

McLean County Historical Society

**Central Illinois Art Exposition
Scottish Rite Temple
March 19 – April 8, 1939**

Processed by
Michael Kozak
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COLLECTION INFORMATION

Volume of Collection:	One Box.
Collection Dates:	1939, 1989.
Restrictions:	Some brittle documents. Use photocopies unless authorized by Librarian / Archivist.
Reproduction Rights:	Permission to reproduce or publish material in this collection must be obtained in writing from the McLean County Museum of History.
Location:	Archives
Notes:	For additional information, see: Central Illinois Art Exposition photographs file.

Historical Sketch

The Central Illinois Art Exposition was possibly the most successful diversion in McLean County during the Great Depression. The drive to bring the paintings of important artists to Bloomington was led by Pantagraph publisher Loring Merwin and Roland's department store owner Raymond Wakeley. The Exposition ran at the Scottish Rite Temple (now known as the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts) in Bloomington for three weeks from March 19 to April 8, 1939. The artists featured at the Exposition included masters such as Titian, Rembrandt, El Greco, Manet, Monet, Renoir and contemporary artists including the now-famous Grant Wood. The Director of New York Art Gallery, Alan D. Gruskin, helped supervise the acquisition and selection of paintings for the exposition. With these masterpieces came the National Guard, as well as national media attention, such as coverage by Art Digest and Newsweek, Time and Life magazines. The National Guard was on hand to protect the masterpieces throughout the exposition. The exposition was viewed by approximately 42,000 people from 97 towns in the surrounding counties, 20,000 of which were students. Because of the success of the exposition, 82 percent of the money raised to fund it was returned to those who made donations. This was a great gesture in a time when money was tight. Frederic Taubes painting "Seated Woman" was gifted by the expositions sponsors to Bloomington where it permanently resides.

Scope and Content Notes

The Central Illinois Art Exposition collection consists of 1 box and 16 folders containing material from 1939 and 1989. Items in the collection include the exposition catalogue, promotional materials, correspondence, tickets, financial records, blueprints, newspaper clippings, national media coverage, photos and material on the Fifty Year Anniversary Exhibit. Folder 1 contains the catalogue for the exposition. Folders 2 and 3 contain the promotional materials. Folder 4 contains Loring Merwin's correspondence. Folder 5 contains tickets from the exposition. Folder 6 contains financial records for the donations made by the public and business. Folder 7 contains blueprints for the exposition. Folder 8 contains wire service bulletins. Folders 9, 10, and 11 contain Pantagraph clippings and national media coverage. Folders 12, 13, 14, and 15 contain publicity photos of the exposition. Folder 16 contains material on the Fifty Year Anniversary Exhibit.

Box and Folder Inventory

Folder 1: Exposition Catalogue (6 copies)

- 1.1.1 32-page booklet listing 106 paintings (Note: membership of organizing committees listed on pgs. 2-3)

Folder 2: Promotional Material

- 1.2.1 Flier: "List of Paintings to be Included in Central Illinois Art Exposition" (2 copies)
- 1.2.2 Brochure: "Time Has Decried They Shall Live!" (6 copies)

Folder 3: Poster Contest flier

- 1.3.1 Central Illinois Art Exposition Junior and Senior High School Poster Conference

Folder 4: Correspondence (32 items)

Folder 5: Tickets

- 1.5.1 Patron season ticket
- 1.5.2 Admit One 25¢ (1 sheet of 5 tickets)

Folder 6: Financial Records

- 1.6.1 Donations list (3 pages)
- 1.6.2 Expenses and receipts (3 pages)

Folder 7: Blueprints

- 1.7.1 "Details of racks for the Central Illinois Art Exposition Scottish Rite Temple"
Schaeffer & Hooton Architect.

Folder 8: Wire service bulletins

- 1.8.1 February 23, 1939
- 1.8.2 February 23
- 1.8.3 February 23
- 1.8.4 March 14
- 1.8.5 March 19
- 1.8.6 March 20
- 1.8.7 March 21
- 1.8.8 March 23
- 1.8.9 March 31

- 1.8.10 April 6
- 1.8.11 April 10

Folder 9: Pantagraph Clippings Part I

- 1.9.1 "These Great Paintings To Be Shown Here" (full page) February 19, 1939, p. 12.
- 1.9.2 "Glimpses Into The Central Illinois Art Exposition" (sixteen-page supplement) March 17, 1930.

Folder 10: Pantagraph Clippings Part II

(see folder in box for list)

Folder 11: National Media Coverage

- 1.11.1 "For the 'Corn-Belt' " *The Art Digest* (March 15, 1939) p. 48 (photocopy).
- 1.11.2 "Midland Marvel" *Time* magazine (March 27, 1939).
- 1.11.3 "Finest Art In U.S. Goes To Illinois Corn Belt For Big Small-Town Show" *Life* magazine (March 27, 1939) p. 58.
- 1.11.4 "Painting of Five centuries in Mid-America" *The Art Digest* (April 1, 1939) p. 12 (electrostatic copy and original).
- 1.11.5 "Bloomington Business Shows World Fames Art Treasures" *American Business* (May 1939) p. 21, 50 (electrostatic copy).
- 1.11.6 "Old Masters for Corn Belt: Businessmen's Project Shows Art Gems to Bloomington" *Newsweek* (no date) p. 26 (electrostatic copy).

Folder 12: Publicity Photos Part I

- 1.12.1 Titian "Portrait of a Nobleman"
- 1.12.2 Bartolo Di Giovanni "Madonna and Child"
- 1.12.3 Magnasco "Seascape with Figures"
- 1.12.4 Tiepolo "Madonna with Child Holding Bird"
- 1.12.5 Canaletto (Canale) "Church of SS"
- 1.12.6 Patinir "Judgment of Paris"
- 1.12.7 Benson "Nativity"
- 1.12.8 Rubens "The Bear Hunt"
- 1.12.9 Van Dyck "Head of a Youth"
- 1.12.10 David Teniers the Younger "Interior of a Public House"
- 1.12.11 Frans Hals "Fisher Girl"
- 1.12.12 Rembrandt "Lamentation over Christ"
- 1.12.13 Maes "Portrait of a Gentlemen"
- 1.12.14 El Greco "The Penitent Magdalene"
- 1.12.15 Ribera "St. Joseph"
- 1.12.16 Chardin "The Bubble Blowers"
- 1.12.17 Fragonard "Venus and Cupid"
- 1.12.18 Delacroix "Lion Devouring an Arab"

Folder 13: Publicity Photos Part II

- 1.13.1 Camille Pissarro “Landscape Near Patoise”
- 1.13.2 Manet “The Lange Boy”
- 1.13.3 Degas “Bateaux Abordant Berck”
- 1.13.4 Degas “Dancer on the Stage”
- 1.13.5 Sisley “Station at Sevres”
- 1.13.6 Monet “Nymphaeas”
- 1.13.7 Monet “Basket of Apples”
- 1.13.8 Renoir “Maison a Cagnes”
- 1.13.9 Renoir “Young Woman Looking at Etching”
- 1.13.10 Gauguin “Iraro Te Oviri, Tahiti”
- 1.13.11 Toulouse-Lautrec “Circus Medrano”
- 1.13.12 Gainsborough “Portrait Viscount Downe”
- 1.13.13 Romney “Portrait of Master Hartley”
- 1.13.14 Peale “George Washington”
- 1.13.15 Stuart “Portrait of Mrs. Mason”
- 1.13.16 Inness “The Valley on a Gloomy Day”
- 1.13.17 Newman “Madonna and Child”
- 1.13.18 Homer “Watching the Breakers”

Folder 14: Publicity Photos Part III

- 1.14.1 Eakins “Portrait of Mrs. Ward”
- 1.14.2 Blakelock “Moonlight Sonata”
- 1.14.3 Ryder “The Waste of Waters in Their Field”
- 1.14.4 Duveneck “Woman with Forget-Me-Nots”
- 1.14.5 Luks “Woman With a Black Cat”
- 1.14.6 Bellows “Dempsey and Firpo”
- 1.14.7 Beal “Scene from ‘Victoria Regina’ ”
- 1.14.8 Bishop “The Kid”
- 1.14.9 Bouche “Jean”
- 1.14.10 Bruce “After the Rain”
- 1.14.11 Cadmus “Self Portrait”
- 1.14.12 Carroll “Georgia Resting”
- 1.14.13 Corbino “Hurricane Wreck”
- 1.14.14 Davis “Reclining Figure”
- 1.14.15 Du Bois “Conversation Piece”
- 1.14.16 Etnier “Bermuda Garden”
- 1.14.17 Evergood “The Siding”
- 1.14.18 Hartley “After the Storm”

Folder 15: Publicity Photos Part IV

- 1.15.1 Hopper “Cape Cod Afternoon”
- 1.15.2 Kroll “New England Landscape”

- 1.15.3 Laning "Street Scene"
- 1.15.4 Laufman "Hillside Cabins"
- 1.15.5 Marsh "Wooden Horses"
- 1.15.6 Mattson "Silver Spay"
- 1.15.7 Meltsner "Study of a Dancer"
- 1.15.8 Palmer "Fish Reels"
- 1.15.9 Peirce "County Fair"
- 1.15.10 Philip "Rochell in Brown"
- 1.15.11 Rosenthal "Mexican School"
- 1.15.12 Sepeshy "Wake of Steamer"
- 1.15.13 Shulkin "Antiquity and Today"
- 1.15.14 Simkhovitch "Island Beach"
- 1.15.15 Sloan "The White Way"
- 1.15.16 Smith "New England Domicile"
- 1.15.17 Soyer "Scrubwomen"
- 1.15.18 Speicher "The Blue Necklace"
- 1.15.19 Sterne "High School Student"
- 1.15.20 Taubes "Seated Woman"
- 1.15.21 Varga "Groceries and Ice"
- 1.15.22 Wood "American Gothic"

Folder 16: Fifty-Year Anniversary

- 1.16.1 Brochure: "Fifty Year Anniversary of the Central Illinois Art Exposition" September 28 to October 27, 1989, at the McLean County Arts Center (2 copies)
- 1.16.2 Condition Reports of artwork received and returned (9)
- 1.16.3 Receipt of Delivery, dated September 27, 1989, from the University of Chicago (2 pgs.)
- 1.16.4 Artist profiles and descriptions of artwork (20 pgs.)