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THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE TWO MRS. SLOANS

By Alexis L. Boylan

In his biography of the twentieth-century American artist John Sloan, John Loughery begins his acknowledgements section with an anecdote:

Some years ago John Rewald, the art historian and Cézanne biographer, remarked in conversation about the difficulties of what he termed the “artist’s widow syndrome,” that unfortunate practice that some wives of deceased painters engage in when they seek to control their husband’s posthumous reputations, usually to the detriment of that reputation. In such situations, documents are mysteriously edited, material is withheld, questionable information is released, and freedom of thought is impinged upon by various ploys.¹

Loughery contrasts Rewald’s comments with his own experience working with Helen Farr Sloan (1911–2005), the artist’s second wife and widow, who he suggests was syndrome-free. She engaged in no “ploys,” no foolish attempts to trick wily art historians or biographers from the truth. Indeed, in reading Loughery’s 1995 biography—which stands as one of the most comprehensive works about Sloan and provides much of the material subsequent art historians have used to consider Sloan’s life and art—what becomes clear is how much Loughery depended on Helen Sloan’s memory and access to her late husband’s papers, photographs, and letters.

For those who study John Sloan (1871–1951) and the Ashcan circle of artists, this reliance on Helen Sloan and her dedication to building an archive and aiding scholars comes as no surprise. Much of the credit for the reappraisal of Sloan’s career during the past few decades is due to her labors. After the artist died in 1951, his widow steered his sizable, rich collection of art and documents to the Delaware Art Museum and worked with scholars to make his diaries and letters accessible. Her hand can be seen, quite literally, in almost every publication and exhibition concerning Sloan produced after 1951; she authored introductions in many catalogs, is widely acknowledged in books on the artist, and willingly participated in numerous interviews about Sloan and his peers.² Helen Farr Sloan was what Loughery, Rewald, and others might consider the good kind of widow, encouraging and befriending all who sought to promote the importance and talents of her husband and rewarding them with kernels of insight and memories about his life.

Helen’s work is often framed as all the more noble given the contrasts between her and Sloan’s first wife, Dolly (1876–1943). Sloan’s forty-year marriage to Dolly is frequently categorized as distracting at best, and as debilitating to his career at worst. The stories about Dolly are repeated again and again in the literature: that she was a drunk, that she isolated Sloan, and that in taking care of her various health and psychological problems it is remarkable that he had time to paint at all. According to Loughery and others, the artist struggled to stay married to Dolly, and his career paid a price. There is, however, little archival documentation to corroborate this narrative; instead, the most frequently attributed source for most of these stories is Helen Sloan. Scholars have almost uniformly taken her word for things, either ignoring or dismissing divergent evidence, and the result has been the historical disparaging, and at times the disappearance, of Dolly Sloan.³

To simply demonize Helen Sloan for her hand in this historical revision would be very easy, particularly since her role in this triangular story reads like an art world soap-opera cliché. She first met Sloan as a teenage student in one of his art classes and then married him thirteen years later, less than a year after Dolly died. She was thirty-one and he was seventy-two. Helen seems to have deferred her own artistic aspirations to focus her energies on John’s career, a pursuit that intensified after his death.⁴ Yet to embark on an evil second wife narrative is as problematic as the “artist’s widow syndrome” in assessing how women negotiate power and memory. Helen created authority and purpose for her own life and for her husband’s legacy, and her labors in creating an archive for John Sloan’s papers and art are invaluable to the study of early American modernism. Still, the damage done by her—and by scholars who have accepted her accounts without question—is profound, resulting in the historical erasure of Dolly Sloan in ways that reify traditional narratives about women and artistic production and diminish the complexities of sexuality, intimacy, and memory. In this article I am less interested in assigning blame than in mapping the ways this story of three entwined lives provides an opportunity to consider how tenacious and satisfying narratives of normative gender roles in artistic marriages have been to scholars, and what possibilities there are for feminist reappraisals of the place of sexuality and partnership in our research and analysis. If this project is largely about relocating Dolly Sloan, it is also about



Fig. 1. John Sloan, *Memory* (1906), steel-faced (removed) copper plate etching, ink on paper, 7 5/8" x 9". Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan.

recognizing and understanding Helen Sloan anew by highlighting that narratives that sustain focus on the experiences of male artists often ignore the women in their lives and how, additionally, those women contributed to both art and the creation of history.

In a letter written to his friend Sloan after hearing about the death of Dolly, the artist and critic Walter Pach predicted,

Probably the art historians of the future will not dwell on Dolly's share in the work [of those Ashcan years], but all those who saw it take place know that she had an important share in it...Dolly was resolute (as in everything) about not being a painter herself, but was there ever anyone who understood better how to be a help!⁵

While these words turned out to be prophetic, if one considers John Sloan's artistic output, his letters, his diaries, and the letters of his friends, there is no reason to imagine that Dolly's legacy would be so significantly misplaced. As this brief overview suggests, Dolly Sloan was very much an active and central figure in the communities of friends, artists, and colleagues that formed and sustained her husband and his career.

John Sloan was living and working in Philadelphia as an illustrator for the *Philadelphia Press*, and dabbling in oil painting at the behest of his friend, Robert Henri, when he met Anna "Dolly" Wall in 1898. She came from a working-class family, and, according to Sloan, they met when he was out drinking with another friend from the newspaper.⁶ A few days after this initial meeting, John traveled to New York City to see if he could live there off of his work, and Dolly went with him. The trip was not successful, and the two returned to Philadelphia and Sloan resumed his job at the *Press*. This was a step back for Sloan, who would in the next several years watch

many of his friends move to New York, ease away from illustration work, and inhabit more fully their careers as painters. Unable to make this jump initially, Sloan was one of the last of the Ashcan circle to move permanently. This pattern of hesitation and an inability to capitalize on opportunity would characterize his long career. Sloan was, bluntly put, the least successful of the Ashcan circle, and throughout his life would be dependent on friends, who saw and appreciated his talents, for work, connections, and money.

These professional setbacks did not seem to affect the young couple. In Dolly's letters to John she was clearly concerned about how he *felt* about his work, asking him about how paintings were progressing or how meetings with colleagues went, but there is no evidence she ever pushed him to be more successful, take on more work, change his art or professional demeanor. Dolly aided his work life, maintaining correspondences with friends and galleries, paying bills, etc., but this work seems more in the context of maintaining her household financially and socially as opposed to overt handling of John's career.⁷ She was interested in his art and their lives, but Sloan's career was his own business.

The couple married in 1901. Drawings and letters suggest that they functioned immediately as a team and were seen as such by friends and family. Evidence of this intimacy was evident when Henri's young wife, Linda, died in 1905. Henri was distraught, and during this period of flux he essentially moved in with the Sloans, regularly coming for dinner and often spending evenings at the house. As letters between the artists attest, Dolly maintained the home for both men. Her primacy in this circle, and indeed to her husband, can be seen in his gift to Henri, entitled *Memory* (Fig. 1). Sloan began work on the image, according to his diary, on January 14, 1906, almost a month after Linda's death. It is Dolly, however, who becomes the central figure of this group, looking out at the viewer. She is, perhaps, the physical embodiment of memory: in the scene but also with us, the viewers, looking at this past moment. John makes Dolly the linchpin of this group and a guide for the viewer into this intimate view of grief and loss.⁸

A Socialist and activist for woman suffrage, Dolly was also quite busy during this period; Sloan often noted in his diary that she was off to meetings or rallies. A photograph from a 1911 rally behind the New York Public Library (Fig. 2), shows Dolly Sloan onstage, fourth from the right. Her political and social fervor and her attention to the news were much noted in various letters from friends and in remembrances after her death; this commitment to ideas, literature, and the causes of the day are likewise apparent in her correspondence with her friend John Butler Yeats. Time and again John Sloan and his friends would cast Dolly as a crucial, functional, and lively part of their lives, a pattern that continued as the couple began to travel regularly to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the 1920s. During their summers there, Dolly Sloan established a group of friends and became active in fundraising for Native American arts exhibitions and appreciation campaigns. Their Santa Fe circle included some of the most powerful and

connected people in the country, in particular artists and writers exploring the relationships among modernism, nationalism, and Southwest native cultures.⁹

I belabor these connections in this brief synopsis of their marriage to suggest an alternative account of who Dolly Sloan was—a version that is visible in the archives but that would be significantly edited in subsequent years. To be clear, this was not a perfect marriage; the archives reveal that Dolly suffered from problems with alcohol and anxiety and at various times sought treatment for these issues. There appears to have been a particularly bad patch of trouble during 1909-10, with letters going back and forth between husband and wife that speak frankly about their love and disappointments. John Sloan also drank too much, was plagued with money problems his whole life, and engaged in a series of intense, and probably sexual, relationships with students and models.¹⁰ There was a great deal of hurt to go around. Whatever passed between these two people over time was no doubt complicated, but the archives suggest that mutual caretaking, affection, and shared friends and community defined their marriage.

Helen Farr enters the story in 1927, sixteen years before Dolly's death. A wealthy young woman interested in the arts, Farr first met Sloan when he was her teacher at the Art Students League. Little is known of her personal artistic theories, desires, evolution, or production. Her earliest works are impressionistic landscapes, but her mid-career work, like *Elevated* (1931; Fig. 3), for example, was primarily figural and of a social realist style similar to John Sloan's art.¹¹ It appears that a few years later Farr began summering in Santa Fe and reconnected with her teacher, but the true nature of their relationship during this period is unknown.¹² A 1930 photograph (Fig. 4) of Dolly and Helen sitting together at a meal at the Sloans's home in Santa Fe reveals that, whatever the nature of the relationship at that point, Dolly was a part of it. Helen circulated around the couple for several years both in New York and Santa Fe, although the archives contain spotty documentation about her from this period. Nevertheless, her hand in organizing, writing, and promoting Sloan's book, *Gist of Art* (1939), was significant enough to earn her a credit on the title page: "recorded with the assistance of Helen Farr." While Dolly seems to have had little to do with the book's production, it is dedicated to her: "The little woman who has been my right hand man."¹³ Attention and affection, competition, and cooperation clearly bound these three people together in these years.

Dolly died in May 1943, and it is after that point that Farr's presence in the archives becomes markedly apparent. Her first letters to Sloan are dated shortly after Dolly's death. She speaks to him in a way that is both intimate and tentative:

I am glad you are happy—I know what you mean—you won through the battle of staying with Dolly. She would have died sadly without you and you know that she lived most happily to the end. You have your work and whether you are able to put much on canvas or arouse us to better reading and thinking—we need you as long as you have the strength to stay.¹⁴

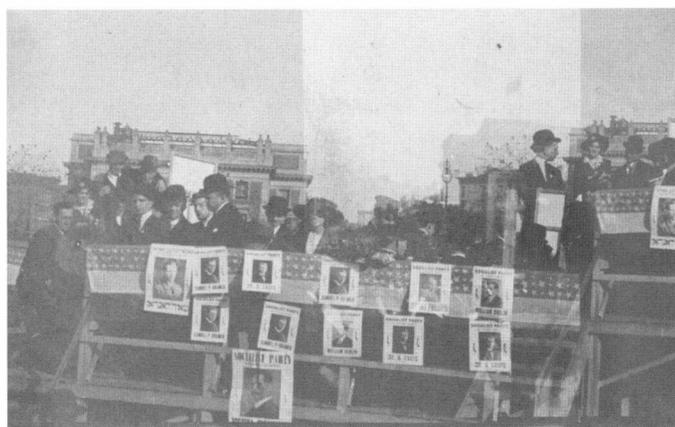


Fig. 2. Socialist Party Rally (Dolly Sloan 4th from right)(1911), photograph. John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan.

Curiously, the archives hold no letters from Sloan to Farr from this period.

Farr's next letter is even bolder: "Dolly told me that this last year or so it made you ill with nervous strain to paint and she would not want me to say anything to hurt or upset you. But I know that what upsets you most when you work is the feeling that the power is not there which used to be...." A page later she makes a request:

It seems selfish of me to ask anything when my many happy memories of you and Dolly will always be mine to keep—but I should like to have a little drawing of Dolly as a keepsake...It would make me very happy if it were given to me instead of being spoiled by the exchange of money with some dealer...just so it is a drawing and not some print that others can have too.¹⁵

This letter almost topples over with competing agendas. Farr begins by pointing out that she knows Sloan better than Dolly did ("I know... what upsets you most"), but then asks for a keepsake of her. Farr is also clear that she wants something personal from Sloan's hand. While perhaps a manipulative request, it is an attempt to reassure her grieving friend that her intentions toward Dolly's memory are kind. On a more profound level this letter suggests a complex friendship with Dolly and acknowledges Dolly's continuing role in any future relationship between Farr and Sloan. This request, even if based in some kind of manipulation, would leave her with a document not of Sloan's time and experiences with her, but of his marriage to Dolly.

Their decision to get married in February 1944 surprised most who knew Sloan and Farr. His diary records the events in this way: "Helen Farr and I did a lot of considering—to marry or not. I took her home at 10.30 came back and thought it over. Decided if we didnt marry Id be a fool. Felt happy at my decision."¹⁶ If Sloan's mood sounds tentative, his new wife's subsequent letters are romantic and hopeful: "I cherish your every freckle, line and silver hair."¹⁷ While no letters provide Sloan's perspective on the marriage, during the seven years they were together before he died, his life stabilized. It seems

that he turned over to Helen all the details of his life, to the extent of charging her with going through Dolly's personal effects and deciding what to keep and what to give away.¹⁸ Also with her guidance, his career gained some momentum. She encouraged her family friend, Van Wyck Brooks, to start work on a biography of Sloan and helped to organize a retrospective of his art at the Whitney Museum of American Art.¹⁹

It was following Sloan's death in 1951, however, that Helen's role shifted dramatically. If her task as a wife was to cater to her husband, her job as a widow was to build his legacy. While some of this was no doubt an investment in securing her own future, Helen's dedication to Sloan scholarship moved beyond any financial considerations. She became, for all intents and purposes, a scholar on the life and work of John Sloan and the Ashcan circle. She wrote introductions for exhibitions and catalogs, including material on Henri and George Bellows, even though both men were dead before Helen became involved with Sloan's work. In this capacity she provided quotes for scholars, from Sloan's mouth but through her lips.²⁰ Some of this was certainly valid: she was not only married to Sloan but had been his student and had worked with him on his book about art; she had spent most of her life in one way or another studying the man. Helen was meticulous about her knowledge, reading books about the period and writing marginalia contradicting authors or adding quotes from Sloan to support a point.²¹ The slippage between Helen's knowledge, her memories, and the actual experiences of John Sloan become increasingly difficult to parse out, and most scholars had little interest in doing so.

This crafting of history comes most acutely into focus in the archives themselves. Helen began donating Sloan's papers, photographs, and other materials to the Delaware Art Museum in 1961, a collection that now includes almost 5000 documents.²² She often visited the growing archive and began the practice of placing handwritten notes among the papers to "clarify" certain documents, highlighting connections, providing keys to photographs, and interpreting "codes" that she claimed Sloan had embedded in his letters. A little editorial tending seemed neither exceptional nor objectionable, and indeed Helen's keys identifying the individuals in photographs and her suggested dates on letters have provided scholars with crucial information that would otherwise have been lost. Increasingly, however, these reconstructions of memories concerned Dolly's role and participation in Sloan's life.

The starkest example of Helen Farr Sloan's historical intervention can be seen in a 1965 edition of her husband's diaries. No doubt, the book was an attempt to capitalize on growing scholarly and art-market interest in American art and Ashcan painters. Indeed, the diaries offer a fascinating glimpse into life in New York City in the first years of the twentieth century. The book was edited by Bruce St. John, who was then



Fig. 3. Helen Farr Sloan, *Elevated* (1931), lithograph, 9 7/8" x 12 1/2". National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Studio Group, Wilmington, DE.



Fig. 4. Dolly Sloan and Helen Farr seated at table outside Santa Fe house (1930), photograph. John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan.

the curator of the John Sloan Collection and the Director of the Delaware Art Museum. He tasked Helen with writing the introduction, ostensibly meant to guide the reader through the broad strokes of Sloan's biography. It was this introduction that constituted the first detailed recasting of Dolly as, foremost, a woman whose alcohol and mental problems put a strain on her husband and his career. Helen began her discussion of their marriage by explaining that Dolly "had a tendency to drink," going on to note that a physician who treated her said her condition was "chronic" and her "neurosis was 'too deep-seated to be cured.'"²³ Helen's presentation of this information, particularly her use of quotes, gave authority to this diagnosis, yet her documentation was obscure. Was it a

direct quote from the doctor, or the physician's diagnosis as told to her by Sloan, or a memory from some other source? Regardless, there is no archival documentation to support these claims. Helen informed readers that Sloan's diary-keeping served two functions: first, as a mechanism suggested by the physician treating Dolly to resolve some of Sloan's unhappiness, and second, as an opportunity for him to write complimentary things about Dolly because he knew she would read his diary. Through this frame of marital dysfunction, Helen elaborated well beyond the text or time frame of the diary. She explained the couple's initial move to New Mexico, for example, as "a convenient place for Sloan to go in summer because ... it was necessary for them to live someplace where Dolly's drinking problems would not cause so much embarrassment."²⁴ In short, in Helen's retelling, Sloan and Dolly's entire marriage, a great portion of John's career, and many of the diary entries were defined by Dolly Sloan's illness.

Helen never shied away from describing and summarizing events that preceded not only her connection to Sloan but her birth, and, as already noted, without documented sources, the quotations fell somewhere between remembered statements and creative dialogue. In fact, what is most troublesome about her introduction is the way it often undermines Sloan's actual words and language as written in the diary. In suggesting that the diary was either a therapeutic exercise or a series of platitudes aimed at placating a drunk, insecure wife, one might question the usefulness of such a document as a source at all. Helen rightly predicted and sought to ease those very concerns by making herself the "key" to unlocking its "real" meaning. She literally placed herself between the diary and the reader by first diminishing its claims to veracity (i.e., some of the words are merely written to make Dolly feel better) and then reinvigorating them (i.e., claiming to clarify the real interpretation). This editorial curating served to diminish any expressions of marital affection and descriptions of Dolly's vibrancy, and caused readers to question the tenderness and dependency that frequently seemed to characterize the relationship between John and Dolly in the pages of the diary.

Helen's insistence on exposing the "true" meaning of John Sloan's diary thus complicated researchers' use of the diary and other documents in the archive. Locating herself as a necessary gatekeeper and translator of her husband's materials, she assumed a position that provided numerous opportunities for her to contribute to—and to shape—the growing narrative about Sloan and his historical contexts. It is perhaps not surprising that Helen continued to offer new "revelations" about Dolly and her dysfunction. For example, in the 1990s, stories that Dolly had worked as a prostitute emerged, along with additional controversial claims (which Helen "revealed" for Loughery's 1995 biography) of abortions, infidelity, suicide attempts, and venereal disease. Provided by a then elderly Helen, whose "authority" on all matters relating to John Sloan had been established, this new information, without any documentation or verification, found its way into subsequent scholarship on the artist.²⁵ With each retelling and each new "revelation," Dolly's history becomes more murky,

making her a cluster of pathologies instead of a functioning, vital person. Conversely, Sloan's conduct as a husband gets cleansed, as his bouts of alcoholism, his bad behavior, his cheating, are all framed as unsurprising compensation for a horrible marriage. If Helen's life's work was to claim for Sloan the prestige and honor she thought he deserved, her ongoing revelations about Dolly helped that goal along. At the same time, Helen created a role for herself, a rapt audience, and an authority that sustained her intellectual and social life for the sixty years she spent as John Sloan's widow.

What can be taken from this? The easy impulse is to blame Helen. Yet, it is crucial to remember that, while she certainly had a hand in this rewriting of history, she was not alone. What becomes clear from a review of the literature is that many scholars also were desirous of a heroic narrative for John Sloan, who enjoyed limited success during his lifetime. (By age fifty he had sold only eight paintings.) He frequently got into nasty fights with other artists and became increasingly bitter, demonizing old friends and blaming them or denying them credit for his artistic choices. Rather than confront his failures, he (and Helen) blamed them on Dolly, causing scholars ultimately to wonder how someone like Sloan ever was attracted to someone like her.²⁶ Dolly Sloan and her supposed failings accommodated a scholarly rationalization, turning the question, "Why was John Sloan not more successful?" into, "Isn't it amazing that he achieved any success with a wife like Dolly?" Even decades after the rise of feminist art historical practice, there remains a deep-seated impulse to hold onto traditional narratives about the heroic male artist that revel in his heterosexuality and manliness while locating his potential undoing in intimate relationships with women.

Dolly Sloan also is problematic in her husband's historical narrative because she did not conform to traditional ideas about the proper role for an artist's wife. She pursued many of her own political and social aspirations and, while apparently conversant with art and painting, largely stayed out of Sloan's artistic practice. Perhaps even more damning, as is clear from letters and diaries, she made emotional demands on him, objecting when he traveled alone or seemed preoccupied with work. Dolly thus got cast as the bad wife and as an obstacle standing between her husband and his deserved success.²⁷

Helen Sloan, on the other hand, was rewarded for her desire to rescript a heroic narrative for John Sloan and for conforming to a more "traditional" role as artist's wife and widow. When they married, she stepped into his work and "normalized" the story, dedicating herself to her husband's career and legacy. As a wife, she was recognized and appreciated by the (mostly male) art historians and scholars of the 1960s and 1970s, who began the process of re-historicizing John Sloan and his artistic contributions. She assumed a power position the deceased Dolly never had. Forthcoming with access and documents, the second Mrs. Sloan was awarded opportunities to write book introductions and catalog forewords and liberally thanked for her assistance. Her cooperation was further compensated—and perhaps even encouraged—by scholars' almost uniform silence regarding questions about her marriage to Sloan, their forty-year age

difference, and their probable affair prior to Dolly's death. These issues, and the complications they suggest in regard to her role in the narrative, are *never* mentioned, as Dolly is sacrificed in the rescripting of Helen and John's marriage.

Returning Dolly Sloan to this story, in her fullness and complexity, is essential to crafting a more complete history of John Sloan and the Ashcan circle of artists, of the socialist and suffrage movements of the early twentieth century, and of the mid-century art scene in Santa Fe. For example, it is well documented that Sloan himself had a complex relationship with socialism, as seen in the shift from his first supportive writings about the movement in the 1910s to his reflections in the 1940s, when he dismissed and minimized his commitment to socialist activism. Complicating the process of gaining a clear picture of Sloan's political views is the inability to document what Sloan himself said (rather than what Helen said that he said). A scholar today might approach this issue by considering more seriously Dolly's role in shaping her husband's politics and social networks in light of her own activism. At her funeral, Dolly was eulogized by the writer and social activist Max Eastman, suggesting that the Sloans were still in contact with political and literary figures. (Eastman famously experienced a radical political reorientation in the 1930s that resulted in his denouncing his earlier socialism.²⁸) Considering the couple's roles in a larger historical reorientation of the left and right, Dolly could prove to be a key figure in assembling a picture of John's political beliefs and intentions in his art.

Likewise, there is much to be gained from a reconsideration of the relationships among the "three Sloans" during Dolly's lifetime. In understanding the complexities of modern marriage and constructions of heterosexuality, it is crucial to consider the exchanges of power and desire that bound these three people together for fifty years. Helen was John's widow, but she also carried Dolly's legacy, for as much of it as she may have erased, she also archived all that we have about Dolly. These two women have their own story, and it too is worth unpacking, not just for historical clarification or fact finding, but as an attempt to consider the elasticity of that institution as a lived structure (particularly in light of our own historical moment when the definitions of marriage are so fraught). Likewise, this type of investigation can serve to break down the easy categories of "good" and "bad" wives, widows, and women, which continue to shape narratives about family, gender, and sexuality.

Finally, as feminist scholars, it would behoove us to approach archives with some circumspection. For while archives so often are sources of feminist recuperations, they also can be sites of desire, violence, and power. Returning to Rewald's "artist's wife syndrome" that began this essay, a woman who creates an archive seems to be allotted one of only two roles, as either meddling with or accommodating scholars. Given these patronizing options, it is not hard to see why Helen Sloan sought the rewards of playing the "good" widow. There is even something heroic in the way that she rewrote her own history, carved out a career for herself, and wrote witty and often astute commentary on Ashcan circle art. And if there

is a need to resituate Dolly in the archives and histories, there is also a need to relocate Helen. Looking at the two wives of John Sloan helps us see a complete picture of the social, political, and even artistic changes, opportunities, and limitations women (and their husbands) faced in the twentieth century. •

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Notes

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1. John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 413.
2. Examples of publications with a substantial contribution by her are: *John Sloan's New York Scene, from the diaries, notes, and correspondence, 1906-1913*, ed. Bruce St. John, intro. Helen Farr Sloan (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); *American art nouveau: the poster period of John Sloan, a selection of hitherto unpublished prints and autobiographical recollections by the artist*, collected by Helen Farr Sloan (Lock Haven, PA: Hammermill Paper Co., 1967); *New York etchings (1905-1949)*, ed. Helen Farr Sloan (New York: Dover, 1978); James Kraft and Helen Farr Sloan, *John Sloan in Santa Fe* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1981); *Robert Henri, 1865-1929, Selected Paintings*, intro. Helen Farr Sloan, essay Bruce W. Chambers (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1986); and *Revolutionaries of Realism: The Letters of John Sloan and Robert Henri*, ed. Bennard B. Perlman, intro. Mrs. John Sloan (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997).
3. Although Loughery's biography is the most recent and frequently cited source for dramatic allegations about Dolly Sloan, including abortions and infidelity, scholarly discussion of Dolly and her "problems" began appearing a few years after John Sloan's death in 1951. For example, Van Wyck Brooks's 1955 biography of Sloan identifies Dolly as "manic-depressive and an alcoholic" but provides no support for either claim; however, his book is dedicated to Helen Sloan, whom he had known since she was a child. The dedication page includes a letter from Brooks to Helen expressing gratitude for her help. Helen expanded the discussion of Dolly's problems in her introduction to *John Sloan's New York Scene* (1965), and from that point on, references to her mental instability and alcoholism are standard. A notable exception is Rebecca Zurier's analysis in *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (2006). Although Zurier considers these stories about Dolly in her analysis of Sloan and his imagery, she acknowledges in the notes both her dependency on Helen as a source and Helen's complicated personal and chronological positioning. Finally, while Sascha Scott, in her study of Sloan and his images of Native Americans, does not discuss Dolly, she does question the extent to which Helen's voice has been collapsed with Sloan's in some scholarly readings of the archives. See Van Wyck Brooks, *John Sloan: A Painter's Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1955), 35; St. John, ed. *John Sloan's New York Scene*, xv-xvi; Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2006), 251

- and 361 n4; and Sascha Scott, "Paintings of Pueblo Indians and the Politics of Preservation in the American Southwest," (PhD. Diss., Rutgers University, 2008).
4. In a 1988 interview, Helen Sloan, in response to a question from the audience asking if she had in recent years "take[n] up the brush," replied that her interests were elsewhere; "I've taken up the pen more...I am working on my memoirs." It is difficult to ascertain what Helen Sloan's artistic desires were; in her lifetime she exhibited her work a few times, and while there are several paintings and drawings in collections such as the Delaware Art Museum and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, these works were contributed by the artist herself or her friends. No consistent pattern of her artistic work is evident, but it is a subject worth more study. See, interview of Helen Farr Sloan conducted by Avis Berman, July 17, 1988, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
 5. Letter from Walter Pach to John Sloan, May 24, 1943, in the John Sloan Manuscript Collection at the Delaware Art Museum, hereafter Collection DAM.
 6. There is little concrete information about Dolly's early life and family outside of notes from John and Helen Sloan. I am currently working on a dual biography of Dolly Sloan and Helen Sloan and keep searching for more biographical details of Dolly's early life. For an account of John and Dolly's first meeting, see correspondence from John Sloan to Robert Henri, October 1, 1898. Collection DAM.
 7. Thanks to Betsy Fahlman for her help in thinking through this issue of artistic spouses and labor.
 8. For a more detailed analysis of this image and its role as a marker of the friendship and antagonisms between Sloan and Henri, see, Alexis L. Boylan, "Best Friends Forever? John Sloan, Robert Henri, and the Problem of Memory" in *Seeing the City: Sloan's New York*, eds. Joyce Schiller and Heather Campbell Coyle (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, and the Delaware Art Museum, 2007), 197.
 9. Dolly Sloan was heavily involved in planning the Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts, an exhibition in 1931 at the Grand Central Galleries in New York City that featured work from contemporary Native American artists. Dolly and John also participated in planning fiestas commemorating historical events relating to Santa Fe. See Grant Holcomb, "John Sloan in Santa Fe," *American Art Journal* 10, no. 1 (May 1978): 33-54.
 10. Sloan himself mentions in letters that he drank too much on numerous occasions. Besides his relationship with Helen, who was his student, a collection of intense, intimate letters from 1915 document a relationship with a woman named Jennie Doyle. Helen's note that accompanies the letters states that Doyle was "in love with Sloan [she] 'frightened him' by her queerness he said." Although Helen tries to make the relationship one sided, the letters themselves suggest something more complex. Box 3, Collection DAM.
 11. I hope, in the future, to provide a more complete picture of Helen Farr Sloan's art production.
 12. Loughery claims that despite Helen being in awe of Sloan, when he first made a pass at her, she declined. Loughery is circumspect about when their relationship turned sexual, introducing the fact in a roundabout way by noting that Dolly became aware of the romance in 1935. See Loughery, *John Sloan*, 303-05 and 326.
 13. John Sloan, *Gist of Art* (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1939), NP (dedication page).
 14. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, June 30, 1943. Collection DAM.
 15. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, November 26, 1943. Collection DAM.
 16. Sloan Diaries, Feb. 4, 1944. His entry the next day, "Helen and I married today. Called for her at Mrs Eckerts then to the County Clerk for License then to Robinson J.P. for marriage. Miss Whites to Dinner with Shusters. At 3.30 AM Helen Sloan started back to N.Y." Collection DAM.
 17. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, March 3, 1944. Collection DAM.
 18. Letter from Helen Farr Sloan to John Sloan, March 2, 1944. Collection DAM.
 19. Helen describes her relationship with Brooks in *John Sloan in Santa Fe*, 29. Notably, in the catalogue for the retrospective exhibition, Goodrich writes of Dolly: "Vivacious, witty, highly sociable she had Irish charm and an Irish temper." This contrasts markedly with how she will be described by Brooks four years later. Goodrich thanks Helen in the acknowledgements, but the show was in the works before Sloan died, which clearly affected the narrative. Lloyd Goodrich, *John Sloan* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and Macmillan, 1952), 14.
 20. This slippage begins with Brooks's 1955 biography, where, without any footnotes or editorial direction, it is impossible to decipher whether quotes come from Brooks's conversations with Sloan or from his interviews with Helen.
 21. The Delaware Art Museum Library has numerous books from Helen Sloan's personal library, including many containing marginalia in which she argues with authors' statements or offers evidence to support their claims. Her writing reveals that she was in active conversation with the historical narratives being shaped about her husband by various scholars, many of whom had in fact come to her for interviews. I would like to thank Heather Campbell Coyle for pointing the marginalia out to me.
 22. For more on the history of the Helen Farr Sloan Library and her relationship with the Delaware Art Museum, see *Delaware Art Museum: Selected Treasures* (London: Scala, 2004), 10-11, 13.
 23. Brooks' s version of this story was that John merely added some complimentary comments about Dolly in the diary because he knew she would read it. He makes no suggestion of any therapeutic function. It is unclear from Brooks's text where he gets his information about the diary and Dolly, but as already noted, Brooks had a longstanding friendship with Helen. See Brooks, *John Sloan: A Painter's Life*, 35-36; and St. John, ed., *John Sloan's New York Scene*, xv-xvi.
 24. St. John, ed., *John Sloan's New York Scene*, xvi.
 25. See Janice Coco, *John Sloan's Women: A Psychoanalysis of Vision* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 2004) and Schiller and Campbell Coyle, eds., *Seeing the City: Sloan's New York*.
 26. See Loughery, *John Sloan*, 51; and Coco, *John Sloan's Women*, 55.
 27. For an insightful analysis of two artistic marriages and similar struggles with gender roles, see Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and the Crisis of Marriage: Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002).
 28. See William L. O'Neill, *The Last Romantic: A Life of Max Eastman* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978).