

## **The Visual Heritage of Bucks County**

**Edward Hicks made more than 60 renditions of *The Peaceable Kingdom*, mostly as gifts for friends, and some versions show William Penn signing a treaty with the Indians.**

Even in early times, Bucks County and its surrounding areas were noted for their great beauty. In fact, after returning to England from the region, William Penn said that he had seen the most beautiful of landscapes. These same landscapes would later become a magnet for generations of artists who together form the visual heritage of Bucks County.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Bucks County had a strong tradition of unschooled and often anonymous artists, starting with those who created the eighteenth-century Pennsylvania German folk art called *fraktur*. The most prominent artist to reside in the area was Edward Hicks, who was one of the most important American folk painters in the nineteenth century. Hicks, a Quaker, is best known for his painting *The Peaceable Kingdom*, which is based on a famous passage in the Bible's Book of Isaiah in which wild animals and domestic animals, most notably the lion and the lamb, are shown living in harmony.

In 1899, William L. Lathrop took up residence at Phillips' Mill in New Hope. Lathrop had earned a reputation as a landscape painter and a teacher, and his presence drew many younger artists to the area. He taught year-round classes in outdoor landscape painting, sometimes using his barge *Sunshine* as a floating classroom on the Delaware Canal. Through teaching and social events, Lathrop and his wife were the major catalysts in the formation of the New Hope Art Colony.

The three most prominent landscape painters to settle in Bucks County were Edward Redfield, Daniel Garber, and Robert Spencer. Redfield was the leading figure in the Pennsylvania School of Landscape Painting, also known as Pennsylvania Impressionism. He was especially noted for the dramatic, large-scale winter scenes that he painted outdoors, often under brutal weather conditions. During the early twentieth century, Redfield earned a significant reputation in the American art establishment, often serving on juries at such leading institutions as the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Garber, who moved to Lumberville in 1907, was a teacher at the Pennsylvania Academy for 41 years and attracted many of his students to the New Hope region. His paintings reveal a dreamlike, idyllic view of the tranquil river valley and are rendered with considerable technical skill. Spencer studied with Garber, but