

## Two Demuth Watercolors Enter The Collection



*Aviariste (Woman with Parrots), 1912.*  
Watercolor 11x8-1/2"

by Carol Morgan

The latest Demuth works purchased by the Foundation (the first, bought in 1989, was *Pink Tulips*, 1930) were acquired at Sotheby's auction with funds generously donated by Henry J. Kauffman and by Caroline S. Nunan; these gifts were supplemented with funds from our art auction and garden tour. Both watercolors fill important roles in our collection; they are the only art in the collection representing Demuth's summer vacation haunt: Provincetown, Massachusetts and his preferred Lancaster entertainment: vaudeville. The watercolors will be shown during February with the full collection of Demuth art owned by the Foundation.

*Man and Woman on the Beach, Provincetown*, 1916 is a complex composition: a group of three adult figures and a small child gather at the seashore, three sailboats on a turbulent sea enliven the background. Colors are limited to black, pink, and red with intensely rich blue ocean waves. Throughout, Demuth marked the sky and sea with strong rhythmic penciled lines typi-



*Man and Woman on the Beach, Provincetown, 1916.* Watercolor 8-1/4x10-3/4"

cal of his figurative works and illustrations. Provincetown was an important retreat for Demuth; there he socialized with avant garde artists, writers and political activists such as Stuart Davis, Eugene O'Neill, and John Reed, all up for the summer from Greenwich Village. Most of Demuth's many Provincetown works feature figures at the beach, but there are also abstract watercolors of dunes and Precisionist works of roofs, towers and steeples.

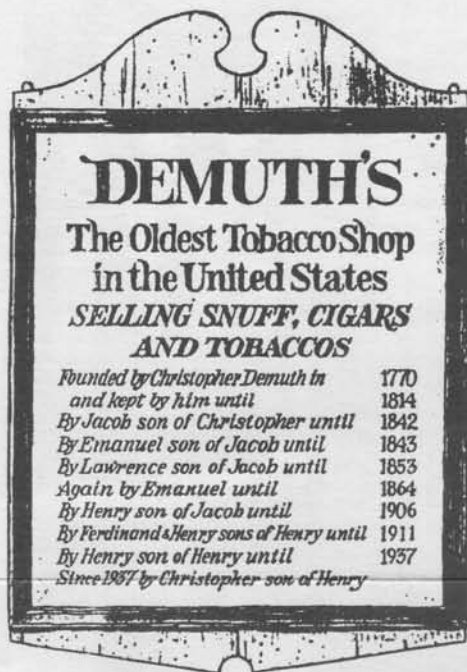
*Aviariste (Woman with Parrots)*, 1912 is one of twelve watercolors Demuth offered his New York dealer Charles Daniel. When Daniel declined to accept the prices asked for the art, Demuth, in a temper, tore all into four pieces and tossed them into the wastebasket. Apparently Demuth was quite intolerant of anyone downplaying the value of his work! Daniel's assistant, Alanson Hartpence, retrieved the works, had them mended and marketed them.

The torn edges are restored with extreme skill, but still can be seen when one looks with care.

Demuth attended weekly performances at the Colonial Theatre on North Queen Street, preferring vaudeville to the new motion pictures. *The Lancaster Daily Intelligencer* noted "a novelty that will be especially appreciated by the ladies and children will be Orbasanny's Cockatoos. These beautiful feathered actors will present "A Trip to Birdland." Orbasanny's is probably the act which caught Demuth's fancy and inspired this watercolor.

The Foundation has been waiting for an opportunity to acquire works such as these. Ever since Elizabethtown College loaned the Demuth art to the museum in 1992 for the 10th Anniversary show, we hoped to add them to our collection. The college received the art as a gift from Robert and Annette Nation, who donated it for the purpose of endowing a scholarship.

# A Tobacco Shop Older Than The United States



by Margaret C. Woodbridge

In a row of brick buildings, the small and inconspicuous shop is now tucked between two law firms, but the sign on the front still states: DEMUTH'S TOBACCO SHOP. This is the site of a truly unique bit of America. This is not only the oldest tobacco shop in the entire country; it is the only one that remained in the hands of one family, since its founding in 1770, until the Demuth Foundation purchased it in 1986.

If you are an antiquarian or a lover of unusual places, you will enjoy a visit to Demuth's Tobacco Shop. It stands today where it has always stood, at 114 East King Street, and for 225 years the spot has been well known to all area residents who desired fine tobacco, sometimes mixed to their specifications, or any of the paraphernalia dear to the hearts of tobacco users.

Visitors feel, on entering the shop, that they have somehow traveled backwards in time. It's partly the effect of the massive, polished wooden cabinets that line three sides of the shop, so unlike the glass and chrome of a modern store. It's partly that visitors will see no garish, gimmicky displays too familiar in drug stores. All items here are set out in a dignified, low-key manner, as befits the oldest tobacco shop in America. An aromatic haze, compounded of rum, cherry, honey, licorice, and of course tobacco, hovers over all.

It would not surprise today's visitors too much to see General Edward Hand, George Washington's aide-de-camp, filling his diamond-studded snuff box. Or perhaps Mr. Justice Jasper Yeates, of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, might be buying his *rappee*. (Probably the fore-runner of today's moist snuff, *rappee* was a coarsely ground tobacco sold in a slightly damp condition.) Or President James Buchanan might have stopped in to pick up his supply of fine cigars. These gentlemen are known to have been regular customers of Demuth's.

The tobacco shop has been a sort of club

down through the years. It served as a gathering place for the men of Lancaster from the beginning. In 1770, no doubt discussion centered on the hateful taxes imposed by the British sovereign, George III, and what Lancaster's Committee of Grievances should do about them. Through all these discussions the presiding guardian was a wooden figure two feet, eight inches high, standing just outside the door. A predecessor of cigar store Indians, the little man was brought inside later on, and he now stands in a niche of the rear wall, a silent reminder of the shop's distinguished past. Carved by Johannes Demuth—third of the founder's ten children—the figure served to proclaim the nature of the store. This oldest tobacco shop advertisement in America, is now one of the treasures of the Demuth Foundation.

That first owner, Christopher Demuth, came from Moravia, Germany, to Pennsylvania. He married a wealthy girl whose family home included the property on East King Street, in which successive generations of Demuths lived, adjacent to the shop. The location was ideal for business—in the heart of old Lancaster, right on the King's Highway. All traffic had to pass by the door. Still, one must admire his adventurous spirit, so typical of early settlers. At the age of thirty-two he took on the risks of embarking on a business career in very unsettled times.

Business was difficult in those days. Tobacco had to be brought from the South: it was not grown locally until about 1825. Transportation was slow and deliveries uncertain. The earliest Demuths appear to have relied mainly on Tunis and Way, a Philadelphia firm of brokers who had a fleet of boats to bring the tobacco from Richmond and Baltimore.

From Philadelphia the tobacco had to be transported in Conestoga wagons with the help of "waggoners." Like some of today's truck drivers, these men would not set out from Philadelphia without a full load. Usually they carried five to seven hogsheads of tobacco, weighing about 1,800 pounds. The cost of such transportation was high, and the time required was enormous. One can circle the globe now in less time than was necessary to bring a load of tobacco from Philadelphia. The tobacco was eagerly awaited in Lancaster at Christopher's snuff mill at the back of his property. Cocks, still on display from time to time in the Demuth Tobacco Shop window, were used for packing the snuff when it was ready for sale. (Later, a cigar factory was added on to the snuff mill, but snuff-making was discontinued around the turn of the twentieth century, and cigar-making ceased between the wars.)

Another problem in those early days was the instability of the currency. It continued unstable until long after the revolution was over. Old letters and ledgers, now in the possession of the Demuth Foundation, attest to the enormous difficulties involved in doing business. To make matters worse, the currency was easy to counterfeit. According to Demuth records, a payment

made in 1817 of \$790.92 had \$55.48 deducted for counterfeits.

In 1814 Jacob Demuth became owner four years before his father's death. Jacob had served in a company of riflemen during the revolution and part of the War of 1812. For 28 years he operated the store and factory. One curious letter to him from Tunis and Way refers to the purchase, requested by Jacob, of a "German girl." The letter explains that none was purchased for him because there were "no good ones for sale." The writer goes on to say that two girls were expected to arrive the following week. All this, of course, refers to the practice of many poor European immigrants who sold themselves into servitude for a period of years or until they were able to save enough from their meager wages to buy their freedom.

Among Jacob's achievements was the purchase of the first bathtub in America. Made of heavy wood, it was about the same shape as a modern bathtub. Cold water came from a pipe which extended over the top. Obviously, the Demuths were establishing themselves as prosperous businessmen to be able to afford such a luxury. In 1879, because of a leak, the tub had to be zinc-lined. Thereafter, it continued in use by the Demuth family until 1890.

In 1842 Emanuel D. Demuth, eldest son of Jacob, took over the business for one year. He sold it to his brother Lawrence, who sold it back to Emanuel in 1853. By that time, some of Lancaster's volunteer fire fighters had made the shop their headquarters. All the Demuths were public-spirited citizens and took a great interest in promoting the fire companies. Perhaps their interest was intensified by the fact that the shop had been threatened by fire in April 1837, when the nearby stables were destroyed. It is easy to imagine the congenial, club-like atmosphere in the shop, where most of the men in the community gathered for friendly chat and a smoke. (By this time, snuff had given way in popularity to pipe smoking.) Moreover, according to historical accounts of this particular period, Demuth's was a favorite congregating place for brokers, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, tradesmen—in short, for men of many professions in addition to firemen. When a paid fire company was formed in 1882, volunteers began to donate their early helmets and horns to Demuth's for exhibition. These are now displayed on the top of the cabinets that line the walls.

By the time the next owner, Henry C., took over, in 1864, Abraham Lincoln had stopped in Lancaster on his way to Washington; four years later, Lincoln's funeral train passed through the city, on its final journey back to Springfield, Illinois.

During all this time, the Demuths had built themselves a reputation as solid men of business. However, some members of the family had other talents as well. Several Demuths, such as Johannes the woodcarver, had exhibited a flair for painting and sculpting; and the son and daughter of the eighth (and final) generation Demuth

to operate the shop are both practicing painters. The outstanding artist of the Demuth clan, of course, is Charles, the distinguished American painter whose life and work the Demuth Foundation honors. He lived with his parents, Ferdinand and Augusta, at 118 East King, adjacent to the tobacco shop.

Charles Demuth was never encouraged to go into business because of his delicate health. Although he made four trips to Paris, and spent much of his time with other painters there and in New York, he always returned to Lancaster. One result of his attachment to his hometown was the series of paintings of local sites, including one of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity, its Christopher Wren-like spire piercing a winter sky—right behind the Demuth properties.

Now, well into its third century, the Demuth Tobacco Shop has continued its proud tradition of providing quality products, along with a spirit of neighborliness. The business became a partnership for the first time, under the brothers Ferdinand and Henry. After Ferdinand's death in 1911, Henry became sole owner and remained in charge until his death in 1937. Sometime during his administration, a self-recording thermometer was installed on the property. Other weather observations regarding humidity, precipitation, and the like, were regularly and carefully made, so that Demuth's became the "official" weather station for Lancaster. Indeed the Lancaster newspapers relied on it for their published reports by sending a runner up East King Street twice a day.

Henry's son, Christopher, kept the shop until his death in 1978, after which his wife Dorothea oversaw its operation until 1986. Then she deeded the Demuth property to the Foundation, with the understanding that the Demuth Tobacco Shop would continue to operate as it had for over two hundred years, as an essential element in Lancaster's history, a living entity as a modest reminder of our past.

Old photographs and records indicate that the Demuth Tobacco Shop has changed very little over the years. Of course, some things have inevitably changed. The city of Lancaster no longer depends on the thermometer in the Demuth backyard for weather information. The great and humble men of the community no longer lounge comfortably on wooden benches outside the shop, discussing the issues of the day. And of course firemen will never use those helmets again.

About a hundred years ago, cigars ranged in price from \$1 to \$6.50 per thousand for domestic, \$15 to \$18 per thousand for imported. The better grades were packed in mahogany boxes; the cheaper were tied in bundles of one hundred and wrapped in paper. In 1995, snuff no longer sells for fifty cents a pound retail, and cigars are somewhat more pricey. A broad range of domestic smoking tobacco for pipes as well as extremely popular imported ones are now available, although some old-timers prefer *Demuth's Old Blend*, the shop's private brand. Throughout the years it has been sold to local residents, and requests for it continue to arrive from pipe devotees all over this country.

Demuth's Tobacco Shop continues on its serene way, little changed by time, except to have become a unique museum in miniature. In addi-

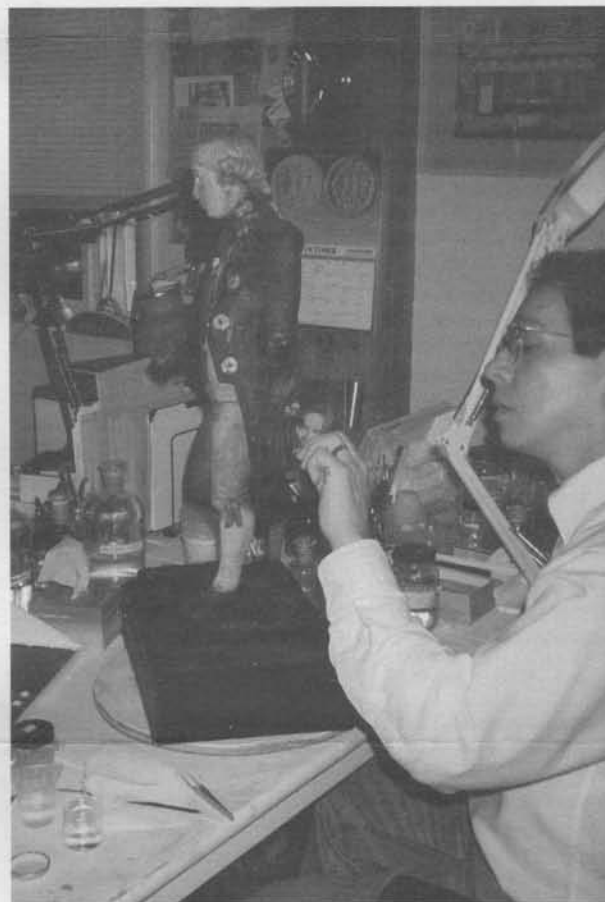
tion to its firemen's memorabilia, it boasts a magnificent collection of pipes: clay pipes, water pipes, calabash and meerschaum—Demuth's has them all. Also, it features many decorative ceramic tobacco jars; a collection of snuff boxes; and tobacco memorabilia is abundant, including the incomparable snuff-boy who smiles at visitors from his walnut niche. Perhaps that quiet little

carved figure with the snuff box urges us to consider that no community in America can afford to lose its history.

*Ms. Woodbridge, a member of the Demuth Foundation, wrote this essay, based on an interview with Christopher Demuth, for U.S. Tobacco Review, Summer 1978. It was revised and brought up to date for the Demuth Dialogue.*

## Demuth's Snuff-Taker Comes Home

Dorothea Demuth called him Johnny, and, although he's formally known as the Snuff-Taker of Colonial Days, most of his friends and acquaintances call him Demuth's little snuff man. At the heart of the Demuth Foundation's collections, the unique polychromed wooden figure is the original trade sign for the Demuth Tobacco Shop.



*Conservator Kory Berrett at work on the Snuff-Taker.*

Carved from a single piece of wood the 29-1/4" tall figure spent its earliest years outside in the weather, a precursor to the familiar wooden Indians so often associated with cigar stores. Sometime during the shop's first remodeling in the early 19th century, the Snuff-Taker was moved inside. A change in the wood grain suggests the figure was removed from the top of a much larger block that originally served as its base. He has occupied his custom designed niche of honor since 1917, the date of the most recent remodeling. At least 175 years old, the sculpture had, over many years, sustained minor losses, accumulated dirt, and some paint was loose.

A technical assistance grant from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation, funded, in part, a recently completed conservation project. Kory Berrett, a professional, experienced conservator, worked on the figure throughout the summer and fall. Many tobacco shop "regulars" noted the absence of the figure and inquired about its whereabouts. Berrett's goal was to stabilize the figure, prevent further paint loss, clean the surface and compensate for paint losses that had already occurred.

The figure now shows its true colors: the face is pale with just a hint of pink, the figure wears a rich blue coat, tan waistcoat and knee breeches, black tie, white stockings, golden buckles on black shoes. The tobacco leaves in the left hand are now green but microscopic paint analysis shows alternate layers of brown or green. The coat buttons are real bone or ivory, painted to match the surface of the carved figure. Berrett's work revealed that oil paint on a white ground and an oil-resin varnish had been used on the figure. The base and left foot sustained earlier damage and had been restored, probably at the same time the figure was first moved indoors.

It's nice to see "Johnny" home again, where he belongs, and looking marvelous! For protection a transparent covering has been designed to enclose the Snuff-Taker's special niche. The Snuff-Taker is described in the *Treasury of American Design* by C. P. Hornung, referenced in detail by John Updike in his 1992 novel *Memories of the Ford Administration*, and cited in *Cigar Store Figures in American Folk Art*, 1953 by A. W. Pendergast and W. Porter Ware. The Mische Tobacco Shop in Old Salem Village, NC, modelled their reproduction figure (displayed outside their site) on the Demuth Snuff-Taker.

## Beginning in this issue...

we offer a selection of direct Demuth quotations (or relevant quotations about the artist). William Murrell wrote for his narrative for the Whitney Museum Series *Charles Demuth*, "And some of his own words about painting might indirectly tell us something about him."

Recent watercolors acquired by the museum represent two of Demuth's favorite subject areas. *Aviariste (Woman with Parrots)*, 1912 shows a spirited vaudeville performer in a scarlet dress on stage with her birds. In "*You Must Come Over, a Painting: A Play*, an undated and unpublished manuscript by Demuth, one of the characters, B., says: "Couldn't we talk about American musical shows,—the people who act in them, (—have acted in them), and dance: they are really our 'stuff.'"<sup>1</sup>

*Man and Woman at the Beach, Provincetown*, 1916 shows a group of figures relaxing or playing on the beach. An excerpt from a letter written by fellow artist, Stuart Davis, provides a sense of place and group dynamic: "On clear days the air and the water had a brilliance of light greater than I have ever seen. While this tended to destroy local color, it stimulated the desire to invent high intensity color intervals. The presence of artists and writers, not too many, added intellectual stimulation to the place. I met Charles Demuth, and his superior knowledge of what it was all about was a great help to me."<sup>2</sup>

—quotations selected by Marie Zubatsky

<sup>1</sup>Richard Weyand Scrapbook No. I, pp. 82-83; as quoted in Emily Farnham, *Charles Demuth: His Life, Psychology and Works*, Vol. 3 (Ohio State University, 1959), p929.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in E.C. Goossen, *Stuart Davis* (New York: George Braziller, 1959), p16.

Mark your calendar today.

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The DEMUTH DIALOGUE is published four times a year by the Demuth Foundation. We welcome comments and ideas for future issues.  
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DEMUTH  
FOUNDATION  
114 East King Street  
Lancaster, PA 17602

### HOURS

Tuesday-Saturday 10:00-4:00

Sunday 1:00-4:00

Closed Mondays

Free Admission

### Telephone

717-299-9940

All About The Demuth Tobacco Shop

## Calendar

Current-Dec. 31

Exhibit: "A Lifetime in Art": Margaret Lestz  
A Retrospective Exhibit  
1st and 2nd floor galleries

Dec. 24 & 25:

CLOSED: Merry Christmas!

January 1996:

CLOSED:

(staff available by appointment)

January-Feb. 14:

Sellers applications for Art Auction received

February 1-29:

Exhibit: Original Charles Demuth Art  
Including two recently acquired watercolors and  
The Demuth Foundation Collection  
2nd floor gallery

February 14:

Deadline to submit offers to sell art at Auction

February 21:

Art Auction acceptance notices mailed to sellers

March 1-12:

Deliver art auction works to museum

March 24 to April 10:

Preview Exhibit: Art Offered for Annual Auction

April 7:

CLOSED: Happy Easter!

April 10:

Third Annual Art Auction & Preview Party

April 21 to May 19:

Exhibit of Photographs: Conrad Bash Heilman

April 27-28:

Art Walk Weekend

Exhibit: Original Charles Demuth Art  
"The Demuth Foundation Collection"



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