

GHR
MONDAY, JULY 19, 1943

Mrs. Abbie Williams Hill, Distinguished Native Artist, Was Born In Grinnel

(Editor's Note: The Herald-Register has just received from Mrs. R. B. Hill of 1610 Plumosa Way, San Diego, Calif., some information regarding Mrs. A. R. Hill, her mother, who died on May 14 after a distinguished career during which for many years she was official scene artist for the great Northern railroad. Local interest in the article is given in the following quotation from Mrs. Hill's lebiographical notes of a remarkable woman, Mrs. Abby Williams ter: "My mother was born in Grinnel and was the daughter of Henry Warren Williams and Harriet Porter Hubbard, both early pioneers in Grinnel. She was contemporary with an outstanding group of young people who in the years since brought credit and renown to Grinnel and its college. Among them were Dr. Dana Bartlett, Mr. William Brainard, Dr. Oliver Emerson, Dr. Albert Shaw, Mary Grinnel Mears, Dr. George White and many others. She was a cousin of Mrs. Oliver Park, a longtime resident of Grinnel, who recently died. I have heard my mother tell many an interesting story of these early associations. I believe that it was in 1906 that the degree of Master of Arts was conferred upon my mother. I am sure that there are still old friends and acquaintances reached by your paper who would be interested in reading an account of my mother's life, work and her death."

The article, written by William Frothingham of Hartford, Conn., and San Diego for publication in the Tacoma (Wash.) New-Tribune is too long to be reproduced in its entirety, but The Herald-Register is glad to reprint a part of it dealing with the story of Mrs. Hill's eventful ten by Mrs. Hill which appeared in the article as sent.)

Mrs. Hill was not only a great artist but the organizer and first president, in 1906, of the Washington State Congress of Mothers, which in 1911 sponsored the formation of Parent-life. Lack of space prevents publication of a number of interesting excerpts from letters writ-Teacher associations in the State. After her retirement from active work years later, she was made honorary president of the state branch.

Chicago, in 1893; the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, in St. Louis 1904; Jamestown Centennial Exposition, Hampton Roads, Va 1907; Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, Seattle, 1909. At the latter, pictures she painted in the Flathead Indian Reservation Montana, were shown; while at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the Great Northern R. R. exhibited twenty of her paintings of scenery reached by their line, and issued a booklet illustrating them. In these various exhibits she was awarded two gold medals.

Perhaps, aside from the camping features of her painting trips for the two railroads, the most remarkable journeys with the children were: one including Washington, D. C., New York, Boston, Quebec, and winding up with two months for painting in Yellowstone Park; the other in 1909, in Europe.

Abby Rhoda Williams was born in Grinnel, Iowa in 1861. At an early age she showed unusual artistic ability and when nineteen attended the Chicago Art Institute, under the instruction of Mr. Spread, its founder. At that time she began the study of German; and later, while for two years she taught painting at a French school in Berthier-en-Haut, Canada, she became so proficient in French, that she was given the highest certificate at that time issued to teach that language. Having by then decided to devote her life mainly to painting, she entered the Art Students League in New York City, becoming a pupil of William Chase. Her fiance, Dr. Hill, was also in New York taking post graduate work. They were married in New York in 1888 and thereafter located their home in Tacoma. Several years later she and Dr. Hill spent some time in Europe chiefly for study, during which time Mrs. Hill continued her art as a pupil of Herman Haese in Munich. While abroad that time she also took a course in Political Economy at the University of Bonn.

Besides the one son born to Dr. and Mrs. Hill, they adopted from time to time three little girls. Mrs. Hill's passionate interest in children her sense of responsibility, and her extraordinary energy, persistency, resourcefulness and courage showed themselves in her taking these four children about with her on her painting and educational expeditions in this country and abroad. During these trips she herself taught them. She emphasized the out-door life, accompanying them when in the open, on dally hikes or boating trips, making them of educational value by teaching about nature, trees (one of the chief features of her paintings), sea life, etc. She believed in "making the punishment fit the deed" and did not believe that if you "spared the rod, you would spoil the child."

Mrs. Hill's prominence as an artist led to her employment at different times by both the Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads. For them she took extended trips over their lines and did painting of great artistic value, that proved not merely for the purpose of advertising these railroads.

Biographical notes of Mrs. Hill appeared in "Who's Who in American Art", "Who's Who in the Pacific Northwest", "Who's Who on the Pacific Coast", "Leading Women of America", "Artists and Musicians."

Her paintings were exhibited at the first World's Fair, in

MRS. ABBY WILLIAMS HILL
Mrs. Abby Williams Hill, 51, a former resident of Tacoma and owner of the Hillcrest apartments, died Saturday at San Diego, where she had resided several years. She was the widow of Dr. Frank R. Hill, a physician in Tacoma, who died five years ago at San Diego. They came to Tacoma from Grinnel, Ia., in 1913. She leaves a son, Romaine, and daughters, Eulalie and Ina of San Diego. Mrs. Hill was a well known artist in Tacoma and had traveled extensively. She was the founder of the Congress of Mothers in Tacoma and was a member of the Avenue Baptist church, San Diego. Burial will be at San Diego, Tuesday.

TACOMA News Tribune
18 May 1943 p. 18

San Diego Union May 16, 1943 (article and obituary)

Scenic Artist For Railway Succumbs Here

Services Tuesday



ABBY WILLIAMS HILL

... Paintings widely displayed.

Abby Williams Hill, 82, for many years official scenic artist for the Great Northern railway, died Friday in her home at 1610 Plumosa way, after a prolonged illness. She was the widow of Dr. Frank R. Hill, and had resided here since 1931.

A landscape artist, she was a pupil of William Chase, of New York, and of H. F. Spread, one of the founders of the Chicago Art institute. She also studied in Europe. The Great Northern railway exhibited her pictures at the world's fairs in Chicago, Jamestown, Seattle and St. Louis. Speaking French and German, she taught her children these languages. She held the degree of M.A. from Grinnell college, Iowa. Grinnell was her birthplace.

She leaves a son, Romaine Bradford Hill, of San Diego, and three adopted daughters, Mrs. James La Torres, of San Francisco, Eulalie Hill and Mrs. Ina Hill, of San Diego.

Services will be conducted Tuesday afternoon at 2 in the University Ave. Baptist church, the Rev. Orson P. Jones officiating. The Erickson-Anderson mortuary will be in charge. Burial will be in Glen Abbey.

Hill, Abby Williams

Leaflet telling of Hill Collection of pictures,
painted by Mrs. Hill and given to University of Puget
Sound, Tacoma, Washington

Died: 1943 - leaflet filed in obit file