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**The Engaging Life Story of an Successful Artist
Born in Early Western America**

TRAILS OF A PAINTBRUSH *Developing, Educating, and Appreciating Fine Art in the American Wilderness* by **Nicholas Brewer**

Artists are found everywhere, even in the most remote areas of the world. But how do they learn proper techniques, and how do they sell their work? **TRAILS OF A PAINTBRUSH** is an engaging, colorful narrative about a man raised in the wilderness of the United States, but whose aspirations quickly outgrew even the vast expanses that surrounded him, becoming a prominent portrait and landscape painter. Nicholas Brewer (1857-1949) was who born in Olmstead County, Minnesota to a farming family. The book presents a remarkable story, starting with many interesting events that punctuated Brewer's difficult early life in the sparsely settled, backward territories of Western America. From an early age, Nicholas Brewer wanted to be a great painter, but had little knowledge of European art systems and methods. Although Brewer was a student in New York of Dwight Tryon and Charles Noel Flagg at the National Academy of Design, he also advocated a more personal learning. He began to travel, and this gave him new opportunities to grow and learn. Brewer reveals to us his struggles in comprehending the intricacies and complexities of art, and his deliberate progress in acquiring the aptitude necessary to become a master painter. Moreover, he developed superior artistic taste, enabling him to break free of the restrictions of American society of the time.

The love of beauty, the overwhelming desire to contribute to the happiness of mankind, and the greatest of ambitions led Brewer from that country home in Minnesota to become an artist and to commune, at least in spirit, with the great artists who had gone before. He practiced his art in diverse places such as Minnesota, New York and Texas. However, he deliberately sought the more difficult road to success—and a success which has been rich in the spiritual things of life. He says “Fortunately, for my individuality, I lived for years away from any influence, save the inspiration of nature in the endless untraveled West, with its infinite variations of scenes and beauty of subject.”

In his book, Brewer expounds on certain historical aspects of art, including the patronage system, which he strongly supported. He himself became a financially successful painter, benefitting from painting the portraits of many well-known, illustrious, and powerful clients. However, Brewer also believed in public exhibitions, and his works were displayed in such places as the National Academy of Design. Yet, despite this familiarity with wider marketing concepts, Brewer attempted to provide a deeper character to his art, by imbuing his works with special religious aspects, such as can be seen in the crucifixion scene he did for the Cathedral of St. Paul, in Minnesota. Not surprisingly, Brewer clearly preferred the traditionalist-

realist form over the modern abstract. Brewer believed that throughout the Middle Ages the human motive of art was religious and its artistic motive was ornamental; many of the Old Masters were encouraged by both the Church and by powerful men. This religious spirit was therefore responsible for providing many of the priceless and beautiful canvases which grace the art museums, churches, and homes. However, America has been sadly lacking in enthusiastic art-lovers who could encourage the artists to the extent accomplished by the Catholic Church and other organizations and individuals of the past. Indeed, Brewer believed that although before the modern era aesthetically sophisticated people were the patrons of great art, now such support is oftentimes in the hands of artistically ignorant millionaires.

In the end, Nicholas Brewer, through strong self-determination, overcame the obstacles in his social environment, and developed not only excellent technical skills, but a very personal style. **TRAILS OF A PAINTBRUSH** teaches us that, even when the individual is not adequately supported by the society in which he lives, a love of great art can assist him in reaching his dreams and fulfilling his vision.

Paul Dennis Sporer (editor) is the author of *The Dimensions of Companionship; Liberating Love; The Concept of Family; and Equal but Different*. He has also served as editor on more than 30 culturally and historically significant books, including *Painting Explained*, by Thomas Gullick; *Is Secession Treason?*, by Albert Bledsoe; *The Heart of Aryavarta*, by Lawrence Dundas; *Beauty and Art*; by Aldam Heaton; *The French at Home*, by Albert Rhodes; *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, by Peter Randolph; *Newer Ideals of Peace*, by Jane Addams; *Views of Old Europe*, by Bayard Taylor; *Gentle Measures*, by Jacob Abbott; *Parental Influences*, William Bacon; *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Moton; *The New Birth*, by Austin Phelps; *Tupelo*, by John Hill Aughey; *An Incident of Travel*, Arthur Jerome Eddy; *End of an Era*, by John Sergeant Wise; *The Missionary*, by Samuel Mazzuchelli; *Half a Century*, by Jane Swisshelm; *Born Three Times*, by Thomas L. Johnson; *Dark Hollow*, by Anna Katharine Green; and *1492: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, by Mary Johnston.

For further information about **TRAILS OF A PAINTBRUSH**, or to arrange an interview with the editor, please contact Cassandra Foxton, [inform at anzapublishing.com](mailto:inform@anzapublishing.com). The publisher's website address is AnzaPublishing.com.

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