Minerva Teichert's Murals: The Motivation for her Large-Scale Production

Marian Eastwood Wardle

Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Art and Design Commons, History Commons, and the Mormon Studies Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5194

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
MINERVA TEICHERT'S MURALS: THE MOTIVATION
FOR HER LARGE-SCALE PRODUCTION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Art
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Marian Eastwood Wardle
September 1988
This thesis by Marian Eastwood Wardle is accepted in its present form by the Department of Art of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Steven C. Bule, Committee Chairman

Martha L. Peacock, Committee Member

Nov 14, 88  Robert L. Marshall, Department Chairman

Typed by: Rachel Huber
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ........................................ iv
List of Illustrations ............................. v

Chapter

I. Introduction ................................... 1
II. Biographical Sketch ........................... 8
III. The Beaux Art Impetus ....................... 21

Mural Decorating in America, 1893-1915 ........ 21
Teichert's Introduction to Mural Painting at the Art Institute of Chicago ........ 30
The Post-Chicago Beaux Art Influence .......... 38

IV. The 1930s: Mural Production Stimulated by Federal Patronage ......................... 51

The Transitional Period, 1915-30 ............ 51
Federal Art Patronage .......................... 62
Teichert's 1930s Mural Production ............. 69

V. Conclusion .................................... 83

Appendix ........................................ 93
Bibliography .................................... 99
PREFACE

In the course of my studies in Art History, I became interested in fitting my grandmother, Minerva Teichert, into her art historical context. Was it true, as many had told me, that she was anachronistic in style, content, and the mural medium she chose? Why did she choose to express herself in such large-scale art? As I began my research for this paper, the centennial of my grandmother's birth was approaching, and her art was receiving new attention. Discovering the motivations behind her prolific mural production has been personally rewarding in this centennial year of her birth. It is my hope that the information presented will be illuminating to students of Minerva Teichert's art as well as to students of American mural painting in general.

My appreciation is extended to Martha Peacock for her helpful suggestions and encouragement. I would also like to thank Robert Davis of the LDS Church Museum of History and Art, Susan Walsh of the Ryerson Library at The Art Institute of Chicago, and Lawrence Campbell of the Art Students League of New York for their time and assistance in providing me with archival, documentary, and illustrative sources. My deepest appreciation is extended to my mother, Laurie Teichert Eastwood, for sharing with me her personal insights and her collection of her mother's letters. I am also grateful to my husband, Lynn, and my sons, David and Jonathan, for giving me encouragement and the needed time to complete this project.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. John LaFarge, The Ascension, 1887. New York, Church of the Ascension.

Fig. 2. Edwin H. Blashfield, Haec est Minnesota granaria mundi, 1905. St. Paul, Minnesota Capitol.

Fig. 3. Charles Holloway, Pursuit of pleasure, 1915. Present location unknown.

Fig. 4. Frank Vincent DuMond, March of civilization to the great west, 1915. Present location unknown.

Fig. 5. Eugene F. Savage, Morning, 1912. Present location unknown.

Fig. 6. Edwin H. Blashfield, study for a mural decoration, 1908. Chicago, Art Institute.

Fig. 7. Edwin H. Blashfield, The law in modern times (study), 1909. Present location unknown.

Fig. 8. Minerva Teichert, My grotto (study), 1915. Provo, Utah, Teichert Family Collection.

Fig. 9. Minerva Teichert, Samuel the Lamanite, 1915. Tempe, Arizona, Private Collection.

Fig. 10. Minerva Teichert, Lehi preaching in Jerusalem, 1960s. Provo, Utah, Teichert Family Collection.

Fig. 11. Boardman Robinson, The history of commerce (detail), 1930. Pittsburgh, Kauffman Department Store.

Fig. 12. Thomas Hart Benton, America Today, 1930-1. New York, New School of Social Research.

Fig. 13. Minerva Teichert, Oregon or bust, 1931. Cokeville, Wyoming, Cokeville School.

Fig. 14. George Biddle, Society freed through justice (study), 1935. University of Maryland Art Gallery.

Fig. 15. Wendell Jones, First pulpit in Granville, 1938. Granville, Ohio, U.S. Post Office.

Fig. 16. Edna Reindel, Experimenting with the first model of the cotton gin, 1939. Swainsboro, Georgia, U.S. Post Office.

Fig. 17. William Dean Faucett, LaSalle's last expedition, 1941. Rosenberg, Texas, U.S. Post Office.
Fig. 18. Seymour Fogel, Migration (cartoon), 1941. Washington, D.C., National Archives.

Fig. 19. Albert T. Reid, The romance of the mail in the old cattle country, 1939. Sulphur, Oklahoma, U.S. Post Office.

Fig. 20. Minerva Teichert, Handcart pioneers, c. 1939. Salt Lake City, LDS Church Collection.

Fig. 21. Minerva Teichert, Captain Bonneville trading with Indians, 1934. Cokeville, Wyoming, Cokeville School.

Fig. 22. Minerva Teichert, Bridger meets Jedediah Smith at the Tetons, 1936. Rock Springs, Wyoming, Community Fine Arts Center.

Fig. 23. Minerva Teichert, Bridger's Yellowstone, 1936. Rock Springs, Wyoming, Community Fine Arts Center.

Fig. 24. Minerva Teichert, Stage coach holdup, 1936. Rock Springs, Wyoming, Community Fine Arts Center.

Fig. 25. Minerva Teichert, Pony Express, 1936. Rock Springs, Wyoming, Community Fine Arts Center.

Fig. 26. Minerva Teichert, Weavers, 1936. Private Collection.

Fig. 27. Minerva Teichert, Coming of the seagulls, 1935. Provo, Utah, Brigham Young University.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1988 marks the centennial of the birth of the late Wyoming artist, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert,¹ best known for her many murals depicting religious themes and subjects from the American West. Almost all of these large-scale works were produced while Teichert was living in the small ranching community of Cokeville, Wyoming. An examination of the motives behind her prolific mural production while living in a small western town, reveals artistic ambitions which she formed during her early art studies.

Teichert was stimulated to embrace mural decoration by her training in the Beaux Art tradition, which she received at the Art Institute of Chicago in the early part of this century. "Beaux Art" mural decoration, which has been largely ignored in recent scholarship, promoted the glorification of American heroes and the depiction of stories from our nation's history. It was taught at the Art Institute in the early 1900s. Beaux Art muralists wished to preserve our history for future generations, as the wall painters of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks had done.
Minerva Teichert embraced this concept and formulated her muralist ambitions. The opportunity for the realization of these ambitions, however, came later, through the structure of American art production in the 1930s.

Teichert executed at least one mural while she was an art student in New York in 1915, and completed not less than four mural works in between 1916 and 1918, shortly after she finished her studies. Her first prolific mural phase, however, coincided with the abundant mural production of the 1930s which was sponsored by the federal government.

From 1934 until the beginning of World War II, the government's Federal Art Project sponsored the decoration of public buildings across America. The government patronage spawned a mural movement which provided abundant opportunities for American artists to produce large-scale works. During these years, Teichert produced at least sixty-six murals, no less than six of which were commissioned through the Federal Art Project. Of these sixty-six murals, nine treated religious themes, while the rest dealt with the American Indian, the pioneers, and related western subjects.

Literature on Minerva Teichert is somewhat limited and is primarily of a biographical nature. She has been the subject of many articles in newspapers, magazines, and other publications. In 1915-16, while Teichert (then Minerva Kohlhepp) was studying in New York, and in 1917, immediately following her return from the East, she appeared in laudatory
newspaper articles in both Idaho and Utah, which stated that Miss Kohlhepp's greatest ambition was to be a mural decorator. 6 Many articles about Teichert also appeared in the 1930s. Some announced the publication in 1932 of her book, Romance of Old Fort Hall, 7 but most accompanied exhibitions of her western murals. 8

Brief biographical sketches of Teichert appear in the early volumes of Who's Who in American Art, as well as in Samuel's Encyclopedia of Artists of the American West and other similar biographical dictionaries. 9 All of these publications list Teichert as a western muralist. Several other biographical sketches have appeared in other publications at various times. 10

Very little has been written specifically about Teichert's works. An analysis of the color scheme employed by Teichert in her mural decoration in the LDS Temple at Manti, Utah, is found in an unpublished master's thesis of 1968. 11 This appears to be the most analytical study yet produced regarding an aspect of Teichert's style.

Teichert has recently received new attention. During the centennial year of her birth, much interest has been focused on the artist and her art by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, due to her many paintings of Mormon subject matter. Recent scholarship has appeared, which provides new insights into her art. 12 The new research, however, continues to be biographical in focus.
Until recently, the most comprehensive study of Teichert and her works was a 1976 article by Richard and Susan Oman. The Omans, as well as her other biographers, emphasize the impact that Robert Henri had on Teichert's art. He was her teacher at the Art Students League in New York, and she corresponded with him for many years. The Omans credit Henri with influencing her "quick impressionistic style," her attitude toward her subject matter, and her role as an artist.

While it is true that Henri influenced Teichert's style and her choice of subjects from life, her attitudes toward her role as an artist and toward mural painting were influenced more strongly by other sources which have been ignored. Henri was not a muralist, nor did he encourage his students to embrace this medium. In fact, he wrote to Teichert, "It appears that you work better on a small scale than on a large one." It was another source that inspired Teichert to look upon mural decorating as the highest achievement of painting. At an early date (before meeting Henri), she had written to her mother of her great ambition to be a mural painter.

It is my thesis that the impetus for Minerva Teichert's prolific mural production came from the lofty ideals of the Beaux Art mural tradition which she encountered and embraced during her studies at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1909 to 1912. Furthermore, it was the great interest in mural
decoration during the 1930s, spurred by government patronage, that provided Teichert with the opportunity to apply these ideals to large-scale works.

Research into the Beaux Art mural tradition has been difficult, as recent scholarship on the subject is negligible. An understanding of this early mural movement, however, yields a greater understanding of later mural production in America. I am convinced that not only Teichert, but other muralists of the 1930s, were motivated by Beaux Art ideals.
Endnotes

1. Teichert claimed to have been born in 1889, and most past scholarship accepted this claim at face value. However, records of the North Ogden Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints list her among the babies who were presented to the Church to be given a name and a blessing in November of 1888. LDS Membership Records 6175, pt. 2, p. 46.

2. Minerva Kohlhepp entered a mural, Uncle Sam Beckoning Immigrants to the West, in the "Immigrant in America" Competition while she was studying at the Art Students League. Laurie Teichert Eastwood, Interview, Cokeville, Wyoming, 2 July 1987. This competition was held at Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney's studio, 8 W. 8th St., New York, on 15 November, 1915. American Art News 13 (14 August 1915):1. The competition entries were exhibited at Mrs. Whitney's studio until the week of 1 January, 1916, when the entire exhibition was transferred to Ellis Island. American Art News 14 (1 January 1916):6. The mural has not been located.

3. In 1916 two murals, both measuring 40 inches x 58 inches, were executed for the Free Methodist Church in American Falls, Idaho: Christ Entering Jerusalem and Esther Before the King. Both paintings are still in the American Falls church. Another mural done in 1916 which measured 84x108, Rebekah Drawing Water, is now untraceable. Laurie Teichert Eastwood, Inventory of the Paintings of Minerva Teichert, unpublished, October, 1987. A fourth mural, Not Alone, was painted in 1918 for the Pocatello, Idaho, First Ward chapel of the LDS Church. The Improvement Era 36 (February 1933):194, 199. This work was retouched by the artist in 1962 and currently hangs in the Pocatello Stake Center of the LDS Church. Eastwood, Inventory.

4. A list of Teichert's 1930s murals is found in the appendix.

5. The 1930s murals are listed in the Appendix.


8. Many such clippings are found in a scrapbook owned by Teichert, but few of the articles are dated, and it is impossible to determine what publication they were clipped from. Minerva


12. A commemorative exhibition of one hundred of her works was held by the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City for the months of March through October. It will be followed by an exhibition at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Related catalogs and articles have appeared throughout the year, and the Brigham Young University Motion Picture Studio has produced a film documentary on Teichert's life. See Robert O. Davis and Laurie Teichert Eastwood, Rich in Story, Great in Faith: The Art of Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988); and Marian Ashby Johnson, "Minerva's Calling," Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 21 (Spring, 1988):127-43.


CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert's family heritage was a great source of inspiration to her throughout her life. Her father, Frederick John Kohlhepp, was from a well-to-do Boston family. He had left the East to seek his fortune in the West, essentially severing ties with his family and his former life. In Utah, he joined the Mormon Church and married Mary Ella Hickman, the daughter of a Mormon polygamist. They raised their family in farming and ranching communities in Utah and Idaho.¹

Fred Kohlhepp passed on to his daughter his aristocratic tastes and knowledge acquired in his East-coast schooling. She gained from him a love for the classics of literature and an appreciation for the arts. From her mother she received her western pioneer heritage. Her mother's parents were pioneers who had belonged to the Mormon Church almost since its inception. She had been named for her pioneer grandmother, Minerva Wade Hickman, a midwife who assisted at the birth of her namesake on 28 August 1888 in North Ogden, Utah.²
Teichert was very close to her grandmother Hickman. Occasionally she went to live with her grandmother in North Ogden so that she could attend school. During these times, Minerva Hickman, who had walked every step of the way from New York to Utah with the Mormon pioneers, related many of her pioneer stories. These stories made a lasting impression on the young Minerva.

At a very young age, Teichert moved to Idaho with her family. They moved frequently, but they lived most often on a homestead outside of American Falls. It was in this ranching land of southern Idaho that Teichert came to love the gray sagebrush, the blue sky, cowboys, bucking broncs, and Indian lore. She started to sketch horses and cowboys in action during her young years, and used her own horse, Gem, as a model to study horse anatomy.

In 1903, at fourteen years of age, Minerva was hired by a wealthy cattleman to go with his family to San Francisco and serve as nursemaid to his two children. While there, she encountered great art for the first time at the Mark Hopkins Art Institute. She was greatly impressed and in later life stated, "The old Mark Hopkins residence Art Galleries were Paradise to me." When she returned from San Francisco, Teichert entered Pocatello High School. As she was living away from home, it was necessary to work for her board and room. Part of the time she boarded with a local artist, Isabel Ballantyne West,
who encouraged her to develop her artistic talents. 7

Teichert graduated from Pocatello High School in 1906. 8 She then passed the Idaho state teaching examination and taught in rural schools in Idaho. Through her teaching, she helped to support her father who was on a mission for the LDS Church in Switzerland and Germany. After her father's return, she continued to teach, saving money to fulfill her dream of studying art in the East. 9

Finally, on 14 April 1909, Minerva enrolled for her first term at the Art Institute of Chicago. 10 She remained there for three months, studying in the usual Academic Department. The curriculum progressed from charcoal practice through drawing from live models. She advanced rapidly during these first three months 11 and on her last day was promoted to "Life Class" by her teacher, Mr. Forsberg. 12

On 22 October 1909, Teichert again registered at the Art Institute and studied there throughout the academic year 1909-10. 13 The first six months were spent in figure drawing classes under John H. Vanderpoel, whom Teichert referred to as the "greatest draftsman on earth." 14

The summer of 1910 found Teichert back in Idaho, where she attended the Idaho State Summer Normal School at Pocatello for four weeks. 15 This was probably to update her teaching credential, for she did not register at the Art Institute again until 24 February 1912. 16 The intervening time was spent teaching again in rural schools to earn more
money for her studies.

Teichert's last term at the Art Institute was from February to June of 1912. Her revered master, John Vanderpoel had died in 1911, and she continued her figure-drawing studies with Antonin Sterba. She had a good record at the Art Institute, and was awarded ten Honorable Mention Citations, a large number for that period.

When Teichert returned to Idaho from Chicago she was "dead broke and in debt." She taught again at a country school in Sterling, Idaho, and attempted to "prove up" on her own homestead. After teaching for two years in Idaho, she taught another year in Pleasant View, Utah, before she went to New York to study at the Art Students League.

Teichert enrolled at the Art Students League on 19 April 1915. She registered for a painting class under Dmitri Romanoffsky and a mural decoration and composition class under Kenneth Hayes Miller. During the summer term, she studied Life Drawing with George Bridgman. In the Bridgman class, she was awarded a scholarship which paid her tuition in Robert Henri's class for the fall.

Robert Henri unexpectedly came to teach at the League in the fall of 1915. Teichert was fortunate to gain a place in his portraiture class, as there were always long waiting lists to enroll in his classes. She was enthusiastic about studying with Henri and wrote to her mother, "I am doing some wonderful portrait work under Henri as he is about the
greatest modern portrait painter in the world." Henri gave Teichert praise and encouragement and the confidence to return home and paint the life and struggles of her own people.

New York in 1915-16 was an exciting place. Europe was involved in war, and artists of many nationalities had fled to the United States. Teichert was caught up in the excitement of this fast-paced city, and frequently attended exhibitions, operas, concerts and lectures. She absorbed ideas from foreign exhibitions as well as from the walls of museums. The new abstraction, however, held no interest for her; it was a representational art which suited her artistic temperament.

Sometime in the spring of 1916, probably at the end of the school season in May, Teichert returned home to Idaho. She was in debt to her family who had helped pay for her schooling, and needed to pay back the money. A friend, Dr. Minnie Howard, opened a portrait studio in her home for Teichert and secured sittings for her. Through Teichert's portrait commissions, as well as commissions for a few murals, she was able over the next year to pay off her New York debts.

The United Stated entered World War I in the spring of 1917. In September, Herman Teichert, an unlettered cowboy who had courted Minerva for many years, was inducted into the army. He pressed her to marry him before he entered the
army, and on 15 September 1917, Minerva Kohlhepp became Minerva Teichert, a war bride. Their first son was born in July 1918, while Herman was in the trenches in France. This opened a new epoch in Teichert's life, and the next decade was the least productive in her painting career. Starting a family and helping her husband establish a ranching career took first priority.

When Herman returned home early in 1919 they settled down on the old Teichert ranch on the Snake River Bottoms near Sterling. Two more sons and a daughter were born there during the next five years. Minerva worked hard on the ranch, keeping the household running in addition to working willingly in the hayfields.

Even during these busy years, Teichert continued to correspond with Robert Henri. He urged her to become part of a tour he and his wife were making of European galleries in 1924. She made plans to go, but cancelled, explaining that she had dreamed she would have a daughter. Her only daughter, Laurie, was born in December of 1924. By 1926, Teichert had begun to paint again, and she sent a few paintings to Henri for criticism. 

Teichert valued Henri's advice, but her world was different from his, and she could not always heed his counsel. For instance, after those early days in Dr. Minnie Howard's home, Teichert never again had a studio; she always painted in her living room, which was the center of family
activity. She churned her own butter, made her own soap, kept a large garden, raised chickens, and cooked for her family and ranch hands on a wood-burning stove. Obviously, she did not follow the advice of Henri when in response to her inquiry about mixing her own paints, he had written:

What I eat is very important to me, but because I want to paint I cannot sidestep to cookery but have to trust a helper. We think our cook is honest, careful and knowing in what has been her life's principal occupation. Important as good food is to my artistic expression, to my life, important as good paint is to my work I prefer to risk the results of specialists to accepting those of a jack of all trades such as I would be if I puttered in the different departments any one of which require an undivided attention and a special adaptability.

In 1927, the Teichert family was forced to leave their ranch on the Snake River Bottoms due to the opening of the American Falls Reservoir. Teichert felt so strongly about the Bottoms with its lacy cottonwood trees, its pleasant memories, its legends and folklore that she captured many scenes of the old ranch on canvas before they moved. She also painted a frieze depicting such scenes around the living room walls in their new home, some one hundred thirty miles away in Cokeville, Wyoming.

There were few neighbors on the isolated old ranch, and when the Teicherts moved to their new ranch house in Cokeville, they enjoyed a sense of community. Also, the new home was bigger and had high living-room walls which were better suited for the large canvasses Teichert longed to paint. They were well-established in Cokeville by the time
their fifth and last child, John, was born in November of 1928.38

Cokeville, like the rest of the United States, was soon to experience hard economic times. During the years of the Great Depression, Teichert painted for economic survival. Fortunately, the federal government sponsored a great revival of mural art in the 1930s,39 and Teichert found a ready market for her large canvases. Aided by the Salt Lake City art dealer Alice Merrill Horne, Teichert placed at least twenty-eight murals in public buildings throughout the state of Utah. She was commissioned through the Federal Art Project to paint no less than six murals for public buildings in Wyoming as well.40

Federal art patronage had almost ceased by the beginning of World War II, but Minerva Teichert did not cease her mural production. She painted at least sixty-one murals during the 1940s,41 continuing to place them through her Salt Lake City agent, Alice Merrill Horne.

In 1947, at the age of fifty-eight, a dream of Teichert's was realized when she was commissioned to decorate the World Room of the LDS Temple in Manti, Utah. The room was twenty-six feet high, sixty feet long, and thirty feet wide.42 Teichert painted all four walls in twenty-three days during April and May of 1947.43 In the midst of the production, she wrote to her daughter:

Sometimes when I'm tired I think I must be crazy to have started such gigantic murals, all to be done
with small brushes . . . . There is just this I may die if I do it but - as dad says- I'd have died if I hadn't.44

The market for American Scene paintings and representational mural art diminished after World War II. Following the upheaval of the war, American artists and the American public embraced abstract art as never before. Teichert, however, continued her production of large-scale representational works, and entered her most prolific mural phase of all. She painted at least seventy-four murals during the 1950s.45 The majority of these murals concerned religious subject matter; forty-two of them were uncommissioned murals depicting stories from the Book of Mormon.

During the 1960s, both Teichert's health and her art production declined, but she still produced at least twenty-eight large murals (in addition to six portraits, twenty-nine floral still-lifes, and seven other paintings).46 Until she became completely senile in the early 1970s, Teichert felt compelled to express herself through her art.

Minerva Teichert died on 3 May 1976, while residing in a nursing home in Provo, Utah. She left behind a legacy of paintings which continue to tell her important stories of the American West.
Endnotes

1. Much of the material in this biographical sketch is based on the personal knowledge of the author who grew up hearing her grandmother's history from both her grandmother and her mother.

2. See n. 1, Chap. 1, above.


6. Throughout this paper I will refer to the artist as "Teichert," even when the time period referred to is prior to her marriage.


8. In a May 1906 letter to her mother, Teichert tells of her scores on her final exams (100% in English, 100% in German, and 85% in Chemistry) and advises her mother on the cost of invitations ($3.25 for twenty-five). Minerva Kohlhepp to Mrs. F. J. Kohlhepp, 29 May 1906, Eastwood files.

9. Eastwood, "My Mother."


13. Academic Record.

14. Minerva Teichert, Notes on her life, undated, Teichert Family Collection. Teichert revered John Vanderpoel and always held him in awe. In later life, she said: "He it was that made the Art Institute great. We almost worshipped that little hunch-backed man (Vanderpoel, at the age of fourteen, suffered a wrestling accident which made him a cripple for
life) who, we felt, was so big and so high up there that he walked with God. Don't we wish America could again produce a giant like that?" (Minerva Teichert to Rosa Gold.)


16. Academic Record.

17. Academic Record.

18. McIsaac. Exceptional student works in each department were retained and exhibited at the end of each month. These works were given Honorable Mention Citations, which were noted on the student's academic records. Art Institute of Chicago, Catalog for Students, 1909-10, p. 31 (hereafter cited as AIC, Catalog).


23. Teichert, "Autobiography." The Art Students League had at that time a practice of awarding a scholarship in every class for the best work done in that class. The scholarship would "entitle the holder to free tuition in any class in which the class dues are equivalent to the tuition of the class in which the scholarship was awarded." The Art Students League of New York, Catalog of Courses, Season: Oct. 4, 1915 - May 27, 1916. This practice was discontinued the following year when competitive scholarships were abolished as a "menace to self-development among students." Catalog of Courses, Season: Oct. 2, 1916 - May 26, 1917. Lawrence Clampbell, resident art historian at the Art Students League, told me that there are no records of who received scholarships and that an artist's own statement is the best evidence available. Lawrence Campbell, interview, New York City, 13 August 1987.

24. Henri is not listed as an instructor in the 1915-16 Catalog of Courses. The 1915-16 Catalog owned by the Art Students League has a note pencilled in by Lawrence Campbell which says, "Robert Henri added to staff of instructors Fall 1915."


27. Laurie Teichert Eastwood, Telephone interview, 31 August 1988. I often heard my grandmother make disparaging comments about abstract art. She expressed a desire to paint stories which could be easily understood by the common man.


29. See n. 4, Chap. 1, above.

30. Family records.


32. Despite the hard work, Minerva always referred to the years on the Bottoms as wonderful years. She said: "I used to think on the old ranch in Fort Hall Bottoms my greatest joy in living was having to get along under difficulties. What joy I took in building the window seat and playbox and my own cabinets. Yes, and making over my New York suits and dresses for the little boys' clothes. I miss the sewing experience now. Sewing is creation." Eastwood, "My Mother," quoting her mother, p. 5.

33. Robert Henri to Minerva K. Teichert, 31 September 1924, Teichert Family Collection. The Teichert's second son, Robert Henri Teichert, was named for this favorite teacher.


37. Minerva also wrote and published two books about Fort Hall and the Snake River Bottoms. Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert, Drowned Memories (Pocatello, Idaho); and Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert, Romance of Old Fort Hall (Portland, Oregon: Metropolitan Press Publishers, 1932).

38. Family records.

39. Government patronage of mural art is discussed in Chapter 4.
40. See Appendix.

41. Eastwood, Inventory.


43. Minerva Teichert to Laurie Teichert, 13 May 1947, Eastwood files.

44. Minerva Teichert to Laurie Teichert, 23 April, 1947, Eastwood files.

45. Eastwood, Inventory.

46. Eastwood, Inventory.
CHAPTER III

THE BEAUX ART IMPETUS

When Teichert entered the Art Institute of Chicago in 1909, mural decoration was emphasized as an important part of the curriculum. Abundant mural production in the Beaux Art tradition was then being practiced in America. By the time Teichert left the Art Institute in 1912, she was convinced that mural decorating was the highest form of painting, and had already established her goal of becoming a muralist. Though her style of painting and her choice of subject matter were affected by her later studies in New York, Teichert remained firm in her determination to produce a large-scale public art in the Beaux Art tradition.

Mural Decorating in America, 1893-1915

The phase of American mural decorating, which has been called "Beaux Art," began with the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893.¹ Prior mural production in America had been negligible, due primarily to the small number of large public buildings and the resulting lack of patronage in a new country. It was because of this lack of native precedents
that American decorators looked to a European tradition for inspiration.

European mural decoration had experienced a revival in the nineteenth century, and to meet the demands of an official art patronage for the decoration of public buildings, mural painting came under the control of the academies. National history and religious themes presented in an allegorical style were the accepted taste in murals throughout Europe by the time American art students were streaming abroad to study.²

The mural art of France was the greatest source of inspiration to American artists. The art of Paul Baudry (1828-86) and Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98) was particularly influential. American muralists were influenced by the quiet harmony of Puvis' subdued palette as well as by his classical allegories. His compositional schemes, however, were too austere for the Americans who opted for the more flamboyant allegorical compositions of Baudry. Baudry borrowed from Raphael and from the antique to create an allegorical style which has been called "saccharine" and "pretentious." Baudry's allegories became the prototype for the decoration of American public buildings.³ The American predilection for allegory is easy to understand when it is realized that during the 1860s, 70s, and 80s, American art students studying abroad found murals abounding in allegory at every turn. Allegorical subjects were the inevitable choice for
muralists seeking recognition.  

The technique and medium employed by American mural decorators in the late nineteenth-century were also those employed by the French. Murals done in oil on canvas were preferred in both France and America. Not only could they be produced in the studio, but they could also be transported and even exhibited before being installed.

Mural decorating, as an "official" art, was controlled by the academies in Europe, and the same system of academic control and formal artistic education was perpetuated in this country. As mural decoration began to flourish in the United States, it came under the control of the American Academy in Rome, the National Society of Mural Painters, and the National Academy.

Before the Civil War, mural production in America was negligible. Yet due to the burgeoning of academic mural production at the end of the nineteenth century, an amazing number of murals had been produced by 1910. John La Farge's American version of the nineteenth-century English Arts and Crafts movement, with its admiration of medieval architecture and the accompanying integration of the arts, provided the impetus for the new mural movement. In the 1876 decoration of the Trinity church in Boston, La Farge, in concert with the architect Henry Hobson Richardson and the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, attempted to use the cooperative efforts of artists and craftsmen to create a public monument
which would also be a great work of art. Not only did La Farge paint the murals for the building, he also painted architectural ornamentation in his efforts to achieve a decorative ensemble.7

La Farge was also important for the establishment of a stylistic reliance on classical precedents. In another joint project, the decoration of the Church of the Ascension in New York, he executed a mural in the chancel which became his most well-known work. This Raphaelesque mural, the Ascension (1887), exemplified La Farge's ability to absorb traditions from the classical past (Figure 1). La Farge has been called a pseudo-classicist painter of escapist themes, as have the other muralists of the ensuing surge in decoration.8 His importance, nonetheless, lies in the precedent set with his classical style. Of greater significance for this discussion, however, was his revival of a medieval ideal—artistic anonymity through the combined efforts of architect, sculptor, and painter in the making of a public monument.

1893 was a landmark year in American mural production. That was the year of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where La Farge's ideal was applied. Francis D. Millet oversaw a large mural project that was the first of its kind in the United States. Several artists participated, most of whom were novices in mural decoration. This group project was an attempt at providing a unified decorative ensemble for the exposition. Symbolic female figures, which are
reminiscent of Baudry, appeared in many of the panels. These allegories and other symbolic figures would reappear again and again in the decoration of public buildings in America. Even the historical murals which became popular in the decoration of state capitolis and courts would incorporate allegorical allusion. To a large extent, the path of American mural painting was determined by this endeavor.9

As Francis D. Millet, Edwin Blashfield, Kenyon Cox, J. Alden Weir, W. de Leftwich Dodge and their colleagues completed the murals at the Columbian Exposition, they stressed that the cooperative effort was more important than the merit of individual paintings.10 Millet said:

Taking the alliance of architecture, sculpture, and painting as one of the results of the exposition of 1893, the next decade will be the most interesting one in the history of art in this country . . .11

The ideal of the cooperative effort and the pursuit of European academic training were encouraged by the National Society of Mural Painters, established in 1895.12 This organization, together with the American Academy in Rome and the National Academy, perpetuated a system of training which included historical salon painting, a classicist conception of drawing, and a reverence for the art of the Renaissance, particularly for the painting of Raphael.13 All participants in the collective decoration of monuments--mural decorators, architects, and sculptors--were trained in this "Beaux Art" tradition.

The Columbian Exposition marked the beginning of a
boom-phase in American mural production. As fast as capitol, courts, and other public buildings were constructed, muralists were commissioned for their decoration. Architects, government, and industrial magnates all shared in the patronage of this large-scale art.\textsuperscript{14} It has been said that this prolific mural production was led by "an array of technically proficient nonentities."\textsuperscript{15} This is an apt description of the type of bland academism witnessed in these murals. This lack of innovation resulted in part from the ideal for which the muralists were striving. They sought a standardized academic education and a close cooperation among artists working together on a decorative scheme. The result was that individual styles were subordinated, as all strove to develop the same academic style.

At the turn of the century, Edwin Blashfield (1848-1936) emerged as the leader of the American mural movement. He further espoused an adherence to a classical style and iconography. Blashfield's 1905 mural decorations in the Minnesota Capitol at St. Paul provide an example of the mural works from his era. His tribute to Minnesota as the "Granary of the World" (Figure 2), depicts an allegorical female figure seated on a harvest cart drawn by two monumental white oxen. There are two genii above the harvest sovereignty and a sprite below. Through this monumental pyramidal group, Blashfield attempted to glorify the state of Minnesota. He
celebrated the Minnesota veterans of war who had helped to preserve the Union, by placing idealized representations of soldiers and a nurse on one side of the harvest group. Figures representing industry and the home were located on the other side.\textsuperscript{16}

Scholarship has tended to either ignore this Beaux Art phase of American mural decoration or mention it only in the context of its vapidity. While it lasted, however, mural decoration held a higher position in America than in any other country in the world, and as the first abundant outpouring of murals in America, it set a precedent for the decoration of public buildings in this country.\textsuperscript{17}

The lofty ideal behind this mural movement was the impetus for its abundant production. La Farge's attempted revival of artist anonymity and joint effort in the production of monumental public works of art was only part of this ideal. The Beaux Art muralists also saw their public art as providing the same hallowed didactic function that it once had in the cathedrals, temples and public buildings of Egypt, Athens, and Rome. As stated by Blashfield:

In Athens twenty-two hundred years ago, in Rome eighteen hundred years ago, the man who lacked the power or the will or the time to read went to the public buildings to learn history, which he found there painted and sculpted so plainly that he learned without effort.\textsuperscript{18}

Blashfield and his colleagues felt that the strongest appeal which could be made for public art on a grand scale was that it was a "public and municipal educator."\textsuperscript{19} Thus,
they considered it to be the most important art form of the future, as it always had been in the past. They saw decorative painting as the oldest art form and the highest form of artistic expression—the greatest of artists, Raphael, Rubens, Veronese, and others, having been decorators. There was also a feeling that the public building possessed a degree of permanence, and that the murals of the day would endure with the buildings, to teach future generations about the past. These lofty sentiments combined to initiate a prolific outpouring of murals in the Beaux Art tradition.

The Beaux Art mural phase ended as it had begun, with an exposition, the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. With the exception of an exhibition of Futurist paintings at the Exposition, which caused somewhat of a stir, there was very little modernist art displayed. Each national section exhibited an official representation of art done in an academic classical style. Moreover, the overall decorative scheme, the sculpture and mural paintings which decorated the courts and avenues of the Exposition, abounded in allegorical renditions in the Beaux Art tradition. Individuality was again sacrificed so that, "No feature of the Exposition [would] haunt the memory of those who loved it as [would] the ensemble effect." Both sculptors and mural decorators at the 1915 Exposition had the didactic goal of expressing the central
theme of "victorious achievement" through their allegorical works. Jessie Niles Burness, author of a guide book to the art of the San Francisco Exposition, recounts that they conveyed their message "with such straightforwardness that he who runs may read." Significantly, this same purpose, "that he who runs may read," was espoused by both Blashfield and then Teichert, to emphasize the didactic function of mural painting.

The San Francisco Exposition, where the building of the Panama Canal was designated "A Thirteenth Labor of Hercules," marked an end in the popularity of standardized pseudo-classical allegories. The classical iconography of works like Holloway's Pursuit of Pleasure (which decorated the entrance to the Palace of Education at the Exposition) ceased to appeal to an American public (Figure 3). Frank Vincent DuMond, in his Exposition decoration, March of Civilization to the Great West, depicted a historical theme of pioneer subject matter. This theme would become increasingly popular in America. Dumond's pioneers, however, are accompanied by allegorical guides (Figure 4).

The high ideals and exalted purpose of the Beaux Art muralists led them to excel in virtuosity of surface technique, as they created academic representations which they hoped would express the life of our nation. After 1915, the production of their allegorical decorations declined, as did mural production in general. Artists who embraced the
new modernism which had been introduced at the 1913 Armory Show, were concerned with the production of easel painting, as were the Realist painters spawned by the Ash Can School. Of the two main currents in American art, neither the Realists nor the Modernists espoused a monumental art form. The lofty ideals of mural painting as a public educator and as the highest achievement in painting, however, were internalized by at least one art student of the period. Also, a mural movement which surfaced over a decade later was not entirely devoid of the same ideals.

Teichert's Introduction to Mural Painting at the Art Institute of Chicago

Teichert had had very little introduction to mural painting prior to leaving for Chicago in the spring of 1909. Although she had ambitions of being a water colorist when she first enrolled at the Art Institute, these desires changed as she came into contact with the Beaux Art mural tradition. She took with her to Chicago some water color sketches she had made, and which her friends had said would "knock 'em cold back there."27 As all students were given "free choice of Atelier and Master with whom they wished to study,"28 Teichert selected an afternoon water color class with Frederick Oswald after registering for morning drawing classes in the regular Academic department.29 She took another water color class with Carolyn D. Wade in April of
1910, but as a young and impressionable art student, she was swept up in the emphasis on murals, and her interest in water colors waned.

The Art Institute of Chicago embraced and perpetuated the academic mural tradition of the Beaux Art period. As advocated by the National Society of Mural Painters, students were trained in a rigorous academic system patterned on that of the French academies.30 The 1909-10 Catalog for Students states:

The general plan of work is that students shall occupy themselves in severe academic practice, chiefly drawing from antique and life, during the forenoon; and in the afternoon they may either continue these studies or devote themselves to the practice of still-life sketching, illustration, perspective, memory drawing, anatomy, composition, modeling, lectures, etc.31

In the academic tradition, fine draftsmanship was emphasized at the school. Abundant opportunities were provided for studying the human figure, which was "universally regarded as the basis of the practice of art."32 To supplement the life drawing courses, classes in artistic anatomy were offered, as well as a lecture series on the construction of the head and figure. There were always several life classes in session, providing both clothed and nude models. The curriculum ranged from early charcoal practice to advanced painting, modeling, and composition. Dissecting could be arranged for students at nearby medical schools.33 Studies in perspective and anatomy were not required, but were highly recommended to all students. They
were required, however, of competitors for high honors and scholarships, indicating the importance attached to such training.

The successful student acquired a thorough academic training, which was reflected in composition and draftsmanship. In 1912, the Art Institute took great pride in the fact that two of the three finalists in the Competition of the American Academy in Rome were trained at the Chicago school. The candidates for the three-year fellowships competed through rigorous examinations in drawing, painting, artistic anatomy and perspective. The finalists then competed in the execution of a figure composition. An examination of Morning, the painting entered by Eugene F. Savage, one of the Chicago finalists, demonstrates the strict adherence to the Beaux Art tradition which was advocated at the Art Institute (Figure 5). The superb draftsmanship of the nude figures in a classically-arranged pyramidal composition clearly reflects the academic training of the artist.

The importance of fine draftsmanship was impressed upon the young Minerva when she began her studies with John H. Vanderpoel in the fall of 1909. Teichert called him "the greatest draftsman America ever had." Vanderpoel is best known for his book, The Human Figure (1907), a text still widely used by art students today. Vanderpoel had a great impact on Minerva Teichert, particularly regarding her
growing reverence for mural art. He did not look upon figure drawing as an end in itself, but urged the student to test his skill and knowledge of figure study by applying them to composition. He applied his own superb draftsmanship to mural composition.

Vanderpoel was a muralist in a classical academic style. In 1906, he produced a series of thirty-foot murals for the banquet hall of the Hotel Alexandria in Los Angeles. The subject of the second panel was the "Vintage Festival," and the Chicago Tribune stated that it was done "more or less in the style of Alma-Tadema." Also, in 1908, Vanderpoel collaborated with Charles Holloway, a noted Beaux Art muralist, who participated in the decoration of the Panama Pacific Exposition (Figure 3). Together, they produced the mural decoration for the College Theatre at St Vincent's College in Chicago. Vanderpoel was also involved in the planning and execution of the landmark in Beaux Art mural decoration--the Columbian Exposition of 1893. He served on the jury that selected the pictures to be displayed, and exhibited five of his own works.

Another muralist who influenced Teichert's attraction toward the medium was the Czechoslovak painter, Alfonse Mucha, whom she heard lecture in May 1909. Best known for his panneaux and posters in the Art Nouveau style, Mucha is seldom remembered as a muralist, but he too, had the lofty goal of producing didactic art on a large scale. In his
case, he monumentalized the story of his people, of the Slavic Nations. Mucha had achieved great success as a painter of posters and panneaux, but he departed from that genre and completed twenty large history murals which he entitled the Slav Epic (1910-28). He donated them to Czechoslovakia without charge on the condition that a building be constructed to display them permanently. The country did not receive them with the enthusiasm Mucha had hoped for. They were displayed for a brief time and then rolled up and put in storage while Mucha spent the rest of his life trying to find suitable housing for them. How much influence Teichert absorbed from Mucha in her first month of art school is difficult to specify, but she probably noted his high regard for the potential of mural painting, a belief shared by Blashfield and others at the Art Institute.

Mural decoration was encouraged by the Art Institute, and opportunities for practical application in the medium were provided for the students. The 1909-10 Catalog for Students states that "the field of Mural Painting is rapidly widening, and it may be said to be the hope of painting in America." Practical problems in mural decoration were undertaken by the Art Institute each year. Competitions were held in composition and color scheme, and the winning students were able to carry out the full-size work, providing decoration for various institutions in Chicago (primarily
schools). Before executing the large-scale works, the students were instructed in the preparation of the canvas, the selection of paints, and technical requirements of mural painting. The expense was born by the patrons or by the Art Institute. The mural painting class of 1912 completed six large panels and three spandrels for an assembly hall, as well as panels for two high schools and the faculty lunch room at the Art Institute. Examples of student-produced murals appear throughout the 1909-10 Catalog for Students.

The leader of the Beaux Art muralists, Edwin H. Blashfield, was a frequent visitor at the Art Institute. He delivered lectures there in 1910, 1911, and 1912 on mural painting. In January of 1909, a special Blashfield exhibition was held at the school, after which seventeen Blashfield drawings were purchased by the institution. All of the drawings were figure studies for mural decorations (Figure 6). These drawings exemplified to students the emphasis mural painters placed on fine draftsmanship. They also provided examples of figure-study for actual use. This same emphasis on figure-study was demonstrated in Blashfield's studies for the pendentives in the Court House at Youngstown, Ohio, which he exhibited at the Art Institute in the spring of 1910 as part of the twenty-third Annual Exhibition of the Chicago Architectural Club (Figure 7).

Blashfield made a lasting impression on Teichert. She owned a well-worn copy of his Scammon Lectures, and was at
the Art Institute when he delivered them in March 1912. Of
utmost importance to him was the concept that mural art
should speak to the people:

. . . the decoration in a building which belongs to
the public must speak to the people — to the man in
the street. It must embody thought and
significance, and that so plainly that he who runs
may read.48

Minerva Teichert internalized this concept and often
told her children and grandchildren that her important
stories had to be painted so that "he who runs may read."49
As noted above, this line was also used to emphasize the
importance of Beaux Art mural decoration at the 1915 Panama-
Pacific Exposition.50 Teichert embraced the Beaux Art ideal
as expressed by Blashfield, that mural decoration was
important as a public educator.

Another important concept stressed by Blashfield in his
Scammon Lectures was the function of mural art as a story
teller:

What is Greek vase-painting? Story-telling. What
do the walls of Egypt tell us? The same stories of
a hundred deities ten thousand times repeated.
What is the graphic art of the Roman empire? The
story of the divinized commonwealth and of the
imperial houses. What were the beautifully simple
and prototypically artistic frescoes of the Italian
trecento? Stories, stories, stories!...What are
the frescoes of the fifteenth century? Stories...What are the
great canvasses of the Venetians? Stories, intertwined, Biblical and
mythological.51

Teichert also saw story-telling as a function of art,
and claimed: "There are only two reasons for painting in the
first place--either a thing must be very beautiful, or it
must be an important story."52 Her stories, however, were not mythological—they celebrated the American Indian, the pioneer, and other heroes of the American West.

For Blashfield, the decoration of a public building was also a commemoration through which the community could celebrate itself. The stories of the heroes, battles, and progress of the community should be monumentalized upon its walls:

If the commissioners of a State capitol came to a mural painter it would be preposterous for him to say to them: "Beauty is all that you require in your rooms—beauty of pattern and line, color and figures." They would reply: "We have suffered and fought in the cause of progress and civilization; remind us of it upon our walls. We have had heroes; celebrate them."53

This ideal was sought after in public art by communities during the Great Depression as well, but by then the allegorical figures had given way to a more realistic depiction.

Teichert never actually took a course in mural decoration at the Art Institute.54 Perhaps this was due to her desire to complete the three-year academic course in a shortened time, or to her inability to fit a mural painting class into her schedule. Nevertheless, she had ample opportunity to learn about murals through lectures, and she absorbed the general enthusiasm about mural painting from her teachers and her peers. Certainly the emphasis placed on mural decoration at the Art Institute impressed students with the importance of that genre, and many were trained in the
execution of large decorations. Minerva Teichert left Chicago fully convinced of the preeminence of mural art, and it would seem that other students were also convinced of its significance.

The Post-Chicago Beaux Art Influence

The impetus to paint murals had been acquired in Chicago, and Teichert hoped to study mural decoration in New York. Upon her arrival in New York, however, three days before she registered at the Art Students League, she wrote home that she would be taking portraiture and life classes her first month because "the mural classes are a joke." It may have been that she felt this way when she compared the lack of emphasis on mural decorating in New York with its importance in Chicago. Kenneth Hayes Miller, the teacher of the mural class, was not even a muralist. Nonetheless, Teichert did enroll in a mural class under Miller eight days after she registered at the League.

Miller's class provided Teichert with her first opportunity to work in the mural medium. She must have felt she had made some progress under Miller, because in July 1915 she wrote to her mother of her plans to paint a "beautiful decoration from the Book of Mormon." She enthusiastically reported that she could paint it in class under Kenneth Hayes Miller's direction. At this early stage of her mural career, she was already envisioning a mural subject which she
pursued until the end of her life.

Though not a muralist himself, Miller had studied under H. Siddons Mowbray, a noted academic muralist. Mowbray, who served with Blashfield on the committee in charge of a prestigious scholarship in mural painting, had decorated the Library of the University Club in New York City as well as many private residences of the wealthy. Perhaps because of his training under this academic muralist, Miller taught sound principles of spatial composition. Many of his students applied these principles to the decoration of federal buildings with murals during the 1930s.

A few sketches for decorations, done by Teichert in a mural class, have survived from this period. One, which may have been entitled "My Grotto," (1915) is a figural composition with a nude bather in the foreground (Figure 8). The academic nude is accurately drawn and placed within a perfectly balanced composition, reflecting Teichert's Beaux Art training. She displays a knowledge of anatomy, sound draftsmanship, and a classically ideal composition of balance and order, employing Renaissance perspective. These qualities were highly regarded by Teichert's teachers in Chicago and by other advocates of the Beaux Art tradition. Signs of her very personal later style are not yet visible; this sketch fits the common mold of a technically proficient academic production.

Teichert executed a large painting of a Book of Mormon
subject, Samuel the Lamanite, about the same time as the sketches (Figure 9). It may be the decoration referred to above which she planned to do under Miller's direction. Samuel is depicted as a classical, semi-nude youth, reminiscent of Beaux Art depictions. The emphasis is on the structure of the human body, and the idealized rendering of the anatomy reflects her academic training. A much looser depiction would characterize Teichert's later renditions of Book of Mormon subjects (Figure 10).

During her first few months at the League, Teichert was strongly entrenched in the ideals of mural painting. By the end of the summer in 1915, she had written to her mother that she would rather not accept little painting jobs to help support herself because she was going to be needed in mural decoration as soon as she was able to do the work. She felt that she painted animals and landscapes as well or better than anyone, but stated that she still needed to learn figures, composition and color. She added, "I hope I can afford to paint big things in oil." When Robert Henri unexpectedly came to teach at the League in the fall of 1915, Teichert, who enrolled in his portraiture class, fell under his charismatic influence, and she compared the excitement she felt in his class to that of driving a runaway team. Henri had a remarkable impact on Teichert. Stylistically she departed from the Beaux Art tradition, as Henri urged his pupils to paint quickly with
large brushes and spontaneous execution, avoiding detail. Of even more significance, however, was Henri's emphasis on the attitude of the artist toward the subject. He urged his students to paint from their own experience, to paint what they knew. He said:

If you want to be a historical painter, let your history be of your own time, of what you can get to know personally - of manners and customs within your own experience.

The pseudo-classical allegories of the Beaux Art muralists must have seemed empty and foolish to Teichert as she came under the influence of Henri. In October she wrote to her mother, "The tendency is to forget all former training except a sense of beautiful simplicity and go back to our earliest feelings on these subjects." She asked her mother to save her early works from the pre-Chicago period, not because of their technical proficiency, but because of a "barbaric note in them which these artists would rave about."

Although Henri had a significant impact on her style and choice of subject matter, the ideal of producing large public art did not fade. Evidence of this can be seen in a notebook which Teichert kept at the League. It contains notes (dated 13 March 1916, just two months before she left the League) from lectures delivered by William De Leftwich Dodge, who had participated in the mural decoration of the Panama-Pacific Exposition the year before. The purpose of this course of six lectures was to "give a clear and simple presentation of
the rules of composition from the standpoint of line, mass and color, as applied to the making of a picture, whether it be a landscape, figure composition or mural decoration.\textsuperscript{68}

Puvis de Chavannes was used as the exemplar in the lectures. A rough sketch of one of Puvis' murals, on a stairway in Paris, is included in Teichert's notes. Her notes discuss the direction of Puvis' lines and comment about his unity of tone, color, line, and "reading motive." She notes Puvis' emphasis on keeping walls flat, "not by painting in flat tones, as all the modeling desired may be done, but strength of wall by use of parallels as in this decoration of Chavannes'." She then adds a self-critique, noting, "this is the law I broke in the swimming pool decoration."\textsuperscript{69} Other comments on her own mural efforts appear in the notes, demonstrating a sincere effort to develop her mural-painting skills. Teichert's notebook is well-worn, showing evidence of much use.

Teichert's mother wondered about her daughter's ambitions, and encouraged her to produce smaller, more marketable works. She sent several large works (probably murals) home to Idaho. In February 1916 her mother wrote to her:

Your letters and also the pictures arrived safe . . . The Hindoo [sic] and the lady are the only two pictures that could be used in a small home. The rest might look well on the stage or in a big hall. In fact I know they would for I love them at a distance but I do wish you would learn to make eyes and features that people could have in their
parlors. You could get plenty of work of that kind out west. 70

The encouragement to pursue mural decoration did not come from Teichert's home. Nor did it come from Robert Henri, who was not a muralist himself. 71 Henri, however, believed that what an artist had to express was vital. 72 Although he did not encourage her to paint murals, he did urge her to return to the West and paint the Mormon story. She related this incident in her later life:

Before I left Henri said, "Has anyone ever told your great Mormon story?" "Not to suit me," I answered. "Good Heavens girl, what a chance, you do it. You're the one; Oh to be a Mormon! . . . That's your birthright. You feel it. You'll do it well." I felt that I had been commissioned by this great friend of mind. 73

When Teichert did return to Idaho, she painted portraits in order to pay off her art school debts, but she let it be known everywhere that mural decoration was her desired ambition. Dr. Minnie F. Howard, a medical doctor as well as the Idaho State Art Chairman, who had provided Teichert with a portrait studio in Pocatello, wrote an article about Teichert in the Idaho Statesman. Although the article glamorized Teichert to a certain extent, it emphasized her desires to do mural work. It stated that a bill had been introduced into the Idaho legislature authorizing the appropriation of five thousand dollars for mural decoration of the capitol by Minerva Kohlhepp. Howard also stated that Kohlhepp had been engaged to paint mural decorations for the new High School. She added:
Those of us who know, believe that some day these decorations will be one of the chief assets of Pocatello, and that travelers will stop off the trains to see them as a pilgrimage.74

The money was never appropriated by the legislature and nothing is known of murals which may have been painted for the high school, but Teichert was, nonetheless, somewhat of a celebrity after she returned from her New York studies. She was a popular speaker for clubs and church groups, and her notes for many of these speeches are still extant. These notes echo the ideals of the Beaux Art muralists; the thoughts expressed could have been those of Blashfield himself. In notes from one speech, Teichert asked:

What part are we to play in future art? In Assyrian, Egyptian, Grecian, and all ancient arts we read the history of the people in the architecture, sculpture, and mural decoration. Suppose in 2000 years hence a new people shall unearth Pocatello. Among the books one is decipherable . . . . Our records will be our buildings, our sculpture, our mural decoration.75

The notes for a January 1917 speech expressed a need to record in a public art the history of ancient America as related in the Book of Mormon. This history had been translated from records engraved on plates of gold. Teichert felt the need to teach this history through mural decoration. The notes from her speech include the following:

We have [the] history of all ancient America to record. We do not keep these things on golden tablets now but in our architecture, sculpture, and mural decoration of the future they will be told.76

Teichert embraced the ideals of the Beaux Art muralists in other ways as well. She reiterated the ideas of anonymity
and collective work which they espoused, and she never deserted these ideals. Richard and Susan Oman quote from Teichert in her later life when she said:

When we shall have advanced far enough to forget to sign our names we will have reached the goal. What I mean by this is that we shall develop an art as great as the Egyptians did. It doesn't matter that they did not sign their works. Theirs is the art of a people, magnificent after millennia. So should our art, rich in story and backed by a great faith, be so glorious that future generations shall say, "This is the art of a great race at its very inception." So may it be with ours."

The Beaux Art mural movement was waning as Teichert finished her art studies, and opportunities for muralists were scarce. Her desire to monumentalize the history of her people through large public art, however, did not fade. She produced a few murals, even when there was no market for them. She was finally able to fulfill her dream, however, when the federal government spawned a new mural movement in the 1930s.
Endnotes


3. Watrous, pp. 16-17, 19. Watrous also noted that Puvis and Baudry both executed mural decorations in the United States; Puvis in the Boston Public Library (1895-97), Baudry in the homes of William H. Vanderbilt and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt (1882).


5. Watrous, p. 20.


9. Watrous, p. 66.

10. Watrous, p. 66.


13. Watrous, p. 60.


17. Watrous, p. 2.


22. Brown, p. 64.


27. Minerva Teichert to Rosa Gold.

28. AIC, Catalog, 1909-10, p. 28.

29. Academic Record.

30. For the position of the National Society of Mural Painters on academic training, see p. 25 above.

31. AIC, Catalog, 1909-10, p. 36.

32. AIC, Catalog, 1909-10, p. 36.

33. AIC, Catalog, 1909-10, p. 29.


35. Minerva Teichert to Rosa Gold.


38. Chicago Tribune, 6 February 1906, p. 115-D.


40. Buehler, "Vanderpoel."

41. AIC, Bulletin (January 1910), p. 55; Teichert always listed Alphonse Mucha as one of her teachers at the art Institute. He does not appear as a teacher on her academic record, but she probably attended his lectures on composition at the school in May 1909.


43. AIC, Catalog, 1909-10, p. 49.

44. AIC, Bulletin 6(October 1912):12.


47. Chicago Architectural Club, Catalog of the Twenty-third Annual Exhibit, 1912.


49. This line had not only been used by Blashfield, but first appeared in the Bible (Habukkuk 2:2), and later in Cowper's Tirocinium of the eighteenth century.

50. See p. 28 above.

51. Blashfield, p. 177.


53. Blashfield, p. 179.
54. Teichert did obtain an informal statement of attainment giving her credit for two and one half years of study and stating that she had taken the special courses in Anatomy and Perspective, and that she had passed the examinations in both subjects. She passed the Anatomy exam with a grade of 86 and the Perspective exam with a grade of 85. John E. Hasfurther, Registrar, Art Institute of Chicago, Statement of attainment, 15 October 1915. These were considered good marks at that time. McIsaac.

55. Minerva Kohlhepp to Mrs. F.J. Kohlhepp, 16 April 1915, Eastwood files.

56. Registration records.

57. Minerva Kohlhepp to Mrs. F. J. Kohlhepp, 8 July 1915, Eastwood files.

58. Watrous, pp. 63, 76.


60. In notes on mural painting which Teichert took at the Art Students League, different methods of breaking up a long expanse of mural painting are noted. One is to pierce a hole in the picture plane "as in my Grotto ." " ." is her brand which she used to sign many of her works. Minerva Teichert, Notes taken at the Art Students League, New York. Teichert Family Collection.

61. This painting was retouched by Teichert in 1921.


63. See n. 24, Chap. 2, above.

64. Minerva Teichert, Notes.

65. Goodman, p. 159.


68. ASL, Catalog, 1915-16, p. 12.
69. Minerva Kohlhepp, notebook kept at the Art Students League, New York, Teichert Family Collection.

70. Mrs. F. J. Kohlhepp to Minerva Kohlhepp, 20 February 1916, Eastwood files.


73. Teichert, Handwritten manuscript.

74. Howard.

75. Teichert, Notes for speech. Teichert Family Collection.

76. Teichert, Notes for a speech at the LDS Conjoint, 7 January 1917, Teichert Family collection.

77. Oman and Oman, p. 58.
CHAPTER IV

THE 1930s: MURAL PRODUCTION
STIMULATED BY FEDERAL PATRONAGE

The style of the technically proficient Beaux Art muralists lost favor in America after 1915, both with artists and with the public. As there was no other well-established mural tradition in this country, mural decoration sharply declined. During the years 1915-30, commercial decorators and the American Regionalists departed from the academic tradition of allegorical symbolism, providing a transition to the prolific new mural phase of the 1930s. This new production was sponsored by the federal government, and provided Teichert with a market for the type of painting which she longed to produce. The government-induced popularity of mural art in the 1930s was for Teichert the means of realizing the ideals she had gleaned from her Beaux Art training.

The Transitional Period, 1915-30

The limited amount of mural decoration which was produced from 1915 to 1930 was commissioned for theaters,
hotels, and department stores. Businesses sought decoration to make their institutions more attractive to the consumer. While mural production for public buildings had become negligible, the commercial sector was experiencing a relative boom in decoration. Academic muralists received some of the commissions, but commercial patrons sought a more realistic depiction, free from allegorical allusion. Illustrators were commissioned more often than those trained in mural production.

The corporate perception of good decoration was that it should be intelligible to the public—a readable image of a specific subject. Accordingly, classical allusion disappeared from commercial works. Historical themes were popular in commercial murals of the 1920s, as they had been in Beaux Art decoration. N. C. Wyeth's Balboa (1928), however, discovered the Pacific unaccompanied by allegorical guides, and there was no apotheosis of a classically-garbed Commerce depicted in Boardman Robinson's History of Commerce (1929).

At the beginning of the 1920s, a mural movement surfaced in Mexico which would have a great impact on public art in this country. After the Mexican Revolution of 1921, Jose Vasconcellos, the new Minister of Public Instruction, employed muralists on a day-laborer basis to decorate public buildings with the life and history of the Mexican people. They expressed the social ideals of the revolution on public
walls. The cubistic style, bold colors, and social content of the Mexican movement strongly influenced American mural production. In addition, the concept of government art patronage was later espoused by the United States government.

Many American artists, aware of the success of the Mexican mural movement, went to Mexico to study. Also, the Mexican muralists, Jose Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera, were soon hired to paint murals in this country. Orozco painted a mural for the New School of Social Research in 1930, at the same time that Thomas Hart Benton was executing his America Today cycle there. Rivera also painted a mural for the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco in 1931.5

Two important transitional muralists in the United States were influenced by the Mexican movement. They were Thomas Hart Benton and Boardman Robinson. Both were commissioned to paint mural cycles at the end of the 1920s. Robinson and Benton departed from the Beaux Art tradition, both in style and content. They made a significant contribution to stylistic devices and subject matter which would become common in the new mural movement of the next decade. This movement would be embraced by Minerva Teichert.

In 1929, Robinson was commissioned to paint The History of Commerce for the Kauffman Department Store in Pittsburgh (Figure 11). His ten panels told a story from the past, but
they displayed two modern stylistic devices which would be carried even further by Benton. They were loud in tone, employing pure reds, yellows, blues, and greens; and stressed the planes and edges of forms. The shapes appeared streamlined; the bold colors reminiscent of modern industrial paints. Both the historical subject matter and Robinson's modern-looking style would be perpetuated in the 1930s.

When Benton received his first mural commission in 1929, he achieved his dream of painting a mural epic of America. This was realized in his painted cycle, *America Today*, for the New School of Social Research in New York City (Figure 12). Benton had tried to embrace various forms of modernism in New York and Paris from 1910 to 1924. After that year he departed from his modernist studies in form, and strove to reassert the importance of content. Benton, like Teichert, had received Beaux Art training at the Art Institute of Chicago when he studied there in 1907-08. It is probable that Benton, as well as Teichert, internalized Beaux Art attitudes toward the importance of mural decoration, for he also desired to paint murals. He produced a multitude of sketches during the 1920s for his *American Historical Epic*, an uncommissioned mural cycle depicting pioneers and Indians, which he had envisioned, and which "nobody wanted."

Benton studied at the Art Institute during the period when mural decorating was emphasized and promoted by Blashfield, Mucha, Vanderpoel, and others. He did not like
the academic training which he received in Chicago. He felt that it was too mechanical, and he became bored. Yet, in his second term at the Academie Julien in Paris in 1909, he registered for a drawing class under Jean Paul Laurens (1838-1921). Laurens was a noted French historical muralist who had been the teacher of Alphonse Mucha, and who is credited with having had an important influence on Mucha's development as a muralist. Benton felt his creativity threatened under Laurens, and he lost interest in the class. The fact that he registered for training under this muralist, however, suggests an interest in mural decorating, even at this early date.

Karal Ann Marling traces the influence of Beaux Art decoration on Benton to an even earlier time. As the young son of a congressman in Washington, D.C., Benton had been impressed by the academic murals in the Library of Congress. These murals (1896-98) had been the collaborative effort of Blashfield, Edward Simmons, Kenyon Cox, W. De Leftwich Dodge, and other Beaux Art decorators who had participated in the first joint mural effort at the Columbian Exposition in 1893. Marling states that Benton aspired to become a new La Farge, describing him as a "would-be muralist and heretofore thwarted aspirant to the mantle of La Farge, Blashfield, and Kenyon Cox."

This is not to say that Benton was an academician. In fact, he disliked his academic training in Chicago and Paris.
Although he rebelled against his Beaux Art training, however, he emphasized the importance of drawing throughout his life. He continually strove to overcome what he felt to be an inferiority in his draftsmanship. This emphasis on drawing came in large part from his Beaux Art training. It is likely that his desire to monumentalize the story of America had its roots in his early training as well. He, like Teichert, and like the Beaux Art muralists, desired to monumentalize stories through large public art. The American Historical Epic, which Benton envisioned but did not realize, would have both told a story and documented the history of a people, much as Mucha's Slav Epic did. Surely, the dream to produce such a mural cycle was inspired by Beaux Art ideals.

When Benton finally began to realize his muralist ambitions, however, he did not produce pseudo-classical allegories, but began a new tradition of American Scene painting inspired by the American Realist school which was spawned by Robert Henri. Benton's mural art was representational, but he did not depict idealized figures of classical allusion. While Blashfield idealized Minnesota's history in his classically-garbed, monumental harvest figure, Benton, in his murals for the Missouri capitol (1936), monumentalized Missouri history through the realistic depiction of the idealized story figures, Franky and Johnny. Though his style and subject matter had departed from the Beaux Art tradition, as had Teichert's, perhaps Benton, too,
had acquired an unshakable goal—to produce murals—by internalizing the ideals of Blashfield-era muralists. Their ideal was to monumentalize the stories of a people through large public art.

While Robinson had depicted the past, Benton addressed the present, basing his work on contemporary life, painting scenes of agriculture, construction, mining, etc. Benton's style, though pictorially legible, looked modern and up-to-date, compared to the Beaux Art academic murals. It was flat, angular, and loud in color, leading Karal Ann Marling to brand it "American Cubism." It was Benton's style which within five years would be the preferred style of those determining official taste.

Benton and Robinson made two important contributions to the new mural movement that was spawned by federal patronage. One was a style based on the cubism of the Mexicans, which had a modern look while still being pictorially legible. The other was the introduction of American Scene painting, both of historical and contemporary subjects. Robinson introduced the telling of stories from American history as acceptable for murals in the new style, while Benton encouraged American muralists to paint what they saw around them and to monumentalize contemporary American scenes.

Of equal importance, however, was the interest which the mural cycles of Benton and Robinson rekindled in American
mural production. The apathy which American artists felt toward the academic murals inspired by European tradition was replaced by an enthusiasm for the new mural style. There was a feeling that a great new American mural movement was about to stir.\textsuperscript{20} It was not anticipated, however, that the patronage for the new movement would come from the federal government.

During these transitional years, Minerva Teichert had continued her interest in mural decoration. She painted at least fourteen murals during the years before government patronage began. These murals, like Benton's \textit{Epic}, were all uncommissioned. They reveal Teichert's desires to be a muralist, desires which had been fostered through her Beaux Arts training.

Minerva Teichert's painting style, however, differed radically from Thomas Hart Benton's. She disliked his works, and spoke disparagingly of his loud tones and angular shapes. She considered her draftsmanship and her own more painterly works to be far superior.\textsuperscript{21} Teichert's palette consisted of the grays and blues of western scenery enlivened with red accents. Her paint was thinly and loosely applied, giving an impressionistic look to her works. Her figures, however, were realistically drawn and fully modeled, reflecting her academic training and the draftsmanship in which she excelled. Her subject matter also differed markedly from that of Benton. While Benton monumentalized contemporary
workers and the popular legend of Franky and Johnny, Teichert painted monumental figures of pioneer women and western explorers.

It was a high regard for mural decoration which Teichert and Benton had in common. Both longed to record the stories of their people in large public art. Neither ever deserted this ideal; both produced murals until the end of their lives. This is more than mere coincidence, as they were contemporaries, and had both received academic training in the Beaux Art tradition at the start of their careers. Both had studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, Benton in 1907-08, and Teichert in 1909-12. The strong mural emphasis by Blashfield, Mucha, Vanderpoel, and others had been absorbed by both.

Both Thomas Hart Benton and Minerva Teichert desired to produce murals depicting American subject matter. They both began mural production at about the same time, during the late 1920s, probably motivated by similar ideals. Benton, however, began his mural career through large commissions for the New School of Social Research and the Whitney Museum of American Art, and he helped provide an incentive for a new mural movement. It was only after 1934 that Teichert's mural career flourished, nurtured by the new mural movement which Benton inspired.

Although her artistic output was minimal while living on the old ranch near Sterling, Idaho, when she and her family
moved to Cokeville, Wyoming, in 1927, Teichert once again began to dream of producing murals. Their new home had a large living room with high ceilings, and in the very year they moved to Cokeville, Teichert decorated her own living room with a frieze depicting scenes from the old ranch on the Bottoms. There was not a large market for murals, however, and it was not until WPA murals were being placed in public buildings throughout the country that Teichert's prolific mural production began. From 1934 to 1940 alone, spurred by a new popular demand for murals, Teichert produced at least fifty-seven mural-sized canvasses.22

In Cokeville, Teichert had a more ready access to outside news than she had had on the Bottoms, and she became aware of current trends in painting and mural production. In 1928 she clipped and saved in her scrapbook a fold-out from the National Geographic Magazine of N. C. Wyeth's Balboa (1928), one of a series of five murals for the National Geographic Society Headquarters in Washington, D.C.23 Impressed with Wyeth's decoration, she began to produce some murals of her own at about the same time. Her murals, however, were uncommissioned, like Benton's Epic, and there was no market for them in Cokeville. They simply reiterated her strong desires to be a muralist.

Teichert had painted as many as eight uncommissioned murals by 1931. The earliest, probably painted in 1928, was a depiction of five bronc riders whom her husband had brought
to Cokeville to perform in a rodeo.\textsuperscript{24} Two others, \textit{Handcart Pioneers} (1930) and \textit{Cast Your Nets on the Other Side} (1930), she gave to the Cokeville LDS Chapel.\textsuperscript{25} Another, \textit{Oregon or Bust} (Figure 13), may have been inspired by the 1931 celebrations marking the centennial of the opening of the Oregon Trail.

As the hard times of the depression hit her family, Teichert decided to use her artistic skills to benefit the family financially. In the spring of 1931, she went to see the Salt Lake City agent, Alice Merrill Horne. She took the \textit{Handcart Pioneers} from the chapel, promising to replace it later, and rolled it up, together with \textit{Oregon or Bust} and \textit{The Five Bronc Riders}. She added another mural called \textit{Saved by the Seagulls}, which depicted an important historical incident from Utah history, and several other murals and smaller works.\textsuperscript{26} Mrs. Horne arranged Teichert's first show at the Newhouse Hotel Gallery in Salt Lake on 12 July 1931. The \textit{Salt Lake Deseret News} reported:

\begin{quote}
Her murals depict cowboy scenes of Wyoming, notably a rodeo series. There is a portrait of Ezra Meeker, Oregon Trail pioneer, which is perhaps the best piece in the entire collection. All should see the newcomer's work.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

Teichert's murals received critical acclaim and were sent on a touring exhibition throughout Utah, but they did not sell well. \textit{The Five Bronc Riders} was selected as a title head for a new section on Western Art in the \textit{Deseret News}.\textsuperscript{28} It appeared for several months, beginning 22 August 1931, but
went without a buyer. The Handcart Pioneers, Oregon or Bust, and Saved by the Seagulls were all exhibited by Mrs. Horne again in her Summer Salon of July 1932.

At least two murals, Captain Bonneville with Trappers (1932) and Bull Dogging (1932), were added by Teichert to Mrs. Horne's 1932 Summer Salon. The murals were all exhibited again at the Newhouse Gallery in April of 1933. At that time it was reported by the Deseret News that Captain Bonneville and the Trappers had recently been sold to West High School in Salt Lake, and that the LDS Church auxiliaries had purchased the Handcart Pioneers.

Teichert produced approximately fourteen murals, including the frieze in her own home, between 1927 when she moved to Cokeville and 1934 when government art patronage was implemented. The Beaux Art mural ideals which Teichert had embraced led her to create uncommissioned murals before there was a mural market. The production of these early murals was negligible, however, when compared to her prolific outpouring after 1934. Her mural production more than quadrupled during the years 1934-40, due to a demand for mural art.

Federal Art Patronage

One of the first acts of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's new administration in 1933 was to establish the "New-Deal" assistance programs to help the common man during the dark days of the depression. In the spring of 1933, George
Biddle, an American artist who had gone to Mexico as a mural apprentice in the 1920s, wrote to President Roosevelt proposing a government art patronage program similar to that of the Mexicans. Biddle pointed out that artists were as hungry as anyone and could be helped by a program which would employ them at daily wages. The government would receive art works in return, which could be placed in any tax-supported institution in the country. Biddle envisioned the rise of a democratic, people's art of mural painting.

In May 1933 John D. Rockefeller had ordered Diego Rivera's mural expunged from the new Rockefeller Center, because it displayed a prominent portrait of Lenin in his anti-capitalist role. After this incident, the Roosevelt administration was somewhat reluctant to sponsor artistic production patterned on the Mexican precedent. Roosevelt stated that, he did not want to encourage "a lot of young enthusiasts painting Lenin's head on the Justice Building." Nonetheless, because artists had to eat too, on 8 December 1933 the first New Deal art program (the Public Works of Art Project) was established. The program, a unit of the Works Project Administration, was placed under the direction of Robert E. Bruce of the Treasury Department, and sixteen regional divisions were set up throughout the country.

During the seven-month life span of the PWAP, 3,749 artists were hired. Though fifteen thousand small prints, easel paintings, and statues were executed under the new
program, it was the four hundred mural productions that caught the public's attention. Most people believed that murals were the only art sponsored by New Deal patronage. The popularity of mural production increased, and after 1934 the largest share of government commissions was for murals. From the establishment of the PWAP until the start of World War II, a multitude of murals were executed by vast numbers of artists at government expense.

After the dissolution of the PWAP, the government continued its program of relief to artists through the establishment of the Federal Art Project and the Section of Painting and Sculpture under the Treasury Department. Both of these programs came under the Works Project Administration. All art sponsored by the PWAP, the FAP and the Treasury Section is now generally lumped together under the term "WPA Art," a term which has come to be pejorative. The WPA Art units were effectively abolished by 1939, though the Treasury Section continued some production until 1943. After that date, the demands of war on government funds made continued federal art patronage difficult.

Under the WPA art programs, the final art product was dependent upon negotiations between three parties: the patron, the painter, and the public. The artist selected by Washington, was to decipher public opinion, and the resultant mural was to become part of the life of the community. These negotiations, in this regionalist concept of art, often
broke down, especially when the desires of federal officials or artists differed from the objectives of town officials. The result was that community leaders came to have increasing input in the selection of the muralists. Many small-town artists, who would otherwise have been ignored, participated in the abundant mural production. The compromise art which often resulted has lead Marling to claim that the government program was not an art program, but a social program that employed artists.\textsuperscript{44}

While the policy of the administrators of WPA art programs was to encourage the stylistic freedom of the artists, they did have their own stylistic objectives. Robert E. Bruce battled what he viewed as two extremes: the academic, Beaux Art style and the modernism which came from abroad. To him, the content of Beaux Art allegories was as inane as the form invented by modernists; neither reflected the truths of modern life.\textsuperscript{45} A vast stylistic middle ground of pictorial legibility prevailed in WPA murals.

The officials themselves, however, preferred the pictorially legible American Cubism of Thomas Hart Benton.\textsuperscript{46} While there was no stylistic uniformity among federally-backed artists, the most prevalent style in WPA mural decoration was the modified cubism of Benton with its up-to-date look. This predominant style which flattened images and emphasized the two-dimensional picture plane can be seen in George Biddle's 1935 \textit{Society Freed Through Justice} painted
for the Department of Justice Building in Washington D.C. (Figure 14). Many different styles of representational art, however, employing various degrees of modernity, abounded in the proliferation of WPA murals.

Benton contributed to the content of WPA murals as well as to their style. His American Scene painting fit Washington's criterion for subject matter. The PWAP had recommended that "the American Scene should be regarded as a general field for subject matter" in public art. Benton's American Scene murals have been branded "Regionalist" art, but Marling makes a distinction between the Regionalism of Benton and the regionalist concept of art which was advocated by the FAP and the Treasury Section. The government intended to sponsor art in all the geographical regions of the country, even in small towns which had not had access to "fine art" in the past. With such a goal in mind, Washington's regional approach to art insisted on factual content so that a mural would appeal to viewers of a particular geographic region. Benton, on the other hand, relied less on local fact and more on stereotypes, that had already been used by the media, to depict his Ozark shanties and midwest farm matrons. The result was that WPA muralists produced Bentonesque scenes which were "regional" because they depicted factual information from a particular locality. Benton's murals, on the other hand, were "Regional" as they typified more general regions of America
through readily recognizable stereotypes.

Certain subjects gained wide popularity in WPA murals. One was the depiction of machines, with particular emphasis on new modes of travel. In 1939 the New York World's Fair murals were dominated by representations of "zooming Fords and Chevies."49 Another popular mural theme of the 1930s was work in local industries. Murals showing routine activities provided a sense of stability, a hope for normalcy in the midst of depressed times.50

History, however, was the most popular theme of WPA murals, including those of Minerva Teichert. In commissioning local history murals, the members of a community chose a stable image of their home which emphasized a commitment to their roots. At a disturbing time in history, the past became a source of pride and comfort. Marling states that the historical mural is the "surest index of American taste in the '30s."51 Values of work, home, and community cooperation were idealized in these history tableaus, values which when applied to the present would bring a future as bright as the cherished past.

Pioneers, stage coaches, and pictures of founding fathers soon decorated the walls of public buildings throughout America. Some, such as First Pulpit in Granville (1938) by Wendell Jones, were decipherable only by town residents aware of local history (Figure 15). The arrival of the Presbyterian pioneers in Central Ohio was of great
significance to the people of Granville. Jones' mural depicts the moving story of their first Sunday in Granville, when they cut down a walnut tree as a symbolic pulpit and sang hymns around it, weeping for joy. Jones' mural provides a perfect example of what was often accomplished by WPA murals. A small town received an artistic production in a pictorially legible style, celebrating an important incident from its own history.

While the WPA murals in general displayed no uniform style, the historical murals displayed an even greater stylistic diversity. Some, such as Edna Reindel's Experimenting with the First Model of the Cotton Gin (1939) for the U.S. Post Office in Swainsboro, Georgia, displayed the up-to-date look of Benton's American Cubism (Figure 16). Many others, however, were couched in retrograde styles like the pseudo-Baroque of LaSalle's Last Expedition (1941), painted by William Dean Faucett for a Rosenberg, Texas post office (Figure 17). All were pictorially legible, with varying degrees of experimentation in elements of modernism. Modern angular forms were displayed in Seymour Fogel's depiction of the Safford, Arizona pioneers (Figure 18), while Albert T. Reid's stage coach mural for Sulphur, Oklahoma (Figure 19), is reminiscent of Remington's western illustrations.

Stylistic diversity was the hallmark of WPA murals, especially of the multitude of historical murals which were
produced for small towns across America. Minerva Teichert had already produced regional historical murals before the PWAP was created. In many ways, she exemplified the ideal qualities of a WPA muralist. Not only did her murals fit stylistically into the vast midground of pictorial legibility, but they were directed to an audience in the remote region of the Rocky Mountain West. Moreover, due to government patronage, murals had become very popular as decoration for public buildings, and Teichert was provided with a market for her large-scale works.

**Teichert's 1930s Mural Production.**

Government patronage spurred the production of murals in general, but it also sparked the prolific mural production of Minerva Teichert in particular. First, Teichert was commissioned to paint at least six murals through the WPA. These commissions helped to popularize her art and create a demand for her murals. Second, the federal program popularized mural art in general, creating a demand for mural decoration. As a result, Teichert's murals became highly sought after for the decoration of public buildings.

It can be said that Teichert perfectly fulfilled the role of a WPA muralist. When federal art patronage sparked a new mural movement, she was ready and waiting. Most of the WPA muralists were easel painters whose mural careers began with their government commissions. Teichert, on the other
hand, had studied mural decorating with the intent of becoming a muralist. By the time she received her first commission through the FAP, she had already painted large-scale murals. Furthermore, through her Beaux Art Training, she was convinced that mural decoration was the height of artistic achievement because of its ability to educate the public. She believed in the importance of telling stories through public art, and she believed that her people would benefit by learning stories from their history. She was also convinced that mural decoration could preserve the history of her people for future generations.55

Through the regionalist concept of art espoused by Washington, artists were encouraged to stay home and paint American scenes with which they were familiar.56 This is something which Teichert wanted to do even without government encouragement. She was a western woman familiar with ranchers, cattle, horses, Rocky Mountain scenery, and western pioneer history. Her teachers in New York had lauded her for her animal painting, and she had considered it a great compliment when Robert Henri said, "Her cattle are cattle and her horses are horses."57 While she was still in New York, Teichert had expressed a desire to paint the American West. In the fall of 1915 she wrote to her mother:

It is not my training they like here but that wild tendency of mine which they insist I should struggle on in. So when I go home I should like to "take up some more land" . . . I will teach art in winter and paint out in wild things all summer . . . 58
Stylistically, Teichert's representational art fit into the vast middle ground between Beaux Art academism and European modernism. She had acquired a painterly style under Henri, which she developed into a realistic style of her own (Figure 20). Her quick execution enabled her to capture action scenes of cowboys and horses of the American west, while through the excellent draftsmanship acquired from her Beaux Art training, she was able to provide a sense of monumentality to her historical figures. Teichert was well-suited to paint western historical subjects, and she readily embraced history painting, that favorite of WPA themes.

Teichert already felt strongly about the history of her people before the creation of the New Deal art projects. She had written two books, stories from historical legends about the area around the old Fort Hall, a former trading outpost on the Snake River Bottoms. Her 1932 Romance of Old Fort Hall recounts a story of friendly relations between the Indians and the white settlers. It tells of a white boy that became the foster child of an Indian woman after his mother had died in an accident on the trail. Teichert based her book on legends of the old Oregon trail. One newspaper said of her book:

It is a historic record of the founding and the lives at old Fort Hall, one of the pioneer outposts of the Idaho country. The author, who is a painter by profession, has drawn a literary picture in a masterly manner. She shows a keen love for the subject about which she writes.60

The article may well have added that she had a keen love for
the subjects she painted.

Teichert read a great deal about the history of the Rocky Mountain west, and many of the stories for her historical murals were taken from her readings. In 1926 she clipped and kept a series of stories about the life of Jim Bridger from a Blackfoot, Idaho newspaper. At least four of her 1930s murals were based on the life of this famous trapper and explorer. After she moved to Cokeville, she borrowed Washington Irving's novel about the western explorer, Captain Bonneville from the Cokeville School Library. She borrowed it so many times that the principal finally gave her the book. Stories of Captain Bonneville provided the theme for another four of her 1930s murals, one of them being a WPA commission for the Cokeville School.

Of the dozen early 1930s murals Teichert produced before the creation of the WPA, half had western historical themes. They included Captain Bonneville and Trappers, Oregon or Bust, and Pierre's Hole Massacre. Due to her espousal of Beaux Art ideals, Teichert longed to monumentalize the history of her people. Her desire to teach the public through her mural depictions of western history was partially fulfilled by the popularity of her historical murals throughout the Rocky Mountain West during the 1930s.

Shortly after the creation of the PWAP, the Cokeville School had the opportunity to commission a mural at government expense. Input from community heads went into
the selection of the artist and, not surprisingly, Minerva Teichert was selected. The school board had already discussed their desire to purchase a Teichert mural, and saw this as an opportunity to acquire one. The commissioned work was Captain Bonneville Trading with Indians, inspired by Washington Irving's book that she had borrowed from the school library (Figure 21). This WPA commission led to others, and was the spark which ignited Teichert's prolific mural production of the next seven years. She would now be able to realize her dream of painting historical themes on a grand scale.

Ironically, Teichert was opposed to FDR politics and New Deal programs in general, and specifically to New Deal programs which effected ranchers. A 1936 news article which Teichert clipped and saved expressed her feelings well:

The New Deal has baited the American ranchman and farmer with a miserable dole designed to buy his independence and his vote. We contend that the "big money" has gone to those who needed it least, and that forced restriction of corn crops and of cotton-seed cakes has all but left the breeder and feeder high and dry. In the place of actual help from Washington, we have been baited with our own money, and "sold out" by the Roosevelt Administration to foreign producers, while meddling officials from Washington pry into everything from our bull pens to our bank accounts.

Teichert was not only averse to WPA projects; she was also opposed to the stylistic preference of WPA art administrators. She disliked the American Cubism of Thomas Hart Benton and referred to Diego Rivera as a "libertine" who executed "faked Mayan Gods."
Despite these aversions, however, Teichert did not turn down WPA commissions. Isolated as she was in the small town of Cokeville, Teichert welcomed the attention which was focused on her as a regionalist painter. Two 1936 FAP commissions for the Rock Springs, Wyoming School District, enabled her to portray stories from the life of Jim Bridger on large canvasses. The two murals were *Bridger Meets Jedediah Smith at the Tetons* (Figure 22), and *Bridger's Yellowstone* (Figure 23).67 Together with works like *Jim Bridger and Brigham Young*, which was commissioned at about the same time for the Hotel Utah in Salt Lake City,68 the murals monumentally recorded the history of the American west for future generations.

Teichert received at least three other WPA commissions. Her daughter recalls hearing a government official, who visited their home in Cokeville, tell her mother that the other Wyoming artists were jealous of her many commissions.69 In 1936 she executed two more FAP murals for the Rock Springs School, *Stage Coach Holdup* (Figure 24) and *Pony Express*70 (Figure 25). These also portrayed scenes of western history and were two of the most popular subjects in WPA murals.71 Also in 1936, she was commissioned through the FAP to paint *Overland Trail* for the University of Wyoming in Laramie.72 Teichert's fame rested in large part on these government commissions and on her works commissioned for the Hotel Utah. In 1945, the *Salt Lake Tribune* referred to her as the
"artist whose murals Pony Express and Overland Stage adorn the walls of the high school at Rock Springs, and also the Pioneer Room (at the) . . . Hotel Utah."  

Through these mural commissions, Teichert provides a bridge between two distinct mural movements. She fulfills the role of a regionalist WPA muralist through her monumental depictions of local history in a readable style. At the same time, however, she fulfills the ideals of the Beaux Art muralists when, as a storyteller, she monumentalized the history of her people through murals which would teach these stories to future generations.

Teichert's fame as a muralist spread, spurring on her abundant production of uncommissioned western historical murals. Mrs. Horne was able to place many of these murals in public buildings throughout Utah. In 1941 Horne listed some of the murals in an article about Teichert. South High School in Salt Lake had purchased at least six Teichert murals: two were based on Captain Bonneville themes, and two depicted another of Teichert's favorite historical themes, the American Indian of the western frontier. Teichert considered her South High Indian murals, Pottery Makers and Weavers (Figure 26), to be especially fine, and she referred to South High as her "shrine."  

Horne also listed three murals which had been purchased by Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. All three were painted in 1935 and purchased by BYU in 1936. Two of these, Rug Merchants and Washakie's Son's Wedding, were based on
Indian themes. The other, Coming of the Seagulls (Figure 27), was exhibited at the Utah Art Institute-WPA exhibit at the Utah State Capitol in 1936. Coming of the Seagulls clearly labels Teichert as a regionalist history painter, and places her alongside other WPA muralists of the period. The work parallels Kendell Jones' First Pulpit in Granville, discussed above (Figure 15), in that its message is only decipherable by those aware of local history.

The first crops of the early Mormon pioneers in Salt Lake Valley had been threatened by hordes of crickets. In answer to the prayers of the faithful, the desperate situation had been reversed when multitudes of seagulls appeared and devoured the crickets. The seagull became the state bird of Utah. Teichert's depiction of this event also portrays the realization of Beaux Art ideals, as it monumentalizes the gratitude of an idealized young pioneer woman for this answer to her prayer. This mural embodies what Blashfield called "significance." Blashfield said: "A public decoration is sure to be in part, at any rate, a commemoration; in the public building the community celebrates itself and is preached to." Three other murals listed by Horne were purchased by North Cache High School in Cache Valley, Utah. One depicted Brigham Young advising a group of pioneers to settle Cache Valley. The two others were of Indian subjects, a group of Indians meeting Jim Bridger on horseback, and a nighttime
scene of captive Indians. Logan High School also purchased two Indian murals.79

Teichert is known to have executed at least forty-two uncommissioned murals of western historical themes between 1934 and 1940. Many are now untraceable, but we do know that at least twenty-five of them were purchased for public buildings through the art dealer, Alice Merrill Horne.80

Teichert's popularity as a western muralist led one feature writer of the 1930s to state:

Too bad that Salt Lake cannot rear a temple of gleaming stone to be used as a center for the arts and there turn Mrs. Teichert loose to do the murals. Without doubt, some stunning effects truly reminiscent of the west would be achieved.81

Robert Davis, in a recent publication on Teichert, claimed that Alice Merrill Horne "gave impetus for the artist's large historical and religious murals."82 It is true that Horne exhibited Teichert's murals, sold many of them, and encouraged her in her work, even defending her in the press.83 It will be remembered, however, that when she first visited Mrs. Horne, Teichert was already a muralist. She had already formulated her goal to paint murals, as evidenced by the uncommissioned murals she took to show the Salt Lake agent at this first meeting. This early mural production, however, had been minimal. From 1928 to 1934, she painted approximately one fourth as many murals as she would produce in an equal number of years after 1934. Teichert's mural production would have continued to be
minimal if her murals had not been marketable, but even the marketability of her murals was not strictly due to Mrs. Horne. Large historical canvasses for public buildings became popular due to the many murals placed in public buildings across America through the auspices of the WPA, and Teichert's own WPA commissions increased the fame of her works. Mrs. Horne was marketing an increasingly popular form of art when she sold Teichert murals.

Teichert was thrilled as opportunities opened up for her to paint the stories of her people and to fulfill her didactic ambitions as a muralist which she had acquired through her Beaux Art training in Chicago. In a eulogy which she delivered at the 1948 funeral service for Alice Merrill Horne, Teichert turned to her early Beaux Art training once more as she explained the importance of mural art as a teacher, again reiterating the oft-quoted purpose for murals, "so that he who runs may read." She said:

We must paint the great Mormon story of our pioneers in mural decorations so that he who runs may read. The story thrills me, fills me, drives me on . . . We want to make a great American art, to develop a style distinctly our own . . . We'll tell our stories on the walls.
Endnotes


2. During the 1920s N. C. Wyeth was commissioned to paint decorations for the Boston Federal Reserve Bank, the Hotel Flamingo in Miami, the First National Bank of Boston, the Franklin Bank in New York, the Missouri State Capitol Building, the National Geographic Society, and the Roosevelt Hotel in New York. Betsy James Wyeth, ed., The Wyeths: The Letters of N. C. Wyeth, 1901-1945 (Boston: Gambit, 1971), p. 858.


6. Marling, p. 36.


10. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of this period.


12. Cook and Yeo, p. 37.


15. Watrous, p. 70.


18. Mucha's *Slav Epic* is discussed on p. 33 above.
20. Watrous, p. 106.
22. Eastwood, Inventory.
25. Eastwood, Inventory

26. Eastwood, Interview, 15 March 1988. Eastwood was with her mother at this first visit to Alice Merrill Horne. She recalls that her mother unrolled her murals on Mrs. Horne's floor.

27. *Salt Lake City Deseret News*, 4 July 1931.
29. Today it belongs to Teichert's son John.
31. Martin, "A Vigorous Painter."
32. Teichert, Scrap book, a clipping entitled "Western artists seen at Newhouse Exhibit."
33. Eastwood, Inventory.
34. See Appendix.
41. Watrous, p. 114.
42. Marling, *Wall-to-Wall*, p. 49.
45. Marling, *Wall-to-Wall*, p. 44.
54. Watrous, p. 119.
55. These beliefs were all discussed in Chapter III above.
57. "Art Critics of Gotham."
58. Minerva Kohlhepp to Mrs. F. J. Kohlhepp, 31 October 1915, Eastwood Files.
59. See n. 37, chap. 2, above.
61. Teichert, Scrap book.
63. Eastwood, Inventory. See Appendix.
64. S. Reed Dayton, member of the Cokeville School Board during the 1930s, telephone interview, 10 March 1988.
65. Teichert, Scrap book. No date nor name of the publication in which the article appeared are found on this clipping. The article is entitled "Statistical Cowpunchers" and was written by J. Everetts Halery, chairman, Jeffersonian Democrats of Texas.


68. Eastwood, Inventory.


70. Keeney.

71. Marling, Wall-to-Wall Murals, p. 140.

72. Eastwood, Inventory; and Eastwood, Interview, Orem, Utah, 9 February 1988.

73. "Fort Hall of Idaho Topic of New Book," Salt Lake City Tribune, 1 July 1945.


76. Horne.

77. Teichert, Scrap book, clipping.

78. Blashfield, p. 179.

79. Horne.

80. Eastwood, Inventory.

81. Teichert, Scrap book. The title of this article is "Mrs. Horne's Summer Salon Collection." The author is Gail Martin. Both date and name of the publication are missing.

82. Davis, p. 40.

83. See "Around the Galleries," Salt Lake City Deseret News, 8 August 1931.

84. Teichert, eulogy, funeral service for Alice Merrill Horne, quoted by Robert O. Davis, p. 41.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A discussion within one paper of both the Beaux Art movement at the turn of the century and the mural movement of the 1930s is unusual. James Watrous' 1939 dissertation on the history of American mural painting is one of the few sources available which treats both movements. The study of both of these American movements is necessary, however, to gain an understanding of Minerva Teichert's prolific mural production. After isolating the Beaux Art ideals which awoke in her the desire to be a muralist, it is necessary to discuss how this desire reached its fruition. Furthermore, Teichert provides an important link between these two seemingly unrelated mural movements. Both movements urged the production of large scale representational works to decorate public buildings. Both emphasized the monumentalizing of people and events to preserve their stories for posterity. The movement of the 1930s stressed the depiction of regional subject matter in a pictorially legible, non-academic style, while the earlier movement emphasized academic renditions employing classical allusion. Yet both movements yielded mural works which commemorated and
idealized the peoples and history of America.

In her early training, Teichert internalized the Beaux Art ideal of monumentalizing stories of history for future generations. She departed from the Beaux Art use of allegorical symbolism, however, and sought to monumentalize stories from the history of her own region in the Rocky Mountain west in a loose, painterly, yet still a representational style. In her readable depictions of regional history, she met the qualifications of a WPA muralist, and the government-sponsored popularity of mural art in the 1930s provided the vehicle through which Teichert realized the ambitions she had acquired during her Beaux Art training.

James Watrous, in his 1939 dissertation on the history of American mural painting, discusses both the prolific Beaux Art decoration and the government-sponsored movement of the 1930s at great length. He emphasizes, however, only the vast differences between the two movements, and does not credit the earlier mural decoration with any impact on the later movement. In fact, he speaks of the older mural production only in disparaging terms, and stresses the impact of the Mexican movement on 1930s murals. This viewpoint is perhaps understandable in one who viewed both movements from a time frame within the 1930s—when the new movement was at its height and the older murals were held in disrepute. I am unaware, however, of any more recent scholarship connecting
the two movements. Yet, certainly the great flowering of murals during the 1930s suggests that there must have been a mural tradition of some sort in America.

The Beaux Art mural decoration produced in America at the turn of the century was the most important mural movement then in existence. It is only logical that it would impact future American production. The study of Minerva Teichert's mural output suggests strong ties between the two movements. Surely other muralists of the 1930s had also received Beaux Art training, as had Teichert and Thomas Hart Benton. Was their dedication to mural painting also inspired by the ideals of Blashfield-era muralists? This is a question deserving of more intense research.

As discussed in this paper, Minerva Kohlhepp, Idaho farm girl, did not aspire to the grand art of mural painting when she first entered the Art Institute of Chicago. It was only after she had been exposed to the lofty ideals of the Beaux Art muralists at the Art Institute that she acquired her determination to be a muralist. Kohlhepp was young and impressionable and awed by her artist-teachers and lecturers. Under their tutelage, she readily embraced the concept that mural decoration was the highest achievement in painting. The Beaux Art goal of educating the public through large public art (as in ancient Egypt and Greece), became her goal as well. She felt that both her religion and the history of the American West could be taught through mural decoration.
Espousing Blashfield's view of mural art as a storyteller, she believed that her art should tell a story so clearly that even the illiterate would understand it. As a young art student, she envisioned the great goal of teaching the public through the painting of easily-understood stories on a large-scale, to be the loftiest goal of a painter.

Teichert also believed in the lasting quality of mural art, as stressed by Beaux Art decorators. Future generations would learn our history through murals, just as we learn about ancient civilizations through their wall decorations. There is an irony, however, in speaking of the lasting quality of twentieth-century mural decoration. Public buildings of this century seem to be ephemeral in nature, and when they are razed, their mural decoration is often destroyed with them. Also, twentieth-century public taste has changed with great frequency, and many murals have been removed or expunged. Few of Teichert's own murals now hang in the buildings for which they were purchased. Nonetheless, the Beaux Art ideal which Teichert acquired in Chicago was that mural decoration of public buildings would last for generations: preserving history for posterity.

When Teichert entered the Art Students League in New York nearly three years after leaving Chicago, she sought out training in mural decoration. At the League, she also came under the charismatic influence of the realist, Robert Henri. Most Teichert scholarship equates her artistic style and
achievements with this teacher, yet Henri only served to counteract certain elements of her Beaux Art training. Under Henri, she relinquished her training in a tight academic style for a looser depiction with a more painterly brush. He also gave her the courage to depict her heroes of the American West in a realist style, rather than as classical figures. Her goal to express her stories on a grand scale never faded, and when she returned to the West after her New York studies, she was very vocal about her muralist ambitions.

Teichert desired to produce mural-sized canvasses immediately after her studies, and she did produce some, but her public was not prepared to receive her large-scale works. Small western towns were not financially able to hire mural decorators for their public buildings, nor was there any precedent for the decoration of their schools, post offices, and court houses. Teichert's popularity and success as a muralist came only after a system of government art patronage had promoted and financed the decoration of public buildings with murals. The WPA art projects of the 1930s not only created a demand for murals in general, but a demand for regional history murals in particular. Teichert was provided with a ready market for the works she had long desired to produce.

As has been shown, however, financial rewards were not the only factor which prompted Teichert's mural production.
She had painted some murals before the government-sponsored movement began. Also, she had expressed desires to be a muralist as early as 1915, before she enrolled at the Art Institute; and she reiterated these ambitions, in terms which espoused Beaux Art mural ideals, even after she had finished her New York studies with Robert Henri. Minerva Teichert's WPA commissions and her other 1930s murals fulfilled her Beaux Art ambitions to teach the history of her people through monumentalizing stories from their past in the decoration of public buildings.

This study illuminates the motivations for Teichert's prolific mural output, and it also sheds new light on the general history of mural production in America. Recent scholarship makes much of a contemporary American mural movement, which is inspired in large part by the Mexican muralists, Orozco and Rivera, and many scholars of the last decade have published much about WPA murals. At the same time, turn-of-the-century mural painting in the U.S. has been largely ignored by scholarship of the last several decades. Scholars have been quick to point out that mural painting at the beginning of the twentieth century had fallen into "utter disrepute," and that the tradition of mural decoration had been lost. Historians seldom deal with the prolific Beaux Art phase of mural decoration and the lofty ideals which inspired it. These Beaux Art ideals, however, motivated at least one muralist of the 30s movement to embrace mural
decoration. Even Forbes Watson, apologist for the Treasury Section, spoke in Beaux Art terms when he defended the pictorially legible WPA murals by stating:

The masters of the past were not in the least discouraged . . . by the requirement to make their earthly story-telling clear to multitudes incapable of understanding art.5

Perhaps a closer scrutiny of other 1930s muralists will reveal that they, too, had been attracted to mural decorating at an earlier time through Beaux Art training.6

Thomas Hart Benton, who inspired the mural movement of the 30s, had received Beaux Art training at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1907. After studying various forms of modernism, he decided on mural decoration as his preferred medium. He aspired to be a muralist throughout the decade of the 1920s, and when his goal finally met fruition he monumentalized American men and women on walls across the United States. He, like Teichert, departed from the strict academic style of the Beaux Art muralists, but he too, had a goal of telling the stories of a people through monumental art.

In addition, people from small towns across America selected murals for their public buildings, commemorating their local heroes and history in a grand manner. A precedent for commemorative historical murals had been set by Beaux Art muralists in the abundant decoration which had been provided for state capitols and court houses in the early part of the century. While the allegorical allusions of the
earlier style had faded by the 1930s, the idea of celebrating local heroes through mural decoration still remained. It is, indeed, plausible that the 1930s penchant for historical murals stemmed from the Beaux Art precedent, as did Minerva Teichert's predilection for historical subjects. The impact of the Beaux Art murals on later historical traditions is certainly worthy of further investigation.

Opportunities abound for further research on many of the American muralists in general, and on the art of Minerva Teichert in particular. A complete analysis of her stylistic development has not been attempted. It would probably link her again to the Beaux Art tradition, for while her loose brushwork was inspired by Henri, her monumental figures seem reminiscent of her earlier training.

Her compositional sources also merit further investigation. Marian Johnson, in her recent article states that *Coming of the Seagulls* "is the only Minerva painting in which a real source can be suggested." Even with the few sources which have been suggested in this thesis, this statement can easily be refuted. The compositional sources for many of Teichert's works can be found in paintings reproduced in books and magazines which Teichert possessed. A study putting Teichert in her proper place among American women artists also awaits thorough scholarly investigation. This would be a very timely topic for research, as a more clear picture of the contributions of American women artists
is now emerging.

It is hoped that this study has amplified the reasons for Minerva Teichert's prolific output of large-scale art. After her muralist goals met fruition in the 1930s, she continued to produce murals until she was rendered incapable by senility near the end of her life. She never forsook her muralist ambitions and ideals acquired in Chicago. In her later life, she still expressed her ideals as she had done in 1917 after she finished her east-coast studies. She wrote in 1947:

In that day the Gospel must be written so that he who runs may read. Isn't that mural decoration? That's how we read the life of the earliest men in Egypt, Chaldea, and Babylon...

Teichert always longed to place more of her stories before her public--members of her church and of her community.


6. Leon Kroll, another 1930s muralist, had also received Beaux Art training. He studied in Paris at the same time Benton did (Yeo and Cook, p. 39). His 1939 murals for the Trenton, New Jersey Memorial display figures conceived in a more modern, angular style than he was taught through his academic training. He monumentalized the World War I dead, however, with depictions of idealized youths promising a hope of life after death. A young soldier is actually depicted stepping beyond this life into a happier one. Surely the Beaux Art tradition had an impact on Kroll.

7. Johnson, p. 139.

8. One striking compositional precedent is that of Raphael's Liberation of St. Peter from Prison, which Teichert used for her Book of Mormon depiction of the earthquake that delivered Alma and Amulek from prison.

9. Teichert, handwritten manuscript, Eastwood files.
## APPENDIX

### The Murals of Minerva Teichert, 1930 - 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HISTORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville (Captain) and Fishermen</td>
<td>57&quot;x70&quot;</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville and Trappers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Purchased by West High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville Trades for Horses</td>
<td>57&quot;x70&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Purchased for Horace Mann School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonneville Trading with Indians</td>
<td>41&quot;x88&quot;</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Commissioned by the Federal Art Project for Cokeville School, Cokeville, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridger (Jim) and Brigham Young</td>
<td></td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Commissioned by Hotel Utah, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridger and Indians on Bear Lake</td>
<td></td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Now part of LDS Church Collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridger Meets Jedediah Smith at the Tetons</td>
<td>72&quot;x120&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Commissioned by the Federal Art Project for Rock Springs School District, Rock Springs, WY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1This list is incomplete, and much information is unavailable. The information is taken from an unpublished catalog compiled by the artist's daughter, Laurie Teichert Eastwood, October 1987.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Painting Title</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridger's Yellowstone</td>
<td>66&quot;x90&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Commissioned by the Federal Art Project for Rock Springs School District, Rock Springs, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigham Young Colonizer</td>
<td></td>
<td>1935</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigham Young and Immigrants (Cache Valley)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Purchased for North Cache High School, Logan, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronc Riders/Five</td>
<td>39&quot;x128&quot;</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Used during 1931 as title head for Western Art section of Salt Lake City Deseret News. Present owner is Teichert's son, John, Cokeville, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td></td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull Dogging/Joe Welch</td>
<td></td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Exhibited in Mrs. Horne's Summer Salon, 1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cache (Captain Bonneville)</td>
<td>72&quot;x130&quot;</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast Your Nets on the Other Side</td>
<td>48&quot;x72&quot;</td>
<td>c1930</td>
<td>Painted for and given to Cokeville, Wyoming LDS Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ</td>
<td>47&quot;x71&quot;</td>
<td>c1937</td>
<td>Purchased by the Deseret Sunday School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Preaching From Boat</td>
<td>72&quot;x54&quot;</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Purchased for Yalecrest Ward LDS Chapel, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming of the Seagulls</td>
<td>70&quot;x58&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Purchased by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covered Wagon Drawn by Oxen</td>
<td>96&quot;x72&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Presently in Hotel Temple Square, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covered Wagon (Man and Woman)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covered Wagons</td>
<td>76&quot;x57&quot;</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowboy at Midnight</td>
<td>35&quot;x70&quot;</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowboy Roping a Bear</td>
<td>77&quot;x59&quot;</td>
<td>c1939</td>
<td>Exhibited by Mrs. Horne 27 February 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance/Summer (Indians)</td>
<td>50&quot;x69&quot;</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>First shown at the Newhouse Hotel Gallery, 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk at Tetons</td>
<td>77&quot;x59&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlisting of Mormon Battalion</td>
<td>84&quot;x60&quot;</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Purchased by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Plowing and Planting</td>
<td>45&quot;x68&quot;</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Presently in LDS Church Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</td>
<td></td>
<td>1937</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handcart Company at Falls</td>
<td>77&quot;x49&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Presently in LDS Church Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handcart Pioneers</td>
<td>96&quot;x72&quot;</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Purchased in Hotel Temple Square, Salt Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handcart Pioneers</td>
<td>68&quot;x51&quot;</td>
<td>c1939</td>
<td>Presently in LDS Church Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handcart Pioneers Choosing Dancing Partners</td>
<td></td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Original painting for and given to Cokeville LDS Chapel. Sold to LDS Church Auxiliaries in 1933. Presently in LDS Church Collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handcarts</td>
<td>59&quot;x46&quot;</td>
<td>c1930</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Captives</td>
<td>36&quot;x72&quot;</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Purchased for Cache High School, Logan, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Captives at Night</td>
<td>48&quot;x96&quot;</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Chiefs off to Powwow/Sioux Chiefs</td>
<td>56&quot;x48&quot;</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Purchased by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Night Skirmish</td>
<td>45&quot;x68&quot;</td>
<td>c1935</td>
<td>Presently owned by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Story of Flood</td>
<td>36&quot;x42&quot;</td>
<td>c1934</td>
<td>Purchased by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Village</td>
<td>69&quot;x117&quot;</td>
<td>c1935</td>
<td>Purchased by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>39&quot;x69&quot;</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Purchased by Cache High School, Logan, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians Meet Jim Bridger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Purchased by Cache High School, Logan, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians Roasting Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Captives, Waters of Babylon/ Psalms 137</td>
<td>60&quot;x84&quot;</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Exhibited by Mrs. Horne, February 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Refugees, New York Harbor</td>
<td>84&quot;x60&quot;</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location and Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion and Lamb, Isaiah 2:4, 11:6</td>
<td>60&quot;x48&quot;</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter, James and John Ordaining Joseph Smith</td>
<td>120&quot;x84&quot;</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Commissioned for Provo LDS Tabernacle, Provo, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre's Hole Massacre</td>
<td>96&quot;x51&quot;</td>
<td>c1933</td>
<td>Presently owned by Cokeville School, Cokeville, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer Ambush</td>
<td></td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneers Eating at Campfire</td>
<td></td>
<td>1938</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneers Throw a Party</td>
<td></td>
<td>1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pony Express</td>
<td>70&quot;x106&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Commissioned by the Federal Art Project for Rock Springs School District, Rock Springs, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottery Makers (Indian)</td>
<td>72&quot;x98&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon or Bust</td>
<td>41&quot;x88&quot;</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Presently owned by Cokeville School, Cokeville, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overland Trail</td>
<td>42&quot;x156&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Commissioned by the Federal Art Project for the University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescue of Lost Lamb</td>
<td>48&quot;x48&quot;</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Purchased by Bonneville LDS Stake Center, Bonneville, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Collection/Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rub Merchants (Indians)</td>
<td>69&quot;x119&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Purchased by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rug Weavers (Indians)</td>
<td>72&quot;x98&quot;</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacajawea</td>
<td>45&quot;x38&quot;</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Purchased by Salt Lake City Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saved by the Seagulls</td>
<td></td>
<td>c1930</td>
<td>Presently in LDS Church Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scouts, Night, Salt Lake Valley</td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Purchased by the Wyoming State Capitol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheepcamp by Starlight</td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Coach Holdup</td>
<td>72&quot;x106&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Commissioned by the Federal Art Project for Rock Springs School District, Rock Springs, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traders and Trappers</td>
<td></td>
<td>c1932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washakie's Son's Wedding</td>
<td>69&quot;x119&quot;</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Purchased by Brigham Young University, Provo, UT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weavers (Indians)</td>
<td>72&quot;x108&quot;</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Purchased for South High School, Salt Lake City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter's Last Trap</td>
<td></td>
<td>1935</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Around the Galleries." Salt Lake City Deseret News, 8 August 1931.


Art Institute of Chicago. Academic Record for Minerva B. Kohlhepp.

Art Institute of Chicago. Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago 3 (July 1909).


Art Institute of Chicago. Catalog for Students, 1909-10.


Chicago Tribune, 6 February 1906, p. 115-D.


Eastwood, Laurie Teichert. Telephone interview, 31 August 1988.


"Fort Hall of Idaho Topic of New Book." Salt Lake City Tribune, 1 July 1945.


McIsaac, Mary. Registrar. Art Institute of Chicago. Interpretation of Academic Record for Minerva B. Kohlhepp.


Provo, Utah, Teichert Family Collection. Minerva Teichert Papers.


"Salt Lakers in Gotham, Four Western Students at Work in New York." Salt Lake City Deseret News, 13 May 1916.


Teichert, Minerva. Scrapbook, Teichert Family Collection.


"Western Art." Salt Lake City Deseret News, 29 August 1931, Sec. 3, p. viii.

Figure 6
THE LAW IN MODERN TIMES
STUDY FOR PENDENTIVE IN COURT HOUSE, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO.
E. H. Blackfield, Painter, N. Y.

Figure 7

Figure 14

Figure 15
Figure 21
MINERVA TEICHERT'S MURALS: THE MOTIVATION
FOR HER LARGE-SCALE PRODUCTION

Marian Eastwood Wardle
Department of Art
M.A. Degree, December 1988

ABSTRACT

1988 marks the centennial of the birth of the late Wyoming artist, Minerva Kohlhepp Teichert, best known for her many murals depicting religious themes and subjects from the American West. An understanding of the motives behind her prolific mural production results from the study of two distinct American mural movements: the Beaux Art movement at the turn of the century and the government-sponsored mural movement of the 1930s. Teichert provides an important connection between these two seemingly unrelated mural movements, which are seldom linked by scholars.

Teichert was stimulated to embrace mural decoration by her training in the Beaux Art tradition at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1909 to 1912. Beaux Art muralists desired to preserve history for posterity, as had the wall painters of ancient Egypt. Teichert embraced this concept and formed her muralist ambitions. The opportunity for the realization of her desires, however, came through the government-sponsored mural movement of the 1930s. In her readable depictions of regional history, Teichert met the qualifications of a WPA muralist, and was enabled to fulfill her Beaux Art ambitions, ambitions likely shared by other 1930s muralists with similar training.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

Steven C. Bule, Committee Chairman

Martha L. Peacock, Committee Member

Robert L. Marshall, Department Chairman