Original artwork for *Film Fun*, March, 1937. Oil, 24 x 30 inches.

BEAUTY BY DESIGN
THE ART OF
ENOCH BOLLES

BY JACK RAGLIN

Call her a pretty girl, a pin-up, or a glamour queen—during the Golden Age of illustration she reigned supreme. For an illustrator to reach the pinnacle of fame mastery of the female form was compulsory, and serious debate was given to the rival charms of the girls of Gibson, Christy, Fisher, Flagg, Philips, and others. These artists earned huge salaries depicting their girls and became the first media stars. They were photographed at work in their studios as well as socializing with high society. Their opinions of subjects ranging from beauty to politics were widely published. Even their models were newsworthy. Magazine publishers clamored to sign artists to long-term contracts to draw pretty girls, and overcrowded newsstands grew as monotonous as a ballroom of debutants in the same dress. To stand out from the pack an artist's girl needed something special, and the enchanting creations of Enoch Bolles had it. For nearly 30 years the Bolles girl graced the covers of magazines such as *Judge* and *Film Fun*; negotiating shifts in hemlines and bustlines from the Edwardian, to the flapper, to the Hollywood vamp. Bolles was also a prolific advertising artist of products from bread to Zippo lighters, and produced hundreds of stunning color ads.

Yet, all of Bolles' advertising art has either gone unrecognized or credited to others, as have many of his pin-ups. Virtually nothing was written about Bolles during his life, and the little that has seen print since is rife with sensationalized accounts of debilitating mental and physical illness. The most widely reported story alleges he went insane and died in an asylum defacing his paintings of beautiful girls with grotesque flourishes and lurid sexual imagery. Another account maintains Bolles suffered a stroke that robbed him of his ability to paint at the very peak of his career.

My own interest in Bolles was sparked by a single issue of *Film Fun*. At a time when the chief marketing ploy of pulp magazines was the screaming girl in mortal peril, the carefree spirit of the Bolles' girl was a ray of sunshine. Not only was she happy—envisioned by an artist who obviously liked women—she was surprisingly modern. In a genre that would become cliché-ridden with girls losing their footing or suffering worse fates, Bolles' girls were remarkably competent. They skied, surfed, fly fished, scaled mountains, sailed, motorcycled, and even wing-walked their way across the covers of *Film Fun* and other magazines. As put by Robert Brown, "No other nation's cover girls looked as at home on the court or playing fields as did Enoch Bolles' creations." Bolles worked in fashion illustration early in his career and his girls rank among the most stylishly dressed of any pin-up artist.

Today, the look of the Bolles girl would be comfortably labeled retro. Despite their historical context, Bolles instilled his girls with qualities that keep them fresh. With gravity-defying breasts, abs straight as a picket fence, and beautifully elongated hands always carefully posed and often holding a cigarette, Bolles' girl was more athletic and shapely than those painted by his peers. Usually flashing an incandescent smile framed by heart-shaped lips, on other occasions she could be pouty or just plain bored. In essence, Bolles was a mannerist. His girls were the deliberate creation of a man with a unique vision of beauty—simple, yet sophisticated—who possessed the skills to achieve it.

The enigma of Enoch Bolles—his alluring girls and the rumors of personal turmoil—compelled me to bring to light this elusive figure who left a staggering legacy of over 500 magazine covers and count-

Two early examples of advertising artwork, c. 1900–1907

less advertising illustrations without seeming to leave a single trace of his personal life. My initial efforts to learn about Bolles produced nothing but frustration. Months of sifting through genealogies, governmental documents, and other sources yielded the barest crumbs of information. Then finally a real lead: a faded newspaper clipping of his obituary. I learned that Bolles had died in 1976 at the age of 93 at his home in New Jersey—not in an insane asylum as alleged. The notice also included the names of his surviving family. Sadly, further checks indicated that seven of his eight children had since passed away. On the remote chance that his youngest daughter was still living, I began searching for her name in telephone directories. Out of countless entries there was only a single match. After some hesitation I nervously dialed the number and was answered by Enoch's 86-year old daughter, Theresa.

And so began the next chapter of my journey to bring Bolles out of the shadows. Time has taken its inevitable toll. Memories have faded. Friends and family have passed. But the alluring art of Enoch Bolles lives on and tells his story in a way that words cannot.

THE EARLY YEARS

Enoch Bolles was born in Boardman, Florida on March 3, 1883 to Enoch Jr. and the former Catherine Keep. Enoch's father and brothers were chemists who owned orchards used for making perfume. His wife's family also owned orchards in the area. Two years later, Enoch's beloved sister Mary was born. When work let up the family traveled to Louisiana to spend time with Clara's family or Newark where Enoch's grandfather and other relatives lived.

From an early age the young Enoch showed an aptitude for art which his parents encouraged. The budding pretty girl artist was also fortunate to grow up during the ascension of Charles Dana Gibson. The wildly popular Gibson girl has been called the first national media icon; a "type" that mandated how a generation of women should look and act. Her popularity brought Gibson extraordinary financial rewards. Already earning handsomely, in 1904 Gibson signed a contract with *Collier's* for the unprecedented sum of $100,000; an amount that today would be approximately two million dollars. The original arrangement called for somewhat lower compensation, but the clamor raised by competing publishers over such an excessive sum prompted Bob Collier and his business manager, Conde Nast, to raise the ante even higher and offer "an even $1,000 per drawing." To further roil the waters, they published his acceptance letter in newspapers across the country.

Gibson wasn't the only illustrator getting rich from drawing pretty girls. By 1910, Howard Chandler Christy and Harrison Fisher were each earning over $50,000 yearly. These artists quickly became shrewd marketers of their wares. Years before George Petty retained reproduction rights on his famous girls for reuse in various advertisements, Fisher described his methods for remarketing his magazine covers: "I do not sell them outright, and thus they are returned to me. Since their first use they have already appeared in a gift book and my calendar." They then appeared on playing cards, a re-edition of a gift book, posters, and decorative designs. After all possible commercial options were exhausted, Fisher would sell the originals. Other illustrators followed suit, and images of men became so rare on the newsstands that none other than Alberto Vargas remarked, "Every magazine cover but *National Geographic* had a painting of a pretty girl." None of this was lost on the young Bolles, and several of his earliest surviving illustrations were of girls done in the Gibson mode.

Original art for fashion card, c. 1900–1907

In 1893, during one of the family visits to Newark, Enoch's father died unexpectedly. Barely one year later there was another shock when grandfather Enoch passed away. The family then moved in with other relatives in Newark but Enoch continued to work the family groves in Florida, once returning so tanned that his fiancé, Clara Kaufman, didn't recognize him. Bolles had met Clara in New York and both shared an interest in art. In April of 1903 they wed, and three years later they had a daughter, Clara, the first of their eight children. During this time the growing family lived in New York City before moving to Tappan, New York, and then several years later settled into their lifelong home in Harrington Park, New Jersey.

In his early years Bolles was employed as a shoemaker and carpenter, the latter a skill he returned to throughout his life, building furniture and even a boat in his spare time. Bolles' art career began soon after he was married, and his first professional assignment may have been for the Philadelphia Shipyard making illustrations of watercraft. The earliest existing examples of his professional art were for the Hammerschlag Printing Company of New York. He created whatever the assignment called for including pen and ink drawings, hand lettered signs and packaging, and color illustrations for fashion cards.

During this period Bolles took a crucial step in furthering his artistic growth by attending the premier institutions of art and illustration. In the fall of 1907 he enrolled in classes at the National Academy of Design. His talent was acknowledged by the Academy, and in both 1907 and 1908 he was awarded the Elliot Bronze medal as well as being granted a special prize in 1908. In 1912, he took night courses at the Art Students League in illustration and composition from Edward Dufner. Night courses were generally attended by students who were already working as professional illustrators. Although not noted in the records of the Art Students League, other sources indicate that Bolles studied under the master instructor, Robert Henri. These experiences left an indelible impression on Bolles, who over a half century later recounted them in remarkable detail to his daughter, Elizabeth. In his letters to her, Bolles acknowledged the value of his education, but like other illustrators who had worked under Henri, Bolles frowned on his tendency to "develop a young painter in his chosen style."

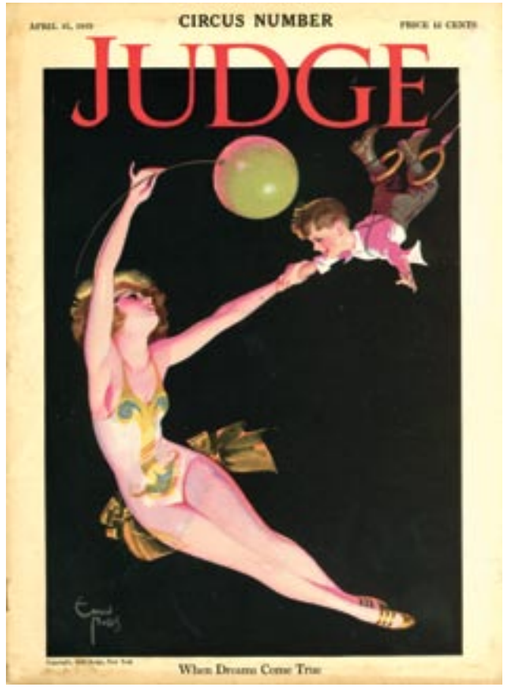
A turning point in Bolles' career took place in 1914 when he sold his first cover to *Judge* magazine. Not surprisingly, the subject was a pretty girl. In the 1910's, *Judge* evolved from a forum for conser-

***Judge*, October 31, 1914**

Advertising artwork for Hammerschlag Printing Company, c. 1900–1907

Bolles at the National Academy of Design, c. 1908. Artist unknown.

Judge, March 20, 1915



Judge, April 21, 1923

Judge, August 13, 1927

Judge, September 3, 1927

Judge, February 24, 1917

vative politics into a humor magazine second in popularity only to *Life*. Its covers were painted by many of the reigning giants of illustration and often featured pretty girls drafted by the likes of Flagg, Armstrong, and even Rockwell before he was told he "made a lousy Gibson" and advised to focus on children. Children were also an occasional subject for Bolles, and one of his most popular *Judge* covers was "Bad Manners, but Good Taste." His youngest daughter, Theresa, was enlisted as a model until Clara walked in on the session and summarily ended the sitting by wiping up the offending mess.

The timing of Bolles' entry into the pretty girl genre was fortuitous. Gibson's work, if not his reputation, was becoming increasingly irrelevant as the fashions of the time passed him by. His biographer later said that of all his drawings, Gibson managed only one good flapper. In his typically brash manner, Flagg decried the modern girl and her "strapped bosom," yearning for a return to an earlier era. Christy would soon leave the field of commercial illustration to specialize in society portraits. This generation of illustrators was growing uncomfortable with the look of the new American woman. Bolles, on the other hand, had no such compunctions and he eagerly took up the flapper in all her brash exuberance.

The *Judge* covers provided Bolles much needed exposure but fell short of supporting a large family. The magazine was never financially solvent, paying only after publication and even then begrudgingly. Its editor, Douglas Cooke, was a notorious skinflint known for repeatedly putting off artists who came to collect, going so far as to claim that the check was lost in the mail. Even the great Flagg was not exempt from such treatment; once after being rebuffed, he threw a fit and refused to leave Cooke's office until a check was cut. During this period Bolles supported his family largely through advertising illustration, specializing in trolley cards done in oil.

Enoch Bolles is seen creating trolley card advertisements in this page from an unknown trade publication.

Best Foods
GOLD MEDAL
Mayonnaise

Life's Necessities ~ Air, Water, BREAD
Buy Bakers Bread
It's more nourishing when made with FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST

Best Foods
GOLD MEDAL
MAYONNAISE
THE BEST FOODS INC.
One of the Best Foods for WINTER and SUMMER

PER-FET-TO
Sugar Wafers
SUNSHINE
PER-FET-TO
ASSORTED SUGAR WAFERS
Everymeal
Everyday
Sunshine Biscuits

CALIFORNIA
Holiday Desserts with
SUN-MAID
RAISINS

Your smile is what your teeth make it
use
SQUIBB'S
DENTAL CREAM
Made with SQUIBB'S
Milk of Magnesia

Greetings!
Best Foods
Relish Spred
Best Foods
Mayonnaise
Best Foods
BREAD AND BUTTER
PICKLES
Nucoa
OLEOMARGARINE
Best Foods
Best Foods

Sore Throat~
relieve
without dosing
Apply~
VICKS
VAPORUB
VICKS
OVER 17 21 MILLION JARS USED YEARLY

Best Foods
GOLD MEDAL
MAYONNAISE
~ she didn't
make it
It's
Best Foods
GOLD MEDAL
Mayonnaise

Get back of a
PETER SCHUYLER
Perfecto
FIVE-PACK
In
Handy Packs
of 5 and 10
PETER SCHUYLER

Famous Fain
KNITTED
CHRISTMAS GIFTS
COMBINE
BEAUTY AND UTILITY
SOLD EXCLUSIVELY BY
Fain Knitting Mills
FAMOUS FAIN HOSIERY
NEW YORK STORES 206 Broadway, cor. Fulton St.
500 Fifth Ave. cor. 42nd St.
124 West 125th St.
BROOKLYN STORES 571 Fulton St.
902 Park Ave.
Our New Store de Luxe, 506 Fifth Ave.

Aw, please Mom!
gimme some more
Best Foods
GOLD MEDAL
Mayonnaise

Original artwork for trolley card advertisement, c. 1920s

Most of this work was for Barron Collier and the New York Sign Company, each among the nation's largest advertising sign companies. Edward Hopper, who may have been a classmate of Bolles at the Art Students' League, also worked for the New York Sign Company. Bolles' primary client was Best Foods, and he produced trolley signs and store displays for all of their major products. Food illustration is a notoriously difficult subject, but Bolles succeeded in balancing the fine line between oversimplifying and overrendering, either of which would dull the consumer's appetite for the product. Other major clients included Sun Maid, Vick's, and Palm Beach Suits.

Moving easily from realistically finished portraits to quick sketches—most impressively his exuberantly smoking Santa in the ad for Peter Schuyler cigars—Bolles' advertising work reveals an impressive command of composition and style that he tailored to the instructions of the client or dictates of the product. Still, personal touches could be found. Bolles enjoyed painting landscapes for leisure and was able to work them into ads for various products. His mastery of hand lettering also shines in these ads. The only known photograph of Bolles at work comes from this period, appearing in an article from an unidentified trade publication that described him as "one of America's finest illustrators."

Bolles' career-defining opportunity came in late 1923 when he was chosen as the exclusive cover artist for *Film Fun* magazine. His contribution helped create what historian David Sloane called "the oldest, longest lived, and the best of all film-oriented humor magazines." Retitled from the *Magazine of Fun* in 1915, *Film Fun* began as a typical cinema magazine filled with stills from movies, short features, and photos of screen stars. It continued this staid course until 1923, when *Judge* editor and cartoonist Norman Anthony was brought onto the editorial board to enliven the magazine's image. Circulation improved and Anthony later credited himself, claiming the magazine had profited from his changes to its editorial content, particularly the "hilariously funny captions" he added to the movie photos provided free by the studios for their publicity. He never acknowledged that at the very time he was changing the interior of *Film Fun*, Bolles was making a far more visible impact, and it was his covers that enticed new readers to explore the new developments within its pages. As one reader put it, "The person who said he bought the magazine for the jokes alone ought to take a course in art." *Film Fun* was the only profitable title out of the Leslie-Judge lineup, but in 1927 a new owner sold it off to Dell Publishing for $17,500 to pay off long-standing debts. The strategy proved misguided as Leslie-Judge later filed for bankruptcy while Dell took in $100,000 in annual profit from *Film Fun* for the following decade.

The signature Bolles style emerged with *Film Fun*. The earliest covers had his girls posed against fully rendered backgrounds, but Bolles soon shifted to more poster-like compositions, his girls surrounded by a stark white field with only an amorphic shadow in blue to ground them to the background. Compared with other illustrators, the Bolles girl was hotter, exhibiting a quality of the times described by historian Elizabeth Stevenson as "a new arrangement of the elements of sex and fashion."

Preliminay sketch for *Film Fun*, c. 1924

In the 1920s, many of his *Film Fun* girls were classic flappers with alarmingly narrow figures that would now be diagnosed as anorexic. Other than the lollipop bodies of John Held, Bolles may have been alone in celebrating the sapling-like physiques that dismayed so many other illustrators of the era. But Bolles' flappers were no cartoon parody; in their own way they were as attractive and womanly as any of the fulsome vamps he specialized in a decade later for the *Spicy* pulps.

Soon after signing on with *Film Fun* he began working for the pulps. In 1924, he produced covers for *Snappy Stories* at the rate of two a month for the next three years, as well as an occasional cover for the humor magazine *Laughter*. These assignments provided Bolles more freedom to experiment with variations in style than with *Film Fun*, from quick impressionistic sketches to more elaborate compositions.

***Film Fun*, December, 1922**

***Film Fun*, July, 1923**

***Film Fun*, July, 1924**

***Film Fun*, April, 1925**

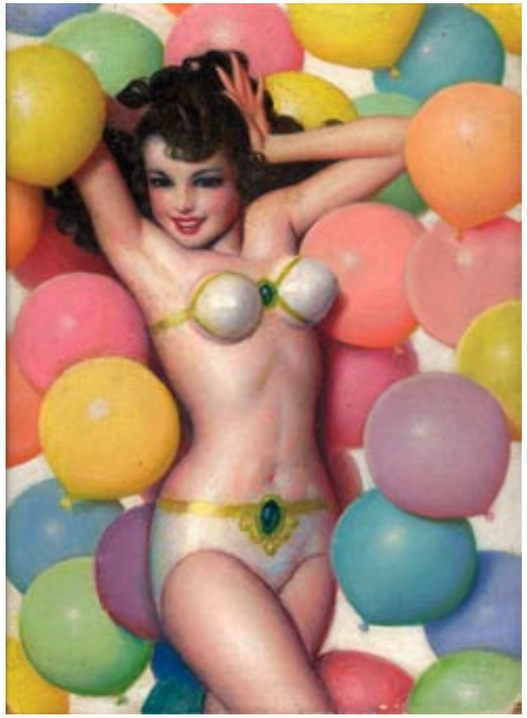
***Film Fun*, May, 1927**

***Film Fun*, November, 1930**

***Film Fun*, November, 1936**

***Film Fun*, March, 1938**

***Film Fun*, June, 1942**



Preliminary sketch for *Film Fun*, 1941. Oil, 9 x 12 inches.

Film Fun, October, 1941.

Film Fun, January, 1941

Preliminary sketch for *Film Fun*, c. 1941

Preliminary sketch for *Film Fun*, c. 1946

Film Fun, February, 1946

Original artwork for *Film Fun*, February, 1946 (reworked.) Oil, 24 x 30 inches.

Image courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, Inc.

Original artwork for *Film Fun*, December, 1936. Oil, 24 x 30 inches.

Imitation and Inspiration

Original artwork for *Film Fun*, ???. Oil, 24 x 30 inches.

Original artwork for *Film Fun*, February, 1946 (reworked.) Oil, 24 x 30 inches.

Image courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, Inc.

Movie Humor cover by George Quintana

Bolles influenced or inspired other well known pulp illustrators who specialized in pretty girls, which resulted in much of his cover art going uncredited or misattributed to other illustrators. Foremost among them was George Quintana, who illustrated *Movie Humor* and similar titles. Quintana has often been described as an artistic peer of Bolles, but an examination of this work reveals that he was anything but an equal. Virtually every one of his cover paintings was either directly copied from a Bolles or was a pastiche of several covers. Quintana's mimickry was only partially successful as he lacked Bolles' mastery of color and anatomy. His attempts to duplicate Bolles' subtle figural stylizations come off as crabbed, particularly his treatment of hands. Quintana owed his career to Bolles, but he wasn't the only artist who was influenced by him. Among others, Peter Driben also would occasionally borrow a Bolles composition, and for a time Earle Bergey fell under his shadow, to the extent that two of his paintings (images 79, 82) are miscredited to Bolles in *The Great American Pin-up*. More than a few readers of *Film Fun* noticed and as one aptly wrote, "many other magazines on the newsstands try to imitate the style used by your cover artist, Enoch Bolles, but fail in the attempt."

Even the great Alberto Vargas was inspired by Bolles. His gatefold in the August 1964 issue of *Playboy* was taken from the classic

Real Screen Fun cover by Quintana

Cupid's Capers, November, 1933

Preliminary sketch, c. 1933

Albert Vargas is inspired by Bolle's "bicycle pose" in the August, 1964 issue of *Playboy*.

Image courtesy of HMH Enterprises, Inc.

Bolles variation of the so-called 'bicycle pose' that appeared on a cover of *Cupid's Capers*. This image has been described by Francis Smith as "one of the very finest of American covers," "a superb composition." Robert Brown has referred to this cover as "a classic erotic illusion." Its original incarnation was more sedate and a pencil concept sketch indicates it was originally proposed as a *Film Fun* cover. On the back side Bolles penciled a note to the editor indicating that, "with enough pants, as indicated, this wouldn't be offensive." Clearly, however, even with the extra covering, the pose was beyond the pale of *Film Fun*.

Bolles drew on many sources for his own artistic inspiration and once described it, "as well as ask a bridge architect to invent his own personal code of mathematics as to expect an artist to work without precedent. It's *what* you do more than *how*." He often worked with models, many who were showgirls who worked in night club acts such as Earl Carroll's Vanities. Like many illustrators Bolles often worked from photographs, sometimes taken from an earlier issue of *Film Fun*, but he was never tied to literal interpretations of them. As stated by Francis Smith in *Stolen Sweets*, a history of glamour illustration: "If a model had a twisted garter, Moran or Elvgren would paint it that way. But Bolles was a stylist and interpreter." ■

Snappy Stories, January, 1927

PEP, May, 1929

Spicy Stories, April, 1929

Tattle Tales, July, 1933

Stolen Sweets, ?

Bedtime Stories, November, 1934

Breezy Stories, January, 1936

Gay Parisienne, August, 1937

Gay Broadway, ?

THE 1930s

The turn of the decade brought both new opportunity and challenges to Bolles. In early 1928 he began to paint covers for *Pep* and then later that year for *Spicy Stories*. Both of these pulp magazines were owned by Frank Armer but would later be sold to Harry Donenfield. Bolles would have an on and off association with the publications of these men for the next decade, although it would be next to anonymous as none of this work was signed.

Some of Bolles' very best covers, if not his most well known, were for the Nuregal Press whose scandalous under-the-counter titles included *Tattle Tales, Bedtime Stories*, *Cupid's Capers*, and *Stolen Sweets*. Among them none is more remarkable than the "Zanzibar" cover of an African pin-up for a 1933 issue of *Tattle Tales*. Given the debasing stereotypes of black women that prevailed, the sensuous woman depicted on the cover is nothing short of extraordinary. Nearly 40 years would pass before Vargas painted his first black pin-up for *Playboy*. Describing this and other anonymous Bolles covers in his book *Stolen Sweets*, Francis "Smilby" Smith states, "his extremely attractive girls have genuine sex appeal, and at times an exoticism beyond the reach of most of his confreres. Here, one feels, may be a talented artist reduced to working in this market because of the Depression." This perspective was also held by pulp illustrator Ernest Chiriaka, who didn't know Bolles but felt he worked for "soft" publications of questionable reputation.

As noted by Doug Ellis in his history of the Spicy Pulps, *Uncovered*, the publishers of these magazines were under constant threat of the law and pressure from public decency groups. Bolles' anonymity may well have been self-protective as even the slightest connection with these publishers could have put him in jeopardy.

continued on page 24...

Original artwork for *Film Fun*, January, 1940. Oil, 24 x 30 inches.

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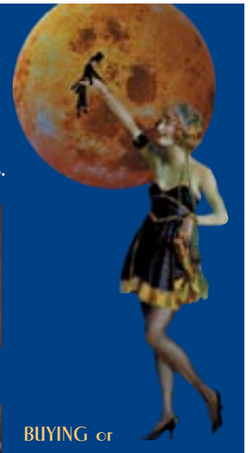
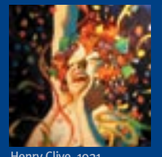
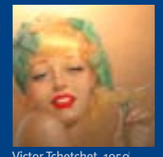


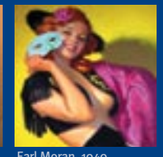
Rolf Armstrong, 1931
Green River Soda Girl



Henry Clive, 1921
Intoxication



Victor Tchetchet, 1950
Pin-up Glamour Girl Toasting



Earl Moran, 1949
Marilyn Monroe as Spanish Girl

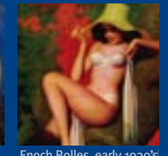
Rolf Armstrong, 1935
The Hollywood Venus

Raphael Kirchner, 1900's
Original Art Nouveau Kirchner Girl

Adelaide Heibel, 1932
Hiawatha's Honeymoon

Albert Beck Wenzell, 1897
Victorian Beauties w/ Angels

Henry Clive, 1934
Moon of My Delight



Enoch Bolles, early 1930's
Spicy Pulp Pin-up Cover

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Portrait Work

Untitled portrait, c. 1930s??

Unpublished portrait of Miriam Hopkins, circa 1935

Although known for his figure painting, Bolles completed several portraits for movie magazines in 1930. Two of these were for the Dell publication *Talking Screen* (soon retitled *Modern Screen*), under the art direction of Abril Lamarque. They are notable for being done with very different techniques. The first cover was a pastel portrait of Norma Shearer modeled in the style of Rolf Armstrong. It must not have passed unnoticed, as Armstrong struck back several months later with his own portrait of Shearer for *The New Movie* using the exact pose. A comparison of the two is revealing. Bolles' fidelity to his subject was true to a fault: Shearer's wandering right eye (which plagued her throughout her career) is evident. Armstrong would have none of this. He not only corrected her vision, but enlarged Shearer's eyes and performed other cosmetic enhancements. Bolles' second cover for *Talking Screen* was an oil portrait of Nancy Carroll done in his more typical style. He also contributed at least one painting of Greta Garbo for *Screen Romances* in 1930. From these examples and his unpublished work, it is evident that Bolles could have been successful as a portrait illustrator. Why he did not continue in this vein is not known, but the answer may have involved simple economics as portraits were more time consuming than his *Film Fun* or pulp covers. ■

Talking Screen, January, 1930

Screen Romances, February, 1930

Talking Screen, March, 1930

The New Movie, July, 1931

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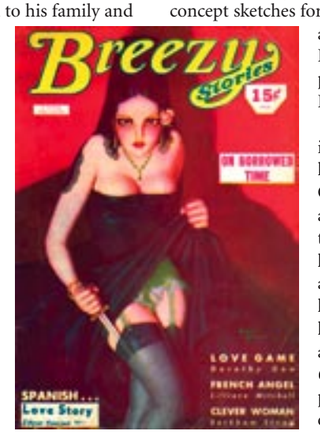
***Portrait of Jack Simes, Jr.*, c. 1920s**

But the question remains as to why he put so much thought and effort into these canvases. The pay was only marginal. Hugh Ward, who did covers for these titles after Bolles moved on, earned $50 to $75 per cover, and complained about being "stiffed" by the editors more than once. These magazines may simply have provided Bolles a forum for exploring themes beyond the pale of *Film Fun*.

The audacity of these covers and his work on other spicy titles stands in glaring contrast to Bolles' own modest persona. A sensitive man of keen intelligence, he had in his own words, "a wide and lively interest in everything." Described by family and friends as unfailingly polite and kind, Bolles was devoted to his family and had no inclination for the bohemian lifestyle pursued by other illustrators. A master fisherman, there was nothing he enjoyed more than to spend time casting at his favorite trout streams. He and Clara ran a progressive household in which his sons and daughters were equally encouraged to participate in vigorous sports and pursue higher education. Two of his children became artists and his daughter, Francesca collaborated with him on the cover of the September 1928 issue of *Film Fun*. They signed it "Fran." Many professional illustrators did not paint for recreation, but Bolles was compelled to, favoring landscapes or portraits of family members. Among the most impressive of these works was of Jack Simes, Jr., his son-in-law who was an internationally renowned competitive bicyclist. Bolles often reworked old paintings to test new techniques or ideas, and regretfully painted over many of his *Film Fun* covers to reuse the canvases.

Bolles had to work extremely hard to support a large family and painted three or more covers a month in addition to *Film Fun*. He supplemented his income with advertising work and the occasional commission, but even with all this there still were hard times. In 1931 his wife fell seriously ill, and to pay the hospital bills Bolles was forced to work for publications he would otherwise have ignored, contributing covers for the spicy titles *Pictorial French Follies* and *Hollywood Nights*. Much of this work was based on concept sketches for *Film Fun* and executed in mixed media. After a long convalescence, Clara fully recovered and Bolles dropped these titles, but they endured periods of financial struggle throughout the Depression.



***Breezy Stories*, April, 1944**

Bolles' daily routine involved an early morning commute by train from Harrington Parks to his one-room studio on 45th Street in New York City. He often did not return until after dark, and if deadlines loomed he would paint through the night in his studio, sustained by coffee and little else. Often he worked during weekends, and on more than one occasion would paint 24 hours straight to meet a deadline. Working as his own agent, Bolles picked up the covers to additional spicy titles including *Breezy Stories*, *Gay Parisienne*, and *Spicy Stories*. Although he painted more than 300 covers for these and other pulps, virtually none were signed, save a single issue of *Breezy Stories* in which a facsimile of his signature was added by the engraver. This cover was also unusual for being the only Bolles painting in the spicy menace style of Hugh Ward. Bolles often signed his *Film Fun* covers, but in contrast to Armstrong or Petty whose signatures were nearly invariant (Petty's was trademarked), Bolles liked to experiment with his. In some cases he tinkered with the lettering or coloring. In other covers he worked his signature into the composition by printing it in both negative and positive space in the border of a shadow.

The Bolles style evolved throughout the 1930s. His compositions became more elaborate and inventive, and he enlarged the scale of his paintings by using seated poses or through foreshortening. His already strong palette grew even bolder with primaries but retained its pleasing balance. Bolles was well-versed in the technicalities of printing and his covers for the *Spicy* pulps remained attractive despite being printed in three or sometimes only two colors. His painting style became more refined and the expressive brushwork from a decade earlier evolved into more subtle gradations. Most of all, the Bolles girl got sexier. The girl-next-door had moved out and the new tenant was decidedly less reserved. Bolles' girls were often dressed in outlandish costumes ranging from catsuits to police uniforms, and a surprising number of covers included double entendres, some quite subtle but others far less so. The sexiness was often leavened with humor, though rarely at the expense of the girl. Bolles was certainly aware of all this, and years later explained, "art has different meanings and carries different messages for everyone." At the same time Bolles' work was growing in scope, the editorial eye of *Film Fun* was drifting from featuring rising Hollywood starlets to chlorines, and in its waning days, "Hollywood hopefuls." In 1939, the magazine was reorganized and Charles Saxon, a Dell staffer, was brought in to take the helm at the ripe young age of 20.

DARK TIMES

In August 1938, the reign of Bolles' *Film Fun* covers came to an abrupt end. The next four covers were weak imitations by Albert Fisher. Three uninspired photo covers followed, and then seven issues with Bolles covers recycled from earlier issues of *Film Fun*, some with slight alterations. During this time his work also disappeared from the covers of *Spicy Stories* and *Gay Parisienne*, titles he had regularly illustrated for the previous five years. But after an absence of over a year, a new Bolles graced the cover of the December 1939 issue of *Film Fun*. The event was highlighted by a feature article—not about Bolles, who (aside from fan mail) was rarely mentioned within the pages of the magazine—but on the cover model, Kitty Keane, who like most of his models bore little resemblance to the girl on the cover.

New works continued until August 1940, interrupted by another spate of photo covers which only reinforced Bolles' absence. But from June 1941 until September of the following year, new Bolles girls graced each cover of *Film Fun*, including some of his finest work. The next month the magazine folded, not the casualty of declining readership but at the hand of the U.S. Postmaster General who revoked the second class mailing privileges, declaring that the magazine does "no more than appeal to the salaciously disposed." Efforts by lawyers for the magazine failed to convince him otherwise. A few other reprinted covers appeared in *Young's Magazine*, but Bolles completed one new cover in 1943 for the new pin-up magazine *Titter*. It featured a contemplative showgirl wearing what may be the most exquisite fishnet stockings ever rendered.

With new pin-up magazines taking the place of *Film Fun* and growing opportunities in the calendar business and paperbacks, why didn't Bolles simply move onto new markets? The explanation that a paralyzing stroke ended Bolles' career was a fabrication by the editor of *Film Fun* to protect his privacy. In truth, Bolles did succumb to a mental disorder. In April of 1938 Bolles called a relative from his studio and complained about "hearing voices." Bolles was evaluated by a physician who diagnosed his condition as a result of poor nutrition and overwork, and directed Bolles to "keep fuel in the tank." Unfortunately, his symptoms did not improve and Bolles entered Greystone Hospital, a state-owned mental institution located in the rolling hills of upper New Jersey.

Greystone was built during the progressive movement following the Civil War according to the guidelines of Thomas Kirkbride's "moral treatment," a system that emphasized caring for patients in a humane manner in tranquil surroundings. The hospital opened in 1876 and was designed to house about 600 patients, but over the ensuing decades it grew into a sprawling complex. By the time Bolles became a patient, the hospital population had peaked at nearly 7,500 with a roughly equal number of staff living on its grounds. Under Kirkbride's system the main hospital was designed to comfortably house patients in well lighted and ventilated quarters situated in a park-like setting. Men and women patients were segregated in separate wings of the hospital according to the severity of illness. Although it was a public facility that included indigent patients with the most severe forms of dementia, the well-to-do could bring their own personal staff and live in suites or even private cottages. The main hospital underwent several expansions and may have been the largest single structure in America until the construction of the Pentagon. From its inception, Greystone was intended to be self-sufficient. It had its own farms, orchards, bakery, icehouse, police station, sawmill, and other necessities of community life. It was so large that electric railcars were used to transport food and supplies via underground tunnel.

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***Titter*, Winter, 1943**

The Windy Girl

Of all of Bolles' advertising work, his most widely reproduced illustration is his least known. In 1937, Bolles received a commission to complete a painting promoting the Zippo windproof lighter. "Windy" debuted in the December 1937 issue of *Esquire* as a black-and-white ad. The illustration was unsigned, but an egregiously misspelled tag line credited, "Enoc Boles." Windy was an immediate hit and her image was stamped on lighters that are now highly sought by collectors. The ad was reprinted in *Esquire* for several more years but with one alteration: the acknowledgement to Bolles was dropped and he was never credited again. Other artists created Windy illustrations for new ads, but none had the sassy charm of the original.

In 1993, Windy was introduced to a new generation in the theme of the Zippo collectible lighter of the year. The lighter was packaged in a decorative tin illustrated with the original image of Windy from the Esquire ad. But again Bolles was not credited as Windy's creator, and she was now christened the Varga Windy. Information included with the lighter described how the founding president of Zippo, George Blaisdell, was a fan of Alberto Vargas and commissioned him to paint Windy for the ad. The commemorative lighter has become a huge success and Zippo has produced over 80 variations in different colors and designs as well as other Windy products, all stamped as a Varga but based on the Bolles painting. From the perspective of Zippo, the story is true by intent. When queried about the discrepancy, a representative from the company confirmed that Blaisdell was indeed an admirer of Vargas and had chosen him to bring Windy to life only to find he could not meet his asking price, so Bolles was chosen as a more affordable alternative. Another source not affiliated with the company stated that the original painting of Windy hung for years in Blasdell's office, where he proudly referred to her as his Varga girl. Sadly, the painting is no longer in the possession of Zippo and its present fate is unknown.

As plausible as the story sounds, it is unlikely. In 1937, Alberto Vargas was still an unfamiliar name to the public at large. Several years of lean work in New York compelled him to move California in 1934 where he was employed in relative anonymity as a design artist for several movie studios. It would not be until the end of 1940 that his illustrations for *Esquire* would launch him into prominence as the creator of the Varga girl. This fame did not remedy Vargas' financial distress as his contract stipulated a rate of $300 a month, with clauses which severely limited his opportunities to do outside work. Blaisdell could have easily afforded him.

The far more likely choice to bring Windy to life was George Petty, who in 1937 was nearing the pinnacle of his popularity. His Petty girl had become a national rage, ostentatiously displayed in products ranging from cigarettes to swimwear. But his asking price of over a $1,000 an ad would have dissuaded the budget-minded Blaisdell. Another factor working against Petty was his distaste to see the female sex smoking. Even in his ads for Old Gold the Petty girl was never caught puffing, and rarely ever held a cigarette. Such reticence was not shared by the more liberal minded Bolles, who enthusiastically employed cigarettes as props. Bolles was so particular about them that he once had his brother-in-law pose for him holding a cigarette, as he was unhappy about how the model had brandished it. Bolles' own obscurity also doomed his Windy to be recast as a Varga. In fact, Bolles' daughter, Theresa, was unaware that he had painted the Windy girl for Zippo. But then that isn't surprising as with her father before her, she doesn't smoke. ■

Zippo advertisement from *Esquire*, December, 1937

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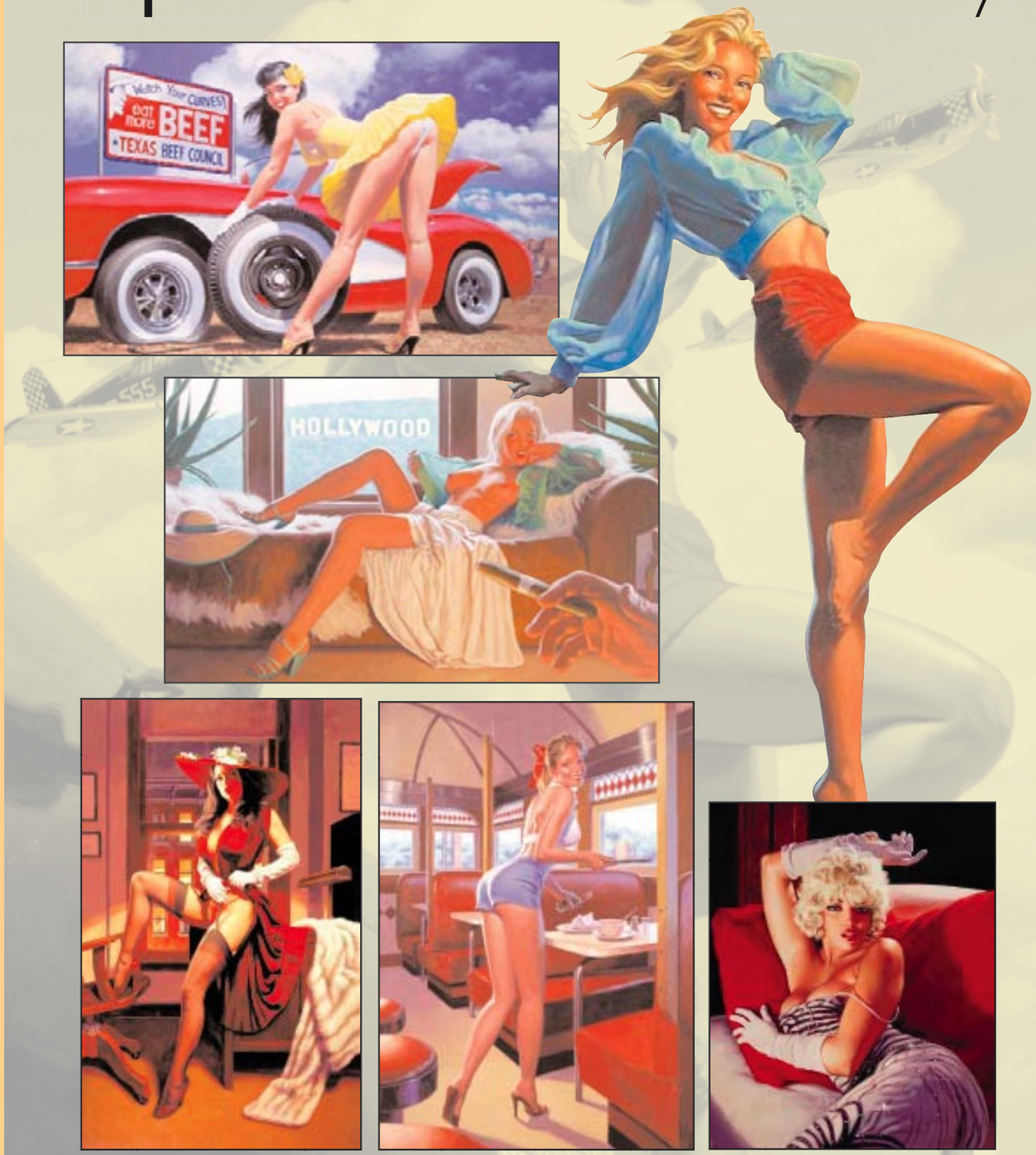

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Personal painting caption?

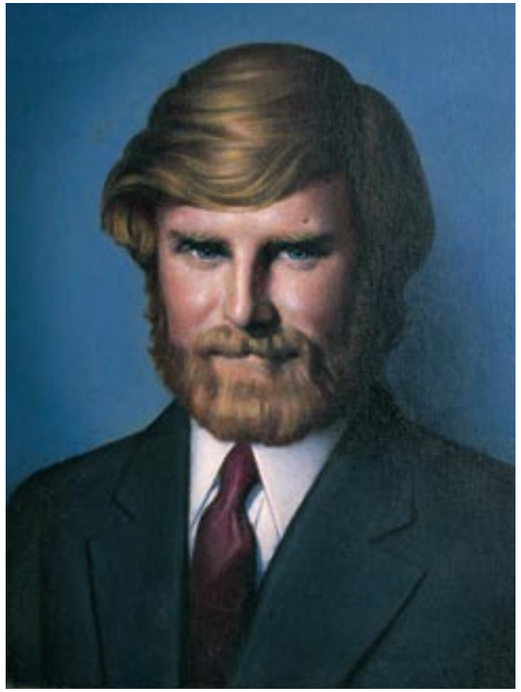
Personal painting caption?

This snowscape of the Hackensack river was found by Bolles' son, "Red," nearly 3000 miles from where it was painted. On a lark his son stopped by a garage sale that was closing up and picked up the painting from a box. He had no idea it was by his father until he cleaned it and discovered his signature.

Bolles was diagnosed by the physicians at Greystone as suffering from a paranoid condition. But while the allegation that Bolles had a mental illness was true, the record of his behavior at Greystone does not support the claim that he pornographically defaced his *Film Fun* paintings. On the contrary, evidence indicates that Bolles was actively painting new *Film Fun* covers while he was a patient at Greystone. Hospital policy encouraged well-adjusted patients to engage in professional activities as a form of therapy and any income earned was placed into a bank account for them. In Bolles' case the hospital staff also provided him with a small room to use as a studio. Bolles continued to paint throughout his stay at Greystone, specializing in portraits of Greystone employees ranging from the barber to hospital administrators. He also completed many personal paintings and studies. One Bolles canvas with crudely painted pornographic elements has been found, but there is no evidence directly linking these additions to Bolles himself.

Although the conditions at Greystone were grim and the hospital was severely overcrowded, Bolles' life hardly fit with the stereotype of a madman. His friends and family made regular trips to visit him on the hospital grounds to have picnics. Bolles' intellect was undiminished by his circumstances and he relished their animated discussions on topics from art to world affairs. His grandson Dan recalls him talking in detail about emerging jet engine technology and its implications for air flight. He enjoyed taking his grandchildren to see the animals at the hospital farm or to fish in the local streams. Bolles was granted furloughs during the holidays or for important family events including the wedding of his daughter, Theresa. In the early 1940s, Bolles returned home for more extended periods, but each time he suffered relapses and had to return to the confines of Greystone. Bolles was a patient before the advent of psychiatric medication; standard treatments of the time included such dubious remedies as "hydrotherapy" and injections of insulin. There were periods when he became overwhelmed with the isolation and one harsh winter could only write, "up to supper—a dark world—back out of doors afterward—all white." While there, his wife, Clara, who had been ailing for some time, died.

Throughout his stay at Greystone, Bolles maintained regular contact with family and friends through letters, often penning more than one a day in his elegant script. He carried on several correspondences on the subject of art, the most significant with his daughter Elizabeth. For over a decade they traded letters on the topic of painting. Bolles wrote detailed descriptions of setting



***Portrait of Dan*, c. ????**

Bolles (right) attends his daughter Theresa's wedding, c. 1939

Watermill, 1967

up a palette, underpainting, brush work, painting skin tones, and the selection of subject matter. He often enclosed painting diagrams and for a time they traded small work paintings. In one letter he described the process of self-discovery through art: "As you grow older in picture making, that sort of thing will take its proper place as sort of a glandular levitator or such. The very important thing becoming more and more yourself and your work; the gratification of showing *yourself* what *you* want to see; knowing as you surely do by now that some of the things you like will be liked by many, some by a few." The content of these letters, written in his third decade at Greystone, provide compelling evidence that Bolles' intellect and emotional health were intact. In fact, most of the Bolles family became convinced his illness had remitted, and questioned hospital administrators about the necessity of him remaining a patient.

A NEW BEGINNING

In the end, several circumstances led to Bolles' release from Greystone, including state budget cuts and changes in health policy that emptied mental wards across the country. In June of 1969, his family received a phone call from Greystone and were informed that Bolles was to be discharged. Within the week he was back in his family home in Greystone and settling into old routines. His granddaughter Patty recalled that it felt like he had never left. In little time Bolles had set up a studio in the attic and resumed painting, telling his grandson that he had some new ideas for pin-ups that would take him ten years to achieve. He was also anxious to resume his professional career and took the train to New York with samples to show to various magazines, as well as to visit his sister Mary who lived there. Bolles learned that Alberto Vargas had revived his career with *Playboy*, and decided to go to its main competitor, *Penthouse*, to see if they would be interested. Unfortunately, they were not.

Bolles also began work on paintings of several family members, remarking that after more than a half century of experience he was just beginning to learn about painting. Although his eyesight was slowly failing and would eventually force him to paint with a magnifying glass, in his late 80s he completed several impressive portraits. A man whose remarkable memory was undimmed by the decades, on one occasion he and his grandson Jack were hiking to a fishing spot in the back hills of New Jersey when Bolles diverted them off their path to a lone cabin in the woods. He approached an aged black man sitting in a rocker on the porch and introduced himself. It turned out the two were boyhood friends some 70 years earlier. They spent the next hour speaking as if a day hadn't passed since they last saw one another.

As Bolles reached his 90s, his physical health began to decline. He was diagnosed with a heart condition and for a time was limited to sitting in an easy chair, but even this did not prevent him from painting. An outdoorsman to the end, only a few days before he passed away Bolles walked a trail into the local woods to spend time at one of his favorite spots at a pond. He died of heart failure on March 16, 1976 at the age of 93.

And so ends my own story. I began this project with the modest goal to learn something about the work of a long neglected artist, and instead uncovered a complex man whose life was defined by many contrasts. Bolles brought beauty and pleasure to so many with his playful art, but his own life was marked with periods of anguish and illness. A kind man with a gentle manner, his art delved into sophisticated erotic themes. Bolles' paintings were in the public eye for decades, yet he was an intensely private person who shied from publicity. It is difficult to resolve these disparate aspects of his nature, but it can be said that in life, Enoch Bolles embodied what his instructor Robert Henri had told him over 60 years earlier: "Picture making is not a way of making a living, it is a way of living."

— Jack Raglin @ 2004

Many people contributed to this article, but I am especially indebted to the Bolles family. Special thanks go to Theresa Simes, Jack Simes, Patty Oelkers, Robin Oelkers, Dan and Fritzi Bolles. My appreciation goes to Ed Comentale for his insightful review of this article.

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