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Painting of The Cowboy Bar and Moore's Cafe by Archie Boyd Teater, circa 1939.



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From the Director's Desk	2
From the Shores of Jenny Lake	4
Jackson Lake Dam: Part II	12
New Museum Update	14

FROM THE SHORES OF JENNY LAKE TO THE WALLS OF MOORE'S CAFÉ:

THE PRE-WWII JACKSON HOLE ART SCENE

BY MAGGIE MOORE

The story of Jackson Hole is just as much a story of renegades and ranchers, mountain climbers and skiers, and wealthy dudes and dudines, as it is a story of art and artists.

Early photographs of the Teton Range by pioneering photographer William Henry Jackson from the Hayden Geological Survey in 1871 and paintings by Thomas Moran, (who merely glimpsed the back of the Tetons from Idaho in August of 1879), first shaped the American public's perception of and affection for the incredible landscape that quickly became a magnet for artistic endeavor.

When Archie Boyd Teater (1901-1978) opened his log

cabin studio and gallery on the West side of the Town Square by the summer of 1947 (present-day J.C. Jewelers now at a slightly different location on N. Cache St.) it was a mid-career achievement. The gallery followed years of survival carving out a reputation by selling canvases out of his tent on Jenny Lake or at pop-up stands on the square along with elk antlers to wealthy tourists and passers-by during summers in Jackson Hole.

However, Teater was not alone in his commercial endeavors and was part of a larger burgeoning community of artists that included painter and photographer Harrison Crandall, regional artists Olaf Moller and Earl Reed, the biologist and amateur artist Olaus Murie, and later Conrad Schwiering. This article seeks to shed light



The rear entrance of Harrison Crandall's studio on Jenny Lake. JHSM Collection 1992.4467.001.

on the overlapping artistic circles of the late 1920s, 30s and early 40s and paint a picture of the places where artists of this time congregated, painted and exhibited.

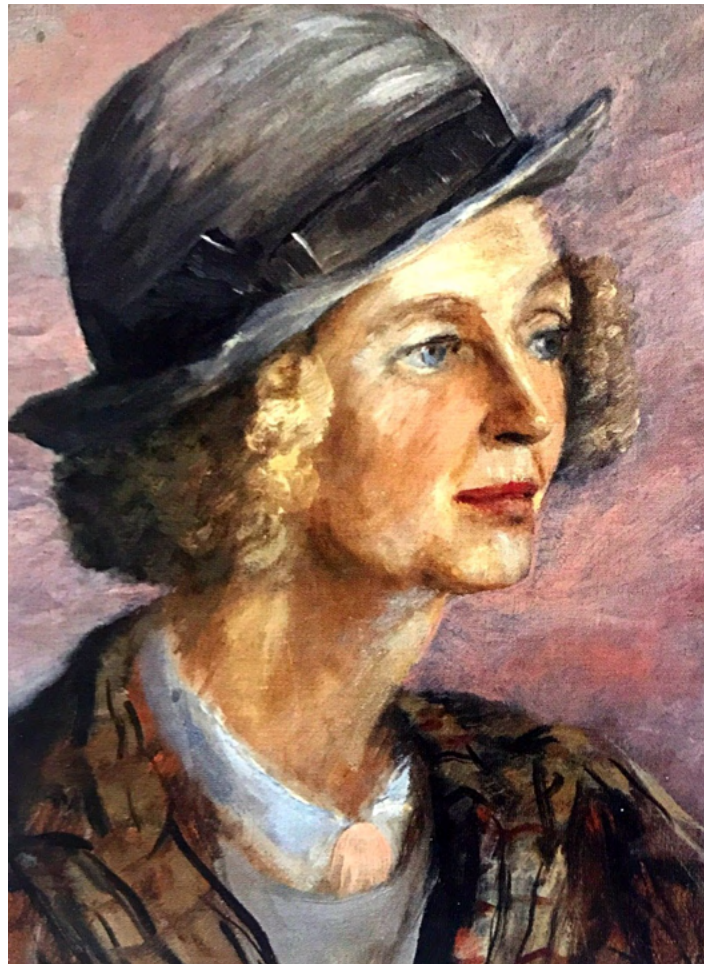
When Teater spent his third summer in Jackson in 1930, he rented a cabin from Harrison Crandall and found himself amidst a significant scene of artists and climbers that was establishing itself around Jenny Lake. Born in Kansas, Harrison Crandall (1887-1970) and his wife Hilda first came to Jackson in the summer of 1922 on their honeymoon. They set up camp on String Lake and built a makeshift darkroom and photo-developing station for postcards, which they sold to dudes and dudines at the JY Ranch or at the Moran General Store. Encouraged by the success of the previous summer's postcard sales, in 1923 the Crandall's purchased land and began to build a homestead and guest cabin near the north end of Jenny Lake adjacent to String Lake.

By 1927, they had designed, built and opened the Crandall Picture Shop and Studio (currently the Jenny Lake Visitor Center). From the lodgepole pine building with elegant herringbone sapling-pole ceiling, Crandall sold his postcards and photographs, and later his hand-painted photographs and oil paintings in various sizes. In addition, Crandall offered a line of posters, photos and prints by other artists including Olaf Moller, Charlie Russell, Winold Reiss, Stephen Leek and Joseph Stimson. [i] Visitors could also buy film equipment and art supplies at the studio, including canvases, paints and sketchbooks. Perhaps this is where Archie Teater bought art supplies when he first set up camp on Jenny Lake in 1928 and began to sell pictures attached to a clothes-line or scattered outside his tent.

In 1932, the Crandall's relinquished their homestead to the newly established Grand Teton National Park, but they were able to move the shop and studio closer to the lakeshore and became the first official park concessionaire. This area became an important gathering place for the early park community. A little tent community of climbers, artists and park rangers grew behind the studio.

Life centered on the Crandall's kitchen, where monthly bonfires and evening picnics took place. [ii] Because there were few places to meet in the park after a day in the mountains, the climbing community began to congregate at the Crandall Studio to converse and swap stories. By 1935 Crandall asked the park if he could supply mountain climbing equipment and supplies.

Notable figures in this circle included Glenn Exum and



Portrait of Mrs. Charles de Rham, c. 1945 by Archie Boyd Teater from a Private Collection.

Paul Petzoldt (roommates of Archie Teater in 1930 and founders of Exum-Petzoldt Guides) and Fritiof Fryxell, a climber and the park's first naturalist. The Crandall Studio published and sold Fryxell's pioneering history of climbing the mountains in the Teton Range titled *Teton Peaks and Their Ascents* (1932).

It was an auspicious moment when Fryxell hosted Crandall's forbearer, the photographer William Henry Jackson, then age 90, when he made a pilgrimage to the area in July 1933. During the three-day visit Fryxell and Jackson returned on horseback to some of the places Jackson photographed in 1872, long before the dream of a national park had been born.

Harrison Crandall and other members of the Jenny Lake artist community surely would have been in the audience of 200 that gathered at dusk in the, "amphitheater beneath the pines," at Jenny Lake and listened, "in wrapt attention," to Jackson as he, "vividly recounted his experiences of 60 and 70 years ago." [iii] What an incredible moment for the fledgling Jenny Lake artist community to share with

Jackson Hole's pioneer photographer.

One artist to join the summer community was impressionist painter Olaf Moller (1901-1985). Moller was born in Copenhagen, Denmark and grew up in Rupert, Idaho. He attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and won a scholarship to the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation.

Moller was spending his summers on Jenny Lake by 1929 and became acquainted with Crandall, Teater and climber Petzoldt. Teater and Moller would spend their days together hiking with canvases and paint brushes in tow, and Petzoldt would act as salesman in the evening, inviting strangers to look at the paintings, and if they weren't interested, talking them into climbing with him the next day. The trio made a modest living that first summer selling art and two-day treks up the Grand for \$25. [iv]

Moller eventually acquired a cabin on the road to Jenny Lake that hosted exhibitions and classes. In the summer of 1941, Moller was advertising himself as an, 'instructor in Portrait, Landscape, Still Life, Drawings and Paintings' in the *Jackson's Hole Courier* and offering the ability to, 'Paint in Jackson Hole with the Moller Art Class,' which took place at Jenny Lake. He continued to be a summer visitor to the area through the 1950s.

By the late 1930s the artists that came to Jackson in the summer were establishing a reputation and soon a movement to organize and gain more national recognition began. In celebration of American Art Week across the country, November 1-7, 1938, the editors of the *Courier* wrote that, "In our own community, we have our own local artists, and in summer others come to study and paint our landscapes...Jackson Hole is outstanding in its scenic values and is the mecca of numerous artists during the summer season. An artist with his easel, by the roadside, in front of the Teton Range, is no uncommon sight." [v]

In an article from the *Salt Lake Tribune* from August 1939 titled "Teton Artists Join Forces in New Efforts," the paper wrote that, "with each succeeding year the stream of artists coming to paint these majestic mountain scenes increases in volume. Several painters of the intermountain section return each summer, realizing that only one who lives closely with this spectacular country is able to capture and give portrayal of its essential character."

The paper goes on to say that those returning artists have, "laid plans whose objective is the creating of an artists' colony, similar to that which has grown up at Taos, N.M., and at many eastern and California points." [vi]



Outdoor Show at Jenny Lake, 1933 by Archie Boyd Teater from a Private Collection.

With that mission in mind, the Teton Artists Association was born. The Association centered around the Jenny Lake studio cabin of Olaf Moller, who was elected president. Joseph P. Nash, a painter from Lake Forest, Illinois, was vice president, and Earl Reed was secretary-treasurer. A picture from the article shows Moller's cabin along the highway below the Tetons with a giant 'PICTURES' sign on top. Moller's cabin hosted rotating exhibitions that changed every two weeks. The article states that the group had secured an, "ideal gallery," in town and intended to send travelling exhibitions throughout the country.

In the 1930s and early 40s one did not only have to visit Jenny Lake to see and acquire local art, for much like coffee shops of Jackson today, one could visit Moore's Café next to the Cowboy Bar (present day Local). Moore's Café was one of the main dining establishments and social gathering places in Jackson in the late 1930s. It was owned by Chef Jack Moore and his wife Berta, who acquired it from Joe Ruby in 1936 and renovated it to have a more, "rustic appearance," with lodgepole pine. [vii] Moore's Café was host to Archie Teater's first-known solo exhibition in the valley in June 1938. The exhibition hung in the private dining room, and included a group of fourteen paintings of Jenny Lake, the Grand Tetons, and

other Jackson Hole scenes. [viii]

The next summer, the first group exhibition of the new Teton Artists' Association in town took place at Moore's Café in August 1939 (the "ideal gallery" that they had secured). The exhibition was advertised as a, "rare opportunity to observe the works of art of several of the foremost artists of this country," including Olaf Moller, Archie Teater, Bert Humphrey, and Earl Reed.

Earl Reed (1893-1980), who was born in Nebraska and adopted by the Meusel family of Casper, WY, had studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and the Art Institute of Chicago. He had been coming to Jackson in the summer since 1933.

The only year-round resident of the group was Olaus Murie, who exhibited a picture titled "Elk Bugling." The *Courier* wrote, "A naturalist in the service of the government, Mr. Murie has taken to art as a hobby. All of his paintings have been of wild animal life as he has seen it in his studies and travels." [ix] A captioned photograph

of the exhibit at Moore's Café states that there were, "26 pictures in oils valued at \$1,726 and five others which are not for sale, representing the work of seven members of the Teton Artists Association." [x]

The exhibition by the Teton Artists Association at Moore's Café was clearly a success. Through a government grant from the Federal Art project it turned into a travelling show the following year that went all over Wyoming and attracted hundreds of visitors, making stops in towns like Lander, Rock Springs and Casper.

The only female artist known to take part in the travelling exhibit was Florence Ware (1891-1971), "who has had a great deal of training in the country and abroad... (she) executes her paintings in a conservative, sincere style that has perhaps more appeal to Wyoming art lovers than any other." [xi] Ware also studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, taught at the University of Utah for many years, and completed several WPA murals in Salt Lake City.

The Jackson artists working in the 1930s during the Great



1931 Sidewalk Show, c. 1930s by Archie Boyd Teater from a Private Collection.



The Salt Lake City Tribune from August 6, 1939.

Depression were propped up by the patronage of wealthy visitors and locals. For instance, one of Earl Reed's pieces was acquired by Mrs. John L. Lewis (wife of the president of the United Mine Workers of America and an important organized labor leader), and another was acquired by the California Boys Club called "The Grand Teton."^[xii]

The 1939 Teton Artists Association show at Moore's Café attracted the attention of important New York art collector and philanthropist Susan Dwight Bliss, who wrote to Archie Teater from her Gilded Age mansion at 9 East 68th Street in the Upper East Side after her trip to Wyoming, "I saw two small paintings of street scenes in Moore's Café. Would you be good enough to advise me of the pieces and would you be willing to send them to me on approval, for selection? I think it was the one nearest the entrance door which I preferred (priced at about \$75.00)."^[xiii]

Teater's career also benefited from the patronage of wealthy New Yorker Mrs. Charles (Frances) de Rham, a World War I widow who owned the JDR Ranch in Jackson. De Rham sponsored Teater's studies at the Art Students League in NY in the 1930s with a stipend of \$100. She later held shows for Teater at her Park

Avenue apartment in the 1940s and 50s. ^[xiv] Frances de Rham was an important figure at the center of Jackson's social and cultural life and was head of the St. Johns Auxiliary, President of the Hereford Cattle Association,

and Chairwoman of "Bundles for Britain" during WWII, amongst other roles.

World War II interrupted life in Jackson and the country, and despite the success of the travelling art show in 1940 throughout Wyoming, the dream of the Teton Artists Association to show nationally was short-lived. Most artists working in Jackson during this time did so in the summer and would leave town during the winter, including Harrison Crandall and Archie Teater.

A place where artists residing year-round could make a living was still years away, but the groundwork for a burgeoning art scene had been laid and paved the way for more permanent resident artists like Conrad Schwiering and Grant Hagen in the post-war years (the subject of an upcoming Part 2 in this series).

When the paper announced Mr. and Mrs. Teater's departure from Jackson to Carmel, California for the winter in October of 1947, Teater, "expressed a belief that Jackson Hole will become the home of a flourishing art colony in the not-too-far-distant future, and stated that this opinion was shared by other artists who had visited and painted here and had become acquainted with the wealth of beautiful scenery and other "material."^[xv]

ABOUT MAGGIE MOORE

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[i] Kenneth A. Barrick, *Harrison R. Crandall, Gibbs Smith, 2013*, pg. 81

[ii] *ibid*, pg. 91

[iii] "Jackson, First to Photograph Tetons, Visits Teton Park", *Jackson's Hole Courier*, July 27, 1933

[iv] Raye Ringholz, *On Belay! The Life of Legendary Mountaineer Paul Petzoldt*, *Mountaineers Books*, 1999, pg. 34

[v] *Jackson's Hole Courier*, Oct. 27, 1938

[vi] "Teton Artists Join Forces in New Effort", *Salt Lake Tribune*, August 6, 1939

[vii] *Jackson's Hole Courier*, November 12, 1936

[viii] *Jackson's Hole Courier*, June 30, 1938

[ix] "Teton Artists Association Exhibit at Moore's Café", *Jackson's Hole Courier*, August 10, 1939

[x] *ibid*.

[xi] *Casper Star Tribune*, March 8, 1940

[xii] *Casper Star Tribune*, December 12, 1957

[xiii] Lester D. Taylor, *The Life and Art of Archie Boyd Teater*, *Gibbs Smith*, 2015, pg. 31

[xiv] *ibid*, pgs. 29-30

[xv] *Jackson's Hole Courier*, October 9, 1947