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SEEING MORE THAN EARTH AND SKY

THE RISE OF A GREAT PLAINS AESTHETIC

HOWARD ROBERTS LAMAR

Sometime in the 1880s, Sallie Cover, a Nebraska settler in Garfield County, painted a picture of the homestead of her neighbor, Ellsworth L. Ball. This attractive primitive painting can be seen in the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln. Various authorities have asserted that it is the first known painting by a local Nebraska artist.¹ Although we know very little about Mrs. Cover, the painting suggests that she liked her neighbor's rational and neat homestead. She painted the earth rich and black, the grass healthy green, and flowers along the front path. New trees have been planted, but some small fruit trees are already in blossom. Three men, one woman, and one child, not lined up or posing in a stiff way, are scattered in the larger scene that includes horses and cattle, a field of ripening grain, stacks of older hay, and a fine barn. A big clear sky looms above the peaceful, orderly, and fertile scene.

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THE GREAT PLAINS AESTHETIC

People inevitably try to rationalize both the landscape and the social and economic conditions in which they find themselves. Two famous Great Plains examples can be found in the works of Walter Prescott Webb and James Malin.² If they had a more positive than negative experience, pioneers or settlers created an aesthetic sense about the features of their surroundings. They read other qualities, often romantic, into a landscape to heighten this sense of beauty. Sallie Cover developed or brought with her a traditional affection for the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer and the aesthetic qualities to be found in rural life. She was perhaps aided by having seen Currier and Ives paintings of happy farm scenes. Like a young Grandma Moses, she may have felt she was a part of the landscape and the community she was painting.³

There are many examples of this early aesthetic response in the pioneer period of Great Plains settlement. In 1877, *Harper's New Monthly* described West Texas in the following way: "Oh, the glory of a Texas Prairie under a vertical sun. The light, the color, the distance, the vast solitude and silence, the limitless level,

the everlasting rest." How different is that from Georgia O'Keefe's descriptions of West Texas in her letters written in 1915 when she was teaching art at West Texas State Normal College at Canyon, Texas. Writing to her friend, Anita Pollitzer, she said:

I walked out past the last house—past the last locust tree—and sat on the fence for a long time—looking—just looking at the lightning—you see there was nothing but sky and flat prairie land—land that seems more like the ocean than anything I know. . . . I am loving the plains more than ever it seems and the SKY—Anita you have never seen SKY—it is wonderful.

"Texas," writes Sarah Greenough of O'Keefe, "gave her an appreciation of nature that would invigorate her art for the rest of her life." Birger Sandén's pleasure over the light and color of the Kansas Smokey Hill Valley echoed O'Keefe's response to the West Texas landscape.⁴

Alma Carlson, just arrived from Sweden, expressed similar positive memories. She "loved the wind from the start, its soothing murmurs as it blew through the grass and pines in a nearby canyon." "In time," writes Elliott West, "Alma Carlson was comforted by all the sounds of the Nebraska plains, even the cries of coyotes. The beautiful and the fearful seemed always to blend."⁵

The rationalizing impulse paralleled this sense of romantic mystery. John Brinkerhoff Jackson quotes Stewart Heney, who grew up in Abilene, Kansas, in the 1870s, as saying that God preferred people with herds over farmers.

The Holy Ghost understood and preferred the livestock operation, and He liked the sort carried on in an arid, non-irrigated Palestine and on the arid, non-irrigated American Plains. Hence the latter was bound to thrive as a cattle realm under the direct guidance of Heaven.⁶

Henry Varnum Poor found the Plains absorbing and recalled his youth in western Kansas with understandable affection. As Poor wrote later, "I think my strongest inclination was to be a naturalist. I knew every bird and insect and made collections of them." He remembered plowing the land and herding the cattle with his pony. Far from feeling lonely, he lived in a "friendly world" with lots of kinfolk, and "lov[ed] every bit of the familiar land and its even more familiar creatures." Willa Cather shared Poor's fascination with nature. A recent article records that as a child Cather said "she picked wildflowers and cried over them for they had no names and no one seemed to care for them." Perhaps the ultimate in the rationalizing process was expressed by Ace Reid's cartoon cowpoke who remarked as he looked out across miles and miles of West Texas that "They ought to make this a national park. There aren't any trees or mountains to get in the way of the view."⁷

There were, of course, the more desperate attempts to create an aesthetic experience that ignored or tried to shut out the landscape. John Cogswell, who grew up in western Nebraska, recalls that on gloomy days women in their sod huts quilted to escape their surroundings. A pioneer woman in Kearney rationalized that process by using cloth strips cut in log-shaped pieces from which she made a quilt called "the Log Cabin."⁸

The settlers of the Great Plains soon had ideas about the beauties of the landscape, and soon read into certain aspects of their experience and lifestyle enough meaning to give them a sense of place. One finds this eloquently expressed in Wright Morris's *Home Place*, or by Willa Cather's *Antonia*, who remembered certain places and events over and over to give her a sense of place and of belonging.⁹

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PLAINS AESTHETIC

If the aesthetic sense was there to begin with, how did the artists of the Plains learn to express

the sense of beauty and place visually? Where and how did they learn to draw and paint? Where did they go for further training if they were any good? In particular, what role did institutions, whether formal or informal, educational, social, or even political, play in training them or in allowing them to exhibit their work?

Often, or when possible, families encouraged artistic sons and daughters. Henry Varnum Poor's mother liked to paint, and the local community soon learned that Henry was talented. His school must have been sympathetic, for he remembered being "loaned out" by his teachers to draw decorations for their blackboards. Birger Sandzén's parents in Sweden encouraged him to be a painter very early in his life. Although the Borglum family lived on a ranch, both Gutzon and his brother Solon were encouraged in their careers as sculptors.¹⁰ Indeed, their father was a talented wood-carver.

But what about formal training? In *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, the catalog for a splendid retrospective of Nebraska artists, Norman Geske lamented that there was not room in the publication to consider "all the important history of institutions, exhibitions and artists' organizations." He also regretted that "no accounting is made of the activity of teachers, lecturers, critics [and] historians. All of these matters are basic to a history of art in Nebraska."¹¹

Nevertheless, Geske has actually provided a fascinating hint of this untold story by noting that the earliest training in the arts in Nebraska was offered at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln in 1877, at the Peru State Normal School in 1895, at the Nebraska Normal School in Kearney in 1905, and at two institutions in Omaha in 1909. As one would expect, the curriculum was traditional in that it trained the student to do representational painting. What marks the beginning of an intriguing theme in Nebraska painting is that the early heads of the University of Nebraska Art Department were women, with Sarah Wool Moore as the first. Cora Parker was a better known successor and an artist whose work reflected the influence of

the impressionists.¹²

Cora Parker's successor, Sarah Shewell Hayden, in turn taught Elizabeth Dolan, a well-known Nebraska artist. When one remembers that no women were accepted at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris until 1863, the presence of women as department heads seems all the more remarkable. There is no evidence of cause and effect, but it is worth noting that Nebraska artist Robert Henri first instituted non-juried shows in New York at the turn of the century so that women could be free to exhibit. If the Nebraska Art Department seems quite liberated in terms of gender, it is equally intriguing that in the 1982 retrospective of Nebraska artists, nine of the early twenty-two artists shown were women. A similar retrospective of Texas artists for the pioneer-settler period lists only two women and thirty-nine men.¹³ The question of gender and art on the Great Plains is of fundamental importance, but that should be addressed in a separate essay.

Although there were many variations, often talented Great Plains artists went first to the Art Institute of Chicago or to the Art Students League of New York, whether or not they attended a traditional college or university. William Merritt Chase, a major father figure to early plains artists, trained scores of students and accepted and encouraged women, including Sarah Hayden and Cora Parker.¹⁴ Robert Henri, who taught with Chase for a time and later broke with him to pursue more modern approaches to art, also encouraged women students. A photograph of Henri's class at the turn of the century shows twelve female and five male students in attendance. As a "rebel" who helped found the Eight and the Ash Can School, it is clear that he was training women as well as men in new techniques and approaches.¹⁵

An artist who felt that he or she needed still more training might then spend a year in Paris. Although some attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, many Americans, and especially Westerners, enrolled in the Académie Julian. The Julian Academy was almost more of an agency

than a school. One paid a fee for a needed service, such as training in drawing, painting, or sculpture. In short, one worked with an independent artist. As the meeting place for a large number of Americans, the Julian Academy inevitably developed a heightened sense of "Americanness" even as the young Americans were forced to follow the strict traditionalist rules of painting, such as those laid down by teachers like Jean-Léon Gérôme of the Beaux-Arts. Gérôme taught one hundred fifty American and Canadian painters, including Lawton Parker, an artist from Kearney, Nebraska. The Americans were delighted with the exciting innovations of the impressionists, whose works could be seen everywhere in Paris. The Julian Academy, which is still in operation today, has trained so many American painters for the past century that its impact on them badly needs study.¹⁶

In urging a study of Americans at the Julian Academy, I am but reflecting a new emphasis in art history, that of the influence of Europe on American regional art. The crucial role of institutions, whether in the Great Plains, America, or Europe, needs recognition. Early Great Plains artists cannot be fully understood unless we know their interactions with the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League of New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and the Paris academies. Nor can we ignore the impact of such ubiquitous teachers as Lorado Taft, distinguished sculptor at the Art Institute of Chicago, William Merritt Chase of New York, or Robert Henri.¹⁷

It is also important to know that many American teachers, among them Chase and Henri, urged their students to paint American themes. Henri, in fact, tried to teach his students to record life directly and spontaneously, even though the style might be Romantic Impressionist or Post-Impressionist. Both he and Chase said artists must have roots.¹⁸ Thus the varied memories of the plains landscape, of Indians, or of nature, proved to be an invaluable resource for many plains artists. One sees this in John Steuart Curry, Henry Varnum Poor, and others.

THE ARTIST AND THE INSTITUTION

If we turn to the question of interaction between the plains population and the local artist, certainly one of the most positive and persuasive examples can be found in the career of Birger Sandzén, the Swedish-born artist who was trained in Paris before coming to teach art and French at Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas. Sandzén was so popular he found himself overwhelmed with students. He taught drawing and painting all day and sometimes into the night. Sandzén founded the Prairie Printmakers, the Prairie Water Color Club, and at one time headed a national art fraternity. A bookstore owner in a nearby town began to promote and sell Sandzén's paintings—indeed, the artist became the focus of an intense local pride. Kansans knew what he was doing when he captured the light and the strong color or recorded the dignity of stony pastures and the quiet streams of the region, and they responded with pride and affection.¹⁹

County and state fairs sometimes allowed local artists to exhibit their works, even if the early fairs in Dakota territory ran heavily to hand-painted china. Still, Amanda Petronella Austin, a Missouri-born pupil of George Caleb Bingham, received her first recognition for her painting "Morning Glories" at the California State Fair in 1880.²⁰ Perhaps more important institutions that promoted the arts periodically were national exhibitions and world fairs. Here again, these temporary institutions seem to have fostered the careers of women artists as well as those of men.

Professor Wanda M. Corn of Stanford has noted in a recent article that there was a Women's Pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, which had a section for the art department. In 1893 a huge Woman's Building was constructed as part of the World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. Chicago sculptor Lorado Taft had so many commissions for that fair that his busy women student sculptors dressed in white smocks were dubbed "the

white rabbits." Among them were Janet Scudder and Bessie Potter Vonnoh.²¹ Vonnoh's sculpture "The Minuet" is in the collection of the Sheldon Art Gallery in Lincoln.

Another Taft student, Evelyn Beatrice Longman, took a job at a wholesale house in Chicago at age fourteen so that she could attend the Art Institute. After working with Taft and graduating with highest honors, she went to New York in 1900 to assist other artists in "the decorations for the Pan American Exposition of 1901." Later she cast a "Victory" statue for the St. Louis Exposition of 1904 and, in conjunction with architect Henry Bacon, produced the "Fountain of Ceres" for the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915.²²

Again, it is important to remember the interplay between region and metropolis when these national fairs occurred. Usually each state had to produce visual and physical icons of its past, its landscape, and its achievements. One of the most intriguing examples of a state's response to such demands occurred when Texas was asked to furnish its pavilion at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. Oran Roberts, a judge and governor of Texas who has been described as "a cultivated art-minded individual," was charged with the task of providing statues of the great Texas founders, Stephen F. Austin and Sam Houston. Roberts turned to Elisabet Ney, a well-known European sculptor living in exile in Texas, and asked her to produce two plaster statues of Austin and Houston for the Texas Pavilion. Ney was extremely excited by the commission for she saw a chance to express a frontier theme in sculpture. The result was a huge statue of Houston clad in frontier garb with a blanket over his shoulder. This departure from the classical caused a sensation. Although she did not finish the Austin statue in time for the fair, both sculptures are to be found in the foyer of the Texas State Capitol at Austin.²³ If Ney's theme was frontier rather than a specific region or a state, Texas's problem of furnishing appropriate art objects symbolizing the state was common to all plains states and territories.

Meanwhile, Iowa-born Abby Rhoda Williams Hill, a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago and a student of William Merritt Chase, was busy producing landscape paintings of the West for the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads to place on exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. She did others for the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland in 1908, and for the Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909.²⁴ Thus, the railroad should be listed as one of the institutions fostering artistic images of the Great Plains and the West.

Reflecting on the roles of the artists in these fairs and expositions for a moment, we see that the artist becomes the official voice for a region when its history and character are displayed to the world. In a sense, that fulfills the basic goal of any artist, to translate the unique and the beautiful into something more universal that a national or general public can understand. In this instance, the artist not only had to communicate more than earth and sky, he or she had to suggest a distinctive regional landscape, history, economy, and culture that would be understood by both a local and a national public. Perhaps most important, the artist connected state or region to nation in terms of a dramatic visual message. Simultaneously, the artist laid the foundations for a local self-consciousness about a region while simplifying the regional image for the general public. However superb their paintings might be, both sojourning artists like Frederic Remington and later native plains artists such as Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood created simplified images that in turn produced images in the public mind that still persist.

If one accepts a broader definition of the word "institution," it certainly would include the network that was created to respond to national or regional exhibitions. Politicians, businessmen, public-spirited citizens, and women's clubs all had to deal with artists and their assistants. The artists in turn had to seek expert advice from historians and ex-teachers. They had to amass materials to meet production and

shipping deadlines. Women as well as men engaged in these activities.²⁵

One can easily exaggerate the size and visibility of this art-related world, but it seems safe to say that given the fact that such institutions as the Nebraska Art Association and others were being founded in the Great Plains between the 1880s and 1910, that art-oriented world was larger, more accessible, more comprehensible, and far more democratic and citizen-minded than may have been realized. One clue to this popularity was the fact that all fairs and exhibitions and even most museums were designed to celebrate American progress, talent, and achievement. They were self-congratulatory rather than critical. But even in the process of self-praise there was evidence of an aesthetic sense and a groping toward a clearer definition of the iconography of region and culture.

CREATING ART AND COMMUNITY IN TEXAS

Certainly the most difficult and elusive set of institutions to identify is the creation of a formal consciousness about art and community. As one way of tracing such a development, we might follow the fortunes of art in two Texas cities. Although both are on the edge of the Great Plains, they provide examples of a regional cattle-country consciousness associated with the Great Plains.

William H. Goetzmann asserts that the formal history of painting in Texas began when Robert Jenkins Onderdonk, a Marylander trained by the indefatigable William Merritt Chase of New York as well as by Robert Henri, came to San Antonio and began to teach painting. His son Julian Onderdonk carried on his father's work, founding the "Blue Bonnet School of Painting." Julian's sister Eleanor helped found the Witte Museum in San Antonio. Goetzmann also argues that Onderdonk brought organization to the study of art in Texas, first by forming a San Antonio group of art *aficionados*, the Brass Mug Club, and later by helping to

found and teach at the Dallas Art Students League. By the first decade of this century, "a perfect mania for Art Leagues swept over Texas."²⁶

One of the talented San Antonio residents that Julian Onderdonk taught briefly was Mary Bonner. Her medium remained undefined, however, until she joined an art colony at Woodstock, New York, where she studied with Bolton Coit Brown, one of the founders of the Woodstock Colony as well as the founder of the Fine Arts Department at Stanford University. Brown advocated "an art where symbols will be the American flora and fauna as seen by American eyes and felt through the American temperament." According to her biographer, Mary George, Mary Bonner then and there decided she was an etcher. After going to Paris for further training, she chose as the theme of her first exhibit in the Paris Salon three etchings called "Texas": one of a cowboy, one of ranchwomen, and one of old mesquite trees—all topics based upon childhood memories of summers spent on a West Texas ranch. The etchings were awarded a prize for their excellence, and as George reports, the San Antonio newspaper ran the headline: "San Antonio Girl Wins Fame Abroad."²⁷

There were other artists in San Antonio, including Gutzon Borglum, but Mary Bonner's career in her home city was perhaps most typical of artists living in other mid-American cities. She promoted a Texas Wildflowers Competition Exhibition, supported by the Witte Museum, and reported news of the art world in Paris to San Antonio. She continued to etch Texas scenes for Paris exhibits, and, with the support of fellow artists and rich socialite patrons, carried the banner of art in San Antonio for a number of years. Ironically, she may be best remembered as having done a sketch of the Alamo that was put on a postcard for sale to tourists.²⁸

Frank Reaugh, another student of the Julian Academy, returned to teach in Dallas. Reaugh founded what was called the rough and ready Oak Cliff School. He developed such a devoted following during his many years of teaching that

he built a hall for lectures, concerts, and exhibitions. Because he focused on cattle ranching and the Texas rural landscape, he came to be called "The Rembrandt of the Longhorns." Decades later a large, complex world of superb galleries, museums, and art schools developed in Dallas and Fort Worth with the oil booms. That is another story, but the point to remember is that there was a community of people there from the beginning who sought to express an aesthetic sense of their surroundings by painting or drawing, as well as a larger community that responded positively to their work.²⁹

And finally, there has been a rise in ethnically-centered art institutions of higher learning as evidenced by Oscar Jacobsen's encouraging Indian students in Oklahoma to use indigenous themes in their painting. Similarly, John Biggars and Carroll Simmons created a new school and tradition of Black American art at Texas Southern in Houston after World War II.³⁰

CONCLUSION

In a general assessment of the artists of his home state, the late Arrell M. Gibson wrote: "The art works of the faculty at the major state universities are regularly exhibited in Oklahoma, the Southwest and across the nation."³¹ This kind of regional pride in art supports my theme that an aesthetic sense emerging from the grass roots continues to find expression and sympathetic resonance in the paintings of contemporary Great Plains artists, although their themes are more personal and critical and less openly patriotic than those of their predecessors. They use strikingly different styles, but they are doing what William Merritt Chase, Robert Henri, and Colton Coit Brown urged other generations to do: express what you know about your area and about the American temperament in such a way that it reaches a larger world.

The story of Great Plains art is the story of shared feelings and images, a democratic, almost populist moment of mutual understand-

ing of citizen and artist about place and what place means. Even so, this would not have been possible without the support of schools and universities, and local artist-teachers such as Cora Parker and Sarah Hayden in Nebraska, Ada Caldwell in South Dakota, Birger Sandzén in Kansas, Robert and Julian Onderdonk in San Antonio, Frank Reaugh in Dallas, and Elisabet Ney in Austin. Nor could it have existed without the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League of New York, and a host of other institutions in Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Cincinnati. The exposure to both traditional and impressionist paintings in Paris and the commissions from fairs, exhibitions, and state and federal governments that expressed regional themes all had their impact.

If seeing more than earth and sky was there from the beginning, it was still the artist-teacher and the agency of many institutions that articulated and visualized that sense of beauty and meaning beyond all expectations. By doing so they provided a visual and aesthetic base that enriches and further defines a positive concept of regionalism. Indeed, so creative have been the artists, the novelists, and the poets in shaping Great Plains iconography that, as one critic noted, "the very inadequacy of the landscape became a resource."³²

NOTES

1. Sallie Cover's painting is mentioned in Norman A. Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 27. The painting itself was reproduced in Jonathan L. Fairbanks and Elisabeth Sussman, eds., *Frontier America: The Far West* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1975), p. 129.

2. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931), and James C. Malin, *The Grassland of North America: Prolegomena to its History* (Lawrence, Kan.: Printed by the author, 1948, but see new edition: Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967).

3. See *50 Currier & Ives Favorites* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1978), pp. 8-9, for country scenes

that could have been the inspiration for Mrs. Cover.

4. Quoted in Becky Duvall Reese, *Texas Images and Visions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), p. 9; Jack Cowart and Juan Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keefe: Art and Letters* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, in association with New York Graphic Society Books and Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1987), p. 157 and 156. Letters selected and annotated by Sarah Greenough; Charles P. Greenough, III, *The Graphic Works of Birger Sandzén* (Lindsborg, Kan.: Bethany College, 1952), p. 11 and throughout. See also Emory Lindquist, "Birger Sandzén: A Painter and His Two Worlds," *Great Plains Quarterly* 5 (Winter 1985): 57, and Jon Nelson, "European Influence on the Visual Arts of the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 5 (Winter 1985): 4.

5. Alma Carson Roosa, "Homesteading in the 1880s: The Anderson-Carlson Families, Cheney County," *Nebraska History* 58 (Fall 1977): 371-94, as cited in a forthcoming work by Elliott West, *Growing Up With the Country: Childhood on the Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989); for an excellent summary of women's attitudes towards the Great Plains, see Julie Roy Jeffrey, "There Is Some Splendid Scenery": Women's Responses to the Great Plains Landscape," *Great Plains Quarterly* 8 (Spring 1988): 67-78.

6. John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *American Space: The Centennial Years, 1865-1876* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), p. 174.

7. Payton Boswell, Jr., *Varnum Poor* (New York: The Hyperion Press, Harper & Brothers, 1941), p. 23. West, *Growing Up With the Country*, is full of reminiscences, almost all positive, by persons who spent their childhood on the Great Plains; Mildred R. Bennett, "The Childhood Worlds of Willa Cather," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2 (Fall 1982): 206; Jim Hoy and Tom Isern, *Plains Folk: A Commonplace of the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 189. The theme of open land is handled more seriously in *No Mountains In the Way*, Kansas Survey: NEA, photographs by James Enyeart Terry Evans, Larry Schwann (Lawrence: University of Kansas Museum of Art, 1975), pp. 1-3. For more contemporary responses, see Roxanne Fridirici and Stephen E. White, "Kansas Through the Eyes of Kansans: Preferences for Commonly Viewed Landscapes," *Great Plains Quarterly* 6 (Winter 1986): 44-56.

8. "Recalling the life of her pioneer mother, one woman said, ' . . . when the wind blew hard and filled the air with dust, she quilted all day. . . . Mama's best quilts were her dugout quilts because that was when she really needed something pretty.'" In John Cogswell, *Voice of the Plains: Selected Radio Commentaries* (Castro Valley, Calif.: Greenridge Press, 1987), p. 9.

9. Joanne Jacobson, "Time and Vision in Wright Morris's Photographs of Nebraska," *Great Plains Quarterly* 7 (Winter 1987): 3-21, but see especially 10 and 14. See also Wright Morris, *The Home Place* (1948; rpt., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976).

10. Boswell, *Poor*, p. 27; Lindquist, "Birger Sandzén," 55-57; "John Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum," *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Three* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 87-90.

11. Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, p. 6.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 44, 45.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 40; Gail Levin, "The Changing Status of Women Artists, 1900-1930," in Eleanor Tufts, ed., *American Women Artists, 1830-1930* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1987), pp. 13-14; Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, pp. 26-51; Reese, *Texas Images and Visions* contains the names of the known nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists. These were used in the sample described above.

14. See two excellent but overlapping studies by Ronald G. Pisano, *William Merritt Chase* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1979), and *A Leading Spirit in American Art: William Merritt Chase, 1849-1916* (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, 1983). See also Keith L. Bryant, Jr., "Genteel Bohemian from Indiana: The Boyhood of William Merritt Chase," *Indiana Magazine of History* 81 (March 1985): 15-46, as well as Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, pp. 38, 45.

15. Levin, "Changing Status," p. 14; Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, p. 40; Pisano, *William Merritt Chase*, p. 56; Pisano, *A Leading Spirit*, pp. 97-100, 179, 181.

16. I am grateful to Professor Robert Herbert of the Yale University History of Art Department for information concerning the Julian Academy. Ronald G. Pisano notes in *A Leading Spirit*, p. 97, that when Chase began his own Chase School of Art in New York, it was described as "'being like 'Old Julian's,' though not on the whole as boisterous, as truly Bohemian—or at any rate as blue with smoke—but there was the skylight, the student paintings on the walls, and a general grey green tone in surroundings that made for harmony—and gave a little sense of atmospheric mystery withal.'" Pisano is quoting a Chase student who is not fully identified; H. Barbara Weinberg, *The American Pupils of Jean-Léon Gérôme* (Fort Worth, Texas: Amon Carter Museum, 1984), pp. 5-6, 93; see a biographical account of Lawton Parker in Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, p. 46. Among others, Robert Henri, Cora Parker, Henry Varnum Poor, Frank Reaugh, and John Noble (a major painter from Wichita, Kansas) attended the Julian Academy. See *Legacy of the Land: A Selection*

of *American Landscape Paintings from the Museum's Collection* (Lawrence, Kan.: Kansas University Museum of Art, 1961–62.)

17. See *Great Plains Quarterly* 5 (Winter 1985) for an issue devoted to the question of European influences on Great Plains art; Timothy J. Garvey, *Public Sculptor: Lorado Taft and the Beautification of Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 38–45. Garvey notes that while Taft was a successful sculptor, “Far more rewarding financially and aesthetically—were opportunities for public statuary.” Indeed, Taft felt American sculptors came into their own at the 1893 World’s Fair. For accounts of Chase and Henri, see notes 26, 27, 28.

18. Bryant, “Genteel Bohemian,” 44–46, stresses Chase’s devotion to American and regional values.

19. Sandzén’s career is traced in Lindquist, “Birger Sandzén,” 53–65, see especially 57 and illustration on 59. In C.P. Greenough, III, *Graphic Work of Birger Sandzén*, p. 4, John F. Helm, Jr., states that Sandzén “was the first to recognize the intrinsic beauties of the Kansas motif.” See also pp. 6, 12, and the illustrations throughout.

20. Howard R. Lamar, “Public Values and Private Dreams: South Dakota’s Search for Identity,” *South Dakota History* 8 (Spring 1978): 135–36; “Amanda P. Austin” in Tufts, ed., *American Women Artists*, pp. 64–65. Austin was also a sculptor whose commissions helped support her.

21. Wanda M. Corn, “Women Building History,” in Eleanor Tufts, ed., *American Women Artists*, pp. 26–34, but especially p. 26, and p. 117; Scudder was from Indiana and Vonnoh from St. Louis, but their experiences as students and “white rabbits” working for Taft typify those of plains artists at the Chicago Institute of Art.

22. Longman was also a midwesterner rather than a plains person, having been born in a cabin in Winchester, Ohio, but here again her career illustrates how a desire to express her talent in sculpture was there from the beginning. A moving autobiography of a frustrated West Texas sculptor is in Tommy J. Boley, ed., *Ella Elgar Bird Dumont* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

23. Alessandra Comini, “Who Every Heard of a Woman Sculptor? Harriet Hosmer, Elisabet Ney, and the Nineteenth Century Dialogue with the Three-Dimensional,” in Tufts, *Women Artists*, p. 24; Emily Fourmy Cutrer, *The Art of the Woman: The Life and Work of Elisabet Ney* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), pp. 123 ff, and pp. 193–96, 223–24. Ney also did the statues of Austin and Houston for Statuary Hall in the National Capitol in Washington. Elisabet Ney was not a modest woman. Upon her arrival in Texas she described herself as a latter-day Prometheus bringing art and culture to Texas.

But Texans responded positively, made much of her, and her studio became one of the first museums in Texas.

24. “Abby Rhoda Williams Hill” in Tufts, ed., *American Women Artists*, p. 75. Hill is cited here, not exclusively as a plains artist, but as one whose commissioned western scenes for expositions and railroads helped define western places and regions. In similar fashion, William Henry Jackson’s photographs, commissioned by the Union Pacific, were even more influential in creating a set of images that helped define the West for the public.

25. Garvey’s *Public Sculptor* is full of descriptions of how Lorado Taft worked with or employed others. Cutrer’s *The Art of the Woman* frequently refers to Elisabet Ney’s difficulties with politicians, ladies’ clubs, and transportation services.

26. William H. Goetzmann, “Images of Texas,” in Reese, *Texas Images and Visions*, pp. 28–30, 32.

27. Mary Carolyn Hollers George, *Mary Bonner: Impressions of a Printmaker* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1982), pp. 14–15, 23–24, 32 ff. Bonner must have taken Brown’s teaching very seriously for her best etchings are bordered with an intriguing set of Texas animals.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 36; Support by wealthy patrons was and is common in the Great Plains states as elsewhere. One thinks immediately of the support of Nebraska artists provided by Mr. and Mrs. Frank M. Hall of Lincoln. See Geske, *Art and Artists in Nebraska*, p. 46; George, *Mary Bonner*, p. 56.

29. Reese, *Texas Images and Visions*, pp. 32 and 70; the rise of art museums in the Southwest is traced in Keith L. Bryant, Jr., “The Art Museum as Personal Statement: The Southwestern Experience,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 9 (Spring 1989): 100–17 (below); South Dakotans are proud of Harvey Dunn and Oscar Howe, according to Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp. 397–98. Kansans like Birger Sandzén, John Noble, Henry Varnum Poor and, with some dissenting voices, Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, as well as a number of others.

30. Arrell M. Gibson, *Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries* (Norman, Okla.: Harlow Publishing Corporation, 1965), pp. 471–75. See also the second edition: (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981); Reese, *Texas Images and Visions*, p. 37.

31. Gibson, *Oklahoma*, p. 475.

32. “Eventually every culture begins to develop its own iconography. It forms an important part of the culture’s self-definition,” writes William H. Goetzmann in Reese, *Texas Images and Visions*, p. 26; Laurie Ricou, “Prairie Poetry and Metaphors of Plain/s Space,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 3 (Spring 1983): 117.