

2016

MYTH,
MEMORIES,
AND THE MIDWEST:
GRANT WOOD AND BEYOND

GRANT WOOD SYMPOSIUM

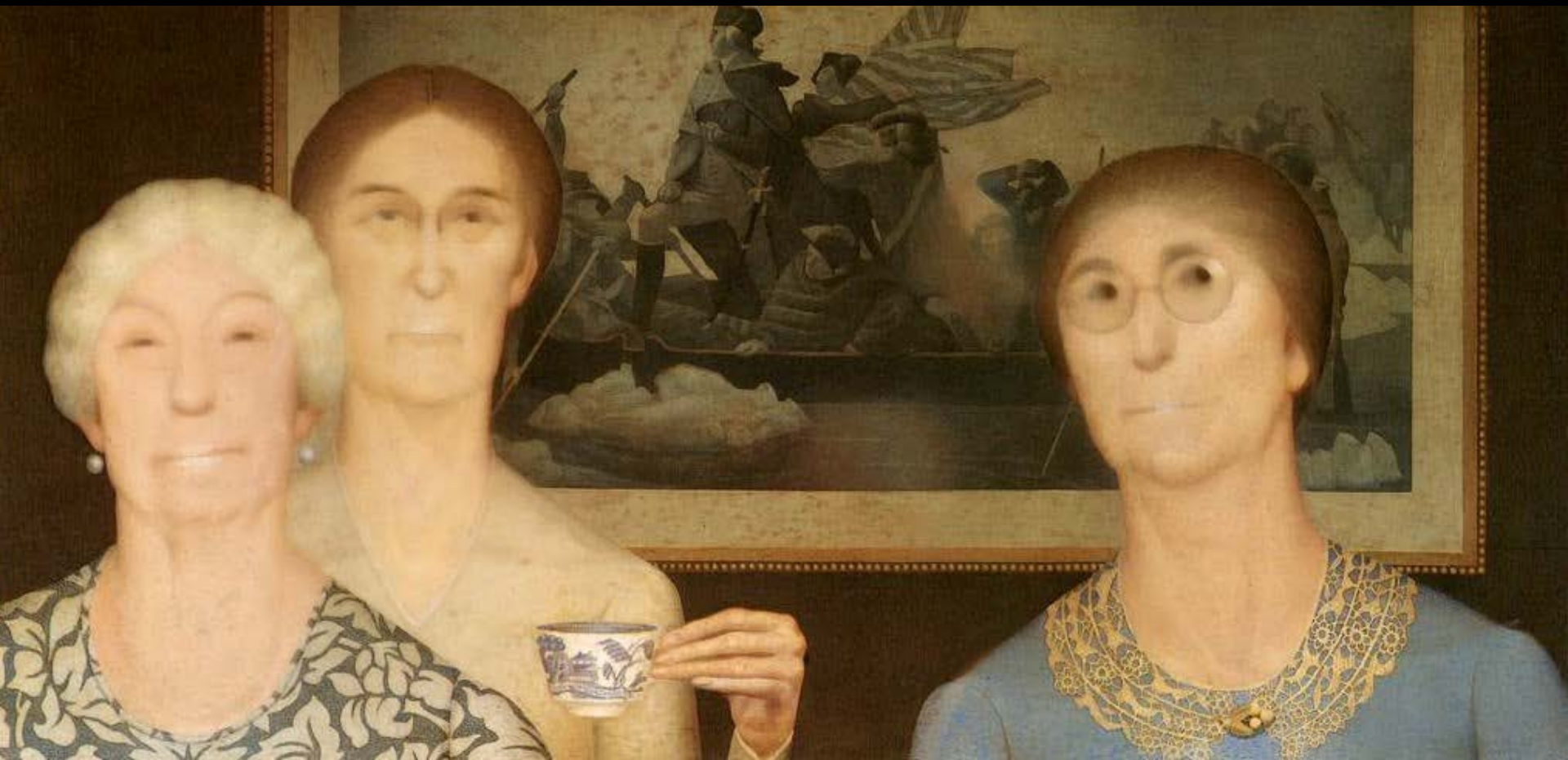
presented by
the Grant Wood
Art Colony

Grant Wood at the University of Iowa. Photo courtesy of
the Egge Art Museum Grant Wood Archive, Scrapbook #8.



“Screwball Regionalism: Grant Wood and Humor During the Great Depression.”

Erika Doss, University of Notre Dame
Grant Wood Art Colony 5th Biennial Symposium
University of Iowa, October 28, 2016





"To infinity and beyond..."





Grant Wood
American Gothic 1930
Art Institute of Chicago



Buzz and Jessie in
American Gothic spoof, 2013





Model in Wood's Famous Painting Breaks Silence

Cedar Rapids Dentist Admits It Was His Face.

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA. (AP)—His was the model for the masculine face in "American Gothic" and he's proud of it—now.

But not until Saturday did Dr. B. H. McKeeby, veteran Cedar Rapids dentist and business leader, make public acknowledgement of his part in the Grant Wood masterpiece.

Shocked at Publicity.

When the painting touched the popular fancy a few years ago and made Wood internationally famous, the dentist was so shocked at the publicity it achieved and so perturbed by his friends' recognition of his features on the canvas that he refused to discuss his connection with it.

But now he appreciates the honor and admits he is pleased by the selection of his physiognomy for delineation in what many critics term the No. 1 painting of the current American art trend toward depicting the native scene.

Became Fast Friends.

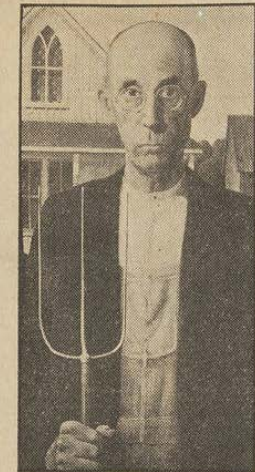
Ten years ago Dr. McKeeby and Wood became fast friends. They had been acquainted for several years.

"When he asked me to pose for him," said the dentist, "I readily agreed.

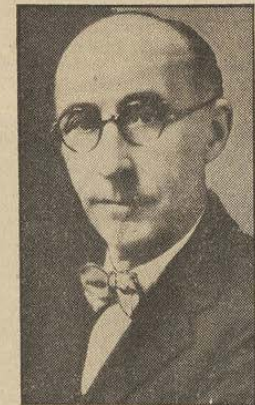
"He told me," the dentist continued, "that he wanted a face showing integrity from a man with a sense of humor who would not rebel at the distortion that might be necessary to carry out his theme. The painting was in no manner intended to be a portrait.

Shocked Into Silence.

"But the likeness was so apparent and the recognition of me by my intimates so general that I was shocked into a silence



"American Gothic."



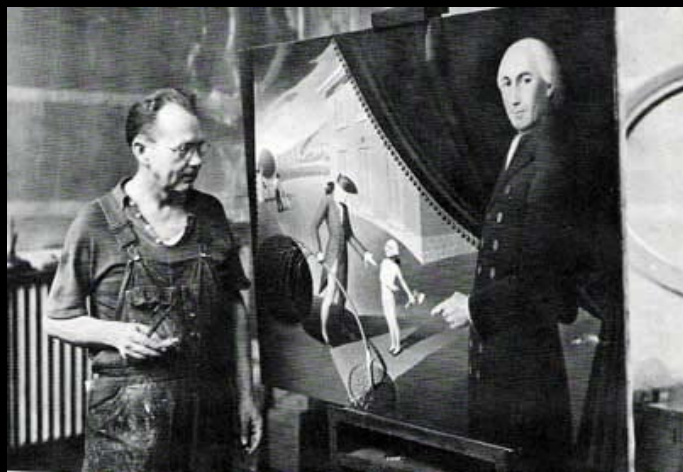
Dr. B. H. McKeeby.

which has continued until this time."

Finally, Wood himself joined in persuading his friend to remove the last trace of anonymity from the masculine visage. That did the trick.

Daughters of Revolution 1932
Cincinnati Museum of Art

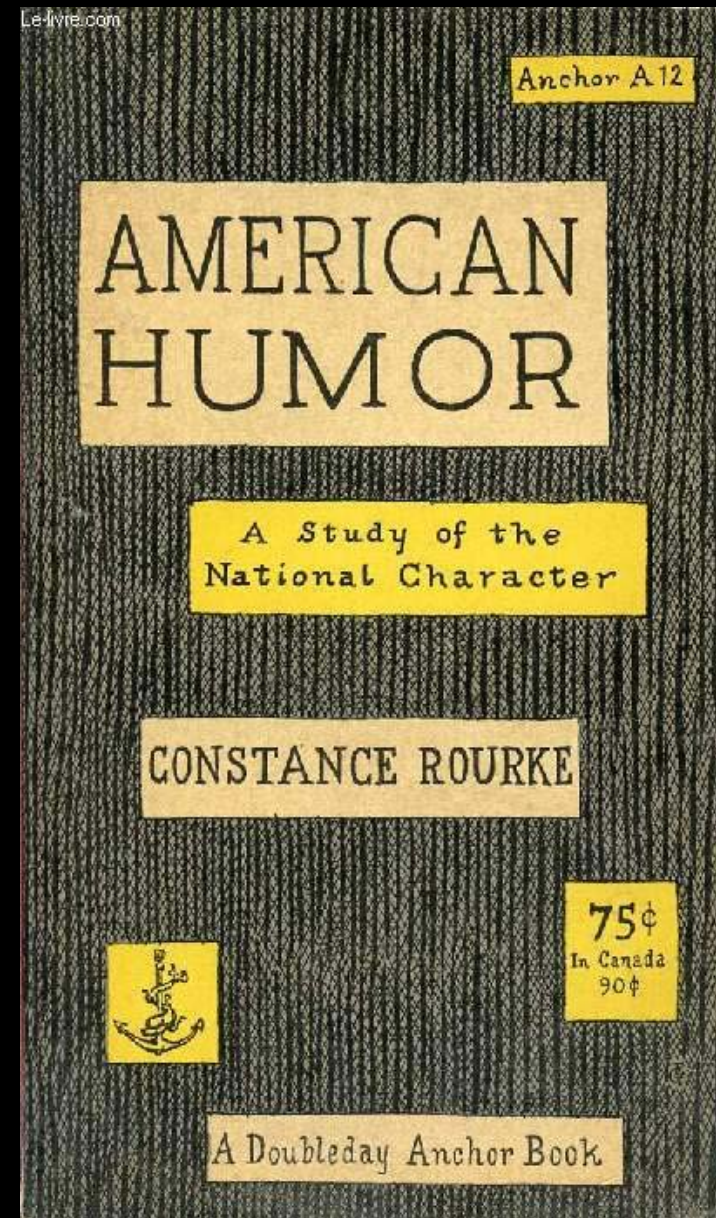






Constance Rourke
(1885-1941)

1931





Thomas Waterman Wood
The Yankee Pedlar 1872



George Caleb Bingham
The Jolly Flatboatman 1846



Thomas Hart Benton
Minstrel Show 1934



Parson Weems' Fable 1939
Amon Carter Museum of American Art

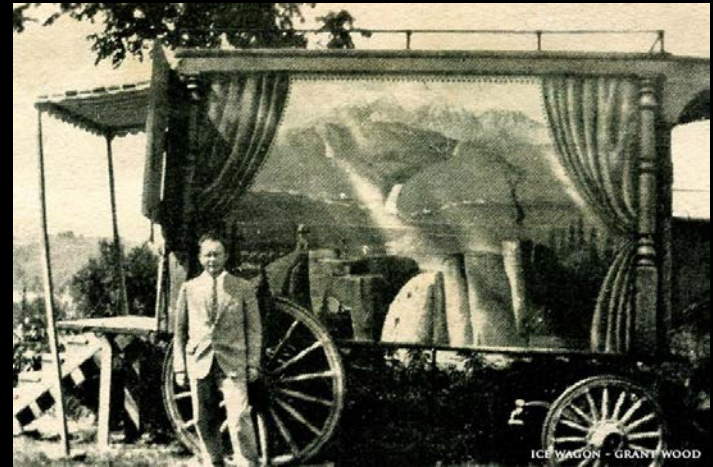
Grant Wood, stage backdrop painted for
McKinley Jr. High School, 1922-26



Grant Wood, decorated ice wagon
Stone City Art Colony, summer 1932



Stone City
Art Colony
summer 1932



AUCTION SALE

THURSDAY, JULY 30

Sale commences at 1:00 p. m. sharp

I will sell by public auction at my farm, 10 miles west of Charlson, 31 miles north-east of Watford City, on SE quarter, Sec. 9-153-96, the following personal property:



Nine Head Horses

- 5—Good broke work horses (2 mares, 3 geldings)
- 2—Saddle horses—mares
- 2—Mare colts, 2 years old

Five tons hay. Four sets harness.
17 horse collars. One saddle.

FARM MACHINERY

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1—10-20 McCormick-Deering tractor | 1—Tractor plow |
| 1—McCormick-Deering d.d. grain drill | 1—McCormick-Deering 8-ft. binder |
| —Disc harrow | 1—McCormick-Deering mower, good as new. |
| 1—McCormick-Deering 22-in. separator | 1—John Deere hay rake, new |
| 1—Single row corn cultivator | 1—Boss harrow, 5 sections |
| 1—Garden cultivator | 3—Gang plows |
| 5—Wagons, 2 hay racks, wagon boxes | 1—Ford 1-ton truck |
| 1—Sulky plow | 1—Harrow cart |
| 1—Bob sled | |

Other articles and equipment too numerous to mention.

TERMS--CASH. LUNCH AT NOON

No goods to be removed from premises till settled for.

GUY WILBER, OWNER

M. S. STENEHJEM, Auctioneer

First International Bank, Clerk.

PUBLIC AUCTION

Our term being ended, we will offer for sale at public auction on the premises of the Green Mansion, now known as the Stone City Art Colony, at Stone City, Iowa, the following described properties on:

August 7, 1932

Commencing At 3:00 Sharp

10—RED BARNS—10

Some with silos, windmills and out buildings rendered in oil and watercolors.

8—FRAME HOUSES—8

In various conditions and styles of architecture both in monochrome and in color.

70—ACRES—70

Oats in shock in all mediums.

27—HEAD—27

Sheep, hogs, horses, cattle and squirrels cast in plaster.

65—ACRES—65

Young corn, winding roads, distant hills, and articles of farm machinery too numerous to mention.

Band Concert by I. S. R. of Anamosa
and Program at 4:30

Terms Made Known on Day of Sale

Stone City Art Colony

STONE CITY, JONES COUNTY, IOWA
W. F. Mitchell of Waubeek, Auctioneer

Reg. 10c Admission to Colony Grounds

newspaper ad for farm auction
1930s

Wood, newspaper ad for public auction
Stone City Art Colony, August 7, 1932
Cedar Rapids Gazette (August 6, 1932)

PUBLIC AUCTION



Our term being ended, we will offer for sale at public auction on the premises of the Green Mansion, now known as the Stone City Art Colony, at Stone City, Iowa, the following described properties on:

August 7, 1932

Commencing at 3:00 sharp

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Some with silos, windmills and out buildings rendered in oil and watercolors

8 - Frame Houses - 8

In various conditions and styles of architecture both in monochrome and in color



70 - Acres - 70

Oats in Shock in all Mediums



65 - Acres - 65

Young Corn, Winding Roads, Distant Hills, and articles of farm machinery too numerous to mention

27 - Head - 27

Sheep, Hogs, Horses, Cattle and Squirrels cast in plaster

Band Concert by I. S. R. of Anamosa and Program at 4:30

—Terms Made Known on Day of Sale—

Stone City Art Colony

Stone City, Jones County, Iowa

W. F. MITCHELL of WAUBECK, AUCTIONEER

Regular 10c Admission to Colony Grounds

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STONE CITY, JONES COUNTY, IOWA

W. F. MITCHELL of WAUBECK, AUCTIONEER

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Wood, newspaper ad for public auction
Stone City Art Colony, August 7, 1932
Cedar Rapids Gazette (August 4, 1932)

Wood, newspaper ad for public auction
Stone City Art Colony, August 7, 1932
Cedar Rapids Gazette (August 6, 1932)

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A Study of the
National Character

CONSTANCE ROURKE



75¢
In Canada
90¢

A Doubleday Anchor Book

Anchor A 12

AMERICAN HUMOR

A Study of the
National Character

CONSTANCE ROURKE



75¢

In Canada
90¢

A Doubleday Anchor Book



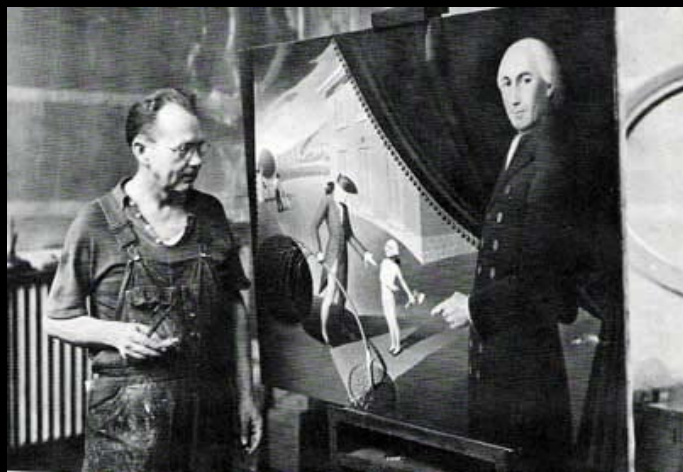


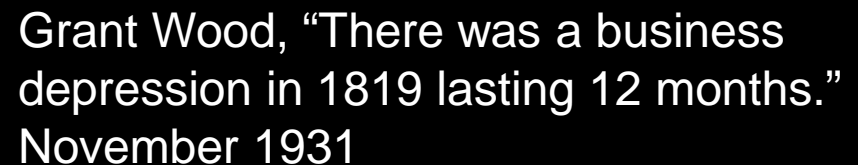
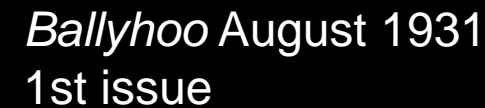


Daughters of Revolution
1932
Cincinnati Museum of Art

Parson Weems' Fable
1939
Amon Carter Museum
of American Art



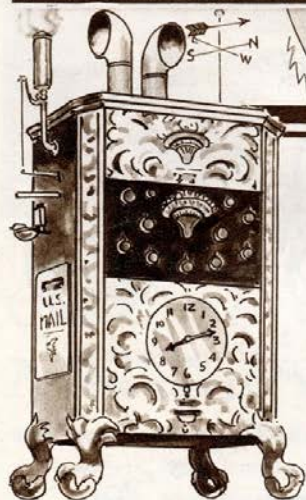




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Smile us into Prosperity!
wear a
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This wonderful little gadget will
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WARNING—Do not risk Federal arrest by looking glum!

Ballyhoo "ad" November 1931

Free Wheeling!

Free Gas!
Free Oil!
Free Air!
Free Transportation!
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That's what
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ZILCH 8!

Here is the car for Hard Times! . . . it
has no engine . . . uses no gas . . . no oil!

Get behind the wheel of a Zilch 8!
Hook it on to the car ahead with our new
FREE WHEELING attachment and enjoy motoring!



Ballyhoo "ad" October 1931

Daughters of Revolution 1932
Cincinnati Museum of Art



Thomas Hart Benton *Political Business and Intellectual Ballyhoo* 1932; panel for *The Arts of Life in America* mural, originally painted for the Whitney Museum of American Art, now In the New Britain Museum of American Art



President Franklin D. Roosevelt
c. 1933





Carole Lombard, William Powell
My Man Godfrey 1936

The Marx Brothers



1936

Shirley Temple





1934





Shirley Temple and a cast of thousands
in *Stand Up and Cheer* 1934





Stand Up and Cheer
1934



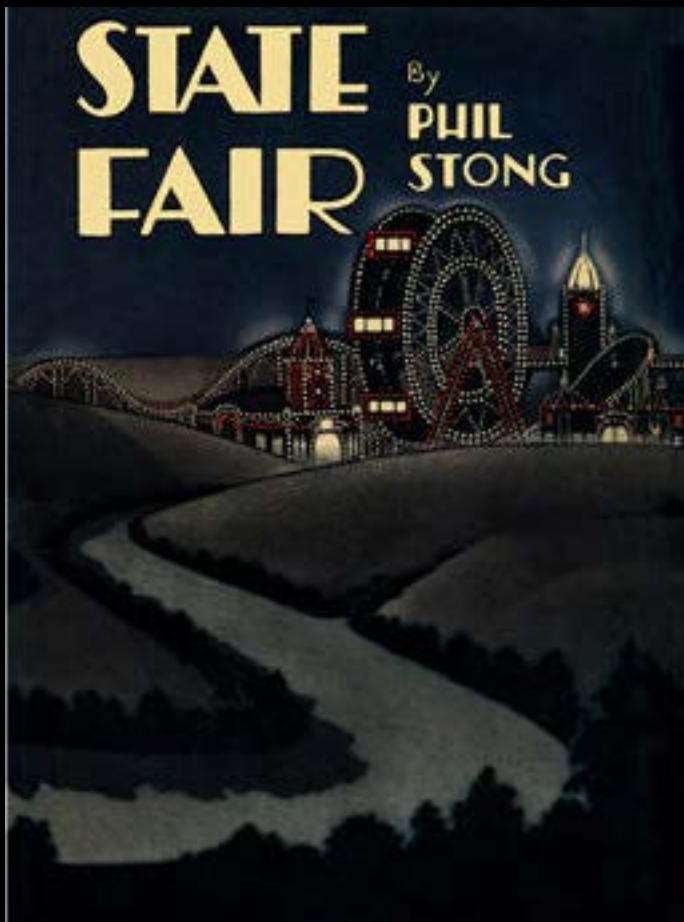


Will Rogers
(1879-1935)

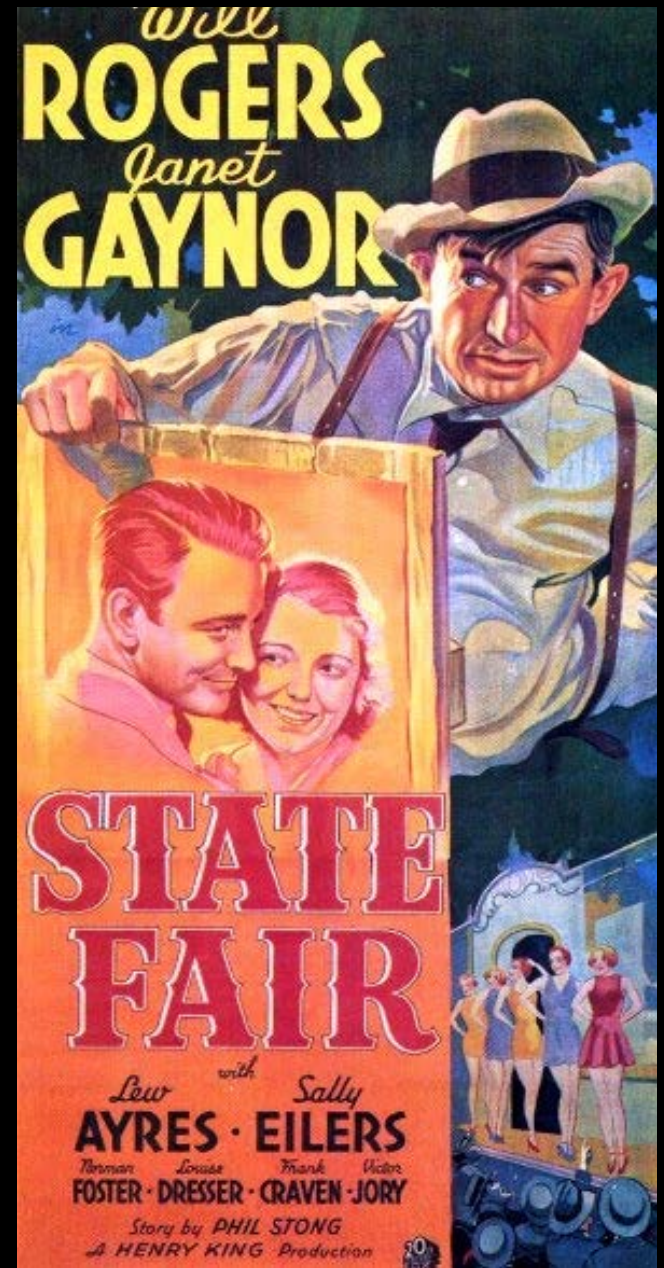


1933





1932



1933

A State Fair is like
Life -- begins lustily --
offers everything -- whether
you go for sheep and blue
ribbons -- or shape and
blue eyes. And, too soon,
it's all over!

State Fair 1933

Will Rogers and
Janet Gaynor, on set





Will Rogers and Blue Boy
State Fair 1933



Blue Boy



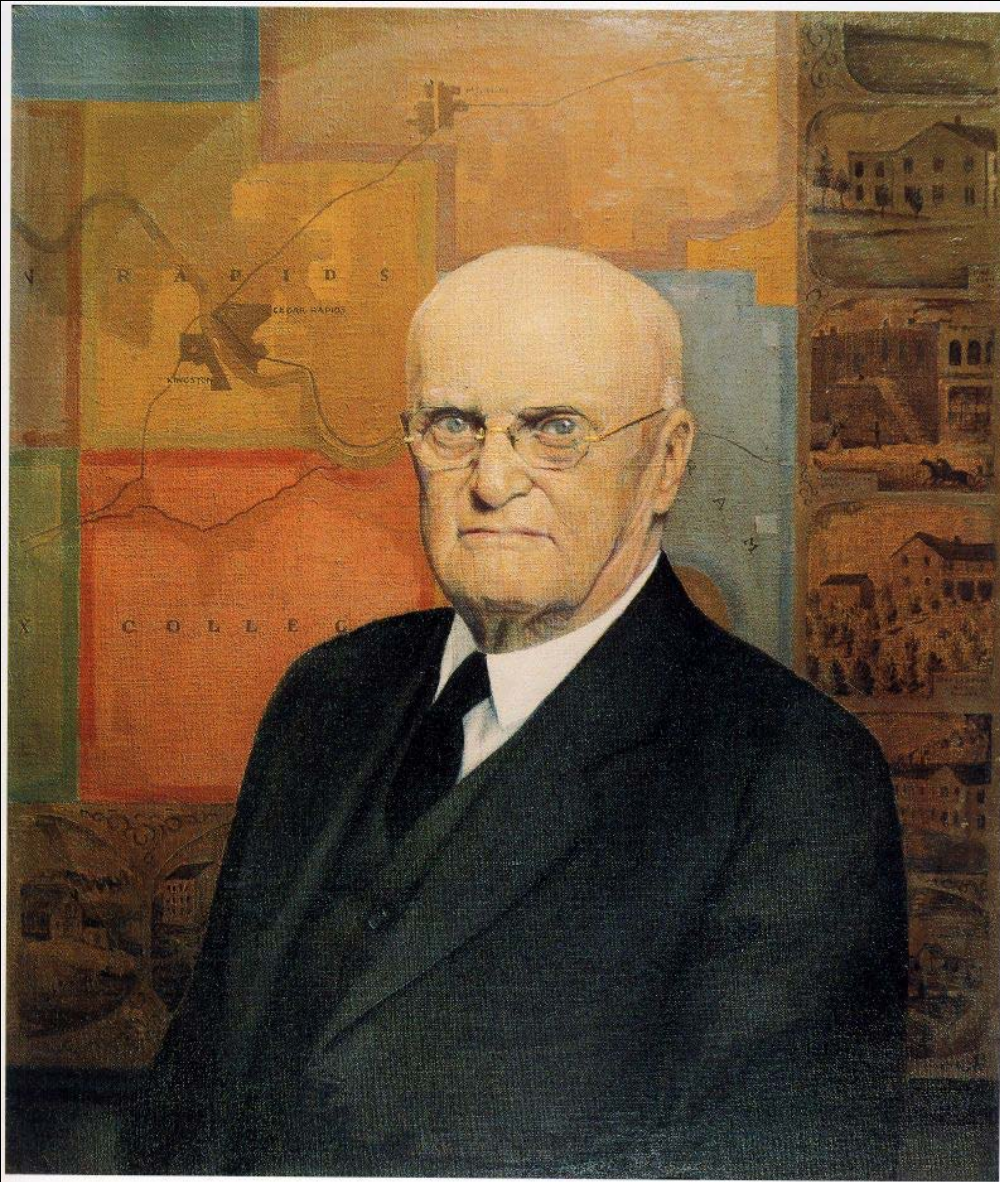
State Fair, 1933
Janet Gaynor bored



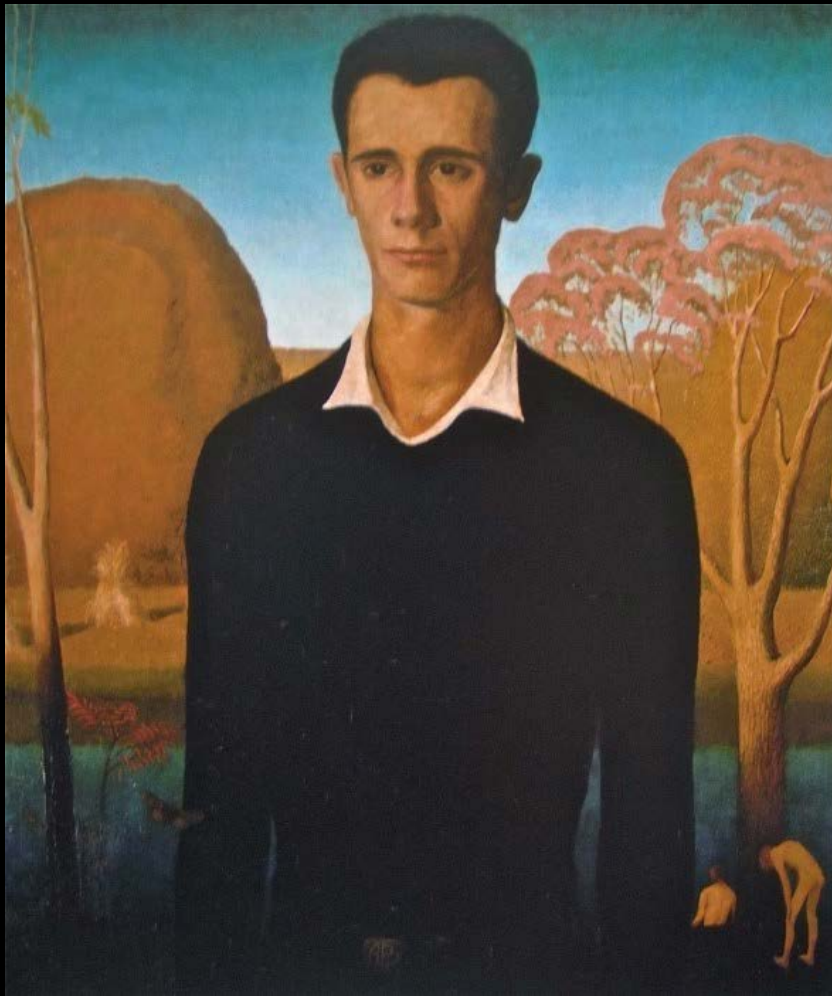
State Fair, 1933
Janet Gaynor mesmerized







Portrait of John B. Turner, Pioneer
1929



*Portrait of Arnold Pyle retitled
Arnold Comes of Age*
1930
Sheldon Museum of Art



Stone City 1930
Joslyn Art Museum



American Gothic 1930



Stone City 1930
Joslyn Art Museum



Cedar Rapids Ia Oct 28-1930

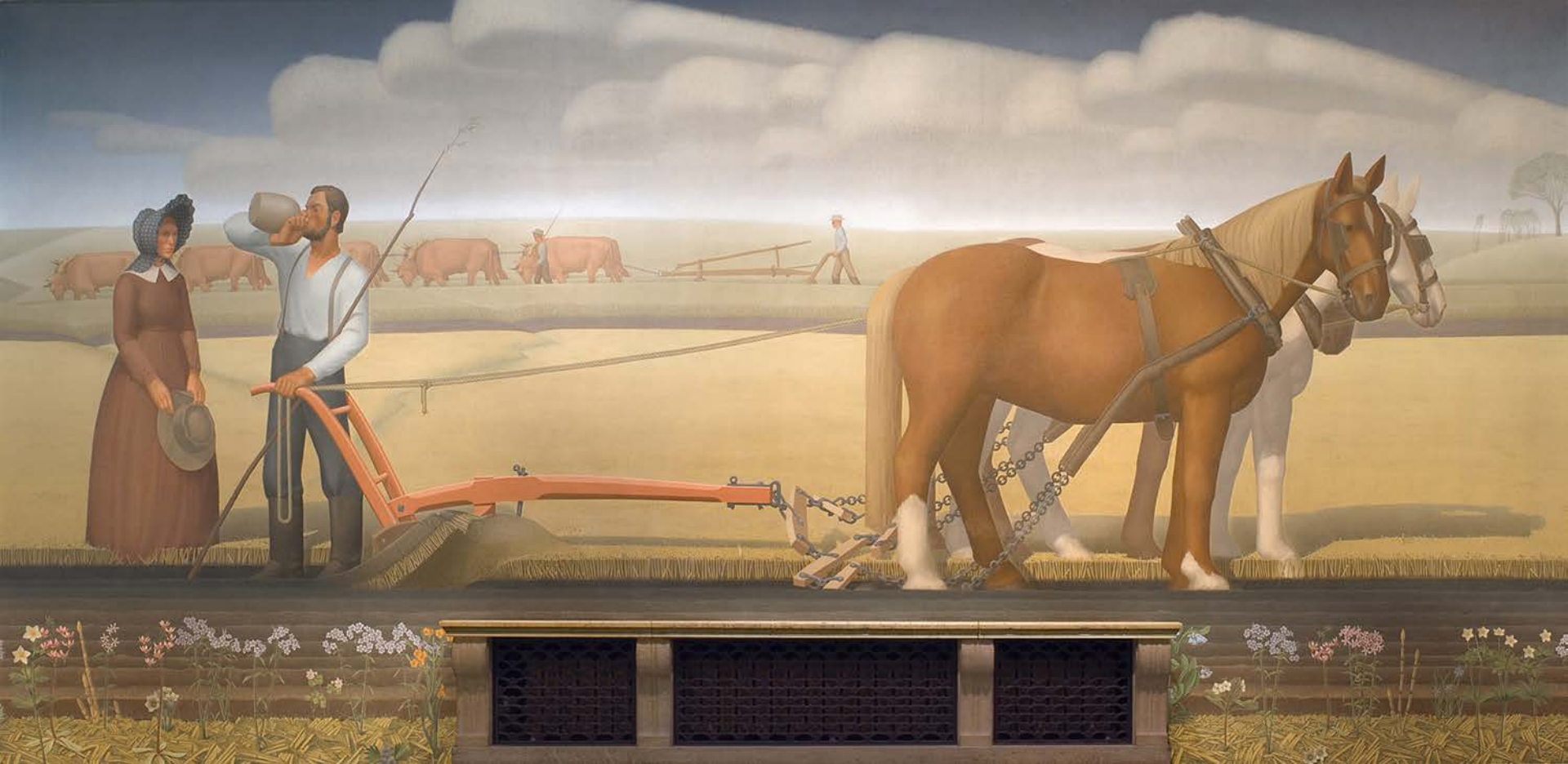
Hurray!

Two paintings of mine in the American show - "Stone City" and "American Gothic"!

Two is the maximum and only a few make it each year

I am having photos of the two made in the art Institute and will get them when I go in next week. Intend to have

Wood, letter to Zenobia Ness
October 28, 1930



Grant Wood
Breaking the Prairie 1937
The Iowa State University Library
Ames

Grant Wood
Associated American Artists lithographs



WHAT! . . . only \$5 for a SIGNED ORIGINAL by GRANT WOOD? Why, he's one of America's greatest artists!



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Alexander Brook	Luigi Luciani
Howard Cook	Joseph Margulies
John Coughlin	Waldo Peirce
John S. Curry	Henry Pitt
Adolf Dehn	Boardman Robinson
Ernest Flame	Andree Ewelson
Gordon Grant	Lola Quintanilla
William Gruppner	Margery Ryerson
George Grosz	Georges Schreiber
Thomas Hartung	Raphael Seyer
Esquerra Higgins	Albert Steiner
Irwil Hoffman	Agnes Tait
Peter Wood	Frederic Tuckers
	Grant Wood

and many others (see catalogue)

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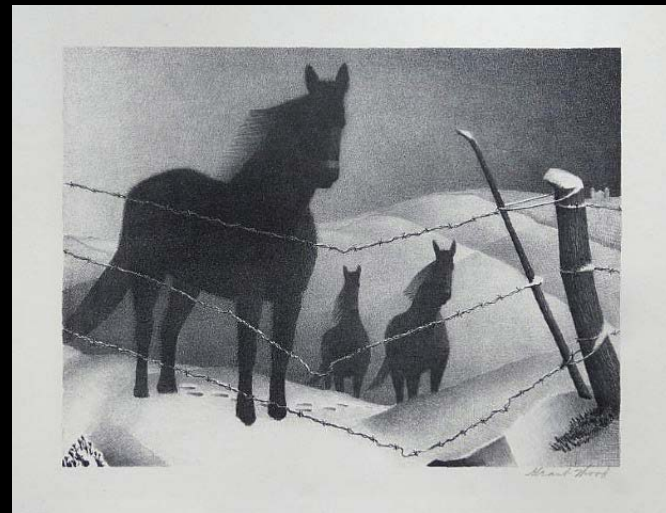
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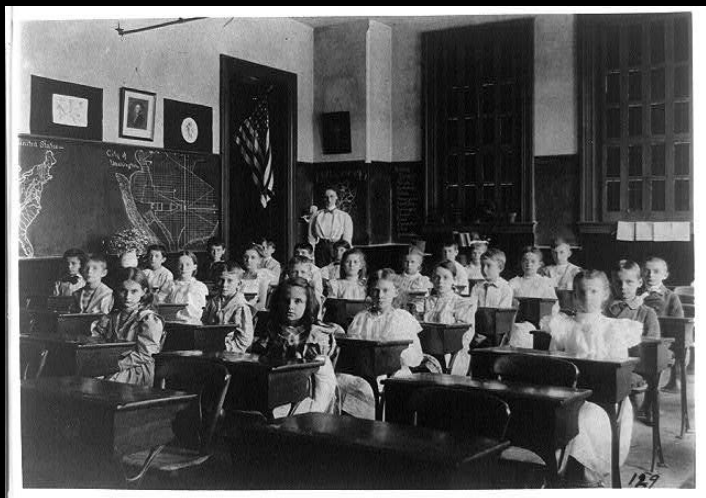


Tree Planting Group 1937



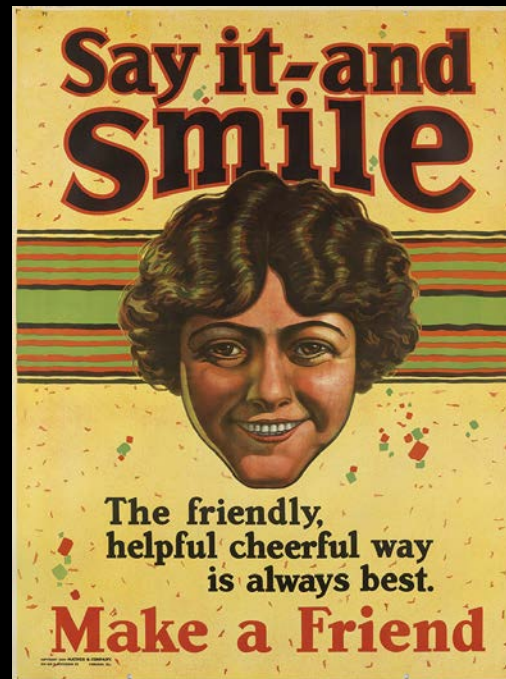
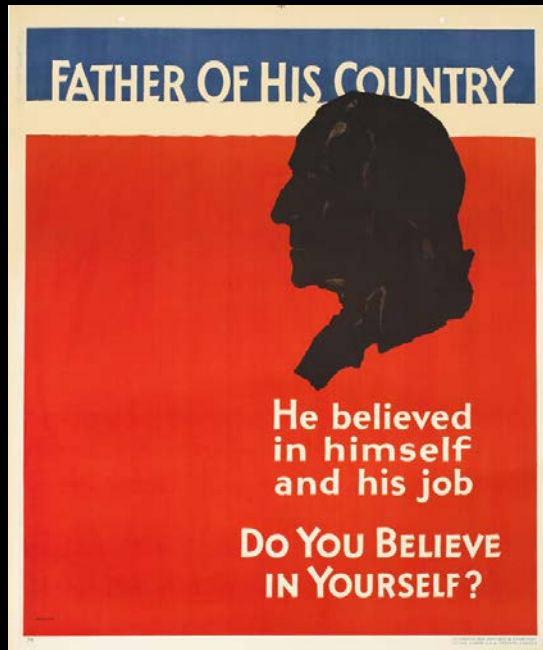
February 1941

Associated American Artists (Triple A) and Life (December 2, 1940)



American public school classrooms
c. 1900: no humor allowed





motivational posters
1920s
Mather & Co., Chicago

Let There Be LAUGHTER

By
LEON ORMOND

★ *in the Classroom!*

And lost be the day to us in which a measure hath not been danced. And false be every truth which hath not had laughter along with it!—Nietzsche

EVEN AS laughter at the dinner table is reputed to aid in the digestion of food (or at least it serves to divert attention from the taste of the spinach), so laughter in the classroom aids the absorption of information. Student laughter is good, healthy, even necessary. All teachers would swear to the truth of this on their syllabi. Nobody would publicly dare admit otherwise. Then why are so many high-school classrooms like tombs?

There are, of course, many reasons more or less obvious. For one, it is a sad but true fact that newly-appointed teachers are often judged not so much upon their effectiveness in stimulating learning as upon their ability to preserve order. A laughing class frequently becomes disorderly, noisy, and difficult to handle. It is little wonder, then, that instructors with uncertain status are tempted to espouse the cause of discipline so zeal-



EDITOR'S NOTE: *Many educators believe that a major aim of education is the happiness of the children. If so, the author asks, why be so dour and solemn about it? A few good laughs (and he doesn't mean feeble smiles) may loosen up the pupils and allow the osmosis of knowledge to proceed faster. Mr. Ormond is a former newspaper man and magazine editor. He now teaches English in the Central High School, Newark, N. J. This article, which first appeared in THE CLEARING HOUSE in April 1940, later became a chapter in Mr. Ormond's book, Laugh and Learn, published by Greenberg, Publisher, New York City.*

ously they become martinets in the process. Pedagogic principles are wonderful things, but a job is a job.

A second reason for solemnity not readily confessed by offending teachers is the tendency toward exaggerated reverence for subject matter.

At the risk of appearing heretical I would go on record as suggesting that quadratic equations are something less than holy, and that even with Jove's mythological phylacteries levity is not entirely unbecoming. No dynasties will fall if pupils laugh their way through Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* even though it is a comedy. Nor does it really, really matter in the long run whether Caesar's *De Bello Gallico* is learned in six weeks or six months or not at all.

Closely allied to this idolatrous attitude toward the printed fact is the unfortunate habit of some teachers of taking themselves altogether too seriously. The youngsters want companionship and inspiration and they get—dignity. The bromidic defense for aloofness is that it engenders respect in the pupil. But this respect is too often synonymous with fear to make it anything but suspect.

And it isn't necessarily true that every time an educator opens his mouth he utters the Word of Revelation. No, if an instructor wishes to have gaiety in his class he must first learn to laugh at himself. And many a teacher has accomplished more with his smile than with his erudition.

Wholesome, hearty laughter can flourish only in a free and easy classroom atmosphere. Axiomatic as this may sound, the number of teachers who fail to grasp the principle in practice is appalling. Pity the plight of the disciplinary genius who tells

Leon Ormond
*The Clearing House: A Journal of
Educational Strategies (1940)*



Wood, Stone City Art Colony
1932-1933

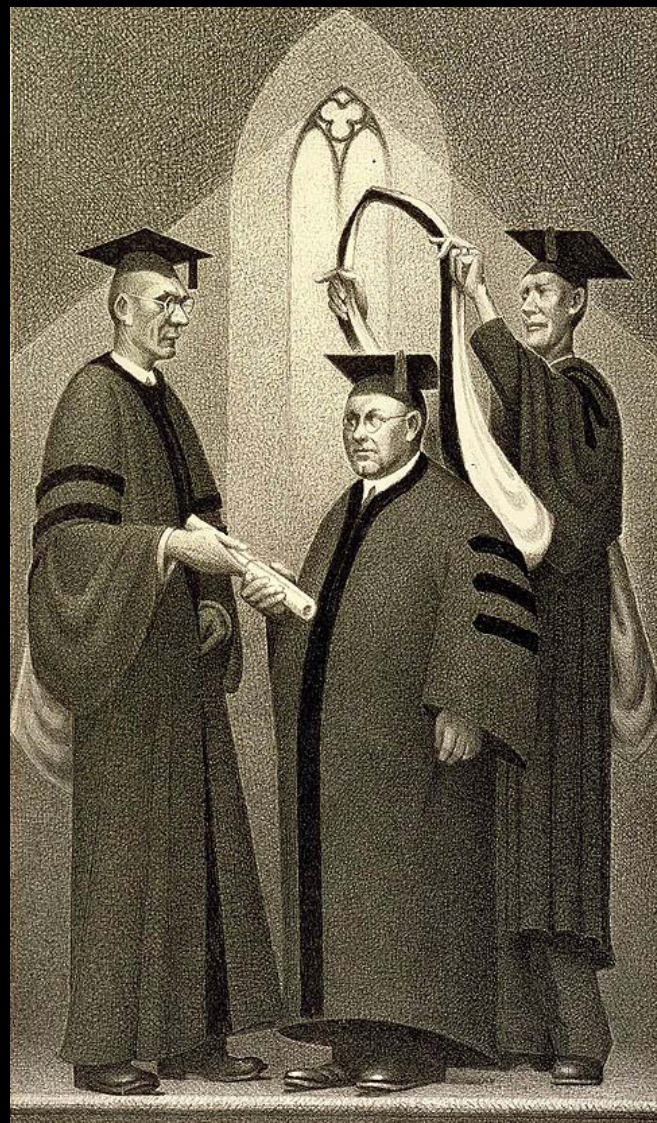


Grant and one of his pupils.

Wood and student at the
University of Iowa 1939



Honorary degree recipients at Commencement
Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin
June 13, 1938
Grant Wood on right



Grant Wood
Honorary Degree 1938
lithograph

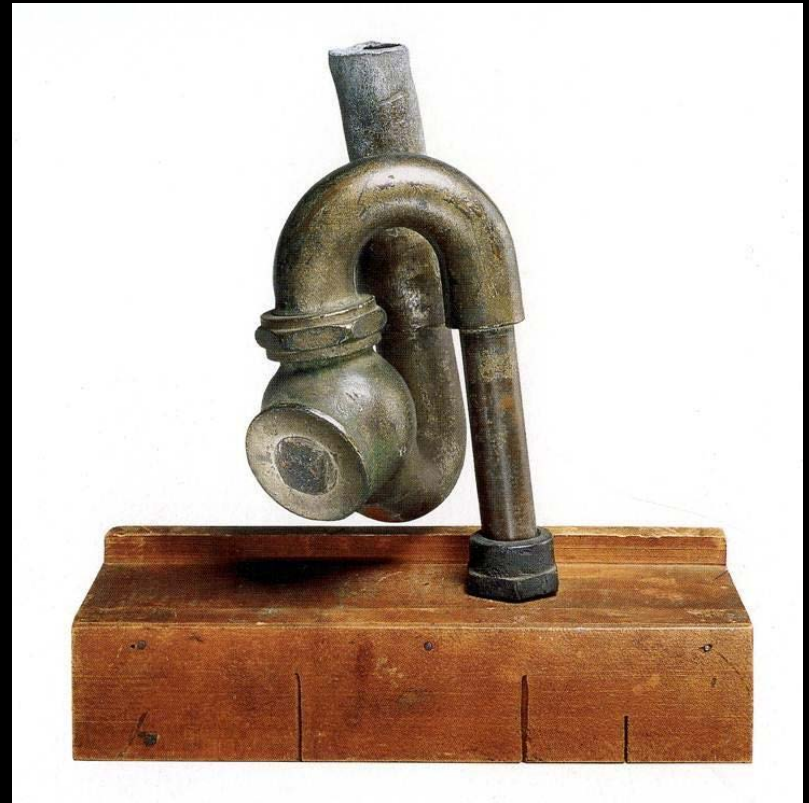
Mourner's Bench 1921-23

Cedar Rapids Community School District Collection





Lilies of the Alley 1925
ceramic, paint, wire, and found objects
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art



Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven
God 1917
cast iron plumbing trap, wooden
mitre box
Philadelphia Museum of Art



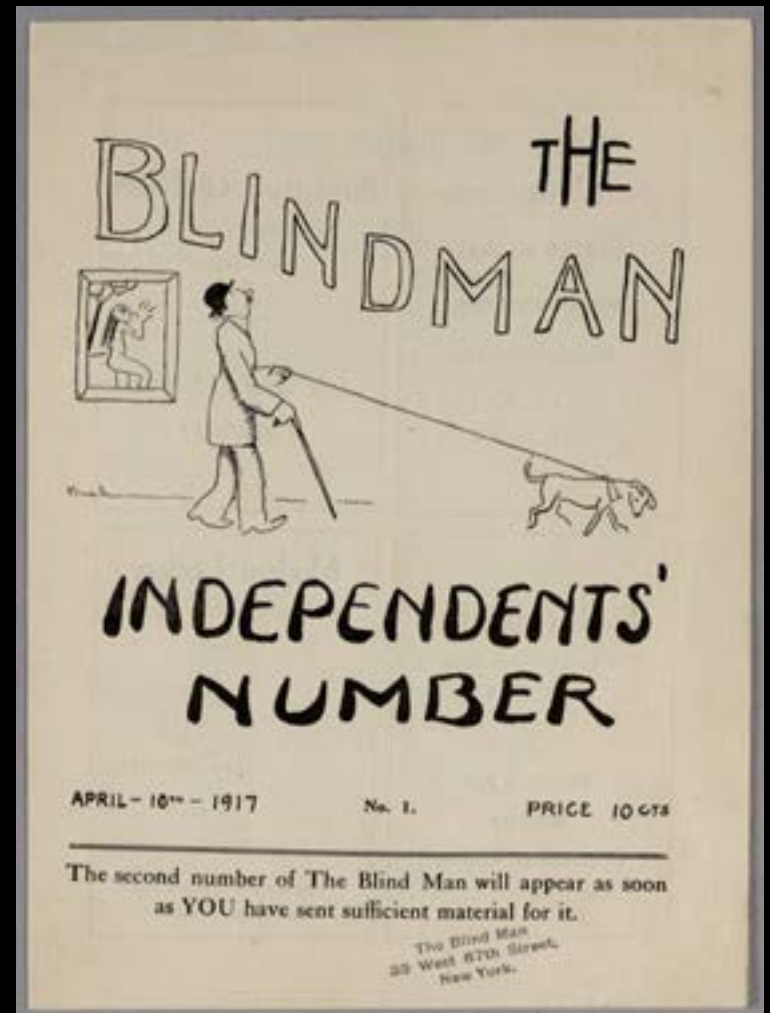
Self Portrait c. 1925
brass, 3" x 2" x 1"
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art



Blind man with guide dog, France
postcard? c. 1920s



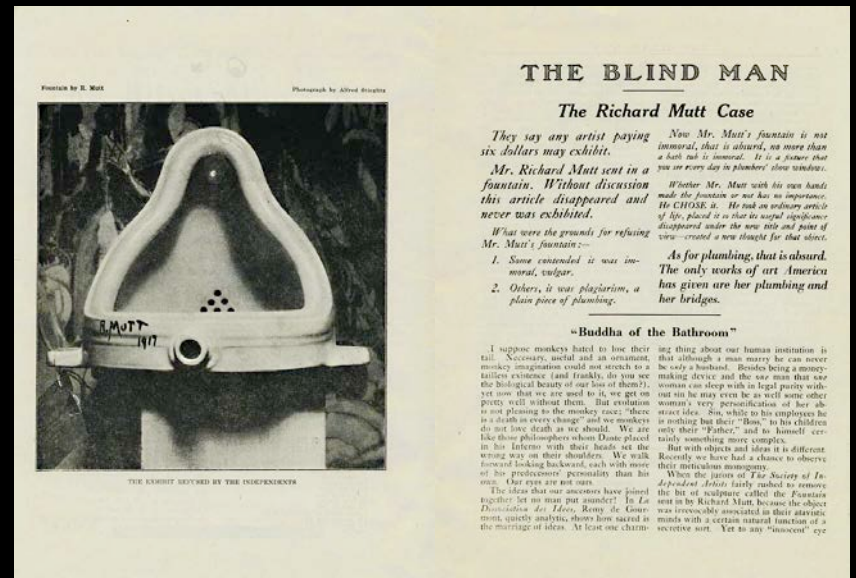
Self Portrait c. 1925
brass, 3 x 2 x 1"
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art



The Blind Man, Dada magazine
April 1917



Self Portrait c. 1925
brass, 3 x 2 x 1"
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art



The Blind Man, Dada magazine
May 1917



Appraisal 1931
Dubuque Museum of Art



*It Happened
One Night
1934*



Daughters of Revolution 1932
Cincinnati Museum of Art



PAGE EIGHT June 3, 1933 THE ALBUQUERQUE TRIBUNE, Albuquerque, New Mexico X99

ARTIST AROUSES WRATH OF DAUGHTERS OF REVOLUTION

Painting Brings Protests of Women



He Teaches Art
Grant Wood, the young Iowa painter, whose jacket for Verdie Fisher's "In Tragic Life" (Double-Dog-Dog) has been attracting a great deal of attention, is one of the Stone City Colony and Art School artists. Believing that a true art expression must grow up from the environment itself, this Stone City Colony was organized for an exchange of ideas and is open to all midwestern painters of all schools. Mr. Wood will be in charge of the class in advanced painting.

This painting, called "Daughters of Revolution," has created a storm of protest in Cedar Rapids, Ia., where members of the Daughters of the American Revolution have demanded it be removed from an art gallery. The painting is by Grant Wood, foremost Iowa painter, resident of Cedar Rapids.

Chicago Tribune Oct. 7, 1934
Artist Views His Painting; Center of Controversy



Leads in Int
Grant Wood, who painted three women called "Revolution" which has caused since it first the Art Institute of Chicago exhibit room yesterday. He way to his home in Cedar from Philadelphia, and where he and Robert H. of the jury which select for the Wagonmaker show art opening in New York.

Daniel Carter Rich, a for of painting at the look Mr. Wood that "Revolution" continued to attention than any pe institute show.

Grant Wood, artist of the modern school, viewing his work, "Daughters of the Revolution," at the Art Institute yesterday. The painting has been the center of heated discussions. Wood stopped in Chicago on his way back to Iowa from New York. [REUTERS Photo.]

newspaper coverage of
Daughters of Revolution
1933-1934

McCutcheon gave this idea my to Grant

Chicago Tribune
Sunday October "SONS OF PEACE" 7, 1934
Adapted from Grant Wood's painting "Daughters of Revolution"





Daughters of Revolution
1932
Cincinnati Museum of Art

Parson Weems' Fable
1939
Amon Carter Museum
of American Art

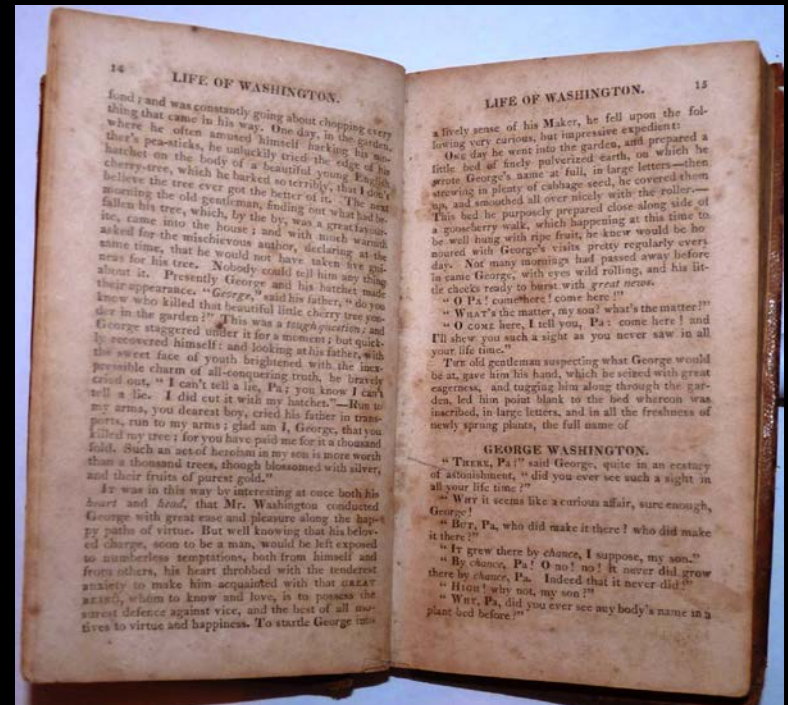
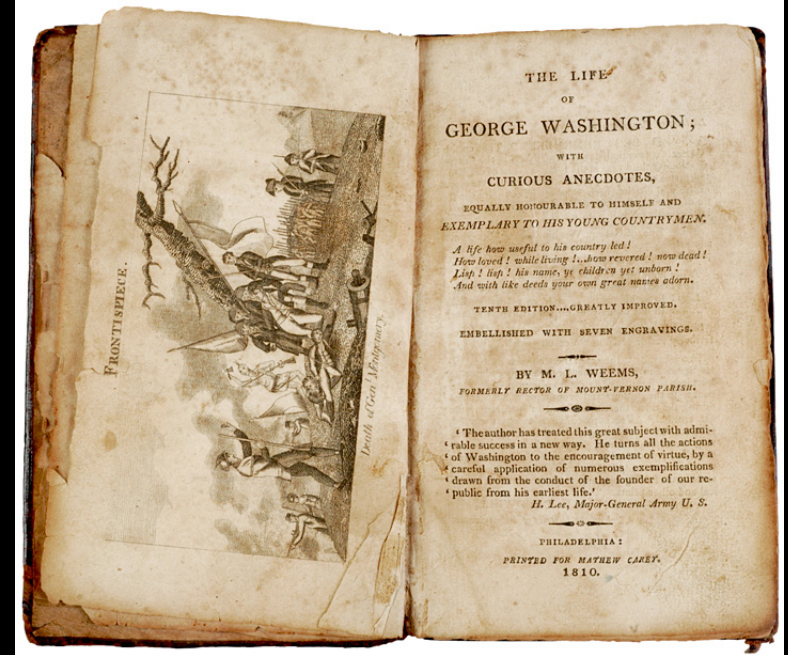




The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere 1931
Metropolitan Museum of Art



Parson Weems' Fable 1939
Amon Carter Museum of American Art



Parson Weems Fable

Mason Locke Weems The Life of George Washington 5th edition, 1806



The Daily Iowan

Iowa City's Morning Newspaper

The Associated Press

IOWA CITY, IOWA SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1940

The Associated Press

'Parson Weems' Fable Merely a Fantasy Of Delightful American Myth--Grant Wood

By MADELYN MILES

When Grant Wood says of his newest picture "Parson Weems' Fable," that he merely painted the cherry tree fantasy as a delightful American myth, he is committing no heresy for it has been proved that this colorful anecdote in the life of George Washington has very little basis in fact.

The painting, which has caused a furore in artistic circles, depicts the scene where, in the artist's own words, "Washington senior, who has just discovered the mutilated tree, is angrily questioning his son about it; and George, hatchet in hand, has drawn himself up proudly to say (according to Weems' biography) 'I can't tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie. I did cut it with my own hatchet.'"

In Harold Kello's biography of the pioneer preacher, "Parson Weems of the Cherry Tree," Kello

points out that Weems never was personally associated with Washington. Weems' only connection with the great American was that he occasionally held services at Truro church that Washington attended in Mt. Vernon; this was, however, after Washington's death.

Kello states that the first edition of the life of Washington was only an 80-page pamphlet, but that with the growing demand, Weems elaborated until the fifth edition was a "quartavolume of over 250 pages, of the liveliest content."

Weems described himself on the title page as "former rector of Mt. Vernon parish."

"This title was a pleasing invention," says Kello, "but not the most ardent of Weems' biographies."

cal admirers can offer any ethical excuse for it. There was no Mt. Vernon parish in Virginia, but Weems, with his instinct for salesmanship, doubtless saw in the name a better advertisement than the name Truro.

Kello goes on to say that although the original pamphlet dealt meagerly with Washington's early years, the fifth edition "bubbled with intimate anecdotes of Washington's boyhood, the authenticity of which is as doubtful as Weems' assumed rectorship."

This week's Time magazine says of the painting, "Mason Locke Weems was an itinerant parson and book agent, pioneer in fictionalized biography. Unauthenticated is his pious anecdote of young George Washington and the cherry tree. Artist Wood has the worthy parson

(See PARSON, Page 6).

Parson—

(Continued From Page 1)

drawing back a cherry-red, cherry-edged curtain to show a tiny, Stuart-faced Washington, complete with powdered wig and all the attributes of father of his country."

Weed, although he does not believe the story, says "It is good that we are wiser today and recognize historical fact from historical fiction. Still when we begin to ridicule the story of George and the cherry tree and quit teaching it to our children, something of color and imagination departed from American life."

"I sincerely hope," avers Mr. Wood, "that this painting will help re-awaken interest in the Cherry Tree tale and other bits of American folklore that are too good to lose."

"In our present, unsettled times, when democracy is threatened on all sides, the preservation of our folklore is more important than is generally realized," he went on.

"Howard Mumford Jones, in an article in the Atlantic Monthly for November 1938 covered this issue admirably," continued the artist.

BARBERSHOP.
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of County, Local Contents

1940 IOWA

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6, 1940

Iowa Artist Paints Second Oil In Series of Historical Works Depicting Folklore of America



In his interpretation of "Parson Weems' Fable," Grant Wood has portrayed the youthful Father of His Country with the body of a boy but the head of the mature leader, as painted by Gilbert Stuart. Critics on this point have agreed the artist was handicapped by the fact that there are no authentic representations of Washington at the age when he was supposed to have mutilated chopping down the cherry tree with his little hatchet.



No sample of work only six weeks of which were devoted to actual painting, went into the second historical "Parson Weems' Fable," with which the artist, Grant Wood, is pictured above. Next project, he says, will be his interpretation of Captain Jack's family scene by Frankston.



First in the Iowa artist's "American Folklore" series was "The Whittaker Site of Paul Bunyan," now on display at the Iowa State Fair. In depicting the famous legend, Wood successfully portrayed the event as taking place in a midwestern setting with Paul Bunyan as a "hairy hunk."



The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere 1931
Metropolitan Museum of Art

