“Something of color and imagination”:
Grant Wood, Storytelling, and the Past’s Appeal in Depression-Era America

Annelise K. Madsen | Art Institute of Chicago | 29 Oct 2016
ARTIST DENIES INTENT TO 'DEBUNK' LEGEND

'Clarifies' Picture of Washington and the Cherry Tree

Grant Wood, whose painting, "Parson Weems' Fable," will be publicly displayed at the Whitney Museum biennial exhibition opening a week from today, issued yesterday through the Associated American Artists, Inc., a "clarification" of his portrayal of the story of Washington and the alleged cherry tree.

In a memorandum accompanying the statement, Reeves Lewenthal, director of the A. A. A. Galleries at 711 Fifth Avenue, said that Mr. Wood's home in Iowa City has been "deluged with telegrams and letters," since the painting was described. The artist has now declared he had no intention of "debunking" the legend, Mr. Lewenthal added.

The picture shows the "boy" Washington with a mature head after Gilbert Stuart. Its largest figure is the faintly smiling parson, depicted as lifting a curtain to reveal the breathless moment after the hatchet stroke.

Grant Wood with Parson Weems’ Fable on easel, 1939. Figge Art Museum Grant Wood Digital Collection, scrapbook 8, University of Iowa Libraries.


Grant Wood (designer); Emil Frei Art Glass Company, Munich, Germany (fabricator), *Memorial Window*, 1928–29, stained glass. Veterans Memorial Building, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.


Installation view of Daughters of Revolution and Parson Weems’ Fable in America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s exhibition, Art Institute of Chicago, June 2016.
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