

The year 1850 may be considered the beginning of a new epoch in America art, with respect to the development of watercolor painting.

In December of that year, a group of thirty artists gathered in the studio of John Falconer in New York City and drafted both a constitution and bylaws, establishing The Society for the Promotion of Painting in Water Color.

In addition to securing an exhibition space in the Library Society building in lower Manhattan, the society founded a small school for the instruction of watercolor painting. Periodic exhibitions of the members' paintings also included works by noted English artists of the day, borrowed from embryonic private collections in the city.

The society's activities also included organized sketching excursions along the Hudson River.

Its major public exposure came in 1853, when the society presented works by its members in the "Industry of All Nations" section of the Crystal Palace Exposition in New York.

The society did not prosper, however, and by the time of its annual meeting in 1854 membership had fallen to twenty-one.

The group gave up its quarters in the Library Society building and returned to Falconer's studio, where it broke up amid dissension.

No further attempt to formally organize the growing numbers of watercolor painters in New York City was made for more than a decade.

During that decade, though, Henry Warren's *Painting in Water Color* was published in New York City in 1856-the book was a considerable improvement over the only other manual of instruction

existing at the time, *Elements of Graphic Art*, by Archibald Roberson, published in 1802 and by the 1850's long out of print.

In 1866 the National Academy of Design was host to an exhibition of watercolor painting in its elaborate neo-Venetian Gothic building on Twenty-Third Street in New York City.

The exhibit was sponsored by an independent group called The Artists Fund Society.

Within a few months of this event, forty-two prominent artists living in and near New York City founded The American Society of Painters in Water Colors.