

Nunamaker Farmhouse, n.d.

Anne Yost Whitesell (b.1911)

oil on canvas

H. 20 x W. 24 inches

Collection Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22



Biography

Nunamaker Farmhouse was painted by Anne Yost Whitesell. Ann Yost Whitesell has enjoyed the beauty of Pennsylvania her entire life. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she has captured the wonders of the beautiful outdoors and magnificent landscapes through her paintings in the impressionist style. Living today in the Lehigh Valley, she has worked and displayed with some of the best-known Pennsylvania impressionists.

Whitesell studied under Dr. Walter Emerson Baum and under Melvin Stalk of Cedar Crest College. Baum and Whitesell eventually developed a friendship. Early on, she was asked to instruct classes at the Baum School of Art, and even at the age of 75, was asked back to teach again. During the 1950s, Baum commented on her snow scenes and Allentown street scenes. Whitesell also had the opportunity to share ideas with Edward Redfield and found herself influenced by his style. Like Redfield, oil landscapes were her focus. Her paintings of farms of Lehigh Valley, Northampton, and Bucks counties became her main concentration. She even painted serene city scenes that seemed to deny the sometimes-harsh realities of urban life.

Ann has exhibited her paintings in New York, Philadelphia, Boca Raton, Greenwich, and other areas in Pennsylvania including Bucks County and Lehigh Valley. She has also received many awards and honorable mentions in juried shows and exhibitions such as the Art Alliance Foundation Award, top prizes at the Hess Brothers Art Exhibit in Philadelphia, and at the Woodmere Art Gallery in Philadelphia. Her work continues to be exhibited and win awards. Many of Whitesell's paintings are included in private collections throughout the United States and within museums in Buck and Lehigh counties.

The title of this painting is Nunamaker Farmhouse. Who were the Nunamaker's?

Kenneth Nunamaker was born in 1890 and died in 1957. He worked in the art department of the Akron Engraving Company in Akron, Ohio, and in his free time taught himself how to paint. He brought sketchpads and canvases to the Ohio countryside where he painted many natural scenes.

Nunamaker moved to Philadelphia in 1918 to become Art Director for Hoedt Studios (1918-1945). He lived in Glenside and then in 1923 bought a home in Center Bridge, residing in Bucks County from 1918 until his death in 1957. From



1945-1957, he operated his own commercial art studio in Philadelphia with Alfred Nunamaker, his son, who also was a painter.

Nunamaker usually painted landscapes, with a particular interest in winter scenes, and was influenced by Edward Redfield. He was skilled in his use of built-up impasto and carefully blended colors. He was a member of the Phillip's Mill Art Association and a member of the New Hope Art Associates. He exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, the National Academy of Design in New York and the International Gallery in Venice, Italy.

Kenneth Nunamaker was a recognized member of the New Hope School of Pennsylvania Impressionists. He exhibited locally at Phillip's Mill, the Playhouse Galleries and the Lambertville House. He worked alongside Edward Redfield, Daniel Garber, Alfred Nunamaker, his son; Harry Rosin, and artists of the New Hope School including Anne Yost Whitesell.

Anne must have created this painting while visiting Kenneth Nunamaker at his farm in Center Bridge.

When I look at this painting I see the primary colors.

What are the primary colors? Where do you see them in this painting? Primary colors often stand out in a painting. In this painting, it seems like the primary colors are also the largest areas of color in the landscape. How does Anne Yost Whitesell's use of primary colors affect the way the painting looks? What would happen if the sky were red, the barn were yellow, and the trees were blue?

What are the secondary colors? Where do you see them in this painting? How does the artist use the primary and secondary colors differently? What would happen if all the green in this painting were purple, and all the purple were orange, and all the orange were green?

Why does it seem like so many barns in real life are painted red?

Most early barns in America were painted red. During colonial times when Pennsylvania was being settled by Europeans, barns made of wood had to be painted so that the wood would be preserved and protected from the elements. During this time, farmers had to make their own paint for barns. As European settlers crossed over to America, they brought with them the tradition of red barns. The red paint was made out of skim milk, lime, linseed oil, and iron oxide, better known as rust. The history books tell us that this mixture was very smelly, although this mixture hardened quickly and wore well.

There are two explanations for the reason the mixture became red. The first is that wealthy farmers added blood from a recent slaughter to the oil mixture. As the paint dried, it turned from a bright red to a darker, burnt red. The second theory is that farmers added ferrous oxide, otherwise known as rust, to the oil mixture. Rust was plentiful on farms and is a poison to many fungi, including



mold and moss, which were known to grow on barns. These fungi would trap moisture in the wood, increasing decay. Red barns were a sharp contrast to the traditional white farmhouse. Regardless of how the farmer tinted his paint, having a red barn became a fashionable thing.

In the mid to late 1800s, as paints began to be produced with chemical pigments, red paint was the most inexpensive to buy. Red was the color of favor until whitewash became cheaper, at which point white barns began to spring up. Today, the color of barns can vary, often depending on what they are used for.

Is this a special kind of barn?

There are many different kinds of barns in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States. In Pennsylvania, early settlers cleared the wilderness of Penn's Woods so they could farm the land and raise food for their families. Their barns, some of which still stand today, protected livestock and stored food during this period of struggle and protected people during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

The barns, some built of wood, others built of stone, served as gathering places. The very people who joined together to raise the hewn timber needed to build the barn later danced along its sturdy planks to a fiddler's tune, taking a short break from life's chores and challenges. Working and socializing together as a community pinned the people together just as strongly as the mortise and tenon joints that held the barn timbers in place. Barns were also wonderful places for children to play, when they weren't helping out with the many farm chores that needed to be done.

The red barn in Anne Yost Whitesell's painting is a good example of American vernacular architecture—the forebay bank barn, better known as the Pennsylvania barn or the Pennsylvania German barn. With one side banked into sloping land and the other projecting outward to shelter horses and livestock, the Pennsylvania barn first appeared in the early 1700s in the southeastern part of the state. (This is just where Anne and her Pennsylvania Impressionist friends lived.) The two-level barn was a big improvement over the one-level structures then being built, because farmers could house livestock in the lower level and thresh and store grains on the upper one.

Today, many people travel to Pennsylvania to see the beautiful farmland and barns that are there. Although their style and structure has changed over time, they continue to beautify the landscape while fulfilling their most important job: providing housing for farm animals and shelter for harvested crops. Sadly, many of these barns are being taken apart, piece by piece. The wood is being reused for wall paneling in new homes, flooring, or other building materials. Some barns are being torn down to make way for more modern facilities made of steel beams and siding to house animals, crops, and equipment on today's farms. Other barns are being torn down to make room for housing developments. Still others have



remained standing, but are being converted into homes and businesses. And some simply are collapsing from neglect, disinterest, harsh weather, and hungry insects.

In the words of state legislator Sheila Miller, “We lose a piece of our past when these barns disappear. They help define our history and symbolize its early settlers, those who brought to Pennsylvania their dream of farming in a free world.”

What season is it in this painting?

Look carefully at *Nunamaker Farmhouse*. Did Anne Yost Whitesell make this painting in winter, spring, summer or fall? How do you know? There are some very specific visual clues in this painting to help you answer this question correctly.

Look at a few more paintings created by Anne’s Pennsylvania Impressionist friends, Walter Baum, Edward W. Redfield, and Kenneth Nunamaker at www.michenerartmuseum.org What seasons were they painted in? Are there any paintings where it is hard to tell? (This activity is more fun if you don’t look at the titles.)

All of these painters liked to paint *en plein air*, or in the open air. What would be your favorite season for painting outside? What would be the positive and negative factors of painting outside in each season?

Learn More

Experiment with color changes in the same composition in the activity “Twin Compositions,” below.

Compare the landscapes of Anne Yost Whitesell with Kenneth Nunamaker’s in the activity “Looking at Landscapes,” below.

Look for shapes in landscape paintings in the activity “Painted Shapes,” below.

Read an explanation of the impasto technique and see examples at www.artlex.com.

Related Images

In modern times, barns are painted in a variety of ways. Learn about the Barn Quilt tradition in Sac County Iowa at www.barnquilts.com.

Durham Township photographer Kathleen Connally has an interesting portfolio of farm and barn scenes. You can see her work at www.durhamtownship.com.



There is an interesting array of farm related paintings on the website of the James A. Michener Art Museum, www.michenerartmuseum.org. These specific artists and titles will guide your search:

Diane's Coop, by Robert Beck

Pennsbury Farm, by Randolph Bye

Barn Window, by Joseph Crilley

Farm Buildings, by John Foster

After the Harvest, by Edith Sharp

Related Links

Learn about Anne Yost Whitesell's teacher, Walter Emerson Baum, at the website of James Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, www.michenermuseum.org.

To read about open space and agricultural land preservation in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, visit the website of Bucks County.org at www.buckscounty.org.

Vernacular architecture includes everything from Arab tents and Turkish cave dwellings to a Taos Pueblo and a Native American tipi. Learn more about vernacular architecture and see images at Great Buildings Online at www.greatbuildings.com.

