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# Stephen Parrish and Charles A. Platt

## Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Views

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3 May to 2 June, 1985

**Dalhousie Art Gallery**  
Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

### Foreword

The Dalhousie Art Gallery is pleased to exhibit this outstanding collection of drawings and etchings by two of the most prominent American etchers from the late 19th Century. Stephen Parrish and Charles Platt travelled up the eastern sea coast from Massachusetts during the summer of 1881, sketching coastal and interior landscape scenes along their way to Nova Scotia. During this trip Parrish completed a substantial number of preparatory sketches which were later used in a composite fashion to create etchings.

Both Parrish and Platt were intrigued by the scenic coastal areas of New Brunswick near the Bay of Fundy, small picturesque towns in Nova Scotia and the abundant farmlands of the Annapolis Valley. A second sketching trip completed the following summer by Parrish resulted in additional drawings and etchings from this region.

These works are on loan for the exhibition from the Special Collections Department at the Killam Library, Dalhousie University. They contribute a significant dimension to this institution's current holdings of historical and topographical prints of Maritime Canada which date from the 1570's. The acquisition of the Parrish/Platt collection was made possible through a grant from the Government of Canada under the terms of the Cultural Export and Import Act. It was acquired last year through the efforts of Dr. Gayle Garlock, the former Collections Librarian at the Dalhousie University Library from an American fine art print collector who had purchased a large collection of work by Stephen Parrish directly from the artist's estate through his grandson Maxfield Parrish Jr. Of historical note is

the fact that Stephen Parrish's son, Maxfield Parrish, was also a very prominent artist best known for his illustrations contained in books and magazines during the early part of this century.

We are grateful for the time and careful thought Ms. Karen Smith, Head of Special Services at the Killam Library has devoted to the accompanying interpretive essay. This exhibition would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of the staff of both the Dalhousie Art Gallery and Special Collections, Killam Library.

Mern O'Brien  
Director  
April, 1985

### A Rich Harvest: Stephen Parrish's 1881 Sketching Trip to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia

"I expect to get far North this summer, possibly to the upper end of New Brunswick . . . I feel there is a rich harvest there for the artist . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The American painter-etcher, Stephen Maxfield Parrish, was deeply interested in depicting and interpreting the complex relationship between water, sky, and land. In his search for the essence of the association, Parrish journeyed far afield from his native Philadelphia to the shores of the Hudson and Schroon Rivers in New York State and to the Atlantic coast at Cape Ann and Gloucester. Word of the "strange shore effects of the Bay of Fundy at low tide . . ."<sup>2</sup> drew him up to the Maritimes in the late summer of 1881. He was not disappointed as the harvest was indeed rich. The trip provided Parrish with material for eight paintings, and the eighteen etchings of his New Brunswick-Nova Scotia series are ranked among his finest.

Stephen Parrish, born July 9, 1846, was the second son of a successful Quaker merchant. Educated in Philadelphia private schools, Parrish displayed an

aptitude for drawing at an early age. Upon completion of his formal education he embarked on a trip to Europe on his own in 1867, where he was exposed to the works of the great masters.<sup>3</sup> After his return Parrish entered the family business and married. He retained an avid interest in art and continued to paint. In 1877 he committed himself to painting full-time. The experience was only in part a commercial success, since by November 1879, Parrish had only sold seven of the thirty-three paintings he had completed.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time that Parrish was launching his painting career, the international etching movement which had flourished in England and France in the 1860's had reached the American art community with the establishment of the New York Etching Club in 1877.<sup>5</sup> Etching is a form of reproduction whereby the design is etched onto the surface of a copper or zinc plate. The etched lines are then bitten into the plate by acid. After the etched plate is inked, paper is laid over the plate and the image is transferred to the paper under heavy pressure. The etching technique allows for freer movement in drawing than any other graphic process,<sup>6</sup> so the talented artist is able to use the etching process to present an original work of art. Successful painter-etchers used their artistic talent to produce the perceptive works of art known as original prints.

Motivated by the need to support his family and having read *Etching and Etchers* by the British art critic, P. G. Hamerton, Parrish decided to try etching. After one brief lesson from fellow Philadelphia painter-etcher, Peter Moran, Parrish produced his first plate on November 28, 1879.<sup>7</sup> By the year's end Parrish had etched three more plates. Largely self-taught, Parrish quickly demonstrated the drawing talent and adaptability needed to produce high quality etchings. His twelfth plate, entitled *November*, was selected for publication in the influential *American Art Review* by its editor S. R. Koehler. Parrish joined the New York Etching Club in 1880. On May 14th he met with four

other aspiring painter-etchers to found the Philadelphia Society of Etchers.<sup>8</sup> A year later he joined the Royal Society of Painters and Etchers in London. Between 1880 and 1882, Parrish exhibited his etchings at eighteen major art exhibitions in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, London, Vienna, and Montreal. Through the wide exposure of his art at national and international shows, Parrish established his reputation as one of the foremost American painter-etchers.

Unfortunately there were too many poor reproductions produced by publishers attempting to cash in on the sudden demand for etchings. The quality etchings of the painter-etchers were swamped in the flood, and by 1890 dissatisfied art collectors turned away from buying original etchings. In 1892 Stephen Parrish laid away his etching tools and once again committed himself to painting full-time. The 168 etchings he produced are a lasting tribute to his talent and helped "establish the concept of the 'original print' as we know it today."<sup>9</sup>

From the onset of his etching career Parrish's talent was recognized and praised by the leading art critics of the day. In his very positive overview of Parrish's first forty plates, S. R. Koehler admired Parrish's ability to capture the moods that pervade nature.<sup>10</sup> The art critic and editor of *The Portfolio* (London), Philip G. Hamerton, was particularly impressed by "the tonic simplicity of the plate" that completely captured the idea of the place in a few suggestive lines.<sup>11</sup> In 1886, Ripley Hitchcock reviewed the Parrish etching exhibit at the Wunderlich Gallery in New York for the *Art Review*. Hitchcock's review closely examined Parrish's development as an etcher. In particular, Hitchcock noted that in the Bay of Fundy etchings "the figure becomes more prominent than before."<sup>12</sup> With his New Brunswick series, Parrish had refined his technique to a high artistic level thus enabling him "to obtain brilliant effects of light and shade, and convey strong poetic feeling."<sup>13</sup>

The New Brunswick and Nova Scotia etchings and drawings of Stephen Parrish in the Dalhousie collection consist of fifty-eight preparatory drawings and thirteen completed etchings. Unlike many of his fellow painter-etchers, Parrish did not etch directly from nature. Instead he would "sketch it up in pencil first . . . then carefully work out the areas of value in the studio . . ." Parrish retained his preparatory sketches, so a century later we are in the unique position of being able to

see the various stages of Parrish's creative process. While nineteen of the Dalhousie drawings are definitely incomplete, many of the pencil and india ink drawings are complete works of art in their own right. The drawings add to our understanding of the completed etchings as Parrish often used elements from various drawings to complete one etching. With their candid and simple lines the drawings exhibited here clearly document the social history of the period.

By May 1882, Parrish had completed half of his Maritime etchings. The strange shore effects had indeed worked their spell. The tides, the sweeping marsh meadows, and the rich hues of the late summer light provided Parrish with compelling subject matter. They provided him with the scope to explore his major artistic interest of "getting the darks and lights right"<sup>15</sup> and of capturing the dynamics present in the endless juxtaposition of land, sea, and sky. The eleven Maritime etchings exhibited here clearly illustrate Parrish's success in presenting his vision, whether it be the dark, threatening waters of the Bay of Fundy illustrated in *A Squall — Bay of Fundy* (cat. 27) or the muted tones of a cold winter evening seen in *A Winter Evening, Windsor, N.S.* (cat. 52).

While vacationing at Bolton Landing, New York in 1879, Stephen Parrish met and befriended a young art student, Charles A. Platt. The following year Parrish introduced Platt to the etching technique. Platt proved to be an avid student and quickly developed his natural talent. In the late summer of 1881, Platt accompanied Parrish on his sketching tour of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Even though Platt was greatly influenced by his teacher, he developed his own distinct, flowing style.<sup>16</sup> The four Platt etchings exhibited here are representative of his work and clearly demonstrate Platt's discerning eye for composition.

During the 1880's, Platt established himself as one of the foremost American printmakers and his etchings were particularly valued as book illustrations. After the collapse of the etching market in the early 1890's, Platt turned his talents to architecture and had a very successful second career as an architect and garden designer.<sup>17</sup>

Karen Smith  
Head of Special Services  
Dalhousie University Library

## Notes

- 1 Stephen Parrish, letter to S. R. Koehler, July 4, 1881, Sylvester Rosa Koehler Papers, Smithsonian Institute. Quoted from Parrish research notes of R. Tovell, Assoc. Curator, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 2 Stephen Parrish, letter to S. R. Koehler, July 24, 1881, Sylvester Rosa Koehler Papers, Smithsonian Institute. Quoted from Parrish research notes of R. Tovell, Assoc. Curator, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- 3 Maxfield Parrish, *Stephen Parrish (1846-1938) — About the Artist*, Boston: Vose Galleries of Boston, Inc., 1982. (Exhibition catalogue), p.9.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p.6.
- 5 Clifford Ackley, "Sylvester Rosa Koehler and the American Etching Revival," *Art and Commerce*, ed. Jonathan Fairbanks, Proceedings of the American Prints Conference, Boston, 1975, p.143.
- 6 M. G. Van Rensselaer, "American Etchers," *The Century Magazine*, Vol. 25, no. 4, February 1883, p.485.
- 7 Stephen Parrish, "Record of Paintings and Etchings," MSS., Collection of William Greenbaum, Gloucester, Mass.
- 8 Henry Russell Wray, *A Review of Etching in the United States*, Philadelphia: R. C. Penfield, 1893, p.77.
- 9 Rosemarie Tovell, Unpublished Parrish research notes, 1984.
- 10 S. R. Koehler, "The Works of the American Etchers, XV: Stephen Parrish," *American Art Review*, Vol. 2, no. 1, 1881, p.5.
- 11 P. G. Hamerton, "In Port," *Portfolio*, 1882, p.149.
- 12 Ripley Hitchcock, "Some Representative Etchings," *Art Review (New York)* Vol. 1, 1886, p.4.
- 13 "Stephen Parrish," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Vol. 38, p.179.
- 14 Maxfield Parrish, *Stephen Parrish (1846-1938) — About the Artist*, p.10.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p.10.
- 16 M. O'Brien and P. Mandel, *The American Painter-Etcher Movement*, Southampton, New York: The Parrish Art Museum, 1984. (Exhibition catalogue), p.45.
- 17 H. H. Reed, "Charles Adams Platt," *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, Vol. 3, New York: The Free Press, 1982, pp.438-439.

## Works in the Exhibition

Drawings are arranged chronologically according to Parrish's itinerary. Etchings are located following the preparatory drawings for the work. The completion dates and titles for these works are as documented in Stephen Parrish, "Record of Paintings and Etchings," MSS. Coll., Wm. Greenbaum, Mass.

All dimensions are in centimeters, height preceding width; measurements indicate the image size exclusive of titles or inscriptions for works with borders. Sheet dimensions are provided for the drawings without defined borders.

**Stephen Maxfield Parrish (1846-1938)**

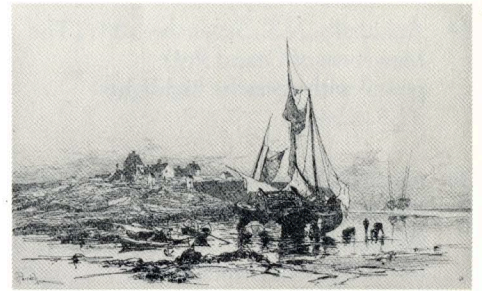
- 1 Carleton, N.B. (St. John West), August 1881  
pencil (incomplete)  
37.5 × 54.5
- 2 Carleton, N.B.  
pencil and ink (incomplete)  
22.0 × 43.5  
Verso drawing: *On Bay of Fundy Near St. John*
- 3 Carleton, N.B., August 1881  
pencil and ink  
38.0 × 56.5
- 4 On St. John River at Carleton  
pencil with gouache highlights  
33.5 × 47.0



- 5 Mills at Mispeck  
etching, drypoint added and printed on vellum  
Philadelphia, 1884  
21.2 × 28.0
- 6 Portland, N.B. (St. John North), August 1881  
pencil with gouache highlights  
39.0 × 23.0
- 7 Portland, N.B., August 1881  
pencil (incomplete)  
31.0 × 52.5
- 8 Boatyards on St. John River  
etching  
Philadelphia, 1886  
6.0 × 11.5
- 9 St. John, N.B. — Low Tide  
pencil with wash (incomplete)  
47.5 × 37.5

- 10 Market Slip, St. John, N.B., August 1881  
pencil (incomplete)  
38.0 × 56.0
- 11 Market Slip, St. John, N.B.  
ink with wash and gouache highlights  
54.5 × 38.0
- 12 Weirs — Harbor of St. John, N.B.  
pencil and ink with gouache highlights  
30.0 × 50.0
- 13 Wood Boat, St. John Harbor  
pencil and wash (incomplete)  
26.0 × 24.0
- 14 On Navy Island — Low Tide  
pencil with wash highlights  
21.0 × 33.5  
Verso drawing: *Untitled (Sketch of Fishing Boat)* (incomplete)
- 15 Harbor, St. John  
pencil  
37.8 × 54.5  
Verso drawing: *On Navy Island, St. John Harbor, N.B., August 1881*
- 16 On Navy Island, St. John Harbor  
pencil (incomplete)  
38.6 × 56.0  
Verso drawing: *On Navy Island, St. John Harbor, August 1881*
- 17 On Navy Island, St. John Harbor  
pencil with gouache highlights  
26.5 × 48.0
- 18 Old Farm near St. John, N.B.  
pencil with gouache highlights  
23.4 × 34.7
- 19 Mouth of St. John River, N.B.  
ink  
25.5 × 35.5
- 20 St. John, N.B. — Looking down the River  
ink  
24.0 × 35.3
- 21 Wood Boats on the St. John River, N.B.  
etching, drypoint added and printed on Japanese tissue  
n.p., early 1882  
12.3 × 27.5

- 22 Mill on the upper St. John  
pencil  
25.3 × 35.0
- 23 Indian House Pool, Restigouche River, N.B.  
etching  
Philadelphia, 1886  
11.0 × 17.5



- 24 A Fishing-Hamlet — Bay of Fundy  
etching, drypoint added  
n.p., spring 1882  
13.5 × 21.0
- 25 Low Tide — Bay of Fundy  
etching, drypoint added  
n.p., fall 1881  
29.5 × 47.0
- 26 Untitled (Wharf Scene)  
pencil (incomplete)  
15.0 × 26.5
- 27 A Squall — Bay of Fundy  
etching, drypoint added  
Philadelphia, 1888  
33.6 × 55.5
- 28 Annapolis, N.S., September 1881  
pencil  
38.0 × 54.4
- 29 Annapolis N.S., August 1881  
pencil  
37.3 × 54.5  
Verso drawing: *Annapolis, N.S., August 1881*
- 30 Annapolis, N.S., September 1881  
ink and pencil (incomplete)  
38.5 × 55.7  
Verso drawing: *Granville, N.S., September 1881*
- 31 The Dykes, Annapolis, N.S., August 1881  
pencil with gouache highlights  
30.0 × 50.0

- 32 *From Goat Island — Annapolis*  
pencil (incomplete)  
38.0 × 54.5  
Verso drawing: *Untitled* (shoreline sketch on Goat Island)
- 33 *The Meadows, Annapolis, N.S., August 1881*  
pencil with gouache highlights  
29.0 × 50.0
- 34 *Annapolis, N.S., September 1881* (The Meadows of Grand Pré)  
pencil with gouache highlights  
37.8 × 54.5
- 35 *Untitled* (Front View of Former Judge Haliburton's House, Round Hill, Annapolis Co.)  
ink and pencil (incomplete)  
26.0 × 39.6  
Verso drawing: *Round Hill, Annapolis, N.S.*
- 36 *The Village-Street*  
pencil and gouache highlights  
11.0 × 17.0
- 37 *Old Tide Mills, Annapolis River, N.S., September 1881*  
pencil and ink with wash highlights  
38.0 × 56.0
- 38 *Untitled* (Cornwallis)  
pencil (incomplete)  
38.0 × 56.2  
Verso drawing: *Untitled* (sketch of a farmhouse)
- 39 *The Dykes, Cornwallis, September 1881*  
pencil  
29.0 × 48.9
- 40 *Meadows, Cornwallis*  
pencil  
38.0 × 53.0  
Verso drawing: *Outside the Dykes, Cornwallis Meadows*
- 41 *In Cornwallis Valley*  
etching, printed on Japanese tissue  
n.p., May 1882  
14.0 × 33.0
- 42 *Meadows of Grand Pré*  
pencil  
8.5 × 21.5
- 43 *Meadows of Grand Pré, September 1881*  
pencil with gouache highlights  
26.0 × 53.5
- 44 *Near Granville, N.S.*  
pencil and gouache highlights  
29.0 × 23.5  
Verso drawing: *Untitled* (sketch of oxen)
- 45 *Meteghan, N.S.*  
pencil and gouache highlights  
23.5 × 35.5  
Verso drawing: *Untitled* (sketch of barnyard)
- 46 *Basin of Minas — Low Tide*  
ink with ink wash and gouache highlights  
30.0 × 44.0
- 47 *Pubnico, N.S.*  
pencil (incomplete)  
25.0 × 35.0
- 48 *Pubnico, N.S.*  
ink and pencil  
25.5 × 35.5  
Verso drawing: *Market Town, S. W. Nova Scotia*
- 49 *Judge Haliburton's House (Sam Slick) Back View*  
pencil with gouache highlights  
37.6 × 54.5  
Verso drawing: *Grand Pré — Nova Scotia, September 1881*
- 50 *Windsor, N.S.*  
pencil and ink with gouache highlights  
10.0 × 18.6
- 51 *A Winter Day — Windsor, N.S.*  
etching  
Philadelphia, 1887  
15.0 × 20.2
- 52 *A Winter Evening — Windsor, N.S.*  
etching, drypoint added  
n.p., 1883  
17.5 × 29.5
- 53 *Old Inn Yard, Wolfville, N.S., September 1881*  
pencil  
38.0 × 54.4
- 54 *In Nova Scotia*  
pencil and ink  
33.0 × 48.0
- 55 *A Nova Scotian Solitude*  
pencil and ink  
21.0 × 42.0
- 56 *Old Acadian Inn Yard*  
etching, drypoint added and printed on vellum  
n.p., 1882  
22.2 × 31.2
- 57 *An Old Homestead*  
pencil and ink (incomplete)  
26.0 × 36.5
- 58 *On the Saguenay River, Quebec*  
etching  
n.p., n.d.  
10.0 × 21.0
- 59 *Near Quebec*  
etching, drypoint added  
n.p., n.d.  
14.0 × 24.0

#### Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933)

- 60 *A Corner of Portland*  
etching  
n.p., 1882  
26.0 × 21.0
- 61 *Untitled* (Windsor, N.S.)  
etching  
n.p., 1882  
10.5 × 22.0
- 62 *Old Houses at Windsor, N.S.*  
etching, drypoint added  
n.p., 1881  
21.5 × 39.5
- 63 *Untitled* (A Provincial Fishing Village, Canada)  
etching  
n.p., 1882  
6.6 × 12.5



We wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Nova Scotia Department of Culture, Recreation and Fitness.