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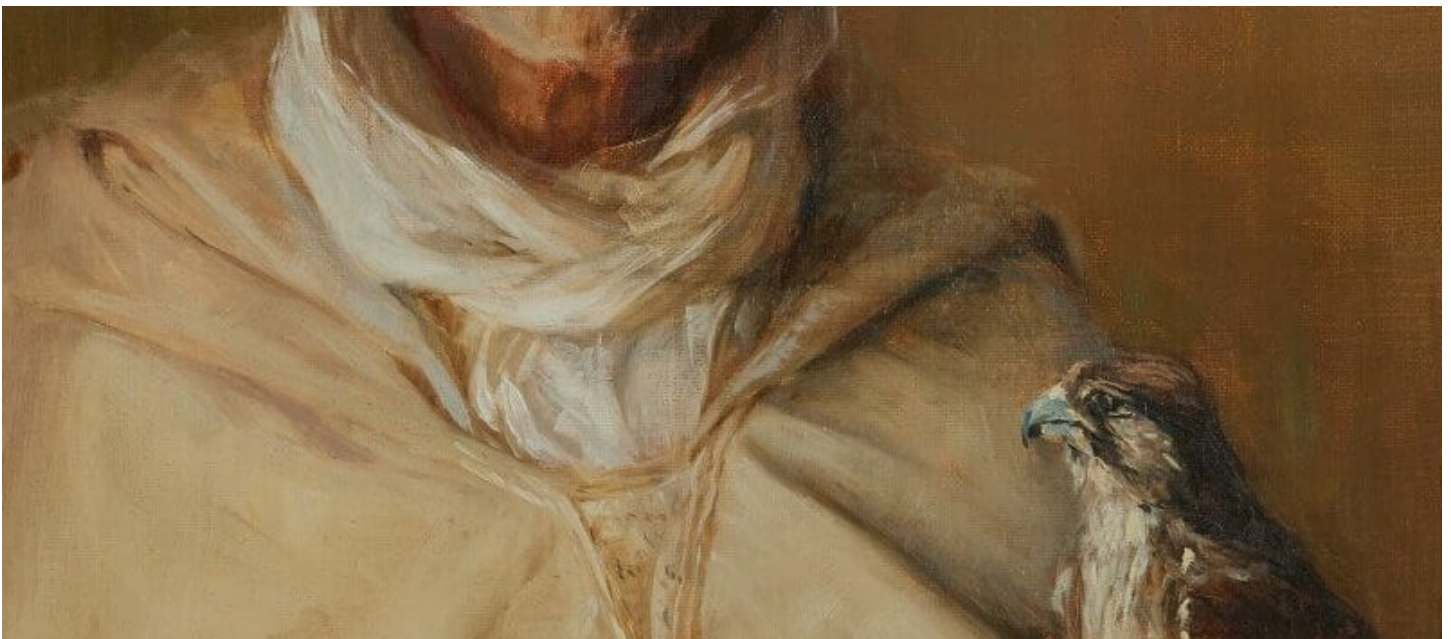
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NHA Acquires One of Elizabeth Rebecca Coffin's "Lost Works"





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NHA Acquires One of Elizabeth Rebecca Coffin's "Lost Works"

February 22, 2022

NANTUCKET, MA – The Nantucket Historical Association (NHA) is pleased to announce the acquisition of the painting *The Old Falconer of Ben Gana, Sheik of the Ziban* (1906), by Elizabeth Rebecca Coffin, thanks to a generous gift from the Friends of the Nantucket Historical Association with additional support from members of the Friends' Acquisition Committee.





The Old Falconer of Ben Gana, Sheik of the Ziban
(1906)

Elizabeth Rebecca Coffin (1850–1930) was an educator, philanthropist, and the most important female artist associated with Nantucket. Born in Brooklyn, where she lived most of her life, she studied at Vassar College, the Academy of Fine Arts in the Hague, the Art Students League in New York, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Among her instructors were Johan Philip Koelman, William Merritt Chase, and Thomas Eakins, whose realist approach is evident in Coffin's surviving works. Her father was from Nantucket and a descendant of the early English settlers; in the early 1880s, she began summering on island, eventually buying a house in which she later retired. Her signal achievement for Nantucket was the revival and transformation of the Coffin School, which she helped guide for more than two decades.

Coffin painted *The Old Falconer of Ben Gana, Sheik of the Ziban* during a trip to Biskra, Algeria, in 1906, and she gifted the painting to Vassar in 1916. Referencing the work in *Nantucket Spirit: the Art and Life of Elizabeth Rebecca Coffin* (2001), Margaret Moore Booker notes, "Coffin's paintings of Arabs bring to mind the portrayals of Bedouins that John Singer

Sargent painted in North Africa in the 1890s." *The Old Falconer* was included in the college's 1920 retrospective exhibition of her work, but was deaccessioned by the college in 1946. It then went through a series of private owners and became one of the most important "lost works" in Coffin's oeuvre, until it reemerged at auction in early 2022.

"There are very few Nantucket artists that fit the description 'Island Treasure', but Elizabeth Rebecca Coffin is most certainly one. *The Old Falconer* is not only the NHA's finest Coffin portrait, it is among the finest portraits in the entire museum," says Stephen Langer, Chair of the Friends' Acquisition Committee.

The painting will be on display this season; stay tuned for more information.

For over 35 years, support from the Friends of the Nantucket Historical Association has enabled the NHA to acquire numerous artifacts, works of art, and documents and ensure that such objects stay on or return to Nantucket to be enjoyed by the people of the island.

###

◀ **Student Art Exhibition
Opens at the Whaling Museum
on February 21**

**Major Asian Art Exhibition on
Nantucket ▶**

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The Nantucket Historical Association preserves and interprets the history of Nantucket through its programs, collections, and properties, in order to promote the island's significance and foster an appreciation of it among all audiences.

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