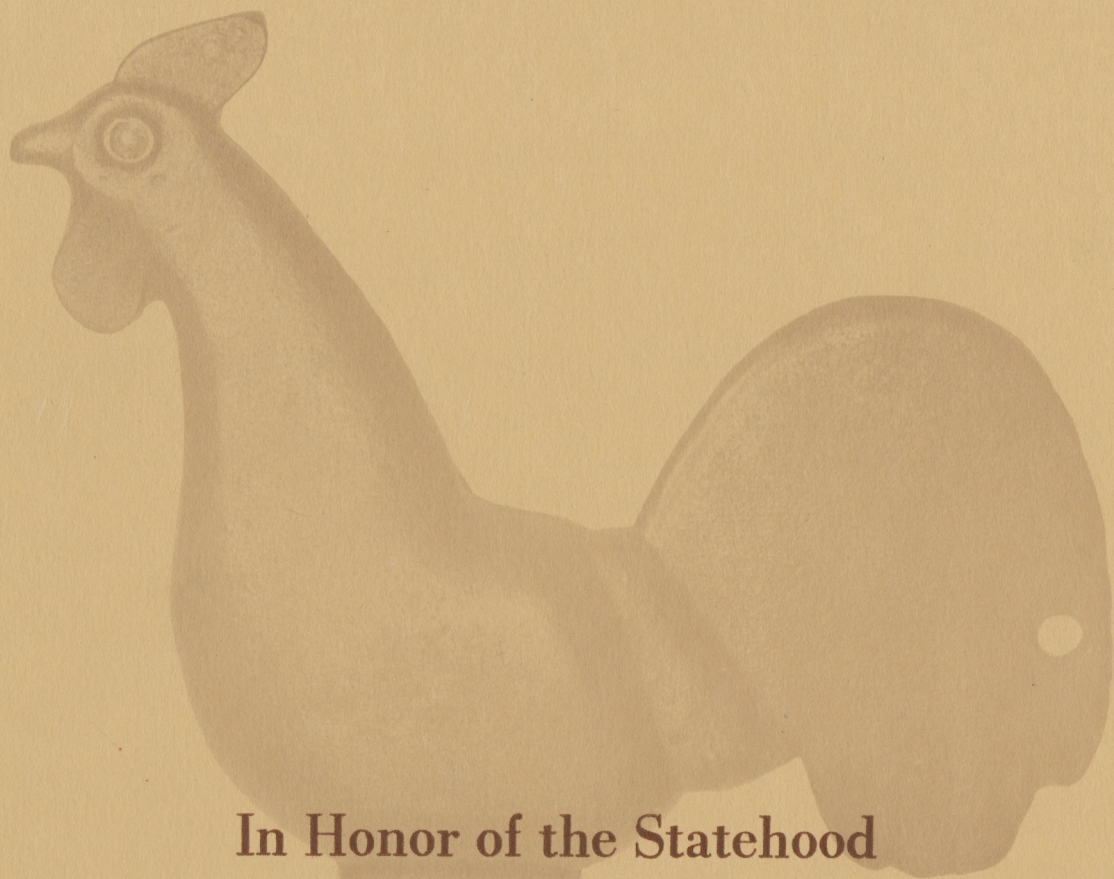


KANSIENSIANA



In Honor of the Statehood
Centennial of Kansas
1861-1961

June 4 to August 7, 1961

The University of Kansas Museum of Art, Lawrence

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How does one celebrate by means of an art exhibition the centennial of the entry of the State of Kansas into the Union? Does the demarcation of the chronological history of an area into segments of a hundred years have any bearing on the artistic efforts of that area? In some cases it might. In Kansas it is a little hard to see that it does. If all that is needed is to point out that there was a great deal of artistic effort in the area during the last hundred years, this would be, to be sure, quite easy. But then there is always a great deal of artistic effort in every area anywhere and at any time. In the most remote corners of the globe man has and continues to embellish in some way or another, if nothing else even the utilitarian objects which help to keep him alive. These, of course, if enough time elapses, begin to be appreciated as having aesthetic value. If, on the other hand, one thinks in terms of the influences which other cultures may have had on an area, one might consider such questions as the possible influence of Spanish Renaissance art on the State of Kansas when Coronado passed through. It appears to be negligible. The same might be said of the nineteenth century when the great westward migrations across the United States would surely have brought some sort of "influences" from the older cultures in the East. The most significant artistic movement of the time, French Impressionism, however, was not one of them. What then, actually, did come to Kansas a hundred years ago, and what has remained and flourished?

The presence of art schools, museums, art study groups, collectors, and a host of amateur artists of every variety in Kansas would indicate that the art of Kansas did not, like Pallas from the brow of Zeus, spring full-grown upon the earth, but developed from something. What it grew from appear to be a number of very odd and very haphazardly gathered together impulses. The itinerant portrait-maker, the quilt and coverlet makers among the pioneer women, and the anonymous craftsmen who were chiefly occupied with building of a state are the sources of all of the current artistic activity and appreciation in the state. Their direct influence is sometimes a very tenuous one and very hard to define.

The purpose of this exhibition is to simply evoke something of these various qualities and to suggest to the onlooker that he think about them. Since that hazy period, a century ago, Kansas has experienced, at first belatedly but in recent years with increasing rapidity, most of the artistic fashions of the rest of the world. Late Victorian gingerbread ornamentation on houses, the self-conscious and "arty" *l'Art Nouveau*, and the equally self-conscious "freedom" of Abstract Expressionism. These can all be found, in one form or another, in Kansas or elsewhere. But at the same time one should look for other things—the beauty of objects which cannot claim the distinction of being "hand-made," or the naive but genuine work of amateurs, or the way in which historical associations can invest a pedestrian object, under the right conditions, with a strange glamor.

Catalogue of the Exhibition

1. THE GREAT SEAL OF KANSAS

Inlaid and tinted wood, 14 inches in diameter

Twentieth Century

Lent by the University of Kansas Memorial Union

Gift of the Endowment Association to the Kansas Memorial Union, 1958

Made only recently by a craftsman in Americus, Kansas, this replica of the state seal is made of eleven different woods. It represents the continuation of a naïve folk tradition into our own day.

2. James Hess (Active 1875-1900)

VIEW OF OLD NORTH COLLEGE

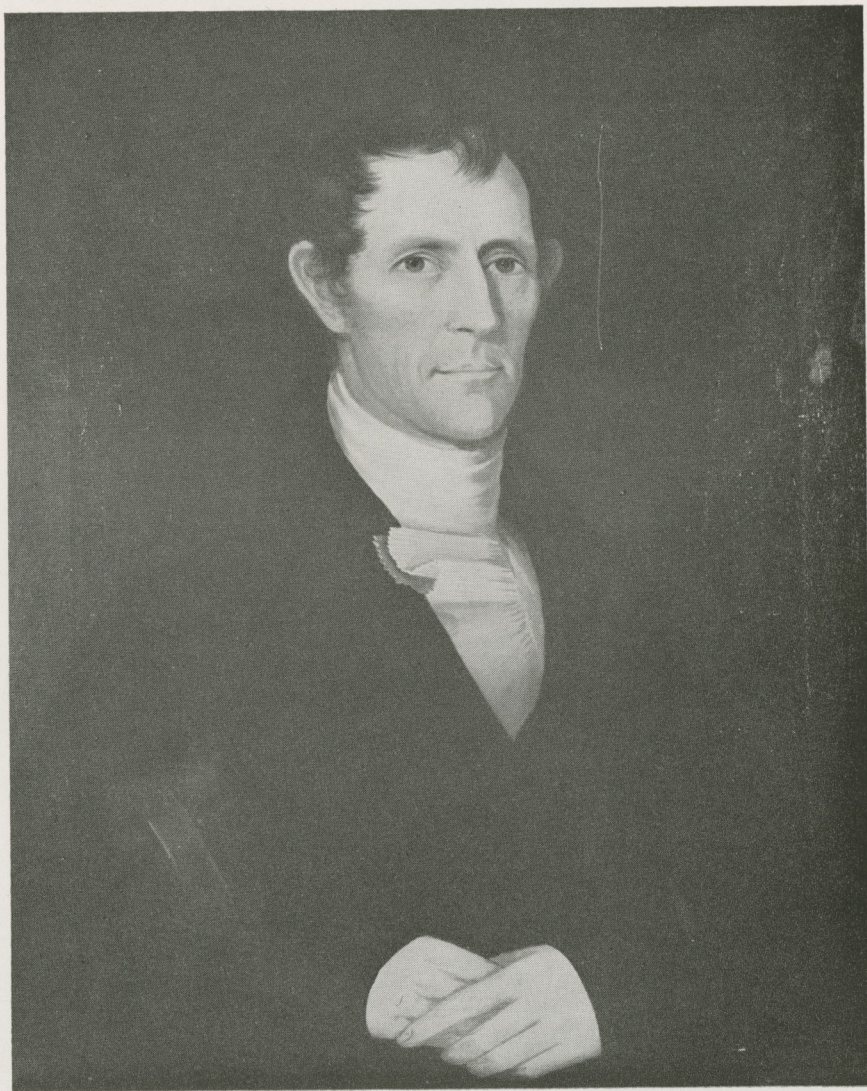
Oil on canvas, 14x19 inches

About 1880

Old North College Hall, the first building of the University of Kansas, is by the Lawrence artist, James Hess. He was an art student of Mrs. James H. Canfield, wife of an early University of Kansas professor. The scene is painted from 12th and Oread Streets, looking toward the Kaw (or the Kansas) River.



3. Phillips (Active 1829-1843)
MR. JOHN LAWRENCE
Oil on canvas, 53x47 inches
About 1835





4. Phillips (Active 1829-1843)
MRS. JOHN LAWRENCE
Oil on canvas, 53x47 inches
About 1835

These have recently been identified as the work of an early American portrait painter of the 1830's, known only by his last name, Phillips. The similarity in style and technique with other examples of this artist's work led to the discovery. Phillips' main area of endeavor was in Columbia and Dutchess Counties of New York State. The identity of sitters is based on the oral tradition of the University.

5. WOVEN COVERLET

King's Flower Pattern

Nineteenth Century

The William B. Thayer Memorial Collection

The early settlers brought with them from the East few of the amenities of life, and few objects of beauty unconnected with utilitarian purposes. Treasured now by the descendants of those early Kansans, woven coverlets such as this example woven in Knott's County, Kentucky, were among the few spots of color to be found in the sod huts and Spartan cabins on the plains.

6. D. M. Bliss (Active 1862-1900)

MONKEY

Catalpa wood, 26 inches

Late Nineteenth Century

Lent by Myrtle Bliss, Columbus, Kansas

Bliss, former soldier in the Union army, began carving while being held as a Southern prisoner of war at Libby Prison, Georgia. He spent the remainder of his life carving fanciful animals out of catalpa wood. The patriotic monkey once held a miniature American flag in his upraised hand.



7. Unknown artist (Active about 1840)
THE CHILDREN OF MYRON LAWRENCE
Oil on canvas, 30x36 inches
About 1840
Bequest of Miss Edith M. Clarke to the Museum of Art

These are the three children of the noted jurist, Myron Lawrence, of Belchertown, Mass. The young lady on the left, Sara Lawrence, grew up to marry, in 1851, Charles Robinson, first governor of Kansas. The painting hung at Oakridge, the home of Governor Robinson.



8. AMERICAN EAGLE
Zinc, 30 inches high, 72 inch wing-spread
Late Nineteenth Century

This monumental eagle comes from a barn in Clay County in Western Kansas. Its original function is unknown, yet whatever it may have been, it cannot be denied that the metal worker who produced it had a sense of grandeur.

9. Streeter Blair (1888-)
K.U.'s FIRST MORNING

Oil on canvas, 28x32 inches

1958

Lent by the Kansas Memorial Union. Gift of the Endowment Association

A contemporary Kansas "Primitive" and alumnus of the University depicting his interpretation of the University's Opening Day. The building is Old North College Hall.

10. John Steuart Curry (1897-1946)
SELF PORTRAIT

Oil on canvas, 30x36 inches

1937

Lent by Mrs. John Steuart Curry, West Newburyport, Mass.

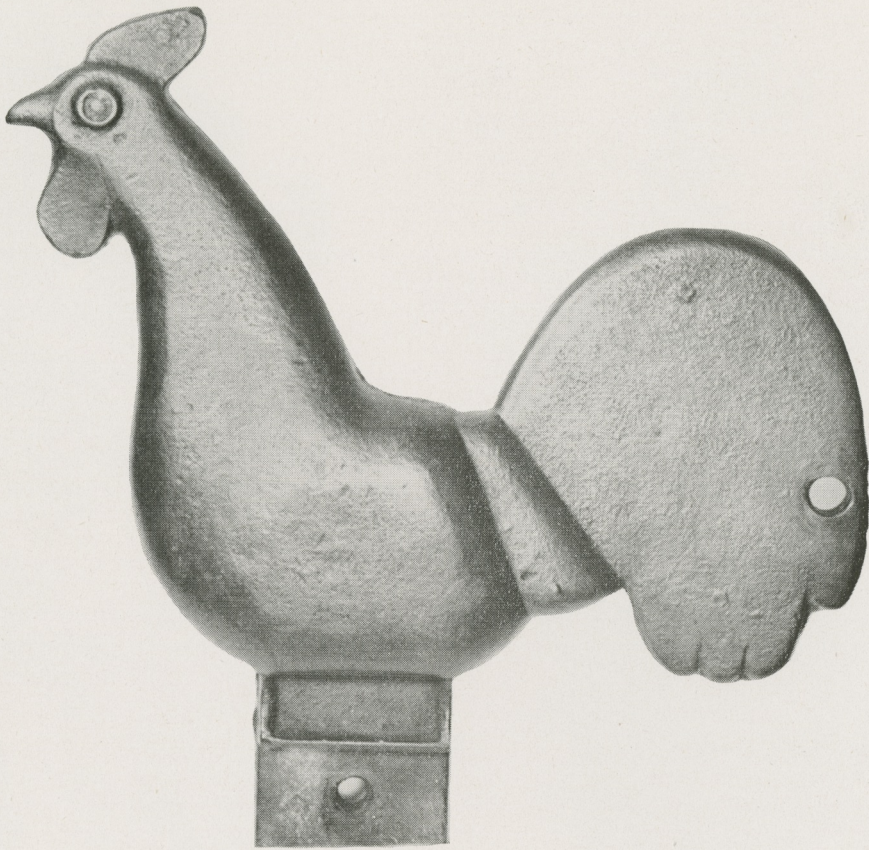
Curry is Kansas' most famous native artist. Although done in a realistic manner, the reflected image is very different from his typical regionalist painting and reveals his artistic sophistication in his attempt at re-creating a Renaissance portrait in modern terms.

11. F. O. Marvin (1852-1915)
LAWRENCE DAM
Pencil on paper, 5x7 inches
1883
12. F. O. Marvin (1852-1915)
LAWRENCE MILL
Pencil on paper, 7x10 inches
1884
13. F. O. Marvin (1852-1915)
BEND IN THE KAW
Pencil on paper, 7x10 inches
1884
14. F. O. Marvin (1852-1915)
A CHURCH IN LAWRENCE
Pencil on paper, 7x5 inches
1884

F. O. Marvin, son of one of the earliest chancellors of the University was the first Dean of the School of Engineering. His interest in drawing led to his depiction of many local Lawrence points of interest. They typify the sort of interest in art kept alive by the University community, an interest more praiseworthy for its intentions than for its achievements.

15. TAVERN TABLE
Wood, 10x3 feet
About 1830-1840

This deal table comes from a tavern on the Santa Fe Trail in Superior, Kansas, south of Burlingame. It is a good example of frontier craftsmanship. Beyond this, it enjoys the glamorous, if dubious, "associative interest" of being a relic of the days when Kansas was the "Wild West."



16. ROOSTER WINDMILL WEIGHT

Cast Iron, 17 inches

Late Nineteenth Century

This rooster once surveyed the plains from atop a Western Kansas windmill. It served as a counter-balance in the primitive mechanism of the mill. This startlingly "modern" cast sculpture is, perhaps, the most outstanding object of Kansas folk art in the exhibition. It represents the fact that while handicrafts may have produced the folk art of the East, in the newly opened country of the Great Plains, the techniques of the Industrial Revolution applied. That such a utilitarian object as the counterweight for the great blades of the Western windmills was not left a simple lump of metal, but was given a decorative form is a reassuring testimony to the need for aesthetic satisfaction even under the grimmest of living conditions.

17. Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902)

WOLF RIVER, KANSAS

Oil on canvas, 48x38 inches

About 1870

Lent by the Detroit Institute of Arts

This Western Kansas scene of an Indian camp on the Wolf River is by one of America's most important nineteenth century painters. The broad sweep of the composition, with the great trees silhouetted against the sky is typical of Bierstadt's landscape style. It is the only Kansas scene by the artist known, although he must have crossed the state on many occasions.

18. Raymond Eastwood (1898-)
RED BARNS IN KANSAS
Oil on canvas, 1959
Lent by the artist
19. Birger Sandzen (1871-1954)
KANSAS CREEK
Oil on canvas, 24x18 inches
20. Ward Lockwood (1894-)
WINTER WHEAT
Oil on canvas, 40x30 inches
1957

Representing the scores of artists working today in Kansas and those who have, are these three painters. The late Birger Sandzen was certainly the most influential figure working, almost like a missionary, in the cause of the fine arts in Kansas. Strangely enough, his totally unrealistic use of color appealed so strongly to his generation that they still consider his arbitrarily drawn works the epitome of traditionalism, just as they do the highly stylized precisionism of Eastwood. The work by Ward Lockwood, the only native son of the three, is actually much more rooted in realism—in the actual visual aspect of Kansas. The sharp green of winter wheat seen against the brown and yellow stubble on the fields whose dark richness is still streaked with melting snow are the sources for his painting which in its abstract expressionism binds Kansas to the artistic developments of the rest of the world.