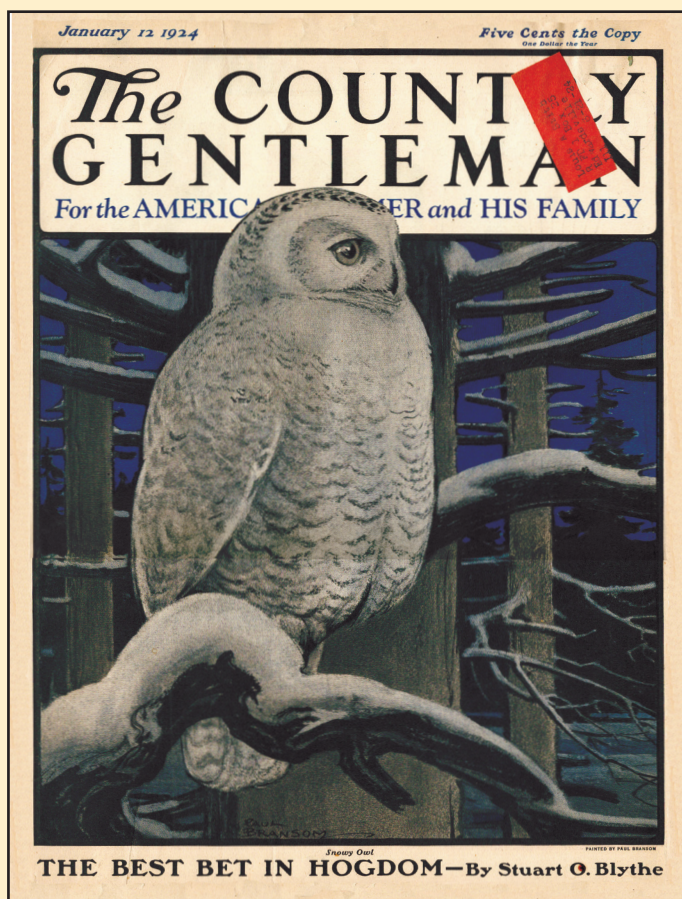
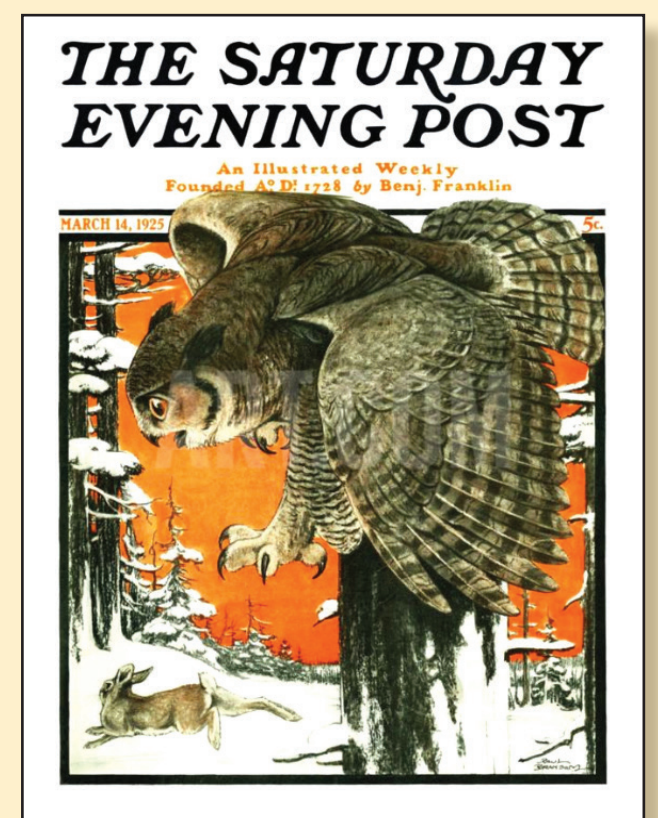
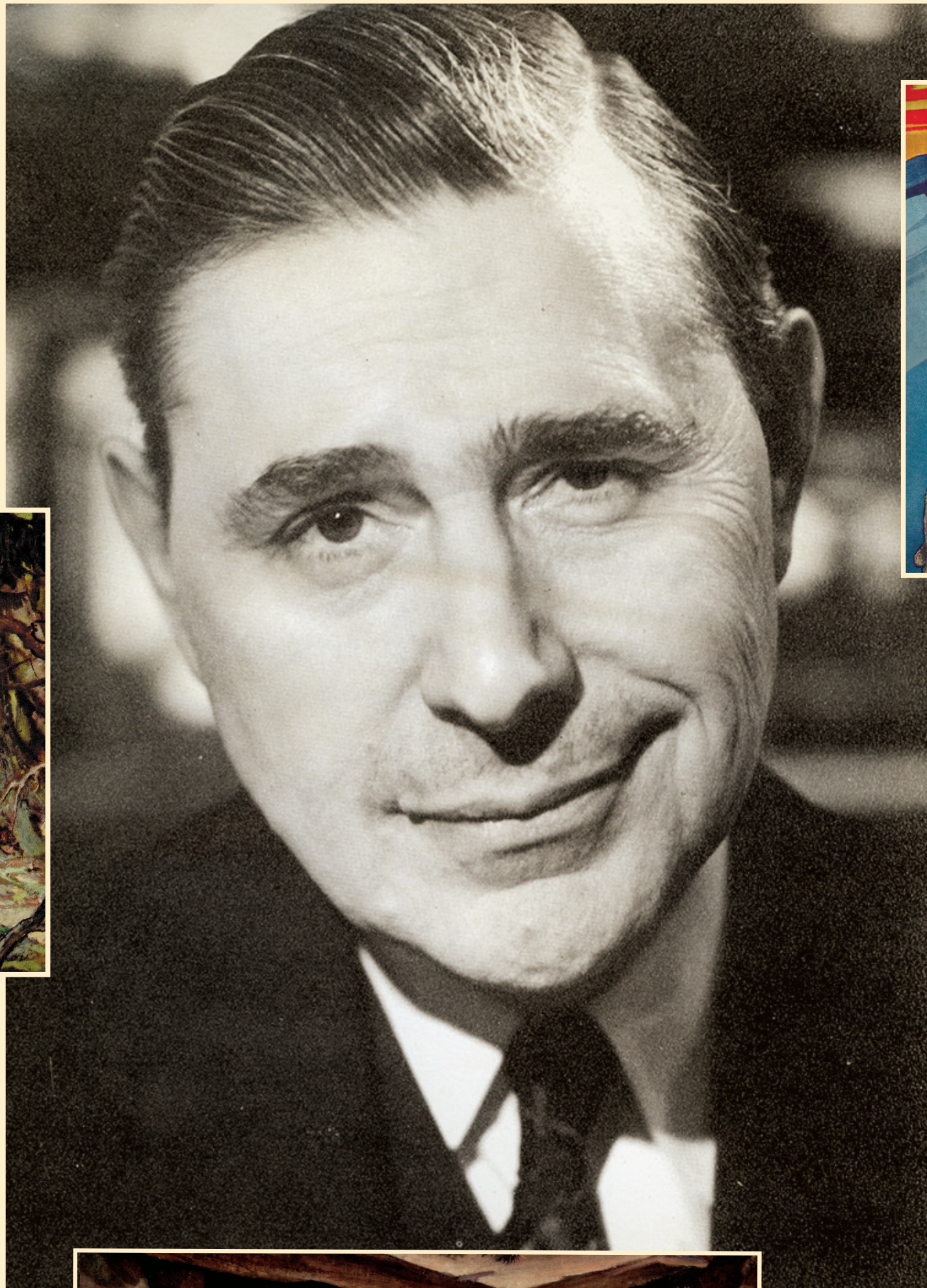

Paul Bransom



Encountering the Wild

To encounter more, visit: CarogaMuseum.org

The Early Years



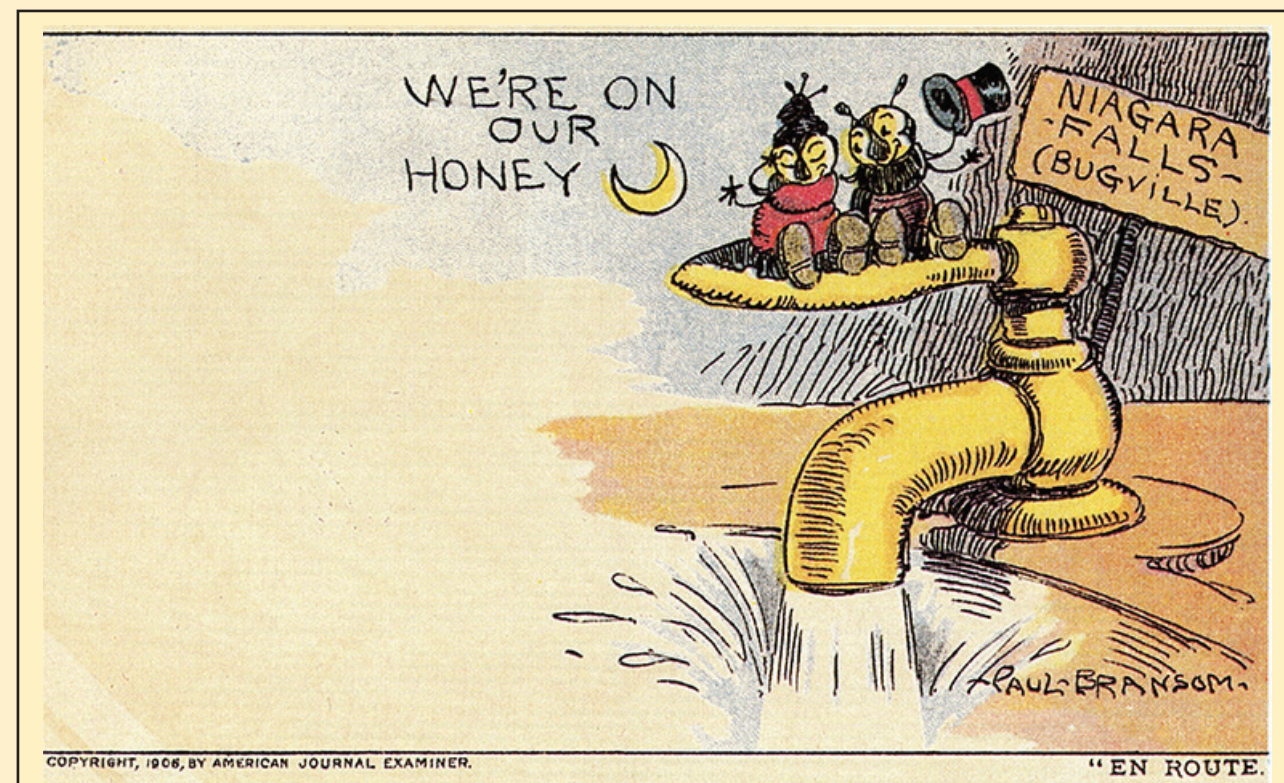
Paul Bransom

The old saying 'Artists are born, not made' applies especially in the case of the true animal artist — with him picturing animals is not a decision — it is a compulsion which is the dominant force of the artist's entire life and endeavor.

(President's message for the Society of Animal Artists, 1965)

Born and raised in Washington, D. C., Paul had a fascination with drawing animals from a very young age. He was attracted not to the museums but the National Zoo. While at the end of the nineteenth century art students trained by copying casts of Classical statues or the works in museums, Paul devoted his attention to drawing animals at the zoo. He wrote, "I have never attended art school save for about a month at the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington. The National Zoo seemed to be ever so much more important."

He left school at 14 for an apprenticeship in the office of a "Patent" draughtsman. At 18, he took what he characterized as "the inevitable flight to New York to seek my fortune." He was hired in 1903 by the *New York Evening Journal* to continue a daily comic strip entitled "News from Bugville."



Bransom spent his spare time sketching animals at the two New York zoos. He caught the attention of William T. Hornaday, director of the Bronx Zoo. Impressed with

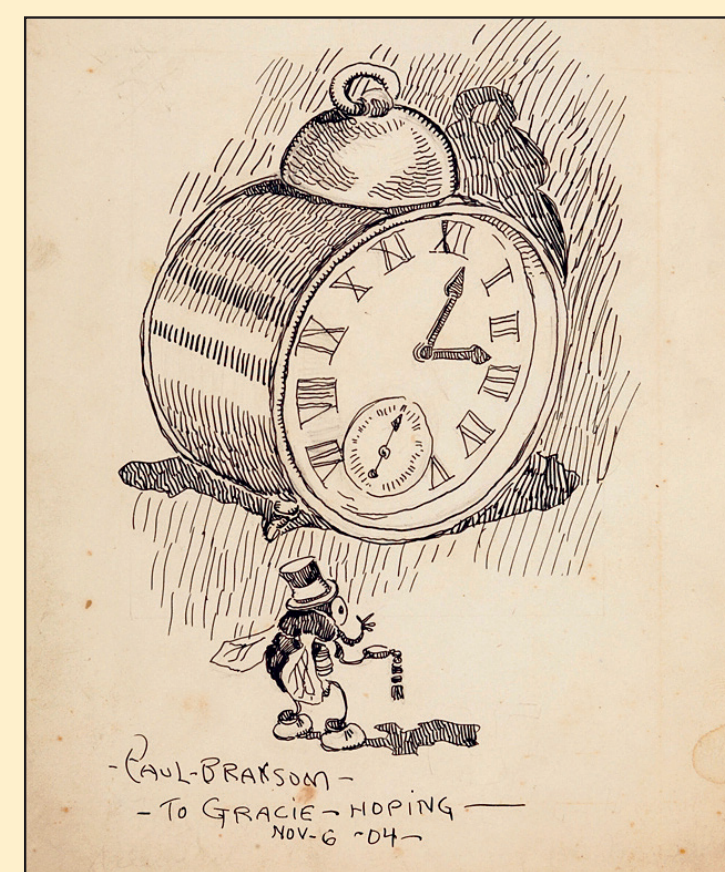


the young artist's work, Hornaday granted him the privilege of a studio in the Lion House.

In the summer of 1904, Bransom met the lovely Broadway actress

Grace Bond, who appeared in Victor Herbert's *Mademoiselle Modiste*.

While at home in Washington, Paul sent regular letters and drawings to Grace. After a couple years of courtship, they were married in January 1906.





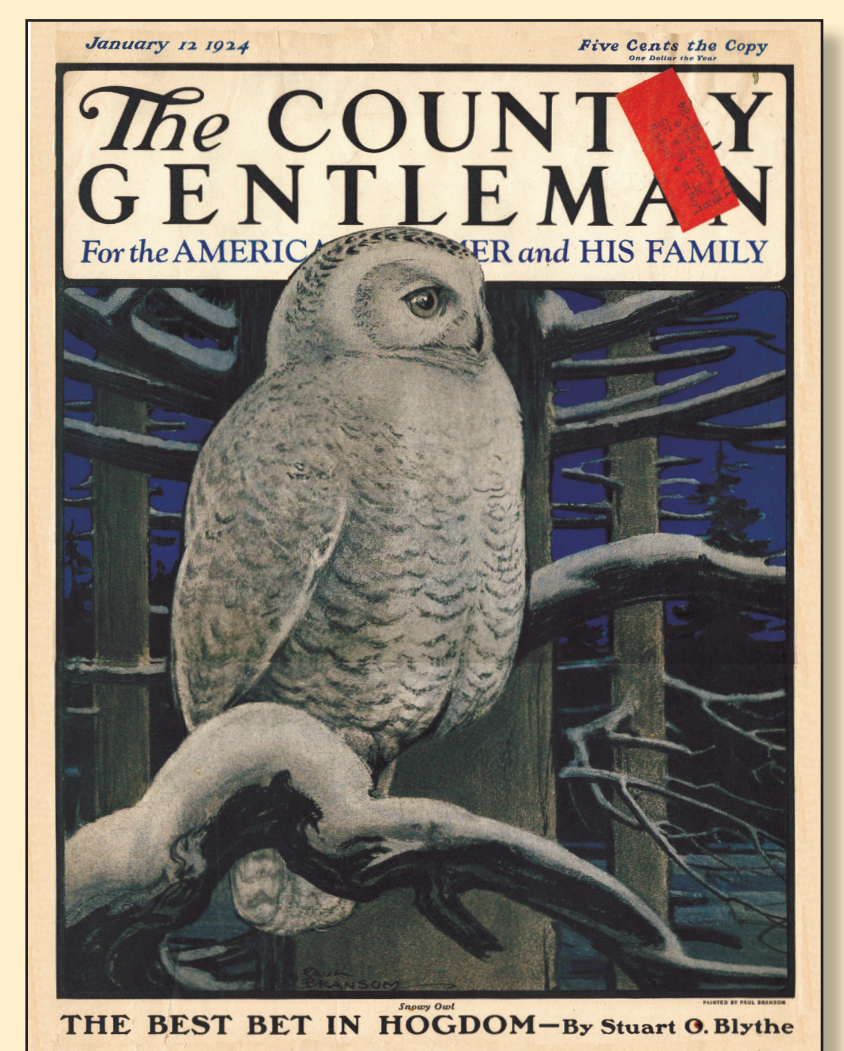
Paul at work in the Great Room of his Canada Lake camp.

Becoming an Illustrator

In the fall of 1906, Bransom took a portfolio of drawings down to Philadelphia and the offices of the Curtis Publishing Company, publishers of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Impressed with the quality of his drawings, the editor purchased four covers and several other sketches. His first *Post* cover appeared on January 5, 1907. Based on this success, Bransom resigned from the *New York Evening Journal* and launched his career as an illustrator.



Bransom was fortunate to come of age during what has been called the Golden Age of American Illustration. Advances in color printing and improvements in the postal system were important factors in the creation of a wide range of popular magazines. There was an audience for high quality illustrations. Artists like N.C. Wyeth, Howard Pyle, and later Norman Rockwell, gained wide popularity. Between 1907 and 1942, Bransom produced sixteen covers for *The Saturday Evening Post* and at least thirty-nine covers for *The Country Gentleman*, also a product of the Curtis Publishing Company.





Encountering the Wild

By the end of the nineteenth century, rapid industrialization and urbanization fueled an interest in the wilderness and a desire to reconnect to the rural past. This was also influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution and the kinship of animals and humans. These were important factors in the creation of a new literary genre, "the realistic wild animal story." As articulated by Charles G.D. Roberts, one of the genre creators, in these stories "the interest centres about the personality, individuality, mentality of an animal, as well as its purely physical characteristics." The intention was to tell the story from the perspective of the animal. Darwin's concept of "survival of the fittest" was a central theme in many of the stories. As Ernest Thompson Seton, the co-creator of the genre, would write, "The life of the wild animal always has a tragic end."

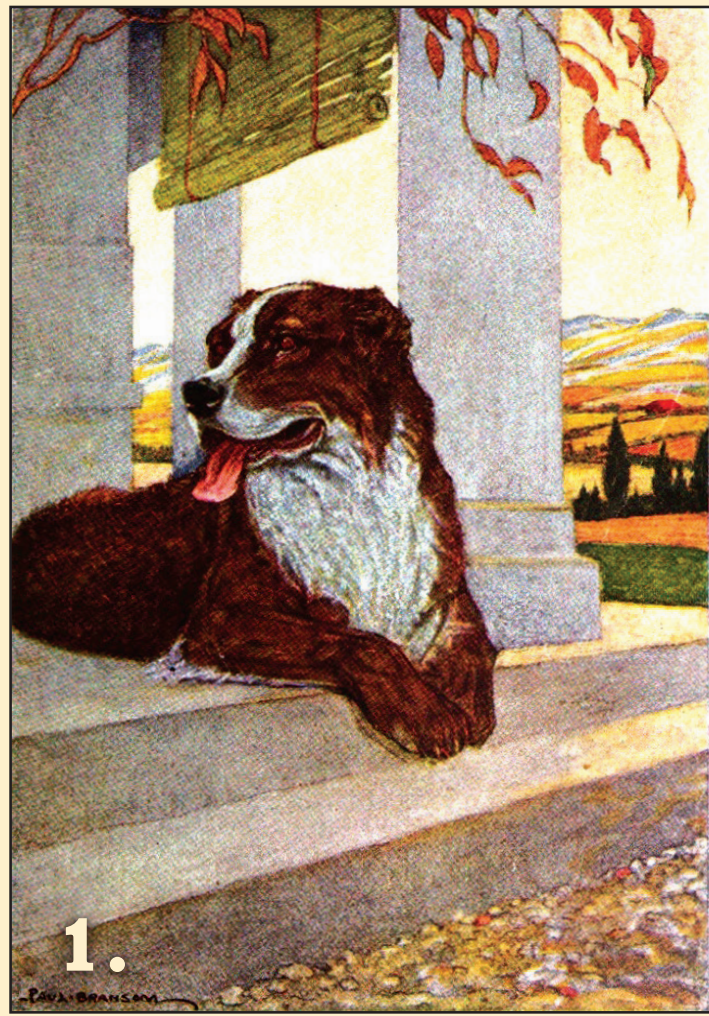
Bransom was well suited to illustrate these stories. One of his favorite books as a child was written by Charles G.D. Roberts. He would acknowledge, "I've been unusually fortunate in being associated with authors of great distinction and ability.

Certainly such writers as Jack London, Charles G.D. Roberts, Kenneth Grahame, A.P. Terhune, Oliver Curwood, Emma Lindsay-Squier, Olaf Baker, H.R. Newell, Enos Mills, etc. — should afford sufficient inspiration for anyone." Bransom's drawings always reveal an empathetic connection with the animals. As a boy he was fascinated by competition between animals: "I was one of those kids whose general conversation and argument — when I could find a kindred spirit — was whether a lion could beat a tiger and which could roar the loudest..."

Between 1907 and 1921, Bransom illustrated at least 85 stories by Charles G. D. Roberts in *Cosmopolitan* and *Windsor* magazines. Many of these illustrations would reappear in anthologies of Roberts' stories. An illustration for Roberts's story entitled "Brannigan's Mary" published in *Cosmopolitan* in 1914 is typical of Bransom's illustrations showing a bear mauling a moose.



Call of the Wild



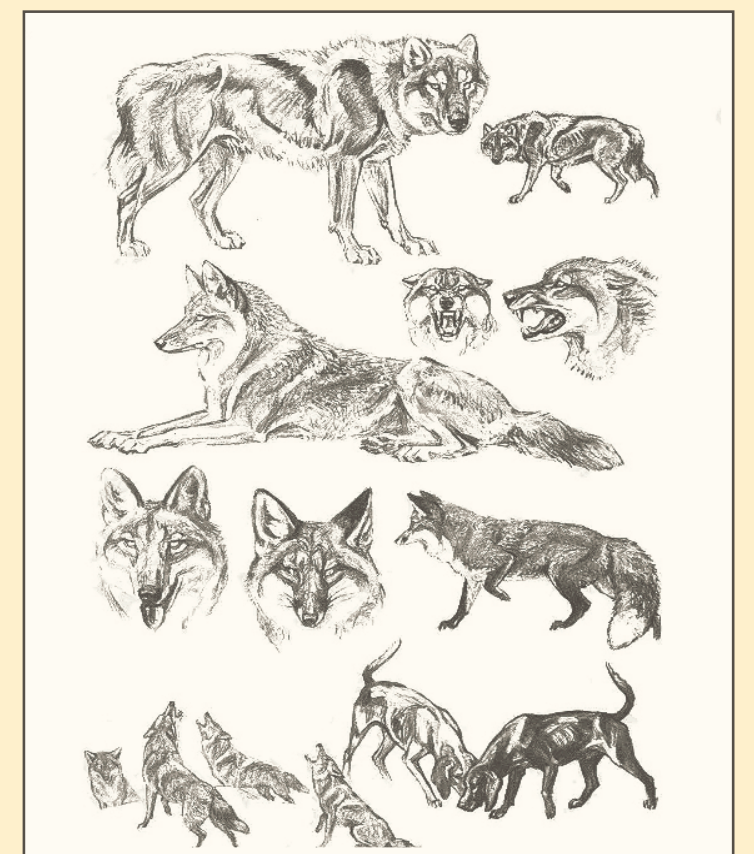
Bransom's first complete book project was a 1912 Christmas edition of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*. Advertisements for the new edition praised the quality and quantity of his illustrations.

The story follows a dog named Buck who is abducted from his life as a pampered pet in California's sunny Santa Clara valley and sold as a sled dog as part of the Klondike Gold Rush. The opening illustration (1) shows Buck contentedly sitting on his porch with its classical columns surveying his domain with its orderly set of fields laid out for agriculture. By the end of the story Buck has shed his domesticity and discovered his primal nature as a wild animal. The California sunshine is replaced by the wintry night sky of the wild Great North from which emerges a pack of wolves with Buck in the lead (3).

Canines were a frequent subject of Bransom's works. He was attentive to the contrast between domestic dogs and wild dogs. He emphasizes this in Buck's first encounter with a wolf illustration (2).

In his 1962 lesson on drawing animals for the National Institute of Art and Design, Bransom wrote: *There is strong resemblance among domestic and wild dogs,*

in spite of proportional variations in size of ears, length of nose, shape of eyes. However, we must consider the great difference in temperament. Through centuries of association with man, domestic dogs have developed a trusting benevolent attitude toward life. The wolf, coyote, fox, and jackal, on the other hand, are hostile, crafty, and suspicious because they have had to meet the harsh realities of a hostile world. The animal artist must express these differences through subtle exaggeration of certain features and attitudes.



In creating his illustrations for *The Call of the Wild*, Bransom benefited from the Bronx Zoo exhibition of sled dogs that took Admiral Peary to the North Pole in 1909. They were displayed in the same section as the zoo's wolves.

London's theme of allowing one's primal nature to emerge must have been appealing to Bransom who saw his work as an animal artist as something essential in him.



Paul and Grace at the Lake in 1908

Paul and his wife Grace came to Canada Lake for the first time in 1908. They were attracted through their friendship with Betsy and Clare Victor Dwiggins. The Bransoms rented the Granger camp next door to the Dwiggins camp, long known as the “Dwigwam,” on Canada Lake’s south shore near Sand Point.

In 1917 the Bransoms bought two lots at \$200 per lot and built their own camp on the lake’s north shore. The camp’s great room with its large north window served both as a living room and studio. Paul and Grace would move to the lake in early May and stay until after Election Day so they could cast their votes. They considered Canada Lake to be their legal residence.

Canada Lake of the 1920s and 30s was a veritable “Art Colony.” Clare Victor Dwiggins (1874-1958) was the first artist attracted to the lake. “Dwig” was a nationally syndicated cartoonist. He built his camp

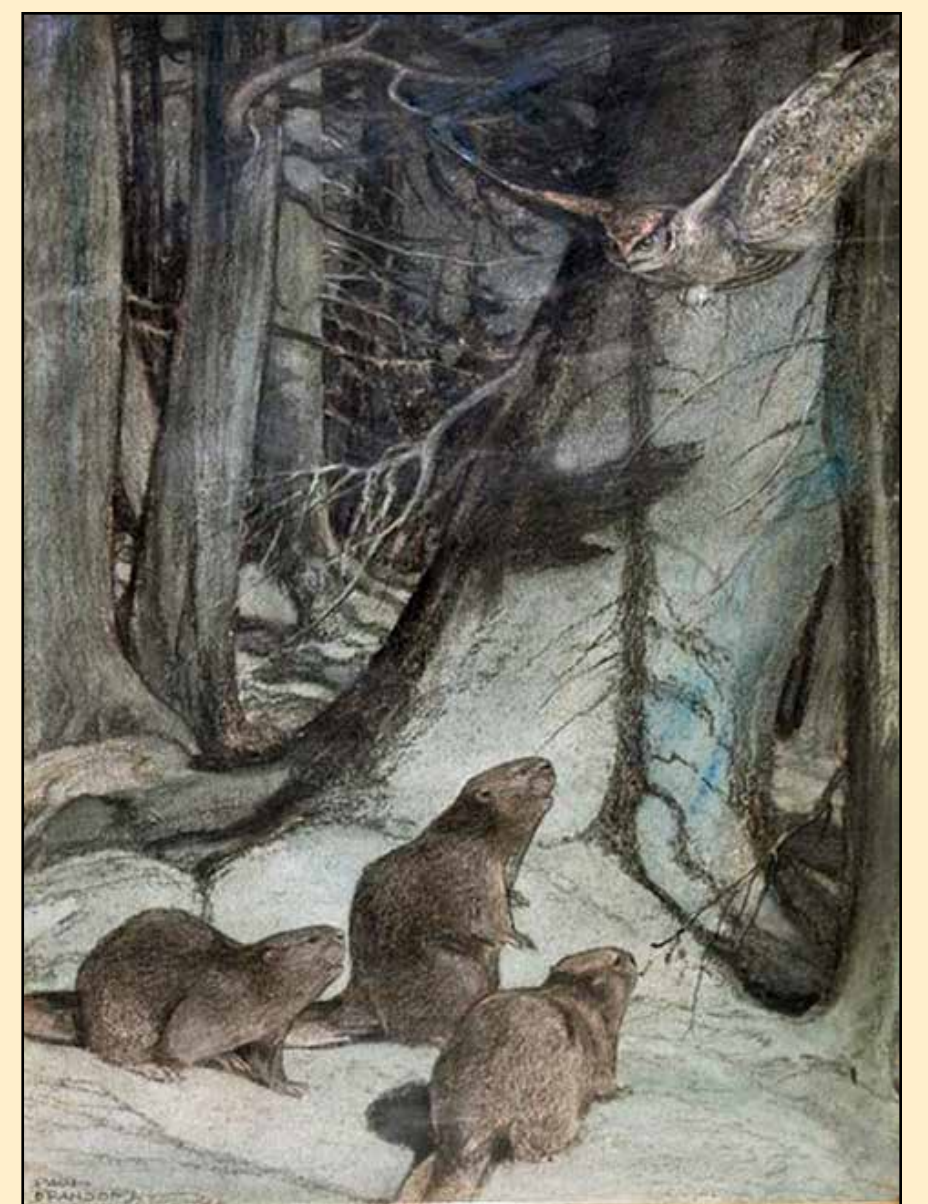
Bransom at the Lake

in 1907. Over the years other artists became summer residents including: Charles Sarka, a successful watercolorist and illustrator; James Stanley, a bass baritone and Victor Red Seal artist, along with his wife Nell, a pianist; John Lowell Russell, head of the early movie company, Blazed Trail Productions; Margaret Widdemer, winner of the first Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1919; and Herbert Asbury, a New York City reporter and writer best known for his *Gangs of New York*, made into a film by Martin Scorsese in 2002. Others, including James Thurber, were regular visitors at the lake.



*Picnic at the Russell Camp in the late 1920s or early 1930s.
Left to right: Nell Stanley, Paul Bransom, Evangeline (Van) Russell,
Jim Stanley, Lu Russell, John Russell, Dwig, and Dr. George Streeter*

Bransom's Greatness



Dorothy Lathrop's Critical Response to Bransom's Work

If he is to draw an animal hidden among the roots of a tree, he himself first feels the snugness of that retreat, the pressure of the roots curving protectingly around him. He feels the fear of the rabbit as it presses itself close to the concealing brown leaves as the fox passes by. He becomes the creatures, but never under his fingers do they become man. The emotions, reactions, movements are all those of animals. The artist has too much respect for creatures, is too keenly interested in them as such, to humanize them by so much as one un-animal-like quirk of a line....

What is even more important than any individual drawing is the feeling one gets from them all of deep woods, their mystery and silence, and of the creatures living there; the perception he gives us of this world of animals from which by his treachery man has shut himself out. It is Paul Bransom's whole attitude toward animals that is important; his championship of them....

He has done more than many conservation measures to protect animals, for he makes us understand and love them, and what we love we do not destroy. That is the greatness of Paul Bransom....

—Dorothy Lathrop, "Paul Bransom,"
The Horn Book, May-June, 1940

In Bransom's Own Words:

Every animal has a movement and nature that are distinctive. The animal painter who wishes to represent living animals instead of stuffed ones must learn the habit of those he wishes to portray. He must gain, through actual experience either in the field or at the zoo, the intimate knowledge of his animals at various stages in their physical development, their eating and sleeping habits, and their reaction to man and other animals....

Each animal must be drawn in the right environment for his particular type. If he does not or will not go to this trouble, he will find himself in a position similar to the Shakespearean actor who spoke his lines with faultless diction but accompanied them with movements so awkward and labored his audience audibly groaned at the spectacle....



January 5, 1907



February 16, 1907



March 2, 1907



March 13, 1909



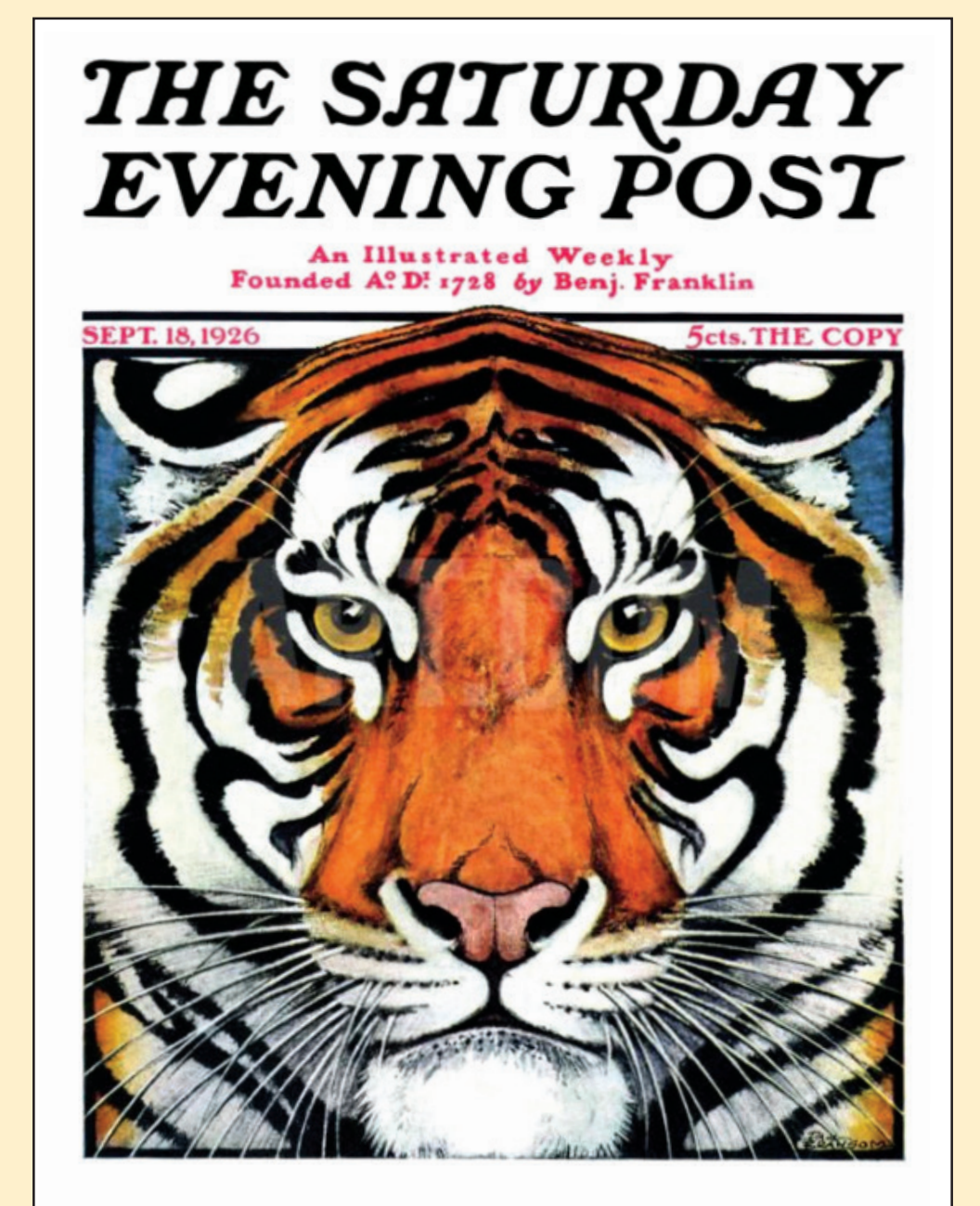
August 5, 1922



March 14, 1925



October 3, 1925



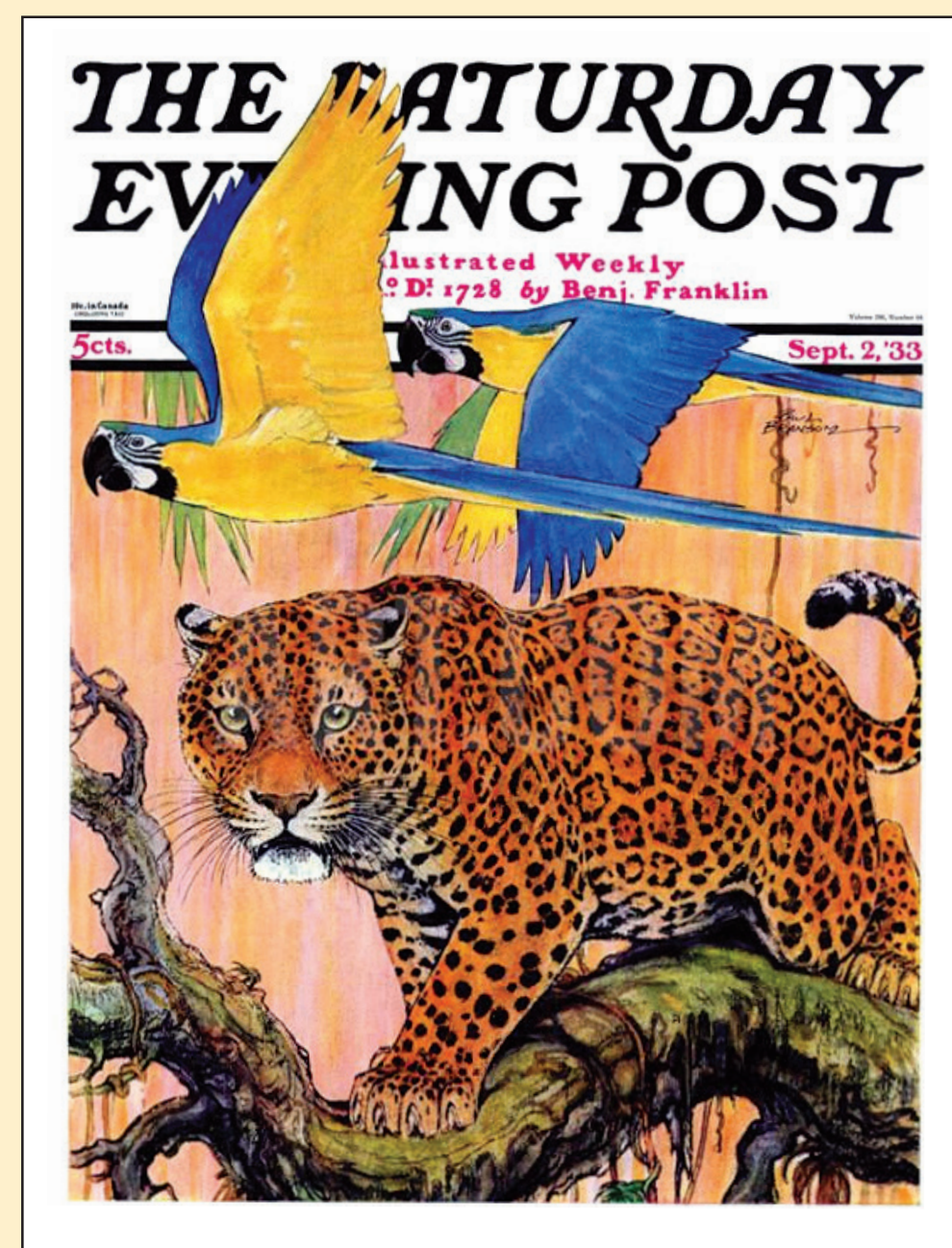
September 18, 1926



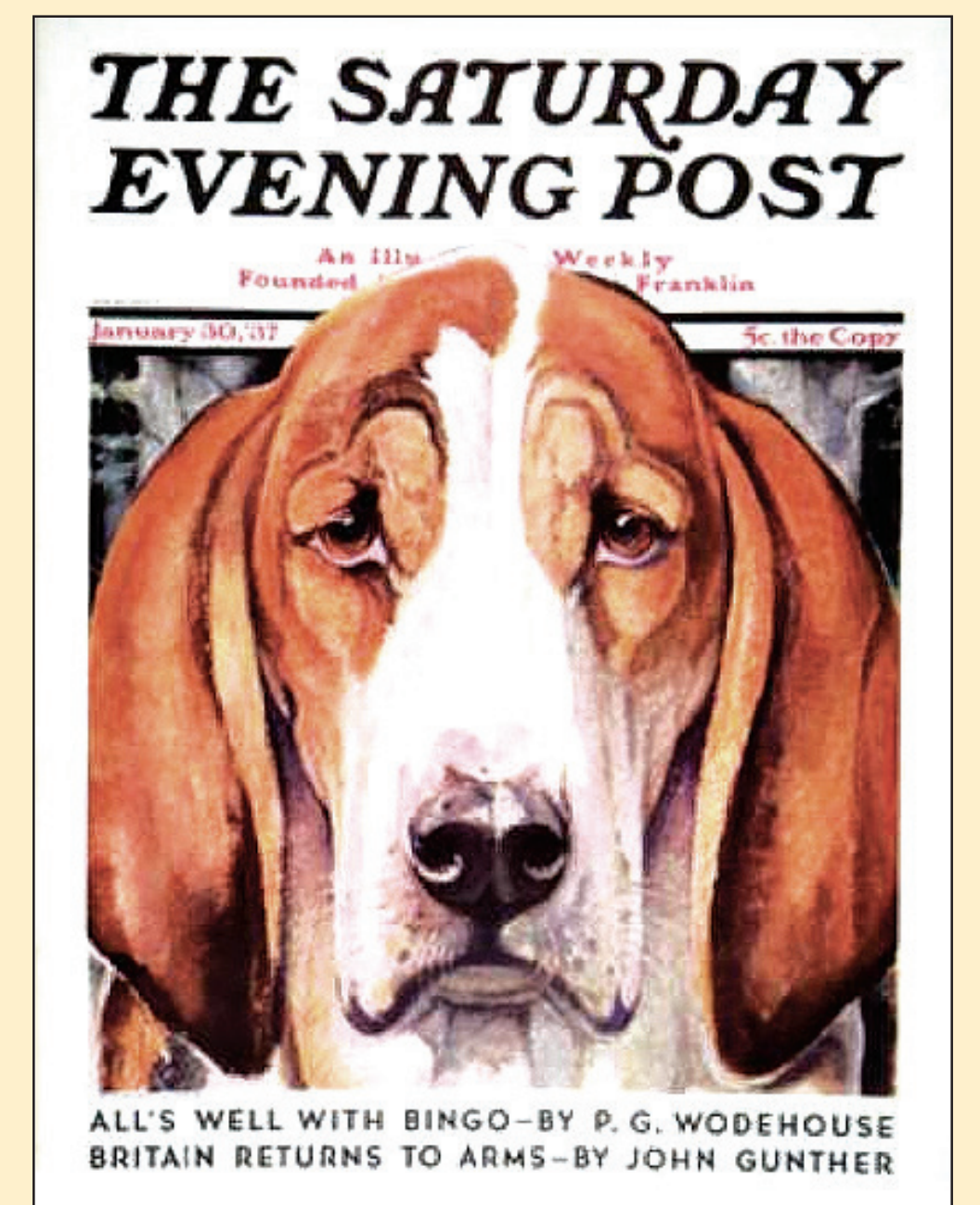
April 27, 1929



February 3, 1933



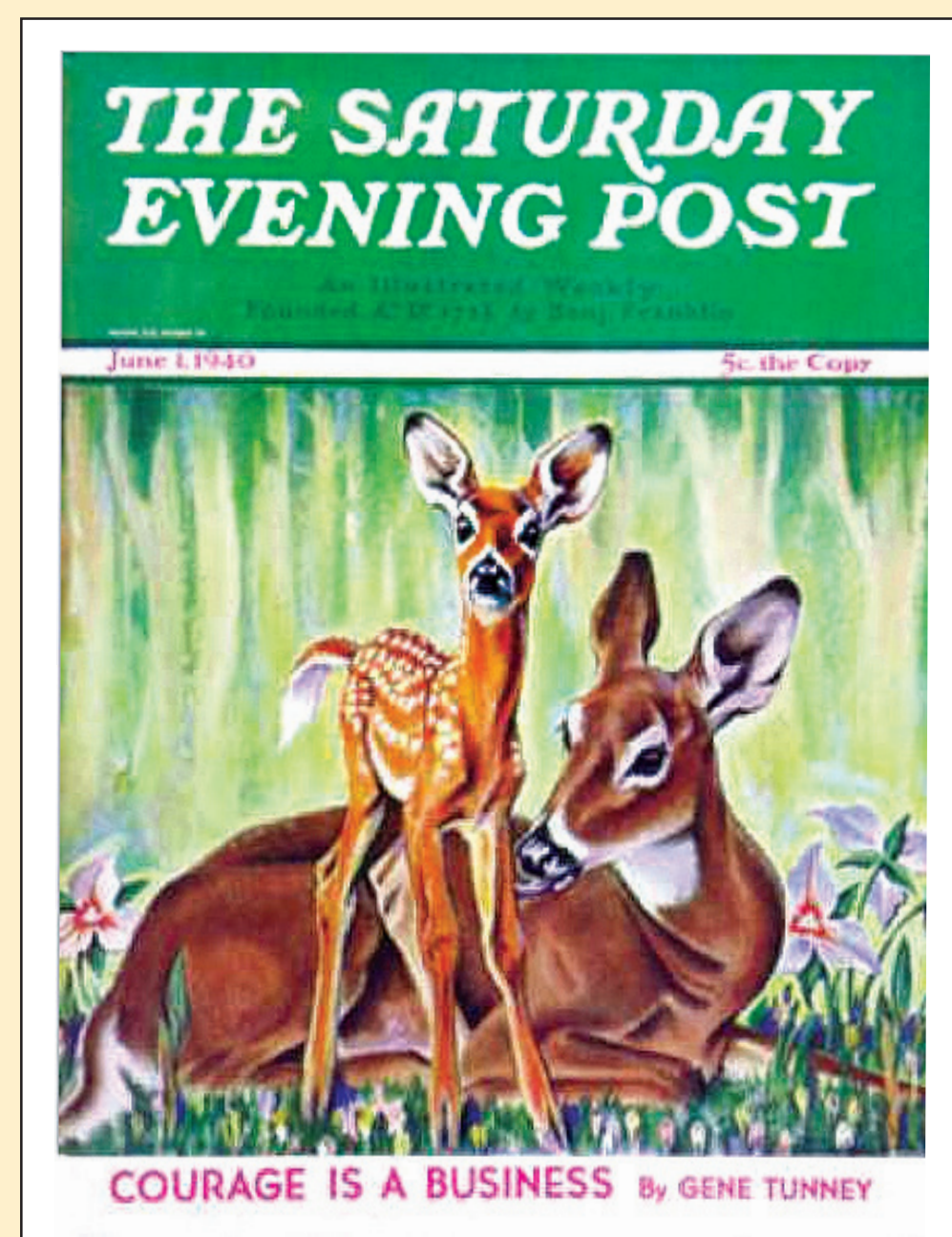
September 2, 1933



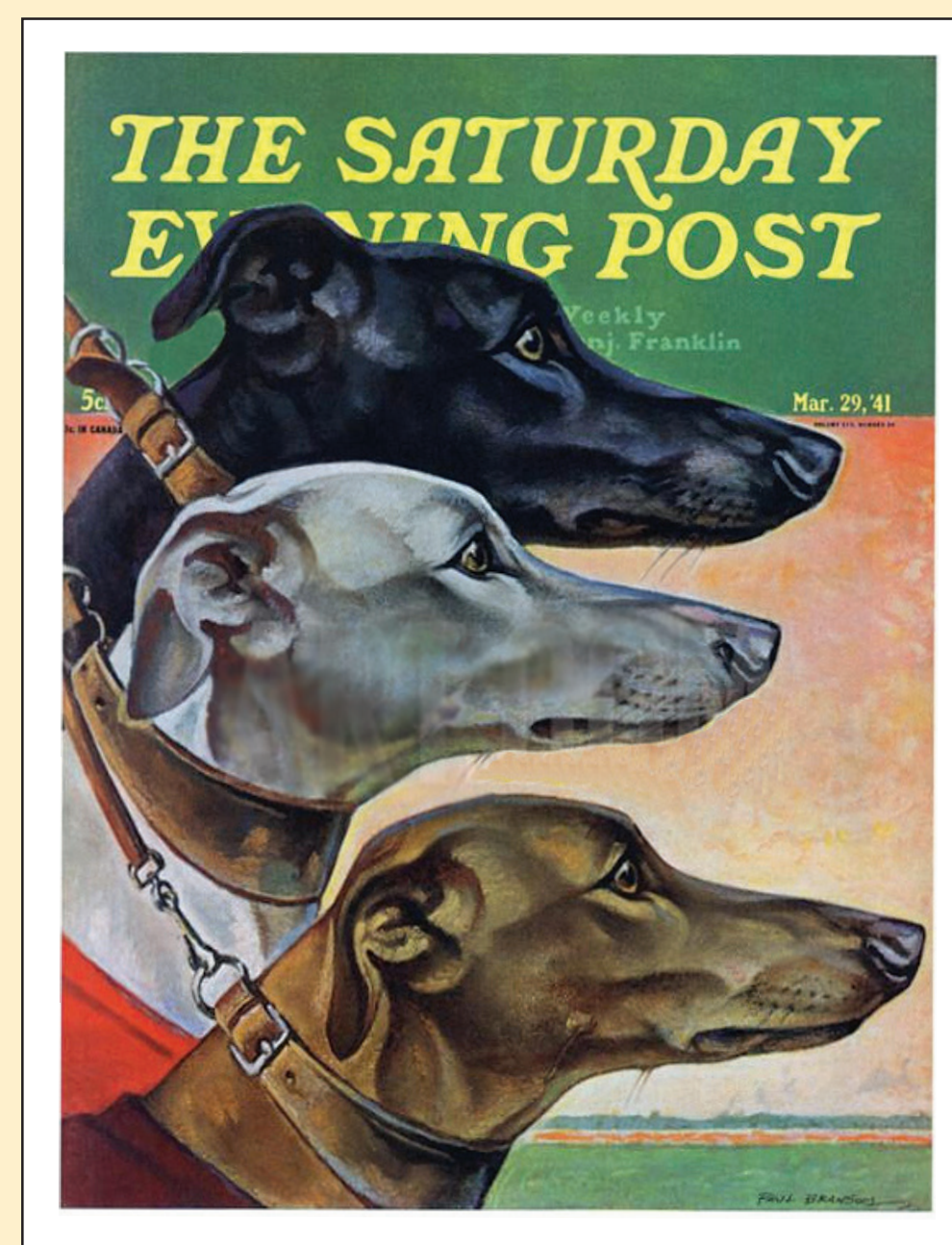
January 30, 1937



January 21, 1939



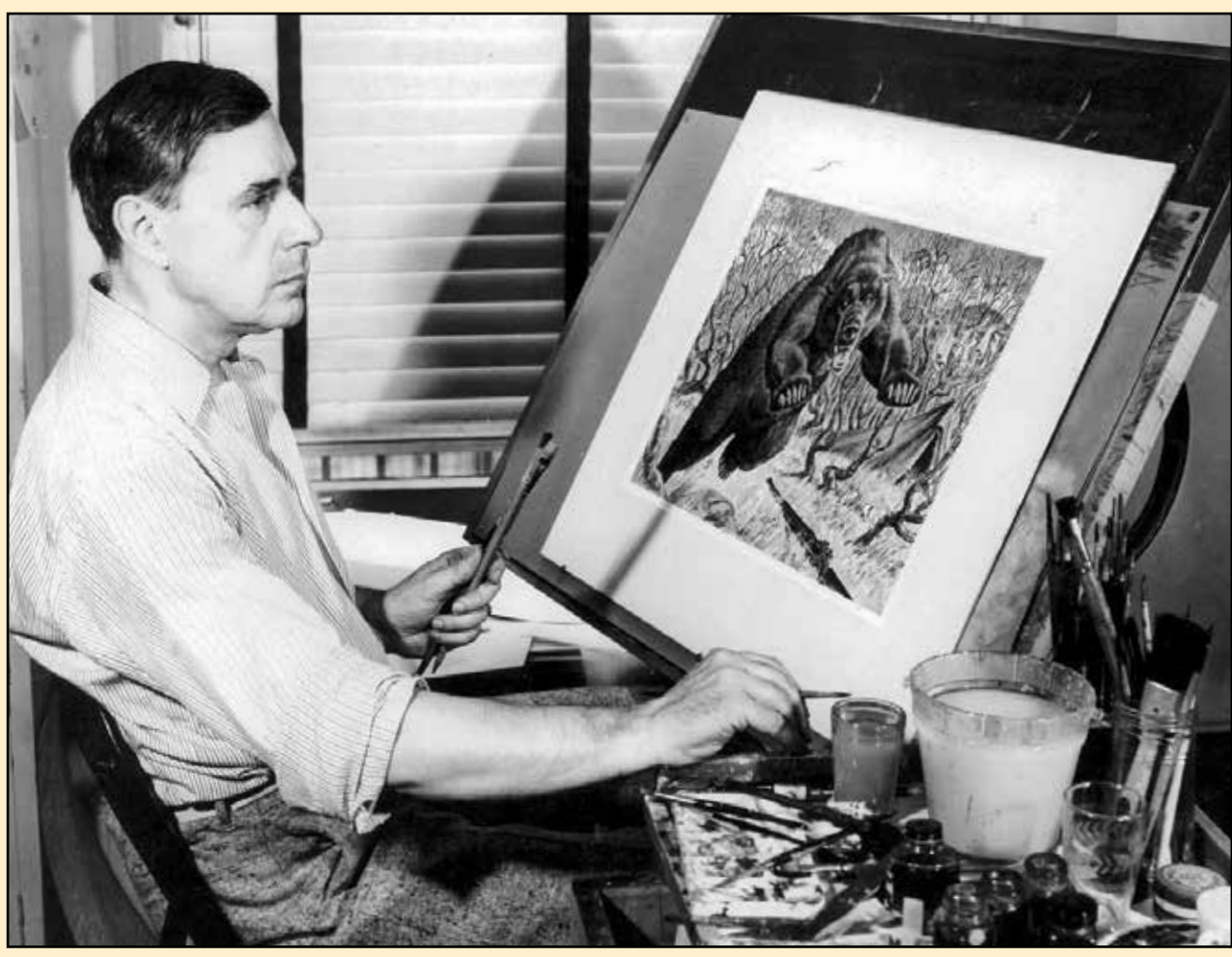
June 1, 1940



March 29, 1941



March 28, 1942



Bransom and Seagram's

Each year from the early 1940s to the early 1960s, Paul Bransom regularly contributed two pictures to each Seagram's Sportsman Calendar. The photo opposite shows Bransom at work on the painting pictured directly below of a charging grizzly bear entitled *Charge*. While the images show a wide range of animals from around North America, several are drawn from his life in Caroga.

