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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30

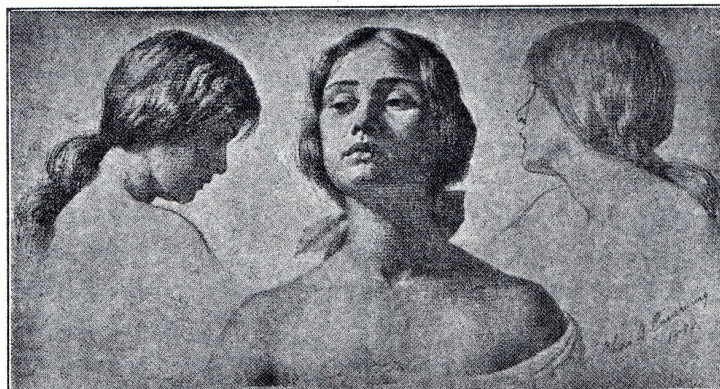
THIS WEEK: Jesseca Penn

BACKGROUND: The *Annals of Iowa* is published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. Special permission was granted for the inclusion of the featured article.

Annals of Iowa, 1957 "Iowa's Notable Dead"

[Jesseca Penn was] born in Des Moines in the 1880s, the daughter of Mrs. Rounds, who later resided at 1006 Seventh street; grew up here and educated in the city schools; began her art work and professional modeling in the Cumming School of Art in Des Moines; first posed for illustration, posters and banners; chosen by the celebrated artist Edwin H. Blashfield in the painting of the central figure of a young pioneer woman on the seat of a covered wagon in the painting "Westward," long displayed crowning the grand stairway landing in the stately Iowa capitol building, which brought great renown to both artist and model; married June 19, 1905, at St. Joseph, Michigan, to Ralph W. Evans, advertising manager of the *Des Moines Mail & Times*; continued her art work going East and posing for some of the greatest artists of the country, portraits of her appearing in galleries among the well-known works of art, found also in the famous Louvre in Paris, as well as in America, notable among the latter being the bronze door of the Boston library done by Daniel Chester French, and the decorative panel "Minnesota" by Edwin H. Blashfield displayed in the Minnesota statehouse and another in the Wisconsin state capitol at Madison, and likewise one in the National Art Gallery at Washington, D.C., and her beautiful face and figure adorns murals in the nation's capitol at Washington; reputed to have married four times, one of her husbands being Louis Loeb, born in Cleveland, Ohio, an illustrator for *Harpers* and the *Century Magazine*, who painted her as "Miranda," a portrait which hung in New York's Metropolitan Gallery; an idealist in his art, and his strength lay in allegory and the posing of his models, seeking to develop artistic elements through trying and difficult situations, but highly successful in portraiture; two paintings

exhibited in 1906 in New York, both her portraits, one by Mr. Loeb and both bore the name "Jessica,"¹ but she was especially proud of a portrait of herself done by Robert Henri that showed her a full length as "The Woman In Black,"² the canvas then hanging in one of the Philadelphia exhibits as the property of the artist himself;



Charcoal drawing by Charles Atherton Cumming

besides working with these painters of renown, she modeled for Mrs. Bryson Burroughs, the sculptress, at her Flushing, Long Island studio, besides posing for other celebrated artists noted for the care in selection of experienced and competent subjects; later a graduate of the Conway School of Acting, becoming an actress and appearing in many plays on the stage; as a member of Mary Mannering's company appeared in "Nancy Stair," and for a time in Mrs. Fiske's company, in one instance doing an unusual dance, her talents being varied; surviving nearest relatives are cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson Miller, of New York City, and Mrs. Alice Mack, of Pasadena, California; complying with the deceased's request, no services were held, and remains taken to Valhalla cemetery in Milwaukee for cremation; a memorial fund established from contributions of friends through the Plainfield Methodist church, of which she was a member.

1. Jesseca's name was often misspelled as "Jessica"
2. Actual title: "*Jessica [sic] Penn in Black and White Plumes.*" The painting was auctioned at Christie's in 2004 for \$3.6 million—a record for Henri, the leader of the Ashcan School.