

Only In Your State

By Kathleen McShane

Part 3- Massachusetts to New Jersey

Massachusetts

Regarded by many as the greatest 19th century American painter, Realist **Winslow Homer** (1836-1910) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Homer spent 25 years as an illustrator, including as a special war correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* during the Civil War. While we tend to associate Homer with his marine-themed paintings, such as the popular work *Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)* (see below), his post-Civil War work is broader. Various works of the artist explore the after-effects of the war, the Reconstruction period, and the legacy of slavery. Those works include *The Gulf Stream*, which art critics have linked to the Black slavery experience. In his later years, Homer lived in relative isolation in Prout's Neck, Maine, where he continued to paint, focusing on the force of the sea. Of artistic talent, Homer said, "There is no such thing as talent. What they call talent is the capacity for doing continuous work correctly."



Winslow Homer, *Breezing Up (A Fair Wind)*, 1873-1876



Winslow Homer, *The Gulf Stream*, 1899, reworked by 1906

Michigan

Carlos Lopez (1908-1953) was a Havana-born artist who immigrated with his family to the US (and Michigan) in 1919. Best known for his New Deal-era murals, Lopez was, in his son's words, an obsessed painter who spent most every day either teaching or working on his art. As an art teacher at the University of Michigan, Lopez frequently told his students, "I can teach you to draw, but I cannot teach you to be an artist."

The mural below was painted for the Plymouth Michigan Post Office. In 2013, the building was sold to a private party with the condition that the mural would stay in place for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The mural can still be viewed at what is now Westborn Market on the site of the old Post Office.



Carlos Lopez, *Plymouth Trail*, 1938

In 1942, Lopez received a government grant to create a mural for the post office in Birmingham, Michigan. It would be controversial even before he began painting it, with residents proclaiming he was an outsider who knew nothing about the culture and history. Once started, the complaints became focused on Lopez's representations of the town forefathers, that their features appeared too "negroid". Ultimately, the mural survived; in 1966, facing destruction, the mural was preserved thanks to the support of friends of the artist. In 2006, it was carefully restored.



Carlos Lopez, *Pioneer Society's Picnic*, 1942

Minnesota

Mike Lynch (1938-2023) has been called a “thoroughly Minnesota artist”. “He was a quiet documentarian’ whose work’ shows all those quiet places that most of us ignore or overlook — the backdrop of our lives.” He often made his pigments, even using ore from mines in the Iron Range he has trekked through. His work frequently features urban scenes, working from his car wearing a headlamp when the weather is not cooperating. According to the artist, “things simplify at night”, and the most banal scene can become magical.



Mike Lynch, *Storage Tanks, Long Lake, Roseville, 1989*



Mike Lynch, *Light on Green House, 1991, watercolor and pencil*

Mississippi

Walter Anderson (1903-1965) has been called “perhaps the most famous American artist you’ve never heard of”. Born in New Orleans, Anderson moved to Ocean Springs, Mississippi, where he lived most of the rest of his life, except for a brief four-year interlude. Anderson was fascinated with nature; according to one account of his life, “Almost everything Anderson did in life was in an attempt to achieve what he called ‘realization’ — to close the gap that separated him from nature.” Anderson was a reclusive man, considered odd by locals, even mad. He agreed to paint a mural in the Ocean Springs Community Center for \$1.00, hoping the town’s children would help. But his reputation as a “mad artist” led parents to keep their children away from him.

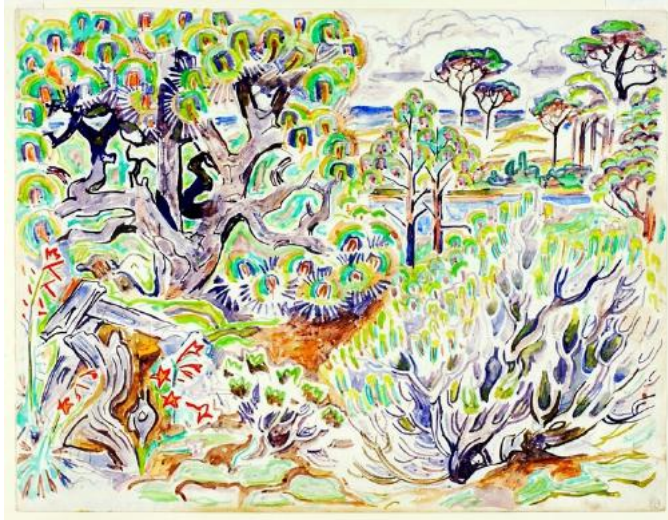
Anderson frequently rowed and sailed miles to the uninhabited Horn Island, where he spent days painting the wildlife around him. He even spent Hurricane Betsy (Category 4, 1965) alone on the island, tying himself to his boat. Two months later, he died of cancer. His excursions produced brilliant watercolors.

Today, visitors to the Walter Anderson Museum in Ocean Springs can view *The Little Room* (10’ X 10’), Anderson’s sanctuary on the mainland during his later years. In this room, the artist brilliantly created floor-to-ceiling murals. No one but Anderson had been allowed in this room before his death. When his wife opened the door, she found the murals and thousands of paintings and drawings, including the watercolors he had created on Horn Island.

Anderson’s life and work were celebrated in the award-winning Children’s Nonfiction book *The Secret World of Walter Anderson* (2014).



Walter Anderson, Detail from the Little Room Murals



Walter Anderson, *Horn Island*, c. 1960

Missouri

Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975), along with Grant Wood (Iowa) and John Steuart Curry (Kansas), was at the forefront of the Regionalist art movement. Benton was born, lived most of his life, and died in Missouri. His great-uncle, for whom he was named, was one of the first Senators elected from Missouri.

Declaring himself an “enemy of Modernism,” Benton’s work focuses on scenes from everyday American life. The often elongated figures in his work evoke the influence of El Greco.

Benton was commissioned to paint murals for the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair as a relative unknown. His *Social History of Indiana* caused controversy due to their political content; one of the panels depicts the Klu Klux Klan in full regalia with a burning cross. The panels are now displayed at the University of Indiana. In 2017, organized protests demanded the removal or destruction of the panel featuring the KKK. The panel was not destroyed; instead, the classroom in which it is displayed was turned into a gallery. Interestingly, the Smithsonian argued that the panel should not be destroyed, arguing that it was not intended to be a glorification of the KKK but a reflection of the reality of Indiana politics at the time. In addition, the Smithsonian said, Benton was known to have denounced racism. (Local tidbit: Benton learned the Gullah language.) The room has since been returned to use as a classroom with retractable screens that will cover it if instructors desire.

Benton also created the mural covering the House Lounge wall in the State Capitol Building in Jefferson City, Missouri. Titled *A Social History of the State of Missouri* (1936), the mural first created controversy with its unvarnished view of its history. It is now viewed as one of Benton’s most outstanding achievements. Of it, Benton said, “I believe the Missouri mural completed the last phase of my development as an artist.”

Benton’s final mural before his death was *The Sources of Country Music* (1975), on view in the Rotunda entrance to the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville, Tennessee.

Benton was the first artist to have a work of art (his self-portrait) featured on the cover of Time Magazine (December 24, 1934).



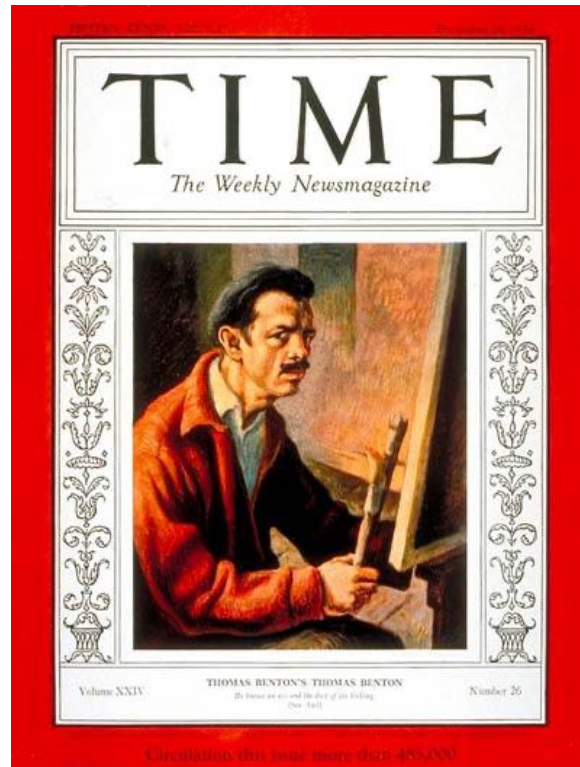
Thomas Hart Benton, *A Social History of Indiana*, 1933, detail



Thomas Hart Benton, *A Social History of Missouri*, 1936, detail



Thomas Hart Benton, *The Sources of Country Music*, 1975



Thomas Hart Benton, *Self-Portrait*, 1934

Montana

C.M. Russell (1864-1926), nicknamed “Kid”, is called The Cowboy artist. Few artists have shaped the popular imagery of the cowboy like Charles M. Russell. Born in St. Louis, he was enamored with the American West. In 1880, he headed to Montana at 16 to become a working cowboy. He worked for a time as a ranch hand before taking up painting and illustration full time. A self-taught artist, he started out using house paints. Russell was never very good at marketing his work. He may not have garnered recognition had it not been for his wife, Nancy. After they were married, she became his manager and publicist. Her efforts made Russell an internationally known Western artist and helped him become one of the most profitable artists. Famous collectors of his works included Douglas Fairbanks and Will Rogers. On the day of Russell's funeral in 1926, the children in Great Falls were released from school to watch the funeral procession. Russell's coffin was displayed in a glass-sided coach, pulled by four black horses.

During his lifetime, Russell created over 2,000 paintings of cowboys, Native Americans, and landscapes set in the western United States and Alberta, Canada, in addition to bronze sculptures. The C. M. Russell Museum Complex in Great Falls, Montana, houses over 2,000 Russell artworks, personal objects, and artifacts. The complex includes Charlie's fully restored home and studio, a National Historic Landmark, where he lived and created for 24 years. Significant collections of his work can also be found in the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming, and in the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City.



C. M. Russell, *Indian Women Moving Camp*, 1898



C.M. Russell, *Bringing Home the Spoils*, 1909



C. M. Russell, *Buffalo Hunt*, 1905

Nebraska

Terence Romaine Von Duren (1904-1968) was born and lived most of his life in the small town of Shelby, Nebraska. He is known for his Regionalist and Social Realist works, which draw upon his rural upbringing. When studying in Paris, Henri Matisse told him never to deviate from his fresh style because it set him apart.

When he was stricken with polio at age six, Duren's parents gave him crayons and paper. Much later in life, Duren said he had known then that he would be an artist. Despite limited use of his upper left arm, Duren played jazz piano in clubs while attending the Art Institute of Chicago. He also designed theatrical costumes for Mae West and Rudolph Valentino, designed opera sets, and did illustrations for books and magazines. In 1944, his painting, *Picnic In the Park* (shown below), was selected for the Portrait of America exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Duren's "rivalry" with fellow Nebraska artist Dale Nichols (who lived just 20 miles from Duren) made it to *Time Magazine* in an article entitled *War in the Corn*. These two artists' lives, rivalry, and works are documented in the 2018 book *Worthy Rivals*.



Terence Duren, *Stevedores*, 1937



Terence Duren, *Picnic in the Park*, 1944



Terence Duren, *Portrait of Webb Ray*, 1946

Nevada

Hans Meyer-Kassel (1872 -1952) has been called “The Nevada Artist” and “Nevada’s Monet.” A prolific artist, Meyer-Kassel’s primary interest was portraiture, but he is also known for his floral still-life paintings and landscapes of Nevada. Born in Germany, Meyer-Kassel was ordered to join the German army at the age of 43 to capture images of the war and for military intelligence. He and his wife emigrated to the United States via Ellis Island in 1922.

After visiting California in 1935, he became enamored with the American West, settling first in Reno, then Carson City, and ultimately in Genoa, Nevada (population 100). In Nevada, he worked as an artist for the state highway department and also earned money by restoring portraits of past governors hanging in the Nevada state capitol building.

The painting below is the artist's first known work (1890). Untitled, it depicts his hometown of Kassel, Germany.



One of Meyer-Kassel's paintings of Genoa was chosen for a three-cent postage stamp issued in 1951 commemorating the centennial of the first permanent Euro-American settlement in Nevada (see below).



Hans Meyer-Kassel, *Carson Valley in Spring* 1952

New Hampshire

Maxfield Parrish (1870-1966) was born and trained in Philadelphia but lived in Plainfield, NH, for 68 years. His artistic career spanned over six decades; he painted until 91. His father, Stephen Parrish, was a printmaker associated with the “American Etching Revival” of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Maxfield Parrish and his father were associated with the Cornish Artist Colony in Cornish, NH, founded by the Irish-American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

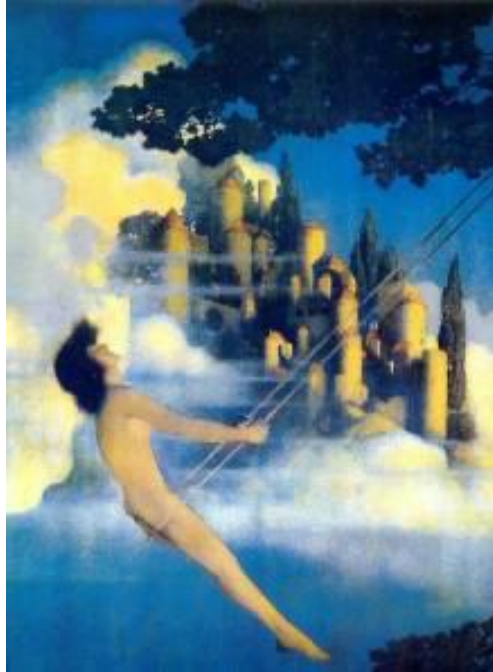
Parrish’s early works were wildly popular. His 1922 painting *Daybreak*, with its neo-classical imagery and vibrant colors, was called the most successful art print of the 20th century by the National Museum of American Illustration. It outsold Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* and Warhol’s soup cans. The print was once on display in one of every four American homes. The original painting sold at auction in 2006 for \$7.6 million.

The color “Parrish Blue,” a specific shade of cobalt blue, was named for Maxfield Parrish. It appears frequently in his work, including in one of his illustrations for Eugene Field’s 1904 *Poems of Childhood*, shown below. The artist achieved the luminous quality of his work using a glazing technique, which involved applying layers of transparent oil paint separated by layers of varnish.

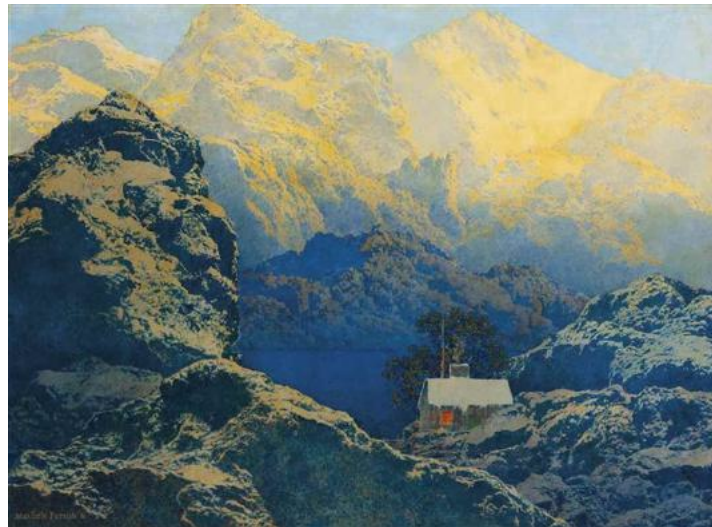
By 1931, Parrish decided he was done with figurative painting and devoted the remainder of his artistic career to landscape painting. In an often-cited article, he said, “I’m done with girls on rocks. I have painted them for thirteen years and could paint them for thirteen more. That’s the peril of the commercial art game. It tempts a man to repeat himself.” Parrish painted his last painting at 91, a landscape entitled *Getting Away From It All* (1961).



Maxfield Parrish, *Daybreak*, 1922



Maxfield Parrish, *Dinky Bird*, Illustration from *Poems of Childhood* by Eugene Fields



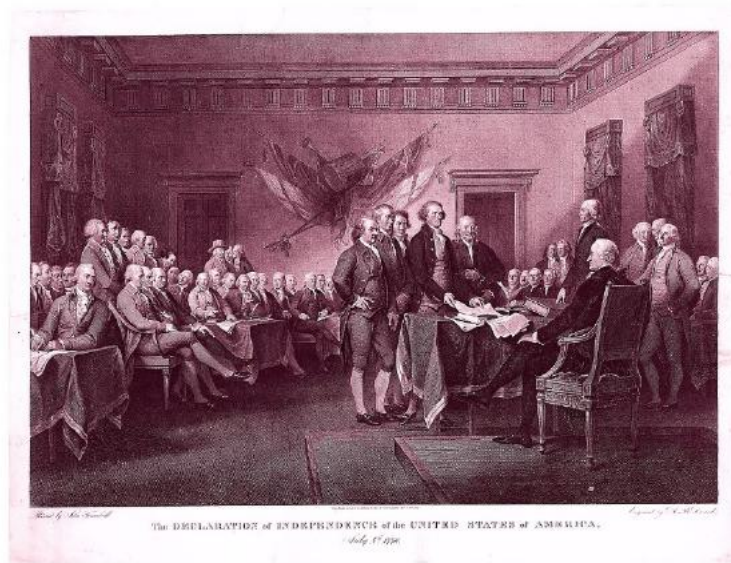
Maxfield Parrish, *Getting Away From It All*, 1961

New Jersey

Asher Brown Durand (1796-1886) has been called (Metropolitan Museum of Art) the “acknowledged dean of American landscape painters following the death of Thomas Cole...” (founder of the Hudson School art movement). Durand was born and died in Maplewood, New Jersey (near Newark). Durand started as an engraver; some of his engravings on banknotes were used as portraits for the first U.S. postage stamps. His reputation as a master engraver was firmly established with his engraving of John Turnbull’s masterpiece, *The Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, July 4, 1776*.

Around 1830, Durand switched his primary interest from engraving to oil painting. His earlier paintings were mostly portraits, including some U.S. presidents (John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson). He then traveled to Europe, where he studied the Old Masters. Upon his return, he turned to landscape painting, often images of the Hudson Valley. His work helped define the Hudson School art movement.

Durand often painted *en plein air*, one of the first American artists to do so. The artist firmly believed in painting with as much realism as possible. His most famous painting is *Kindred Spirits*, which features Thomas Cole and the poet William Cullen Bryant in the Catskill Mountains. Durand painted *Kindred Spirits* as a tribute to Cole after Cole died in 1848. The painting was a gift from Durand to Bryant.



Asher Brown Durand, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, 1823



Asher Brown Durand, *Gathering Storm*, 1837



Asher Brown Durand, *Kindred Spirits*, 1849