



“Painting the Town”: How Merchants Marketed the Visual Arts to Nineteenth-Century Omahans

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Article Summary: How does one build an art community in a frontier town? As Omaha grew, local merchants used their wealth and influence to promote art appreciation and the concept of art patronage.

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Photographs / Images: Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha; Logan Fontenelle (1853 portrait by folk artist George Simons); Exposition Building, Fifteenth and Capitol streets, Omaha; George Lininger, Omaha merchant and art patron; letterhead for the Lininger Implement Company; a late-nineteenth century Omaha art gallery; an Omaha art class, c. 1894; advertisement for The Omaha Academy of Fine Arts, Omaha Excelsior, December 12, 1891; Bouguereau’s Return of Spring on exhibit at the Lininger Gallery; detail of Paul Philippoteaux’s panorama, The Battle of Gettysburg, a copy of which was displayed in Omaha beginning in 1886; Makovsky’s Russian Beauty and Cat, 1862, Joslyn Art Museum; Bouguereau’s Return of Spring, 1886, Joslyn Art Museum; “Lynhurst,” home of George and Sarah Joslyn; a postcard showing the Lininger Gallery; Fine Arts Building constructed for the TransMississippi and International Exposition in Omaha, 1898 (exterior and interior views)

“PAINTING THE TOWN”

How Merchants Marketed the
Visual Arts to Nineteenth-Century Omahans



When Joslyn Memorial opened in Omaha, Nebraska, on November 29, 1931, over 30,000 Omahans—from “the man in overalls” to “the man in an evening suit”—“poured into the building, swept down every hallway and filled every room.”



Commissioned by Sarah H. Joslyn, the structure commemorated the life of Omaha newspaper magnate George A. Joslyn, Sarah's husband. The Joslyns were devoted patrons of music and art, and the memorial contained multiple galleries for art as well as a fine concert hall in which was installed George Joslyn's personal pipe organ taken from the Joslyn home. It had been rebuilt as a concert organ with four manuals and pedals and some seventy-five sets of pipes.² Although today's enlarged structure retains its fine music hall, most twenty-first century Omahans know Joslyn as the "art museum" with a permanent collection ranging from artifacts of the earliest civilizations in the Fertile Crescent to the most recent contemporary visual art.³ But when Joslyn Art Museum opened, twentieth century Omahans had not suddenly decided that they would support a museum of fine arts; they had been schooled by the city's nineteenth century business leaders-turned-art patrons to understand the importance of supporting visual arts in their community. Omahans had been educated to appreciate art, not solely as household decoration, but as a culturally appealing societal component of life that transcended all income levels in the city. The story of Omahans' acquisition of the skills necessary to foster community interest in the visual arts can be told through the story of the efforts made by nineteenth century merchants who marketed the concept of art patronage to all residents of this frontier metropolis.

Established in 1854 on the west bank of the Missouri River, the frontier community of Omaha grew quickly after the Civil War during the era of the transcontinental railroad's construction. By the 1870s, art patronage among members of Omaha's business community was expanding rapidly. The decade saw an economic boom that boosted the city's population to over 60,000 people. Numerous industries manufactured bricks, brewed beer, and refined metals. Over 1,300 retail establishments sold everything from furniture and stoves to hats and undergarments. A hinterland of small agricultural communities, farms, and ranches thrived along the rails west of the city, each with residents who depended in some way on the goods sold by Omaha merchants. In their free time, Omahans attended thirty-eight churches and two synagogues. For entertainment, they danced, sang, played musical instruments, and watched plays by itinerant troupes.⁴ But the visual arts were viewed only privately in the sitting rooms of the city's wealthy citizens.⁵ And only a few businesses stocked decorator accessories such as chromo-lithographs.⁶ But

as the city grew and diversified, so did the population's desire to individually collect and to civically cultivate the visual arts. In December 1885, Parisian art broker Joseph Keller visited the city to get acquainted with its prominent citizens—and potential clients. Omaha was on the cusp of artistic change, and Keller summarized residents' improved interest in, and understanding of, the visual arts by saying:

There can be no doubt that art decoration, in every branch, is receiving more attention in America than ever before. It is apparent every time I come here. . . . I find myself doing business for the most prominent people in America. . . . [not] all picture buyers are connoisseurs. . . . But it is not them we seek to educate. It is their children who are beginning to discern between masterpieces and daubs.⁷

The city's cultural environment had begun to mature.

Omaha's story of art patronage parallels that of most sizable American communities. Art—and a model for collecting it—had come to North America with the earliest immigrants. Early in the colonial era, wealthy individuals had returned to England to sit for portrait painters, but the colonists' desire to decorate their houses with portraits and landscapes commissioned from skilled painters, coupled with a dearth of North Americans trained as artists, led many colonists to seek federal support for the visual arts, as had been common in Europe. However, art patrons soon acknowledged that in America's capitalistic business environment, financial support for professionally trained artists would have to come from the public. At the same time, the patrons, usually well-to-do individuals from entrepreneurial families, realized it would be up to them (and in their own best interests) to demonstrate the usefulness and value of fine art to their communities, thereby not only encouraging good artists to settle in their towns, but also to facilitate the study of art in their communities.⁸

The fledgling American community of art patrons turned to Europe for a model of action.⁹ Europeans' pattern of patronage had been established during the Renaissance, when artists were first elevated from the position of anonymous craftsmen who worked at the pleasure of their benefactors to that of ennobled and famous artisans whose works were commissioned for their creators' independent style and sometimes unconventional personal behaviors. The underlying Renaissance theme of humanism, which intended to restore classical vir-

tues to the contemporary world, also reinforced the innate human desire for fame that had been sublimated during the Middle Ages' cultural domination by the church, and it became acceptable to attain fame through use of creative and artistic skills. At the same time, aristocratic merchants, long allowed fame for their leadership skills, found it socially valuable to be knowledgeable and supportive of the arts as well. It became important for wealthy shopkeepers and civic leaders to hire masterful artists to paint their portraits and decorate their homes—which were likewise designed by leading architects and artists. By the seventeenth century, the stature of artists had been transformed. The best among them were supported by Europe's leading aristocratic families.¹⁰

But the concept of exhibiting works of art also had to evolve; it began in France. In 1667, artist members of the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris were the first to stage a public exhibit of their work as a marketing strategy. By 1737, the exhibits staged by the Paris art school had become annual events held in the Louvre's Grand Salon, and were ultimately referred to as "salons." Similarly in Britain, well known artists in the British Society of Artists first publicly exhibited their work at London's Foundling Hospital in 1746, and soon after acquired a special place to exhibit the work of unknown artists. Proceeds from viewers' admissions to the exhibits went into a fund used to support aged and infirm artisans. By that time, European artists had become professionals who could find employment across a broad spectrum of socio-economic groups. Art as a craft and art patronage as a societal skill had become parallel professions that were part of the cultural baggage of colonial Americans. Taking a cue from their mother culture, early American painters realized that exhibits of fine art—or copies thereof—offered a two-pronged opportunity for cultivating the visual arts; the artists could demonstrate their artistic skills while simultaneously training the unskilled eye to see the decorative merits of fine art. Artists began to stage public exhibits of their work in Philadelphia as early as 1794, when a society of artists led by Charles Willson Peale (called the Columbianum) mounted an exhibit of work by unknown artists. By the early nineteenth century, art societies and groups in Boston and New York were staging exhibits that included copies of Old Masters' works, art created by unknown artists, and the personal collections of prominent citizens.¹¹

But as America moved west onto the frontier, art patrons found little evidence that the hearty new

Americans had any awareness of the arts. Instead, they found themselves in the midst of a fledgling economic system that encouraged the building of industries and infrastructure. Noting the dearth of art in Western communities, an anonymous writer in 1851 derided his transplanted Eastern and European peers who lived in frontier communities but did not support the arts. The writer concluded that artistic endeavors—which he defined as public buildings, parks, villas, and artistic ornaments—evidenced wealth in the communities that displayed them. But he also deduced that emigrant entrepreneurs saw the arts only as societal "parasites possessing no power to affect the financial or social condition of communities in which they are . . . fostered," and he argued that the lack of interest in fine art by either craftsmen or patrons in the frontier's new communities would ultimately damage the region's overall economy for several reasons. The first likely outcome was that those who sought a culturally rich environment would simply avoid settling in new areas. This might include potentially valuable residents, such as craftspeople and/or laborers. Secondly, those who did enjoy cultural pursuits would travel eastward to patronize the arts, thus spending their leisure budget in established cities instead of in the towns in which the incomes had been earned. This practice would further damage local economies because the merchants in the fledgling towns would have



George Simons, a self-trained folk artist, left behind his 1853 portrait of Logan Fontenelle as payment for a debt. Fontenelle was an Omaha Indian leader.
NSHS RG1001-2

fewer residents to whom they could sell their wares during the summer travel season. The author's view was based on an awareness of the arts' evolution in the settled towns of western New York and Kentucky, for example, where rising merchant classes used local arts and cultural refinements as marketing strategies to lure entrepreneurial wealth into their regions.¹²

And so in Omaha as well as other cities in the West, the pattern of development for visual arts in the new towns repeated those of colonial America. The first artists in colonial communities had generally been limners, and thus, along with resident hod carriers, wheelwrights, cigar makers, and teamsters in 1866, Omaha's first *City Directory* recorded one itinerant artist who boarded in a single room and had no studio: Harry Conley. When the next *City Directory* was printed in 1868, Conley was gone, but two new artists/limners and four sculptors had moved to town.¹³ But this era of itinerant artists in the West was short-lived because the new craft of photography was rapidly replacing the function of the portrait artist.¹⁴

The rapid evolution of photography from one of portrait medium to literary record altered the career of early area-artist George Simons, who lived in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Simons had come to the area as a cook and jack-of-all-trades with Gen. Grenville Dodge's survey crew in the early 1850s when Dodge surveyed the route of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad through Iowa. A self-trained folk artist with a nearly photographic memory, his accurate renderings of landscapes were extremely valuable to General Dodge's survey work. Although Simons traveled throughout the West, participating in a wide variety of frontier ventures from buffalo hunting with the Indians to gold prospecting in Colorado, he always returned to the Council Bluffs region. His creativity was not only visual; Simons also wrote poetry and descriptive narratives. The body of his work that remains includes over thirty paintings and drawings.¹⁵ In 1853, the artist painted a portrait of Logan Fontenelle, a prominent Omaha Indian leader. Years later, Simons moved to Logan, Iowa, leaving the unclaimed portrait of Logan Fontenelle with his landlord as payment for back rent. In Logan, Simons refocused his work from creating portraits on canvas to immortalizing faces with the camera, and he opened a photography studio there. In 1909, the pioneer artist moved permanently to Long Beach, California.¹⁶ After Simons' departure from the area, nearly two decades passed before a community of artists and patrons was visible in Omaha, although several early

residents had brought with them substantial art collections when they arrived in the 1850s and 1860s.¹⁷

The earliest evidence of an

Omaha art community appeared in 1877, when Mrs. Charles Catlin established a sketch class to give interested local artists/members an opportunity to improve their skills.¹⁸ Mrs. Catlin had studied at New York's Art Students' League and opened her home two evenings a week for members to sketch in black and white.¹⁹ As with most early art patrons, the Catlins were part of Omaha's business community; Charles Catlin, called one of Omaha's "premier stationers," was vice-president of the Omaha Book Company.²⁰ In September 1879, Josephine Catlin used her skills to assist the women of Trinity Cathedral parish in hanging the first art exhibit in Omaha. The work of the Trinity women, most of whom were spouses or offspring of Omaha's business elite, marks the first attempt by Omahans to encourage art patronage.²¹

As part of their fundraising efforts to construct a new stone edifice for the See of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska, the Trinity women contacted local civic, business, and social leaders, soliciting them to loan pieces from their personal and family collections to be exhibited in a public space. Admission fees from the exhibit were to be added to the cathedral construction fund.²² Staged in the old Christian Church on Seventeenth Street, exhibit backers emphasized their cosmopolitan outlook by hiring the Omaha Electric Company to install the new technology of telephones in the church, "bringing the exhibition into telephonic communication with all parts of the city."²³ The exhibit, which opened on September 25, could be viewed from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily for an admission fee of twenty-five cents per person. The paintings were displayed in the church's auditorium, and the news media complimented Mrs. Catlin for her "excellent judgement" in their hanging.²⁴ The loaned art included portraits and landscapes in a variety of media, including engravings, crayons, and watercolors. But the paintings were only a small portion of the exhibit that included categories of other decorative arts such as "jewelry," "lace and textiles," "plants and flowers," "books and rare manuscripts," "Indian curiosities," and "bric-a-brac." Each evening at 7 p.m., entertainment was offered for an additional twenty-five cents; refreshments were also sold. Much of the entertainment was musical—i.e. local vocalists, bands, or musicians—but one evening the diversion was a living chess game; the pieces were all humans "gorgeously arrayed." Due to its

popularity, the exhibit remained open over a week longer than originally intended, finally closing on October 9, 1879. Gross receipts were estimated at \$1,400, with net proceeds at about \$1,000.²⁵

That this first Omaha art exhibit, properly hyped as “the most interesting of the kind ever seen in the West,” was organized and carried out by women, made it a novel undertaking for that era.²⁶ Although women had been organizing fundraising activities under the auspices of organizations’ male leaders for nearly a century, the exhibit required them to independently solicit art works from Omaha’s business moguls, not only stressing women’s growing independence, but reinforcing the link between art and commerce in early Omaha.²⁷ The efforts of Trinity women had long-term effects because, after seeing the results of the women’s efforts, several local businessmen with substantial financial resources began attempting to foster city-wide encouragement for the arts.

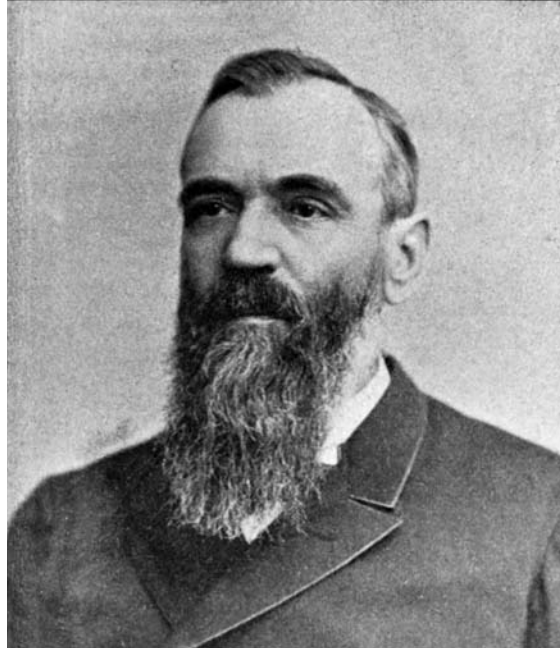
Land sales and business statistics demonstrated the rapid growth of Omaha’s economy in the 1880s.²⁸ While art broker Joseph Keller was in the city in December 1885, he found Omahans eager to learn good taste in art. But Keller was also a tremendous supporter of art galleries, both public and private, and he expressed his belief that viewing a copy of a fine work of art, or even viewing an artwork of poor quality, would expand public awareness of the arts.²⁹ But Omaha had no art galleries. Thus members of the city’s business community eventually demonstrated their collective interest in culture and improved city services with the construction of an Exposition Building.

Built expressly for conventions, entertainment, and social gatherings, the Exposition Building opened in February 1886, at Fifteenth and Capitol streets. *The Daily Republican* hailed it as proof that Omaha had become a truly progressive city. Bringing large assemblies of people together in one

Built for conventions, entertainment, and social gatherings, the Exposition Building opened in Omaha in 1886, at Fifteenth and Capitol streets. From the collections of the Omaha Public Library



**George Lininger
(1834-1907), Omaha
merchant and art patron.**
NSHS RG1001-2



place could be expected to bring increased revenue to Omaha merchants and hotel operators. At the building's formal opening, the Hon. A. J. Poppleton stressed the building investors' intention that the structure serve residents of the entire region, noting that the population could now "enjoy the choicest literature, oratory and music at a moderate price and thus ennoble and exalt themselves." A few months later, Daniel H. Wheeler, secretary of the Omaha Fair and Exposition Association, announced that the upcoming Omaha Fair would include an art display in the Exposition Building. The fair, which had previously featured only horse racing at the Douglas County fairgrounds site, would expand to include exhibits in the Exposition Building. These would be devoted to fine art, small artifacts, and merchandise, while fairground displays would feature the region's agricultural and metal products. The fair became the First Annual Inter-State Exposition. Opening on September 4, 1886, it drew merchants from Iowa and Colorado, in addition to those from Nebraska. The block-long Exposition Building was full of nearly one hundred booths representative of Omaha and regional businesses.³⁰

The structure's large exhibit space was divided into galleries that exhibited fine arts, along with twenty-one booths that housed the wares of Omaha merchants dealing in art supplies, jewelry, and Indian artifacts. The large gallery space was divided to display three categories of art: "Works of Leading Artists"; "Works of Amateur Artists"; and "Miscellaneous."³¹ Although selection of the expo's

leadership had been controversial, George Lininger had ultimately secured its superintendency.³² And as with the 1879 exhibit, all works were lent by Omahans, and included *Russian Beauty with Cat* by Konstantine Makovsky, which had been purchased by Lininger in St. Petersburg in 1885.³³ Omaha newspapers praised the gallery space, noting that the fireplaces and mantles installed for the event made the space appear "charming" and "home-like." Sunday evening after opening, the admission price was reduced from fifty cents to twenty-five cents to "allow all classes and conditions of men an opportunity to inspect what the creative fancy . . . is."³⁴ For the first time, the business community created an exhibit space, collected the treasures, and placed them before the public.

The Inter-State Exposition appears to be Omaha's first encounter with George Lininger as art collector. Lininger apparently had no contact with the art community in Omaha until after 1879, when he sold his farm implement business, G. W. Lininger and Company, in order to travel in Europe. In fact, Lininger's wife, Caroline, a Trinity Cathedral parish member, assisted with the 1879 Art Exhibit, but only on the Committee on Refreshments. Although a few male parishioners were listed as members of that exhibit's Committee on Art and the Committee on Bric-a-Brac, George Lininger was not among them.³⁵ Originally from Pennsylvania, George Lininger and his brother Jacob had come to this area from Illinois, for health reasons in 1868. They settled in Council Bluffs, where George and a partner opened a farm implement business. The firm expanded to Omaha in 1874.³⁶ In 1879, Lininger, an active Mason, traveled to England and Europe to study Masonry.³⁷ Although he had dabbled in art collecting before, on this first trip abroad, Lininger began to avidly collect art, although the patron later said that he told his guide on that trip that if he were required to visit "any more art galleries, he would promptly dismiss him."³⁸ Lininger returned to Omaha in 1881, and again opened an implement business. While he continued to be very involved in Masonic events, he also took on numerous civic duties.³⁹

By 1886, when George headed the fine arts exhibit at the Omaha Fair and Interstate Exposition, the Liningers had become strong supporters of Omaha's artistic pursuits. Both his wife, Caroline, and their daughter, Florence, were members of the Social Art Club, organized in 1881 to teach various art techniques to its members. In May 1882, the group had staged its first exhibit in the Central Hall, located along Fourteenth between Douglas



A farm implement business created the wealth that allowed George Lininger to become an influential Omaha art patron. Lininger sold his farm implement business in 1879 in order to travel to Europe, and began collecting art during the trip abroad. He later started another implement company. The letterhead shown here is from two years after his death. NSHS RG2AM-166

and Dodge streets. Mrs. Lininger and Florence were among the event's organizers. The exhibited works were creations solely of club members and included oil painting, china painting, textile painting, and embroidery—the artistic craft of choice for Florence Lininger.⁴⁰

Eighteen-eighty-six proved to be an important year for the arts in Omaha. On April 27, a group of Omaha businessmen, including Daniel H. Wheeler of the Omaha Fair Board, unveiled yet another type of art for the masses, a panorama entitled *The Battle of Gettysburg*.⁴¹ Panoramas had originated in Europe early in the eighteenth century, and were an artistic response to the interest in, and evolution of, the “natural sciences.” Longing to see the whole horizon, devotees climbed mountains and went atop high buildings in order to view natural panoramas. In response, landscape artists began to include more realistic evidence of natural topography in their art. Taking the idea of realistic landscapes even further, the panorama removed obstacles to viewing such as bad weather and proximity to the view. Panoramas also required special viewing facilities. The canvases were usually at least 300 feet long, and forty to sixty feet high. The earliest paintings were housed in crudely built wooden rotundas that soon evolved into unornamented permanent structures, and finally became ornate cast iron buildings, all with skylights for interior illumination.⁴²

Panoramas came to America in 1795, when an English artist hung a circular canvas of London's cityscape horizon in New York City. Other artists and panoramic subjects followed. Although they were enormously popular in every city in which they were hung, the views from the windows of a

moving locomotive fairly quickly replaced the thrill of the dizzying effects of a panorama, and shortly after the mid-nineteenth century, public interest in them waned. In the early 1880s, panoramas enjoyed a resurgence of popularity, and European businessmen commissioned numerous scenes and marketed them to their American counterparts. The Omaha Panorama Company was headed by A. L. Strang, with Daniel H. Wheeler as vice-president; stockholders included several prominent Omaha businessmen.⁴³

The company, whose total investment was estimated at \$30,000, had leased the land at 1802 St. Mary's Avenue on November 25, 1885.⁴⁴ There they constructed a round, brick building with a diameter of about 100 feet; it was twenty-eight feet high to the eaves and had a viewing platform that would accommodate about 300 people.⁴⁵ Omaha's *The Battle of Gettysburg*, and the building in which it was housed, were copied from the panorama exhibited in Chicago. Chicago's *Battle of Gettysburg* was a copy of the one executed by Paul Philippoteaux for the Boston Cyclorama Company. The Philippoteaux original has been restored and is on permanent exhibit at Gettysburg National Military Park. Originally 400 feet long, poor care of the canvas reduced the existing Gettysburg panorama to 358 feet at the time of its restoration in 1962. But, given that the Omaha painting was a copy, it can be assumed that the length of the canvas approached 400 feet. The artist for the Omaha piece, which viewers felt was superior to that on exhibit in Chicago, is unknown, as was the case for most of the American panoramas of the 1880s. At its opening, an Omaha reviewer referred to the “beauty and grandeur” of the work, and gushed, “Everything connected with the painting is so real and life like

that one almost listens to hear the orders of the commander and the roar of the musketry and artillery.⁴⁶ As noted previously, panoramas crossed the line between art and amusement, and by 1891, the Omaha public had lost interest in the panorama as entertainment. In May of that year, the Panorama Company went into receivership.⁴⁷ In foreclosure proceedings a year later, the building became the property of Herman Kountze “who probably don’t want it” according to a local newspaper.⁴⁸

Two years after the panorama opened, two Omaha merchants arranged to exhibit another panorama-type piece in the city in conjunction with the Douglas County Fair.⁴⁹ Called *The Siege of Sevastopol*, it was part visual art and part theater. The entertainment was a re-enactment of the 1854 year-long siege of Sevastopol during the Crimean War during which Russian troops failed to defend their claims on the Crimean Peninsula against British and French forces, who finally prevailed.⁵⁰ Against the painted canvas backdrop of Sevastopol’s urban skyline and the Black Sea coast, 350 actors portrayed soldiers in mortal combat.⁵¹

Battle scenes had become enormously popular panorama themes due to the marketing efforts of a French military officer and artist, Jean-Charles Langlois. To increase attendance at his Paris panorama rotunda in the 1830s, Langlois had recreated the physical environment of his panorama surroundings by adding real elements of the painting’s setting to the spectators’ viewing platform. In 1859, Langlois created the first panorama stock company. Using the investments made by his stockholders, the artist opened another exhibition hall in Paris, where he presented a series of panoramas painted around the theme of Crimean War battles. Langlois had served in the French military during that war, and his new panorama—*The Siege of Sevastopol*—was painted from photographs of the battle instead of on-site terrain sketches. The Crimean War was the first international confrontation to be widely photographed; some 360 pictures were taken, and Langlois undoubtedly became acquainted with Crimean War photographer Roger Fenton. But Langlois also returned to the Crimea to make traditional landscape studies for use in painting his new panorama. Adding real elements to the panorama environment became the norm, and in August 1888, Omaha merchants Peter E. Iler and Frank Colpetzer spent \$40,000 to bring an updated form of the *Siege of Sevastopol* to the city.⁵²

Entertainment such as *Siege* shifted panoramas from an art form to theater. This version of the *Siege of Sevastopol* was staged from an amphitheater

built near the fairgrounds, which were then located near Sixteenth and Binney streets.⁵³ There the production crew constructed an artificial lake 250 feet long by 75 feet wide. The water body represented the Black Sea, behind which was constructed an amphitheater that seated 10,000 spectators. The backdrop was 10,000 square feet of canvas painted with the skyline and all the battle sights of Sevastopol. To this were added 350 actors “in the dazzling uniforms of French, English, Italian, Russian and Turkish soldiers, with glistening guns and swords.” The presentation also included displays of fireworks intended to represent the “bombardment of the forts. These include some of the most startling aerial displays imaginable, . . .” The fireworks were produced on site; the French military men in the production were portrayed by soldiers from Fort Omaha.⁵⁴ After nineteen contracted performances, the *Siege of Sevastopol* closed on September 23, with city leaders planning to stage a similar event the following year at the site.⁵⁵ Although those plans did not materialize, many observers believed that it was “Sevastopol” that brought the crowds to the fair, which by itself, was a dismal failure.⁵⁶

In 1888, encouragement for the artists themselves came with the creation of the Western Art Association. On June 18, 1888, forty local artists and patrons met in the only dedicated exhibition space, (Max) Meyer’s Art Rooms, to discuss the feasibility of creating an art institute in Omaha. The new art club named George Lininger as its first president, and decided to present an art exhibit of original works as well as copies painted by local and regional artists. Although Max Meyer offered his small hall for the purpose, Lininger shortly announced his intention to build an art gallery adjoining his residence at Fifteenth and Davenport streets, and the art group later hung its first exhibit in the club leader’s private gallery.⁵⁷ The purpose of the art organization was “to make Omaha an art center of the West.” Over the next several months, the art association developed a mission statement that expressed not only its intent to exhibit members’ works, but also to acquire the important books and papers that would constitute an art library, to offer periodic lectures on art topics, and to host receptions for distinguished artists visiting the city. Two additional components of Omaha’s support for the arts were inherent in the group’s earliest plan: 1) the establishment of a school “to instruct the masses”; and 2) procurement of financial support for arts from the business community.⁵⁸



A late-nineteenth century Omaha art gallery. From the KM3TV/ Bostwick-Frohardt Photograph Collection, permanently housed at The Durham Museum.

The precise opening date for the local artists' first show in late 1888 remained undecided well into the fall due to delays in construction of the art gallery at Lininger's home. However, when it finally opened on November 15, 1888, the first exhibit of the Western Art Association included some 350 pieces of art, china painting, and architectural renderings. Artists from as far away as Detroit participated. A local reviewer noted effusively that the exhibit did "credit of a high degree to the northwest in general and the city of Omaha in particular." The exhibit site, Lininger Gallery, was itself a work of art. Designed by the local architectural firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie, the gallery cost \$15,000 to construct. The sixty-by-thirty-foot structure, built of brick and terra cotta in the Italian Renaissance style, had walls fourteen feet high. The interior of marble wainscoting with mahogany and bronze trim and a tile floor was lit solely by natural light with skylights measuring fourteen feet by forty-four feet. The exterior boasted a roof of red Spanish tile and niches in the walls for statuary.⁵⁹

Membership in the Western Art Association, among both artists and patrons, expanded rapidly, and soon the group added a "sketching club."⁶⁰ The

first exhibit had been highly satisfying to Omaha's artists and patrons, and within weeks, the group began planning another for May 1889. The focus of this second show was to be the loan of a fine art exhibit then circulating the country. Plans proceeded rapidly, and Washington Hall at Eighteenth and Harney streets was selected as the display space for the show. However, very quickly the idea of a loaned exhibit was abandoned for lack of financial support, and plans for a second member show moved into high gear. The second display offered cash prizes in several categories to entice the entry of members' finest work.⁶¹ The judges were Omahans regarded as having high moral character, but were not artists themselves. The show opened May 15, 1889, in the J. J. Brown building at Sixteenth and Douglas streets.⁶² Reviews were complimentary, and even after prizes were awarded, the art association ended its first year of operation with some \$600 in the treasury. A third exhibit by the association opened in mid-November 1889, in the *Bee* Building. Cash prizes were again offered, and efforts to sell member works were increased, resulting in patron purchase of many of the exhibited pieces.⁶³

An Omaha art class, circa 1894. From the KM3TV/Bostwick-Frohardt Photograph Collection, permanently housed at The Durham Museum.



Omahans' interest in the arts was flourishing. A decade earlier, just before the women of Trinity Cathedral parish staged their exhibit and before the businessmen organized the Inter-State Exposition or built a panorama, art for sale in Omaha could be found only at places like Hospe's "Gallery of Art," where the owners advertised "everything new in oil painting, fine steel engravings, photographs, chromos, etc." But by the late 1880s, the city boasted several art teachers, including Miss Miller who painted portraits and was a "master at human tones." She taught students in her studio in the Ramge Building. Another, Mrs. F. B. Mumaugh, was highly regarded with students who came to her studio from throughout the state.⁶⁴ Interest in fine art had spread across the river to Council Bluffs, which had established its own art association.⁶⁵ And George Lininger continued to add to his gallery's permanent collection, as well as to show loaned works that circulated the country in temporary exhibits.⁶⁶ Despite such seeming advances, Omaha merchant Edward Garczynski, superintendent of the Western Art Association's second exhibit, took a contrary view. He chided Omaha's "rich men" for demonstrating a "disregard [for] art," which he noted was probably a good thing because Omahans had previously lacked the understanding of art to foster it correctly:

Omaha unquestionably suffers from the indifference of the leaders of society here to all forms of the beautiful. . . . The people . . .

are accustomed to bad architecture, and to an utter absence of parks and drives and boulevards, there is always a danger of a sudden reaction, and a boom of beautifying might inflict irreparable injury upon the city in the hands of men utterly without knowledge and without a feeling for the beautiful.⁶⁷

One of the goals of both artist and patron members of the Western Art Association had been the establishment of an art school for use by members as well as the city's budding artists.⁶⁸ The demonstrable evolution of culture in the city, together with the success of the first exhibit, prompted Lininger in January 1889, to contact Professor S. A. Southwick of Callahan College in Des Moines, Iowa, about the possibility of coming to Omaha to open an art school. Southwick was clearly interested in the proposition, and Lininger believed that a class of fifty students would immediately enroll. Southwick had studied under contemporary French master Adolphe Bouguereau; his collaborative partner was "well-known French artist" L. E. Jardour. Lininger called upon local business moguls to support the association with a fifteen-dollar membership fee, and to erect a studio building in which to house the school and a gallery. Such a facility would make Omaha more attractive, and having the school occupy the proposed building would provide a "paying speculation" to the structure's owner.⁶⁹ Although word on the street indicated that an art school would open in the fall of 1889, by

August, the plans were dead. Southwick's partner/artist Jardou could not come to America due to the illness of his father, and Southwick had decided to go to Europe to paint. Extremely disappointed, Lininger solicited applications from art teachers throughout the nation, believing that seventy-five—maybe even one hundred—students would enroll in art classes.⁷⁰

Although it was George Lininger the art patron who wanted the art school for the city, it was George Lininger the businessman who fully realized how much the business community had to gain from promoting Omaha's character as cosmopolitan and its population as enlightened. The city had widely published, negative views to overcome. Rudyard Kipling had passed through Omaha en route to Chicago in 1889. He called the city "a halting place on the road to Chicago . . . populated entirely by Germans, Poles, Slavs, Hungarians, Croats, Magyars, and all the scum of the Eastern European States." He went on to note that many of the downtown intersections were dangerous. Crossed by rail lines, they needed overhead bridges.⁷¹ Locally, *Omaha Excelsior* editor Clement Chase admonished city fathers for leaving the downtown streets littered with "rubbish of all kinds, from pigs' feet bone to pieces of tobacco and other waste matter in great variety. The odor arising from it is unhealthy and unpleasant." Such literature effectively negated attempts by businessmen to present a sophisticated image of Omaha to newcomers. "What will a stranger think of us . . . Verily he will pity us, and verily he has a right to mock at our art gallery and if he comes with the intention of investing he is apt to leave in disgust."⁷² The city's business community did its best to transcend the negativity. In November 1890, two separate—but nearly concurrent—art exhibits enticed Omahans to become educated in viewing and appreciating the visual arts. The businessmen who sponsored them believed that the exhibits would serve as fundraisers for, and civic enticement of, an art school.

The first to open was that of the Western Art Association. From November 15 to 17, 1890, the association staged its third annual exhibit on the first floor of the New York Life Building at Sixteenth and Harney streets. Reviewers found the exhibit unexpectedly noteworthy in two ways: the first was the improved artistic quality of the work. The second surprise seemed to be that a large amount of good art was displayed by female artisans, although many had shyly refused to sign their

The Omaha Academy of Fine Arts.

Under the Management of Western Art Association.

G. W. LININGER, PRESIDENT.
 CHARLES ELGUTTER, VICE-PRESIDENT
 H. A. SMITH, TREASURER.
 MRS. E. A. BROWNLEE, SECRETARY.
 MR. J. LAURIE WALLACE, ART DIRECTOR

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THE OMAHA ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS;

N. E. Cor. 15th and Dodge Sts., Omaha, Neb.

artworks.⁷³ Reviewer Elia W. Peattie, who had condemned the first exhibit in 1888 as "pitifully poor," went on to say that:

Omaha Excelsior,
December 12, 1891

There were fewer copies than of any previous exhibition. . . . but for the most part they were hung together so that they did not masquerade as originals. . . . These copies of copies, these plagiarisms in sky and field and pen . . . are an insult to the [public's] appreciation . . . and a significant comment [about] the absence of creative faculty in the artists who paint them. Only second to these are the ideal sketches which it has been the fashion of certain immature artists to send forth from their studios. . . . Humility is the handmaid of art and the humble man would hardly venture to improve upon nature. . . . It is, therefore, gratifying to observe that truth appears to have aroused more interest in the breasts of the members of the Western art association [sic].⁷⁴

Just a few days later, on November 22, Omaha's first exhibit of works by European and American master artists opened in D. M. Steele's empty warehouse at Thirteenth and Farnam streets.⁷⁵ Thirteen of the city's most prominent businessmen, led by J. N. H. Patrick, had formed the Omaha Art Exhibition Association.⁷⁶ Seeking to elevate Omaha to the same cultural level enjoyed by the nation's largest cities, the men planned to use proceeds from the exhibit to fund the construction of a public arts building which would house an art gallery, the public library, and a music hall. Additionally, the receipts would be utilized to bring an even larger exhibit to the city the following year. The warehouse's interior walls were covered with bunting; its rafters strung with electric lights. Organizers installed an elevator to take patrons to



second floor exhibits, and “a toilet room [was] arranged.” Open from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. daily, the space was divided into thirteen galleries in which 800 oil paintings and 400 watercolors were hung, and numerous rare items were displayed. Some of the pieces were for sale at prices ranging from \$1500 to \$12,000.⁷⁷

The exhibited art works were sensational, especially in the eyes of late-nineteenth century Omaha viewers. Included were *Empress Josephine* by Jacques Louis David, *Last of the Buffalo* by Albert Bierstadt, *Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death* by George Inness, *Return of Spring* by Adolphe Bouguereau, and one of the thirty pieces of silver paid to Judas Iscariot.⁷⁸ Backers of the project opened the event Friday evening, November 21, with a dinner in the middle of one of the galleries for one hundred guests and regional media representatives.⁷⁹ Due to the value of the collection, the men’s group had protected their investment with insurance during transport. The insurance also covered damages from any common, but ordinary, disaster.⁸⁰ However, they did not foresee the costly tragedy inflicted on one of the works that ended the men’s exhibit association and temporarily halted their plans for a public gallery in Omaha.

The Return of Spring by Adolphe Bouguereau had been awarded the coveted gold medal at the 1886 French Salon in Paris. Appraised at \$18,000, it was one of the most valuable works in the 1890 exhibit. The painting is just as exquisite today as it was then. *Spring* is a nude surrounded by cherubs; the flesh tones on all figures are visually sensuous. About 9 p.m. on the evening of December 15, 1890, a young man named Carey Judson Warbington entered the gallery where the painting was displayed. In the presence of a number of other gallery visitors, Warbington picked up a chair and began to “smite the canvas with all his mite [*sic*].” Two legs of the chair went through the canvas in two places creating two separate L-shaped tears about thirty inches long in total. Warbington, a bill collector for S. A. Orchard’s department store, made no attempt to escape. Upon his arrest, he told a reporter that he had slashed the work to “protect the virtue of women.” After studying the image on the canvas for a few minutes, Warbington believed that the picture must be destroyed, even though he knew that by so doing, he “might go to the penitentiary.” He believed it “was worth while to sacrifice one man’s life to rid the world of so corrupting a sight as that picture.”⁸¹

The painting had come to the United States in 1887, where its owners, Boussod, Valadon, and Company of New York City, hung it in their Fifth Avenue gallery.⁸² In 1890, the firm allowed it to become part of a traveling exhibit that had hung in Minneapolis before coming to Omaha. The men's art association had contractually agreed that all loaned works would be returned in good condition, and that they would pay the costs associated with any damages incurred while the art group was in possession of the pieces.⁸³ Although the businessmen initially believed they were legally responsible to pay for the painting, they ultimately refused to bear any financial responsibility.⁸⁴ Throngs of people crowded into the galleries after the incident, causing organizers to consider increasing admission to fifty cents, and leading the men's group to claim that the incident had actually *increased* the painting's value. The exhibit remained open in Omaha through the holiday season, finally closing on January 5, 1891, with a formal, by-invitation-only dance on the exhibit floor in the evening after the galleries closed.⁸⁵

Late in December 1890, while the exhibit was still open but after the Bouguereau had been damaged, celebrated painter Albert Bierstadt spent an afternoon in Omaha with the exhibit's organizers, during which time he answered multiple questions about his art, his subject matter, and offered suggestions for evaluating the quality of an artwork. But while he was in Omaha, he also examined the damaged *Spring* and concluded that, if the art was returned to Bouguereau to be restored, it would regain much of its value, and could become the central work in an Omaha art museum where it would also have historical value. At about this same time, Lininger offered to buy *Spring* for \$5,000.⁸⁶

The paintings remained stored in Steele's warehouse for most of January 1891, although some of the art was shipped to Denver, the next stop for the traveling exhibit. On January 28, 1891, thirty feet and 8,000 bricks of the front (north) wall of Steele's warehouse collapsed to the sidewalk. Fortunately, neither human nor painting was injured, although both Bouguereau's *Return of Spring* and Bierstadt's *Buffalo Hunt* were still in the building. Asked about the damaged Bouguereau at the time of the collapse, exhibit director H. Jay Smith made it very clear that financial liability for the damage had not been decided, noting that:

Neither the Omaha association nor the owners of the picture are willing to take the Bouguereau. I am endeavoring to get the

consent of both sides to allow me to take the picture until the matter is settled. I hope to have it settled without going to court.

He added, "The picture now has a national reputation, and it would exhibit well anywhere."⁸⁷ However, it was clear that paying for the necessary repairs would be costly, and in January 1891, spokesperson for the exhibit association Robert W. Patrick asserted that the men did not believe that the association had any financial obligation. The men's group believed that they had fulfilled all promises to protect the artworks, and that *Spring's* owners could now "do as they please."⁸⁸ But owners Boussad, Valadon and Company had a different opinion. Throughout 1891, the art dealers tried unsuccessfully to force the Omaha Art Exhibit Association to pay them the painting's pre-damage appraisal of \$18,000. The Omahans refused partly on the grounds that the incident had increased the painting's value as a curiosity item. In fact, nearly a year later, the painting remained a crowd-pleaser. Then on exhibit in Minneapolis, the still-damaged painting attracted throngs who flocked to a showing of the artwork alongside the chair used to slash it.⁸⁹ At some point during the next three years, the painting was returned to Paris where Bouguereau repaired and fully restored it. During that same time frame, owners Boussod, Valadon, and Company filed a \$30,000 lawsuit in New York courts against J. Nelson H. Patrick and the Omaha Men's Exhibit Association seeking damages from them for ruination of the painting.⁹⁰ After several years of attempting to settle the matter in the courts, the suit by Boussod, Valadon, and Company was apparently dropped in early 1896 on a technicality.⁹¹

Twice in 1891, Warbington was tried for malicious destruction of property, but charges were eventually dropped after the defense demonstrated that "not only Warbington, but his father, grandfather, uncles and cousins were as crazy as a lot of March hares." Warbington was freed in July 1891 after the second trial.⁹² After Bouguereau repaired the painting, *Return of Spring* returned to New York where it was again exhibited in the gallery of owners Boussod and Valadon.⁹³ Its circuitous path of exhibition is unclear, but in spring 1901, George Lininger purchased the artwork from its new owner, Arthur Tooth and Sons.⁹⁴ The painting was shipped to Omaha, where it remained in Lininger's Gallery until the entire collection was sold after Florence Lininger's death in 1927. Today the painting hangs in Joslyn Art Museum.⁹⁵

The Warbington incident put only a small dent in the merchants' efforts to bring art permanently to Omaha's masses. At a meeting at Lininger's Gallery in February 1891, members of the Western Art Association again expressed their interest in opening an art school in the city, noting that collectively, the group's membership had the resources to make the project a reality.⁹⁶ Many association members were involved in the next leg of that effort, which by then had evolved into plans to construct a new building that would house both music and the visual arts. Two new faces assisted in the drive to bring the facility into fruition; both were editors of the city's two art publications. Frank N. K. Orff managed a journal called *Topics*, and H. C. Long edited *Art World*. Dr. John Flood managed the latter publication.⁹⁷ The publications' existence evidenced the further growth of interest in the visual arts by Omahans.

The announcement that a new "temple of art and music" would be built at Eighteenth and Chicago streets came in February 1891, in the Omaha Board of Trade's boomer publication that touted the city's industrial growth. The structure was to house an art school managed by Dr. J. C. Flood, as well as an art gallery and a music hall capable of seating 3,000 people.⁹⁸ Ownership for the building would be held in a stock company headed by George Lininger. John Creighton donated the land on which the school was to be built. The part of the building devoted to music would be occupied by the Omaha Apollo Club directed by L. A. Torrens. The Apollo Club was a musical organization that supported a forty-voice male chorus; the group planned to add a chorus of fifty women. Since the music organization and its choral practice/administration facility were both growing, the group wanted to expand its schedule of performances to include an annual State Festival that would showcase guest artists from abroad and performances by large guest orchestras.⁹⁹ But despite all the plans and hyperbole, the fine arts building never materialized due to economic factors. As early as May 1890, local newspapers reported that Omaha's economy was "dull," and in January 1891, the first run on an area bank occurred at the South Omaha Savings Bank.¹⁰⁰ The depression of the 1890s eventually trumped the art school building.

Nonetheless, the dream of an art school had grown too vivid to fade. The school became a reality in April 1891, when local papers announced that J. Laurie Wallace, president of the Chicago Society of Artists, had resigned his position in that city to accept directorship of the Academy of Fine Arts in

Omaha. In June, Lininger introduced the Chicago artist to 200 art association members and guests at a gala event in his gallery. The evening's entertainment, which focused on remarks by Wallace entitled "Realism in Connection with Modern Pictorial Art," was supplemented by musical solos and ice cream—a novel, edible sensation.¹⁰¹

The arrival of J. Laurie Wallace marked another milestone in the evolution of art patronage in Omaha. Over the preceding decades, several fine artists and a number of worthy patrons had settled in the city, but Wallace was the first artist with national stature to reside in Omaha. Born in Ireland in 1864, Wallace immigrated with his family to Philadelphia as a toddler. In his early teens, he began to study at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, part of that time under painter Thomas Eakins. In the mid-1880s, Wallace spent two years traveling throughout the American Southwest recording the colorful world of ranchers and cattle kings. About 1885, he returned to a more settled life, moving to Chicago where he organized the Chicago Society of Artists.¹⁰² Among Chicagoans, Wallace was regarded as "bohemian" in appearance, with long hair and a beard. But he was also quite handsome "after a Svengali style of beauty." While visiting in Chicago in 1895, Wallace seemed to be the center of attention and noted that "I could not stand my popularity." At the theater, "the attention of every person in the house was divided between me and the stage." Shortly thereafter, he cut his hair, but his habits remained bohemian. Of his studios, Wallace remarked, "I don't care where I sleep or eat, . . . But I must have a beautiful place in which to work."¹⁰³

On September 7, 1891, the Omaha Academy of Fine Arts, under the management of the Western Art Association and directorship of J. Laurie Wallace, became a reality. The art association had a collective treasury of 200 art works to start the school, "some of which were exceeding meritorious," as well as an assortment of easels and furniture, and \$1,200. The mission statement of the school expressed its intent "to teach the fundamental principles of drawing, painting, designing, modeling and architecture. Proficiency in any subject will be recognized by certificates of attainment upon examination." The school opened on the third floor of the Williams Building on the northeast corner of Fifteenth and Dodge streets. Wallace believed that the teaching environment of the facility, which had a skylight and large windows, was more conducive to learning than that of the art school in Chicago, and was at least equal to that of the one in Philadelphia. To facilitate the

enrollment of more students, the school offered night and Saturday classes so that young men and school teachers could attend. Although Wallace expected enrollment to reach one hundred students within the month, by the following February, only sixty pupils had registered for classes, although some came from as far away as Beatrice and Norfolk. The school preferred live models, but Wallace conceded that they were sometimes difficult to find. Many were “volunteers and often disappoint us.”¹⁰⁴

The economy proved to be the greatest obstacle however. The early 1890s were disastrously hard for most Nebraskans. Just as the art school opened, the *Omaha Excelsior* reported that “Omaha is at a stand still. . . trade is dull.” Over the next twelve months, the economy continued to slow, and by late October, the Western Art Association announced that it would have to close “up the business of the association” if finances did not improve. The group’s solution was to incorporate, selling shares of stock for ten dollars each. Four dollars of each share was payable at the time of purchase; the remaining six dollars had to be paid in two equal installments over the following two months.¹⁰⁵ The funds would keep the school open and pay Wallace for another year. The *Omaha Excelsior* succinctly noted that:

the few are no longer willing to bear the burdens of the many and the work cannot go on without a legally organized body and without funds. Unless all interested give their aid the result of five years struggle will be lost, and the whole work have to be gone over again in future years.¹⁰⁶

The economy did not improve, and 1893 was an economic fiasco. In January, a Lincoln bank failed, and by mid-year, the local elite were chiding residents not to “invite disaster by the withdrawal from the solvent institutions of money the depositor cannot possible use.”¹⁰⁷ Local businesses reduced the size of their operations, and the bonds offered for sale by the city to fund its needed infrastructure projects “went begging.”¹⁰⁸ Omaha’s smelting works prepared to shut down due to the lack of a demand for silver.¹⁰⁹ Statewide, many Nebraska farmers packed up their few belongings and headed back East, “getting away from the prairie farms where long term and continued drought, crop failure, and mounting mortgages had made it impossible for them to live.” The population in the western part of the state experienced a famine that necessitated the charitable relief efforts undertaken by eastern Nebraska philanthropists.¹¹⁰ Despite its economic difficulties, a December 1893 report



Detail of *The Battle of Gettysburg*, a panorama by Paul Philippoteaux. Starting in 1886, a full-size copy of the 400-foot-long painting was displayed in a specially constructed building in Omaha. The restored original is displayed in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Courtesy of Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau



Konstantin Egorovich Makovsky, Russian, 1839-1915, *Russian Beauty and Cat*, 1862, oil on canvas mounted on masonite panel, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska: Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Charles W. Martin, 1954.¹⁷²

indicated that the school was “holding its own . . . notwithstanding the dullness of the times.”¹¹¹ However, within the year, the art school and gallery had moved from their studio in a leased facility onto the third floor of the new Omaha Public Library. Newly incorporated as the Art Association, the group was authorized to sell 1,000 shares of stock at \$25 each, although only 200 shares were initially purchased. In October 1894, an exhibit in the new space included fifty works of art from Lininger’s collection.¹¹² Tuition for all classes was substantially reduced, and leadership on the school’s board of directors also changed, although J. Laurie Wallace continued as director.¹¹³

Despite the economy, art patronage remained strong, and by 1895 Omaha had multiple artists, studios, schools, galleries, and exhibits to view. Artists with studios included Mollie Conyers, Lita Horlocker, Fannie Bachman, J. W.

Herold, Albert Rothery, Katherine Stillwell, Mellona Butterfield, and Lawrence Esmoer. The studio of Frank Shill was deemed “the finest in Omaha” by the *Omaha Excelsior*. Beginning in fall 1895, Shill taught still life classes.¹¹⁴

Also contributing to the Omaha art scene that year was the Nebraska State Fair. In early 1895, the state’s Board of Agriculture moved the site of the annual State Fair to Omaha, granting the city a five-year contract for the event. Among their reasons for moving the fair from Lincoln, board members cited better rail facilities, including faster trains that came into Omaha from many regional communities, as well as inexpensive local fares on the city’s extensive street railway system. Additionally, the city promised 100 acres of land and construction of an amphitheater to seat 12,000 people. By the time of the fair in September, the Commercial Club had raised \$80,000, although most of the buildings were not completed until fall 1896.¹¹⁵ Omaha businessmen also organized the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben to provide entertainment at the fair, and Nebraska artists and patrons, led by George Lininger (now referred to as “Dr. Lininger”) loaned their personal collections for exhibit.¹¹⁶ The Western Art Association staged an exhibit in November, and the Omaha Woman’s Club, previously organized in May 1893, planned monthly lectures under the auspices of its Art Department.¹¹⁷

The extent of Omahans’ devotion to understanding the arts could be seen by early spring 1896 when Omaha Public Schools administrators staged a competitive exhibit of student art. The competition was the brainchild of Mrs. W. W. Keysor, head of the Women’s Club Art Department. Mrs. Keysor challenged students in grades five through twelve to create their own copies of the world’s art masterpieces.¹¹⁸ The club offered seventy-five dollars in prizes for the best student work. The pieces were judged according to a ratio of points that included not only the quality of the student’s work, but the child’s choice of “meritorious” art for copying, thereby simultaneously encouraging both art as craft and art patronage as societal skill.¹¹⁹

The final nineteenth century event for Omaha’s art patrons was the exhibit organized in conjunction with the Trans-Mississippi Exposition that opened on June 1, 1898. For five months that summer, from June 1 to October 31, the fair became the region’s most desirable entertainment for all ages and for every economic level of the population. Thirty-one states and territories sent representatives or constructed buildings and exhibits. The focus of every exhibit was the trans-



William Adolphe
Bouguereau, French,
1825-1905, *Return of Spring*
(*Le Printemps*), 1886, oil
on canvas, Joslyn Art
Museum, Omaha,
Nebraska: Gift of Francis
T. B. Martin, 1951.889.

"Lynhurst," home of George and Sarah Joslyn, was completed in 1903. Today it is known as Joslyn Castle. NSHS RG3348-6-316



A postcard of a hand-tinted photograph of the Lininger Gallery in Omaha. NSHS RG2341-1221



Mississippi West, and every entertainment was designed to transport the visitor to another place and/or time. Although fair investors barely "broke even," the event helped dislodge the region from the depths of the 1893 depression. Contemporary writers called it "rain in a drought."¹²⁰

Conceived in late 1895, the fair was the outgrowth of the Trans-Mississippi Congress that first met in Omaha in 1891. Feeling slighted by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Omaha's urban marketers invited congress delegates to



The Fine Arts Building, built for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha, 1898. The buildings at the exposition were temporary structures made of plaster and lath. NSHS RG2752-1-05-01

meet in Omaha in 1895. At their Omaha meeting in November that year, delegates resolved to support numerous environmental projects in the West, such as a survey of the region's arid lands for possible irrigation, protection of its forests, navigation in its rivers, and another Populist issue—free coinage of silver. They also agreed to promote the region with an exposition, and Omahans touted their city as the best site.¹²¹

Trans-Mississippi congressional delegates supported the Omahans' bid, and by early 1897, funding had been secured and a site had been chosen. Those responsible for organizing the fair's Fine Arts Department approached the Western Art Association for assistance in choosing an exhibit leadership and a building architect. Exposition architects Thomas Rogers Kimball and C. Howard Walker supported the selection of St. Louis architects Eames and Young to design the Fine Arts building. Directors of the Western Art Association served as the advisory committee responsible for choosing the art and named Armond H. Griffith, then director of the Detroit Museum of Art, as superintendent of the expo's Fine Art Bureau. Naturally, the committee sought the finest art examples to demonstrate that residents of the West, and particularly those of Omaha, were highly acculturated.

Griffith logged uncounted miles across the United States and Europe visiting artists and institutions from whom he sought to borrow works for the exposition. However, many nationally known artists had no interest in exhibiting their works in Nebraska, and many institutions were prohibited from loaning parts of their collections.¹²² Ultimately, over 700 original works were offered for the exhibit, all of which were juried in their cities of origin before being selected for the fine arts display at the expo. The pieces included oils, water colors, and drawings rendered in several kinds of media, as well as sculpture. Pissarro, Bierstadt, Renoir, Constable, and Van Dyck were among the European masters represented by original works; "autotypes" and "facsimiles" of masterpieces generally represented works hung in European museums that were unavailable for the show.¹²³ Although one of Adolphe Bouguereau's paintings hung in the exhibit, it was not the locally infamous *Return of Spring*, although some local sources reported it as such. The Bouguereau hanging in the expo's exhibit was entitled *Pandora*.¹²⁴

The art work began arriving in early spring, long before the Fine Arts building was completed. Observers and reviewers, aware of the hard work undertaken by Griffith in recruiting pieces for the



More than 700 original works were offered for exhibit at the Fine Arts Building at the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition. Pissarro, Bierstadt, Renoir, Constable, and Van Dyck were among the European masters represented by original works. From the collections of the Omaha Public Library

event, praised the arriving art, noting that “there is an absence of many inferior works of art [such as those] which marked the” Chicago Exposition. The interior walls of the galleries were painted a subdued red and green, colors intended to provide good visual backdrop to black and white drawings; the building’s architecture was highlighted in ivory. Despite the seeming cultural success of the visual arts exhibits in Omaha during the summer of 1898, financial backers lost some \$3,500 on the art exhibit. In November after the expo closed, sponsors organized a sale of art to defray exhibition costs. An estimated \$1,200-\$1,500 worth of artwork was purchased before the event, but when no one came to the sale itself, organizers cancelled it in early afternoon. Almost conversely, George Lininger’s Art Gallery was extremely popular during the expo. Before the fair opened, Lininger spiffed up his exhibit space, re-painting its ceiling in muted pastel colors

and improving the skylights. A conservatory on the property was also altered to provide more gallery space. During the 1898 expo, an estimated 20,000 people visited the gallery, which was open daily.¹²⁵

As the twentieth century opened, Omaha proudly touted its new Union Pacific Depot, its new building construction statistics, and the growing sum of its packing house receipts. There were over 2,400 miles of new pavement and four more miles of sewer piping.¹²⁶ But the community of art patrons was in transition. George Lininger’s health was failing. His doctors ordered him to rest, and in doing so, the cultural presence of his art gallery in the city also waned. Lininger died in 1907, after which the gallery was seldom open to the public. After Caroline Lininger’s death in 1927, the art collection was sold at auction, although regional art patrons purchased many of the artworks.¹²⁷

Certainly George Lininger had been instrumental in bringing art to the Omaha masses. Although he took his lead from the Trinity Episcopal Women's Auxiliary, he dug deeply—and often—into his own pockets in the 1890s during the economic downturn to make certain that the gains in art patronage and investment were not lost. But as the twentieth century moved forward in Omaha art circles without Lininger's leadership as patron, the mantle of patronage guidance passed to another Omaha couple, George and Sarah Joslyn, whose contribution to culture remains associated with the visual arts, but in fact was originally intended to highlight music in the city. The Joslyns arrived in Omaha in 1880, when George opened a branch of the Iowa Printing Company, a "ready-print" newspaper company that printed full-sized newspaper pages with regional and national news on only one side. Shipped to small-town presses, local stories were then printed on the remaining blank pages before delivery of the papers to local readers. Over the next two decades, Joslyn expanded the newspaper's distribution, merged the firm with other auxiliary presses, and renamed his business the Western Newspaper Union. The Joslyns derived additional income from managing two Omaha hotels and their investment in a patent medicine company.¹²⁸ By his death in 1916, George Joslyn was Nebraska's wealthiest citizen.¹²⁹

The Joslyns contributed significant amounts to Omaha charitable projects such as the Auditorium Building Fund, Child Saving Institute, and Joslyn Hall on the Omaha University campus then at Twenty-fourth and Pratt streets. Although the couple did not collect art as had the Liningers, they loved music, and in 1907, the couple added a music room to their lavish mansion, called "Lynhurst," completed at Fortieth and Davenport streets in 1903. Thus it seemed only natural that, after George's death and his wife's subsequent sale of the estate's assets, Sarah planned to memorialize her husband by constructing a building that would nourish and support the arts for Omahans.¹³⁰ In the memorial's fine concert hall was housed George's pipe organ; Sarah organized the Joslyn Liberal Arts Society to manage the memorial. And when Joslyn Memorial opened on November 29, 1931, local media referred to it as "Mrs. Joslyn's greatest gift."¹³¹

It might be said that twentieth century Omaha businessmen were more capitalists than art patrons. Although nationally known artist J. Laurie Wallace continued to live in Omaha until his death in 1943, only a plaque on his home south of Elmwood Park bears testament to his presence in the

city. In the relatively small metropolis of Omaha, it was the business acumen of late-nineteenth century moguls—not art—that gave the city international stature. The city is remembered internationally for Union Stockyards and the Plains' cattle industry; for the insurance industry led by Mutual of Omaha and Woodmen of the World; and for centrality in the transportation industry as headquarters of Union Pacific Railroad. In reality, most Omahans viewing the Joslyn Art Museum collection today have little awareness of the efforts undertaken by nineteenth century patrons to school city residents in the benefits of art patronage. It was farm implement dealer George Lininger, and not a professional artist or wealthy aristocrat, who first endowed them with a fine art collection and art gallery. But the legacy of inculcating city residents with an interest in the arts remains highly visible in Omaha, notable not only in the Joslyn Art Museum collection, but also in at least two dozen independent art galleries, art collectives, and art schools in the immediate area. Additionally, city residents have diversified their art interests to include the music and performing arts of the Omaha Community Playhouse, the Omaha Symphony, Opera Omaha, and a thriving, nationally recognized indie music scene. Joseph Keller was correct in 1885 when he noted that it was the children who must be taught "to discern between masterpieces and daubs."¹³² And over a century later, it is clear that his admonition was heeded. ■

NOTES

¹ "Joslyn Memorial Draws Thousands to its Dedication," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 30, 1931, 1, 4.

² August M. Borglum, "Palmer Christian Organ Recital Well Received at Joslyn Memorial," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 30, 1931, 4. Borglum indicated that not only was the organ Joslyn's personal instrument, but that George "loved to play" it. Eventually the organ was removed from the building and re-installed in a college in Illinois. See <http://astrolldown40thstreetmtm.blogspot.com>, accessed June 28, 2010.

³ "Facts About Joslyn," distributed to Joslyn docents in the 1970s. Copy in possession of Jo Behrens.

⁴ For an excellent contemporary summary of Omaha's economy and culture, see "Omaha: Annual Review of Her Commerce, Manufactures, and Industrial Development," *Omaha Bee-News*, Jan. 1, 1885, 1.

⁵ For example, early residents Andrew J. Poppleton, who came in 1854, John Nelson, Hayes Patrick and Herman Kountze, who came in 1856, and Clark Woodman brought personal collections of art with them when they emigrated. See "There are a number of . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, May 23, 1891, 1.

⁶ In 1883, only two firms/individuals advertised that they sold decorator arts such as pictures and frames; they were A. Hospe and James Forsyth. See *Omaha City Directory, 1883*, 395. The

1884 directory added J. N. Young as a “jobber” of “fine engravings and pictures.” In a second ad, the latter promoted a portrait copying service undertaken with a man named Browning. See *Omaha City Directory, 1884*, 437. Evidencing the fact that the market for such goods and/or services was not strong, by the next year Young was operating a furniture store with a Mr. Hill. See *Omaha City Directory, 1885*, 464.

⁷ “The Beautiful in Art,” *Omaha Daily Herald*, December 3, 1885, 8.

⁸ Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 87-89. Here in America, the untrained colonial artists were classified as “unprofitable laborers,” a group that included “hairdressers, tavern keepers, musicians, stage players, buffoons, and exhibitors of birds and puppets.” See Richardson Wright, *Hawkers and Walkers in Early America* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1927); reprint ed., 1965, 129.

⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰ Theodore K. Rabb, *Origins of the Modern West: Essays and Sources in Renaissance and Early Modern European History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), 206, 224-26, 228-30. Foremost among the earliest art patrons was Florentine merchant Cosimo de Medici, who collected classical literature and supported the earliest artists of the Renaissance. See Dale Kent, *Cosimo De’ Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron’s Oeuvre* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 5. Kent examined the intent behind de Medici’s commissions, as well as the artistic masterpieces that resulted.

¹¹ David B. Dearing, “Annual Exhibitions and the Birth of American Art Criticism to 1865,” in David B. Dearing, ed., *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1926* (New York: National Academy of Design, 2000), 54-56.

¹² Miller, 87-88, 177, 179-83; “Civic and Rural Embellishment,” *Western Journal* 7 (Nov. 1851): 75-78.

¹³ Charles Collins, comp., *Omaha City Directory* (Omaha, Nebraska: 1866), 7, 107. The other occupations can be found by scanning listings on pp. 137-57. Limners were itinerant artists who traveled rural areas during the warm months, painting the faces of their subjects onto incomplete canvases created during the preceding winter months in studios far from the western settlements where summer found the artists. Composition of the incomplete works included images of generic bodies and backgrounds onto which faces and personalized details were painted on site. Many of these itinerant artists contributed to their wages by cutting silhouettes, sculpting wax, or painting signs. See Wright, 129-33.

¹⁴ See for example, Helmut Gernsheim, *The Rise of Photography, 1850-1880* (New York: Thames and Hudson, Inc., 1988), 23. Because photography was often less flattering than was a portrait, photographers routinely retouched their work.

¹⁵ Mildred Goosman, “George Simons: Frontier Artist,” *The Iowan* 10 (Summer 1962): 19-20. Works Progress Administration writer Martha Turner reported that Nathan P. Dodge, the general’s brother, paid Simons to make the sketches of scenes in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area. See Martha N. Turner, “Early Artists in Nebraska,” typed manuscript dated 1932, in the Works Progress Administration Papers located in the University of Nebraska at Omaha Criss Library, Omaha, Nebraska. (Hereafter cited as WPA Papers.)

¹⁶ “An Artist Here Back in 1853, His Paintings Seized for Rent,” *Omaha World-Herald*, April 30, 1939, n.p.; Robert Curran, “Painting of Logan Fontenelle,” Typewritten manuscript, dated Sept. 10, 1936, located in the WPA Papers; Goosman, 20.

¹⁷ “There are a number of . . .” See also Joseph D. Duryea, D.D., *An Omaha Souvenir* (Omaha, Nebraska: Omaha Advertising Bureau, 1892): 15, located in the “Lininger Art Gallery” file, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha Nebraska; James W. Savage and John T.

Bell, *The History of Omaha and South Omaha* (New York: Munsell and Company, 1894): 106, 113, 570.

¹⁸ Mrs. Howard Kennedy also organized an art group in the 1870s. See Robert Morris, “Artists Have Flourished in Omaha Since City’s Earliest Days,” *Omaha World-Herald*, March 23, 1954, n.p. By 1872, Omaha’s population had included enough amateur artists that a new firm, Brady and McAusland, advertised their stock of artists’ supplies, including zinc white which was used to paint in oils. See *1872 Omaha Directory*, 110.

¹⁹ James W. Savage and John T. Bell, *The History of Omaha and South Omaha*, 449-51. This must have been a loose organization of hobbyists, because no local newspaper mentions the group with any formal description during the fall of 1877. Neither did the *Omaha City Directory* offer a description of the group in its listing of city organizations. See the descriptions of societies and organizations in the *1879 Omaha City Directory*, 48-54.

²⁰ Charles F. Catlin was listed in *Omaha City Directories* in 1876, 1878, 1879, and 1880. The Catlins left Omaha in 1881, returning in July 1889. At least part of that time was spent in New York City. At the time of their return, Catlin opened the “Natorium,” a Turkish and Russian bath house. See “The presence in the city of . . .,” *Omaha Excelsior*, Mar. 16, 1889, 5; “Mr. C. F. Catlin is making . . .,” *Omaha Excelsior*, June 29, 1889, 1; *Omaha City Directory, 1890*, 147, 581.

²¹ For information on the Trinity Women’s exhibit, see for example “The Art Loan,” *Omaha Herald*, Sept. 21, 1879, 12.

²² “Art Loan,” *Omaha Herald*, Sept. 24, 1879, 8.

²³ “A Palace of Art,” *Omaha Herald*, Sept. 25, 1879, 8. Although some of Omaha’s oldest and wealthiest families—e.g. those of J. M. Woolworth and Herman Kountze—lent the fine arts pieces, none came from George Lininger, who a decade later built a formal art gallery adjoining his home.

²⁴ Ibid. Prominent in the business community, the Catlins were also Episcopalians and among the first members of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church. See “Parish Canonical Register, 1869-1884,” vol. 1, 29. In July 1870, George Catlin represented the parish laity when the cornerstone of a new structure was put in place.

²⁵ “Living Chess,” *Omaha Herald*, Sept. 28, 1879, 12; “The Art Loan,” Sept. 21, 1879; “Art Loan,” Sept. 24, 1879; “Halls of Enchantment,” *Omaha Herald*, Sept. 27, 1879, 8; “The Last of the Loan,” *Omaha Herald*, Oct. 10, 1879, 8.

²⁶ “Art Loan,” Sept. 24, 1879. For a discussion of women’s fundraising efforts within male dominated charities, see Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 112, 121-22. See also Anne Firor Scott, “Women’s Voluntary Associations: From Charity to Reform,” in Kathleen D. McCarthy, ed., *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy, and Power* (New Brunswick, Connecticut: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 38, 41-42.

²⁷ Originator and chairwoman of the event was Meliora McPherson Clarkson, wife of Nebraska Episcopal Bishop Robert Harper Clarkson. The couple came to Nebraska Territory from Chicago in 1865, where the newly consecrated Missionary Bishop of Nebraska and Dakota had served as rector of St. James Episcopal Church since 1849. In November 1863, Meliora Clarkson had worked with the women who organized the Chicago Northwestern Sanitary Fair, an event staged to raise money for the coffers of the Chicago Sanitary Commission. The 1863 fair had included an art exhibit organized very much like the 1879 Art Exhibit that she directed in Omaha. Thus, it is clear that by replicating in Omaha her previous civic work in Chicago, Mrs. Clarkson was an important model for Omaha women’s community roles.

See “A Palace of Art”; Alfred Theodore Andreas, *History of Chicago* vol. 1 (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, Publisher, 1884; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1975), 336; Rima Lunin Schultz, *The Church and the City: A Social History of 150 Years at Saint James, Chicago*

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(Chicago, Illinois: The Cathedral of Saint James, 1986), 20-25, 44-48; Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., *History of St. James Church, Chicago: A.D. 1834-1934* (Chicago: 1934), 40-42; Caroline Kirkland, *Chicago Yesterdays: A Sheaf of Reminiscences* (Chicago: Daughaday and Company, 1919), 141; Bessie Louise Pierce, *A History of Chicago* vol. 2 (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1940), 453; and *History of the Northwestern Soldiers' Fair* (Chicago: Dunlop, Sewell, and Spalding Printers, 1864), 4-5, 11, 32-35.

²⁸ "A Mad Race for Wealth," *Omaha Herald*, Dec. 6, 1885, 7. For instance, real estate transfers in November and December showed an increase of \$291,830 over the same two month period in 1884.

²⁹ "The Beautiful in Art."

³⁰ "Opening of the Exposition," *Omaha Daily Republican*, Feb. 7, 1886, 2; "With Praise From All," *Omaha Herald*, Feb. 19, 1886, 1; "An Annex of the Fair," *Omaha Herald*, July 2, 1886, 8; "Begun With a Boom," *Omaha Daily Republican*, Sept. 5, 1886, 1.

³¹ "Fair and Exposition," *Omaha Daily Republican*, Sept. 2, 1886, 8; "Begun With a Boom."

³² "Omaha's Coming Fair," *Omaha Herald*, July 27, 1886, 8; "Begun With a Boom."

³³ Ibid.; "Map Showing Locations Connected with Art in Omaha: 1854-1954"; unpublished paper in "Lininger Art Gallery" file held at Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska. The painting is now owned by, and exhibited at, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁴ "Omaha's Coming Fair"; "Begun With a Boom."

³⁵ Eva Mahoney, "Where Treasures of Famous Old Art Gallery Go," *Omaha World-Herald Magazine*, July 31, 1927, 1; "A Palace of Art."

³⁶ Mike Markinas, "Brief Survey of Lininger's Life Prior to Settlement in Omaha." Typewritten manuscript dated Feb. 1, 1972, and located in Joslyn Art Museum Library, Omaha, Nebraska. For more information on George Lininger's life, see Michael Harkins, "George Washington Lininger: Pioneer Merchant and Art Patron," *Nebraska History* 53 (Winter 1971): 346-57.

³⁷ Lininger reportedly had the most complete Masonic library in the country. *Omaha Illustrated* (Omaha: D.C. Dunbar and Company, 1888), 62.

³⁸ "Monday evening a most successful . . .," *Omaha Excelsior* Dec. 15, 1888, 5.

³⁹ As a Mason, Lininger served as Grand Master of Nebraska in 1877, and as Past Grand Master of all Masonic bodies in the state. He also helped to establish the Masonic Orphans' Home in Plattsmouth, in 1903. A Republican, Lininger served as a Nebraska State Senator from Douglas County in 1887. He was a member of the Board of Trade, the Omaha Commercial Club, and was appointed to Omaha's Park Board in 1889. J. Sterling Morton, *Illustrated History of Nebraska*, vol. II (Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1906), 386.

⁴⁰ "Social Art Club," *Omaha Daily Republican*, May 10, 1882, 5.

⁴¹ "The Battle of Gettysburg," *Omaha Daily Herald*, April 27, 1886, 5; "Battle of Gettysburg," *Omaha Daily Herald*, May 2, 1886, 5.

⁴² Stephen Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 12, 32, 37, 49, 54, 59.

⁴³ Ibid., 59, 313, 342; "Omaha Panorama Co.," in *The Industries of Omaha, Nebraska: Her Resources, Advantages and Facilities in Trade, Commerce and Manufactures* (Omaha: Industrial Publishing Company, 1887), 174. Strang's firm at Ninth and Farnam streets contracted to provide railway, steam, and waterworks supplies, and Daniel H. Wheeler, for whom Wheeler County, Nebraska, is named, was the longtime secretary of the Nebraska Board of Agriculture, and was the first corresponding secretary of the Nebraska State Historical Society. See *The Industries of*

Omaha, 80, 175; Elton A. Perkey, *Perkey's Nebraska Place-Names* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1982), 198; and Anne Polk Diffendal, "A Centennial History of the Nebraska State Historical Society," *Nebraska History* 59 (Fall 1978): 318.

⁴⁴ Douglas County, Nebraska. Registrar of Deeds. Book A-16, 1802 St. Mary's Avenue, Block 2, lot 6, Elizabeth Kountze Reserve; "Omaha Panorama Co."

⁴⁵ "Omaha Panorama Co." See also *Insurance Map, Omaha, Nebraska: 1890* (New York: Sanborn and Perris, 1890), 2. No other images of the panorama building have been located.

⁴⁶ "The Battle Opened," *Omaha Daily Republican*, April 28, 1886, 8; Oettermann, 343-44.

⁴⁷ "Receiver for the Panorama," *Omaha World-Herald*, May 10, 1891, 7. Also see "Panorama," advertisement in the *Omaha Herald*, May 4, 1886, 5. Similar ads for the panorama always appeared under the heading "amusements" in Omaha newspapers. A listing for the panorama in the *Omaha City Directory* no longer appears after the 1893 edition.

⁴⁸ "The 'Battle of Gettysburg' building . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, May 7, 1892, 8.

⁴⁹ "Big crowds have been the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 8, 1888, 1.

⁵⁰ See for example, Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: A Brief History* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1999), 470.

⁵¹ See Ad for "Siege of Sevastopol," *Omaha Daily Herald*, Aug. 28, 1888, 2.

⁵² Oettermann, 158-59, 163-64; "Sevastopol Has Fallen," *Omaha Herald*, Sept. 23, 1888, 3. Iler was part owner of Willow Springs Distillery in Council Bluffs and influential in organizing the South Omaha Land Syndicate and Union Stock Yards; Colpetzer and Henry Guiou managed Chicago Lumber Company. Both of the latter men's wives had worked on the Interstate Exposition's art exhibit. See Savage and Bell, 487, 451, 508, 605, 613.

⁵³ In November 1887, Colpetzer and Henry Guiou had leased land west of Sixteenth Street and between Wirt and Binney streets for five years. See Douglas County, Nebraska. Registrar of Deeds. Lot 55 of SW1/4 of Section 10, Township 15, Range 13. Deed recorded in Deed Book 5-6, p. 74; lease recorded in Misc. Records Book 4, p. 301. See also "Big crowds have been the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 8, 1888, 1. Proximity to the fairgrounds was important. Then under reconstruction, the old buildings were destroyed by fire in November 1887. Savage and Bell, 278; and "Looking for New Fair Grounds," *Omaha World-Herald*, Jan. 15, 1888, 8.

⁵⁴ "The Siege of Sevastopol," *Omaha Daily Herald*, Aug. 31, 1888, 7; "Sevastopol Has Fallen"; "Siege of Sevastopol," *Omaha Republican*, Aug. 30, 1888, 8; "Siege Number Three," *Omaha Daily Herald*, Sept. 3, 1888, 7.

⁵⁵ "Sevastopol Has Fallen."

⁵⁶ Ibid. There had been talk of bringing "The Last Days of Pompeii" to Omaha the following year and staging it at the same location. "Pompeii" was managed by the same individuals who organized "Sevastopol." See "For an Exposition," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 15, 1888, 2; "Siege of Sevastopol," *Omaha Republican*, Aug. 28, 1888, 5.

⁵⁷ "Art in Omaha," *Omaha Daily Republican*, June 19, 1888, 5; "The regular meeting of 'The Western . . .,'" *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 6, 1888, 5. Max Meyer and Bro. operated a jewelry and music store in the Paxton Block at Sixteenth and Farnam streets. Part of their building was used for concerts. This portion was referred to as "Meyer's Art Rooms." See *Omaha City Directory: 1887*, 357; "Max Meyer, President Omaha Board of Trade," *Omaha Illustrated*, 80.

⁵⁸ "The regular meeting of 'The Western . . .,'" "Western Art and

Artists," *Omaha Herald*, Nov. 16, 1888, 7; "Business Men and the Western Art Association," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 17, 1888, 2.

⁵⁹ "Sub Rosa," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 13, 1888, 1; "Among the Artists," *Omaha Daily Republican*, Nov. 16, 1888, 2; Savage and Bell, 453; "Sub Rosa," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 17, 1888, 1.

⁶⁰ "The next regular meeting of . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 5, 1889, 5; "The Sketch Club of the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Dec. 22, 1888, 4.

⁶¹ "Monday evening the members of . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Feb. 12, 1889, 5; "The Western Art association need . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Feb. 23, 1889, 5; "The spring exhibition of the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Mar. 23, 1889, 1.

⁶² "Art and Artists," *Omaha Excelsior*, May 18, 1889, 1, 8. The article included drawings of *Excelsior* editor Clement Chase's favorite works. Judges were Dr. J. T. Duryea, James M. Woolworth, Philip Stimml, John Worthington, and Dr. Robert Doherty.

⁶³ Ibid.; "The final meeting of the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, June 15, 1889, 5; "Western Art Association," *Omaha Bee*, Nov. 19, 1889, 6; "Buying Pictures," *Omaha Bee*, Nov. 23, 1889, 8.

⁶⁴ Advertising for Hospe's "Gallery of Art," *Omaha Daily Republican*, Oct. 19, 1877, 4; "Some time ago we announced . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 20, 1888, 1; "Miss Miller, a very talented young . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 13, 1888, 5; "The Art Life of Omaha," *Omaha Excelsior*, Mar. 16, 1889, 1.

⁶⁵ "The annual exhibition of the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, April 26, 1890, 4.

⁶⁶ See "Art and Artists," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 19, 1889, 4; "The Lininger Art Gallery has . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, April 26, 1890, 1; "Mr. Lininger has added to . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Feb. 28, 1891, 1.

⁶⁷ "The spring exhibition of the . . .," "A Plea for Higher Art: Edward Rudolf Garczynski Upon Art Education," *Omaha Excelsior*, May 4, 1889, 2.

⁶⁸ The regular meeting of the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 6, 1888, 5; "Business Men and the Western Art Association," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 17, 1888, 2.

⁶⁹ Mr. G. W. Lininger, unlike Mr. di Cesnola, . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 5, 1889, 5; "At the meeting of the Western . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 12, 1889, 1; "Monday evening, although the weather . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 19, 1889, 5.

⁷⁰ "The spring exhibition of the Western . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, May 25, 1889, 1; "Art students who had hoped . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Aug. 10, 1889, 1.

⁷¹ Rudyard Kipling, *From Sea to Sea: Letters of Travel*, Vol. II (Toronto: George N. Morang and Company, 1899), 136.

⁷² "Cleanliness is Next to Godliness," *Omaha Excelsior*, Dec. 28, 1889, 2.

⁷³ "What Women Have Done," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 12, 1890, 5.

⁷⁴ "Western Art Association," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 11, 1890, 5.

⁷⁵ "The Great Exhibit That Will Be Opened . . .," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 16, 1890, 2; and *Omaha City Directory*, 1890, 773. Dudley M. Steele was a wholesale grocer who operated at Twelfth and Jones streets, although he lived in St. Joseph, Missouri. See *Omaha City Directory*, 1890.

⁷⁶ In addition to Patrick, the men were George W. Lininger, Guy C. Barton, Henry H. Meday, W. V. Morse, Lewis Reed, Herman Kountze, George L. Miller, W. W. Nash, Lyman Richardson, J. W. Savage, James M. Woolworth, and B. B. Wood. See "Work of a Crazy Censor," *Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 16, 1890, 3.

⁷⁷ "The Great Exhibit That Will Be Opened . . .," "The Annual Art Exhibit," *Omaha Bee*, Nov. 22, 1890, 2; "Art Notes," *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1891, 12; "Work of a Crazy Censor"; "The Great

Exhibit That Will Be Opened"; "A Feast of the Beautiful," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 18, 1890, 5; "Order Out of Chaos," *Omaha Bee*, Nov. 21, 1890, 8; "Sub Rosa," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 23, 1890, 1.

⁷⁸ See "Hanging the Pictures," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 19, 1890, 5; "A Feast of the Beautiful"; "The Great Exhibit That Will Be Opened."

⁷⁹ "A Goodly Company Sits Down Amid . . .," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 22, 1890, 5.

⁸⁰ Savage and Bell, 452; "Work of a Crazy Censor."

⁸¹ "A Feast of the Beautiful"; "Work of a Crazy Censor"; An ultraviolet photograph of the painting after restoration showed one tear on the left upper arm of the figure; a second tear was made on the right side of the figure at the hip. Copy of an undated ultraviolet photograph held in the "Bouguereau" file, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸² "Entirely Too Modest," *The Collector* 2 (January 1, 1891): 1.

⁸³ "Work of a Crazy Censor." The men had insured the painting for \$12,000, however it was appraised at \$18,000. The men's group must have refused to pay the additional \$6,000, although that cannot be entirely ascertained. See "Smashed an Eighteen-Thousand Dollar Picture," *New York Illustrated News* (January 3, 1891), 7.

⁸⁴ Ibid.; "What Warpinton [sic] Has Done," *Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 17, 1890, 5; "An interesting point as to . . .," *The Art Amateur* 24, no. 5 (1891): 114.

⁸⁵ "Crowds Visit the Gallery," *Omaha World-Herald*, Dec. 17, 1890, 2; "An interesting point as to . . .," "The management of the art . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 4, 1891, 5.

⁸⁶ "Bierstadt Talks on Art," *Omaha Bee*, Dec. 21, 1890, 2; "Smashed an Eighteen-Thousand Picture"; "The Omaha Picture Thug," *The Collector* 2, no. 6 (1891): 69; "Mr. Lininger offers \$5000 for . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Dec. 21, 1890, 2. When added to the painting's insured value, the purchase offer would have taken the painting nearly to the artwork's appraised value.

⁸⁷ "Worse Than Warbington," *Omaha Daily Bee*, Jan. 29, 1891, 7.

⁸⁸ "In regard to Bouguereau's exquisite . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 31, 1891, 8.

⁸⁹ "An interesting point as to . . .," "Worth More Than It Was," *Omaha World-Herald*, Oct. 16, 1891, 8.

⁹⁰ "The firm of Boussad, Valadon & Co. has . . .," *The Collector* 6, no. 13 (1895): 207. See also "Art Notes," *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1895, 20.

⁹¹ Joslyn Art Museum undated fact sheet for *Le Printemps (Return of Spring)*. Located in "Bouguereau, William Adolphe" file at Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁹² "His Whole Family Crazy," *Omaha Daily Bee*, March 19, 1891, 8; "Carey [sic] J. Warbinton, who threw . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, July 11, 1891, 5.

⁹³ "Art Notes," Jan. 6, 1895.

⁹⁴ "\$50,000 Painting Which Sprang to Fame While Being Exhibited in Omaha," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 2, 1901, 24. See also Michael J. Harkins, "George Washington Lininger: Pioneer Merchant and Art Patron," *Nebraska History* 52 (Winter 1971): 354; and Joslyn Art Museum fact sheet.

⁹⁵ The *Return of Spring* has continued its remarkable life in Omaha. On a Sunday afternoon in January 1976, Frederick H. Fennelly hurled a bronze statue exhibited near the Bouguereau painting in Joslyn Art Museum at the artwork, splintering the glass used to protect the canvas and slashing the painting in five places. His action also left glass shards in the picture's undamaged portions. Declared mentally incompetent, charges against Fennelly were eventually dropped. The painting was repaired the second time by the St. Louis Art Museum. In 1993, film maker Martin Scorsese directed *The Age of Innocence*, a screenplay

based on Edith Wharton's novel. The book and the film's opening scenes take place at a soiree in the London sitting room of a house in which is hung Bouguereau's 1887 work, *L'Amour Vainqueur* (*Love Victorious*). Because the whereabouts of the latter Bouguereau remains unknown, Scorsese sought permission to duplicate Joslyn's *Return of Spring* for use in the movie. The reproduced *Spring* also appeared at that time in a *People Magazine* article about the movie. See Larry King, "Man Damages Joslyn Painting, Calls It 'Filthy,'" *Omaha World-Herald*, Jan. 12, 1976, 4; "Art Damage Suspect Found Too Ill Mentally for Trial," *Omaha World-Herald*, April 20, 1976, n.p.; "Charge in Art Attack Dropped by '72 Ruling," *Omaha World-Herald*, Feb. 2, 1977, n.p.; and "Joslyn Work Plays a Role in 'Age of Innocence' Scene," *Omaha World-Herald*, Oct. 5, 1993, n.p.

⁹⁶ "The Western Art association held . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Feb. 14, 1891, 8.

⁹⁷ Board of Trade's *Omaha, The Western Metropolis: An Index of the Progressive Industries* (Omaha: n.p.: 1891): 47; *Omaha City Directory*, 1891, 52. H. C. Long was the speaker at the Western Art Association's February meeting. See "The Western Art association held . . ."

⁹⁸ "The City," *Omaha Bee*, Feb. 17, 1891, 8.

⁹⁹ *Omaha, The Western Metropolis*, 82.

¹⁰⁰ "Seldom has Omaha been so dull . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, May 17, 1890, 1; "First run in Omaha . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 24, 1891, 8.

¹⁰¹ "Art Notes," *New York Times*, Apr. 19, 1891, 13; "The Western Art Association 'at home' . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, June 13, 1891, 5.

¹⁰² Virginia Hunter, "J. Laurie Wallace," dated March 2, 1936, in WPA Papers; James Ivey, "Wallace-Wolsky Studio Holds Memories of Early Days in Omaha Art," *Omaha World-Herald*, Jan. 3, 1982, 11B.

¹⁰³ "An Omaha Artist," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 5, 1895, 1.

¹⁰⁴ "The Western Art association [sic] held . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 12, 1891, 5; Ad for "The Omaha Academy of Fine Arts," *Omaha Excelsior*, Dec. 12, 1891, 2; "Where the Models Pose," *Omaha Excelsior*, Feb. 6, 1892, 2.

¹⁰⁵ "Sub Rosa," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 31, 1891, 4; "The Western Art Association have . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 22, 1892, 8. See "The plan of incorporation for . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 25, 1892, 8; "The Western Art association has formed . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 21, 1893, 3.

¹⁰⁶ "Western Art Association," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 17, 1892, 1.

¹⁰⁷ "The failure of the Capitol . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Jan. 27, 1893, 3; "The ideas regarding withdrawal . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, July 22, 1893, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Max Meyer, local art merchant and one of the art schools stalwart supporters, was forced to consolidate his four stores into one business location at his "old store at Eleventh and Farnam. . . [it] will make a handsome as well as convenient place of business." However, Meyer eventually left Omaha and headed for Baltimore "to recoup his fortunes." See "Max Meyer is fitting up . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, July 22, 1893, 7; "Bonds, like everything else nowadays, . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, July 8, 1893, 7; "The *Excelsior* must say a word . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, April 11, 1896, 6.

¹⁰⁹ "The most depressing news at . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, July 1, 1893, 6.

¹¹⁰ Rt. Rev. Paul Matthews, D.D., "Reminiscences of the Associate Mission in Omaha," *The Living Church* (May 27, 1945).

¹¹¹ "Sub Rosa," *Omaha Excelsior*, Dec. 9, 1893, 1.

¹¹² Catalog of the Loan Exhibit, "Oil and Water Color Painting by the Western Art Association," opening October 8, 1894. Located in Nebraska State Historical Society Library/Archives, Lincoln, Nebraska.

¹¹³ "The Art School," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 2, 1895, 1.

¹¹⁴ See for example, "Omaha Artists," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 14, 1895, 3. "Omaha Artists," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 5, 1895, 2.

¹¹⁵ "How We Got the Fair," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 21, 1895, 4; "The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 21, 1895, 2. For pictures of the buildings, see "Our Illustrations," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 5, 1896, 5. The state's contract with the city required expending \$30,000 for buildings. By fall 1896, Omaha's total expense had been \$110,000, with some \$60,000 spent on the buildings.

¹¹⁶ "The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 21, 1895, 2; "Beautiful Pictures," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 21, 1895, 2. See also "The Men Behind the Show," *Omaha Excelsior*, Sept. 21, 1895, 2.

¹¹⁷ "Omaha Artists," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 23, 1895, 6; "The Art Department of the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Oct. 12, 1895, 6.

¹¹⁸ Mrs. Keyser was an enthusiastic art patron who had already been staging lectures at Lininger's Art Gallery for several years. See for example "The third lecture at the . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, March 25, 1892, 5; and "For several winters, Mrs. W. W. Keyser . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 2, 1895, 1.

¹¹⁹ "There is upon exhibition in . . .," *Omaha Excelsior*, March 28, 1896, 7.

¹²⁰ For more information about the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, see for example, James B. Haynes, *History of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898* (n.p.: Committee on History, 1902), rpt. ed.; Kenneth G. Alfors, "Triumph of the West: The Trans-Mississippi Exposition," *Nebraska History* 53 (Fall 1972): 313-29; Patrice Kay Beam, "The Last Victorian Fair: The Trans-Mississippi International Exposition," *Journal of the West* (January 1994): 10-23; and David Lynn Batie, "Thomas Rogers Kimball (1890-1912): Nebraska Architect," *Nebraska History* 60 (Fall 1979): 320-56.

¹²¹ "Omaha's Part in West," *Omaha World-Herald*, Oct. 14, 1891, 8; *History of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898*, 12; "An Exposition in 1898," *Omaha Excelsior*, Nov. 30, 1895, 7.

¹²² "Art at the Exposition," *Omaha Bee*, June 1, 1898, 3.

¹²³ The Louvre sent a copy of *Winged Victory*. See *Official Catalog of the Fine Arts Exhibit at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition* (Omaha: Klopp and Bartlett, Company, 1898), 11; and Haynes, 209.

¹²⁴ Haynes, 207; *Catalog of the Fine Arts Exhibit*, 11.

¹²⁵ "Visitors Shut Out," *Omaha Bee*, May 29, 1898, 1; "Art at the Exposition"; "Arts Sale a Fizzle," *Omaha World-Herald*, Nov. 2, 1898, 1; Harkins, 352, 354.

¹²⁶ Only 1.3 miles of sewer had been constructed in 1898. See *Omaha World-Herald*, Jan. 2, 1900, 9, 10, 13; *Omaha Bee*, Dec. 31, 1899, 1.

¹²⁷ Harkins, 354; "Where Treasures of Famous Old Art Gallery Go," 1, 2, 4, 5, 8.

¹²⁸ Dennis N. Mihelich, "George Joslyn: Amercia's First Media Mogul," *Nebraska History* 82 (January 2001): 26-30.

¹²⁹ Dennis N. Mihelich, "The Joslyns of Omaha: Opulence and Philanthropy," *Nebraska History* 83 (January 2002): 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5, 7-8, 10-11.

¹³¹ "Joslyn Memorial Draws Thousands."

¹³² "The Beautiful in Art," *Omaha Daily Herald*, Dec. 3, 1885, 8.