised eucalyptus decoration over earthenware and turquoise interior glaze, collection of author.

White Pines pottery was mostly made of a low-fire white and then later a pinkish (buff) colored earthenware that may have been commercial or local.<sup>453</sup> Historian Jane Perkins Claney wrote about Jane and Ralph’s correspondence with Chicago potter, William Whitford, who advised them:

to hire a clay expert to “do some prospecting and testing of your local clays and produce a body from the material which you have near at hand . . .” To what extent [the] Whitehead[s] followed that advice is not known. He [They] used a variety of clays, both English and American; one was called “Woodchuck Hollow” clay, which was probably local.<sup>454</sup>

Several *Eucalyptus Series* pots were made using red clay that was left with a raw, unglazed-looking finish on the exterior, exploiting the visual qualities of the red earthenware. These pots are redware, where a red clay exterior is applied over an

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<sup>453</sup> Robert Edwards, email correspondence with author, 7/24/07. Edwards notes that White Pines Pottery also included on occasion redware.

<sup>454</sup> Jane Perkins Claney, “White Pines Pottery,” 17.



underlying clay body. As a contrast to the exterior surface, these pots were glazed on the interior with a bold, shiny color, in two examples, turquoise, probably in order to make the pot visually exciting and waterproof the vessel for use. In Jane and Ralph's White Pines pottery oeuvre, some of the most exciting examples are those that feature one color of glaze on the exterior and another contrasting or complimentary color on the interior.

Jane developed a love for eucalyptus as a decorative motif during her years in California, where the plant is a symbol for the place. A period photograph of her painting in a studio at Arcady shows bunches of eucalyptus leaves hanging from the walls while she paints them. [Illustration: 3.13.] In this case, the abundance of eucalyptus, and Jane's physical connection with them on her canvas through her long paintbrush, connects her with the eucalyptus symbol, making her likeness--the beautiful woman artist in reform dress sitting within an aestheticized studio--the equivalent of the eucalyptus, and, thus, symbolic of California. This is just one of many examples of the Whiteheads' use of Jane as their corporate symbol—a muse, so to speak, of the art and its connection to the places where they lived, a subject that will be returned to later in this chapter.

While Frederick Hurten Rhead's stylized use of leaf decoration on his pottery was both attractive to Jane and probably an inspiration for the *Eucalyptus Series* of pots she made while studying with him, more naturalistic applications of eucalyptus leaves to redware and bisque earthenware pots, like those seen on examples from Wesley H. Trippett's Redlands Pottery, are closer, visually speaking, to Jane's work. [Illustration 5.35.] Rhead's leaves are highly stylized and unidentifiable. However, they possibly relate to the leaves of the Yucca or Agave or even some varieties of Palm all native to Southern California and the American Southwest. Rhead applied the leaf decoration in

imitation of the effect created when leaves are applied to the exterior of the pot, not dissimilar to the effect of stylized lotus blossom decoration on many Asian examples of pottery and other media. In contrast, Jane's eucalyptus decoration and that of Trippett at Redland's Pottery were more painterly renderings—albeit three dimensional or in relief—of the leaves as they would be seen hanging from the branches of the eucalyptus tree. Jane and Ralph owned a stunningly large Rhead vase with carved leaves on buff clay that has highlights of underglaze blue to enhance the leaf decoration and a shiny clear overall glaze. [Illustration 5.36.] While the vase is rumored to have been made by Rhead in Santa Barbara and glazed and fired on a visit to Byrdcliffe in 1913, it is more likely that the Whiteheads acquired it from Rhead in Santa Barbara that year, at which time Jane studied with him and they invited him to Christmas dinner at their second Montecito home, Neroli (discussed in the next section of this chapter).<sup>455</sup> [Illustration 5.37., 5.38. and 5.39.]

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<sup>455</sup> Joseph Cunningham, tour of ADA 1900 collection, June 13, 2007 suggested that the pot was glazed and fired on a visit to Byrdcliffe. However, no supporting documentation to prove Rhead was in Woodstock in 1913 has been unearthed at this time. The Byrdcliffe register for that year does not mention him and no mention of his being in Woodstock in 1913 has been found in Jane's calendars or correspondence. Jane Perkins Clancy in "White Pines Pottery; the continuing arts and crafts experiment," 17, wrote about the Whiteheads having the Rheads for Christmas dinner in Santa Barbara in 1913. Clancy's statement is supported by Jane's calendar entry from December 25, 1913, Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.



5.35. Redlands Pottery (Wesley H. Trippett), Pair of Vases, 1902-09. carved and burnished earthenware, pictured in Ken Trapp, et. al., *Living the Good Life*, 200.



5.36. Frederick Hurten Rhead, Rhead Pottery, Santa Barbara, *Vase*, ca. 1913, Joseph Cunningham and Bruce Barnes Collection, ADA 1900.



5.37. Rhead Pottery (Frederick Hürten Rhead), *Vase*, 1913-1917, Earthenware with sgraffito design and colorless glaze, 15 5/6 x 7 3/8, The Oakland Museum, pictured in Kenneth Trapp, et. al., *Living the Good Life*, 196.



5.38. Arequipa Pottery (Attributed to Frederick Hürten Rhead), *Vase*, 1912, earthenware with sliptrailed leaf design and multicolored matte glaze, 10 x 5 1/8 inches, in Kenneth Trapp, et. al., *Living the Good Life*, 150.



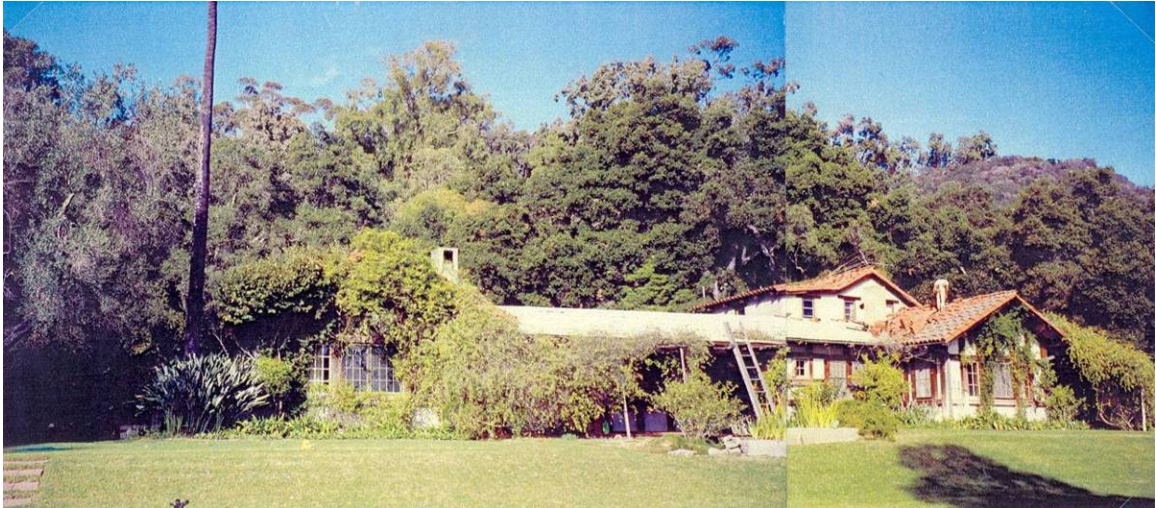
5.39. Arequipa Pottery (Attributed to Frederick Hürten Rhead), *Vase*, ca. 1912-13, earthenware with carved leaf design and black semimatte glaze, 5 ¼ x 2 11/16 inches, in K. Trapp, et. al., *Living the Good Life*, 152.

### **Section 7: California.**

As mentioned earlier, Jane's *Eucalyptus Series* was a Woodstock/California hybrid, reflective of Jane and Ralph's bi-coastal existence. Even though Byrdcliffe was now her primary residence, she continued to spend quite a bit of time in California, mostly in the winter months when it could get pretty cold and inhospitable in Woodstock. The Whiteheads owned Arcady until 1911 at which time they sold it to George Knapp, who greatly altered the home and gardens, transforming it from an Arts and Crafts simple life Arcadia into an American Renaissance pleasure palace.

After Arcady's sale, the Whiteheads built a second Montecito home named Neroli on another property they owned—28 acres at the upper end of Ashely Road on the hilltop above Mountain Drive--which they initially purchased in October 1894 to be used as the

source of Arcady's abundant water supply.<sup>456</sup> [Illustration 5.40.] Ralph demonstrated a considerable knowledge of engineering in creating a huge water tunnel on the Neroli site as well as at another location to provide water for Arcady and other Montecito estates. It is a testament to his skill that today the tunnel on the Neroli property is still actively used by neighboring properties.



5.40. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers with J. W. Browning, builder and contractor, *Neroli*, Montecito, California, built 1913, photographed 1991, Montecito Library files.

In Whitehead terms, Neroli is a cottage, being a fraction of the size of Arcady and a lot smaller than their White Pines home at Byrdcliffe. Clearly, it was intended only for visits and not as a permanent residence. There is an original coach house on the property that had a second story apartment where caretakers lived.<sup>457</sup> Neroli is a long Redwood one-story hacienda style house.<sup>458</sup> A second story addition was put on its east end by the White family, Neroli's second owners after the Whiteheads.<sup>459</sup> Like Arcady, Neroli has a red tiled roof. The building was probably meant to be naturalistic like Arcady

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<sup>456</sup> David Myrick, *The Days of the Great Estates of Montecito and Santa Barbara*, 305.

<sup>457</sup> Maria Herold and Richard L. White, tour of Neroli, 6/13/2005.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Maria Herold and Richard L. White, tour of Neroli, 6/13/2005.

outbuildings with natural redwood walls, not unlike the exteriors of Byrdcliffe buildings. However, the building's exterior has a decidedly Tudor style appearance because the Whiteheads applied white asbestos cloth between the half-timbers to retard the lightening speed wild fires that often tear through the arid hills of Montecito being fueled by desert winds from the East and Northeast.<sup>460</sup>

The house is narrow, mostly one room wide, with rooms falling in line, one behind the next connected by a long hallway running down the length of the backside of the house, which begins and ends with doorways into the house. [Illustration 5.41., 5.42., 5.43., 5.44. and 5.45.] A kitchen is off to the back side. The house is entered through an unassuming front porch leading into an entrance room--a sitting/living room—which is followed by a dining room, followed by a bedroom. These rooms all have doorways out to a porch overlooking the terrace. Interiors are similar to Byrdcliffe interiors. They feature naturally stained wood boards with built in bookcases and benches, and fireplaces in all the main rooms. Some interior walls including those in the living/sitting room appear to be stained with a clear green/blue stain, similar to wall treatments at Byrdcliffe. Joinery was meant to be earthquake-proof being done with wooden pins and L-beams that can rock without breaking if the earth moves.<sup>461</sup> The fireplaces in the living room and dining room are joined through the wall that divides them. Fleur-de-lis andirons still in place are original to the Whiteheads' residence<sup>462</sup>—the fleur-de-lis being one of the couple's corporate symbols.

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<sup>460</sup> Thanks to Mary Corbin Sies for clarifying the direction of the winds that cause fires in Montecito.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Maria Herold and Richard L. White, tour of Neroli, 6/13/2005.



5.41. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, J. W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Entrance Porch*, Montecito, California, built 1913, 1990s photograph, Montecito Library files.



5.42. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, J. W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Entrance Sitting/Living Room View of Windows Facing Terrace*, Montecito, California, built 1913, 1997 photograph, Montecito Library files.





5.43. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, J. W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Entrance Sitting/Living Room View of Fireplace*, Montecito, California, built 1913, 1997 photograph, Montecito Library files.



5.44. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, J. W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Entrance Sitting/Living Room Detail of Corner Window Looking out onto Front Porch*, Montecito, California, built 1913, 1990s photograph, Montecito Library files.



5.45. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, J. W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Hallway*, Montecito, California, built 1913, 1990s photograph, Montecito Library files.

In the bedroom, a cast buff colored ceramic *Madonna and Child* possibly by della Robbia is inset in the natural wood fireplace overmantel.<sup>463</sup> The door panels to the right of the fireplace have been decorated by Jane. [Illustration 5.46. and 5.47.] The lower panel featuring white Madonna lilies and the upper panel, “The Salutation of the Dawn” a Hindu Sanskrit poem by Kalidasa (mid 4<sup>th</sup> – early 5<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) is inscribed using pyrography. The poem reads,

Listen to the exhortation of the Dawn!  
 Look to this Day! For it is Life, The very Life of Life.  
 In its brief course lie all the Varieties and Realities of your Existence;  
     The Bliss of Growth,  
     The Glory of Action,  
     The Splendor of Beauty;  
 For Yesterday is but a Dream,  
 And To-morrow is only a Vision;  
 But To-day well lived  
 Makes every Yesterday a Dream of Happiness,  
 And every To-morrow a Vision of Hope.

<sup>463</sup> Previously, for Arcady’s living/dining room, the Whiteheads’ imported a Lucca della Robbia Madonna and child that was inset in the fireplace overmantel. It is pictured in a published ca. 1895 photograph that can be seen in this author’s “Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead: Cofounder of the Byrdcliffe Art School,” 66.

Look well therefore to this Day!  
Such is the Salutation of the Dawn.<sup>464</sup>



5.46. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, Jane Whitehead, painted and pyrographic decoration, J.W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Bedroom View of Fireplace with Cast Buff Colored Madonna and Child and Putti (possibly Della Robbia) inset in Overmantel*, Montecito, California, home of Jane and Ralph Whitehead, built 1913, 1990s photograph, Montecito Library files.



5.47. Jane and Ralph Whitehead, designers, Jane Whitehead, painted and pyrographic decoration, J.W. Browning, builder/contractor, *Neroli Bedroom View of Doorway with Painted Lilies to right of fireplace and "The Salutation of the Dawn" poem pyrographed in Door Panels*, Montecito, California, home of Jane and Ralph Whitehead, built 1913, 1990s photograph, Montecito Library files.

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<sup>464</sup> Kalidasa, Hindu Sanskrit poet and dramatist (mid 4<sup>th</sup> – early 5<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.), “The Salutation of the Dawn.”

Local records list the Whiteheads as architect and carpenter J. W. Browning as Neroli's contractor.<sup>465</sup> One would think they would have asked Christopher Tornoe to build the house since he built Arcady, and its outbuildings, the Giglio and the Moon studio, as well as the Arcady School they added in 1898. Certainly, the Whiteheads were still in contact with Tornoe; they went in together investing in Frederick Hurten Rhead's Rhead Pottery in 1914, and Jane's calendars mention the Tornoes during the Neroli years. However, given that Tornoe died in 1915 at the age of 55, it is possible he had stopped building by the time the Whiteheads decided to construct Neroli. Neroli interiors are sympathetic to those Tornoe previously built for the Whiteheads at Arcady. Perhaps he recommended Browning.

With the exception of a kiln that used to be on the Neroli property but was later torn down,<sup>466</sup> Neroli, according to Montecito historian, David Myrick "is essentially the same today as when it was built except for the addition of a porch on one side."<sup>467</sup> That porch leads out from the dining room to a terrace with views off of the hilltop. This terrace is very similar to the placement of one in front of the Whiteheads' home White Pines at Byrdcliffe. The Neroli terrace was gardened by Albert Tanner who moved to Neroli from Arcady and continued to garden there after the Whiteheads sold it in 1926 to the Harwood Whites.<sup>468</sup>

After Neroli's sale, the Whiteheads reportedly had a winter home in Carmel, California. Ralph died in 1929 in Santa Barbara en route to the Carmel home.<sup>469</sup> Throughout their years in Woodstock, the Whiteheads remained connected to California.

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<sup>465</sup> Montecito Association, Protective and Improvement form, n.d., in Montecito Library files.

<sup>466</sup> Maria Herold and Richard L. White, tour of Neroli, 6/13/2005.

<sup>467</sup> David Myrick, *The Days of the Great Estates of Montecito and Santa Barbara*, 307.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

This connection is visible in the hybrid quality of some of their arts and crafts, such as the chiffonier with California landscape panels, and Jane's *Eucalyptus Series* paintings and pottery. [Illustration 5.18., 5.32., 5.33. and 5.34.] While the Whiteheads' simple life evolved into a more austere and naturalistic experience in Woodstock, it remained connected to and in communication with ideas from the West Coast.

**Section 8: Jane as Symbol in Portraiture and Eva Watson-Schütze at Byrdcliffe.**

Earlier, a photograph of Jane painting eucalyptus in one of her California studios was used to discuss Jane's role as the Whiteheads' muse. [Illustration 3.13.] In that case, her physical attachment to the eucalyptus she painted on the canvas through her paintbrush established the symbolic purpose of the image. Here, Jane's beautiful likeness, eyes averted, seated before her easel in an artist's smock stood for artistic California in an equation that roughly read: eucalyptus = California as personified by Jane. Throughout Jane's life, even before she met Ralph, photographs of Jane were taken for symbolic purposes. It seems she always had a strong sense about the power of her image. A very early image in Chapter Three shows her in the early 1880s in Washington, DC.

[Illustration 3.1.] She is posed with a bird on her finger—a reference to her name, Jane Byrd; her Byrd-like attributes, delicate and ethereal; and also a very recognizable symbol of Victorian womanhood: the caged bird who must be cared for, caged for its own protection, in a patriarchal world of business, industry, and violence. Jane was a smart woman. We cannot doubt that she was very aware of the ironic message she communicated in this image of Victorian womanhood--the bird being liberated by the very picture of Victorian womanhood, Jane. Pencil thin with waist cinched in so tightly

it is hard to imagine how she could breathe, Jane was about to embark on a life that rejected, to a degree, and, certainly, renegotiated the rules of the game. She was going to take her bird and run away down the winding path shown behind them in the photograph. That path led her to Europe and England, where she studied art and traded in her cinched waist for her artist's smock and aesthetic dress, and met her future husband Ralph. With Ralph she reformed her image in photographs like the one of her painting eucalyptus in her California studio. But, it was through the lens of pictorialist photographer and photo-secessionist Eva Watson-Schütze's lens that we see Jane at her most symbolic: as a Madonna smelling a pure, white lily: the picture of aesthetic reform, or as Holy Mother, the picture of grace, repose and the sanity made possible through simple living in the country. [Illustration 1.2., and 5.48.] These and other photographs of Jane by Watson-Schütze capture Byrdcliffe's message. But, how do we make the leap from Holy Mother to simple living?



5.48. Eva Watson-Schütze, photographer, *Jane Whitehead Smelling a Lily*, 1905, platinum print, Collection of the George Eastman House or the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Based on these images, and the regularity at which Madonna and Child and lily imagery is seen in all the stages of evolution in the Whiteheads' simple life, how do Madonna and Child and Madonna lilies relate to simple living to the Whiteheads? What are they using these religious metaphors to symbolize?

To the Whiteheads, as a couple, the Madonna and Child and the Madonna lily<sup>470</sup> relate to Florence, the place they first met and where they formulated their plans for a simple life "art convent." In their initial conception of Byrdcliffe, published in 1892 in an essay titled, "Work," in their larger book *Grass of the Desert*, the Whiteheads imagined changing the world, or at least the world of the lucky individuals residing in their haven, for their children. Even in their work with children at Arcady in California, in their own Arcady Sloyd school for manual art and in their loan of fine quality reproductions of great works of art to local schools, discussed in their 1901 publication "Pictures for Schools," part of their *Arrows of the Dawn* series, they exhibited a deeply held conviction that the future is in the hands of the children—that the world might not be what it could or should be in their adult lives but that they might plant the seeds that would help the next generation live better. So, the Holy Mother portraits of Jane use her to symbolize motherhood in the sense of her being a pure mother figure bringing forward a new generation--a rebirth through simple living.

Religiousness also imbues another one of their early publications, *Vita Nuova of Dante*, also from 1892. In it Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* is pictured.

[Illustration 2.2. and 2.3.] A similar portrait of Jane merges Dante's original story of

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<sup>470</sup> "In religion and art the lily symbolizes purity, and as the flower of the Resurrection and of the Virgin it is widely used at Easter. The lily of the Bible (Cant. 2.1) has been variously identified with the scarlet anemone, Madonna lily, and other plants; the "lilies of the field" (Mat. 6.28) probably means any wildflowers, perhaps the iris." Lily entry, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, sixth edition, 2001-05, <http://www.bartleby.com/65/li/lily.html>, accessed 11/18/07.

transfiguration and holy love into something modern as it was translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and as that translation inspired the Whiteheads in their quest for “the new life”—as simple living was sometimes called. Whereas Dante and Beatrice’s holy love was only obtainable after death in the original story, Rossetti’s translation made it earthly through a combination of spiritual and physical communion (this idea is more fully discussed in Chapter Two). In this case, Jane as Beatrice symbolized the potential for heaven on earth in the new life.

Similarly, a Madonna with lily photograph by Watson-Schütze pictures Jane as the Madonna of the Annunciation. She is shown after her receipt of the lily from the angel who delivered the sad but blessed news about her role as Christ’s mother.

[Illustration 5.49.] Again, one is reminded of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This time, it is his *Annunciation* from 1849-50 that comes to mind. [Illustration 5.50.] In the photograph of Jane it is hard to tell if she is meant to portray the angel or the young mother-to-be who in Rossetti’s very human portrayal looks overwhelmed by the news. Jane’s posture reveals sadness taken in stride. This Madonna with lily knows what she has to do. Perhaps the portrait of Jane, then, is of the Virgin mother after she has had some time to reflect on the angel’s message.





5.49. Eva Watson Schütze, photographer, *Jane Whitehead as Madonna with Lily (at Byrdcliffe)*, ca. 1905, platinum print, 8 ½ x 4 inches, collection of Bill Shea.



5.50. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Annunciation*, 1850, oil on canvas, support: 724 x 419 mm frame: 1002 x 698 x 88 mm painting, Tate Gallery, London.

Watson-Schütze took startlingly beautiful portraits of the many Byrdcliffe inhabitants she lived with during her and her husband, Martin Schütze's residence there. According to Byrdcliffe art historian Tom Wolf, the Schütze's spent half the year at

Byrdcliffe.<sup>471</sup> Wolf aptly describes Eva's portraits as "following the tradition of Eakins," with whom she studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia; "her portraits communicate a sense of human dignity, intellectual aliveness, and individuality on the part of her sitters."<sup>472</sup> Her portraits inspire contemplation and evoke in the viewer a wish to describe what is seen. The sexually potent gaze of painter Eric Carl Lindin is embedded in a play of positive and negative space created by his reclined diagonal posture and Iris-like white shirt across the dark background of the photo field.

[Illustration 5.51.] Another beautiful interplay of positive and negative forms in space is Lucy Fletcher Brown, wife of Bolton Brown, and their daughter in a rocking chair--a depiction of the intimacy shared by mother and child as powerful as similar representations by Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt. [Illustration 5.52.] A reversal of the positive and negative spatial interplay in the two aforementioned photographs can be seen in an apparition of Jane Whitehead, dressed in black velvet walking through the fourth dimension, so it seems, as she penetrates the white space of the Japanese screen in the background. [Illustration 5.53.]

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<sup>471</sup> Tom Wolf, "Art at Byrdcliffe," 102. See this essay for more on Eva Watson-Schütze and Martin Schütze.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.



5.51. Eva Watson-Schütze, *Eric Carl Linden*, platinum print, collection of Gregory and Eleanor Lindin, pictured in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 193.



5.52. Eva Watson-Schütze, *Lucy Fletcher Brown and Daughter in a Rocking Chair*, ca. 1905, platinum print, Collection of the Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York, in Nancy Green, *Byrdcliffe*, 192.



5.53. Eva Watson-Schütze, *Jane Whitehead with Japanese Screen*, ca. 1905, toned platinum print, artist's monogram in pencil on recto, 8 ½ x 4 1/2," Paul Cava fine art.

The Schützes had a cabin at Byrdcliffe they occupied during the summer months. Eva came from New Jersey originally, and studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia with Thomas Eakins and Thomas Aschutz. She became part of Alfred Stieglitz's photo-secessionist group and was featured in his journals *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work*. In 1901 she married Martin Schütze, whom she met while he was a Fellow in German at the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>473</sup> At present it is unknown if the Whiteheads knew the Schützes from Philadelphia or Chicago, the latter being where the Schützes lived after marrying and where they were involved in the intellectual circle of Hull House and University of Chicago—Martin was the chair of German Literature there for many years—that Jane and Ralph were active in. [Illustration 5.54, 5.55. and

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<sup>473</sup> Nancy Green, "Cast of characters," 239.

5.56.] If the connection was established in Philadelphia it would have been through Jane, who grew up there. Eva and Martin were both born in 1867 and Jane was born around 1858, making them around the same age. As a young art student she, no doubt, interacted with the circles of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, where Eva studied, and her father was a professor of Civil Law at the University of Pennsylvania, where Martin was a Fellow. Later, Martin “became the first president of the Woodstock Historical Society and organized many of its early programs. He also initiated the series of talks called the ‘Byrdcliffe Afternoons’ in the late 1930s.”<sup>474</sup> “Byrdcliffe Afternoons” were later published. This series of recountings by early Byrdcliffers, such as Bolton Brown, Hervey White, and Bertha Thompson, have been a very important source of information about the art colony. They have been an especially helpful counterbalance, adding breadth, depth, and verification to ideas and facts in the Whiteheads’ personal correspondence, Jane’s calendars, and published sources from the period.



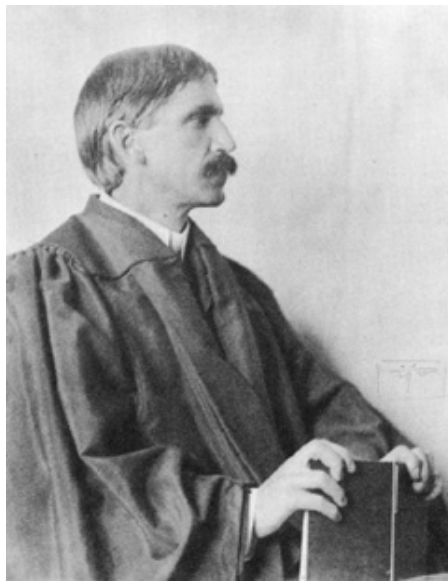
5.54. Eva Watson-Schütze, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ca. 1915, silver print, collection of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe*, 194.

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid.



5.55. Eva Watson-Schütze, *Jane Addams*, ca. 1910, platinum print, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center.



5.56. Eva Watson-Schütze, *John Dewey*, n.d., University of Chicago Library website, [www.lib.uchicago.edu/.../fac/fac\\_img18.html](http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/.../fac/fac_img18.html), accessed on 8/1/07.

**Section 9: Ideal and Reality: Comparing “Work” and Byrdcliffe.**

In their 1892 essay “Work” within *Grass of the Desert* the Whiteheads provided the blueprint for what later became Byrdcliffe. Calling it an “art convent,” the Whiteheads imagined living a rational life that was useful, happy and reasonable—a life that was healthy in body, thought and emotion—making themselves a model community (“a city on the hill” to return to Winthrop’s 1630 sermon, or Bigelow’s 1909 adaptation of it in his description of Byrdcliffe as a “city of the forest” in *American Homes and Gardens*).

The remainder of this chapter summarizes “Work” and evaluates how closely it was followed in the realization of Byrdcliffe. Ralph wrote,

When I was twenty, imbued with the republican and socialistic theories of Mill and Mazzini and others, I wanted to learn the business of our country side and to become in time the head of the factories which our family possessed in those days in Yorkshire, with a view to the gradual introduction of real cooperation . . . Now I think not of such large beginnings, but of quietly finding out something which I shall be capable of doing as an individual . . . In the community we spoke of . . . there will be room for all kinds of work; you [Jane] talked as if you thought the scheme might fail degenerating into dilettante art and learned leisure. No; you have your painting, that is work enough for you; another may have his music but to others, such as myself, who have no particular artistic or literary faculty, simpler crafts are still open.<sup>475</sup>

Ralph goes on to suggest that the women could spin yarn and the men could weave cloth. “Such work, done on hand machines, and not for too many hours in the day, has nothing degrading in it and would be a delightful occupation to those whose nerves are overstrung by the irrational life they have hitherto been leading.”<sup>476</sup> Here, artists do the designing and workmen carry them out as mechanically as possible in order not to spoil them.<sup>477</sup> A farm provides men and women residents with an outlet for some daily “manual out-door labour for the good of their bodies, and for the due preservation of touch with nature and

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<sup>475</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “Work,” 61-62.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

simplicity of life.”<sup>478</sup> Written abroad, the Whiteheads imagined the New World a suitable place for such an endeavor to take place. Painting, engraving, sculpture including metal and enamel work, music, literature, carpentry, cabinetmaking, wood carving, leather work, bookbinding, handwork in brass and iron, pottery, spinning and weaving were all projected and realized occupations.<sup>479</sup> On the other hand, it doesn’t seem the Whiteheads enforced their initial plan to make “farming, gardening, and forestry to be exercised by all members of the community.”<sup>480</sup> It is hard to tell if cleaning and maintenance were taken care of by residents “possibly with the aid of some hired help,” as the Whiteheads imagined.<sup>481</sup> But, it is hard to imagine the Whiteheads doing much of it themselves. He continues,

The community would have a common house, to form a nucleus, but affiliated members could live at any distance . . . probably married people should have houses of their own near the central home, and free access to the latter. In the common house, each member would have a sleeping room, and one in which to exercise his profession and to be alone; work might conveniently be done together in some cases, but we want to preserve, not to suppress individuality.<sup>482</sup>

Rooms for common use include a “refectory, a meeting room for quiet study with books, and one for amusement with a piano and an organ”—all were realized at Byrdcliffe.<sup>483</sup>

Rules about who could marry and how much money each individual had to contribute as well as what the daily work is worth are described, being called “Political Economy”: “As to the cost of life: I am supposing that, to start with, all of us who join either have, or can earn, £120 a year. I know that our society is not ideally perfect unless we can admit all mankind; but for the present we are thinking of a very select few, and

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<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.



their lives and are not attempting to reform the world.”<sup>484</sup> In this case at Byrdcliffe, promising students often came on scholarship, making the reality more egalitarian than the initial idea. Since things never became cooperative in the way the Whiteheads initially imagined, they provided the scholarships. But, even at the outset of their thinking, they considered ways to make their convent available to those without much money. Ralph suggested that those making over £120 be taxed for the benefit of the community and that this money could be used to pay for the education of someone who wants to join but doesn’t have sufficient income. Once educated, the Whiteheads imagined that person would ideally become able to make the requisite sum.<sup>485</sup>

The hours of the day are scheduled too. Work concludes at about 4 pm, followed by short evenings. That never happened. Byrdcliffers spent many nights partying into the wee hours in the out-of-doors under the stars.

As for clothing, dress reform was to be in fashion at the art convent. “While at work, we all, for our own sakes, wear very simple garments; when work is done, all beautiful stuffs will be allowed to those who can afford them and who care to wear them. There is no danger in this, for it is not the richness of dress that makes its beauty; we are not ascetics for the sake of asceticism, but for the sake of a fuller life.”<sup>486</sup> “Work” made it very clear that those seeking luxury and wealth would be expected to leave on their own accord.<sup>487</sup> All accounts, ranging from Burroughs’ discussion of Byrdcliffe’s people being “very democratic, free and informal in their intercourse” to Annie Thompson’s account of the “lack of superficial things” and “colorful dressing but noting pretentious,”

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

seem to confirm that modesty and simplicity in all things down to clothing choice were *de rigueur*.<sup>488</sup>

As described in Chapter Two, “Work” described people being allowed to worship freely as long as they keep their religious views to themselves. This dictum seems to have been followed in reality.

Even the focus on the lives of children, which seems to be the inspiration for Byrdcliffe was included in the Whiteheads’ early essay “Work,” when they described efforts that were not “merely for our own short lived pleasure” but, rather, “for those whose lives, in coming ages, depend on how we live now, we must not be hindered by comparatively petty considerations from following what we know in nature to be right.”<sup>489</sup> In 1892, they imagined that book learning would be “smaller than is now required, for we wish our children to have healthy, active bodies, and bright, intelligent minds, to be able to appreciate all that is beautiful in nature and art; how, all that is to a high degree beautiful is simple.”<sup>490</sup> Thus, in the earliest days of the Whiteheads’ romance, they imagined having children, and trying to change the world for them. Probably, this early wish to change the world for their children led them to form the Arcady Sloyd school for manual art in Montecito. However, the reality of Arcadia, with its emphasis on simple living close to nature without regard for intellectual pursuits, was rejected by the Whiteheads when they decided to move on to Byrdcliffe. The thought of their sons growing up as “healthy animals” was not enough. They wanted them to be

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<sup>488</sup> John Burroughs to “My Dear Friend,” letter; and Annie Thompson, “Bertha and Byrdcliffe,” 4-5.

<sup>489</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, “Work,” 59-60. Also see Poultny Bigelow, “The Byrdcliffe Colony of Arts and Crafts,” 389-393: “the inmates live in sandals, short skirts, sailor jumpers, gypsy attire; the men mainly in the comforts of outdoor camp-life. The inmates of this great park . . . are here to draw inspiration from nature; nature is their mother; they love her and make her their model.”

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

men with souls, and that required culture and learning more readily available on the East Coast which was a shorter distance from Europe than was California.<sup>491</sup> Really, it was the birth of the Whiteheads' sons that forced them, so to speak, to make their dreams into a reality.

Going on to declare "we must live in the future, not in the past," Ralph asks readers to "Let us advance:"

Let us no longer look to the past and try to live amid a world of beauty we half galvanize into life from the Renaissance, or the Middle Ages, or the East.

We have seen visions lovelier than the *Spring* of Botticelli; let us make our lives more beautiful than those of our fathers . . . Only that is alive which has in it the possibility of development and progress. Not in vain, sentimental longing for the simple happy times which we imagine to have been when the world was young, but in confidence that the golden age lies ahead of us.<sup>492</sup>

While Ralph talks about creating a future that doesn't nostalgically look to the past, the reality of Byrdcliffe is utopian in its separation from the rest of the world. It is a rural ideal that is conjured from several sources. Active is Ruskin's nostalgia for what he thought was a more egalitarian past in the Middle Ages. Here, it was believed the laborers on the cathedrals expressed their individuality in their workmanship as they carved griffins in stone. On the importance of enjoyable work, Ralph added, "Consider too, how the health of the race might improve when men and women, who are now run to seed from a too nervous life, and the pursuit of a low form of intellectual cleverness, at the cost of all vigour and freshness, should regain their balance and a healthy body should once more be the house for a reasonable soul."<sup>493</sup> Also, at work is a preindustrial image of happy life on the farm and people working as a community towards their common

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<sup>491</sup> Jane Whitehead to Ralph Whitehead, letter, inscribed "July 14<sup>th</sup> 1900. Saturday Night," [on Arcady, Sta. Barbara letterhead], Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library.

<sup>492</sup> Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, "Work," 71.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

good. All of this, in fact, is quite similar to the utopia proposed in William Morris's *News From Nowhere*. In *News from Nowhere*, people are beautiful, healthy and strong, and they live longer lives. This happens because they spend a good deal of time in the outdoors, they work the land in a communal fashion, and do the work for which they are best suited. Few are intellectuals, and those who are tend to be older or grumpy men. Morris the book's hero, given the thinly disguised alias William Guest, looks very old to the people of the future, such were the adverse aging effects that occurred during his life in the nineteenth century, a life he'd rather leave behind but one he knows he is destined to return to.

Ralph touches upon some things he thinks need to be changed in society. He cites society's need to organize labor, and abolish the system of competition active in the industrialized world of globalized capital. He thinks working people need shorter hours, and safe working conditions, and that consumers need to refuse to "buy goods produced under conditions fatal to the health of workers."<sup>494</sup> All this is well and good, and we certainly see from it his sympathies with socialist principles. However, he doesn't tell us how society should be restructured. But, I guess that wasn't his intention. At the outset of their essay "Work," they wrote that "real cooperation" was a beginning "too large" for their own work. And, that what they hoped to achieve was something they were capable of doing as individuals. They did not set out to make a radical change to society. They didn't even set out to reform their society. But, they saw problems with it and were able to live apart from it, according to a model they thought would be good for others to follow. So, we can't assume they thought their model would work on a large scale.

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

The essay, “Work,” ends with what seems an obligatory commentary on the value and role of machines. “Let me add one word on machines,” adds Ralph. He tells us machines cannot produce art because they are characterless, and the reflection of a human being’s character is the sparkle that distinguishes art. But, he admits, machines are capable of doing some things better than human hands. And, that in certain cases, the aid of a machine allows men to produce things of greater quality than would be possible without them. Citing the production of cotton yarns as an example, he warns readers that while they are useful here and we should accept them, we need to take care “that those who work them are not thereby crippled, as so often happens at present. Shorter hours are needed to avoid this and a refusal to buy goods produced under conditions fatal to the health of workers.”<sup>495</sup> He concludes with a call for variety in daily work, organized labor, and abolishment of the system of competition.

In Ralph’s case and in that of other Arts and Crafts proponents arguing for and against the machine, “the machine” and its use in the manufacture of arts and crafts is invoked to discuss labor issues, therefore making “the machine” and handmade “arts and crafts” code words for opposing forces—evil and good, capitalism and social reform or socialism, respectively--within the world of industrial capitalism.

The argument about the use or rejection of machines in the handicrafts produced during the Arts and Crafts movement has played a central role in the dogma of the movement—if it is even conceivable to say such an individualistic movement was capable of dogma. Yet, proponents and practitioners have used non-human powered machines since the outset of the movement. Morris’s firm Morris & Co. used them, and so did many others. On the one hand, Morris wrote about the importance of avoiding

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

machines, and on the other, he conceded that they were here to stay. Both sides of this argument that occupied so many Arts and Crafts makers and scholars since the time the Movement took place were presented by Morris in his essay, “The Revival of Handicrafts,” published in the *Fortnightly Review* in November 1888, a point in his life when he seems to have lost faith in the power of art to change the world and when, instead, he focused his energies on promoting the cause of Socialism. In it, Morris proposes to discuss “the effect of machinery versus handicraft upon the arts.”<sup>496</sup> In reality, his argument is about labor conditions for workers and not about the effect of the machine upon the arts. The arts are not what is driving Morris here, people’s lives are. And, Morris concedes this is the case. For him, “it is impossible to exclude socio political questions from the consideration of aesthetics because the life, habits and aspirations of all groups and classes are founded on the economical conditions under which the mass of people live.”<sup>497</sup> Morris thinks the machine is an evil of contemporary life, but believes that when people live in a society of equals—the triumph of socialism—then man will become master versus slave of the machine and it will become a liberating tool. In the meantime, Morris advocates a return to handcraft and the end of machine production.

By the turn-of-the-century, many proponents of socialist principles within the Arts and Crafts movement were conceding that machines could be useful and they could actually lend themselves to the development of aesthetics. This liberal view of the use of machines in Arts and Crafts work was especially acceptable in the United States, where there seems to have been a greater belief in the democratizing potential of industrial

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<sup>496</sup> William Morris, “The Revival of Handicraft,” 169.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

capital to bring wealth and happiness to an unprecedented number of people. In 1901, architect Frank Lloyd Wright was advocating these ideas in Chicago to an Arts and Crafts audience in his speech “The Art and Craft of the Machine.” “Every age has done its work, produced its art with the best tools or contrivances it knew, the tools most successful in saving the most precious thing in the world—human effort,” Wright said, “Greece used the chattel slave as the essential tool of its art and civilization. This tool we have discarded, and we would refuse the return of Greek art upon the terms of its restoration because we insist now upon a basis in Democracy.”<sup>498</sup> Wright foresaw a moment in the future when the machine and art would act together to “emancipate human expression,” serving purposes other than the ones of his present time--the time in which Morris lived and in which Wright also found himself. In Morris’s time and in the present, Wright admits that the machine has been a deadly engine of enslavement and art, the idealization of selfishness. But, in the future, when the machine is used well this will all change. So Wright warns,

Artists who feel toward Modernity and the Machine now as William Morris and Ruskin were justified in feeling then, had best distinctly wait and work sociologically where great work may still be done by them. In the field of art activity they will do distinct harm. Already they have wrought much miserable mischief.

If the artist will only open his eyes he will see that the machine he dreads has made it possible to wipe out the mass of meaningless torture to which mankind, in the name of the artistic, has been more or less subjected since time began; for that matter, has made possible a cleanly strength, an ideality and a poetic fire that the art of the world has not yet seen; for the machine, the process now smooths away the necessity of petty structural deceits, soothes this wearisome struggle to make things seem what they are not, and can never be; satisfies the simple terms of the modern art equation as the ball of clay in the sculptor’s hand yields to his desire—comforting forever this realistic, brainsick masquerade we are wont to suppose art.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, “The Art and Craft of the Machine,” 203.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

Siding towards verbosity, Wright goes on to make the point that simplicity is vital to the aesthetic of the “Art of the Machine.” Really, Wright’s points are the basis of the translation of Arts and Crafts values into Modernism in the twentieth century. Wright held a Modernist position on the machine—it will be the liberator of man, an emancipator of human expression, a Democratizing tool. His position and the aesthetics he posits would be shared by the founders of the Bauhaus in Germany, by De Stijl in the Netherlands, by the International Constructivists coming out of Communist Russia and Europe, and others, all of whom acknowledged their indebtedness to the theoretical foundations laid by William Morris.

At Byrdcliffe, Jane and Ralph and other residents used hand methods when it pleased them and machine tools when it made their work more enjoyable. By all accounts, the weaver Marie Little was a purist when it came to her use of natural dyes and yarns in the making of hand-loomed textiles. On the other hand, however, photographs of the Byrdcliffe woodworking shop show engine run belts powering woodworking equipment, and we know Jane and Ralph used an electric versus a wood-fired kiln.

In conclusion, the “art convent” Ralph and Jane imagined in their essay “Work,” based on conversations and plans made at the outset of their relationship and published in 1892 in *Grass of the Desert* is pretty close to what was realized at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock in 1903. Things didn’t end up being run cooperatively. The Whiteheads footed the bill for the entire enterprise. But, through their generosity they created and managed a utopian ideal set apart from the evils they saw active in the modern world. Byrdcliffe craftsman Bertha Thompson reminisced,



Mr. Whitehead had dreamed of a community of workers in the arts and handicrafts, associated but independent, living a simple and satisfying life amid beautiful surroundings. Perhaps his dream came as near to being realized that summer [1904—the second season of the Byrdcliffe summer school] as it ever could. He shared all he had with us in his endeavor to bring this to pass. Many fine, sensitive spirits, in other times and other places, have dreamed this dream so impossible of full realization, forgetting that the human race has yet to learn the true meaning of cooperation in community living. Nor could he foresee the years of restless change that were coming upon the world at large, resulting in the defeat of idealistic efforts everywhere. By the time the first frosts of autumn touched the maples and turned their leaves to gold, there appeared the signs of inevitable change. Other artists, craftsmen, musicians, and writers came to the hillside in the years that followed, but many of that first eager group were drawn to the city by necessity of study or of work,--a few to return after a time to make Woodstock their home.<sup>500</sup>

About its lasting influence into the present, Bertha Thompson wrote “Who can say that Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead’s dream has not been realized in this wider community as we know it today?”<sup>501</sup> In the 1930s, Bolton Brown concurred in his estimation of Byrdcliffe’s impact:

And so, gradually, artists and near artists, oozing out of Byrdcliffe or drifting in from the world at large, set up all over the region their varying establishments. And thus it was that the Art Colony entirely outgrew the original idea—a chosen and selected group, inside a fence—and became instead a large and free public movement that has been growing steadily for thirty years and is likely to grow thirty more.<sup>502</sup>

The wheels were set in motion. Beyond handcraft, Jane and Ralph at Byrdcliffe introduced a way of life, the simple life, and its associated artistic practices, values and philosophy to a small New York State town. In that place, that lifestyle evolved in unprecedented ways throughout the twentieth century into the American subculture, and the place it is now.

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<sup>500</sup> Bertha Thompson, “The Craftsmen of Byrdcliffe,” 11.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>502</sup> Bolton Brown, “Early Days at Woodstock,” 35.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Before and throughout her life and partnership with Ralph Whitehead, Jane Whitehead posed for photographed portraits that conveyed sometimes startlingly symbolic messages. This conclusion looks at pivotal images of Jane that best epitomize the four courses of her life history traced in this dissertation—her early life in Philadelphia, her years abroad prior to marriage, and her married years, first in California, and later, in Woodstock, New York. It then analyzes their symbolism as it relates to the evolution of the Whiteheads' simple life philosophy and the aesthetics this philosophy was inextricably tied to.

The ideas presented here were first considered in an exhibit I guest curated at the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens in 2004. That show and its corresponding exhibition brochure were titled, “Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead’s Idealized Visions about Simple Living and Arts and Crafts.” For that project I set out to use key photographs as entrance points for discussing the phases of Jane’s simple life and its relation to the arts and crafts she and her circle produced. I wanted the photographs and artworks to do the talking because it was clear to me that the entire story was within them and it was a powerful and beautiful one. As for the photographed portraits, they had been self-consciously posed to elicit a certain reading from the viewer. They were created as icons—symbols of the beliefs and aspirations of the sitter and, after she married, corporate symbols of what Jane and Ralph stood for. Jane was the simple life muse of the Whiteheads. At the time of the Georgia show, I was just finding the words to describe the symbolism and meaning imbued in these photographs. Subsequent years spent writing about the history behind the images and art works has helped me become more articulate about their meaning.

The earliest image in the quartet is a studio card of Jane taken in Washington, D.C., between 1885-90, around the time she was studying art at Oxford in England and in Paris, France. [Illustration 3.1.] This portrait shows a young Jane posing with a bird on her finger. Recently liberated from its cage, the bird is a symbolic reference to the sitter's middle name, Byrd. More than her middle name, Byrd took on specific connotations for this sitter, who was delicate, beautiful, and ethereal: the Victorian feminine ideal. In their years together, her husband Ralph always referred to her by this name in his letters to her. But, in this portrait, Jane is naming herself and using this image as a symbolic message to the people she sent studio cards, as custom had it. What was she telling her recipients? Perhaps it was a conventional message about Victorian ideals of beauty and femininity intended for the elite, aristocratic and royal social milieu of which she was a part in those days. But, if we look closely, we notice other dimensions being conveyed—dimensions that, like Jane's life itself, contradict and reject high society and the conventional Victorian ideals it seems to stand for. With the bird on one finger and her other hand on her tiny waist in an attitude of self-assurance, she looks the bird in the eye, seeming to say "I told you so." If we look at this image as a precursor to the path her life would take—a path that is metaphorically alluded to in the winding path receding in the background—it seems as though Jane is constructing an image that rejects conventional Victorian values. She and the bird are preparing to follow their respective paths. The bird no longer caged will return to nature, and so will Jane as she embarks on her simple life adventure.

This was the moment when Jane first experimented with simple living, calling it "country life" at Albury House in Surrey, England. Although she gardened, raised bees

and poultry, and learned traditional textile techniques from village women at Albury House, this excursion in simple living was not much more than an artistic approach to high society living in a pastoral and idyllic setting—in the tradition of Marie Antoinette’s dairy, the Laiterie de la reine, in the woods behind the King’s hunting lodge, the Chateau de Rambouillet, in Rambouillet, France. The simple life aesthetics and ideas she would soon express are only vaguely present at this point.

In a later portrait, probably taken on her European honeymoon by her love struck newlywed husband Ralph, the bird/bird cage metaphor returns as a bird cage holding a dove (perhaps) rests upon a stand embellished with the Whiteheads’ corporate symbol, the Fleur-de-Lys. [Illustration 3.25.] Jane is but one of numerous objects in the room used to convey an image of PreRaphaelite splendor. Rather than being portrayed as the conventional Victorian ideal as she was earlier, she is dressed here in an Elizabethan style gown—an artistic Victorian ideal—and self consciously posed in a reclined position against the tiger’s head of the exotic animal skin adorning her day bed. Silken pillows, a small tabouret inlaid with mother-of-pearl or ivory, and an iron bat probably of Japanese origin refer to the Near and Far East. A Renaissance mother-and-child triptych hangs on the wall alongside images of Florentine architecture, and paintings by Jane and those of her friends. Here, the artist appears to be resting in order to take a break and consider her current project on the easel, the panel painting of wings emerging from the clouds she prepared in commemoration of her meeting with her husband in Italy and the pact they made there to live the simple life. [Illustration 3.28.] In this Aestheticized studio, Jane is both object and subject. She is the PreRaphaelite ideal of beauty, and she is the artist.

The meaning of this icon has to do with beauty and art—two crucial components of the early phase of the Whiteheads’ simple life. Here, Beauty, with a capital “B,” is based on Plato’s belief that Beauty and truth were one and the same. In this course of thinking, to seek to approach truth in life was an ultimate goal.

And so Art is not something separate from our common life here, but may become to us, even if we are not ourselves artists, a real factor modifying and refining life by its constant influence. Thus Art for Art’s sake is in the highest sense no false cry, for in Art are visualized and made manifest to us some of Nature’s most noble works.<sup>503</sup>

Here, simple living was not so simple. It is rich looking and artistic in the Aesthetic sense, including a layering of patterns and objects from an eclectic mixture of time periods and national origins. It is not yet austere or naturalistic as it would become in its mature phase at Byrdcliffe. Here, simple living is Emerson’s anti-materialistic approach, which “clearly recognized the benefits of a capitalist economy” as cultural historian David Shi aptly states:

[Ralph Waldo] Emerson repeatedly explained to his listeners and readers that in stressing the primacy of thoughts over things he was not asking them to abandon their coarse labors and flee to the woods like Rousseau’s “noble savage.” The good life, he stressed, required more than “the crust of bread and the roof.” It should include “the freedom of the city, freedom of the earth, traveling, machinery, the benefits of science, music and fine arts, the best culture and the best company.”<sup>504</sup>

A portrait of Jane in a Romantically draped cloak standing with her back to the viewer on the stoa of her Arcady villa in Montecito, California aptly illustrates the next course the Whiteheads’ simple life would take. [Illustration 4.11.] Here, Jane is presented as a mysterious and timeless figure. Again, PreRaphaelite parallels come to

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<sup>503</sup> Ralph Whitehead, “Pictures for Schools,” 7, 11-12.

<sup>504</sup> David Shi, *The Simple Life*, 131-132. In this passage, Shi quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Plato,” “The Conduct of Life,” “Society and Solitude,” *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols. (Boston, 1903-1904), 4:53-58; 6:89, 134; 7:116.

mind. PreRaphaelite portraits depicting the seasons or moods, canvases featuring Biblical figures, Rossetti's paintings of Dante's Beatrice all show similarly clad figures. Jane's likeness may relate to all these things at once. Given the locale, however, another reference seems to be to the monks at local Spanish Missions. One post card in the Whiteheads' collection depicts Father Fox standing within the loggia of the Santa Barbara Mission. It is strikingly similar in mood, composition and costume to the portrait of Jane. [Illustration 4.10.] Resonating with these other likenesses, the Whiteheads portrait of Jane perhaps communicated their ideas about the New Life—another term for the simple life. Anchored in Rossetti's translation of Dante Alighieri's *Vita Nuova*, the New Life was a rebirth brought about through a spiritual union of heart and intellect through Beauty, where heavenly love was made earthly, physical and sensual. Advocates of the New Life subordinated material things for spiritual purposes. "Through discussion, simple living, manual labour and religious communion," proponents "hoped to lay the basis of a new life."<sup>505</sup>

Overlooking the glistening Pacific Ocean below, the Whiteheads' Arcady estate was graced by gentle winds and perfect weather. Irrigation made the naturally arid terrain's total transformation into an earthly paradise complete. Southern California was made into a Pacific Arcadia. Here, nature was modified into an idealized image of the Ancient past—a model the Whiteheads made overt on their stoa through their use of unfluted, bulging Doric columns, inset plaster cast reliefs of horsemen from the Parthenon frieze, and Romanesque niches featuring intertwined rampant lions with eagles. This combination of Ancient references with European Aestheticism, indigenous and Spanish colonial influences and the awesome beauty of Southern California's local

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<sup>505</sup> Sheila Rowbotham, "Commanding the Heart: Edward Carpenter and Friends," 42.

nature resulted in a simple life aesthetic, lifestyle and political standpoint that reflected Charles Fletcher Lummis's thoughts about the American Southwest's promise as a center for a cultural Renaissance if its Anglo Saxon settlers combined their Protestant work ethic with the advantages the Southwestern world had to offer: a temperate Mediterranean climate that allowed for an outdoor lifestyle, and a Latin Catholic culture characterized by the Spanish generosity of spirit, personal restraint, social purpose and joy in life.<sup>506</sup>

Returning to the photograph to look through the open door on the stoa at the chair upholstered in a Morris textile peeking through, we are reminded of the building's interior. Within, Jane had a grand artist's studio conceived in the Aestheticized studio tradition, which was used as a studio-salon for artwork, lavish entertaining and musical performances. She also had smaller studios on the grounds of the estate, which she used for quiet reflection. Her "Moon" studio, for example, was a small scaled wooden cottage that was built into the land as an organic outcropping. [Illustration 4.12.] It and other Arcady outbuildings signaled the direction simple living would take in the future. Gone are references to Ancient Greek culture, to Renaissance and PreRaphaelite art works, to the cultural highpoints of civilization present in the main Arcady villa. In contrast, cultural references are downplayed and nature is presented as the direct conduit to spiritual fulfillment and peace of mind. This would be the aesthetic ideal of simple living presented at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock, New York.

A portrait of Jane in her White Pines pottery studio in the attic of her Byrdcliffe home White Pines depicts this final stage of the aesthetic evolution of simple living. [Illustration 5.27.] Taken sometime between 1913 and 1929, this picture shows Jane as

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<sup>506</sup> Charles Fletcher Lummis, quoted in Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 89.

an older woman around sixty years of age. Here, the idealism of the earlier portraits is traded for realism. She is portrayed earnestly engaged in hand work, decorating a ceramic vase. Her clothing looks warm but not terribly stylish or like a costume as it did in the past. Within her studio surrounding her we see ceramic vessels at various stages of completion. One pot in the foreground sits on a potter's wheel. A table to the left in the background is covered with pieces and the paint brushes and tools Jane will use to embellish them. It can be assumed that Ralph took this portrait of Jane. Conversely, it relates to a pendant portrait of Ralph that Jane must have taken, where he is shown seated at a table in their pottery studio. [Illustration 5.28.] In pottery, the Whiteheads worked collaboratively in media that highlighted their individual strengths—Jane's prototypes for pots and her decorations, and Ralph's emphasis on the chemistry and science of clay and glaze recipes. Never before were Jane and Ralph's mutual art projects so long-term and fully integrated into their life. One could say they achieved their simple life ideal of spiritual union in their work on this project.

At Byrdcliffe the lifestyle and aesthetics of simple living were austere, relying more heavily on direct inspiration from the surrounding local nature of the place than had been the case in England first and California afterward. Here, the aesthetic was at its most Spartan and naturalistic. The entire Byrdcliffe campus was rendered in dark stained natural wood cabins that sympathetically blended into the mountainside. Landscaping was sculpted into the site to provide views of the surrounding scenery, but nature was not "marred or defaced." According to naturalist John Burroughs, "the modesty and privacy of nature has in all things been guarded."<sup>507</sup> The Whiteheads formed a colony of like-

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<sup>507</sup> John Burroughs to "My Dear Friend," letter, inscribed "West Park, NY, Aug. 30, '05," Byrdcliffe Collection, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum.



minded individuals and families. At Byrdcliffe, people worked earnestly during the day on their art, craft, music, writing, gardening, etc. In the evenings, interaction among residents was encouraged to the degree it was almost enforced. Materialistic behavior and possessions were avoided to facilitate direct experience with nature and give people time to concentrate on their work rather than on housework. Byrdcliffe was an oasis to the Whiteheads and their guests and residents from many of the social problems in the outside world. They were there seeking the therapeutic, regenerative benefits of simple living. However, they believed Byrdcliffe was a model for the outside world—a city on a hill, so to speak--and that individual artists and craftspeople carried the lessons of simple living back into the world when they were no longer in residence.

As a rejection of repressive social mores and materialistic behavior and a critique of social inequality in the modern world, the Whiteheads' simple life between 1870-1930 was enacted in rural places where nature served as a model for spirituality and aesthetics in art and the built environment, and where handwork in the form of art and craft and working the land were balanced with intellectual activity, leisure time and socializing in order to improve physical and psychological well being. While their philosophy remained close to their initial conception published in *Grass of the Desert* in 1892, the aesthetics evolved tremendously over this sixty year period. The Whiteheads documented this transition in portraits of Jane where she posed as their simple life muse.

## Appendix

### Chronological listing of publications on Byrdcliffe and the Whiteheads

- Bakker, James R, auctioneer, and Robert Edwards, Thursday, October 27, 2005, *Byrdcliffe 2005: the Property of Jill and Mark Willcox, Jr. with no additions*, auction cat, Rose Valley.
- Livingstone, Karen and Linda Parry, eds., 2005, *International Arts and Crafts*, London: V&A Publications.
- Evans, Heidi Nasstrom, 2004, *Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead's Idealized Visions About Simple Living and Arts and Crafts*, exhib. brochure, Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art.
- Green, Nancy, et. al., 2004, *Byrdcliffe: an American Arts and Crafts Colony*, exhib. cat., Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University.
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- . 2004, "The Reality of Beauty: Ralph Whitehead and the Seeds of a Utopia in John Ruskin, William Morris, and Victorian England," in Nancy Green, et. al., *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*, 36-55.
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- Green, Nancy and Jessie Poesch, 1999, *Arthur Wesley Dow and American Arts and Crafts*, exhib. cat., The American Federation of Arts.
- Meyer, Marilee Boyd, curator, 1997, *Inspiring Reform: Boston's Arts and Crafts Movement*, exhib. cat., Davis Museum and Cultural Center.
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