

For release, November 2008

<http://www.johnpbenson.org/>

\$65.00, 136 pgs, hardcover, 130 images w/92 4/c, 9" x 12"
ISBN13# 978-0-9821761-0-8 / ISBN 10#0-9821761-0-4

Publisher: Baker Marine Publications

PR: [Blueline Publicity / 603-205-0552](mailto:media@bluelinepublicity.com)

Email: media@bluelinepublicity.com

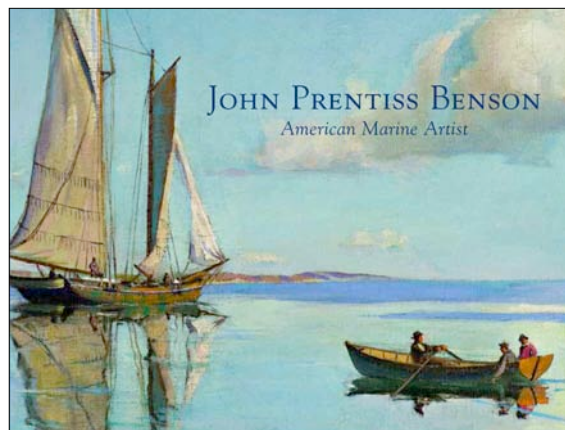
Publication date — February 1, 2009

JOHN PRENTISS BENSON

AMERICAN MARINE ARTIST

by Nicholas Baker and Margaret M. Betts

- ✓ Over 90 full color plates.
- ✓ Marine artist lived from 1865 to 1947.
- ✓ Hundreds of undiscovered paintings at large.



John Prentiss Benson was born in 1865 in Salem, Massachusetts. His youth was spent just blocks away from the seaport where ships of all kinds were a source of endless fascination. Artistic talent ran in the family, and his oldest brother, Frank, displayed such gifts that further study was encouraged. But when young John indicated he, too, would like to study art, parental caution took over. One artist in the family was enough.

After receiving excellent **training in Paris** in 1888-89, John opened an architecture practice in New York City. Half of his professional life was spent as an architect, but he never lost his desire to paint. By 1925, he had closed his business, **moved to Kittery, Maine**, and become a full-time painter. His artwork sold readily in galleries, at exhibitions, and to visitors. Painting with great regularity every year until his death in 1947 at age 82, **he created more than 750 canvases. Many remain unlocated. Part mystery, part treasure hunt, the search for still unlocated John P. Benson paintings is an ongoing quest.**

FROM THE FOREWORD BY BEVERLY BENSON SEAMANS

"John Prentiss Benson's paintings demonstrate a living, moving energy. It's an energy derived from the way he perceived the natural forces of water, primarily the sea, and weather, and the tension that exists when mankind participates in those worlds."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nicholas J. Baker has produced seven books, three of which were local histories. Most recently he compiled and edited a three-volume catalogue raisonné, *The Artistic Legacy of John Prentiss Benson*. A fourth volume has been published electronically on the John P. Benson website. Mr. Baker's late wife, Joan Prentiss Benson Baker, was John Benson's granddaughter and named after him. Her death in 2000 prompted the publication, first, of the catalogue raisonné and now this book.

Margaret M. Betts has been researching and writing about John Prentiss Benson for the past eight years. Her interest in the artist goes back to her childhood when her father inherited Benson's painting *The Seven Seas* after the death of his father, Ned Betts, who was John Benson's good friend. A writer by avocation, she has published stories in *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Trains*, and the former *Maine Business Digest*. She has compiled biographical information about John Benson in the three-volume catalogue raisonné, *The Artistic Legacy of John Prentiss Benson*. She lives and writes near Auburn, Maine, with the quiet companionship of two border collies, one tuxedo cat, and a flock of laying hens. For author interviews please contact Margaret at <mmbetts@roadrunner.com>.

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Distribution: Enfield Publishing & Distribution Co., P.O. Box 699, Enfield, New Hampshire 03748

Tel: 603-632-7377 / <http://www.enfieldbooks.com>

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PRAISE FOR JOHN PRENTISS BENSON

"John Prentiss Benson is one of my favorite marine artists. His knowledge of the motion of water, his sense of drama, and above all his understanding of the way of a ship in the sea are complete, confident, and supremely satisfying. It is wonderful that the research team has continued to turn up more of his paintings, and I am very excited to see the pictures reproduced in the size and quality they deserve."

Nathan R. Lipfert, Senior Curator, Maine Maritime Museum

"The name Benson immediately draws up Frank Benson, that illustrious American Impressionist who was a member of "The Ten". Few may recognize the name of his brother, John, younger by two years. He, too, was a talented painter, but his family urged him to sublimate that desire in favor of what would become a successful career in architecture. John did continue to paint privately, but starting in mid-life he finally focused exclusively on painting. For the last twenty-five years of his life he pursued his love of marine subjects and the coast of Maine. He was prolific, producing at least 750 paintings, the best of which are as spirited and skillful as those of his brother, Frank. Thanks to Nicholas Baker and Margaret Betts, **American art history is richer for telling the story** of an artist who painted under no one's shadow."

Peter Hastings Falk, Author of Who Was Who in American Art

"Successful architect, sometime New York City fire inspector, lifelong sailor, Salem native John P. Benson did not become a full-time artist until his late 50s and never achieved the fame of his older brother, Frank, in his lifetime. But to those collectors fortunate enough to own any of his paintings, **Benson's work as a marine artist is a revelation.** Now at last, thanks to Nicholas J. Baker, the rest of us are being given a chance to judge John P. Benson's work for ourselves. Baker's handsome and well-illustrated book is long overdue. It, too, is a revelation."

*Llewellyn Howland III, publisher and antiquarian bookseller,
specializing in American marine painting and maritime history.*

"Benson had an exceptional eye. His architectural training taught him how to see detail and truthfully render that detail as a painter."
John Hagan, private art dealer and advisor

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