

# Rocky Neck Historic Art Trail

Gloucester, Massachusetts

Trail Site **8** 49 Rocky Neck Avenue

## Breckenridge School of Art

In 1920, Hugh Henry Breckenridge (1870-1937), *avant garde* painter, instructor and dean at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, founded a summer art school on Rocky Neck which was to become a critical force in bringing notable younger artists to the area during the period between the two World Wars. Breckenridge's reputation for innovativeness and talent as a colorist—together perhaps with his tuition of but \$10 a week or \$75 for eight weeks—kept his classes filled for almost two decades. In 1926 when asked “why Gloucester?” Breckenridge was quick to cite the visual stimuli afforded by the gritty locale.


*“It is because Gloucester has everything that an artist wants...Here is a port more like a quaint foreign port than any other waterfront in the United States. There are strange and beautiful craft. There are the interesting characters of the fishing colony. There are fascinating colors in the streets, in the buildings, in the bronzed faces of the men who brave the raging seas and keep ever fresh in Gloucester the glamour of romance about the business of seafaring, the stories of shipwrecks, of heroism and of thrills like those the sword fisherman experiences. Flowers grow wondrously for those who like to paint flowers and denizens of the ocean are disgorged by the boat load to the joy of those who strive to put on canvas the opalescent hues of fish. There are magnificent skies and impressive shores. There is material for artists in the whole range from portraiture to pickled herring.” — (GDT, 10 September 1926, p.7)*

Many Breckenridge School alumni became nationally acclaimed artists and continued to be drawn to Rocky Neck each summer. Increasingly, the Art Colony's reputation for encouraging innovation in painting was becoming as much a lure for artists as its scenic topography.



### DIRECTIONS:

From the end of Rte. 128 (second traffic light) go straight up over hill. Follow East Main Street 1.1 miles, turn right onto Rocky Neck Avenue. Bear right at Sailor Stan's Restaurant. Go .1 mile, No. 49, now The Studio Restaurant, is the red building on the right, perched on pilings over Smith Cove.

 Below: Current site photo of 49 Rocky Neck Avenue.



*At The Studio Door*, black and white photograph reproduced in 1937 Breckenridge School of Art brochure. Cape Ann Museum archives.



*Boats in Harbor, Gloucester, MA*, by H.H. Breckenridge, undated, oil on canvas, 24 x 21.75 in., courtesy of Roughton Galleries, Inc. Breckenridge uses Cubist-inspired composition and Fauvist-inspired pigmentation to capture one of the “innumerable subjects to be found within a few minutes of the Studio.”



*Boat at Harbor*, oil on canvas, painted in 1928 by African-American impressionist Allan Randall Freelon, Sr. (1895-1960) while he was enrolled at the Breckenridge School of Art, shows the student's interpretation of the iconic imagery at hand. Private collection.

