

William Henry Dethlef

# KOERNER

(1878-1938)



## They All Went Through the Gate and Had a Look

Oil on panel  
24 x 36 inches  
Signed lower right, WHDK

William Henry Dethlef Koerner was born in Lunden, Germany on November 19, 1878 and emigrated to the United States with his family two years later, settling in Clinton, Iowa. At 15 years of age Koerner found work at the Chicago Tribune and eventually established himself firmly as a staff artist, earning \$5.00 a week. During this time he continually sought to improve his artistic ability and regularly attended classes at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Francis Smith Art Academy. While studying at the Academy, Koerner met Lillian Lusk and the two were married in 1903.

In an effort to launch his career, Koerner moved to New York City, where he attended classes at the Art Students League and worked as a freelance illustrator. Koerner then traveled, in 1907, to Wilmington, Delaware to study with the father of American illustration, Howard Pyle. While studying in Delaware, Koerner was exposed to the work of Pyle's other students, particularly N.C. Wyeth, Harvey Dunn, and Frank Schoonover. Upon leaving Pyle's tutelage in 1911, the burgeoning artist secured work from *Ladies Home Journal*, *Redbook*, *Harper's*, *Collier's*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, with whom he would eventually work exclusively.

*They All Went Through the Gate and Had a Look* is a classic example of Koerner's illustration work. The painting was commissioned by the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1935 to illustrate the August 31st short story "October Corn", by Sigman Byrd. The moment depicted is one of explanation and realization, the height of any murder mystery. Koerner's distinct illustrative style established a vignette, literally and figuratively, of the entire story. While this moment does not appear until a few pages latter, it is illustrated on the first page in order to grab a potential reader's attention and attract them into the story.



Koerner passed away at his home in Interlake, New Jersey in 1938, at just 59 years of age. During his career, he had completed works for more than 500 paintings, most of which were published as illustrations. His New Jersey studio remained in place for some time, before being moved and preserved indefinitely at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. Today the artwork of William Henry Dethlef Koerner is widely recognized for its significant contribution to American illustration, a genre that provided much needed entertainment and excitement for Depression era America.

- Illustrated: Byrd, Sigman. "October Corn", Saturday Evening Post, August 31 1935, pg. 12
- Reed, Walt. *The Illustrator in American; 1900-1960's*. New York, NY: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1966
- Reed, Walt. *The Illustrator in American; 1860-2000*. New York, NY: The Society of Illustrators, 2001
- Hutchinson, W.H. *The Workd, The Work & The West of W.H.D. Koerner*. Oklahoma City, OK: University of Oklahoma. 1978

## THOMAS NYGARD GALLERY

19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN ART

135 EAST MAIN STREET • BOZEMAN, MONTANA 59715  
TELEPHONE: 406-586-3636 • TELEFAX: 406-587-8279  
www.nygardgallery.com



FINE ART DEALERS  
ASSOCIATION  
MEMBER