

Carroll Beckwith's Portrait of William Walton A 19th Century Chronology and A Personal Search

by Guy St. Clair

INTRODUCTION

Long considered a favorite of the members of The Century Association, this painting is much loved. Indeed, it is a special attraction in the East Room, the club's primary meeting room where members gather for monthly meetings and, with guests, for various club programs.



James Carroll Beckwith, *William Walton*, 1886,
oil on canvas, Century Association.

I, too, have long admired this painting, but I have often found myself frustrated at not having more information about Beckwith, Walton, and their many fellow Centurions during the 19th century.

Who were they? How did they spend their lives? Other than their attention to art (if they were artists, collectors, or even simply lovers of good art), what else did they do? How did they interact with other Centurions?

Did they find employment of some sort, having separate careers to go along with their interest in art? The Century is—and always has been—an association for conversation, so what did they talk about when they joined up with one another at the club? How did they feel about each other? Were they friends?

In other words, from our point of view, since they lived in such a historically wide-ranging time, what were their lives like? Do they have a story?

And if they do, is there any way we could ever know their stories, what their interests were, what concerned them ...

Probably not, since that would take us into the realm of imagination and with us so distant from the 19th century and these people's lives, that would be only speculation.

Still, if we care to do so, we can find at least two reasons to spend time thinking about Beckwith and Walton and this painting. The first might be somewhat selfish on my part, as I want to learn as much as I can about

these two men and the special relationship that, over the years, bound them together. If I can, I want to think about these men, their membership in The Century Association, their lives (including their artistic lives), yet with a sense of propriety, avoiding any inappropriate inquiry into their private lives.

The second reason has to do with what seems to be happening at the present time in the larger realm of art history. Institutions like The Century Association and others owning older art masterpieces are beginning to take a new look at the treasures that are their responsibility. They are examining, we might say, not just the work of art itself but what that work—created in another time—says to us about our lives today.

The best current example (and a spectacular one, certainly, when compared with the art collections of smaller organizations and other owners) is the recent five-year renovation of the galleries for European paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, described in a thought-provoking and highly worthwhile guide by Jason Farago.

“Let the light in,” Farago begins, and that’s exactly what we want to do as we take a new look at Carroll Beckwith’s *Portrait of William Walton*. In this work, “a painter is painting a painter” (as the portrait is described in one of many descriptions of the painting that can be found, thanks to Carroll Beckwith’s success with the portrait), and there’s no doubt that this double sort of discernment does “let the light in.” And it’s what we want to be doing with such treasures from the past.

As a first exercise in this new way of looking at art, Farago selects six faces from six different paintings, concluding with “Put these six together, stare into their 12 eyes, and you can just about map the European cultural enterprise that has become a global inheritance.”

It’s that “inheritance” we’re talking about here. Not only do we look at those “12 eyes” and think about what was seen in them by original viewers, we’re now asking ourselves what they mean to us today. And that’s what we want to do with Beckwith’s outstanding painting.

And as we take up our game, we realize something else, that this essay is not only about William Walton, Beckwith’s subject. It is about the two of them, as well as we can discover, and—as we are able—share what we’ve learned.

Speculation? Yes, to some extent, but—delightfully—also something remarkably interesting to think about. With some facts and some dates, which I am happy to provide with this effort, we can imagine.

Let’s do that.

CHRONOLOGY

The lives of William Walton (the subject) and James Carroll Beckwith (the artist)

1843

William Walton was born on November 10 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was the son of Edward Hicks Walton and Anne Mifflin Townsend of Byberry Township, now a neighborhood in the far northeast section of Philadelphia.

The family seems to have been part of a large Quaker community in the immediate area and in Ohio. His older sister, Eliza Mifflin Walton, had died in April 1843, and William was born several months later. Two years later, in 1845, his brother James Edward Walton was born, and their mother died in 1855, when William was 12 years old and James was 10. James died at the age of 29 in 1874, in a devastating cholera epidemic that took the lives of many of the Quakers in the area.

Edward Hicks Walton (1814–1899), William’s father, was described in the U.S. Census of 1860 as an “agent” living with William, age 16. An 1877 Philadelphia directory lists “Walton & Co. Stationers” at 529 North 8th Street in Philadelphia and the 1880 Census describes 65-year-old Edward as a “Stationer and Bookseller.”

1847

The Century Association was formed at a meeting of the Sketch Club in January 1847.

1852

James Carroll Beckwith was born September 23, 1852 in Hannibal, Missouri. He was the son of a prominent wholesale grocer. Not much is known about his youth, although his interest in art came at an early age. As the family had moved to Chicago, he was able in 1868—when he was sixteen—to study art with Walter Shirlaw. So his parents must have recognized his talent and encouraged him to pursue his studies further. In 1871, still not twenty years old, Beckwith moved to New York (although we don’t know if he left Chicago before or after the deadly fire). In New York he studied at the National Academy of Design under Lemuel Wilmarth. Just two years later, he made the decision to go to France to study.

1861

As a youth, William Walton studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts briefly. In 1861, when he was nineteen years old, Walton took an Antique class, copying from casts, typically.

1866

When Walton was twenty-three, he had another course at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, studying drawing and painting from live models.

Beckwith comes to Paris, sailing from America to England on the 13th of October, 1873, when he was just twenty-one years old. We have a lovely sense of his youthful enthusiasm, as well as his sensitive connection to his family, captured in his diary as he was making his crossing.

He writes from the Steamship *Italy*, on the National Line, and his diary entry is headed “Atlantic Ocean, Friday, October 24, 1873 PM.”

Well, this is indeed change ‘way off base in the bosom of old ocean, seated in my little state room, listening to the rumble of the machinery and the dash of the water as the sound comes through the open port above my head. What a change from the quiet farmhouse down among the oaks. The 13th I bade farewell to the happy old nest and started on my wanderings—how I did hate to leave that happy home no one knows, and I even now dread to think it makes me feel so sad. I have certainly learned one thing in my travels about this world and that is a fellow never knows how dear his home is until he leaves it, and this has assisted me to love mine very tenderly. After many plans and expressions of regret (5 Bells) it was at last settled that I should leave on Monday night and sail the following Saturday. At first Charlie was coming down to N.Y. to see me off but finally that was given up as Mother would be to [*sic*] lonely after our departure and it was also an unnecessary expense. Father was but poorly situated as it was to start me, but owing to the importance of my mission and my time being so valuable he did everything in his power to help on and off, though I know how hard a [pull?] my leaving gave his heart strings. But this noble self-denial of Mother was a beautiful evidence of a most unselfish devotion to my interests and this resolute way in which she aided me made me often feel how really great the sacrifice was to leave such a mother and go out into the world. Yet I held to my purpose as strongly as I could, knowing that it was a really necessary step if I wished to be successful in my profession. Though I cannot but think the object a selfish one, yet I also believe it the course Father and Mother in their minds pleased to hear ...

Once in Paris, Beckwith enrolls to study with Auguste Émile Durand, known as Carolus-Duran, born July 4, 1837 in Lille. In his later career, Carolus-Duran was an important artist and painting teacher, and according to one source, of his twenty-five most notable students, the majority were British or American, (and as we now know, these included James Carroll Beckwith). And Beckwith, remembering his introduction to the class later in life (1917), wrote in his diary “When I entered the class [of Carolus-Duran] it must have numbered fifteen or twenty and it grew to nearly sixty and continued twenty-five years.”



John Singer Sargent, *Carolus-Duran*, 1879,
oil on canvas. Clark Art Institute, 1955.14.

Indeed, in *Americans in Paris, 1860–1900*, H. Barbara Weinberg, in her chapter “Cosmopolitan Attitudes: The Coming of Age of American Art,” writes about how Carolus-Duran had a distinctive and original teaching method, and it was attractive to the Americans who came to Paris to study:

The teaching method that he evolved was at odds with the academic system. He did not favor long and rigorous study in cast and life drawing but advocated painting from the live model as early as possible. Apparently more willing than their French counterparts to take a chance with a stylistic discipline and apparently eager to acquire a fluent style rapidly, many Americans gravitated to Carolus-Duran.

His *atelier des élèves* was well represented at the 1889 fair [at which] twenty-one of his students exhibited. The most prominent in display, the quintessential stylistic clone of the master was John Singer Sargent.

Entering the studio of Carolus-Duran in 1874 at the age of eighteen, Sargent was a prodigy; he submitted works to the Salon as early as 1877 and won an honorable mention the following year. So there was clearly a seriously “heady” atmosphere and challenge at Carolus-Duran’s atelier, and it was in this environment that Beckwith met William Walton. It’s no wonder they become best friends, as described in the “Notes on the Artists and Paintings” of Weinberg’s chapter. And we also learn about his studies after arriving in Paris in 1873:

Beckwith [had] received early instruction at Chicago’s Academy of Design (1868–71) and at New York’s National Academy of Design (winter 1871/2–73). He was in Paris from October 1873 to August 1878. He entered the atelier of Carolus-Duran in autumn 1873 and early the next year was admitted to the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs. In October 1874 he failed the examination for matriculation at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and, skeptical of Carolus-Duran’s nontraditional teaching methods, began to supplement his instruction by drawing from life at the Académie Suisse, copying Old Master paintings in the Louvre, and studying in the independent atelier of Léon Joseph Florentin Bonnat. He retook the Ecole’s entrance exam in February 1875 and was successful. In March 1875 he matriculated there for the first of six consecutive semesters, studying drawing under Adolphe Yvon and gaining three honorable mentions for drawing in 1877. He first exhibited at the Salon in 1877 and showed there regularly until 1890.

Beckwith travelled to Fontainebleau, Barbizon, Moret, the Seine Valley, the Champagne region, and Brittany in summer 1874; to Italy in May 1875 and April 1878; to Munich in July 1875; and Normandy in August 1878. On his return to the United States, he taught at the Art Students League from 1878 to 1882 and 1886 to 1897, keeping abreast of international developments in painting by returning frequently to Europe. His voluminous diaries (at the Archives of American Art) are a major source of information about the art world.

Again, and in the same section of the book, Kathleen Adler describes the painting that is the subject of this paper:

Portrait of William Walton, 1886

Pennsylvania-born William Walton had studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the National Academy of Design in New York before entering Carolus-Duran’s Paris studio in 1877, where he met Beckwith. The young art students quickly became inseparable, touring Italy together before sailing home to America in August 1878. Walton worked in New York as a painter, writer, and art critic, becoming a member of the National Arts Club and the Century Association.

This portrait shows Walton in Beckwith's New York studio. With its background of Beckwith's own Impressionistic landscape paintings and its strength of characterization, this painting demonstrates the impact of Carolus-Duran's teaching on Beckwith, as well as the probable influence of Manet's portrait of Emile Zola, shown in Paris in 1884. Praised when it was exhibited at the Society of American Artists in New York in 1886, this portrait was sent by Beckwith to the 1889 Salon and the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris and the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, in 1901.

It is here we begin to think about how much time the "inseparable" young art students spent together, and with all the travelling throughout Europe Beckwith was doing, as noted above, was Walton with him? Who knows? We have no definitive answer.

And we don't know when Walton began his studies in Paris, only that he entered the Carolus-Duran atelier in 1877. He could have been in Paris longer than either Beckwith or Sargent, but it is easy to see how the three could become good friends and fellow students as they did their studies, worked together in shared ateliers, and enjoying Paris.

So even though we know very little about Walton's early life before he came to Paris, or about his family after he came to Paris, we also have reason to believe that he might have been there for a while before he met Beckwith and Sargent.

Why? For a couple of reasons, it seems to me: the age differences between them (in 1877, when we first learn that the three men knew one another well, Beckwith was twenty-five, Walton thirty-four, and Sargent only twenty-one).

More important was Walton's solid mastery of the French language. While we don't have the particulars, he either had excellent academic language studies (in America or in Europe) or he studied the French language seriously when he came to Paris, whenever that was. And while we don't know what—if any—academic studies Walton pursued while he lived with his father, who is described as a "stationer and bookseller," Walton could logically have undertaken an intellectual pursuit such as learning a different language. Otherwise, he would not have been able to have his later career in translation, to say nothing of the many books he wrote about France and French history. All signs seem to indicate that Walton was intellectually and academically proficient in the language and in French history and culture. All of which leads me to believe that Walton was already in France when Beckwith arrived in 1873.

So far, though, we have no way of finding out anything more specific about these years although, as noted above, he had studied in both Philadelphia and in New York before coming to France to

continue his studies. And it was in France, we now know, where he met Beckwith when he enrolled in Carolus-Duran's Paris studio, where Beckwith was the master's top pupil and class monitor and kept discipline at the atelier while Carolus-Duran taught.

1878

Beckwith and Walton return to America, travelling to Antwerp, and sailing from there to New York on August 30, 1878. They settled in New York to paint and to enjoy the city they had each left some years before. They each came to enjoy their new adult life, with Beckwith especially liking the social milieu in which they found themselves. We don't know what their earlier New York experiences had been, although, as noted, both had attended art classes at the National Academy of Design (obviously at separate times, since they did not meet until they were in Paris, in 1877).

1882

For Carroll Beckwith the New York milieu offered many happy experiences, in particular when he fell into a charming (and brief) friendship with Oscar Wilde just four years later, in October, 1882. The story comes from *The Oscar Wilde Blog* and, once again, we get a pleasant look into Beckwith's lifestyle and his New York artist's life by spending a little time with it. The October 12, 2022 blog post tells the story, in "A New Character in the Wilde Story," written by John Cooper and Erik Ryding.

Briefly, as Oscar Wilde was finishing up his American tour in 1882, he came to New York to enjoy the last two months of his visit to the United States, acquaint himself with people he already knew, and to meet others: "He took up residence in New York City to see out the year—and, of course, to further a campaign of inculcating himself into the lives of notable artists and personalities. One such was James Carroll Beckwith."

The visit turned out to be two months of good dining, fine theatre, meetings with many other people, and just doing whatever else the two of them wanted to do. Of special notice—at least to Beckwith (who was all of thirty years old at this time)—was to attend several performances by the great actress Lillie Langtry, who was beginning her own American tour.

As Mrs. Langtry was a close friend of Oscar Wilde, much of Wilde's and Beckwith's energy was spent preparing to be with her as she made her debut, and the first performance was eagerly anticipated. Sadly, the theatre burnt down the night before the opening but no worries! The show moved to another venue and opened the following week, with Beckwith and Wilde often in attendance, with the actress coming to her box to be with them each night they were there.

As Beckwith reports in his diary, on one evening, "Chase & I dined at the Levy's [Chase being William Merritt Chase, painter, impressionist, and teacher] and I went to see Mrs. Langtry who is the

most beautiful woman I have ever seen.”

On another evening with Oscar Wilde, in Langtry’s private box, “She came in at once to see us and it is, needless to say, I had a rapturous evening in the presence of that beautiful woman. We then went to the Club where I introduced him to some of the members.” No, “the Club” was not The Century. Beckwith wasn’t a Centurion until 1895, so Wilde and Beckwith went to another club (it might have been the Lotos Club, of which he was a member at one time). In any case, the club they visited was one where Beckwith was a member since he was able to introduce Wilde to “some of the members.”

The two men, “with several others” dined together on Christmas (the location and the host’s name are not mentioned) and “we all had a jolly xmas dinner.”

Continuing with Beckwith’s diary we see that, not only did he dine with Wilde on Christmas Day, but he was also with him on the day after Christmas as well. And then, “I bade Wilde farewell tonight with sincerest regret. I have taken a warm liking to him.”

1883

After Walton and Beckwith returned to America from Europe, and after five years of attempting to set himself up as a successful artist, Walton apparently took more seriously his writing talents, probably realizing that he could more successfully support himself with his writings and his translation work.

In a different vein than Major and Davis—in their slightly dismissive tone describing this effort in *American Art at The Century*—Bruce Weber makes it clear that this was a step forward for Walton. In his essay “The Art of Carroll Beckwith: Pictures in the Exhibition” in *Intimate Revelations: The Art of Carroll Beckwith (1852–1917)*, Weber writes:

Beginning in 1883, Walton was employed by the Philadelphia publisher George Barrie & Son, for whom he produced thirty-two pictorial folio volumes, and translated writings by numerous French authors, including Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Alphonse de Lamartine, and Honoré de Balzac. He also wrote articles on contemporary art for leading American magazines. His art publications include *Chefs d’oeuvre de l’exposition universelle de Paris* (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Son, 1889) and *World’s Columbian Exposition: Art and Architecture* (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Son, 1893). He was also the author of *The Army and Navy of the United States, 1776–1895* (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Son, 1889–1893).

It almost goes without saying that he succeeded with this line of work (and, indeed, when he became a member of The Century Association in 1892, Walton stated his profession as “Writer,” not as “Artist”). And he obviously attained some standing in this “other” profession, as we can see in the large number of works he authored or translated. It was a reputation that was good for both Walton himself and for

his best friend, for he was able to secure for Beckwith the “welcome employment” of translating Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris*, and later worked with Bertha Beckwith in translating the French author’s *Les Misérables*, as Weber discovered in Beckwith’s Diary.

1886

The strong friendship between Beckwith and Walton continued to grow, and now we find that there are frequent references to Walton in Beckwith’s diaries.

And why not? The two men were together often, and Bruce Weber characterizes the friendship succinctly: “Walton was one of Beckwith’s oldest and closest friends.” And indeed, in 1886 they were together, for they spent the first two months of the year with Beckwith painting the portrait which would, in the opinion of many of us, become his masterpiece.

A first showing took place on March 4 at the Sherwood, the studio building at 58 West 57th Street in Manhattan. Constructed in 1879, the building was designed for artists’ apartments, with large windows catching the best light. It was a perfect site for Beckwith to show off his new masterpiece and the studio reception was a great success, with Beckwith recording in his diary that the portrait was visited (I presume over a period of time, not stated) by “thousands of visitors.”

For those of us who delight in looking at the portrait, we can see why so many art lovers came to have a look. And it is Kathleen Adler again who catches the spark of how it came about. Speaking of the many American and British artists who came to Paris to study, from the time they first arrived in Paris, each of these visiting artists found themselves attracted, as she put it, “to the role and styles of the Parisian flâneur (or dandy) and how they become acquainted with or observe, usually attributed (in their case) to their master and teacher Carolus-Duran. And how, often, such ideas are characterized in their work.” And without belaboring the point, we can overlook Adler’s oversight that flâneur is not a term generally connected with the look of a “dandy.” On the other hand—if we want to stretch it a bit—if a rather ordinary man, an artist, for example, might in posing for a portrait be dressed to look like a man who is very concerned with how he looks, he could be characterized with the old-fashioned, very late 19th-century term, a “dandy.” And it would all be in great fun.

Adler continues in this vein, describing the painting delightfully:

Beckwith’s portrait of the artist and critic William Walton reveals Carolus’s influence in the handling of the suit, offset by the impeccable white shirt, the precision of the placing of the handkerchief in the pocket, the elegance with which Walton holds his cigarette—seemingly an essential prop for the scruffiest Bohemian and most elegant flâneur alike. Beckwith’s own



William Walton, *Thessalian Plain*, undated, oil on canvas, Century Association.

landscape studies, and, in the top right-hand corner, his fencing mask, provide the background, and suggest the impact here too of Manet's portrait of Zola. Walton is both groomed to perfection, every detail of his toilet immaculate, and the contrast with the freedom of the landscape studies behind him heightens his severity and sense of self-worth.

As for William Walton's art career, he continued with his paintings. Indeed, the painting seen on the previous page, *Thessalian Plain*, was purchased for The Century by the Committee on Art in 1916.

Bertha Beckwith's admiring language, from her article about the "memorial exhibition" organized for The Century after Walton's death (described in this chronology at 1916 below) refers to Walton as "a scholar and a great reader" and praised his "fanciful and poetic imagination."

As it turns out, what she wrote gives us a look at how unusual some of Walton's thinking was about many subjects, not just about his own painting. In the article, Mrs. Beckwith writes:

...on looking carefully at the individual pictures one was amazed at the variety of his imagination and the unique aim of his works. They were fanciful and poetic to the last degree. He was a scholar and a great reader. Often his pictures failed to be understood by those who were unacquainted with the sources of his researches and his knowledge of ancient legends.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that in the opening sentence of the Century's history, published in 1946 at the time of The Century's centennial, Allen Nevins wrote, "The stamp of the fine arts is firmly printed upon the origins of The Century Association."

In a later volume, in 1977, in *American Art at The Century* (prepared in celebration of the nation's Bicentennial), President Russell Lynes writes that the stamp has never been, and is in no danger of being, cancelled.

The later book also contains an informative and typically well-written essay written by Centurion, eminent historian, and special Pulitzer Prize Awardee James Thomas Flexner. The first couple of pages of "Paintings on The Century's Walls," describe delightfully how important drinking is (or was at the time) in clubs, giving a light-hearted beginning to his essay with a description of early days at The Century's predecessor club, the Sketch Cub.

In his humorous telling, our famous writer/Centurion Flexner has fun telling how at the Sketch Club, "It is true that, when the Sketch Club was organized in 1829, a serpent in the artistic Eden suggested that it would be healthful to serve no drink but milk and honey. The matter was referred to a committee who brought in a report worthy of the grave statesmen who now decorate our (that is, the Century's) membership. The report stated that no bill of fare should be dictated since 'one gentleman may live in

a neighborhood abounding in good brandy; another may have greater facilities for the acquisition of Madeira, while both might find it difficult to furnish milk and honey.”

After so much fun, it seems a bit sad to point it out, but in the book, Major and Davis describe Beckwith's portrait, but the perspective seems overly dramatic and not particularly sympathetic. The book is also, sadly, occasionally inaccurate. Nevertheless, the back of the book includes a Catalogue (in the “Oil Paintings” Section) where there is an entry for a single painting by William Walton (*Thessalian Plain*, shown above), noting that the painting was purchased by the Committee on Art, 1916, thus giving The Century at least one painting by Walton in its collection. The painting is not illustrated in the Mayor and Davis book; at The Century Association it hangs in the Ladies Room on the second floor.

1887

Carroll Beckwith marries Bertha Hall on June 1. They had been engaged for three years, while Beckwith worked with his painting to establish some greater financial security. Bertha was known to have had a beautiful singing voice and earlier had participated in amateur theatrics. Her father—a successful Manhattan dry goods merchant—had died several months earlier.

Beckwith had earlier—before his first trip abroad—written in his diary about what he would be looking for in a wife (he was nineteen years old at the time):

“There are four things I want a woman to possess. She must be a good housekeeper—musician—possess beauty and wit; yet I do not suppose any woman can be perfect unless you are deeply in love with her and I fear I shall never love a woman sufficiently well to be blind to her faults.”

He obviously came to put aside any scruples about marriage, for on the day of the wedding, Beckwith recorded the date in his diary, noting simply that: “Bertha and I married today at 4 pm in Zion Church, 38th St. and Madison.” The chancel of the church had been decorated with palms and flowers by architect Stanford White and Beckwith's former student Herbert A. Denman from the Art Students League.

The Hall family lived at Madison Avenue and East 36th Street, and the wedding breakfast was held at the nearby Hall home. Among the guests were Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Thomas Dewing, Walter Shirlaw (Beckwith's former teacher), William A. Coffin, and William Merritt Chase. Their friend John Singer Sargent gave them a Venetian watercolor as a wedding present.

There is no mention of their dear friend Walton, but he must have had a good reason for his absence, or he certainly would have been there. He probably didn't attend the wedding because he was out of town working for George Barrie & Son in Philadelphia on the several projects he had been hired to undertake since he went to work for the company in 1883.

The earlier description of students and their learning activities at Carolus-Duran's atelier shows that Sargent's great success at the 1889 l'Exposition universelle was notable, especially as he had been only eighteen when he began his studies with Carolus-Duran in 1874.

But both Beckwith and Walton were at the 1889 l'Exposition universelle as well. Indeed, Beckwith seems to have made many excursions to Europe as his career advanced. And even if Walton did not go to Europe as often as Beckwith, both were in attendance at the fair, with Walton sailing on his trip home on the French steamship *La Normandie* on the 9th of December, 1889, as we learn from the ship's passenger manifest.

And as noted by D. Dodge Thompson in *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition*, in his essay "Loitering Through the Paris Exhibition: Highlights of the American Paintings at the Universal Exposition of 1889," the emphasis in the event was somewhat less on the fine arts and more on mechanical and structural arts.

Thompson writes:

"The hallmark of portraiture at the Exposition was informality and intimacy and throughout the American section were extremely successful portraits whose authors chose not to rely on established formulas."

One example he chose was "James Carroll Beckwith's high-valued and broadly painted *Portrait of William Walton*" and he continues:

Beckwith's portrait of a fellow artist and critic was displayed effectively on the canted surface between two walls of the stateside artists' gallery. Beckwith ... combined genre with portraiture, perhaps taking his cue from Manet's famous portrait of Zola (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). While Sargent's portraits won the honors of the exhibition, Beckwith's portrait received its share of critical attention, reminding the two friends that their teacher, Carolus-Duran, once called the *Portrait of William Walton* "the best portrait that ever came from America.

So there were situations in which the American successes in the fine arts of the 1889 exposition were overshadowed, as William Walton himself noted. In Richard Guy Wilson's essay in Blaugrund's history of the world's fair of 1889, Wilson noted that it had "nationalistic implications" and in his essay, titled "Challenge and Response: Americans and the Architecture of the 1889 Exposition," Wilson made this point:

The possible meanings of the Paris world's fair are many, but unmistakable is the fact that the French creators intended to assert French supremacy in all areas, from the arts to manufacturing.

That specific challenge was understood by many Americans. The first and most apparent challenge to Americans—and indeed to any visitor—rose over the roofs of Paris, observable from nearly every corner: the Eiffel Tower.

Walton was quoted in what Wilson describes as “an extensive account of the art work for American audiences” (a resource sadly not found today). Here’s what Walton wrote, admitting that, “Undoubtedly it is the architects and the engineers who have carried off the principal honors of the Exposition.”

1889

William Walton is assigned to write the history of the American military:

The Army and Navy of the United States from The Period of the Revolution to the Present Day: A Record of the Formation, Organization, and General Equipment of the Land and Naval Forces of the Republic, by William Walton, Colonel Asa Bird Gardiner, and Commander H. C. Taylor, assistant editors; with the Official Approval of the War, Navy, and State Departments. Published in Boston, Philadelphia [etc.]: G. Barrie & Son, 1889–95. 11 parts in 2 v: ill., col. Plates. 52 cm.

1892

William Walton becomes a Centurion, elected December 3, 1892 at age forty-nine. He was proposed by Charles Collins and Russell Sturgis.

Charles Collins (1830–1918) was a printer, and like Walton, he was also a Quaker, possibly connecting with Walton’s early life growing up in the Quaker community of Byberry Township in Philadelphia. He was one of the founders of the Civil Service Reform Association, as is noted in his obituary which states that “He was always ready to do his part, and more than his part, in the series of movements for lessening the evils of bad government, in the city of New York. The obituary also notes that “At the outbreak of the present war, although already enfeebled by age and by infirmities, he gave valuable cooperation to the work done by the Quaker Committee for Red Cross Service in France.”

Russell Sturgis (1836–1909) was a noted architect and, in addition to completing four Yale College buildings—Farnam, Durfee, Lawrence Hall, and Batteil Chapel—he was well known for his writings on architecture and architectural history. In addition to his *Dictionary of Architecture and Building* (1902) and his *European Architecture*, he made a complete revision of *Lubke’s History of Fine Art*. Like Collins, Sturgis, too, was involved in the Civil Service Reform Association but we don’t know if his work in the organization was as “in-depth” as that of Charles Collins. In any case, the work of both in this locally important effort for turn-of-the-century New Yorkers is worth remembering with appreciation. Walton, as noted earlier, in listing his profession for *The Century*, described himself as a writer. He seconded the membership applications of Henry Golden Dearth and John Singer Sargent.

With Walton's important assignment to write *The Army and Navy of the United States*, the years for 1889 to 1895 were to be very busy for him and as we can see, they became even busier, with even more work coming his way.

For one thing, even though he was employed, as noted, by the George Barrie & Son publishing house in Philadelphia, his work was not only to translate the many French literature offerings from the publisher, but also to author the important (and often sold by subscription only) collectors' titles. In fact, as far as we can tell, all his titles, even the translations, are referred to as "by William Walton" or, for the translations, "Translated by William Walton."

And, as I've said, he was already working on the military history (a five-year project started in 1889). There was more to do for the Barrie company. Sometime about 1890 or so, he was given the assignment to write about the up-coming World's Columbian Exposition. In what would become the "Official Illustrated Publication Printed only for Subscribers" it was Walton's task to catalog and describe the many architectural drawings and works of art displayed in the fair's Palace of Fine Arts. This book was to be a massive folio (22" x 16"), a two-volume specialty item for collectors, his famous *World's Columbian Exposition: Art & Architecture*.

If one wants to ponder the seriousness of the work, here is the Table of Contents:

THE ARCHITECTURE, including the book's Preface, The Architecture, an Index to Textual illustrations, and an Index to the Plates.

THE ART – VOLUME I includes The United States, France, Russia, Poland, and an Index to Textual illustrations, and an Index to the Plates.

THE ART – VOLUME II includes Great Britain, Australasia and Canada, Germany and Austria, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, Belgium and Holland, Italy and Spain, Japan, Brazil and Mexico, Etchings in Color, and an Index to Textual illustrations, and an Index to the Plates.

I have had experience with only one copy of *Art and Architecture*, in the Rare Book Collection at Library of The University Club of New York, where I served as the club's Library Director and Art Curator from 1979 until 1986 (we'll see later that a copy came to The Century Association as well, through a gift from Walton's estate).

There are notable facts about this work, authored by our subject William Walton. One of these is that each copy of this book is very specifically printed, and includes the following statement, printed on the verso of the title page of each of the several individual editions, as shown for this one:

THE COLUMBUS EDITION
PRINTED ONLY FOR SUBSCRIBERS
THIS COPY IS PRINTED FOR
COMMANDER LEONARD CHENERY, UNITED STATES NAVY
UNIVERSITY CLUB, NEW YORK CITY

One of the most interesting facts (and giving us much insight about Walton as author and Geo. Barrie & Son as publisher of such titles, designed for collectors of special books) is the contents of a hand-written attached letter addressed, I gather, to The University Club's Committee on Literature and Art, found in that copy.

The letter is date-stamped with the title University Club Library and the date of FEB 25, 1898. The letter follows:

The sum of \$330 was paid for this work, in eleven equal installments, as the sections appeared successively, from 13 May 1891 to 17 Jan. 1895.

Three years later, 21 Jan. 1895, the publishers supplied the twelfth section, gratis, with title-pages and content-tables, and the whole was then sent to the binders, who charged \$12 for putting it together.

Hence, the complete book has cost \$342, or a much larger sum than any other volume yet purchased by the Committee on Literature and Art.

This purchase price, however, included that of a duplicate set of the principal plates, colored, and mounted on card for framing. Until such disposal is made, of them, these duplicate plates will be kept in the original white vellum portfolio which contained the sections, 1 to 11.

At the bottom of the page is printed:

LIBRARIAN of the UNIVERSITY CLUB
No. 32 EAST 26th St.,
NEW YORK CITY

As an aside, New Yorkers (and historians) recognize the address, for it was the former Jerome Mansion, the home of Leonard Jerome, grandfather of British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. The building served, from 1884 to 1899, as the home of The University Club of New York. It had also later housed the Union League Club (where the author was employed as Librarian and Art Curator from 1968 to 1979 at that club's present location at 37th Street and Park Avenue). The Turf Club and the

Manhattan Club were also at different times housed in the building.

And in yet another aside, The Jerome Mansion was the first designated New York City Landmark to be demolished (Penn Station, mistakenly so described on occasion, was never a designated landmark).

As we think about the different notable facts relating to Walton's authorship of *World's Columbian Exposition: Art & Architecture*, as I've noted it was offered in several editions. We can note one example, the so-called "Edition of the Republic," of which only 100 copies were printed, some with red morocco spines and corners and with "brilliant plates, some colored by hand."

We can't help but wonder if Walton, as an artist and as an employee of the publisher as well, might have had some connection with such work. Of course we don't know, but it's not particularly out of line—as we continue with this "personal search"—to think about such a possible link, in the context of what we know about Walton's life and his artistic talents.

1895

Walton translates Balzac's *Scenes of Parisian life Now for the First Time Completely Translated in English*, published by G. Barrie & Son for subscribers only. Additionally, over a period of several more years, Walton translated many volumes of several collectors' editions of Balzac's works published by Geo Barrie & Son.

1895

Beckwith, described as an Artist, becomes a Centurion at age 43. He was proposed by James Nicoll and Will H. Low and elected on November 2, 1895.

Nicoll (1876–1918) was an artist known for his marine paintings and occasional landscapes, and also recognized for his etchings. He was active in the interests of art, President of the American Water Color Society (of which Beckwith was also a member) and he was personally influential in the success of Artists' Aid, supporting charities and artists, similar—it might be assumed—to Beckwith's work with the Free Art League and the Art Guild of New York.

Will H. Low (1853–1933) was a friend of both Beckwith and Walton (and, like Charles Collins—one of Walton's proposers—he attended Walton's funeral). Low, too, was an artist known by name to many of the American public, primarily, as was suggested in his 1933 Century memorial, because he was "spectacular in his personality." Yet he was relatively conservative in some of his ideas, and with respect to his work, his memorial described that aspect of his personality as well: "The delicacy, the grace, the color, the sureness of touch which marked his canvasses and murals expressed from the first to the last his adherence to old ideals."

As a Centurion Beckwith proposed Edward G. Kennedy, John Singer Sargent (with Walton), Augustus Vincent Tack, and S. Seymour Thomas for membership. He seconded the membership applications of Frank Vincent Du Mond, George F. Ide, John S. Melcher, and Herman K. Vielé.

1896

Walton writes “Miss Mary Cassatt,” in *Scribner’s Magazine*, March, 1896, and the full expression of his genius as a writer comes through. It is perhaps the best of several articles that I’ve come across, written during the ensuing several years following the completion of *The Army and Navy of the United States* and his masterful work with the *World’s Columbian Exposition: Art & Architecture*.

Indeed, this particular description of another writer is so well done that I do not feel amiss in sharing several excerpts, just to give us all a more wide-ranging look at his talent. In this essay, Walton writes that the impressions made by the “number of picture exhibitions in New York City, in the winter season of 1894–95, was very considerable.”

One of these in this case was undoubtedly that of a certain number of works of Miss Cassatt, in which the strong individuality of the artist seemed to move and live, as it were, behind the mask of her works, and the spectator was impressed by a new personality with which he was brought almost into contact. ... Miss Cassatt’s works, oils, pastels, and dry points seemed to have so much a style of their own as to at once attract attention—even among those more conventional or more timid who preferred milder methods of painting pictures. ...

In the technical rendering, the painter has apparently addressed herself, as the important thing, to the solution of the unsolvable problem of painting flesh. In this great problem even those are now beginning to be interested who, despite their interest in pictures, considered flesh as something unprofitable. Something ugly, meaty, and indecent, to be covered up on all occasions and not mentioned outside the bath-room. They are not yet converted to the artist’s belief that it is the most beautiful substance in nature, and one of the most wonderful; that neither the Japanese, Barbedienne, nor Thiébaud frères can make such bronze the clear, translucent brown of a young negro. ...

As he continues, Walton provides a brief history of painting flesh:

The solution to this problem by some of the masters, three or four hundred years ago, has been accepted as very nearly satisfactory without anyone’s being able to discover just how they did it. By wise and vigorous painting, with the full strength of her palette and a careful observance of the local variations, [Miss Cassatt] secures the intrinsic quality of her fleshly tones—so that you can well imagine that her rendering would feel under your fingers much as the naked body

does in life—and she is much aided in securing this desirable effect by a free use of that hard outline which the impressionists so generally disregard. ...

As the essay concludes, Walton is not shy about his personal reactions to Mary Cassatt's talents.

To the first exhibition of the impressionists in Paris, in 1878, Miss Cassatt was an important contributor, and her works have appeared in the Salons both before and since that date and in this country—as in the galleries of the Society of American Artists and at the Loan Exhibition of Portraits of Women in New York, November, 1894—but in general she seems to have attained to that desirable condition, coveted by artists, of being able to dispense with the annual exhibitions. An art so learned, so well-inspired as hers, which so well combines the letter and the spirit, and knows how to present the prettiest and most popular of themes in a large and comprehensive way, preserving all the tenderness and avoiding all of the little and the commonplace is sufficiently rare even in this age of over-production, and any knowledge of it is to be accounted as gain.

1897

Walton writes “Cecilia Beaux,” in *Scribner's Magazine*, XXII, July–December 1897, expressing some of his opinions about the differing roles of the painter and the critic:

Concerning the work of any good painter there is much to be said, but the commentator's methods should be the reverse of the painter's. The artist's creations have distinction as they reveal his individuality, whilst the writer had better set forth his subject without any ego at all. It is more polite for him to consider that his professional sympathies and impressions have peculiar value; that he is entitled to cherish his moods as the artist is his. It is safer to assume that the general reader will not care for any putting forward of B when he wishes facts concerning A. This being so, a collection of intelligent statements respecting the painter's art may be a more useful contribution than any single one; and it sometimes happens, as in the case of the present artist, that the variety of renderings of the same general conclusions have that finer interest of subtle variations—much finer than that which attaches to gross contradictions. The distinguishing characteristics of Miss Beaux's portrait work appears to be so obvious that her various commentators, native and foreign, set them down in much the same way. “She paints slightly as an impressionist might,” says an American critic,” but she is a fairer parallel to him and raises his principle to a higher power in her feeling, in her quick sensitiveness to the imaginative, spiritual significance of her model and her accurate rendering of what she has seen in that momentary process of insight.

1898

As for Carroll Beckwith, his career had continued to move forward since his days in Paris and his studies. After he returned to New York with Walton in 1878, he spent much of his time painting, of course, but also teaching and—as seemed to be his personal style—undertaking many other activities. He taught at the Art Students League, and he was teaching there in 1886 when he painted *The Portrait of William Walton*. He also, as noted, worked with Walton on some non-artistic assignments, translating some of the special works that Walton probably did not have time to do. And Walton was able to procure for Beckwith an assignment for the World’s Columbian Exposition (possibly working with Walton, considering the latter’s own assignment to write the “Official Illustrated Publication” of the fair’s *World’s Columbian Exposition: Art & Architecture*). In this work, Beckwith was charged with designing and painting the murals for one of domes at the Palace of Fine Arts.



James Carroll Beckwith, *Self Portrait*, 1898, oil on wood panel. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of the artist, 17.3.

In his more public professional life, Beckwith served as President of the Free Art League, and he was one of the earliest promoters of the Art Guild of New York, focused on educating artists and the public about art and its role in society.

Beckwith received many awards for his work, including an Honorable Mention at the 1889 l’Exposition universelle, and he won a gold medal at the Atlanta Exposition of 1895. In his self-portrait painted in 1898, when he was forty-six years old, he had been a Centurion for three years. He was active in many organizations including The Fencers Club of New York (of which he was president at one time), the National Academy of Design, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Water Color Society, the Lotos Club, and The Century Association.

Beckwith was also a member of the Episcopal Church, and when he died in 1917, his funeral was at St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue.

And, to repeat, despite misinformation in several places, Beckwith did not commit suicide. Before his death, he had been in ill health for some time, and he died of “chronic endocarditis,” as noted in his death certificate.

1899

Walton writes *Paris Known and Unknown*, published in ten volumes by George Barrie & Son. The volumes included extensive illustrations and plates.

1899

Walton writes *Paris from the Earliest Period to the Present Day*, published with the super-title “IL FLOTTE SANS ETRE SUBMERGE” [IT FLOATS WITHOUT BEING SUBMERGED], in nine volumes by George Barrie & Son. Separate sections are titled “Gallo-Roman and Pre-Medieval Periods,” “The Court and the Upper Classes,” “The Bourgeois and the Lower Classes,” and “The Administration, National and Municipal.” The volumes, lavishly illustrated with full page color plates and photogravure frontispieces, have additional black and white in-text illustrations.

1903

Walton writes “On Some Tendencies in American Art,” an essay in “The Field of Art” section of *Scribner’s Magazine*, an essay in which he seems to be seeking to change an apparent lack of national interest in art, in the United States:

Even in the field of art some consideration may be bestowed upon the weight of numbers; that the great American public is seriously interested in the contemporary American art is, perhaps, not so frequently asserted as it was after 1876, or after 1893, and it is frequently vehemently denied. A very recent writer on the current university commencements calls attention to the fact that in all the colleges the scientific departments are encroaching on the classic, on the “humanities,” as they were formerly called. He asserts that the college student is interested primarily in athletics, that he cares nothing for art, literature, or music, and never reads a book. ... That the national contemporary art is not duly appreciated at home, the painters, the potters, the sculptors, and even the musicians, declare. The annual exhibitions of the various societies do not awaken any more popular interest than they did twenty-five years, and in the number of visitors and the amount of sale not unfrequently show an actual decrease as compared with previous years; the portrait painters complain that they, the natives, are neglected by the wealthy classes of society, who import foreigners to execute their numerous and lucrative commissions (these foreigners being, in their turn, ignored by the native societies and communities); the anomaly is also presented, the painters assert, of a national capital (of the arts, at least) cherishing in its bosom an avenue full of dealers all sworn to discourage the national and encourage the cheap foreign. For American artists such social positions, such authority, such residences, as those of Leighton, Alma-Tadema, or of the great Parisian artists of the *Institut* or the *Académie*, are wildly impossible. The United States is, moreover, distinguished from all other civilized countries by possessing not one periodical of any importance devoted to the arts. The lack of a national standard around which to rally, so the speak—the absence of patriotism, noisy or otherwise—is curious, and somewhat interesting.

1906

William Walton, writing about Eastman Johnson proves he can be succinct in his reactions and simply write briefly if he likes the artist:

“His work characterized by the careful avoidance of carrying the obvious thing too far ... he never descends to mere story-telling or the merely comic.”

1915

William Walton dies on November 13, 1915, in Brooklyn New York, and early speculation attributes his death to suicide.

Century Memorial (from The Century Association Biographical Archive):

The quaint and gentle figure of William Walton was familiar in The Century, where he had more friends than perhaps he realized. We all knew his paintings. They were spiritual fantasies; each of them carried an idea; and they were often beautiful in color. As compositions they reflected the imaginings of a subtle and otherwise unsuspected personality. Walton was also a good art critic; and the best magazines took his pieces. But none of us knew of the drudging literary labor by which with small remuneration he supported himself so insufficiently. Working for a Philadelphia publisher since 1883, he produced thirty-two pictorial folio volumes; and as co-editor had assisted in the making of twelve volumes more, of an Iconographic Dictionary. Besides, he translated works of Victor Hugo, Flaubert, Lamartine, Dumas fils, Voltaire, and twenty-one volumes of the novels and stories of Balzac. If Walton, through those years of toil, had had a little more self-assertion, he would not have been impelled to that last tragic relief which has brought sadness to his friends.

Henry Osborn Taylor (1916 Century Association Yearbook)

As it turned out, Walton was more well-known than many people realized, as noted (above) in Henry Osborn Taylor's obituary for his fellow Centurion. And because of the way he was reported to have died, several newspaper articles were published about him and his death.

Before his friend died, and of special interest to us, is Beckwith's situation, and several of his diary entries at the time tell of his sorrow, and of his disappointment that he couldn't do more. He had broken or severely injured his leg in October of 1915 when he was struck by a car. He had a difficult time getting around and was still struggling into mid-November. On October 24, 1915 he noted that “Walton, Low, and Harold called on me” when he was convalescing. By November 7th he claimed that he was “getting confidence in my leg again,” but he still struggled with movement.

By November 11th, there was a “nervousness” circulating among his circle that Walton was missing. He seemed to have “gone to the country without leaving any address.” The next day Beckwith writes that he is disturbed about Walton and that it’s been two weeks since he went away, even though Walton had claimed several days before he disappeared that he expected “to be away for some days.” Beckwith still seems worried over Walton, but he continues on with his normal schedule. By November 14th, fellow Centurions Kendall (William M. Kendall, architect) and Raasloff (Harald de Raasloff, civil engineer) decide to wait two more days in case Walton returned. They seem to be more concerned over Walton’s reputation and his perceived reaction when and if he returned, unlike Beckwith who is losing patience.

On November 19th, Beckwith goes to “the club” (presumably The Century) and writes “they have done nothing about putting Walton’s disappearance up to the police fearing his dissatisfaction should he come back.” [Beckwith’s own emphasis] By that Sunday (the 21st) Beckwith is convinced he will do something to alert the police against Worth (?) and Kendall’s wishes.

The next day (Monday, the 22nd), Beckwith went to the police station to report Walton’s disappearance, followed up by a Lt. Williams paying Beckwith a visit at his studio at noon. By 2pm Lt. Williams said a man’s body in the Flatbush morgue matches the description Beckwith gave of Walton. Lt. Williams returned at 6pm with scraps of clothing to help identify the body, and Beckwith said the clothing “seemed conclusive.” Then Williams reports, “Evidently this man had thrown himself from the Rockaway boat, removing all traces of his identity—[and that] the body had been in the water a week to ten days.” Beckwith than writes, “I have known that poor William was horribly discouraged.”

By the next day (November 23rd), he writes that “there is no doubt but it is William’s remains” and on the 24th, confiding to his diary, Beckwith shares some sense of his friend’s personality: “All day very busy over poor Walton, and he who never wished to be any trouble! [Beckwith’s emphasis]

Reporters show up at Beckwith’s doorstep, not surprisingly since New York in the first years of the last century has long been described as “a newspaper town.” The next day (Wednesday, November 24th), articles appeared in the papers (some a little more sensational than might have been appropriate), and in seeing them we are surprised to learn that Walton was more well-known than many people realized. His popularity as a friend had been noted in Henry Osborn Taylor’s obituary for his fellow Centurions but going beyond that, it is clear that there was a certain level of public—or at least journalistic—interest in him. And of course, newspapers being newspapers, because of the way he died, his death would be of interest to several editors.

From *The New York Times*:

W. M. WALTON, ARTIST
TEN DAYS IN MORGUE
Friend Discovers Body of Writer
and Painter, Who Disappeared
Three Weeks Ago
HAD BEEN MISSED AT CLUBS
No One Can Explain How Dead Man
Got Into Sheepshead Bay—
Friends Deeply Shocked

While friends in the Century Association and the National Arts Club searched everywhere for him the body of William Walton, a writer and painter of note, lay for ten days unidentified in the Clarkson Street Morgue in Flatbush. Dr. William J. Hoag, a dentist of 331 Madison Avenue, spread the news yesterday that he had seen Mr. Walton's body and identified it.

Last evening the way Mr. Walton came to his death was still unknown to his friends, and they were further mystified when they were told at the Kings County Hospital, with which the Morgue is connected, that a body picked up on Nov. 13 in Sheepshead Bay and believed to have floated there from some point off Rockaway Beach, was still unidentified.

If Dr. Hoag was correct in his identification, however, the body is that of Mr. Walton, and friends last night began a new investigation to discover, if possible, how the artist, who was 72 years old, had come in the water. Carroll Beckwith, a lifelong friend, a fellow artist, and a member also of the Century Association, said he was greatly upset over Mr. Walton's death. He knew, he said, that Mr. Walton occasionally visited friends on Long Island, and it is supposed he somehow fell into the water and was washed out to sea while starting upon or returning from such a visit.

Attack Not Suspected

"I do not think Mr. Walton was attacked," said Mr. Beckwith. "I am satisfied he was drowned and that his death was accidental, but I cannot account for his body being in the water. It is a terrible thing."

Mr. Beckwith said Mr. Walton had disappeared from his home, 360 West Twenty-second Street, about three weeks ago and a search had been instituted for him at once. He did not know how Dr. Hoad had chanced on his body far off in the Flatbush Morgue, but said he was satisfied the dentist had been correct in his identification. Mr. Beckwith said his old friend had lived alone, and he and other friends were now trying to locate his relatives.

Mr. Beckwith said that Mr. Walton was distinguished in his profession, but declined to say anything further of him, declaring: "I could not do him justice."

In the neighborhood in which he lived, however, there were many persons ready to talk of Mr. Walton, for, it seems, he was a character in the locality. A. R. Smith, who said he had lived at 361 West Twenty-second Street for twenty-seven years, declared the aged artist was known to everyone about as "Jack the Ripper."

It was because of his appearance and not at all because of his character," said Mr. Smith. "He was a kindly old gentleman, but he had long, flowing black locks, turning to gray, and a long black mustache, also tinged with gray, and he wore a cloak and a big soft hat. Thus attired, he would rush from his home mornings and almost run to the elevated station."

"He kept entirely to himself, and none of us in the street knew him well. He had lived, so I heard, for twenty-five years in a little room on the third, back, of 360 West Twenty-second street, and I've heard of no one was in the room except himself. The house belongs to Charles Rollinson Lamb, an artist, and he rents rooms to men like Mr. Walton."

Smith said Walton was not supposed to be very well off financially and was known to act as a solicitor for The Art Students' Journal. It was this work which kept hm hurrying off to business mornings."

Denies His Friendship

Mr. Lamb declared he didn't know Mr. Walton when a reporter questioned him, and referred his questioner to Mr. Beckwith.

"But he was a friend of yours," it was suggested to him, and Mr. Lamb replied testily, "No, he wasn't either. He wasn't any friend of mine."

[Author's note: a little literary license, perhaps, or whatever it might called for reporters? In any case, an odd part of the story, since Charles Rollinson Lamb, himself an artist and Walton's landlord, would have known Walton. And Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rollinson Lamb attended Walton's funeral at the

Quaker Cemetery in Prospect Park in Brooklyn.]

Though his friends hesitated to tell his history, *Who's Who in America* shows that Mr. Walton was born in Philadelphia on Nov. 10, 1843, the son of Edward Hicks Walton and Mrs. Annie Mifflin Townsend Walton. He was educated in the public schools and in the high school in Philadelphia, and afterward studied drawing in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Next followed a course at the National Academy of Design in this city, and then Mr. Walton went to Paris, where he studied under Carolus Duran in 1877 and 1878.

Mr. Walton never married, and soon after his return to this country he established himself in the Twenty-second Street house. He was a writer on art, and his own work in that field consisted chiefly of figure and landscape work. He was a life member of the National Arts Club and a member of the Century Association.

From *The Evening World* (New York, New York):

**POVERTY AND PRIDE
DROVE ARTIST TO
FIND DEATH IN SEA
William Walton Was Down
And Out and Too Proud to
Beg of Rich Friends**

After he had faced dire want for many months and with a cheerful countenance met wealthy friends who never suspected his embarrassment, the body of William Walton, an artist and writer on art, is to-day being cared for by them. If in life he had permitted them to know that he was in need aid would have been quickly extended, but the only one who knew was the aged lady who had cared for his studio at 360 West Twenty-second Street. His friends' first knowledge of his poverty came when his body was identified in the morgue after having been picked up in the water off Rockaway Point.

"He was too proud to let his friends know that he was in need, too proud to appeal to them," said the woman who shared his secret to-day. "For a long time, I have seen how things were. He was down and out, but he would not let me even mention a thing. To the few friends who came here he was very cheerful and smiling. Three weeks ago, when he went away, he left a note for me saying: 'Don't disturb my room until I return.'"

For two weeks friends who called for him were told of the note the elderly artist had left and they came to believe he was visiting friends. Carroll Beckwith, the artist, and W. H. Watrous, Secretary of the National Academy of Design, finally decided all was not well, and when they heard from the studio attendant of the troubles he had kept secret from them, they appealed to the police to look for their friend.

Dr. William Hoag, a dentist, at No. 331 Madison Avenue, and an intimate friend of Mr. Walton, joined in the search, and yesterday at the Flatbush Morgue, he came upon the body. It had been there ten days, having been picked up three and half miles off the Rockaway Point Buoy by Capt. Eastman of the Sheepshead Ferry. In a few days, it would have been on the way to an unmarked grave in Potters' Field, but Dr. Hoag, Mr. Beckwith and other friends will care for it and he will be given an honored burial.

Until just before he disappeared Mr. Walton had been a frequent visitor to the Century Association and to the National Arts Club on Gramercy Square, of which he was a member. Younger artists came to him for criticism of their work and the older men sought his company. All believe he had saved a competency from his writings and paintings and he never allowed them to suspect otherwise.

"It was one of Mr. Walton's keenest regrets," Mr. Beckwith said to-day in his studio at No. 59 West 45th Street, "that his fame as a critic and writer overshadowed his fame as an artist. He was a dreamer and painted beautiful conceptions, but Americans are only paying high prices for the work of foreigners and so perhaps his paintings did not sell. He was melancholy of late, but I never suspected the reason for it."

Mr. Walton was seventy-two years old and early in life was known for his French translations. He was born in Philadelphia and studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and at the National Academy of Design. In Paris he was a pupil of Carolus-Duran. His first literary work was the translation of the works of Victor Hugo for the firm of George Barrie & Son, of Philadelphia.

Several years ago he published a "History of Banking," which met with some success. He wrote many treatises on art. He devoted himself in his painting to landscape work largely, and was noted for his paintings on wood.

For more than twenty-five years he had lived in his studio room on the top floor of the studio building on West Twenty-second Street. With the changing of the neighborhood many of his artist friends moved away, but he remained and was a picturesque figure in the neighborhood.

From *The Daily Record* (Long Branch, New Jersey):

**MYSTERY IN DEATH
OF ARTIST IN OCEAN
Walton's Body Is Found In
Flatbush Morgue**

New York, Nov. 24.

Friends of William Walton, the famous figure and landscape painter, who disappeared from his studio, 360 West Twenty-second street, about two weeks ago, identified as his a body in the Flatbush Morgue which was taken from the water at Rockaway, Nov. 13.

Dr. William Hoag, a dentist, visited the morgue and positively identified the body as that of the aged artist, whom he knew well.

No one, however, will venture an explanation of the manner in which Walton's remains got to a point three and half miles off Rock point buoy.

When the body was found it first was taken to the morgue in Rockaway and later sent to Flatbush.

Carroll Beckwith, the artist, of 59 West Forty-fifth street said:

"Mr. Walton was a man who had many friends. He was a much loved man. It often happened that he would visit friends out on Long Island.

H. W. Watrous, secretary of the National Academy of Design, said he had been informed of Walton's disappearance. Members of the Century and National Arts club also noted Walton's absence.

Walton was born in Philadelphia Nov. 10, 1843, and he was educated in the public schools and the high school in Philadelphia, afterward studying drawing in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

It was Beckwith who signed the certificate for burial for the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Home, identifying himself as William Walton's "friend."

Finally, on Friday November 26th, Walton was buried in the Quaker Cemetery in Prospect Park "where we place poor Walton's body under the pink November sky among the autumn leaves. [Illegible] la fin."

A newspaper article published on the next day (Saturday) described the funeral:

WILLIAM WALTON BURIED

Many Friends of Artist Attend Services in Funeral Church

The funeral of William Walton, the artist, art critic, author, and translator, was held yesterday morning at 10 o'clock at the Funeral Church, 241 West Twenty-third Street, and was attended by a large gathering of his friends.

There were quantities of flowers, with pink roses, violets, and chrysanthemums predominating. The Rev. Dr. Joseph R. Duryee of 139 West Thirty-sixth Street conducted the simple services. Among those who attended the funeral, many of whom followed the body to the grave, were Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel E. Quigg, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin H. Blashfield, Mrs. John Russell Taber and the Misses Taber, Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Lawrence, William C. Brownell, Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Proudfoot, the Misses Andresen, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Golden Dearth, Mr. and Mrs. J. Alden Weir, Edward Caswell, Will H. Lowe, Childe Hassam, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Melville Dewey, Robert McCurdy, Mr. and Mrs. George Barrie of Philadelphia, Charles Collins, Mr. and Mrs. Everett Colby, Mr. and Mrs. Harold de Raasloff, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Rollinson Lamb, and Mr. and Mrs. Carroll Beckwith.

Mr. Walton was a life member of the National Arts Club and the Century Association, and Mr. Beckwith in speaking for the association last night said: "Mr. Walton was a man possessing one of the most rare and interesting minds of any of our members."

The interment took place in the Friends' Cemetery in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

1915

William Walton Obituary *American Art News* (no date—presumably mid-November 1915 or January, 1916)

William Walton

The mystery of his disappearance from his long-time home, 360 West 22nd St., where he had lived almost as a recluse in a small room, of William Walton, the well-known artist and art writer, was sadly solved on Tuesday last through the identification at the Flatbush Morgue of a body, found some days ago, in Sheepshead Bay, as that of an aged man.

This sad ending of the life of a man, who, although of a peculiar and solitary temperament, had an unusual ability and qualities that endeared him to his friends, chief of whom was Carroll Beckwith, his fellow student under Carolus-Duran in Paris, cast a gloom over the Century and the National Arts Club, which were his favorite haunts.

The artist was born in Phila. in 1843, studied at the Pa. Academy and National Schools here, and in Paris. He was a figure and landscape painter but was better known through his art writing. For many years he had been a frequent and interesting contributor to the department known as “The Field of Art” in Scribner’s.

1915

William Walton Memorial Tribute *American Art News* (no date—presumably mid-November 1915 or January, 1916)

William Walton

A Tribute.

Good friend and true and noblest of thy kind,
We are the band of mourners left behind
To chant, in broken cadences, thy dirge.
O may a gladlier song arise to purge
Of comradeship enjoyed must ever be
Our solace. Nay, what though thy brush and pen
No longer bear their messages to me?
The message of thy soul is higher still.
Shy spirit, rest thee quietly until
We meet again. Would we might learn of thee—
Thy kindly ways, thy matchless loyalty!
In God’s own sunshine, far from wind and wave,
We lay the laurel on thy new-made grave.

L. S.

1916

“William Walton: A Memorial Exhibition at the Century Association” by Bertha (Hall) Beckwith—Beckwith’s wife—is published. The article, with original spellings, describes how seriously Walton was missed by his friends, although apparently it was only Beckwith who had been concerned about his mental state, as noted in his dairy.

At the Century Club, West 43rd Street, New York, an association of artists, literateurs and professional men, an exhibition was recently held of the work of a most original genius, William Walton. It was in the nature of a “memorial exhibition,” as the artist died last November under tragic circumstances.

A life-sized portrait of him by his old-time friend and atelier companion, Carroll Beckwith, hung in the center of the gallery; beneath it was placed his palette tied to a “funeral palm”

with a ribbon of purple satin. On the four walls were displayed a good portion of Mr. Walton's work since 1880. The effect as a whole was most harmonious and agreeable in color, and on looking carefully at the individual pictures one was amazed at the variety of his imagination and the unique aim of his works. They were fanciful and poetic to the last degree. He was a scholar and a great reader. Often his pictures failed to be understood by those who were unacquainted with the sources of his researches and his knowledge of ancient legends.

From time-to-time single examples of his work have been seen in different exhibitions, with mediaeval or Oriental characteristics. But seeing them grouped together, the sensitive quality of his talent combined with the originality of his subjects were shown in a striking manner. For instance, among the works shown were "Mère King," picturing a lovely blue sea with a commanding Gibraltar-like rock overshadowing it. On a horse in the foreground the king in blue-sea robes, with crown on forehead, was carrying a fainting lady away to his kingdom below the ocean; "Great Enchantment," in which there was an interesting combination of Chinese gods, who seemed to be alive, surrounding and grinning at a maiden; "Thessalian Plain," a landscape with a female centaur cantering over a grassy slope—noble masses of trees in the background, and the greens having a rich freshness of early summer; "Castle of the Ogre," a courtyard with a tessellated pavement, a row of columns on one side, into which ride three knights in armor led by a little child, the architecture and armor done with careful discrimination and the beginning of the tale depicted, stirring up the imagination of the onlooker; an exquisite little "Annunciation" with gothic architecture and a primitively decorative panel in the background—truly a treasure; "No Man's Land," a landscape warm and soft in color, and "East-Hampton House," an exterior with a lady sewing in the front garden, summerlike and interesting; while those entitled "Sleeping Beauty" and "The Martyr" were to many the gems of the collection.

Altogether the exhibition made a deep impression on those who saw it. As many of the examples are passing into private ownership, never again, in all probability, will be gathered together such a long number of the works of William Walton.

Another newspaper article from *The Sun* (New York, New York) Monday, June 12, 1916, describes Walton's will:

WILLIAM WALTON WILL FILED
Written Works Bequeathed to the
Century Association

The will of William Walton, writer, artist, critic, and translator who is believed to have committed suicide when he found himself without sufficient income to maintain his standing among his artist friends was filed recently for probate.

Walton lived in a studio at 360 West Twenty-second street. His body was washed up on the beach at Rockaway on November 13 last. Not until November 22 was his identity established, through the finding of a letter in his pocket which had been overlooked when the police searched his clothing.

His written works he bequeathed to the Century Association of New York city. They include several illustrated subscription volumes published by George Barrie of Philadelphia. "A History of Sculpture," "Mythology," "The Army and Navy of the United States," two volumes on the Paris expositions of 1889 and 1900 and one on the Chicago exposition of 1893 are among these. The sum of \$100 is given for rebinding the works. A number of books by French authors, which he translated, are also bequeathed to the association.

As executors he named Carroll Beckwith, an artist, and A. W. Calliston, Jr. They are to sell his studio property and pay all transfer or inheritance taxes on the bequests he made to his aunt, Mrs. Robert Purvis of Norway, Pa., and Mrs. Carroll Beckwith. Mrs. Purvis is to receive the residue of his estate if any remains after the debts have been paid.

Of particular note, and related to what we've heard about Walton's financial difficulties (but with no knowledge of the accuracy of the telling), is an advertisement in the Philadelphia Inquirer from seven years earlier (November 29, 1903). In the advertisement, Cosmo Studio, 437 Fifth Avenue, New York, offers The Cosmo Collection, art-related fine publications for sale. Walton's name appears among eighteen others, many of them artists, museum directors, and academic scholars in "fine arts." If the collection was offered and sold to people with serious interest in art and art history, some income from royalties or other arrangement would have come to Walton. In any case, he was able to enjoy his friends (especially the Beckwiths) and spend his evenings at The Century, as we have learned, which was usually the case.

1999

From my point of view, and even though parts of the following have already appeared in this effort, this essay from Bruce Weber seems to be a special tribute, not only to Walton but to Carroll Beckwith. To me, Weber seems to catch the character of what Beckwith was trying to do with the painting and, in essence, the long-term relationship between the two men, both intellectuals—thinking men—and artists.

Portrait of William Walton

Walton was one of Beckwith's oldest and closest friends. They met at Carolus-Duran's atelier and sailed together to America in the summer of 1878, following their completion of study abroad. After settling in New York, they developed a relationship of almost daily contact, visiting each other at home or dining together at the Century Club (also known as the Century Association), where both were members. Walton often visited in Greene and Onteora, New York, and they traveled together briefly in Europe in 1906. Their friendship included artistic collaboration. Walton designed a gown for Beckwith's model Mary Joyce to wear in Beckwith's painting *Cordelia* (c. 1883, Location Unknown), and he helped Beckwith solve the thorny problem of achieving the correct perspective for his ambitious 1893 World's Columbian Exposition mural in Chicago (Dairy, July 20, 1892).

The Pennsylvania-born Walton was active as a painter, writer, translator, and art critic. His art career floundered after his return from European study in 1878, but he continued to paint classical and allegorical subjects, landscapes, and decorative. Beginning in 1883, he was employed by the Philadelphia publisher George Barrie, for whom he produced thirty-two pictorial folio volumes, and translated writings by numerous French authors, including Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, Alphonse de Lamartine, and Honoré de Balzac. He also wrote articles on contemporary art for leading American magazines. His art publications include *Chefs d'oeuvre de l'exposition universelle de Paris* (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1889) and *World's Columbian Exposition: Art and Architecture* (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1893). He was also the author of *The Army and Navy of the United States, 1776–1895* (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Son, 1889–1893). In 1891, Walton secured Beckwith the welcome employment of translating Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, and later worked with Bertha Beckwith in translating the French author's *Les Misérables* (Diary, December 10, 1891 and August 18, 1892).

By 1910, however, Walton's career as a writer was also suffering. That year Beckwith related in his diary that Walton "was so unsuccessful that it is depressing" (February 18, 1910). Beckwith soon began to notice that Walton's behavior was growing increasingly erratic, and when his friend disappeared in November 1915, Beckwith was quick to contact the police. Walton had committed suicide by jumping off a boat in Brooklyn's Sheepshead Bay. It was Beckwith who was called to the morgue to identify Walton's body. In his diary, he reported that over a hundred people came to the burial in the Friends' Cemetery in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, where "we placed poor Walton's body under the pink November sky among the autumn leaves" (Diary, November 26, 1915). After the burial, Beckwith wrote very little about the friend whom he had once described as "one of the few men we love to have always about" (Diary, May 13, 1898). Walton was remembered as a "quaint and gentle figure" by Henry Osborne Taylor, secretary

of the Century, and the publisher Robert Barrie recalled “that although he inclined to be quiet, retiring, and solitary, and in later years lived almost a recluse in his studio, [he] had many friends in the world of painters and writers. He was both a painter and a writer, perhaps not great, but he had the genius of originality and the courage to make use of it.” Following Walton’s suicide, a memorial exhibition was held of his art at the Century Club. Beckwith’s portrait of Walton was featured in the memorial exhibition, where it hung in the center of the gallery. Below was placed Walton’s palette with a ribbon of purple satin. Club member Herbert L. Saterlee, who donated the work to the Century, purchased it from the Beckwith estate sale.

Beckwith’s portrait of Walton was painted during the first two months of 1886. The life-size canvas was shown in a studio reception at the Sherwood on March 4 of that year, where it was visited by “thousands of visitors” (Diary, March 5, 1886). The portrait was shown at major exhibition in America and Europe, including the Society of American Artists in 1886, the Paris Salon of 1887, the Exposition Universelle of 1889, and the Pan-American Exposition of 1901. The critics recognized the painting’s stylistic connection with the most advanced of modern French art, feeling that the painting was “sufficiently Japanese to meet with Impressionist approval,” and that it looked “as if Mr. Beckwith had been hobnobbing with Renoir! . . . he never was afraid of color. And when he sticks to reality he ranks among our best men.” From the perspective of 1901, Chares H. Caffin viewed the portrait in the context of Beckwith’s career: “What stimulating actuality! So direct and telling in its fidelity to facts and yet with a pleasant artifice in the arrangement of the background, that gives the figure pictorial support without detracting from its due prominence. The color is dry, perhaps even a trifle harsh, compared with the more juicy method of his later work, and one wonders whether the striving after sumptuous color may not be running counter to the painter’s real instinct and have led him astray from the simple directness of his earlier work. For this portrait has a dignity, which his more colorful are apt to lack. It was evolved, one may imagine, from a natural impulse, and its manner was directed by the unaffected instinct of the painter, and after all, that represents the way in which all work, most notably, is produced.”

Beckwith’s portrait of Walton follows in the French Realist tradition established by Manet and Degas. This is reflected in the informality of the figure’s pose, the painting’s warm and unaffected analysis of character, and its depiction of the subject in familiar personal surroundings. When portraying artists and writers whom he knew intimately, Beckwith was more easily able to grasp the individuality of the sitter and experiment with original and modern approaches to portraiture. In the case of his close friend Walton, he breaks completely from the standard poses and academic conventions of his typical portrait commissions to create a painting that, as American art critic Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer recognized, “is vigorous, facile, and

almost startlingly alive.” The portrait’s vital sense of life and reality is also due to the care the artist devoted to drawing and rendering values, especially those of the background elements which are masterfully subdued to the figure. The background is indebted to Beckwith’s study of nineteenth-century Japanese prints: the elements are arranged asymmetrically and cropped, and color is treated flatly. Walton stands in front of a wall featuring several of Beckwith’s vibrant plein air sketches. At least three of these date from his joyful summers in Andé: from left to right of center are images of the watermill at Andé, Céline in the Garden and a glimpse of the River Seine. A fencing mask partially obscures the close-up sketch of waves at the upper right, which alludes to one of Beckwith’s favorite leisure-time pursuits as an active member of the Fencer’s Club of New York.

1917

Carroll Beckwith dies on October 14.

Century Memorial (from the Century Association Biographical Archive):

But it is the death of yet another painter that has recently touched so many of us here with the pathos of life and sadness for the loss of an old friend. James Carroll Beckwith was a cheerful and picturesque feature of our artist society in New York, even as he had been in happy student days in Paris, before Time brought fame with grey hairs to those many talented and proper painter friends of ours whose company still gladdens us. The artist life of our metropolis, as we know it at The Century, has shed, with its brown locks, the aroma of Bohemia.

Beckwith had mastered the elements of drawing before he sailed for Paris in 1873, to pass five years in the atelier of Carolus-Duran, in Yvon’s class at the Beaux Arts, and in the Bonnat school. His quick faculties assured his admission, and made him a favorite with those masters, with Carolus especially, whose manner and, one may say, talents Beckwith made his own.

He had a studio with John S. Sargent, and the two worked neck and neck as assistants of their master Carolus, helping in the groundwork and detail of his compositions. Beckwith was a skillful draughtsman and facile painter when he returned to New York in 1878 and opened his famous drawing class at the Art Students League. He soon made himself known by his pictures shown at the National Academy (of which he was made a member in 1894) and the Society of American Artists. Most noteworthy was his work on portraiture, which more than once won favorable mention and medals at exhibitions. In 1910 he and Mrs. Beckwith bade good-bye to their friends, and left New York for Rome; but later returned and again made their home in this city and at Onteora, and again took up their old strong friendships. A good friend to his friends was Carroll Beckwith.

Henry Osborn Taylor (1918 Century Association Yearbook)

Beckwith's death too, is described by Bruce Weber in *Intimate Relations: The Art of Carroll Beckwith (1852–1917)*, by Pepi Marchetti Franchi and Bruce Weber (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1999).

Then, on October 24, Bertha made an entry in her husband's diary: "Fearful storm last night kept us both awake with the noise. Carroll stayed in except he went across the street to send a telegram to Cleveland about his copies. At 5 p.m. he said he would go out and take a walk. At 5.15 he came home in a taxi and it was the end."

Weber then adds a useful and important note:

On several occasions in recent years, it has been misreported that Beckwith committed suicide. It is likely that Beckwith's death has been confused with William Walton, his close friend and the subject of his best-known portrait, who committed suicide in 1915. For various misreportings of the artist's death see Hyatt Mayor and Mark Davis, *American Art at The Century* (New York: The Century Association, 1977), p. 83, Peter Falk, ed., *Who Was Who in American Art* (Boston: Sound View Press, 1985), p.13, Annette Blaugrund, *Paris 1889: American Artists at the Universal Exposition*, p. 252, 11ff, and Steven Doherty, "Life is short the art long," *American Artist* 54 (January 1990): 10. The artist's death certificate attributes his death to "chronic endocarditis." In turn, numerous entries in Beckwith's 1917 diary convey the fragile nature of his physical health in the months prior to his death.

CODA

“Let the light in”—an especially relevant point of view in today’s thinking about how we look at cultural and artistic masterpieces of the past—is the theme of this effort. It is a very personal study, giving one person (myself) the opportunity to identify and express opinions and perceptions about the two men who are the subject of this paper.

I wanted to learn as much as I could about Carroll Beckwith and William Walton—the painter and the painter who was the painter’s subject—and how they lived in a particular time in history. It was a time removed from our own, very different, and yet much that was happening in those years might be seen to relate to what we do in our own lives.

If I have been successful in this exploration, in my own effort to “let the light in,” as Jason Farago did in his article, readers and others will be able to connect things that were happening when Carroll Beckwith and William Walton lived with things that are happening in our own time. And—we might be brave enough to wish—with things that will be happening in the times of those who come after us.

Those readers (and others) will include the members of The Century Association, each of whom, at his or her own level of interest and enthusiasm, will benefit in that connection. As we know, during the years to which this chronology alludes, much turmoil took place in American society. Yet society came through, survived, and progressed. Of course, for many people the difficulties and tragedies seemed insurmountable. And the picture seems even gloomier when those troubles are tied to personal events we read about in the final pages of this essay. Advancement and moving forward seemed far away.

Yet here in our own space—at our delightful and special association—we took a big step in making that connection (and celebrating it) in 2022. In planning for The Century Association’s 175th anniversary, the Committee on Exhibitions was approached by the 175th Anniversary Planning Committee to install an exhibition celebrating the Century’s art during the anniversary year. As this work moved forward (and just coincidentally linking to the larger subject described in the present narrative), a decision was made to let artist members pick which work they wanted to recreate for the exhibition, with the image of the original painting included for comparison. Centurion Hugo Bastidas chose to create a painting of Beckwith’s *Portrait of William Walton*. It became—to those of us who so particularly esteem this masterpiece—a welcome representation, reminding us that during the years to which this chronology alludes, Beckwith, Walton, Sargent, the members of The Century, everyone else, they all had lived their lives to live. With their art, they lived them with beauty.

If we can connect with them and if what they experienced to what is happening in our time (some of which is frightening), or in the times of those coming after us (which we hope will be less frightening), our societies and our cultural and artistic worlds, including those of the members of The Century Association, will indeed

move forward. And we will embrace them. We will forever embrace those accomplishments.

And to change the tone a bit, let's return to where we started. I earlier suggested that one of the ways we might succeed in thinking about how we might "let the light in" would be to engage in some speculation, to play with the idea of how some of the events described herein came about. And now that we have more factual details, we can dig a little deeper, indulge in some imagining. Then we don't have to necessarily speculate if we include some imagination (or perhaps, even re-imagination) into what we've learned.

For example, as I learned about Beckwith and Walton, of course I didn't learn much about their specific personalities. Generally speaking, though, I got the idea that they had some engaging times as they experienced all they did together, with their travels, with their time in New York and in the country with Bertha (Beckwith's wife), with Walton's visits to his friends on Long Island, with their enjoyment of Paris (both when they were studying, despite the differences in their ages, and when they later returned to Europe, both together and individually), the many meals they enjoyed both together and with other people, the theatre (and especially what we learned about Beckwith's short friendship with Oscar Wilde), and, enjoying as much as anything else they did, the pleasures of their good life at The Century. They had fun, and it all adds up to two lives "well lived" (if I might be forgiven using an oft-repeated phrase), until the later part of their lives when the experiences

wrought by Walton's emotional or psychological troubles defeated him. And which, sadly, he kept to himself.



Hugo Bastidas, *William Walton*, from the 175th Century Association Celebration.

And even I, your author, have had some fun re-imagining. One picture I like comes up now and then: how in 1886 when the portrait was being created, I like to think about how Beckwith and Walton dealt with (humorously I hope) Walton's change of clothes each day as he readied himself to pose. I see him coming to Beckwith's studio from his living space cum studio down on 22nd Street (we know he hurried each morning to rush to "the elevated" to travel uptown). He would be wearing his ordinary artist's workaday garment or whatever other informal clothes he wore when he was writing (not the business clothes he would wear when he worked for Barrie & Son). Then, when Beckwith was ready to begin his work, Walton would be transformed into that Parisian and stylish genteel clothes-conscious gentleman Kathleen Adler had so much fun

with. It became—to those of us who so particularly esteem this masterpiece—a welcome representation, reminding us that during the years to which is chronology alludes, Beckwith, Walton, Sargent, the members of the Century, and everyone else all had their lives to live. With their art, they lived their lives with beauty.

Fellow Centurion Hugo Bastidas, noted above, also enjoyed a little re-imagining. He writes that when the planning for the 175th celebration exhibition was going on and he did the painting illustrated here, he was considering depicting Walton in a horizontally striped bathing suit because there is a boat in one of the small pictures on the wall behind William Walton. “From popular movies, old photos and paintings of that period, leisure time was presented in various locations,” Bastidas writes, “and one was people enjoying the shoreline. However, I believe I was painting a man of certain modesty (I’m assuming). Thus my apprehension about painting him in a swimsuit. In hindsight, though, it would have been fun.”

So there is a place for imagination and re-imagination, isn’t there?

A FINAL NOTE

A practical statement, about the conservation history of Carroll Beckwith’s *Portrait of William Walton*: the painting was cleaned by Demetrius Alfonso in 1977, and the frame was repaired by Angel Lopez in 1989.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly indebted to Celestina (Tina) M. Cuadrado, Curator, for her advice and her invaluable assistance in helping track particularly elusive facts or details. Brynn White, The Century’s Archivist, too, is a strong and much-appreciated professional treasure. At the New York Public Library, Andy McCarthy at also supplied hard-to-find specifics, as did the staff at The Library of The University Club of New York, especially Scott Overall, Associate Director.

Fellow Centurion Hugo Bastidas contributed his own experiences with The Century’s 175th Anniversary Celebration. My devoted in-house editor, Andrew J. Berner, the Library Director Emeritus at The University Club of New York Library, also a Fellow Centurion, spent many hours listening to my thoughts exploring different directions for inclusion in the paper and provided wise and useful guidance.

And a special thank you to various friends, including several fellow Centurions, who have helped with suggestions and comments, for which I am extremely grateful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guy St. Clair is a writer and editor living in New York City. In his blog, [Sharing Guy’s Journey](#)—published since September, 2009—he writes about anything that crosses his mind (some friends refer to the blog as “Guy’s online journal”).

As an author, Guy has written *A Venerable and Cherished Institution: The University Club of New York 1865 – 1990* (1991) and *SLA at 100: From Putting Knowledge To Work to Building the Knowledge Culture—A Cen-*

ennial History of SLA (The Special Libraries Association) 1909–2009.

Guy is also a former faculty member at Columbia University, where he taught knowledge services. He has written several academic titles, including the most recent, *Knowledge Services: A Strategic Framework for the 21st Century Organization*. He is also currently the Series Editor for [Knowledge Services](#) for De Gruyter Saur in Munich and Berlin.

His personal interests have to do with, first of all, attending programs and dining at The Century Association. After that comes his own good times with his friends, opera, ballet, reading, and whatever next comes up. He has been a Member of The Century Association since 1989.

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