



William Henry Rinehart: American Sculptor

William Henry Rinehart was born September 13, 1825 on a farm near Union Bridge, Maryland. Union Bridge, then part of Frederick County, would become part of Carroll County upon the county's establishment in 1837. William was the fifth of eight sons born to Israel and Mary (Snader) Rinehart and the great-grandson of Ulrich Rinehart (1704 - 1787). Ulrich Rinehart had emigrated to Pennsylvania from the German Palatinate in 1733 and eventually settled on a three-thousand acre farm in Chester County. His son, William's grandfather, David Rinehart, left Pennsylvania and established his family as farmers in Frederick County. (*William Henry Rinehart, Gelatin silver print, c. 1870, Unknown photographer*)

David's son Israel married Mary Snader, of English and German ancestry, after he freed his slaves, a condition Mary had stipulated before her acceptance of his proposal. Israel attained a high degree of prosperity as a farmer and was known as a stern man, widely respected for his strict sense of honor, honesty, justice and economy in all things. Mary has been described as a graceful woman of subtle sensibilities, a deeply religious German Baptist (Dunker) who had an unfulfilled yearning for poetry and beauty. Mary's nurture of William's talent, for which she was rewarded with his adoration of her, some have said was "her only offering on the altar of what might have been."

THE EARLY YEARS

At seven years of age William entered the log Quaker Hill School not far from his home. His education continued at Priestland, a school in neighboring Linwood, and for a short time at Calvert College, scholastically a high school, in New Windsor. He made some progress early in his education, more out of fear of his father's displeasure than from a genuine affection for academics, but later proved to be an unenthusiastic student.

William was a high-spirited young man who enjoyed the companionship of his classmates. Daniel Wolfe, a former classmate of the young Rinehart, remembered that William would entertain his friends with a war-dance in which "his hair which

was tolerably long was tied up in a queue on top of his head. Thus equipped, he started around in a circle, stamping and yelling savagely, giving at intervals a tremendous war-whoop and a flourish of his club, often winding up his dance by rapping one over the head with his club." Rinehart seems never to have lost this youthful exuberance.

Once William's disinterest with schooling became evident, his father put him to work on the farm in earnest. William had engaged to some degree in the work of the farm since his childhood, but now found himself in that work full time. He was put at teaming and was sent to Baltimore each week with produce from the Rinehart and neighboring farms. William had no more love of farming than studying, however, and was eventually secured a position as a helper to a stone-worker by his father, who had caught the young man modeling a bust of his mother while the horses under their plow stood idle beneath a tree.

The heavy stone work soon proved too much for the young man's strength and he found himself once again on his father's farm. Accepting William's uselessness as a farmer, his father put him to work at a marble quarry that had been opened on the property. He was set to the tasks of polishing and lettering blocks for tombstones, window and door sills to be sold throughout the community. With this new work William finally seemed to find



his niche and was able to develop his ability. (*Datestone from "Marble Knoll," built by Israel and Mary Rinehart. Carved by their son, William. Union Bridge, Carroll County, MD, 1841, Gift of Mrs. Maybelle Baker, 1978*)

In 1846 at the age of twenty-one, the young Rinehart left his father's farm for the opportunity of the city. In Baltimore William became an apprentice to Baughman & Bevan, the largest stone-cutting firm in the city. He quickly worked his way up to the position of foreman and, after only two years with the firm, was permitted to open his own studio and accept private commissions. It was during this period that Rinehart's work first caught the attention of William T. Walters (of art gallery fame), a Baltimore merchant and art connoisseur for whom the young artist had repaired a mantel. This fortunate encounter resulted in a life-long friendship and patronage for the aspiring sculptor.

William supplemented his training with art courses at the Maryland Institute's night school. He received a gold medal for a stone copy of Teniers' Smokers in 1851, and a bust of the Rev. Dr. John G. Morris and a reclining figure entitled Faith were publicly exhibited in 1853.

FROM OBSCURITY TO GREATNESS

In 1855 Rinehart set off for Florence, Italy under the patronage of Walters and a few other local philanthropists. Although he found the city full of aspiring artists and work not nearly so plentiful, he managed to secure work as a stonecutter. Two years later he returned to Baltimore with four bas-reliefs.

William tried his fortunes in Baltimore for a short time, but found the city an inappropriate one in which to nurture his art. Models for his sculptures were practically nonexistent and patronage available through only a handful of citizens. Some commissions were secured during his stay, including many portrait busts and the caryatid figures for the clock in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1858, William left the city for Rome, where he would maintain his principal studio for the rest of his life.

Rinehart's Hero



Rome, Italy, c.1869

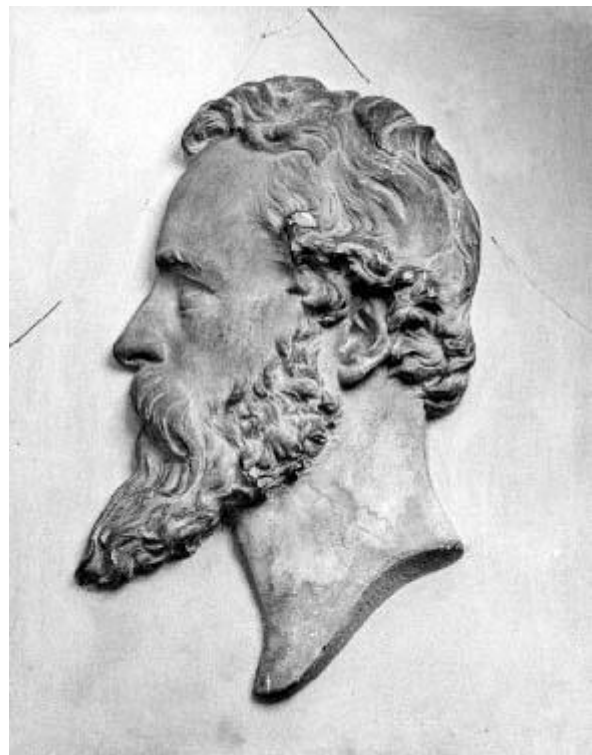
Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Rinehart's work in Rome following his establishment as a professional sculptor may be separated into three periods. The first, his first eight years in Rome, was signaled by his completion of the bronze doors for the U.S. Capitol in Washington. The project had been designed and begun by Thomas Crawford, but after his death Rinehart was selected by the former's widow to complete the commission. A series of ideal subjects followed, including Hero, a classical piece depicting the young woman of myth searching out over the sea for her beloved, Sleeping

Children, a funereal group for the Sisson family lot at Greenmount Cemetery in Baltimore, and Love Reconciled with Death, commissioned by Walters following the death of his wife for his family's lot at Greenmount. Rinehart returned to Baltimore for a brief time in 1866 and during this trip completed a marble bust of Walters and secured the commission for a bronze statue of U.S. Chief Justice Roger Brooke Taney.

The second period, lasting for about six years, was a busy one for the sculptor. Besides his completion of the Taney commission, Rinehart was able to complete many portrait busts, profitable but rather dull business for one eager to do more imaginative work, and many other impressive works. Latona and Her Children, representing mother love with her children Diana and Apollo, and Clytie, perhaps his masterpiece, depicting the sweetheart of the sun gently caressing a sunflower, were created by him from marble and represent but two fine examples of his artistry during this period. *(Rinehart self-portrait bas relief Rome, Italy, c.1870. Gift of Evan Rinehart 59.793.1)*

It was also during this period that Rinehart completed a plaster bas relief of himself and the marble bust entitled My Mother. The latter work was his tribute to the memory of his own beloved mother. Rinehart had sent for the last cap she had worn and incorporated it with the clay bust he had done in his youth to create this new piece. He delighted his brothers by presenting each one with a plaster copy of the marble one he had created for himself.





*Plaster copy of My Mother by Rinehart
Rome, Italy, c.1868. Gift of Mrs. Harry D. Williar, Jr.
62.923.1*

Rinehart returned to the U.S. in 1872 for the unveiling of the Taney statue in Annapolis, Maryland. Walters, greatly impressed by this work, presented a replica to the city of Baltimore for placement in Washington Square. Rinehart remained in Baltimore for a short time, traveled to California, then returned to his studio in Rome.

The last years of Rinehart's life were spent trying to complete an incredible number of commissions. Owning a bust by Rinehart had become highly fashionable and orders

for them flooded his studio. He pushed himself terribly in an attempt to complete them, and still managed to complete many other portrait figure compositions, funereal groups and ideal figures. Impressive as they all are, the finest of these last is perhaps the Endymion, a depiction in marble of a young boy in perpetual sleep. His final work was the funereal group fittingly entitled Victory over Death.

It had been Rinehart's habit to spend the worst part of the Roman summer in Switzerland, but because of the tremendous backlog of work he made the unfortunate decision to remain in Rome in 1874. It was during that summer he began a losing battle with tuberculosis, the disease that would eventually end his life at the age of forty-nine on October 28, 1874.

At the height of his fame Rinehart was described as a compact man of medium height with a fine head covered with curly brown hair. He never lost the enthusiasm for life he had exhibited as a youth, and was well-liked for his robust and cheerful disposition by all who had the good fortune to know him. He was eulogized in newspapers throughout the United States and Europe, and funeral services were held in both Rome, where it was reportedly attended by the entire artist colony, and in Baltimore, where, by his last wishes, he was buried in Greenmount Cemetery surrounded by friends and many of his works. His executors, Walters among them, had cast in bronze a copy of his Endymion to be placed over his grave.

THE SCULPTOR'S LEGACY

Rinehart's too brief career left us with many fine bas reliefs, over one hundred portrait busts and over thirty pieces of ideal statuary. Beyond this awesome contribution, the sculptor was also able to create a lasting legacy ensuring further artistic beauty.

Rinehart had often given encouragement and financial support to family and friends who struggled with their desire to create art, and he arranged for this encouragement and support to continue after his death. By the provisions of his will the sum of money he had inherited from his father was left to his brothers but the bulk of his estate was designated for the advancement of art. The executors of his estate wisely invested this money until 1891, when it amounted to one hundred thousand dollars. It was then turned over to trustees of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore who used it to establish The Rinehart School of Sculpture at the Maryland Institute, provide scholarships to Paris and Rome for promising artists and in general advance the interests of sculpture and sculptors.

William Henry Rinehart may not only be remembered as a famous Carroll County native son, but also as a world-renowned artist who is regarded as one of the greatest sculptors this country has ever produced. His legacy of art and of the promotion of art ensures that his life will touch future generations. All that he has left us endures as a fitting monument to his formidable talent.

GLIMPSES OF HIS TALENT

Many of Rinehart's works can be seen in Baltimore, Washington and Annapolis. In Baltimore, some of the sculptor's finest works can be found at the Peabody Institute, the Maryland Institute, Washington Square and Greenmount Cemetery. The Historical Society of Carroll County proudly possesses a number of artifacts and works relating to the sculptor. In addition to the items on exhibit, the Society also possesses a marble portrait bust executed by Rinehart, the datestone from the Rinehart home Marble Knoll, many photographs and related articles.



*Bust of Sarah Matilda Robertson Mygatt
Rome, Italy, 1860. Gift of Miss Susan Kellogg
64.925.1*

William Henry Rinehart: An American Sculptor was on exhibit in the Kimmey House, headquarters of the Historical Society of Carroll County, in 1995.
Gallery guide written by Duane Doxzen.