

**Charles E. Burchfield****Chronology****1893**

April 9: Born Charles Ephraim in Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio, son of William Charles Burchfield (merchant tailor) and Alice (Murphy) Burchfield (schoolteacher), the fifth of six children. Siblings are James, Frances, Louise, Joseph, and Fred. Paternal grandparents are the Reverend James M. Burchfield (who works in merchant-men's furnishings and becomes an Evangelistic preacher) and Elizabeth Kerr. Maternal grandparents are Ephraim Murphy (farmer) and Amy Moore.

**1898**

September: Father dies. Burchfield moves with his family to 867 East Fourth Street, Salem, Ohio, his mother's hometown.

**1911**

Graduates from high school as class valedictorian.

Works at the W.H. Mullins Company, a local manufacturer, filing automobile parts until he contracts typhoid fever. After recuperating, he returns to W.H. Mullins and works in the cost department in order to save money to go to art school.

**1912-16**

Attends the Cleveland School of Art, Ohio.

Reads a variety of books including essays by John Burroughs, *Autumn* and *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau, writings by Friedrich W. Nietzsche, collections of Hindu and Buddhist myths, and *I Am an Agnostic* by Robert Ingersoll. Is also inspired by the music of Richard Wagner as well as by the Russian Ballet and designs of Léon Bakst.

Introduced to the work of Aubrey Beardsley.

**1914**

Most likely sees exhibition of American Cubism and Expressionism at the Taylor Gallery, Cleveland. Sees Chinese scroll paintings at Hatch Gallery, Cleveland, where he works as guard during show.

Cites Asian art as influence, including the Japanese artists Hokusai and Hiroshige.

**1915**

Begins to paint independently.

**1916**

Spring: Graduates from the Cleveland School of Art.

Fall: Awarded scholarship at the National Academy of Design in New York City, but leaves after one day in life class. Exhibition of watercolors at Sunwise Turn Bookshop owned by Mary Mowbray-Clarke in New York, and at the Cleveland School of Art. Mowbray-Clarke remains his dealer until 1922.

November 22: Returns to Salem and job at W. H. Mullins, where he continues to paint during lunch breaks.

**1917**

Creates series of motifs he titles *Conventions for Abstract Thoughts*. He later refers back to this period as his "Golden Year" for its inventiveness, stylistic experimentation, and prolific output.

**1918**

Spring: Hears Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* and cites it as an important discovery in his career.

July 1: Inducted into U. S. Army; stationed with Field Artillery Section at Camp Jackson, South Carolina; later transferred to Camouflage Section.

**1919**

January 1: Honorably discharged with the rank of sergeant.

Returns to Salem and to W.H. Mullins. Richard Laukhuff gives him a copy of Sherwood Anderson's newly published book, *Winesburg, Ohio*. Burchfield begins to read other contemporary authors, including Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather. Produces first etchings.

## 1920

February 16–28: *A Catalogue of the Drawings in Watercolor by Charles Burchfield*, Kevorkian Galleries, New York City.

Summer: Burchfield takes three-month leave of absence from W.H. Mullins to paint. Makes brief trips to Tennessee and New York City.

August: Henry McBride's review of Burchfield exhibition at Kevorkian Galleries, in which the critic perceives "a hatred of Salem," appears in *Dial* magazine.

## 1921

Participates in exhibition at Cleveland Society of Artists, winning first prize in watercolor.

Exhibits at Harvard Liberal Club, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

*Watercolors by Charles Burchfield* is presented at the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois.

Participates in *First Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting* at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. *The False Front* (1920-21) is awarded first prize in watercolor and Penton Medal in Silver for Excellence.

Summer: takes extended sketching trip through eastern Ohio with Henry Keller, Frank Wilcox, and Paul Travis. Begins working at Kenreich farm in Greenford, Ohio, where he develops friendship with Bertha L. Kenreich.

November: With help of the Dean of the Cleveland School of Art, obtains position as assistant designer at M. H. Birge & Sons, a quality wallpaper company at 390 Niagara Street in Buffalo, New York, and moves to Buffalo.

Hears Dvořák's *New World Symphony* for the first time. Cites Russian literature as an important interest, specifically Leo Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky.

November 7–December 18: *Water Color Paintings by American Artists*, Brooklyn Museum, New York. Museum subsequently purchases *February Thaw* (1920).

## **1922**

May 20: Marries Bertha Kenreich in Greenford, Ohio. They live in Buffalo.

## **1923**

May 26: Daughter Mary Alice born.

One-person exhibition at Grosvenor Galleries, London, England.

## **1924**

June 28: Daughter Martha Elizabeth born.

Montross Gallery in New York begins to represent Burchfield.

Has first one-person exhibition at Montross Gallery (March 18 - April 5). Shows there regularly until 1928.

August: Visits George Bellows in Woodstock, New York, and Robert Frost in Shaftsbury, Vermont.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchases *The False Front* (1920-21).

## **1925**

April: Moves to 3574 Clinton Street, Gardenville (West Seneca), New York, where he lives until his death.

July 5: Daughter Sarah Ruth born.

## **1926**

December 31: Daughter Catherine Esther born.

## 1928

July: Edward Hopper's essay on Burchfield appears in *Arts* magazine. Burchfield begins friendships with Hopper, and with Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Root of Utica, New York, who arrange a meeting with dealer Frank Rehn.

## 1929

Included in *124th Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture* (January 27-March 17), Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. *Lilacs* (1924-27) awarded Jennie Sesnan Gold Medal Award.

Frank K. M. Rehn Galleries in New York begins Burchfield's long-time representation.

June 1: Son Charles Arthur born.

August: Resigns as head of design department of M. H. Birge & Sons to paint full-time.

Included in *Paintings by Nineteen Living Americans* (December 13-January 12, 1930), The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Museum purchases *Noontide in Late May* (1917).

## 1930

Included in *Retrospective Exhibition of American Paintings and Architecture* (March 15-April 7), Royal Academy, Stockholm, Sweden.

First of a series of one-person exhibitions (March 17-April 5) at Frank K. M. Rehn Galleries, New York.

*Charles Burchfield: Early Watercolors 1916-1918* (April 11-26), The Museum of Modern Art. Exhibition gains artist major national recognition.

Hears Sibelius's *Second Symphony* for the first time. Sibelius's life and work become major inspiration for Burchfield.

Serves on the art juries for the *Carnegie International* and the *Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Annual*.

## **1932**

Burchfield cites “nationalist spirit” of Sibelius’s *Finlandia* as model for his work's ambitions. During 1930s is also inspired by biography of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and novels by Scandinavian writers including Knut Hamsun, Selma Lagerlöf, and Sigrid Undset.

## **1933**

Destroys large portion of work he created during 1919.

Participates in *A Century of Progress: Exhibition of Paintings and Sculptures* (June 1-November 1), Art Institute of Chicago.

*Early Watercolors of Charles Burchfield* (November 5-February 15), Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, DC.

June 13: Sister Frances dies

June 23: Mother dies.

## **1934**

Participates in *19th International Biennial Art Exhibition*, (May 12-October 12), Venice, Italy.

*Watercolors and Drawings by Sheeler, Hopper, and Burchfield* (December 5-31), Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## **1935**

Included in *The 1935 International Exhibition of Paintings* (October 17-December 8), Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. *The Shed in the Swamp* (1933-34) is awarded second prize.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller donates first of many works by Burchfield to The Museum of Modern Art.

**1936**

*Fortune* magazine commissions artist to paint the railroad yards at Altoona and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and in 1937, to paint sulfur and coal mining operations in Texas and West Virginia.

December: *Life* magazine runs story titled "Burchfield's America."

**1938**

*Water Colors and Oils by Charles Burchfield* (March 8-April 3), Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute.

Included in *Trois Siècles d'Art aux États-Unis* (May-July), Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris, France.

Included in the *Great Lakes Exhibition 1938-39* (November), Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

**1939**

Included in *Art in Our Time* (May 9-November 1), The Museum of Modern Art.

Serves on regional committee to select art for and participates in *American Art Today* at the New York World's Fair.

**1940**

*Exhibition of Water Colors by Charles Burchfield*, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

Participates in *Thirty-eighth Annual Philadelphia Water Color Exhibition* (November 3-December 8), Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. *New Fallen Leaves* (1938) is awarded Dana Water Color Medal.

**1940-55**

Serves on Guggenheim Fellowship selection committee.

**1941**

Participates in *20th International Exhibition of Water Colors* (July 17-October 5), Art Institute of Chicago; travels as *Contemporary American Water Colors* (October 16-

November 9), The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *House of Mystery* (1924) is awarded Watson F. Blair Prize.

*Paintings by Charles Burchfield* (April 20-May 10), Cleveland School of Art.

Exhibits in *Artists for Victory* (December 7-February 22, 1942), The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

### **1942**

Receives Award of Merit Medal, National Institute of Arts and Letters, New York.

### **1943**

Completes *The Coming of Spring (1917-1943)*, his first reconstruction or composite painting.

Elected member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

### **1944**

*Charles Burchfield: A Retrospective Exhibition of Water Colors and Oils 1916-1943* (April 14-May 15), Albright Art Gallery.

Receives the Chancellor's Medal from the University of Buffalo, New York.

### **1945**

Twenty-eight works from the Albright Art Gallery's retrospective exhibition circulated by the American Federation of Arts.

### **1946**

Included in *Pioneers of Modern Art in America* (April 9-May 19), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Participates in *American Painting from the 18th Century to the Present Day* (June-July), Tate Gallery, London, England.



**1948-55**

Member of Board of Directors, Albright Art Gallery; also serves on Art Committee at the Gallery.

**1949-53**

Teaches periodically at the Art Institute of Buffalo, New York; Ohio University, Athens; University of Buffalo, New York; University of Minnesota, Duluth; and Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, New York.

Introduced to the Finnish writers including Alexis Kivi, Sally Salminen, and Unto Seppänen.

**1952**

Participates in *American Water Colors, Drawings and Prints 1952: National Competition Exhibition* (December 5-January 25, 1953), The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *Sun and Rocks* (1918-50) awarded prize.

**1953**

*The Drawings of Charles E. Burchfield* (November 4-December 31), Cleveland Museum of Art.

**1954**

Elected National Academician (N.A., full member) of the National Academy of Design, New York.

**1955**

Series of health problems begin.

**1956**

*Charles Burchfield* (January 11-February 26), Whitney Museum of American Art; retrospective continues on six-venue national tour through 1957. Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts; San Francisco Museum of Art, California; Los Angeles County Museum, California; The Phillips Gallery, Washington, D.C.; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio.

*Edward Wales Root, 1884-1956: An American Collector* (April 28-May 26), Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York, honors major bequest that includes numerous Burchfield works.

Longtime dealer Frank Rehn dies. John Clancy takes over Rehn's gallery and continues to handle Burchfield's work until 1975.

### **1958**

Elected to American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York.

### **1959**

Spring: Begins cortisone treatments, which results in increased artistic output.

Included in *Contemporary American Watercolors and Drawing* (May 1959-May 60), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; tours nationally to eighteen venues.

*Twenty-five Years of American Painting*, organized by the City Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri; United States Information Agency tours exhibition internationally to museums in Italy, Germany, Sweden, and England through mid-September 1960.

*Ten Modern Masters of Art*, American Federation of Arts, New York (January 1959-January 1960), tours nationally to twelve venues.

### **1960**

Awarded Gold Medal of American Academy of Arts and Letters.

### **1961**

*Paintings, Water Colors, and Drawings by Charles Burchfield* (July 1-September 9), Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine.

### **1962**

*Paintings by Charles Burchfield* (May 13-June 10), Edward W. Root Center, Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.

**1963**

Included in *The Decade of the Armory Show, New Directions in American Art 1910-1920* (February 27-April 14), Whitney Museum of American Art.

*Charles Burchfield: Recent Paintings* (April 24-May 19), Upton Hall Gallery, Buffalo State College.

*Charles Burchfield: Early Watercolors* (April 24-May 19), Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

Becomes art consultant for Buffalo State College.

November: Suffers heart attack.

**1964**

*Paintings by Charles Burchfield* (December 3-January 3, 1965), Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

**1965**

*Charles Burchfield: His Golden Year: A Retrospective Exhibition of Watercolors, Oils and Graphics* (November 14-January 9, 1966), University of Arizona Art Gallery, Tucson.

**1966**

December 9: Charles Burchfield Center, a museum dedicated to the artist, inaugurated at Buffalo State College.

Included in *200 Years of Watercolor Painting in America: An Exhibition Commemorating the Centennial of the American Watercolor Society* (December 9-January 29, 1967), The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Burchfield establishes The Charles E. Burchfield Foundation.

**1967**

January 10: Dies of a heart attack in West Seneca, New York.

**1968**

*Charles Burchfield Memorial Exhibition* (March 1-April 21), American Academy of Arts and Letters and National Institute of Arts and Letters.

**1970**

*The Nature of Charles Burchfield—A Memorial Exhibition* (April 9- May 31), Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute.

**1974**

*Charles E. Burchfield Watercolors* (March 27-April 20), Kennedy Galleries, New York.

**1975**

Kennedy Galleries begins representation of The Charles E. Burchfield Foundation. Hosts regular exhibitions through 2004.

Included in *The Whitney Studio Club and American Art 1900-1932* (May 23-September 3), Whitney Museum of American Art.

**1978**

Included in *Representations of America* (March 15-May 15), Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

**1978-83**

*Charles Burchfield: The Charles Rand Penney Collection* organized by Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, New York, and Smithsonian Institution; tours nationally to nineteen venues.

**1980**

*Charles Burchfield* (June 25-August 17), Whitney Museum of American Art.

**1984**

*Charles Burchfield* (January 30-March 25), The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**1986**

*An American Visionary: Watercolors and Drawings by Charles E. Burchfield* (March 20-May 16), Boston Athenaeum, Massachusetts.

**1987**

*The Early Works of Charles E. Burchfield 1915-1921* (December 13-February 7, 1988), Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio.

**1993**

Celebration of centennial of Burchfield's birth: The Charles E. Burchfield Foundation helps newly founded Burchfield Homestead Society buy the artist's childhood home in Salem.

*Charles E. Burchfield: The Sacred Woods* (June 12-July 30), organized by Burchfield Art Center, opens at the Drawing Center, New York; travels to Minnesota Museum of American Art, Saint Paul; Burchfield Art Center, Buffalo State College; Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

**1994**

Charles Rand Penney donates his Burchfield collection to Burchfield Art Center. In recognition of the new gift, center changes its name to Burchfield-Penney Art Center.

**1996**

*Life Cycles: The Charles E. Burchfield Collection* (April 16-May 26), organized by Burchfield-Penney Art Center, opens at Valparaiso University Museum of Art, Indiana; American Federation of Arts travels exhibition to seven additional venues through March 1999.

**1997**

*The Paintings of Charles Burchfield: North by Midwest* (March 23-May 18), Columbus Museum of Art; travels to Burchfield-Penney Art Center; National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

**2005**

DC Moore Gallery, New York, begins representation of The Charles E. Burchfield Foundation.

*Charles Burchfield: Paintings, 1915-1964*, DC Moore Gallery.

**2006**

*Tempests and Romantic Visionaries: Images of Storms in European and American Art*, Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma.

**2007**

*Charles Burchfield, Ecstatic Light*, DC Moore Gallery.

**2008**

Burchfield Penney Art Center opens a new museum building on the campus of Buffalo State College.

**2009**

*Heat Waves in a Swamp: The Paintings of Charles Burchfield* (October 4, 2009-January 3, 2010), curated by Robert Gober, for the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California; travels to Whitney Museum of American Art (Summer 2010).

**Sources**

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