

Augusta Palmer

by Lynne Belluscio

A couple of weeks ago I listened to a message on my phone: “Lynne, we just came back from an antique show in Rochester. One of the dealers had several paintings by Ingham University students. There was one by Rose Shave and the others were by Augusta Palmer. But we don’t have the program and can’t remember the dealer’s name.”

Unfortunately I didn’t get the message until a couple of days after the show, but I went to the Geneseo Antique Show the next week and talked with a few dealers: “Were you at the St. John Fisher Show? Do remember the dealer in booth 21? I’m looking for some paintings that might have been done by a student, Augusta Palmer and Rose Shave.” But I didn’t talk with anyone who could help me locate the dealer with the Ingham paintings. So I figured I had lost the opportunity to find them.

Then a few weeks after the Geneseo show, I had to give a program at Bohns at the spring meeting of the Government Appointed Historians of Western New York. One of the folks who was there, was Joan Schumaker from Nunda. She has organized a collection of paintings by Rose Shave who was from Nunda and had graduated from Ingham and had become the head of the Ingham Art College.

The collection is exhibited at the Nunda Historical Society. “Joan, a couple of weeks ago, I learned about a Rose Shave painting that is for sale, but for the life of me, I can’t find out who has it. You haven’t heard of a dealer that is selling a Rose Shave? If you have, I might

be able to find the paintings by Augusta Palmer.” “Sorry, but I haven’t heard anything. We did buy one recently, but I haven’t heard of other Ingham paintings.” (Dead end, again!)

I had to leave the meeting and go back to LeRoy, to make sure everything was going OK at our little antique show at the LeRoy Country Club. “How’s everything going?” “Great so far. Lots of folks are really enjoying looking around. And there’s a guy out on the porch who has some paintings from Ingham.” You could have bowled me over with a feather! I couldn’t get to the porch faster. I looked around, and a man was holding a couple of small paintings and was talking to the dealer. I waited an eternity. “Were you at the antique show at St. John Fisher a couple of weeks ago?” “Yes.” Eureka – I had found the long lost Ingham paintings.

There were five of them. The dealer had bought them from a picker who had bought them at a house sale. There were two post-card sized pieces and a larger western landscape and two beautiful round landscapes. “Those round landscapes are from Silver Lake or Perry.” “Oh no they aren’t,” I said. “That one is LeRoy. There is the steeple of St. Joseph’s Church. That view was painted by many of the Ingham students. They hiked along the creek, north of town and painted the creek in the foreground looking south with the church on the right. We have several paintings by Ingham students of this scene and a couple of years ago, we bought a painting by Lemuel Wiles, the art professor of this same scene. And we have

one by Frank Eastman Jones.”

So I was able to buy the two round landscapes. The two little post-card sized pieces were sold to the other man, and the western landscape is being held until I can find the money to buy it. The dealer had a copy of Augusta Palmer’s diploma and he told me that the picker still had the original. I had to go back to Batavia for the rest of the meeting at Bohns, but before I left the antique show, I asked, “Do you still have the Rose Shave painting?” “Yes, but I didn’t bring it.” “I’m going to tell Joan Schumaker about it, and I know she will be very interested in it.”

So I headed back to Bohns in Batavia, and told Joan. And as I sat down for lunch, I was telling the folks at my table about the Ingham pieces, and a lady sitting across from me said. “My husband went to that show to look at those paintings.” “Well, I think he bought the two little ones.”

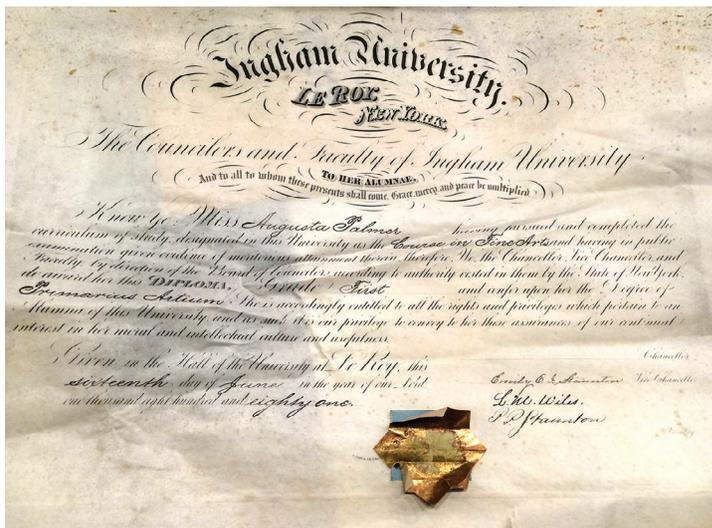
Before I left Batavia, I had a



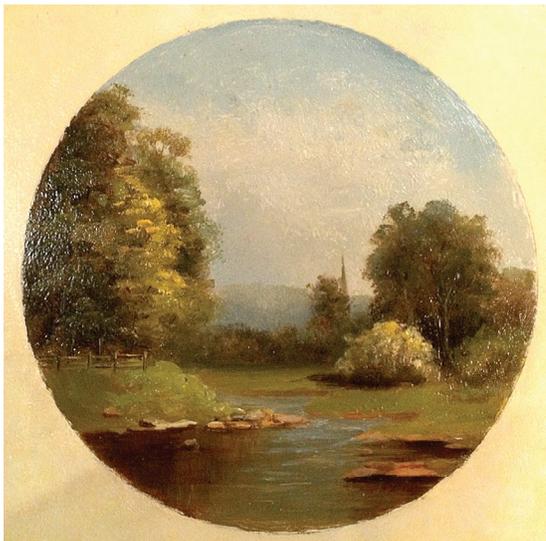
Augusta Palmer’s senior photograph.

call from the picker, offering to sell Augusta Palmer’s diploma. He was asking far too much money and I declined, but after several more phone calls, the price came down – although not as much as I had hoped, but last week the diploma was delivered.

I e-mailed Joan Schumaker to see if she had bought the Rose Shave painting, and she told me



Augusta Palmer’s Ingham diploma, 1881.



Scene of the Oatka Creek with St. Joseph’s steeple in the background.



Unknown view, by Augusta Palmer.

that she stopped back in LeRoy after our meeting ended. She bought the Rose Shave piece, because the dealer said that the picker had called and wanted to buy it back.

So the story has a happy ending and we’ve brought some history back to LeRoy. Augusta Palmer was born in Perry in 1858, and graduated from the Perry High School in 1878. She attended Ingham University and studied under Lemuel Wiles and graduated from Ingham in 1881. According to the Alumnae records, she returned to Perry where she lived with her parents on their farm. She never married and died in 1952. It is not known if she continued to paint.