

Only In Your State

By Kathy McShane

Part 2- Hawaii to Maryland

Hawai'i

David Howard Hitchcock (1861-1943) was born and died in Hawai'i. He is associated with the "Volcano School", a group of non-indigenous painters whose work featured eruptions of Hawai'i's volcanos. He has been called the first homegrown Hawaiian artist with international recognition. For years, his painting of the goddess Pele hung on the wall of the Visitor Center of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (see below).



David Howard Hitchcock, *Halemaumau, Lake of Fire*, 1888



Gu David Howard Hitchcock, *Pele*, c. 1927-1929

Idaho

Gutzon Borglum (1867-1941) was a sculptor born in the Idaho territory, a child of a Church of the Latter-Day Saints polygamous marriage. He was the original sculptor hired (1915) to create Stone Mountain (the largest world's most prominent exposed granite outcrop) in Georgia, but technical and personal problems resulted in his dismissal, taking his models and sketches with him (resulting in a warrant for his arrest and his flight from Georgia). Borglum's work at Stone Mountain was blasted off the mountain. From there, however, he created the carving for which he is best known: Mount Rushmore. Mount Rushmore was incomplete before he died in 1941; his son Lincoln finished the work that same year. While working on Mount Rushmore, Borglum was commissioned to sculpt the State of North Carolina monument at Gettysburg National Military Park, dedicated in 1929. The photos below are of Mount Rushmore and the State of North Carolina monument.



There is a direct connection between Borglum/Mount Rushmore/Dataw Island. Borglum's chief construction superintendent at Mount Rushmore from 1930-1935 was **William S. Tallman** (1906-1997), grandfather of Dataw resident and past VAC President Marj Shymske. The c. 1927 photo below is of Tallman and assistant sculptor Ivan Houser studying a scale model of Abraham Lincoln produced in preparation for the Mount Rushmore construction. Tallman also assisted Borglum with the North Carolina monument at Gettysburg, serving as the model for the monument's lead figure. Tallman's papers and documents are housed at the University of Virginia's Special Collections.



Illinois

Kerry James Marshall (1955- still active) is a preeminent American artist who lives and works in the Chicago area. His work is in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian, the National Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and a dozen other prominent American museums. His paintings can command over 2 million dollars at auction. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, in publicity for an exhibition of his works called Marshall “one of America’s greatest living artists”. 2017 *Time Magazine* named him one of the world’s 100 most influential people.

Marshall has long been an inspired and imaginative chronicler of the African American experience. He is best known for his large-scale paintings featuring black figures, which defiantly assert blackness in a medium where African Americans have long been “invisible men.” Two of his most iconic works are pictured below.



Kerry James Marshall, *Barbershop*, 1993



Kerry James Marshall, *The Lost Boys*, 1993

For the September 2020 issue of *Vogue*, Marshall was invited to make a painting for the cover. Marshall could decide who would be on the cover, a real or imaginary person, and how that person would be portrayed. The only requirement was that he choose a dress by one of four *Vogue*-selected designers for their subject to wear. Marshall created a fictional character dressed in a formal white evening dress by Off-White. The *Vogue* cover is shown below.



Indiana

Theodore Clement (T.C.) Steele (1867-1926) was an Impressionist painter, born and died in Indiana. Known for his Indiana landscapes, Steele was one of five Indiana-based artists known as the Hoosier Group, thus named after a successful exhibition of their work in Chicago in 1895. During his lifetime, he did not have the name recognition that some eastern seaboard artists were able to achieve. His income for a long time was primarily derived from commissioned portraits. By his death, he had painted many of Indiana's prominent citizens.

His passion for plein air painting came while studying at the Royal Academy of Art in Munich. Steele often traveled to rural areas of Indiana for inspiration; he designed a horse-drawn mobile studio to facilitate his expeditions. He was a prolific painter; his second wife, Selma, said, "I marveled at his work capacity". He believed, according to Selma that "during a work season, no landscape painter should be in bed after four o'clock in the morning." The epitaph on Steele's tombstone in Belmont, Indiana at the bottom of the hill at his home, House of the Singing Winds, reads: Beauty Outlives Everything.



T.C. Steele, *Selma in the Garden*, c. 1915-1920



T.C. Steele, *House of the Singing Winds*, 1916

Iowa

The best-known artist from Iowa is also one of the most famous American artists, **Grant Wood** (1891-1942), creator of the iconic *American Gothic* (1930). Wood was one of three artists most closely associated with the American art movement, Regionalism, the other two being Thomas Hart Benton (Missouri) and John Steuart Curry (Kansas).

American Gothic, pictured below, was first exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago, where it remains today. Although some (including the author, Gertrude Stein) have concluded that the painting is intended to be a parody or a satire of small-town life, Wood insisted that it was supposed to convey a positive image of rural American values, offering a vision of reassurance at the beginning of the Great Depression. Some Iowans were outraged at the depiction of them as "pinched, grim-faced, puritanical Bible-thumpers". *American Gothic* is among the world's most lampooned works of art.

Also pictured below is Grant's 1941 *Spring in Town*, of which the artist said, "in making [this painting], I had in mind something which I hope to convey to a fairly wide audience in America - the picture of a country rich in the arts of peace, a homely, lovable nation, infinitely worthy of any sacrifice necessary to its preservation."



Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930



Grant Wood, *Spring in Town*, 1941

Kansas

Wood's fellow Regionalist, **John Steuart Curry** (1897-1946), was born in Kansas, and much of his art draws inspiration from his experience there. He studied in Paris but rejected European modernism, believing art should appeal to the common man. Curry's first major painting, *Baptism in Kansas* (1928), was exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, where it caught the eye of art patron Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who then provided Curry with financial support for the next two years. She later purchased the painting for her newly founded Whitney Museum of American Art.

In 1937, Curry was commissioned by the State of Kansas to create a series of murals for the State Capitol in Topeka to depict the state's history. In one of the murals, an 11-foot tall, 31-foot-wide piece entitled *Tragic Prelude*, which would become Curry's most famous work, the artist depicts a fiery abolitionist, John Brown, standing between fighting Confederate and Union soldiers. It would be an understatement to say that Curry's murals caused controversy. The Kansas Council of Women said, "The murals do not portray the true Kansas. Rather than revealing a law-abiding progressive state, the artist has emphasized the freaks in its history — the tornadoes, and John Brown, who did not follow legal procedure." The Kansas Legislature effectively blocked Curry's completion of the project through a formal resolution not to remove marble blocking areas that were part of Curry's design. Curry left the project in disgust, refusing to sign his work.

Curry said of his depiction of John Brown, "I wanted to paint him as a fanatic, for John Brown was a fanatic. He had the wild zeal of the extremist, the fanatic for his cause—and we had the Civil War, with its untold misery." Curry later said, "I think [John Brown] is the prototype of many Kansans. Someone described a Kansan as one who went about wreaking good on humanity. This might be the kernel of my conception." The mural eventually found its way into the State Capitol rotunda, but only after Curry's death, which his wife attributed to a broken heart. In the 1990s, the Kansas State Legislature issued a formal apology and an appreciation for the murals. The cover of the 1974 debut album of the rock band Kansas features a scene from *Tragic Prelude*.



John Steuart Curry, *Baptism in Kansas*, 1928



John Steuart Curry, *Tragic Prelude*, 1937-1942

Kentucky

Paul Sawyer (1865-1917) is considered one of Kentucky's most renowned artists. As a child, he moved with his family to Frankfort, Kentucky, where he took his first art lessons. Many of his works of art, primarily painted in an Impressionist Style, depict scenes in and around Frankfort.

The first painting of Sawyer's pictured below is of the woman believed to have been the love of his life, Mayme Bull. Although once engaged, they never married because of a mutual need to care for aging parents. The second features a favorite pastime and location of Sawyer's: fishing in Elkhorn Creek, one of Kentucky's best-known streams for fishing for smallmouth bass.



Paul Sawyer, *Portrait of 'Mayme' Bull Within River Landscape*, c. 1908



Paul Sawyer, *Kentucky Fishing Scene*, c. 1912

Louisiana

Clementine Hunter (1887 or 1888 -1988) was a self-taught Creole folk artist. She lived most of her life on Melrose Plantation near Natchitoches, Louisiana. Melrose Plantation is one of the most extensive plantations in the US, built by and for people of color. She was uneducated; she only attended school for 10 days. In her 100 years, she never travelled more than 100 miles from her birthplace. She spoke only Creole French until taught English by her second husband, Emmanuel Hunter, whom she married in 1924. Hunter did not start painting until the 1940s, already a grandmother. She would work all cooking and housekeeping and paint at night. Her first painting was made on a window shade using a brush and paints left by an artist visitor to the plantation. Hunter painted on whatever surfaces she could find: canvas, paper, milk bottles, wood, cutting boards, and cardboard boxes.

Her art portrays the life around her, including work in the cotton fields, funerals, baptisms, and clothes washing. Her work is vibrant in color with little regard for “normal” perspective and scale. The women in her work are often depicted as larger than the men, stressing the former’s importance. Hunter also created pictorial quilts; her Melrose Quilt, which depicts buildings on the plantation, is in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Her most iconic works include nine room-size murals painted in 1955 inside a building at Melrose Plantation called African House. At the provided link, you can watch a short video detailing the murals' restoration that visitors can view to Melrose Plantation and African House, a National Historic Landmark. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iE8SM7ikpl>



Clementine Hunter, *Melrose Quilt*, 1960



Clementine Hunter, *Plantation Life*, c. 1960-65

Maine

I chose **Marsden Hartley** (1877-1943) for Maine, partly because he was born in my father's hometown, Lewiston, Maine. He proclaimed himself to be the "Painter from Maine". Some consider him the most important North American modernist of the first half of the 20th century. According to the National Gallery of Art, he invented one of the most innovative painting styles of the early 20th century. Marsden's work is quite varied, including landscapes, still life paintings, and portraits. He was also a poet.

Hartley has been described as a sad and peripatetic man who spent much of his life roaming the world in search of inspiration. He studied art at the Cleveland School of Art and with William Merritt Chase in New York. Hartley spent time in France, meeting luminaries like Cézanne and Picasso, and in Germany, he met members of the Blue Rider group, including Kandinsky. He travelled to New Mexico, where the landscape inspired some of his work. He spent time with a fishing family in Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. During his time with the family, two of the children were tragically drowned in a fishing accident, which devastated Hartley. This experience is reflected in his painting *Off the Banks at Night*, shown below, and in a long elegiac prose poem entitled *Cleophas and His Own: A North Atlantic Tragedy*. He spent his last years back in his native Maine painting the coastline and local fishermen and lobstermen, as well as at least eighteen paintings of Maine's highest peak, Mount Katahdin, a geological landmark that is the northernmost terminus of the Appalachian Trail.



Marsden Hartley, *Off the Banks at Night*, 1942



Marsden Hartley, *Mount Katahdin, Autumn, No. 2*, 1939-40

Maryland

For Maryland, I chose a different kind of artist: a street artist. **Michael Kirby** (1975- still active) has been called by the Maryland State Arts Council as the most famous artist no one has ever heard of. Also known as Murals of Baltimore, Kirby was born and grew up in Baltimore. He went to live in Italy as a teenager, where he created street art and murals for a decade. He returned to his hometown in the early 2000s and has been creating public art throughout the Mid-Atlantic, specializing in what he calls 3D street art. He is also an accomplished muralist, studying fresco painting while living abroad. He was the first American artist to win the title of Master Street Painter in all the major European Street Painting festivals. Here are a couple of examples of Kirby's work.



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