

THE WAY IT WAS

by Hattie Beresford

Frederic Remington in Santa Barbara: Part 1

Morning Press, 15 January 1903: "A party consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick (sic) Remington, Mr. and Mrs. Burton, and Mrs. M.B. Smith were the guests of Mr. J.R. Fithian yesterday at a lunch given at his ranch near Carpinteria. The day was most enjoyably spent, the party returning to town late in the afternoon. Mr. Remington is delighted with Santa Barbara and vicinity, and expressed the hope that he would be able to buy and build here in the near future."



(From left) Elizabeth Eaton Burton, Mrs. Mary Rathbone (Baker) Smith (who was soon to become Mrs. J.R. Fithian), Eva Remington, and Joel Remington Fithian at *Rancho Miramar*, which he later renamed *Rancho Monte Alegre* (Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York)

By the time of his visit to Santa Barbara, Frederic Sackrider Remington's reputation was at its peak. He had grown up in Ogdensburg, New York, where his father had moved the family in 1872. Remington's father was a newspaperman and distinguished cavalry officer in the Civil War, and writing seemed to come naturally to the young Frederic. His ambition, however, was to be an artist.

After a short stint studying art at Yale, Remington dropped out of school and headed West, emulating his famous artist ancestor, George Catlin. Catlin had gone west in 1830 to chronicle the life and customs of the Native Americans of the upper Missouri River. He believed this way of life was disappearing, and he hoped

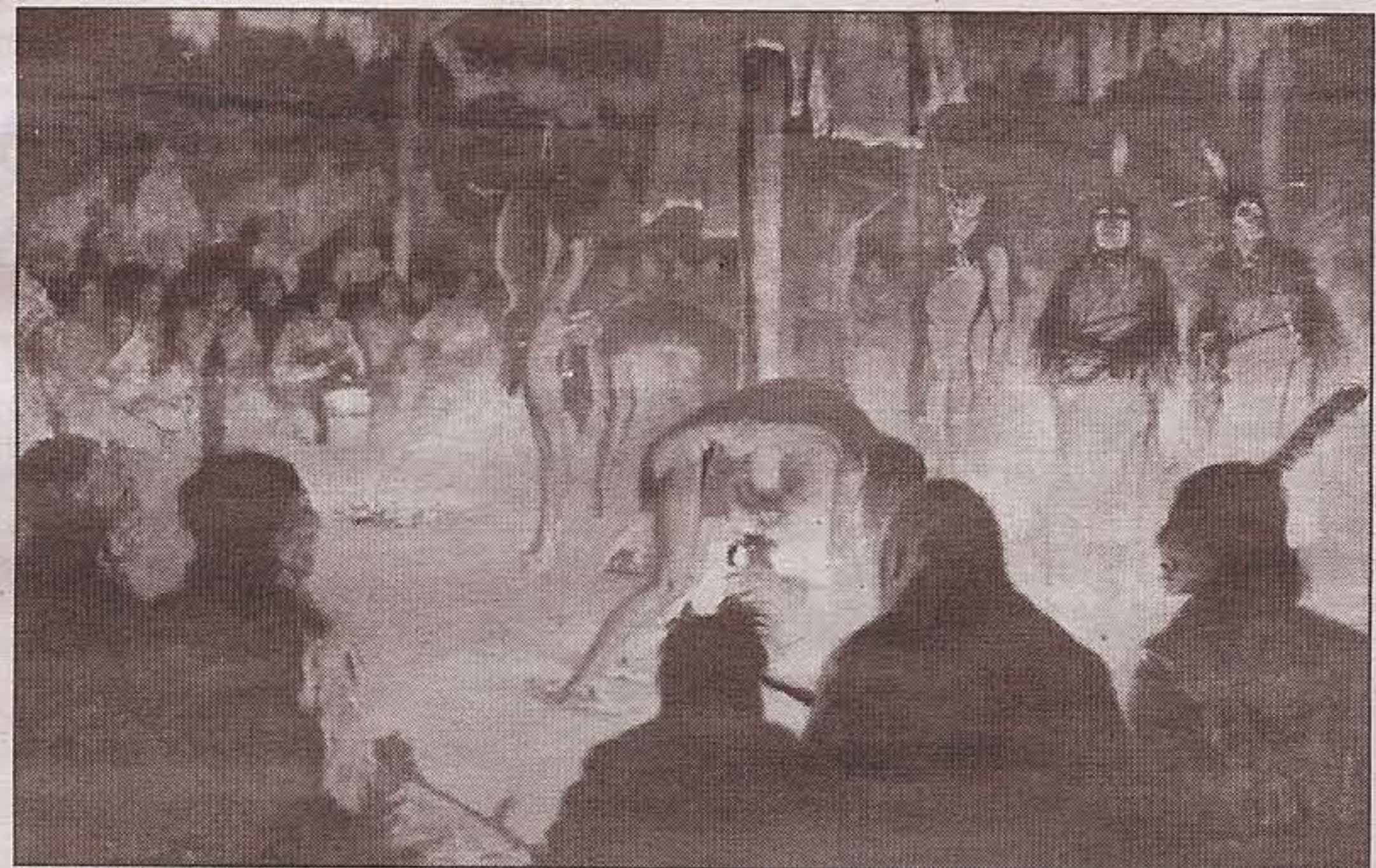


Ms Beresford is a retired English and American history teacher of 30 years in the Santa Barbara School District. She is author of two Noticias, "El Mirasol: From Swan to Albatross" and "Santa Barbara Grocers," for the Santa Barbara Historical Society.

his "Indian Gallery" would educate and inspire people to value and preserve this ancient culture.

Remington, too, planned to chronicle frontier life. To immerse himself in the West, he bought a sheep ranch in Kansas. When that failed, he purchased a hardware store and then a saloon, sketching all the while.

In 1884, he married Eva Caten and brought her to Kansas City.



Like his famous ancestor, George Catlin, Remington painted the Okipa ceremony of the tribes of the upper Missouri River (Remington Art Museum)



Etchings of Remington's painting began appearing in national magazines by the mid-1880s (Library of Congress)

Unimpressed with his drawings of saloon life and the rustic nature of a Western town, she left him and returned to the East. Remington, who like Catlin was mostly self-taught, started sketching and painting in earnest. When he returned to Eva in Brooklyn, he joined the Art Students League and studied and refined his technique. In time, the couple moved to New Rochelle, where he could have an outdoor life and studio and still be close to the galleries and publishing houses of New York City.

In the mid-1880s, newspapers and magazines had become interested in the dying West, and Remington began to receive commissions for his articles and drawings in such magazines as *Harpers*, *Colliers*, and *Outing*. Soon he was illustrating books and articles for other authors as well, most notably



A lost wax casting of Remington's first sculpture, *The Bronco Buster* proves that Remington was correct when he said, "I am to endure in bronze" (Frederic Remington Museum)

Theodore Roosevelt's *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*.

By 1890, he was considered one of the premier painters and illustrators of the American West and his promoters carefully propagated the myth of his authenticity as a Westerner, despite the fact that most of his work was painted in his studios in New York.

About 1895, Remington taught himself to sculpt and produced his first bronze, *The Bronco Buster*. A clue to his motivation resides in a letter he wrote a friend, "My oils will all get old mastery – that is, they will look like old molasses in time – my water colors will fade – but I am to endure in bronze – even rust does not touch. – I am modeling – I find I do well – I am

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doing a cowboy on a bucking bronco and I am going to rattle down through all the ages unless some anarchist invades the mansion and knocks it off the shelf!"

Santa Barbara



Remington's illustration for his novel, *John Ermine of the Yellowstone* (Courtesy Joel Remington Fithian II)

The Fithian family came to Santa Barbara in 1892. In six-short years, Joel Adams Fithian bought a ranch in Carpinteria, purchased several town lots in Santa Barbara, built a four-story office building on State Street, and helped his sons, Joel Remington and Richard Barrett, establish the Santa Barbara Country Club on Channel Drive in Montecito.

Joel's cousin, Frederic Remington, made many visits to Santa Barbara over the years. He often stayed at the Santa Barbara Club where rooms



Frederic Remington and Francis Townsend Underhill at China Camp on a test run of his and Fithian's Old Time Stage Line (Frederic Remington Art Museum)



James K. Hackett as John Ermine in the Broadway production of Remington's play whose success was spoiled by the "d.....d women" (Frederic Remington Art Museum)

were available for members or guests. Edward A. Gilbert, local real estate and insurance agent, recalled, "My family came to know him well and he occasionally dined at our home. During these evenings, he would often pick up a pad and sketch a pic-

ture or two for me. Needless to say, I was greatly thrilled... I remember Mr. Remington as a kindly gentleman who was extremely nice to a young boy."

Remington also became friends with fellow New Yorker and expert whip Francis Townsend Underhill, who at various times owned ranches in Santa Barbara, Los Alamos, and Montecito and homes on Channel Drive. Other friends were William Waples "Billy" Burton, realtor and charter member of the Santa Barbara Club, and his artist wife, Elizabeth Eaton Burton, who became internationally known for her brass and shell lamps as well as her work in leather.

Elizabeth remembered Remington's visits fondly. "Perhaps the most amusing personality among the artists who came to Santa Barbara was Frederic Remington," she wrote in her memoir. "He and his wife came out to spend several months, and during his stay, I think we had the best times of all our career in Santa Barbara."

Elizabeth described Frederic as "a great big spoiled boy, devoid of all sense of responsibility or even any regard for many of the conventions, and we all encouraged him by our easy laughter."

She found Frederic's unconscious manner of peppering his speech with epithets somewhat shocking, but her friends told her to wait until she was under his own roof to hear the real thing. "I must confess it was breath-

taking," she wrote.

Remington used to say to Elizabeth, "I like your work; it has all the strength of a man's work."

"Of course, this pleased me," she wrote, "not because I do not believe we can do many things as well as a man, but that it meant so much in his estimation."

Frederic's friends kept him well entertained when he and Eva visited Santa Barbara. Elizabeth wrote, "In these days we used to take many trips over the mountains to Mr. Underhill's Ranch, *El Roblar*.... When Frederic Remington came up also, a rodeo with all its gay accompaniments of the barbecue, music, and dancing was staged during his stay and all sorts of games were organized."

In 1902, Frederic had sent Joel Remington Fithian a copy of his new book, *John Ermine of the Yellowstone*, with the following inscription, "To my friend Fithian, who helped me hold the stage against the rock thus saving many lives." To what incident this refers is unknown, but Joel Fithian was a devoted driver and collector of carriages and stages, a passion he would put to use the following year.

In 1903, *John Ermine* was made into stage play that opened in Boston in September and on Broadway in November. It had a live bronco in it, and the *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Remington's crayon is much in evidence in the scenes which are throughout massive and elaborate." Nevertheless, the play was not a great success.

Frederic later told Elizabeth E. Burton that all was going well, until the other sex was introduced into the scene. "And then," said he, "I couldn't handle the d.....d women and they got the better of me and spoiled my play."

The Remingtons' 1903 Visit to Santa Barbara

On January 1, 1903, Santa Barbara's newest and grandest hotel, the Potter, opened its doors on West Beach. On January 9, the *Morning Press* headlines blared "ARTIST REMINGTON AT HOTEL POTTER." Frederic and Eva were to stay one week, the paper reported, and went on to list a sum-



Fithian (looking at the camera) and Underhill took Eva and Frederic to the summit of San Marcos Pass in the legendary Hank Monk's old stage (Frederic Remington Art Museum)

mary of Remington's artistic accomplishments.

On the 10th, W.W. (Billy) Burton and Joel Fithian took Remington for a drive through Montecito in Joel's stagecoach. "Mr. Remington was more than pleased with the places he visited," reported the *Morning Press*. "He was especially impressed with the Country Club [then on Channel Drive], which he declares is one of the prettiest he has ever come across."

Later that week, Francis Townsend Underhill arrived in town to field test the new excursion business he and Joel Fithian were implementing. When passenger service for the new rail to San Francisco was instituted in 1901, the last Wells Fargo Stage had crossed San Marcos Pass and retired. A little piece of the Wild West died in Santa Barbara that day, but Joel Fithian stepped up to preserve its memory by purchasing the stage.

Now these two Easterners were

opening an excursion stage line with 18 horses and two stages, one of which had been driven by the legendary Hank Monk on the Carson City to Placerville line. Oddly enough, Henry James (Hank) Monk had driven his first stage from Ogdensburg to Fort Covington at age 12 in New York's North Country.

It is unknown if Remington had heard of his boyhood home's famous son, but he and Eva, together with Billy and Elizabeth Burton, accompanied Fithian and Underhill on the excursion to the summit of San Marcos Pass and picnicked at China Camp in the valley of San Jose Creek.

Their week over, Eva and Frederic headed for Yuma, where he planned to sketch and paint for several weeks. In March, a package arrived in Santa Barbara. It was Remington's way of saying thanks and contained a painting for the Santa Barbara Club entitled *Prospectors Making Frying-Pan Bread*.



Prospectors Making Frying-Pan Bread, Frederic's gift to the Santa Barbara Club, now resides safely at the Frederic Remington Art Museum in Ogdensburg, New York

It also contained two army scenes, one for Joel Fithian and one for Billy Burton. Elizabeth, in turn, created two signature leather photo albums commemorating Remington's visit to Santa Barbara in which he placed his photographic studies of horses, places, and landscapes of the American West.

Despite having forged friendships with former New Yorkers Francis Townsend Underhill and Joel Remington Fithian, Frederic Remington, renowned Western artist, would never build a home in Santa Barbara. He and Eva remained Easterners, and when New Rochelle no long suited their needs, they moved to "hinterlands" of Connecticut. He died in 1909 of a burst appendix. He was only 48 years old.

(Many thanks to Laura Foster, curator of the Frederic Remington Art Museum, for a wonderful tour of the museum this past October and for sending and allowing the use of the images of the works in the museum's collection.)

•MJ



Eva Remington at the Stow Ranch in Goleta holding a giant radish and lettuce (Frederic Remington Art Museum)

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Frederic Remington's North Country: Part 2



Ironically, one of the nation's premier Western artists remained an Easterner at heart. Although Frederic Remington took many trips to the West to study, photograph, and sketch Western themes, his paintings and sculptures were produced at his New York studios in New Rochelle and *Ingleneuk*, his island estate in Chippewa Bay on the St. Lawrence River.

The six-million acre Adirondack Park and New York's North Country,



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which borders Canada along the St. Lawrence River as well as Lake Ontario, had plenty of wilderness for



The Frederic Remington Art Museum in Ogdensburg resides in the 1810 Parish Mansion (author photos)



Frederic Remington in his New Rochelle Studio (Frederic Remington Art Museum)

Remington to explore. Born in Canton and raised in Ogdensburg, Remington was intimately familiar with the area. As a child he loved to hunt, swim, ride, canoe, and camp; experiences that suited him for activities in the Far West.

At his studio in New Rochelle, Remington used his photographs and his collection of Western paraphernalia to create his sculptures and paintings. His painting of the New Rochelle studio itself became the basis for its re-creation at the Whitney Western Art Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming. But the museum that contains the greatest number of Remington's works resides in his hometown of Ogdensburg.

The Frederic Remington Art Museum

After Remington's untimely death from complications after an appendectomy in 1909, his wife Eva Caten Remington went to live in Ogdensburg and moved into the 1810 Parish Mansion. Eva died in 1918. In her will, she bequeathed a huge gift to the Ogdensburg Public Library to establish a museum to memorialize Frederic's art. The museum opened in 1923 and today contains the largest collection of Remington's works,

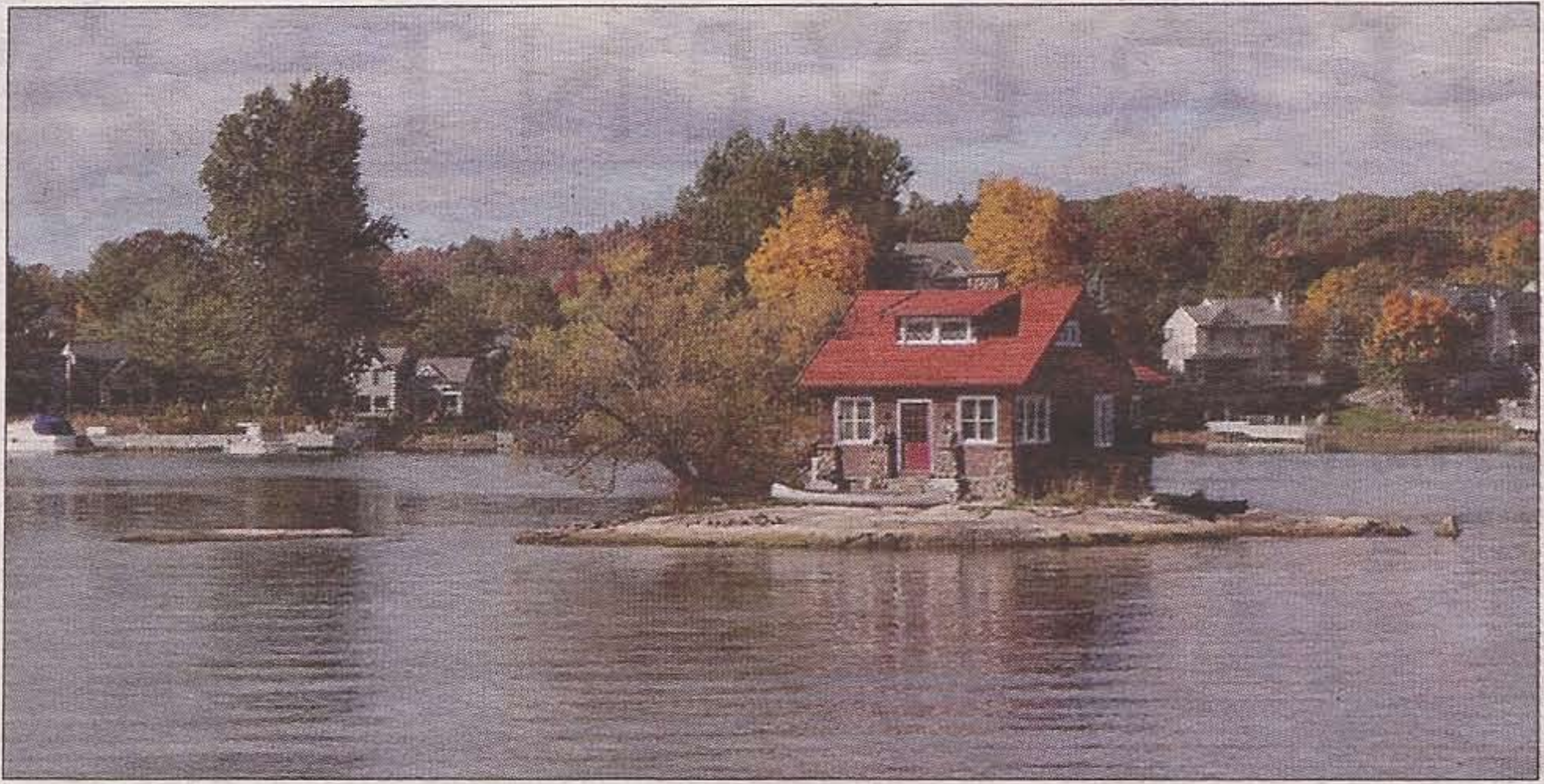
letters, and photographic studies in the world, as well as his own personal collection of the works of such artists as Julian Rix, Charles Dana Gibson, and Childe Hassam.

Curator Laura Foster and the staff have created telling displays that reveal Remington's methodology, personality, philosophy, and subject matter. Laura, who had helped with the production of Elizabeth Eaton Burton's memoir, *My Santa Barbara Scrap Book*, gave my husband and me a personal tour of the museum on our recent visit to New York. The displays of his sculptures, the black-and-white paintings used for illustrations, and his oils, which ranged in subject matter and evolved in style, were impressive.

Laura took us to the vault to see Elizabeth Eaton Burton's signature leather photo albums and what they contained, which included images of Remington's 1903 visit to Santa Barbara. (See previous article, "Frederic Remington in Santa Barbara".)

By a stroke of luck, the 1893 oil painting of *Prospectors Making Frying-Pan Bread*, which Remington gave to the Santa Barbara Club in 1903 but was subsequently sold, is safely ensconced at the museum, thanks to a generous donor.

Well worth the trip, the Ogdensburg museum lies along the St. Lawrence



One of the more modest island homes in Thousand Islands

ble farms are open for touring. And, of course, this is where 1000 Island Dressing was invented.

Beyond a multitude of recreational opportunities, historic sites abound. Narrated boat tours of the islands pass incredible mansions. The river is lined with small historic towns, forts, lighthouses, museums, stores, and historic landscapes.

Less than an hour northeast from Clayton lies Ogdensburg. The drive parallels the river along a rolling countryside of charming farms and hardwood forests. Several state parks lie along the route and provide camping and boating opportunities on the St. Lawrence River.

At Chippewa Bay overlook, Singer Castle, built by the Bourne family of Singer Sewing Machine fame, lies on Dark Island. (During the season, it is open for tours.) Frederic Remington also owned an island in Chippewa Bay to which he added a studio. He called his estate *Ingleneuk*.

A little farther down the road, at the museum in Ogdensburg, hangs a painting Remington created of his neighbor's castle-like estate and ones of the boathouse and studio at



The 1000 Islands region has grown its agro-tourism business with cheese factory tours and shops featuring local cheeses

Ingleneuk. There are also paintings set at Cranberry Lake in the Adirondacks. Of course, the large and wonderful collection of his sculptures and paintings of the American West is highlighted.

Well worth the journey, the Frederic Remington Art Museum is truly a national treasure, and Upstate New York was, surprisingly to us, filled with immense natural beauty.

(Many thanks to Laura Foster, curator of the Frederic Remington Art Museum.)