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Chapter 1

Introduction

American history has evolved through many decades of discovery, settlement, independence and wars. While artists, writers and musicians were at work over these years, it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century, mostly following the end of the Civil War, that the fine arts really began to flower. Continued improvements in communication and transportation (the postal service, railroads, the telegraph, and the press) all made it easier for knowledge of the arts to circulate and the art itself to travel. When the entrepreneurs who brought about the Industrial Revolution became wealthy, there were large fortunes to be spent in the new or growing American cities. These millionaires of the Gilded Age built mansions, decorated them in a grand style and, in several cases, shared their art collections with their communities. Aiding these new collectors were art dealers, critics, academics, and the artists themselves, whether American or foreign.

The story of art creation, education, training and collecting has already been documented for a few cities, including New York, Boston, Chicago and Pittsburgh, but its development in the Twin Cities of Minnesota is certainly less widely known. The story is worth telling.

This book will trace the origins and growth of the fine arts in the Twin Cities, from 1835 when the first working artists appeared, through the remainder of the nineteenth century, to the opening of the first permanent museum in the Twin Cities, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts building in 1915.¹ Other events also made this latter date relevant. Locally the St. Paul art patron and collector James J. Hill died the same year, and that was also the date by which the art collections of Minneapolis art patron Thomas B. Walker were essentially completed. Nationally, the 1914 International Exhibition of Modern Art, held at the New York City Armory, changed the provincial American attitude towards art and sculpture, brought on in part by such internationally known European artists as Pablo Picasso and Paul Cézanne. Modern art was soon to be broadly accepted, and the American art market and collecting, even in Minneapolis and St. Paul, would never be the same.

This 1835 to 1914 period is the time during which the seeds of the Twin Cities flourishing arts community were planted. We will explore the institutions which were created to support the fine arts, we will review the events, including art exhibitions which resulted, and we will consider the collectors, dealers, and artists whose efforts, understanding, generosity, and creativity made all of this possible. Finally, due to its content, this work should be considered to be social history rather than art history.

It should be noted that a number of well-researched books and articles have previously considered individual topics and persons included among this era of
the Twin Cities arts community. We do not mean to replace those efforts. Rather, this book merely seeks, for the first time, to bring a summary of all of these subjects together in one place.

To document our work we have looked to primary sources in the archives and records of museums, libraries, historical societies, and art collectors, and we have consulted newspapers, magazines and books of that era. Old photographs, which allow us to view nineteenth-century studios, galleries and their catalogues, other exhibition venues, artists, and works of art, complete this story and visually supplement the text in many ways. While it would have been desirable, as well, to include in this book illustrations of many of the works of art we are considering, this was not feasible for various reasons. With few exceptions no author is able to obtain, and no art book publisher is willing to print, images of every mentioned work of art. An interested reader, instead, should be able to access many of the images on websites of museums currently possessing these works of art.

Perhaps, finally, this writing may have been a fool’s errand, a Don Quixote-like search. In this twenty-first century where many scholars are Google-reliant, they expect full information to be available at the click of a computer key. Quite to the contrary. Early newspapers and magazines in most nineteenth-century Minnesota cities have no indexes. Therefore a tantalizing, fleeting reference to a particular person or event has no magical follow-up. We were made aware of records in an unheated archive, with bare-bones curatorial assistance occasionally available, making these records essentially unavailable to an aging author. Another important archive, known to exist, was unavailable to us because the institution concerned wished to do its own research, at its own pace. Yet another institution would not reply to requests for information. As a result, this book can only be considered to be an overview of the subject, a sign-post pointing to many avenues of future research. Some of these pathways are already well-trodden, while others are lingering in the bramble bushes of neglect and ignorance. Perhaps this overview will provide some inspiration for future scholars to research these matters in greater detail.

Only recently a major research opportunity presented itself. The Knoedler Gallery of New York City closed in 2011 after serving as one of the major sources of fine arts for collectors in Europe and the United States for nearly 165 years. According to information available to us many Twin Cities collectors acquired works of art from this Gallery. With few exceptions, in this regard, we have not been able to verify what was purchased, or when, or for what price. It has just been announced that the Getty Research Institute of Los Angeles has acquired the entire Knoedler Gallery archives, containing stock books, sales books, a photo archive, and files of correspondence from major artists and collectors. This will indeed be a treasure-trove for scholars to research.

The book was inspired, in a sense, by Collecting in the Gilded Age. Pittsburgh, 1890-1910, by Professor Gabriel Weisberg (and others), which was published by the Frick Art and History Center (1997).
The Big Picture

But first, what does the big picture show about the development of the fine arts in the entire United States? During the nineteenth century an extraordinary range of cultural institutions were created, having as their goals art appreciation, display and patronage. Cultural historian Neil Harris goes on to explain that:

Libraries, historical societies, art unions, art academies, lyceums, theaters, and opera companies appear, not only in eastern cities, but in the newer western towns such as Lexington, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Indianapolis. Obviously levels of attainment varied according to the wealth or age of the community: New York and Boston afforded more variety and sophistication in their amusements and recreations than did Pittsburgh and St. Louis. But the factor bringing all of these institutions under one heading in this period was the zeal of residents in publicizing their home cities as places deserving outside respect (and patronage) because of their cultural amenities. Literary societies and academies were advantages alongside convenient railroad lines and fine harbors. Guidebooks and newspapers, both in New York and in smaller towns, presented their panoply of institutions as proof of urbanity and wealth.³

One might proceed by inquiring how and why the growth of the fine arts in the Twin Cities might differ from other cities, such as New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, or Boston? If one compares the initial half-century of urban growth in each place, the answers are predictably the same. Cities gradually develop as transportation hubs, and as marketing and manufacturing centers. Businesses grow based on the products produced in each region. The successful founders of these enterprises became patrons and supporters of opera houses and symphony orchestras, libraries and museums. They also emphasized their affluence and success through furnishing their homes with art. And eventually, through their financial help and vision, the fine arts community develops.

There are specific similarities between the Twin Cities and elsewhere. Between the years 1890 and 1914 cities across the country, including Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and San Francisco, expressed their support of the fine arts by founding museums, art schools, and associations.⁴ The Twin Cities were among this group of cities.

Prior to the founding of these public museums, several of the early Eastern collectors opened their art collections for public viewing, and even prepared catalogues of their holdings. One example was railroad magnate William Henry Vanderbilt who, in addition to opening his New York mansion’s gallery on Fifty Fifth Street to the public, was the first to list his collection of more than two hundred paintings in published catalogues.⁵ Vanderbilt’s cultural legacy,
embodied in these actions, was certainly known within the Twin Cities art community.

But if one were to compare other events in the second half of the nineteenth century in each city, the answers are quite different. The Twin Cities were, at the onset, starting from absolutely nothing. No cultural institutions of any sort existed. Most of the other cities were long established, from 50 to 150 years ahead of the Twin Cities. They had a commercial and intellectual infrastructure already in place and functioning. They had artists, art schools, museums, art collectors, and an established, much larger and educated population base. Affluent persons in the Eastern cities had fortunes which could be categorized as “old money,” crying out to be spent. Affluent collectors in the Twin Cities were just starting to accumulate their fortunes. The early visionary people of the Twin Cities, as mentioned later in this book, could only dream of what the future of the fine arts might be. In sum, such a broad-based comparison seemingly comes to nothing.

The art collectors in the Eastern cities could travel with ease between New York, Boston, and Philadelphia where they could visit art exhibitions, art dealers, libraries, and nascent museums, as well as the home galleries of similarly inclined collectors. Collectors in the Twin Cities did not have easy access to these opportunities: it was eight hours by train to Chicago, and another very full day of travel to the Eastern cities. The Eastern art collectors could and did travel to Europe to visit the Salons and even the studios of important artists. They also purchased art through major, nearby dealers showcasing contemporary artists (the Salon painters) who were “approved,” having won medals or, simply, had been widely exhibited. This was not always a meaningful option for most of the Twin Cities collectors. Instead, a visit to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago might have had to suffice. And finally, various Eastern cities were the venues for major international art exhibitions, such as the 1896 Carnegie International exhibition, held in Pittsburgh. No similar exhibitions existed in the Upper Midwest.

In many ways the development of the fine arts in the Twin Cities will be seen to parallel that of the Eastern cities. Perhaps, however, mention of a few exceptional people and significant events will indicate how, on occasion, the onset and maturing of the fine arts in the Twin Cities differed from these other cities. The story of these people and events will be developed further in the pages which follow.

Setting the Stage

Let us set the stage with some general considerations. Once Minnesota was open for settlement, the early settlers came from New England and Eastern states such as Pennsylvania and New York. Eventually immigrants from Scandinavia,
Ireland and Germany flooded in as well. While such people were usually not well educated in the classical sense, many seemed to share a collective memory about the place of culture, including the fine arts, from their previous surroundings. The early leaders of Minnesota, for example, were proud of the role their New England heritage and value system was playing in the establishments of the first institutions of the state. Such memory may well have produced a more willing receptivity to the fine arts than that found elsewhere, as these arts were gradually showcased in the nineteenth-century Twin Cities. An example is the important Scandinavian art exhibit of 1887 and the Norwegian and Swedish art club activities of that decade.

Nothing in Minnesota’s crisp air or fresh water developed for its new settlers, by itself, a warm and cuddly feeling for the fine arts. It clearly was up to outside influences to help provide a basis for that sense. The more educated classes clearly kept in touch with New York’s Herald Tribune and other Eastern newspapers, and periodicals such as Harper’s Magazine, Scribner’s, and Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Journal, all of which, from time to time, considered the fine arts. They also patronized the art dealers who offered for sale fine arts created elsewhere.

Geographically speaking the Twin Cities in the nineteenth century were clearly off the beaten path, yet the citizenry was also hungry to learn about related cultural subjects such as literature. Literary visitors well-known at that time who came to lecture and to write about the area, included authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Anthony Trollope, Edward Eggleston, Fredrika Bremer, Bayard Taylor, Henry Thoreau, Hamlin Garland, Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, and Knut Hamsun. Minnesota, but especially the Twin Cities, also had a long, complementary tradition of support for literature, as witnessed by its “Community of the Book,” in which early lyceums, lectures, women’s clubs, booksellers, literary journals, and book critics abounded.

Churches and clubs, where people gathered, provided a place to view and discuss the arts. The Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church in Minneapolis is the prime example of this, with its on-going display of religious art. One club example is the New Century Club of St. Paul, which was organized in 1887 and is still active today. A group of rather affluent women, with natural intelligence but usually lacking advanced education, had as their avowed mission in those early days a desire to study the world about them. They were the principal movers behind the 1890 Art Exhibition in St. Paul, as well as holding a series of art lectures, open to the public. Another early venue for the display of art was the exclusive Minneapolis Club, organized in 1883, which since 1908 has been a fixture of downtown Minneapolis where the rich and famous have gathered.

In addition to the home galleries of James J. Hill and Thomas B. Walker there were various public venues in which the fine arts could be viewed in the nineteenth century. Minnesota was then an agrarian state, and for most
people attending the state and city Fairs, the so-called “Annual Minnesota Get-togethers,” was one of the few ways to socialize, relax and, from the many exhibits, learn about the outside world. Competitions in these Fairs commenced in 1857. Perhaps this was the earliest and most popular way that people could relate to the fine arts on display there. Towards the end of the century Twin City residents were also attracted, in great numbers, to the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition and its art exhibited (1886-1892), with the same results. After that, the Minneapolis Public Library provided, from 1889 until the opening of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in 1915, the most important exhibition venue for the arts.

Minnesota, but especially the Twin Cities, had for many years another quite important group of citizens. These were the successful businessmen, too many to mention, who were exceedingly generous in their support of the local community, including the fine arts. Before the museums came there were no tax deductions available to donors, there were few foundations to dispense money, and there were no so-called “percentage for art” programs in which for all Minnesota public buildings a set percentage of the contract price is set aside for the purchase of art. Notwithstanding all of this, these citizens sought to give back to the community some of the money they had obtained through their business efforts and, in fact, they and their descendents have continued to do so ever since. They and their companies donated money and art to the fledgling art institutions, they served on the boards of directors, and they collected art as well, thereby supported local artists.

In most of the older Eastern or Midwestern cities a single individual seemed to have set the standard for the local art world, such as Henry Clay Frick in New York City, William T. Walters in Baltimore, Charles Phelps Taft in Cincinnati, Andrew Carnegie in Pittsburgh, John Severance in Cleveland, or Potter Palmer in Chicago. For the Twin Cities, to the contrary, a group of six unique persons dominated the early fine arts scene. First of all were the two very significant collectors and major benefactors, James J. Hill and Thomas B. Walker. Both men were active in their business ventures, but both were involved in every significant local art event of their times. Next were the art school director Robert Koehler, and the art dealer John S. Bradstreet. And they were followed by H. Jay Smith, the very active promoter and director of the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Art Gallery. The last was architect Cass Gilbert who, in his duties involving the design and construction of the Minnesota State Capitol building, commissioned murals and sculpture from nationally known artists for the State’s first significant public building, and made them available for viewing by the public. The inspiration and the means for the growth of the fine arts in the Twin Cities originated in great part from the vision and the activities of these six men.

We will now examine in greater detail the various individuals and thematic subjects which helped to define the growth of the fine arts in the Twin Cities.
Chapter 2

The Producers of Art

Perhaps the earliest artist to visit Minnesota was George Catlin (1796-1872) who, in 1835, traveled up the Mississippi river to Fort Snelling. That fort was established in 1819 at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, and preceded the founding of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul by more than three decades. During Catlin’s few weeks at the Fort he sketched and painted at least a dozen landscapes, great sweeping impressions of bluffs adjoining the so-called “Father of the Waters,” the Mississippi river. He also painted scenes of Native Americans in that area, including one of Ojibwe people portaging their goods in canoes around the Falls of St. Anthony, where Minneapolis would eventually be built.

Fig. 2.1 Braves’ Dance at Fort Snelling, by George Catlin, oil painting, circa 1836. Courtesy of the Smithsonian American Museum of Art, Washington, D.C.

While Catlin’s work is mainly centered on activities at the Fort, Seth Eastman (1808-1875), who was the Fort’s Commandant between 1841 and 1848, depicted Fort Snelling as it appeared from the land and water below.
Early visitors always stopped at the Fort and then toured two of the area’s most famous waterfalls, Minnehaha and St. Anthony. Minnehaha Falls would figure in “The Song of Hiawatha,” the famous Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem and, later on, appear on early post cards. St. Anthony Falls, whose scenic waterpower made the later flour mills of Minneapolis possible, was another “must” subject for artists, including Henry Lewis (1819-1904). His 1855 painting was based on a sketch he made in 1848.
Successive generations of Minnesota artists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of whom resided in the Twin Cities, created paintings, drawings, and sculptures. A very few were professionally trained, able to support themselves by their artistic efforts, while most others were self-taught.

Among these artists and sculptors were Carl Boeckmann, Peter Gui Clausen, Charles Deas, Seth Eastman, Jakob H. F. Fjelde, Paul Manship, Gilbert Munger, Alexis Jean Fournier, Anton Gag, Herbjørn Gausta, Homer Dodge Martin, Julie Gauthier, Joseph Rusling Meeker, Alexander Grinager, Henry Lewis, Robert Koehler, and Douglas Volk. Each of these individuals will be mentioned in other connections, later in this book.

Since its founding in 1849 the Minnesota Historical Society has collected over 80 examples of fine art created by these artists. Rena Neumann Coen, in her important study of Minnesota art before 1914, carefully considered and listed these as well as other amateur and less known professional artists who were active in Minnesota.

Much of the work of these artists remained in Minnesota and could be viewed by the public, mostly in the living rooms and libraries of the more well-to-do collectors. In this way the appreciation of the fine arts in the local communities began.

From time to time recognized portrait painters would travel to the Twin Cities in the hope of obtaining commissions to paint its prominent citizens. For example, Charles Scheffer of St. Paul (1854-1875) was a banker, businessman, and the State’s first elected treasurer. The first artist to paint the portrait of Mr. Scheffer was Carl Gutherz, and the second was Theodore Kaufman. Carl Gutherz (1844-1907) briefly established a studio in St. Paul in 1873, and painted allegorical pictures as well as portraits of several Minnesota governors, while Theodore Kaufman (1814-1896), an itinerant photographer and portrait painter, is known for his portraits, and military paintings. Another visiting artist was John Antrobus (1837-1907), an itinerant English portrait and landscape painter, whose portrait of Governor John S. Pillsbury is now in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Portraits, especially ones by famous artists, were another way to emphasize a collector’s good taste. In 1884 James J. Hill commissioned William Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905), the French painter of wistful nymphets, to paint a portrait of his daughter Ruth. The artist was supplied photographs of the five-year-old girl in 1884, and completed the work in 1886, for which he charged the sum of $4,129.87.

Occasionally visiting artists stayed at the homes of collectors. Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), well-known for his landscape paintings, was in Minneapolis during August of 1886 to attend the art exhibition held at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Building. While there he painted a miniature oil of Minnehaha Falls which included, in the foreground, a tiny depiction of Archie Walker, the four-year-old son of T. B. Walker. Bierstadt was at the time a guest in Walker’s residence on Hennepin Avenue.
The French portrait artist Henri Caro-Delvaille (1876-1928) spent three months during 1913 living as a guest in the James J. Hill residence. While there he painted portraits of James J. Hill, his wife, and a life-size group picture of the children of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hill, the son and daughter-in-law of the collector.16
Chapter 3

Early Art Exhibitions and Competitions

New York held the first state-wide fair in 1841. Other states followed, with agriculture and the domestic arts being emphasized. Nineteenth-century Minnesota fairs were similarly modeled, providing an important venue in which both amateur and professional artists could enter their works in competition, while the resulting exhibition could also be viewed by the public.

Local, Territorial and State Fairs

Among the earliest of these Minnesota events was the Third Annual Territorial Fair, sponsored by the Minnesota Agricultural Society, and held in St. Paul in 1857. In the premium category of “Paintings, Ambrotypes, Daguerreotypes, Photographs, Printing and Book Binding,” prizes were offered in best and second categories for oil painting, watercolors, and crayon drawings. Winners received a diploma and an award of $5.00. The three judges were Major Thomas W. Newson of St. Paul, newspaper editor and publisher, Isaac Atwater of St. Anthony, noted local historian, and Franklin Steele of Fort Snelling, the initial homesteader in the Minneapolis area.

The Premium list for the Fifth Annual State Fair, held at Fort Snelling in 1860, expanded the fine art categories to include the best paintings of an animal, flower, fruit, orientalist subject, landscape, Minnesota scenery, cattle drawing, and pencil drawing.

The Daily Minnesotian newspaper had this comment:

In the department of painting the display is creditable. One picture, indeed, No. 43 (“animal painting in oil,” Deas – an Irish wolf hound) we regard as of peculiar excellence. It was produced here at an early day when artists were few. But it preserves with truthfulness, we are told, the features of one well known at Fort Snelling years ago, in himself the embodiment of fidelity–a faithful dog. As a work of art we think it entitled to the first place.

Charles Deas (1818-1867) painted that picture, titled Lion in 1841, and at one time both the dog and the painting were owned by Henry H. Sibley, Minnesota’s first governor. The picture now belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society. Local newspapers usually limited their commentary to farm animals and agricultural equipment, seldom reviewing the paintings exhibited. No mention, either, was made of attendance at the Fair. Receipts, however, did cover expenses by eighteen dollars ($1619.78 to $1601.78).
The Premium List for 1875 further refined the categories of fine art which could be exhibited. Included was a category for best collection of oil paintings shown by a resident of Minnesota, as well as best painting in oil by a Minnesota artist. Crayon works were expanded to include best portrait and best landscape.

For several years there were rival, competing fairs, sponsored by merchants in Minneapolis and in St. Paul. The Minnesota Agricultural and Mechanical Association held fairs in Minneapolis between 1877 and 1882, with Colonel William S. King as its president. These fairgrounds, located in the Seward neighborhood near what is now the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Twenty Fourth Avenue South, had buildings for agriculture, mechanics, the local newspapers, a grandstand, and even an art building.\(^\text{23}\)

\textit{Fig. 3.1 Art Gallery Building in the Minneapolis King fairgrounds, 1877. Courtesy of the Minnesota State Fair Archives.}
Each of the Fine Art Department Premium Lists for these fairs noted that entries would be juried, as is the case at the present time. A Premium List, for the 1878 King Fair, contained this curious preface:

To prevent the display of worthless pictures and other pieces of Art in this Department, it has been decided that all articles offered for competition or exhibition in the Art Hall shall first be examined by a committee of experts (who will be appointed by the Board of Managers,) and articles not found worthy be refused a place in this Department.24
The 1878 Premium List, whose content was similar to those previously mentioned, had several new departures. Silver medals and diplomas, in addition to cash awards, were also offered, following the example of other states and national fairs and expositions.25

The year 1885 was the initial year for the Minnesota State Fair at its present location north of St. Paul, on the site of the old Ramsey County poor farm. The exhibition of the arts and related crafts was obviously important, since a new 40 by 90 foot building was constructed to display these materials. The Premium List of September 7, 1885, had a “Division H – Fine Arts,” superintended by Russell C. Munger. All exhibits had to be original work, done by residents of Minnesota. The categories were again expanded. Newly included in the mediums of oil and watercolor were best marine paintings, best interior painting, best study from life, best still life, and best study of fruit. Categories in pastel were along the same lines, while the list concluded by best modeling in clay. The category of sculpture always attracted fewer entries than those of painting, while apparently wood carvers did not then exist.26

The opening of the new art gallery was described in warm terms by a local newspaperman:

The picture gallery was opened yesterday and was the universal theme of admiration. The pictures were artistically arranged under the immediate supervision of Mr. Gilbert Munger, who has several very handsome pictures on exhibition. We noticed a very beautiful piece done in pencil by Mr. Boss, of this city, and also two very handsome pieces by Mrs. Dr. Hall of this city. The whole building is adorned with a great variety of paintings, some of which are surprisingly beautiful, and very valuable. One very noticeable piece is entitled “John Anderson My Joe John,” and represents an old couple singing from a book that celebrated piece. All day long the vast crowd surged backwards and forwards through the picture gallery and admired the paintings over and over again.27

Gilbert Munger (1836-1903) was known for his landscapes of the American West.28 In 1867 Munger spent some time in Minneapolis and, like many other visiting artists, made an obligatory trip to paint Minnehaha Falls. Russell Munger was his brother.

By the year 1893 the Minneapolis Tribune reported about a greatly expanding awards listing:

For collections of paintings in oil and or water, not to exceed 10 or less than five, the prizes are $20, $10, and $5. For single paintings, crayon, pastel, sepia and various collections the premiums range from $20 for first to $2 for
third. In special premiums there is... a $30 gold watch for a single painting in oil by a lady; a $25 ladies’ fur cape for the best collection of paintings on any material except canvas... a $25 bronze figure for the best specimen of clay modeling (bust or figure)... $10 hat for the best water color painting by a lady... For a water color original painting of Minnesota wild flowers by a girl under 14 years of age there is a first premium of framed pastel, valued at $15...²⁹

The annual State and city fairs were the venues where professional and amateur artists could exhibit their works of art, and where the general public could view and thereby enhance their appreciation for the fine arts.

National Expositions

Various Twin Cities artists also exhibited in and attended two early national expositions. The first was the World’s Industrial & Cotton Centennial Fair, held in New Orleans in 1884. Intended primarily to focus upon the production and worldwide marketing of cotton, the exhibition had a number of other features, including a main exhibition building, a horticulture building, and an observation tower.³⁰

Julie Celina Gauthier (1857-1924), a St. Paul artist, author, and teacher, exhibited in the Women’s Department of the New Orleans Fair a work she specially prized, a life-sized study of a black man entitled *Pony, the Wood Cutter,*
which had previously been shown at the Stevens and Robertson’s Gallery on Wabasha Street.\(^{31}\) The painting won a first prize.

The second national fair was the World’s Columbian Exposition, held in 1893 in Chicago. This was a mammoth exposition open for over six months, covering 600 acres and included nearly 200 buildings. More than 27 million people attended to partake of grandeur which far exceeded any other world’s fair held prior to that date.\(^ {32}\)

In her 1893 article, “Minneapolis Artists and the World’s Fair,” Laura Baldwin mentioned with approval various local artists and sculptors who intended to exhibit in the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago, including Jakob Fjelde, Alexis Jean Fournier, Alexander Grinager, Mrs. A. M. West, and Miss Clara V. Shaw. Baldwin also described many of the works of art which these artists hoped to exhibit in Chicago.\(^ {33}\) Regional “juries of acceptance” (in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Munich and Rome) decided which entries of artists would be accepted, while there was a “national jury” which could over-ride the regional decisions.\(^ {34}\) Unfortunately, none of the works of these artists, other than Jakob Fjelde, were accepted.

Jakob Fjelde (1855-1896), to be considered further in a later chapter, exhibited a bronze bust of a Judge Nelson and a plaster bas-relief of Burt Harwood, a St. Paul artist, and Carl Gutherz “won praise for his ‘Arcessita Ab Angelis.’” Douglas Volk (1856-1935), the first director of the Minneapolis School of Art, and the only Minnesotan to win an award, displayed three studies of pilgrim girls. The most widely known artist of them all, Homer Dodge Martin (1836-1897), a St. Paul resident, whose works are now in the collections of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the St. Louis Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, exhibited four paintings. According to art historian Elizabeth Broun, “one of Martin’s most striking paintings in Chicago was the 1886 ‘Mussel Gatherers.’” \(^ {35}\)

Robert Koehler, to be discussed in a later chapter, exhibited three paintings. His most famous, The Strike, hung at eye level in the first floor gallery reserved for American artists. It is argued that this painting did not win an award due to several factors, including changing aesthetic standards among American painters, critics and art patrons, who were now favoring landscapes, portraits, allegorical views of women, and outdoor activities. Perhaps the stronger argument is that the social conflict subject matter of this work (considered later in this article) came at a time of general labor unrest and bloody strikes, possibly unnerving the jury.\(^ {36}\)

Artists could submit works for the competitive exhibition at the World’s Columbian Exposition, but that was not the only venue for the display of art. Many states had their own buildings, as did Minnesota, at which art, sculpture and many other items of state pride could be shown. A plaster cast of Hiawatha and Minnehaha by Jakob Fjelde stood outside the Minnesota building. This statue was later cast in bronze in 1912, and was then placed at Minnehaha Falls, where it still stands.
At the World’s Columbian Exposition over eleven hundred art objects were displayed in the American sections of sculpture and oil painting. 69 American sculptors and 419 painters exhibited. While the number of Twin City artists showing was small, yet the experience of exhibiting for the artist, and the resulting publicity they received, had to be beneficial to them as well as to the growing fine art community in the Twin Cities. Probably most important was the opportunity which the emerging group of local art collectors had to view what was then considered as the very best in the fine arts.
Chapter 4

Art in Public Places

By the end of the nineteenth century Minnesota cities witnessed major building booms as businesses erected buildings along their streets. Architects were called upon to decorate commercial, religious and civic real estate. Courthouses, city parks, and railroad stations acquired indoor and outdoor sculpture from national and local artists. Employment was provided for local artists who painted frescos, scenery, and drop curtains for theatres and opera houses. And panorama buildings, the early prototype for motion picture theatres, utilized local artists to paint the moving murals.

Cass Gilbert

In St. Paul a competition was held to select an architect for the construction of the State's third capitol building. Cass Gilbert (1859-1934), won that competition. His concept included the use of nationally known artists whose decorative paintings and sculptures would present Minnesotans with another opportunity to see fine art in a permanent local venue. Art historian Thomas O’Sullivan briefly sums up the façade of this imposing building:

Gilbert’s design draws the eye to the center of the building, and up: from a wide flight of granite steps, to a loggia of three vast arches, to a blaze of golden sculpture known as the Quadriga. Crowning the whole is a dome of white marble, which brings the building to a height of well over 200 feet at its gilded pinnacle.37

Gilbert engaged Daniel Chester French (1850-1931), one of the country’s leading sculptors to design and prepare the Quadriga. Edward C. Potter (1857-1923), a specialist in equestrian and animal sculpture, worked with French to create the larger-than-life gilded horses. The Quadriga was a Roman artistic concept adopted to a Minnesota setting, with a statue of “man” standing in the chariot. Two women walk between the horses, helping guide the chariot.38

In the course of his duties Cass Gilbert was also charged with the selection of the murals, sculptures and other works of art which decorated the Capitol. He selected muralist Edmond Simmons (1852-1931) to fill in the pendentives above the entablature of the Capitol's rotunda. Simmons’ eight panels were entitled “The Civilization of the Northwest.” Other muralists included Elmer Garmsey, Kenyon Cox, H. O. Walker, Frank D. Millet, Douglas Volk, R. H. Zogbaum, Howard Pyle, Edwin H. Blashfield, and John LaFarge. A complete description, with useful
Fig. 4.1 The Progress of the State, known as the Quadriga. Photograph courtesy of Bob Firth.

Fig. 4.2 The Civilization of the Northwest, by Edmond Simmons. The fourth panel of the Capitol Rotunda. From Julie C. Gautier, *The Minnesota Capitol: Official Guide and History* (St. Paul: Pioneer Press Mfg. Dept., 1907), 17.
photographs of all public art contained in the Capitol building is contained in its very first guide book, written by Julie C. Gauthier (1883-1929), a Minnesota artist referred to previously in this book.  

Upon the completion of the capitol building in 1905 the extensive mall area, stretching southward towards downtown St. Paul, has been utilized as a location for sculpture commemorating public figures, including governors, explorers and military heroes. Presumably the model for these displays was the Capitol Mall in Washington, D. C.

Outdoor Sculpture

Before the museums came, and with the exception of works by Jakob H. F. Fjelde, considered earlier in this chapter, most of the outdoor sculpture found in the Twin Cities was created by artists who lived elsewhere. While pedestals and bases of such sculpture were often carved from Minnesota granite by local stone masons, the heroic figures being depicted were modeled or cast in another state or country. Beginning in the 1880s the City Council of St. Paul purchased fountain figures for its parks, while ethnic and patriotic groups memorialized their heroes, whether historical, literary, or musical, in the form of statues. The precedents for this activity might be found in the palace garden displays, such as Versailles or the Tuileries, or other European royal residences.

Fig. 4.3 Post card view of Rice Park fountain, St. Paul, circa 1900. Courtesy of the author.
The fountain shown above featured the “Boy and Swan” figures standing on an acanthus leaf base. This fountain stood in Rice Park until the mid-1920s, when St. Paul removed all such fountains from its parks.

The lobby of the Minneapolis courthouse features an oversize marble sculpture entitled *Father of the Waters*, the classically inspired rendering of a seated river god, referring to the Mississippi river. The sculptor was Larkin Goldsmith Mead (1835-1910), a native of Vermont who worked primarily in Rome. The statue was dedicated in 1906 and remains prominently displayed in the courthouse.

Jakob Fjelde, who arrived in Minneapolis in 1887, was trained as a sculptor in Norway and in Italy. Among other works, he created plaster models for bronze reliefs and busts of local civic leaders which were exhibited in the Art Gallery of the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition. His full size statue of Minerva was placed in the old Minneapolis Public Library, and is today located on the main floor of the downtown Hennepin County Library. Fjelde’s statue of *Ole Bull*, a famous Norwegian violinist, still stands in Loring Park of Minneapolis, while his bust of *Henrik Ibsen* sits on a stone pedestal in St. Paul’s Como Park. Fjelde’s monument to the First Minnesota Regiment which fought during the Civil War, is located at the Gettysburg battlefield, in Pennsylvania. He also created clay or marble busts of important Minnesota men. His marble bust of Marie Scheffer, wife of St. Paul banker Albert Scheffer (1844-1905), may well be one of the few such works showing a Minnesota woman of the time.

But what is the difference between these expertly crafted bronze or zinc creations and another category of quite well-known sculptural art, the cigar store Indian? They were superbly crafted in a zinc alloy or carved in wood before being artistically decorated. In a discussion of these Indians it has been said that these statues have grown out of the making of figureheads for ships as were carved by William Rush and others. These statues have been noted throughout both Minneapolis and St. Paul. One example, which lasted into the twenty-first century, was originally on view in front of the Chapman Cigar Store in St. Paul before ending up at the Pool and Yacht Club in Lilydale, a suburb of St. Paul. Other zinc alloy statues in Twin City parks are those of Civil War soldiers, and in cemeteries, those of firemen.

Known as *Indian Scout*, this painted zinc figure was identical to the twenty-five Indian Chief statues considered in Carol A. Grissom’s monumental work *Zinc Sculpture in America, 1850-1950*. Speaking of these figures, Ms. Grissom states:

This statue was one of the best known of all zinc figures and arguably one of its most successful in sculpture. It may have begun life as a tobacconist’s figure but was more widely used as a civic statue for the commemoration of local historical figures... Copies were exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, the Cotton Exposition in New Orleans in 1884-1885, the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, and an exposition in Paris.
Theatre Art

The theatrical tradition of presenting plays, opera and vaudeville in Minnesota began early, at Fort Snelling in 1821, and continued there through at least 1836. The earliest opera house was located in St. Paul in 1850, while in the years thereafter theaters proliferated in both Minneapolis and St. Paul. For the auditorium in each of these buildings scenic artists, who worked in oils, painted detailed drop curtains which traditionally hung at the front of the stage. They also painted backdrops which accompanied the rituals of many fraternal orders. Peter Gui Clausen (1830-1924), was especially active in the painting of scenery, theater interiors, and drop curtains, while Alexander Grinager (1865-1949), who specialized in impressionistic works of local scenes, painted background scenes for the Grand Opera House in Minneapolis. While little is known about these two artists, other part-time artists who worked in this genre are even more obscure. Many of them worked for the Twin City Scenic Company, whose business, commencing in 1895, was producing stock scenery as well as various differing drop curtains, for use in opera houses across the country. Long out of business, the archives of this Company are now held by the University of
Minnesota libraries. The traditional use of such scenery for backdrops and drop curtains is still noted today at the Minneapolis Scottish Rite Temple.

Panoramas

As the various Premium Lists from the Minnesota State Fair competitions indicate, fine art painters produced portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. A few even turned to a very popular form of history painting and entertainment—a newsreel of the day called a “panorama.” Panoramas, continuous views painted in oil of notable historical events, moved horizontally on rollers before the audiences. Early panorama painting in the United States was centered in Milwaukee.

Panorama buildings were built to display cycloramic paintings as early as Philadelphia in 1876, and after that, in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Most showed battle scenes, such as The Siege of Paris or The Battle of Mission Ridge.

These huge paintings were mounted in specially prepared buildings located in the downtowns of both Minneapolis and St. Paul. Glass panels in the roof provided necessary lighting. Additional lighting provided by gas fixtures was a fire danger that often resulted in destruction of these early “moving pictures.” A typical panorama was 400 feet long by 50 feet wide. The Minneapolis Panorama Building was located at the corner of Fifth Street and Marquette Avenue, while the Capital City Panorama was located at the corner of Sixth and St. Peter Streets, in St. Paul.
One of the panoramas on view in Minneapolis in 1886 was *The Battle of Atlanta*, while *The Battle of Gettysburg* opened in St. Paul the same year. Fifteen artists were hired to paint the *Battle of Atlanta* panorama. As strictly business ventures, the buildings were open at eight o’clock in the morning, and the admission charged was fifty cents for adults. Both panorama buildings closed for good in 1889.  

At the opening of the *Battle of Atlanta* panorama in Minneapolis on June 28, 1886 before an invited audience, Douglas Volk, the recently appointed director of the Minneapolis School of Art, was quoted as saying: “It is artistically great.”

This panorama may be viewed today in Grant Park, Atlanta, Georgia.

Two panorama paintings still exist in Minnesota. The panoramas painted by Anton Gag (1859-1908) of New Ulm and John Stevens (1816-1879) of Rochester, both dealt in part with the 1862 Sioux uprising, and are now owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. Unfortunately, both panoramas are in storage, and have not been viewed for many years.
A number of early panoramas were painted showing scenes along the Mississippi river. Most of these are now gone, but one, owned by the St. Louis Art Museum, was shown in “The River: Images of the Mississippi” exhibition at the Walker Art Center in 1976. For this viewing the audience walked past, since this panorama didn’t move.56

A previously mentioned Minneapolis artist, Peter Gui Clausen, who did frescos for Minnesota churches, and painted many western scenes for the Great Northern railroad, created a rolling panorama 300 feet long and 8 feet high of Yellowstone Park, which was exhibited at the Grand Opera House in Minneapolis in 1887.55 William Dabelstein (1884-1970), a St. Paul artist, is best known for his Trappers Peak, a 1914 mural of Montana mountains painted on canvas. This “panorama” was displayed for many years in a Minneapolis railroad station.56

The viewing of panoramas was more an entertainment than an art experience. Not meant to enhance individual artists or their work, they nevertheless provided employment to various Twin City artists.

Art in public buildings, outdoor sculpture, panoramas and drop curtains in Twin City theatres were continuing reminders of the growing acceptance and importance of the arts in urban daily life.
Chapter 5

The Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Art Gallery

In an effort to attract convention and exhibition business away from neighboring St. Paul, nearly 2,400 merchants in Minneapolis subscribed a total of $250,000 for the construction of the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition building, which became the largest public building in Minnesota in 1886. Construction on the site of the old Winslow House Hotel (close to the present-day Third Avenue bridge over the Mississippi river) was completed by early summer of 1886. The resulting building had 240,000 square feet; the exposition hall, with nearly seven acres of floor space, hosted the first Minneapolis Industrial Exposition on August 31, 1886.57

The exposition organizers were heartily in favor of promoting the interests of the city, and to that end plans were made for extensive fine art exhibits. The art gallery was designed so that it could be kept open during the entire year, whether or not other events were taking place.58 A complete, glowing description of the art gallery from the 1887 Exposition Report was that:

Fig. 5.1 Lithographed poster of Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Building, 1886. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.
This portion of the structure is separated from the main building by a glass covered court (used for showing sculpture and casts) 165 x 30 feet, 40 feet in height. It is 180 feet in length and from 40 to 60 in width in its different parts. It has two full stories besides a large-commodious basement, provided with all of the conveniences for the handling and storing of boxes and frames and a large elevator to the upper floors. The building is fire-proof, and contains fourteen rooms of different sizes for the exhibit of pictures. They are lighted both day and night in the most approved manner and are provided with all necessary settees, desks, railings, etc., for the comfort and convenience of both visitors and attendants. The electric light plans for this department includes over 1,500 incandescent lamps...

The first *Exposition Art Catalogue* went on to brag that:

The Exposition art exhibit of the present season is one of the finest collections of art works ever shown at any similar institution in the country. The total value is probably over $500,000. Over 1,000 paintings, etchings, engravings and other art objects, besides the sculptures, will be exhibited. Over 300 pictures have been selected from valuable collections in New York City. The exhibit by local artists is extensive and very credible. Mr. H. Jay Smith, of this city, is the superintendent of the Exposition Art department, and the selection of exhibits has been under his personal supervision.

Among the many other exhibits, there were eleven paintings by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), a noted landscape painter of the American West mentioned later in this chapter. He made numerous journeys to paint these dramatic scenes which were carefully detailed, with romantic, almost glowing lighting. Nearly all of the works of art on exhibit were for sale. The first year proceeds from admissions to the art gallery were approximately $13,000. Ambitious plans of the Exposition Board of Directors included taking the sum of $10,000 from the art gallery receipts each year for the purchase of art to build a permanent collection. To that sum would be added $20,000 worth of Exposition shares of stock. Artists who exhibited at the 1886 show, including Albert Bierstadt, agreed to provide a 25% discount towards the purchase of their works for the permanent collection of the gallery.

A large collection of casts of antique sculpture occupied an entire room in the Exposition art department. These casts were taken from works originating in Assyria, Greece, and Rome, and were selected and acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Since that museum did not have adequate space, the collection was sold to the Minneapolis Exposition Association for $10,000. The most notable among the collection were casts of Elgin Marbles, taken from the Parthenon in Athens. This collection was donated to the Minneapolis Public Library in late 1895.
Fig. 5.2 Art Gallery, Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Building, 1886. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Fig. 5.3 Sculpture Hall, Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Building, 1886. Art director H. Jay Smith stands in center foreground. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.
As the photograph of the sculpture hall shows, the casts included were of many classical works: the *Venus de Milo*, the *Doryphorus*, the *Laocoön*, and the *Charioteer of Delphi*. The educational value of such a collection of casts is clear. Through these reproductions it is possible to obtain a fairly clear idea of the great masterpieces of sculpture that are inaccessible to most, except in this form. In the plaster form one could study proportions, composition and style of such works.⁶⁴

**Fig. 5.4** Front cover of *Official Catalogue and Visitors Guide* from 1886 Minneapolis Industrial Exposition. Courtesy of Minneapolis Collection, Hennepin County Library.

Minneapolis hosted the second officially sanctioned exhibition of Swedish art in America during the Second Industrial Exposition, from August 31 to October 16, 1887. This exhibit featured 121 paintings by Scandinavian artists:
54 by Swedes, 36 by Danes, and 31 by Norwegians. These exhibits were said by Mary T. Swanson to have laid the foundation for a collection of Swedish Art in Minneapolis and a positive climate for Swedish American artists in the Twin Cities.\textsuperscript{55}

Cultural mavens of Minneapolis labeled the 1887 exhibition as a success, even though only one painting, done by a Swedish artist, was sold. Exposition officials purchased \textit{On Their Way to Church}, a painting by Alfred Wallander (1862-1895). When art expositions ceased at the Industrial Expositions that painting was transferred to the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. It hung at the Minneapolis Commercial Club in 1909, and then in the Minneapolis Public Library.\textsuperscript{66} Organized in 1894 the Minneapolis Commercial Club was noted for its rooms, which were the favorite meeting place for various public gatherings, whether large or small.\textsuperscript{67}

The \textit{Catalogue of Paintings} for 1888 contained categories for watercolors, charcoal works, and a selection of works by amateurs, some of whom were students at the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts.\textsuperscript{68} A reporter for the \textit{Minneapolis Tribune} noted that the year 1888:

\begin{quote}
... probably marked the zenith of the exhibition activities. The art committee included a large collection of amateur work from Minnesota and surrounding states. Consisting of oil paintings, it occupied nearly the entire first floor of the gallery. The upper floor of the gallery was occupied “by the finest productions of the most finished artists in America and will also contain nearly 60 original paintings by the old masters, including two Murillos of great value, three Rembrandts, a celebrated Wouvermann (sic) and specimens of the work of the Teniers both père and fils.”\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

The reporter might well have mentioned that Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1618-1682) was a Spanish Baroque painter; P. Wouverman, a somewhat obscure American painter of hunting scenes; David Teniers the Elder (1582-1649) a Flemish painter of landscapes; and his son, David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690), a prodigious Flemish painter of religious subjects and landscapes. Presumably Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) needs no further explanation. Available records do not disclose further details concerning these old master paintings.

The 1889 \textit{Catalogue of Works of Art, (Fourth Annual Exhibit) Minneapolis Industrial Exposition}, continued the previous year’s focus on watercolors and sculptures. The latter category contained a number of works by Jakob Fjelde. Perhaps as a harbinger of bad economic tidings on the horizon, Art Director H. Jay Smith (1852-?) sought to establish a guarantee system to ensure the continuity of the gallery. Guarantors would each be asked to purchase at least one work of art from the 1890 exhibition, scheduled to occur between August 27 and October 4, 1890. It was anticipated by Smith that over 200 persons would agree to do so.\textsuperscript{70}
Jakob Fjelde had a studio in the Exposition building and worked on an eight foot high figure in clay. Visitors to the Exposition were encouraged to stop by Fjelde’s studio and watch him at work. His clay model was the basis for the statue of Minerva (1889), which eventually was placed in the niche over the doorway of the old Minneapolis Public Library, which was then under construction.\textsuperscript{71}

Featuring an artist at work was one innovation which H. Jay Smith devised. Another idea was to introduce Native American Art to the community. Smith launched an expedition to the American Southwest, and returned with art and artifacts for display. Alexis Jean Fournier (1865-1948) was the official artist for the expedition which, in 1891, visited the so-called “Cliff Palace” in Mancos Canyon, located in the Mesa Verde area of Colorado. Funded by donors to the Exposition, the expedition spent nearly six months investigating this site, and bringing back relics for the Museum Department.\textsuperscript{72} Drawings made by Fournier on the expedition, including works in oil, watercolor, pen and ink, and pencil, were later utilized by him in two formats. The first was an elaboration and re-working of his art which was exhibited in panorama form at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893. Fournier personally interpreted this large work, 50 feet by 12 feet, with spoken commentary, to the thousands of persons who viewed the panorama.\textsuperscript{73} The second was an exhibit of drawings and sketches which accompanied the facsimile of the so-called “Battle Rock” exhibit at the 1893 Fair, prepared by H. Jay Smith.\textsuperscript{74}

Industrial Expositions were held at the facility through the year 1892. The height of the fame of the Exposition building occurred that summer, when it hosted the Republican National Convention, at which President Benjamin Harrison was re-nominated for the presidency. The enormous building “subsequently fell into disrepair and neglect with equal rapidity.”\textsuperscript{75} By the end of 1895 the Exposition board of directors had authorized the sale of all properties of the corporation other than the Art Exhibit collections. The sale of these latter assets, then on display in the Minneapolis Public Library, was deemed to have an inconsequential value.\textsuperscript{76}

Minneapolis historian Isaac Atwater had good things to say about the art exhibitions:

To speak of the great advantage of this Industrial Exposition to the city would be a work of supererocogation (sic). Whether the institution pays financially is comparatively a matter of no great moment. Indirectly, it is of inestimable value. As an art educator in music and painting, its benefit is incalculable. The works of art exhibited in 1886 exceeded half a million dollars in value. Each succeeding year has progressively exceeded that amount by many thousand dollars. Taken as a whole it may be safely averred, that no similar exhibition, west of New York and Philadelphia, has exceeded this in interest and value.\textsuperscript{77}
The Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Art Gallery was the first large-scale attempt to provide the fine arts experience for Twin City viewers. Many thousands of persons visited these premises, viewing everything from student work to canvases by celebrated professional artists, both American and foreign. What they saw was assembled by entrepreneur H. Jay Smith. Who was this gentleman?

Art Director H. Jay Smith

The Minneapolis Tribune of July 11, 1889 carried an article headlined “The Greatest Picture of the Century Arrives in the City.” The introductory paragraph started out:

A mingled smile of enthusiasm and satisfaction spread over the features of Art Director H. Jay Smith yesterday afternoon, as he watched the unpacking of what some critics have pronounced the greatest character picture ever painted. A long box with a generous covering of foreign inscriptions was opened in Sculpture Hall, at the Exposition, shortly after 3 o’clock, and revealed a roll that might have been taken for the scenery of some big traveling theatrical aggregation. It took four men to lift it out of the box and unroll it on the floor and it will keep two of them for two days to properly mount it.

That picture, titled Peasants’ Insurrection, was by French artist Georges Antoine Rochegrosse (1859-1938). A French historical and decorative artist, Rochegrosse generally painted his works on a colossal scale. The French owners demanded $1,000 per month for the loan of this work of art.78 No local collector was interested in its purchase, however.

Such was the publicity which H. Jay Smith, the art director of the Industrial Exposition Art Gallery was constantly able to generate.

Born Harvey Jay Smith in Red Wing, Minnesota, he attended the University of Minnesota in the class of 1878. He was married to a Carrie Barnum, which perhaps may help us understand this curious individual. Just as P. T. Barnum was noted for obtaining publicity and launching a museum filled with art and curiosities, Smith clearly could play the press to obtain wide attention for his similar activities and antics.

As noted above, Smith was quite efficient in managing the Exposition Art Gallery for its entire existence. But he seemed to have some difficulty in separating his official duties from his private money-making activities. At the conclusion of the 1888 Industrial Exposition Smith rented a suite of rooms at the elegant West Hotel, then the most prominent hotel in the city. With a partner,
Smith offered for sale both “old master paintings and the best works of American art,” valued at over $500,000, a huge sum for those days. One room in the suite was “entirely devoted to that magnificent picture of ‘Christ in the Praetorium,’ which alone is worth tenfold the time and effort of a call… The Exposition only had the pictures. Now, however, under this new arrangement and artistic genius, they are set in harmonious environment as the tints of stone are shaded into a perfect Mosaic.” The *Minneapolis Tribune* went on to crow, “Minneapolis has the wealth and intelligence, surely she has the soul to appreciate this rare collection. She will not let all these treasures be taken away with the pleasure that such possession must give to any great city.”

Gustave Doré (1832-1883) was an extremely successful French book illustrator of the middle nineteenth century. In the 1870s he took up the painting of large scale religious works. Doré painted four canvases of *Christ in the Praetorium* but, due to its large size, 20 by 30 feet, it is believed that this particular version was the one displayed at the West Hotel.

*Fig. 5.5* Front elevation of proposed Barrel Palace for World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, designed by H. Jay Smith. From *Minneapolis Tribune* (November 6, 1891), 5.
Smith also served in a similar position, as art director, at the Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition in Jacksonville, Florida, held between January and May, 1888. This Exposition was held to encourage tourism in Florida, which had by that date substantial railroad connections with northern cities. The Exposition displayed products and resources of Florida, especially fruits, flowers, trees and farm products. It also had an annex of sixty-four feet by eighty-eight feet, two stories high, which contained an art gallery. Smith also served in a similar position, as art director, at the Florida Sub-Tropical Exposition in Jacksonville, Florida, held between January and May, 1888. This Exposition was held to encourage tourism in Florida, which had by that date substantial railroad connections with northern cities. The Exposition displayed products and resources of Florida, especially fruits, flowers, trees and farm products. It also had an annex of sixty-four feet by eighty-eight feet, two stories high, which contained an art gallery.

A catalogue was specially issued to highlight the Florida exhibition of 235 works of art, all of which were for sale. Exhibiting artists were from New York, Paris, Brussels Hanover, London, and Amsterdam, and included among others Albert Bierstadt, A. J. Conant, Louis Deschamps, James Fairman, Théodore Rousseau, Jules Dupré, and Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez. The artist with the most canvases, given the Exposition’s emphasis on fruit and other farm products, was Caducious Plantagenet Ream (1838-1917), an American still-life artist who specialized in paintings of fruit and vegetables.

Smith was always the promoter. In 1891 the Minnesota commissioners for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition were meeting to decide on the design and contents for the proposed Minnesota building. H. Jay Smith suggested a building made entirely of wooden barrels since, at the time, flour barrel making was an important industry in Minnesota. The “Barrel Palace” as he proposed it was 200 feet square at the base, with domes 60 feet high. His design was not approved.

Smith eventually settled in Galt, California, where he engaged in real estate development. After 1908 no further references to H. Jay Smith or his activities have been located. His personal foibles aside, it is clear that Smith managed the Exposition’s art gallery in a manner so that the Twin Cities were to benefit greatly from a five-year run of important fine art displays.
Chapter 6

Patrons of the Arts

Conspicuous consumption was considered to be the norm for the monied classes during the so-called Gilded Age between the 1870s and World War I, and the collecting of fine arts was one way to gain praise and prestige among one's peers. Art historian Lisa Dickinson Michaux developed this concept by stating that:

For Gilded Age millionaires, art collecting became a favorite pastime, whether or not they actually liked art; some simply enjoyed the excitement of hunting down rare and valuable treasures. European art, in particular, helped to establish the collector as cultured and linked him or her to the historical past. In addition, the industrialists often viewed art as an investment that would increase in value. In the homes of the wealthy, private art galleries became highly desirable status symbols. While some of the largest collections were in New York City, substantial collections sprang up in cities as far afield as Pittsburgh, Chicago, Sacramento and Portland.85

Does this insight apply in the Twin Cities? Two men: capitalists, philanthropists, art collectors, and organizers of art institutions, were instrumental in the development of the fine arts in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Their collections were different in scope and number, but both men willingly lent to local exhibitions and welcomed visitors to their home galleries. They were Thomas Barlow Walker and James J. Hill.

Thomas B. Walker

Thomas Barlow Walker (1840-1927), one of America's ten wealthiest men at the turn of the twentieth century, earned his money through ownership of timberlands and lumbering. The first record of an art purchase by Walker, dated June 5, 1878, was a receipt for the purchase of "a Rembrandt Peale Picture of George Washington," for the sum of $250.86 Beginning at that time he purchased a number of paintings, sculptures and chromolithographs for his home on Hennepin Avenue at Eighth Street, in Minneapolis. Shortly thereafter he was to acquire important landscapes, portraits and paintings, including works by such renowned artists as Thomas Cole, Rembrandt Peale and George Inness. In 1879 Walker built a sky-lit gallery adjoining his residence. This was the first art gallery west of the Mississippi river and the first public art gallery in Minnesota.87 Entrance to the gallery was free to visitors.
One of T. B. Walker’s more important early acquisitions was an 1889 painting by Jules Breton (1827-1906), titled *L’appel du soir*. It was purchased in 1889 from M. Knoedler & Co. for $18,000. A nineteenth-century realist painter, Breton’s works were often views of the French countryside. According to Janet Lynn Whitmore, “Breton’s reputation in the art world is at its peak at this time...” and Walker’s purchase “is reflected by his increasing willingness to spend substantial sums for his art collection.”

The M. Knoedler & Co, was at the time one of the largest firms dealing in fine arts. It was the principal supplier of paintings to many of the elite collectors in the East, as well as to Walker and James J. Hill. Marketing “the tried-and-true in French or French inspired paintings,” Knoedler in effect became the taste-maker of what was then popular to collect, especially if one could not afford the Old Masters. Works by Corot and Bouguereau were especially favored.

T. B. Walker lent six pictures to the “Loan Exhibition of Selected Works of Old and Modern Masters” held at the Art Institute of Chicago from January 1 through
January 23, 1898. His loans were among others from the elite of Chicago, including Potter Palmer, William O. Cole, Martin Ryerson and R. H. McCormick. Works which Walker lent were by Bouguereau, Boulanger, Hogarth, Demont-Breton, Bol and Crome. After the exhibit closed, the secretary of the Art Institute of Chicago wrote to Walker: “A vote of thanks to you was unanimously passed for the loan of your valuable pictures for the recent exhibit of Select Works of Modern and Ancient Masters, one of the choicest collections ever exhibited in Chicago.”
A contemporary (1899) description of Walker’s home gallery from *Brush & Pen* magazine is of interest:

The entrance is through the house — a flight of steps, covered with a rich rug, leading to it from the drawing room. In the first and second rooms, which are separated from each other by an archway, are hung the larger pictures of his collection. In a third room, which can be shut off at pleasure, are a number of smaller and even more highly prized paintings by such artists as Rousseau, Corot, Cazin, Turner, Hogarth, Sir Thomas Lawrence, and others. Opening from this room is still another, called the bronze room, where Mr. Walker has a large collection of rare and costly bronze vases, and a case of curious and valuable articles of Chinese workmanship — crystal snuff-bottles and small intricate carvings in ivory.... Each room has a skylight and is furnished with a row of electric lights and reflectors, so that the lighting is as perfect as possible. Exquisite Oriental rugs are scattered over the floors and thrown over the divans.  

Walker’s galleries were not illuminated or furnished in any significant manner different from counterpart private galleries in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston

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*Fig. 6.4 Interior view of the T. B. Walker art collection, circa 1915, showing the succession of galleries. Courtesy of the Walker Art Center.*
or New York. Likewise, his artwork was initially hung in similar fashion to those galleries and, indeed, to public museums of the times. Quantity rather than quality, was displayed, according to art historian Janet Whitmore, in a hodge-podge patchwork.  

As noted from the illustrations, Walker’s paintings were exhibited in various levels, from the floor to nearly the ceiling, with very little space between the frames. For visitors of that era this sort of display was the norm and presumably was to them visually appealing. As time went on, and working with the curator, Reuben H. Adams, a more organized, coherent approach to exhibiting was followed. Paintings were eventually grouped by stylistic categories or by individual artists. No rails or barriers separated the art works from the public.

Noted in the bottom row of the ladies’ portrait alcove is Hogarth’s Portrait of his Wife. William Hogarth (1697-1764) was an English portrait painter, pictorial satirist and editorial cartoonist. Arranging together women’s portraits could have been simply an effort by Walker to gather similar subject matter in a single location. There may be a better reason, however, for this specialization. The nineteenth century, as art historian Gabriel Weisberg wrote, was a period of change in women’s lives, as shown in art and elsewhere. By the 1890s women who had once been confined to the home, were seen in public everywhere – from the tennis courts to advertisements in magazines and on posters. Women then were seeking greater economic and educational opportunities, as well as the right to vote. Among Walker’s portrait collection were women whose status came from birth or marriage, but among the more recent were, for example, actresses and painters.

One of the most effective tools which Walker used to inform and educate the public about his collection was the printed catalogue. Specially noted are his catalogues dated 1902, 1907, and 1912 in the time frame we are considering. Walker did not charge a fee for these catalogues.

Two well known connoisseurs from the Philadelphia Art Club, John H. McFadden and Albert Hetherington, visited Minneapolis in 1912. The New York Sun reported that:

...to the amazement of the two Philadelphians, instead of the usual local gallery filled with copies or indifferent specimens bearing great names, they found a gallery literally crammed with distinguished pictures and fine old Chinese porcelains. The catalogue of the paintings numbers over 300. Truly an amazing gathering, one that reflects high and varied artistic tastes. Yet how many know the Walker gallery?

A Norwegian artist, Carl L. Boeckmann (1867-1923), who settled in Minneapolis in 1905, was an assistant to Reuben Adams in the Walker Gallery. He also was commissioned to paint portraits of Blackfoot Indians, some of whom posed in...
Fig. 6.5 Interior view of the T. B. Walker collection, circa 1915, showing the first large gallery. Seated is Reuben H. Adams, the first gallery curator. Courtesy of the Walker Art Center.

Fig. 6.6 Ladies portrait alcove, T.B. Walker Gallery, circa 1914. Courtesy of the Walker Art Center.
Walker’s gallery. These portraits, along with those of Henry H. Cross (discussed below) formed a part of Walker’s important Indian portrait collection.98

Walker also obtained for his collections a selection of works from Henry Lewis, discussed previously, an early artist whose oil paintings dealt with mid-western forts, Indians, and scenery of historical interest.99

Walker was fond of publishing accolades about his collections, and did so in the various catalogues of his collections. One such comment, by David Starr Jordan, the first president of California’s Stanford University, said:

I do not profess to be an art critic, but I have seen miles of pictures in my time, at home and abroad, in public and private collections, but of all the galleries that I have seen, without exception, a large part of the pictures should be turned face to the wall. I have examined every picture in this collection and there is not one that needs disturbing, and it is the only gallery of the kind that I have ever seen, and stands the highest as a collection of art.100

Walker’s collecting interests continued to expand, and eventually included galleries of miniatures, Asian porcelains and jade, and ladies’ portraits, as well as Native American artifacts from the Southwest.101

Over time Walker made a very generous donation of his religious art to the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church, located across the street from the present-day Walker Art Center. Included among the many canvases were those by
Washington Allston, Lucas Van Leyden, Giovanni Tiepolo, Benjamin West, and Jacobi Tintoretto. Later research has indicated that a number of these donated works were incorrectly attributed.

Walker also planned, albeit unsuccessfully, to establish a museum of American history in Minneapolis. He commissioned artist Henry H. Cross (1837-1918), to portray famous Indians and famous Indian fighters and scenes in which historic Western events occurred. For a time Henry Cross had a studio in Minneapolis to carry out this project. Cross had previously concerned himself with portraying the Sioux people; his first connection with Minnesota was his painting of each of the Indians sentenced to death for their participation in the Sioux Uprising of 1862. Buffalo Bill Cody called Cross “the greatest painter of Indian portraiture of all times.” In the course of his “Wild West” shows Cody had become acquainted with many of the subjects of the portraits of Cross and, as such, would have been familiar with the accuracy of these canvases.

In this regard The Walker Galleries Catalogue wryly notes that

Buffalo Bill, after enumeration of a great number of the Indians whose portraits, by Mr. H. H. Cross he saw in the collection, says 'I knew these men personally and intimately, and the portraits of these people are true to life. I have Yellow Hand’s scalp.’

Fig. 6.8 Henry H. Cross with Native American portraits, circa 1905.
Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.
The Cross collection of paintings would, it was hoped, become the nucleus of such materials in the new museum.\textsuperscript{104} No further mention of this plan is noted in the records. Reuben H. Adams, the T. B. Walker curator, published a catalogue of the H. H. Cross Indian Portraits in 1927, which illustrated each of the portraits.\textsuperscript{105} The resulting collection, known as the Cross Native American portraits, was later sold and is now in the Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The goal of T. B. Walker was to have his comprehensive collection of art become a public museum in Minneapolis. The mayor and the city council would not agree, however, to fund such a museum. Some years later, 1927, the Walker Art Center formally opened its new building on Hennepin Avenue, and exhibited some, but not nearly all of Walker’s collection. Walker Art Center curators through time also determined that a number of paintings in Walker’s collection were not correctly attributed. The Center was to later change its focus, and its collection eventually was concentrated on modern, contemporary art.

The great majority of the paintings, sculpture and miniatures in the Walker collection were disposed of by the Walker Art Center in auction sales later in the twentieth century, at Parke Bernet Galleries, the New York City Gimbel Brothers Department Store, and Sotheby’s. The Chinese Jade collection eventually entered the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

What is the legacy of T. B. Walker? Art historian Janet Lynn Whitmore writes that “...he possessed a very specific aesthetic ideal, focused on the importance of rural life and values and on the beauty of the natural world. Secondary to that was his firm belief that an art collection should encompass cultural history and be useful in educating the ordinary person.”

Walker stated in his eighty-seventh year that “…the public has always been made to feel that the gallery belongs to it and that all are welcome to view the objects of art I have collected. …the fact that so many have enjoyed visiting my galleries is one of my great compensations now that I am an old man.”\textsuperscript{106}

James J. Hill

James J. Hill (1838-1916) immigrated to St. Paul from Canada in 1856 and engaged in various freight-related businesses. By 1893 his Great Northern Railroad ran as far west as Puget Sound in the state of Washington, and was hugely successful. In 1881 Hill became interested in art, and in 1883 he added an art gallery onto his house at Ninth and Canada streets. Hill carefully recorded his art purchases between 1881 and 1915, the year of his death, disclosing a list of 285 paintings and pastels representing the work of 128 different artists.
Conspicuous consumption was not the only motivation for art collecting by James J. Hill. While T. B. Walker was interested in the subject matter of art, Hill’s interest also stemmed from his attempts to understand it in practice. Hill’s obituary in the *New York Times* said in this regard that:

> It was not generally known that he was a fair artist himself. He would take his brushes and palette, and with a keen sense of the values of light, shade, coloring and perspective, would turn out a very fair painting. When he was a boy in the Quaker school in Rockwood, Canada, he used to draw and make copies of famous engravings and paintings.\(^{107}\)

In 1883 Hill spent $66,500 for thirty-four paintings. His acquisitions in succeeding years were works by contemporary European artists, purchased primarily from prominent New York art dealers, including M. Knoedler & Company, and Samuel P. Avery. When the Hill family left Lowertown for their new mansion at 240 Summit Avenue, completed in 1889, an art gallery was ready for the art collection. For this new space Hill formed a collection of work by the French artists Corot, Millet, Rousseau, Delacroix, and Courbet. In 1891, for example, he spent $123,000 on twenty-four paintings.\(^{108}\) The public was always admitted to
view the collection, which was open six days each week, but until 1894 it was necessary to ring the doorbell to gain entry to the gallery.\(^\text{109}\) For a time Hill had an apartment in Paris from which he furthered his art collecting interests.

As stated in Henry Fuller’s satirical novel, *With the Procession (1895)*, owning a work by Jean Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875) was a status symbol: “people of our position would naturally be expected to have a Corot.”\(^\text{110}\) Hill’s collection eventually contained at least 18 paintings by Corot.\(^\text{111}\)

Describing the Hill home gallery, the French writer Paul Bourget said in 1895:


> The gallery of paintings which it contains is mentioned in the guide books. Pictures, everywhere. Corots of the highest beauty... a colossal Courbet, the *Convulsionnaires* of Delacroix, and a view of the Coast of Morocco before which I stood long, as in a dream, I saw the canvas years ago. I have sought for it since in hundreds of public and private museums, finding no book which could inform me who was its present possessor, and I find it here... \(^\text{112}\)
Fig. 6.11 Residence of James J. Hill, at 240 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. The art gallery is at the left side of the residence. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Fig. 6.12 Ticket to home art gallery of James J. Hill at 240 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, circa 1900. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.
At the present time the Minnesota Historical Society owns and operates the Hill residence for public tours and events. The art gallery is currently used for the display of the Society’s own collection of Minnesota art.

Hill was public-spirited and generous. He lent works to the Minneapolis Public Library upon its opening in 1889, to the St. Paul Public Library in 1901, and to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1904. He gave substantial financial support to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts on its opening in 1914.113

James J. Hill died in 1915 without leaving a will. His second son, Louis Hill, Sr., took on the task of dividing the art collection among the heirs. After the collection was appraised Louis divided the oil paintings into six equal lots based upon monetary valuation, one lot each for his mother, himself, and his siblings.114 In this manner the remaining paintings in Hill’s collection, 83 pieces in all, passed to his descendants and they, in turn, were very generous in donating various works to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. By 1973 twenty-two works of art, including ones by Courbet, Delacroix, and Corot, had been donated by Hill family members. Two of these paintings, donated by Jerome Hill, had hung in the 1838 Salon, and could not have been more different. According to curators Gregory Hedberg and Marion Hirshler of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Corot’s huge (97 ½ by 70 ½ inches) Silenus (1838), took a story from Greek antiquity as told by Virgil and gave it almost a ballet treatment. These curators also noted that Eugene Delacroix’s Fanatics of Tangier, painted in 1838, was based on contemporary Morocco, a view of street violence which the painter had witnessed.115 Both paintings seem far removed from Hill’s usual selections for his collection.

James J. Hill purchased as a group fifty-six watercolor paintings, by Seth Eastman (1808-1875) during the five year period when Eastman was preparing illustrations for Henry R. Schoolcraft’s notable work, History, Conditions and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States (1851-1857). Eastman’s small watercolor paintings were then reproduced as engravings and colored lithographs in the six volume history. The original sketches for these paintings were made at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, between 1841 and 1848. According to art historian Jennifer Jane Marshall, Eastman’s works were said to differ from the ethnographic documenting of a vanishing race by his contemporary George Catlin since, frequently, “these small works aren’t really ethnography, but more properly genre scenes.”116 Following Hill’s death in 1915 the watercolors were donated to the James Jerome Hill Reference Library in St. Paul.117 Hill had built this library during his last years, to house his books and smaller collections.

Louis Hill, Sr., who succeeded his father as president of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads, clearly shared his father’s interest in art. He created, in effect, the first Minnesota corporate art collection by commissioning works from such well-known artists as John Fery, Elsa Jemne and Winold Reiss, for use in railroad stations, national park hotels, and in tourism advertising.118 These commissioned paintings were usually based upon portraits of Native
Americans and landscape scenes in areas through which the railroad traveled.\textsuperscript{119} John Fery (1854-1934), for example, worked for Louis Hill between 1910 and 1913, completing 347 often very large paintings, for which he was paid $31.70 each. Hill provided Fery lodging and a studio in the Seymour Hotel and an annual salary of $2,400.\textsuperscript{120}
In 1958 the Minneapolis Institute of Arts held a loan exhibition of paintings and sculpture from Hill’s collection, then in the collections of his heirs. This event was an attempt to re-assess the scope of Hill’s collection.

Comparing the Collections of Walker and Hill

Why did the art collections of James J. Hill and T. B. Walker differ so markedly? Both were self-made men of enormous wealth who began collecting in middle-age. Neither man had the advantage of a classical education or, in fact, schooling beyond the elementary level. Neither man made a practice of traveling abroad where he could have examined art in its cultural context. Both had available to them their choice of dealers and advisers, both local and in such cities as New York and Boston. And the fine art collecting of both men has been extensively documented, based on the records of purchases and sales which they themselves maintained.

James J. Hill clearly was assisted in his selection of art by the dealers whom he frequented, but his taste in art was seemingly motivated by what he liked. He had a home gallery and he filled it with works of art by the Barbizon painters. As the proprietor of a hobby farm he enjoyed scenes of rural life.

T. B. Walker on the other hand was perhaps motivated, as the years passed, by his desire to leave for posterity a museum devoted to his collection. This necessitated the acquisition of an enormously wider spectrum of the fine arts, from Asian to European, and in a variety of media (sculptures, paintings, ceramics and miniatures). He also commissioned art by contemporary artists (Cross, Boeckmann, and Harnett) as he sought to assemble an even more comprehensive collection.

The families of both men continued to be interested in art, as collectors, donors, museum trustees, and in the case of Hudson B. Walker, as a museum administrator. T. B. Walker’s son, Archie, also used his business position to give America one of its most widely-known commercial icons. The Red River Lumber Company (T. B. Walker’s principal firm) introduced the figure of logging great Paul Bunyan. An American folklore figure, Paul Bunyan was first drawn by W. B. Laughead, a Walker cousin, in 1915.
Chapter 7

Other Important Collectors and Donors

The names of the founders and later members of the board of directors of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts are synonymous with a listing of important early Twin Cities art collectors. Minneapolis names include William Whitney, James S. Bell, John Van Derlip, Edward Gale, Frank H. Peavey, W. H. Dunwoody, Martin B. Koon, Sumner T. McKnight, William Chute, Thomas Lowry, Charles A. Pillsbury, Frederick Pillsbury, Alfred F. Pillsbury, William D. Washburn, Clinton Morrison, and Mrs. Putnam McMillan. Many of these collectors were among the earliest benefactors of the Society. Van Derlip donated money, Clinton Morrison donated the land upon which the museum was built, and McMillan donated decorative arts.

One of the founding trustees of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts was Herschel V. Jones (1861-1928) the owner of the Minneapolis Journal newspaper. His collecting interest was prints. Over the years he assembled a collection of many thousand prints dating from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, containing the entire spectrum of the graphic arts. The highlight of his efforts was the purchase in Oregon of the William M. Ladd collection. The Ladd collection of prints included over 150 Rembrandts, 119 Dürers, and selections by Piranesi, de Ribera, and Kandinsky. Jones’ 1916 gift to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, then valued at over $600,000, was considered so important that the museum’s first separate curatorial department was established to deal with it. According to art historian Lisa Dickinson Michaux, the scope of this gift cannot be understated:

The opportunity for a newly established Midwestern museum to display original works by such masters as Rembrandt and Dürer, while also exhibiting recent trends in the graphic arts, brought Minneapolis acclaim and respect. The Ladd prints were instrumental in bringing the museum national, and even international, recognition at an early stage in its existence.

What follows are summary descriptions of the art collections of various other early Twin Cities collectors. Their selection of paintings should presumably be judged in the context of what was then fashionable and, indeed, affordable. Taking the case of French artist Julien Dupré (1851-1910), whose paintings were found in many of these collections, as an example, one can see that while Dupré witnessed fame and fortune during his lifetime, yet his works were to be shunned by the art world during much of the ensuing twentieth century. William–Adolphe Bouguereau is another example of an artist successful in his lifetime, but less valued in later decades. The critical assessment of such works today must consider that tastes do change and even change again.
Martin B. Koon was a Minneapolis attorney and judge active in the formation of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts in 1883. His art collection was principally composed of contemporary American paintings, including one which he took particular pride in, *Luxembourg Garden at Twilight*, by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925).  

W. H. Dunwoody, who achieved his wealth through grain milling, owned several canvases of Constant Troyon (1810-1865), including *Landscape with Cattle*, and *Feeding the River*. These oils, as well as *Child with Cherries*, later known as *Yvonne*, (1895) is William-Adolphe Bouguereau were subsequently donated to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

A Minneapolis newspaper, the *Journal*, in a series of 1903 articles cited below described the lives of the rich and famous, their homes, and their art collections.

Frank H. Peavey, who made his fortune in the grain elevator business, owned paintings by twenty foreign and nine American artists. The *Minneapolis Journal* noted that “the paintings that adorn the walls of the Peavey residence are exquisitely selected.” His collection included works by Jules Breton, Charles Daubigny, Alexis Fournier, William-Adolphe Bouguereau and Jean-Léon Gérôme. “The Bath which shows an eastern interior, with the marbles that Jean-Léon Gérôme is so fond of painting, is probably the only example of his work in Minneapolis.” Gérôme (1824-1904) was a French painter whose work included historical subjects, Greek mythology and Orientalist subjects.

Thomas Lowry, owner of extensive urban real estate and founder of the Twin Cities streetcar systems, purchased most of his collection in 1886 in Europe, often from the artists’ studios, Bouguereau, and others from the Salon exhibits. His collection included 33 works of art, including those of Murillo, Millet and Gabriel Max. Lowry’s home had an art gallery.

Sumner T. McKnight, whose fortune came from lumber and real estate ventures, acquired his collection in the early years of the twentieth century. His collection contained works of sixteen artists, including those by Julien Dupré, Constant Troyon, and George Inness.

Paintings by ten artists hanging in the James S. Bell residence “were purchased because the beauty of each painting appealed to their owner.” According to the *Minneapolis Journal* the gem of the collection is probably the Daubigny, purchased recently at the Angelo sale in Philadelphia. It was called *Washing on the Seine*. Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878) was an important French artist of the Barbizon school. His work includes a number of paintings of the Seine River, so it is not possible to identify further, with certainty, the picture acquired by James S. Bell. Also in the Bell collection were several Charles M. Russell (1864-1926) paintings of western scenes. Bell was involved in various flour milling businesses.

Another important Minneapolis collector was William D. Washburn, a one-time U. S. Senator from Minnesota, who made his fortune in grain milling
and lumbering. The city block upon which his Minneapolis mansion, called “Fairoaks,” was located would eventually become the city park across from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Washburn was generous in lending art from his collection to local exhibitions.

The fortunes of the Pillsbury family came from flour milling, and allowed the building of three important collections. The eldest, Charles A. Pillsbury, was said to be interested in “adorning his walls with the work of good artists.” While he owned works by Bouguereau, and Dupré he also favored, among his twenty-five canvasses, the works of American artists. The works of twenty-four artists in the residence of Frederick C. Pillsbury included those of many American artists, including William T. Richards, M. Wright, J. C. Brown, George McCord and James Hart. Reporter Ruth Danenbaum noted that John S. Pillsbury, on the other hand, was said to be interested only in “beautifying his home.” His oil paintings included works by Julian Dupré, and a “portrait of Rembrandt, attributed to Rembrandt… a strong picture with all of the Rembrandt coloring.”

The Reverend John Wright became Rector of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in 1887, which was then located at Ninth and Olive streets in St. Paul, Wright was described in Episcopal Church documents as “a man of deep piety and wide reading, who is showing Americans that in the West something more can be done than make exceedingly good railways and flour…” In addition to art, Wright amassed a large collection of bibles and prayer books; he was an author on many religious subjects; and he lectured extensively on other subjects, including Egyptology. Being a man of the cloth, Reverend Wright clearly did not have the financial assets of the capitalists described in the previous paragraphs, but he exhibited the painting The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine (circa 1500-1510) by the Italian Renaissance artist Antonio da Correggio (1489-1534) at the 1890 Harvest House Festival in St. Paul (discussed in a later chapter) which attracted significant local interest. A newspaper reporter had the following to say:

The picture which attracts the most interest, probably, is a small one loaned by Dr. Wright, rector of St. Paul’s, a genuine Correggio… It is a marriage of Catherine and represents the Virgin holding the blessed Child, who leans forward to place upon the finger of the young girl the ring which wedded Him to Her and His work… The picture is a beautiful and rare one, valued at thousands of dollars. It has changed hands but twice since it left the possession of the Pepoli family, who held it in Bologna for over 300 years.

A comparison of these affluent Twin Cities collectors, such as those mentioned previously, to explain what they selected for their collections, and why, is impossibly complicated. Nearly all of the families of these collectors came to Minneapolis from Eastern cities. As such they presumably had some awareness
of the place of the fine arts in their earlier communities. Their collections usually included portraits, landscapes, animals, and scenes of the rural poor. Almost no religious scenes are noted, perhaps because they generally were of the Protestant persuasion.

Fig. 7.1 The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine, by Antonio da Correggio, circa 1500-1510. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
But such comparisons quickly become blurred. More than a century has passed, and this highly conceptual question is not one in which third and fourth generation heirs are comfortable with, and few written records on the subject are available. Each of these collectors had his own particular background: education, culture, religion, travel, and family interests. It would not be productive to delve further than this.

These collectors mainly purchased from New York dealers, often selecting works that had been awarded prizes in the French salons. While Walker and Hill certainly set the standard, there were also different avenues and influences to guide the other local collectors, as the following chapters demonstrate.
Chapter 8

Art Exhibitions – Minneapolis

In addition to the private art collections formed by Messrs Hill and Walker, the annual State Fair art competitions, and the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Art Gallery, all of which were open to the public, there were private clubs as well as libraries which, from time to time, owned or displayed works of art. There were also various local and traveling art exhibitions.

A downtown Minneapolis art exhibition containing eighty oil paintings, forty watercolors, as well as etchings and engravings, was held beginning on September 25, 1878, in a suite of six rooms at the Brigham House on Hennepin Avenue. The art was all locally owned, and many of the works were “inspired” by the Old Masters. According to William Watts Folwell, then President of the University of Minnesota, “with little or no advertising, the attendance was considerable, and many were surprised at the number of good, if not rare or costly works of art, owned in Minneapolis.”

While the exhibition contained European paintings and watercolors, there was also an Orientalist room with Chinese, Japanese and Korean works of art. The citizen’s committee sponsoring this exhibition included John S. Bradstreet, Minneapolis’ first famous designer and interior decorator, who contributed the Orientalist room, and who will be considered later in this book.

The Society Norden, dating from 1871, a Minneapolis fraternal benefit society composed primarily of Swedish-American men, held a series of temporary fine art exhibits in their Minneapolis clubrooms between 1885 and 1889. These exhibits were said to have primarily reached out to their own ethnic community.

The Norwegian Art Association was incorporated in 1887. Its stated purpose was the founding of an art gallery and the promotion of Norwegian art in Minneapolis. While the gallery, located at 235 Fifth Avenue South, was said to be a success, yet the work of its continuation fell upon only a handful of members, and this caused its liquidation. The artists of the works of art exhibited there were nearly all “young and their names are quite unfamiliar to the general public, but the art lovers of every country know them,” said the Minneapolis Tribune.

Among the artists included were Axel Ender, Jorgen Sorenson, P. V. Arbo, and Gerhard Munthe. The newspaper reported that thirty-six paintings were offered at auction on June 3, 1893, and all were sold, but “the prices were ridiculously low when it is remembered that nearly all of the artists have had their paintings in the famous salons and exhibitions of Paris, London and Berlin.”

The Minneapolis Art League was organized in 1894, and its members included prominent professional local artists of the time, including Robert Koehler, Alexis J. Fournier, Herbjorn Gausta and Alex Grinager. Associate members included John S. Bradstreet, William J. Cross, and Emil Oberhoffer, the first conductor of the
Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. The League held their initial exhibition in the spring of 1896, “in the small and ill-lit gallery of an art dealer.” The following two exhibitions were held in the studio of the League’s president, Robert Koehler, and thereafter those premises became the permanent home of the League.\textsuperscript{142} The third annual exhibition of the League occurred in May of 1897 at 719 Hennepin Avenue. The illustrated catalogue listed 82 works of art, including oils, pastels, charcoal, and watercolors. The exhibitors included N. R. Brewer, Bertha Corbett, Alexis Fournier, Herbjørn Gausta, Alexander Grinager, and Robert Koehler.\textsuperscript{143}

In Robert Koehler’s Introduction to the 1911 \textit{Catalogue of the Traveling Exhibit of the Artists’ League of Minneapolis} he complained that, for the two weeks the pictures were exhibited in the Minneapolis Public Library, only 2,100 visitors came:

Had those who have no intelligent interest in art and no understanding of its wholesome influence on the life of the city been fairly represented, the attendance could hardly have been less than 20,000.

By way of apology Koehler added that Minneapolis “...is far from insensible to the value of art or unappreciative of its beauties. By every permanent sign she is rather eager to available herself of all the manifold uses of art.”\textsuperscript{144}

The Publicity Club of Minneapolis (which later became the Advertising Federation of Minnesota) was founded in 1906. This Club helped to organize a display of its “Traveling Exhibit” in the premises of five participating commercial clubs in Minneapolis, for a one week interval at each site. The Club paid shipping expenses and a local insurance company provided necessary insurance. Robert Koehler prepared the catalogue.\textsuperscript{145} The illustrated catalogue listed sixty-seven oils, etchings, and watercolors by twenty artists, including Edwin M. Dawes, Alexis Fournier, Herbjørn Gausta, Robert Koehler, and Grace E. McKinstry.

Other art exhibits were also scheduled in Minneapolis, either relying on local collections or showing works from elsewhere. For ten days during May of 1895, the Young Women’s Christian Association sponsored a Loan Art Exhibition in the gymnasium hall at its premises at 809 Nicollet Avenue. Exhibited were watercolors, etchings and engravings lent by “the art loving citizens who are known to be possessors of desirable works.”\textsuperscript{146} The exhibition was for fund-raising purposes.

The Heiman-Taylor collection of 15,000 black and white reproductions of masterpieces from many European museums, of which 12,000 were un-mounted in portfolios, were included in a traveling show which was then making the rounds of the larger American cities. The show was held in Minneapolis under the auspices of the Institute of Arts and Letters, and was exhibited for a week, commencing April 10, 1898, in the four stories of the building at 623 Nicollet Avenue.\textsuperscript{147} The Heiman-Taylor Art Company of Cleveland, Ohio, specialized in
reproductions and photographs of art for schools. This exhibit was strictly a money-making endeavor.

Before the commercial use of photography the principal way of reproducing works of art was through engraving and later, through lithography. In this manner the public could view and own copies works of art otherwise unavailable to them. The Heiman-Taylor Art Company was one of a number of companies which prepared and sold such art.

Reproductions of paintings appeared in magazines and newspapers and were circulated to libraries and schools, and were framed for display in the home. The journey from the artist’s easel through an engraving or photograph, and then the sale as a reproduction to the public greatly increased the exposure which a painter could expect for his works of art. An early, important producer of such reproductions was Adolphe Goupil (1806-1893), a French fine arts dealer and publisher. The Goupil roster of artists which they represented included Breton, Bouguereau, and Pasini, names of European artists certainly familiar to Twin City collectors.146

The Boston firm of Louis Prang accomplished similar reproduction of paintings through the process of chromolithography, specializing principally in works by American artists. The summary by Katharine M. McClinton of Prang’s work in the diffusion of art also applies to the activities of Goupil:

The chromos of L. Prang & Company hit the taste of the times... The chromos of paintings sought to teach and to raise the art taste of the many; they were really an expression of the times and echoed the democratic tastes of the people...149

Edmund D. Brooks was the best-known bookseller of the times in Minneapolis. Perhaps because some of the oil paintings were of literary figures and might be of interest to his patrons, Brooks hosted an exhibition of art at his Tenth Street South bookstore and gallery during the December of 1911. The Portrait of Victor Hugo on the Seashore by Ferdinand Victor Eugene Delacroix and Portrait of Charles Dickens (1859) by William Powell Frith were among the works exhibited. Also noted were works by John Everett Millais and Joseph Mallard William Turner.150
Chapter 9

Temporary Art Exhibitions – St. Paul

As in its sister city, Minneapolis, there were in St. Paul local and traveling art exhibitions and shows sponsored by artist organizations. But there were far fewer. The 1909 *Magazine of Art* noted that:

> St. Paul is a typical American City – which means that business comes first, and art takes what is left. It got very little during the first fifty years of the city’s life. From the city itself, nothing at all. Individual artists carried their aspirations away to more congenial climates and left St. Paul to its railroads and its ledgers.\(^{151}\)

Landscape artist Joseph Rusling Meeker (1827-1887), who lived in St. Louis, was one of the earliest artists to have enough confidence in the St. Paul art market to bring, in 1874, various of his paintings for sale. Included were his specialty, views of the swamps and bayous of the lower Mississippi river. The art was displayed at the store of Metcalf and Dixon on Seventh Street. Two of the paintings, according to the *St. Paul Daily Pioneer*, “are probably as fine works of arts as were ever brought to Saint Paul.” Making several further trips to the Twin Cities, Meeker painted views of Lake Pepin. One of James J. Hill’s early art purchases was a painting entitled *Scene in a Cypress Swamp of Louisiana*.\(^{152}\)

Art in St. Paul was given its initial impetus by the Art Loan Exhibition of 1883. A hall in the Mannheimer Block was made available for the mounting of the art. A number of noted St. Paul residents lent works by prominent European artists, even though it was hoped to have a goodly number of works from local artists as well. Lenders included General Henry Sibley, Norman Kittson, James J. Hill, Charles Ames, William Dawson, Robert Sweeny, and even Governor Hubbard. A total of 80 works were hung. The Exhibition opened on June 15, 1883. Commentary following the closing of the show indicates that the show failed in its primary purpose, obtaining full participation by amateur artists.\(^{153}\)

Perhaps the most important nineteenth-century showcase event for the fine arts in St. Paul was the Harvest House Festival, which opened at the Endicott building on October 27, 1890, benefiting the Women’s Christian Home. That Home opened in 1873 and eventually became a part of the Union Gospel Mission. The Festival’s Art Loan Committee, mostly made up of women of the New Century Club, contributed works of art from their own collections, and also persuaded many other St. Paul collectors to do the same. The Festival lasted for a full week, and its exhibition of paintings, drawings, models, and other items were estimated to have a value in excess of one million dollars.\(^{154}\)
The Festival’s large hall, in which the band of the Third Infantry Regiment played, was filled with non-artistic exhibits, from flowers to tea tables covered with delectable displays of food, as well as a military officer who explained the workings of the deadly Gatling Gun. “In one corner of the large hall lovers of the weed purchased cigars from beautiful Turkish ladies.” 155 Clearly to tempt an audience one had to offer a mélange of things.

Among the 18 pictures lent by James J. Hill were works by Millet, Corot, Henner, Jean Paul Laurens, and Delacroix. Particularly noted was *A White Bull* by Rosa Bonheur, which had been previously purchased by Hill for $8,250, a large sum for that time. Illustrated below is another exhibited painting, by French Realist Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), entitled *Chateau de Ornans.*

![Fig. 9.1 The Chateau de Ornans, by Gustave Courbet, 1855. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.](image)

The Art Workers’ Guild of St. Paul was founded in 1902. Its mission was “to encourage the workers in art, to forward the interests of art, and to develop in the community a love of beauty in every form.” By 1906 the Guild had 102 members, which included artists as active members and prominent citizens of St. Paul as contributing members. The treasurer of the Guild was William Yungbauer, whose business was the St. Paul equivalent of John S. Bradstreet’s in Minneapolis. The Guild hosted exhibits, lectures, and sales of arts and crafts. 157
Renamed as the Arts Guild of St. Paul, this group hosted a traveling exhibition of paintings organized by the Detroit Museum of Art in May of 1908 in the new State Capitol building. The exhibition included sixty-three works by Impressionists, including Mary Cassatt, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre Auguste Renoir. Also displayed were thirty-nine works by six American artists, including Paul W. Bartlett, Myron Barlow, Frederic Carl Frieseke, Henry Salem Hubbell, Alfred Henry Maurer and Henry Ossawa Tanner.158
Chapter 10

Art Education

There was, clearly, an early interest in art education at the secondary school level. A Minnesotan, Theodore J. Richardson, who grew up in Red Wing, Minnesota, and attended Winona Normal School, was selected in 1880 to develop the first city-wide department of art instruction in the Minneapolis public schools. Richardson later went on to produce pastels and watercolors of Alaskan scenes. There were also art schools in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The Minneapolis School of Art

In April of 1886 the Society of Fine Arts established the Minneapolis School of Art in a small house at 1021 Hennepin Avenue. It opened with twenty students enrolled, and Douglas A. Volk (1856-1935) became the first director. Volk received a salary of $100.00 a month, in addition to whatever profit the school made after expenses.
As attendance increased the house became too small, and proper lighting could not be supplied. It was decided, accordingly, to erect for the School a one story, sky-lit building at 719 Hennepin Avenue, on land owned by T. B. Walker, and the school remained there for a short time. By December of 1889 it removed to new premises in the new Public Library. An examination of three school catalogues (from 1889 to 1891) discloses that there were day and evening adult classes and classes for children. While a few of the adult attendees were local socialites, such as the Misses Julia and Hattie Walker and Eloise Butler, various aspiring artists also attended, including Grace McKinstry, Bertha Corbett, and Alexis Fournier. According to Douglas Volk:

The founders of this school began their work in the belief that it would be both a cause and a consequence of growing art knowledge in our city and State. They have been encouraged by the number of students who have attended, and the high quality of their work. The director has made good the powerful testimonials which prevailed in his election, and his enthusiasm has awakened the same spirit in others.
Volk was known as a painter of portraits and genre scenes. He exhibited in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition and won his first major award there. He was also selected by Cass Gilbert to paint one of the murals for the new Minnesota State Capitol building which opened in 1905. Volk’s 1905 mural, *Father Hennepin at the Falls of St. Anthony*, is in the Governor’s Reception room of the Minnesota State Capitol.

The Minneapolis School of Art had various downtown locations in the years which followed. Students had their first opportunity, in 1888, to exhibit their works publicly, in the Art Gallery of the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition.

To educate and stimulate its students, pictures and drawings from the leading art schools in the country were also exhibited in the School’s rooms at the Minneapolis Public Library, starting on May 2, 1890. Douglas Volk, the director, had hoped “that the exhibit may stimulate the interest in art and fully repay him for the trouble to which he has been to secure it.”

By the early 1890s Volk became increasingly concerned by the School’s lack of patronage, and the School’s directors were quite unhappy with Volk’s financial management. The receipts from tuition did not cover the expenses, and a guaranty fund was needed. Volk resigned in 1893.
Even in the nineteenth century students both in Minneapolis and St. Paul aspired to travel and study art abroad, either in Munich or in Paris. Alexis Jean Fournier was one of the earliest Minnesotans to have this opportunity. Cass Gilbert (the architect) and Paul Manship (the sculptor), were others who benefited from such foreign study.

**Robert Koehler**

Volk’s successor as director of the School was Robert Koehler (1850-1917), a German-born artist. His early years were spent in reorganizing the school and improving its financial basis. By 1898 Koehler managed to correct many of the previous problems. In the years which followed Koehler introduced a decorative design department (with courses offered by a future director, Mary Moulton Cheney), which was perhaps influenced by the activities of John S. Bradstreet, discussed hereafter in this book.
Surely one of the best known works of art which Koehler accomplished was his signature painting, *The Strike*, which was completed in 1886. Inspired by various labor strikes it portrays a group of factory workers confronting their boss. Shortly after its completion it was published in *Harper’s Weekly*. It was also reviewed in the *New York Times* of April 4, 1886: “Mr. Koehler has done well to show the earnest group of sweating workmen, quite possibly with justice on their side... The Strike is the most significant work of art in this Spring Exhibition.” But the painting, which today is among the esteemed labor works by an American artist, was never paid much attention by later U. S. art critics. In storage for over 50 years, it was purchased in 1971 from the Minneapolis Public Library by a private collector, Lee Baxandall, for $750.00. Baxandall promptly insured the work for $100,000. It was thereafter exhibited at the Whitney Museum in New York City, and is now in the collection of the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin.

The St. Paul School of Fine Arts

The Ladies Art Association, a group of prominent St. Paul women, was deeply involved with the formation in 1894 of the St. Paul School of Fine Arts. The intent was to offer classes as well as to host exhibitions of art. The first director was
Fig. 10.6 St. Paul School of Art students sketching from a live model in the attic of the Metropolitan Hotel, 1894. Pictured among the students are Alice E. Hugy and Paul Manship, and the director, Burt Harwood. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Fig. 10.7 Mesdames Barber, Brack and Sorders at art summer session of the St. Paul School of Art at the Sibley House, Mendota, Minnesota, 1896. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.
Burt Harwood (1855-1922), an associate and contemporary of Douglas Volk. In the first year 40 students were enrolled. The first premises for the school were in St. Paul’s Metropolitan hotel.

The first brochure for the school lists drawing and modeling in clay, and sketching from live models. The School went through a progression of directors in succeeding years, and in view of continuing financial issues merged, in 1908, with the St. Paul Institute of Arts and Science.\footnote{169}

The St. Paul Institute of Arts and Science

Incorporated in 1907, the St. Paul Institute of Arts and Science was located in the St. Paul Auditorium. Termed a “People’s University,” one of seven curriculums was the fine arts which, in 1908 had 591 students enrolled. Its courses included drawing from life, portrait, watercolor and sculpture, sketching and ceramics.

The Institute’s art gallery was on the second floor and its chief function was to house “migratory exhibits.” With the cooperation of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, these exhibits included a traveling exhibit assembled by J. W. Young galleries of Chicago, and the annual exhibition of works by the school’s students. Ambitious plans also included art lectures and a permanent collection. In the years which followed, classes were expanded and a number of exhibitions occurred. However, financial issues, and dropping enrollment of students, resulted in the closing of the art school in 1917.\footnote{170}
Other Art Institutions

Libraries, clubs, societies, and State sponsored organizations were involved in the fine arts.

The Minneapolis Athenaeum

The Minneapolis Athenaeum was founded in 1859, the earliest library in Minnesota.

T. B. Walker became a member of the Athenaeum in 1877 and thereafter was instrumental in many of its activities.\(^7\) For many years the Athenaeum was a subscription library for members only, until it became a tenant in the Minneapolis Public Library building in 1889. It possessed a representative collection of prints by John Singleton Copley (1738-1815), illustrating American mural paintings; as well as a number of old Japanese woodblock prints by well-known Japanese artists Utagawa Kunisada (1786-1865) and Ando Hiroshige (1797-1856); and large photographs illustrating different architectural periods from the New York City studio of Frank Hegger, a late nineteenth-century dealer in etchings and photographs. These works were hung in the art book room of the Library.

The Minnesota Historical Society

As early as 1881 mention is made of the continued display, in the rooms of the Minnesota Historical Society, of over 120 portraits of people who have had a prominent part in the history and development of Minnesota. Also considered were group pictures and paintings of historic scenes, all related to the focus of the Society on collecting Minnesota art and artists.\(^7\)

The Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts

The Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts was organized in January of 1883. Founders included twenty-five commercial, industrial and professional leaders of the city. Eleven were women. William W. Folwell, University of Minnesota President, was the first chairman of the Society, while John S. Bradstreet was on the Executive Committee. The object of the Society, as expressed in its Articles of Incorporation was “to advance the knowledge and love of art through exhibitions of works of
art, lectures on art subjects, the establishment of an art library and gallery and the development of facilities for regular art study.”

The initial activity of the Society was to sponsor the First Public Loan Exhibition, which was held in second floor rooms of the Clinton-Morrison Block at 421 Washington Avenue South in Minneapolis, and opened on November 20, 1883. The exhibition included contributions from local artists, mostly amateur, but also had over 100 oil paintings, watercolors, and crayon drawings from the collections of Minneapolis citizens, as well as special loans from collectors in Milwaukee and New York. A room of Orientalist art was lent by John S. Bradstreet. The admission charge was twenty-five cents. Frederick C. Pillsbury was the only purchaser of pictures from this exhibition, acquiring the first two oils for his collection. They were those by James Hart (1828-1901), and J. G. Brown. Hart was known as a painter of the Hudson River School, while John George Brown (1831-1913) an English born artist who later moved to New York, was known for his British genre paintings adapted to American subject matter. His studies of shoe shine boys were well known.

Great public interest required that the exhibit be kept open until January 1, 1884. Many persons attended. “On one Sunday alone, when no admission was charged, the attendance was estimated at 2,000 people, a remarkable number when one considers that the population of Minneapolis at that time was only 50,000. The Society realized a profit of $2,000.00 from this exhibit and felt that a definite impression had been made. Enthusiasm ran high, prompting Mr. Folwell to say, ‘It was the beginning of an era.’”

![Fig. 11.1 Post card view of East Hall, Museum of the Minnesota Historical Society, circa 1908. Courtesy of the author.](image)
The largest gallery was a salon of oil paintings, the majority of which were categorized as “home loan” paintings from local owners. One work was a portrait of Léon Gambetta (1838-1882), a French statesman who was prominent during and after the Franco-Prussian war. It is curious to note what interested one of the commentators about this exhibit: “The large portrait of Gambetta now on exhibition... is said to be the only portrait of this statesman in this country, if not the world. Gambetta had an aversion to likeness and could never be made to sit.”

The second largest of the exhibition rooms was set aside for watercolors, etchings and engravings. The room had a background of yellow and white, which imitated the decorations which James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) used for his earlier exposition in London. A Whistler etching, then titled The Doorway and the Beggars, was lent by John S. Bradstreet. That etching had been purchased by him from at the London show. This was, incidentally, the first print to enter the permanent collections of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, following Bradstreet’s death in 1914.

Fig. 11.2 Catalogue cover from the 1883 Public Loan Exhibition, showing the calligraphic influence of John S. Bradstreet. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Collection, Hennepin County Library.
Other activities followed. In the fall months of 1884 a course of popular lectures were given by William M. R. French, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, with the purpose of increasing interest in the fine arts. In the winter of 1886 a loan exhibition was held in rooms of the Minneapolis Loan and Trust
Company on Nicollet Avenue. In the earlier weeks some important works were displayed. Beginning on February 15th a collection of fine art from the private gallery of T. B. Walker took their place. A deficit of more than $500 discouraged further efforts at exhibitions of this sort.\footnote{179}

The Society of Fine Arts itself had neither permanent quarters nor a regular exhibition program during the final years of the nineteenth century. A review of local newspapers indicates that only a few exhibits were actually held. On March 16, 1895, an exhibit of American pictures from Indianapolis took place at No. 8, Fifth Street South under the auspices of the Society.\footnote{180} Between February 9 and 18, 1899, in the gallery of the Minneapolis Public Library the Society sponsored an exhibition of paintings from the gallery of Arthur Tooth & Sons.\footnote{181} When the collector was not able to visit a dealer in his galleries, the dealer often saw fit to travel to the home city of the collector.\footnote{182} Arthur Tooth & Sons, based in London and with a branch in New York City and an agent in Paris, specialized in British art and the Old Masters.

Commencing in the year 1900 the Society sponsored a number of annual exhibitions of paintings held in the Minneapolis Public Library gallery. Robert Koehler was the curator of the first exhibition. An examination of the first three annual catalogues indicates that the great majority of works on exhibit (144 in 1900, 122 in 1901, and 165 in 1902) were from collectors and dealers in the eastern United States. Between five and ten percent were from local collectors. A special collection in 1900 was described as “paintings by old Spanish and French Masters, formerly hung in churches and convents of Mexico.” These items were from the collection of Louis and J. D. Holtzermann, owners of a Minneapolis department store.\footnote{183} All works were offered for sale. A perusal of the catalogues discloses works of art from nationally known artists such as Thomas Eakins, Childe Hassam, Winslow Homer and Jean-Baptiste-Camille-Corot. Local artists included Fournier, Koehler, and Gausta.

Herbjørn Gausta (1854-1924) was the first professional painter of Norwegian immigrant origin in the United States. He settled in Minneapolis in 1888 and, due to the lack of demand there for art work generally, had to earn his living from producing altar pieces for Norwegian-American churches. He was also invited to join the faculty of the University of Minnesota. His work left a unique record of early immigrant faces and life and, according to his principal biographer, Professor Marion J. Nelson, “he established a place for art in the culture of Norwegians in America.”\footnote{184} Many of his paintings are now in the collection of Luther College, in Decorah, Iowa.

Representatives of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts actively sought out works of art for their planned new museum. William Hogarth, the English portrait painter, was commissioned in 1756 to paint an altar piece for the east end of the chancel of St. Mary Redcliffe, an Anglican parish church in Bristol, England. The works included the \textit{Ascension}, flanked by \textit{The Sealing of the Sepulchre}, and
The Three Marys at the Tomb. A representative of the Bristol Fine Arts Academy, which wished to raise funds for a new building, was offering these works for sale in New York City and, in Minneapolis on April 15, 1911, to representatives of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. Apparently the works were at the time on loan from the church to the Bristol museum. The works were subsequently acquired by an English benefactor, however, since the sale did not occur. The works are once again on display in the St. Mary Redcliffe church.585

Discussions were underway by 1909 regarding the construction of a museum building for the Society of Fine Arts. While T. B. Walker was unwilling to participate, since he had other plans for his collection, others were solicited to aid in the planning. On the night of January 10, 1911, 175 of the city’s most prosperous citizens were invited to dinner at the Minneapolis Club. The guest of honor was William R. French, director of the Art Institute of Chicago. In the words of Mrs. Florence Welles Carpenter, a long-time supporter of the fine arts and a participant at the dinner, the following transpired. While the quotation is long, its flavor is important in understanding the developments:

The dinner progressed pleasantly, and as Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. French were the guests of honor discussion turned naturally to the situation in Minneapolis, to sites for a museum, to procedures tested elsewhere, in all of which the Chicago guests took a stimulating part. When interest had mounted and the temperature had risen sufficiently, there were sprung two surprises which brought enthusiasm to the boiling point.

Mr. Van Derlip rose and asked permission to read a letter from his father-in-law, Mr. Clinton Morrison. It stated concisely Mr. Morrison’s offer of property known as the Villa Rosa. This had been the residence of Mr. Morrison’s father, Mr. Dorilus Morrison, and was a social center in the early days when Mr. Morrison was Mayor of Minneapolis, and he and Mrs. Morrison entertained with lavish hospitality. The Villa Rosa site comprised ten choice acres and was valued even then at $200,000. Mr. Clinton Morrison’s letter expressed the hope that if this offer was accepted the property opposite it, long the home of Senator Washburn and his family, might be acquired as a city park....
history of art,” Dr. Edward Robinson was later to characterize this occasion...A twenty year old goal had been achieved in less than two hours. The museum was as good as built.186

Later in 1911 a group of trustees from the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts made an inspection tour of museums in various Eastern cities. They returned impressed, especially, with the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh, which combined under one roof an art museum, art school, and orchestra hall. Construction of the new museum building, designed by McKim, Mead and White, was completed in the fall of 1914.187

![Fig. 11.4 Twenty Fourth Street entrance, new Minneapolis Institute of Arts building, 1915. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.](image)

The first director selected for the new Museum was Joseph Breck (1885-1923). One of his first duties was to arrange for a loan collection to be in place for the dedication of the new premises. This collection comprised some 450 paintings
from public and private sources in all parts of the country. James J. Hill of St. Paul had presented the Museum with the Courbet painting shown below, loaned one-half of his famous collection of French masters, and contributed much excellent advice. Besides paintings there were loans of colonial furniture, Persian miniatures, et cetera. It was a tremendous task that Mr. Breck performed in securing and installing all of these treasures from donors as various as J. Pierpont Morgan and the Emir of Bokara.

Fig. 11.5 Deer in the Forest, by Gustave Courbet, 1868. Gift of J. J. Hill to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1914. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
The painting shown above, once known as the *Roe Covert*, was painted in 1868 by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). According to a handbook of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, “his great artistry is inescapable when we see in such a painting… the bold naturalism of vision, and directness of brushing combined with such a fine power of harmonizing tones, and through all, such a tender feeling for the subject.”

The Minneapolis Public Library

In 1885 the Minneapolis Public Library Board, with T. B. Walker as its first president, commenced planning for library premises, to include reading rooms, galleries of art, and a museum. In the new library, which was completed at the corner of Tenth Street and Hennepin Avenue in 1889, was a 27 by 100 foot art gallery on the upper floor, with a skylight at the top and a large bay window at the front. The Minneapolis School of Fine Arts occupied the two corner rooms on the same floor.

![Image of the art gallery in the Minneapolis Public Library](image-url)
The first exhibit in the new Public Library Art Gallery, held during August, 1890, included six oil paintings presented by James J. Hill, and loans from T. B. Walker, William D. Washburn and Thomas Lowry. The owner of the street railroad company in Minneapolis, as well as many real estate ventures, Lowry loaned 34 canvases. Among the loaned portraits was an 1885 work entitled *Cupid Disarmed*, by William-Adolphe Bouguereau.

The Minneapolis Public Library also had an art book room. In 1906 T. B. Walker loaned $6,000 to the Minneapolis Library Board to complete a third floor wing, on the condition that it contain an art department with selected art from his personal collection. When completed, the art book room was illuminated both by open gas jets in glass bowl diffusers and by exposed electric lamp bulbs. Electric reading lamps were on the tables. The numbers seem minute by today’s standards, but in 1912 the art book room had a total of 7,051 visitors, and the art book circulation totaled 3,532. In addition to reference books on the fine arts, the collection included prints, photographs and lantern slides.
By contrast, according to W. J. Holland, the director of Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Museum, the initial concept in 1886 of Andrew Carnegie was for an art gallery contained in a library. As originally built in 1895 his art gallery was initially housed in the main branch of the Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh in Oakland. Only with later additions were the galleries to dwarf the original library.\textsuperscript{196} The Minneapolis art department was in no way unique, however. In the year 1900 there were 46 libraries in the United States, from 21 different cities, which had art departments containing more than 500 volumes each.\textsuperscript{197}

T. B. Walker collected many fine art pieces, including Persian porcelains, Greek vases, Assyrian glass, and Chinese ivory. In 1909 Walker lent eight cabinets of this material to the Museum of the Academy of Science, which occupied space on the third floor of the library. The \textit{Minneapolis Journal} noted that the contents of these cabinets “in addition to being attractive, are interesting in the study of peoples of bygone ages, reading their history in the workmanship and art displayed in these rare antiquities.”\textsuperscript{198}

The Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts sponsored a loan exhibition of twenty paintings by Jules Guerin (1866-1946), which featured temples and gardens of the Holy Land. Guerin, an American artist, was a pupil of Benjamin Constant, and the winner of many medals and awards in Europe and the United States. The canvases originated at the Montrose Gallery of New York City and came, via the Detroit Museum of Art, to the gallery of the Minneapolis Public Library for three weeks, starting on January 14, 1911. The featured work was a painting entitled \textit{Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem}. The total attendance was in excess of 7,500 people.\textsuperscript{199}

The Minneapolis Club

The Minneapolis Club was organized in 1883, and moved to its present quarters in downtown Minneapolis in 1908, into a building which provided a “stimulating atmosphere where members could gather and engage in the development of social and cultural organizations.” One of the early Club presidents was Martin B. Koon, the attorney and judge who was deeply involved in the organization of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. It was in 1911 in Club premises where the pivotal meeting of affluent Minneapolis citizens resulted in the decision to erect the museum building of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. It is clear that a number of pictures graced the mahogany walls of the 1908 club-house, but available records do not indicate whom the actual artists might have been. The fine and decorative art found in the collection at that time presumably reflected either the Club’s nineteenth-century atmosphere or the wealth of history found in the state or the region. By 1996 the collection included over one hundred and forty works of art.\textsuperscript{200}
The Minnesota State Art Society

Minnesota was the second state to establish a State Art Society, Utah being the first in 1899. The Minnesota State Art Society was established in 1903. The law provided broad powers for encouraging arts and crafts within the State. Robert Koehler was the first president of the board, and of the twelve members, “four shall be artists or connoisseurs of art.” During its existence there were thirteen annual art exhibitions, which rotated between various Minnesota cities. By 1905 the Society had held its second annual exhibition in Minneapolis, St. Paul and

Fig. 11.8 The Channel to the Mills, by Edwin M. Dawes, 1913. Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
Winona. During April of 1912 the eighth annual exhibition was held in the St. Paul Auditorium in two large galleries. The first contained paintings, watercolors, etching and sculptures. The second contained art handicrafts. In the fine arts gallery were a selection of paintings and sculpture lent by the Chicago Art Institute, and also works solicited by The American Federation of Arts. A large selection of works from Minnesota artists, including Robert Koehler, Nicholas Brewer, Alexis Fournier, Grace E. McKinstry, and Edwin M. Dawes (1872-1945), were also on exhibit. According to Rena N. Coen, “...in The Channel to the Mills, quite arguably his finest work, Dawes used that technique [the daub of the brush stroke which is the signature of the Impressionists] to depict a shimmering cityscape of the nation’s then flour milling capital on the Mississippi River.” The painting is now in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

By 1915, however, the State legislature cut off the funding for the Society, and it was not thereafter a meaningful institution.

Cultural historian Neil Harris observed that “a sense of competition with Europe, for the greater glory of republicanism and American nationalism, seemed to argue for the establishment of institutions aimed at producing great artists, and educating the public sufficiently to appreciate them.” The Twin Cities strived towards this end.
Chapter 12

Art Dealers

The profit motive, to be sure, guided the early Twin Cities art merchants. Yet they were also quite effective in their support of the art collecting community and the various organizations which sought to exhibit the fine arts. Most early commercial art galleries or dealers in fine art also stocked artists’ supplies, made frames for works of art, and sold oils, watercolors, etchings and engravings. It is often difficult to locate meaningful information on their activities, except from infrequent advertising in newspapers of the day, or in exhibition catalogues or city directories. Subject to this caveat, we can still provide the following information.

Early Art Dealers

Perhaps the earliest reference to an art dealer was to the fine art gallery and photographic studio of J. E. Whitney in St. Paul, which began business in 1850. By 1866 it was located at the corner of Third and Cedar Streets, and there occupied three stories of a large building. “Whitney has on his walls several elegant oil paintings – one or two of them worth $300 each…” Martin’s Art Gallery, at 315 Third Street, in St. Paul, was, in 1865, the place where you could “see the best and largest collection of Paintings and Engravings ever brought to St. Paul.” These two galleries merged in 1869. According to the St. Paul Pioneer Press, “a later gallery, that of Messrs. Stevens and Robertson, on Wabasha Street, had hung only the choicest pictures, not copies, but original works, from the easels of the best artists—both American and Foreign…”

By 1872 out-of-state art dealers were arriving to sell their merchandise. Scott’s Art Gallery of Philadelphia had an art sale of foreign and American artists at the D. D. Merrill & Company premises at 166 Third Street, in St. Paul. In 1873 the first auction of fine arts occurred. Twenty-five oil paintings by landscape artist Cyrenius Hall (1830-1904) were offered. Only a few sold, most at prices of less than $100.00. The St. Paul Pioneer Press reported that not all out-of-state dealers went away happy:

Mr. Fanning, the dealer in water colors, has folded up his tent and wended his way back to Chicago, a sadder and wiser, but not much richer man. If all the cities he visited were as unappreciative as St. Paul, the young men who throng the garrets of Düsseldorf, Dresden, and Paris, and furnish him famous paintings by the wholesale would starve to death.
Fig. 12.1 Advertisement for Whitney’s Pioneer Gallery, St. Paul, 1867. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Fig. 12.2 Advertisement of the H. J. Smith & Co., 1886. Courtesy of the author.
The city directories list a number of art dealers in business in Minneapolis, including Beal’s Premium Art Gallery at 19 Washington Avenue and the H. Jay Smith & Company at 307 Nicollet Avenue. Smith was also the Art Director for the Art Gallery of the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition, discussed previously. Wales & Company at 425 Nicollet Avenue, advertised itself as a “Fine Arts Store,” furnishing paintings, etchings and engravings. I. E. Burt Company, at 624 Nicollet Avenue, advertised that “original paintings from noted painters will be on exhibition each week day.”

When a gallery sponsored a one-man show, that artist usually had reached the apex of success. Alexis Jean Fournier (1865-1948) was described as a realist in depicting the urban world of Minneapolis. He was an early student of Douglas Volk, the first director of the Minneapolis School of Art. H. Jay Smith hung 191 of his paintings in what was advertised as the “Fournier Gallery” in the 1892 art exhibit in the Industrial Exposition Building. Laura Baldwin, a writer of the late nineteenth century commented on one of Fournier’s works:

A gentleman standing before one little meadow called the “Deserted Sheep Pasture,” said, “should you walk through that bit of grass you would surely scare up a covey of chickens.” “Sunset on the Peak” reminds one of a Moran. The sky is yellow in tone and very brilliant. “Sunset on Upper Twin Lakes,” is also a beautiful bit of brilliant coloring. The distant mountains, soft and rich in the purpling light, throw their shadows in the lake which is too brilliant in this purple glory.

Fournier was recognized by having another one-man show at the Chicago Art Institute in October of 1903. According to Rena N. Coen that exhibition was “much praised in the Chicago press and the artist was hailed as one of the greatest of America’s landscape painters.” Director William French later wrote Fournier that the exhibition had attracted more visitors and more purchasers than had ever been known at any one man show at the Chicago Art Institute. Fournier also exhibited his works at the Craftshouse of John S. Bradstreet on several occasions (March, 1899 and January 1902). His work, *Silvery Moonlight*, later known as *The Shepherd’s Return*, was exhibited there, as well as at the Chicago Art Institute, where it was purchased for display at the art gallery of the Roycroft community.

Fournier was an important painter whose work was in the mainstream of the late nineteenth century. He specialized in landscapes while he resided and worked in Minneapolis; he also worked hard to exhibit and to promote his works. He was also an influential painter of the arts and crafts movement after he moved to New York and joined the Roycroft community. Only recently has there been a renewal of interest in the representational arts and, according to Rena N. Coen, he is now “recognized as one of America’s visual poets.”
Fournier’s work also appealed to James J. Hill, who purchased several paintings by the young artist and funded his study trips to Europe. Various Fournier paintings are in the collections of both the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

The Tastemaker – John S. Bradstreet

Perhaps the most influential art dealer and tastemaker in Minneapolis was John S. Bradstreet. In the 1883 First Public Loan Exhibit he showed a James M. Whistler etching which he had purchased in London. Bradstreet was also active in the organization of the Society of Fine Arts, in the on-going activities of the Art Gallery of the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition, and as a member of the fashionable Starlight Club.
The Starlight Club came into existence in 1890. According to magazine columnist William C. Edgar it was “a sort of mild protest against Philistinism,” and its many influential members included, in addition to Volk and Burt Harwood, a future director of the St. Paul School of Fine Arts, John S. Bradstreet, “the eminent traveler and decorator, who for many years brought to Minneapolis art treasures from abroad and exercised a notable and lasting influence upon the taste of the city in its formative period...” The first meetings of the Club were held in the building originally built for the Minneapolis School of Arts, and later in the studios of Douglas Volk.217 While the industrialists of Minneapolis dined at the Minneapolis Club, the tastemakers of Minneapolis gathered at the Starlight Club.

Douglas Volk painted an important portrait of Bradstreet. According to art curator and historian Michael Conforti, “the portrait conveyed the sensibilities of a sitter through setting and pose as much as likeness. His painting of interior designer John Scott Bradstreet at his ease, amid what a Minneapolis editorial termed ‘the fellowship of good things,’ captures Bradstreet’s eclectic aesthetic.” 218
John Scott Bradstreet moved to Minneapolis in 1872. While Bradstreet was extremely active in the growth of the fine arts community, as recounted above, for nearly 40 years he earned a living by devoting his talents and artistic vision to offer to the city’s more affluent citizens contemporary interior decorating styles with which he had become acquainted in his many foreign travels. Forming partnerships with several local businessmen, Bradstreet established and operated in turn various stores, with fashionable showrooms, to offer to the public interior design advice accompanied by fine furniture, often suggesting Moorish and Japanese motifs. During the 1880s Bradstreet was one of the country’s foremost authorities on the Moorish styles. Through time, however, the art of the Orient became perhaps the most significant influence on his offerings. According to Joyce M. Szabo, a specialist in museum studies,

In the later years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries in the United States, many people could afford to incorporate such contrived styles, or “fabricated realities,” into their homes and the collections they amassed. Public architecture, as well as private, included exotic elements. Architectural manifestations of Orientalism, especially in private settings, offered opportunities for a type of state that could fill the imagination with visions of exotic and distant cultures..."219
The Aesthetic movement, which was to have a long and deeply felt influence on design theory and practice, made its initial appearance in the Twin Cities during March of 1882. Bradstreet was most certainly in the audience when the “Apostle of the Utter,” Oscar Wilde, spoke in both Minneapolis and in St. Paul. Wilde argued that great art is local and artists should seek their subjects in the meadows or docks of a great city. Just as the Japanese painter might use a stork in his work, he noted, American artists should feature deer or buffalo. Local press reviews of his speeches were not, for a number of reasons, favorable, and commentators such as Professor John T. Flanagan, concluded that nothing in his arguments shed a favorable light on the gospel of aestheticism. The business of Bradstreet was eventually, however, to be influenced by concepts of this movement.

Bradstreet’s one-man show for artist Robert Koehler (1850-1917) was perhaps the most important of this era. The Exhibition and Sale of Paintings, Drawings and Engravings of the Works of Robert Koehler was held at the art rooms of John S. Bradstreet & Co., on Seventh Street South, November 12-18, 1900. The catalogue was impressive. It contained an introduction by William Watts Folwell, retired President of the University of Minnesota, and was the first local catalogue to have actual illustrations of the art works. This exhibit, which included Koehler’s signature work The Strike, also included seventy-eight other works of art. While the list of patrons included T. B. Walker and other luminaries, and attracted a fair number of visitors, not a single work of art sold. William Watts Folwell thereupon launched a successful campaign for the purchase of The Strike, for $3,000.00 by the Society of Fine Arts. It was thereafter hung in the third floor gallery of the Minneapolis Public Library.

Bradstreet was hired in Minneapolis to decorate rooms in the lavish West Hotel, the auditorium of the Grand Opera House, retail spaces in the Donaldson’s Department Store, and a number of private residences, including Highcroft, the Lake Minnetonka estate of Frank H. Peavey. The George H. Daggett home was “decorated by Minneapolis’ apostle of good taste,” and contained a spectacular Moorish ballroom, modeled after the Court of the Lions at the Alhambra, in Granada, Spain. His most significant landscape design, the transformation of a small island in Minneapolis’s Lake of the Isles into a replica of a temple island he had admired in Japan, was never built.

These years of business activity culminated with the establishment, in 1904, of the Minneapolis Craftshouse, in redesigned premises on South Seventh Street. Through time this establishment was expanded and turned into a complex of showrooms, offices, and workshops. The thrust of the business quickly became the manufacture of interior decoration, furniture and furnishings. By 1910 the firm employed eighty men, and the activities included cabinet making, painting, gilding, upholstery, and the creation of ceramics and light fixtures. While period reproductions were always an important part of the business, Japanese wood-
carving in traditional formats became very significant as well. The Craftshouse quickly became a nationally known force in its sphere of business activities.\textsuperscript{225}

A visiting correspondent for \textit{Harper’s Magazine} during the 1890s had good things to say about Bradstreet:

There is a large furniture and furnishing store in Minneapolis, well sustained by the public, which gives one a new idea of the taste of the Northwest. A community that buys furniture so elegant and chaste in design, and staffs and decorations so aesthetically good, as this shop offers it, is certainly not deficient either in material refinement or the means to gratify the love of it.\textsuperscript{226}

An August 15, 1914 obituary for John Scott Bradstreet, from \textit{The Bellman}, a Minnesota literary and arts magazine, said in part:

... Of this he has been the head, the director and the animating spirit, supported by a group of loyal and personally devoted associates constituting an organization, rather than a mere business concern, in which and through which radiated the rare genius of its founder, finding its concrete expression in the famous Bradstreet Craftshouse, a building which, as to both exterior and interior, stands alone and unequaled of its kind; a treasure-house of beautiful things, a marvelous repository of objects for which its creator has ransacked the world on the innumerable voyages which he made in search of the beautiful....

... He came into a raw, pioneer community early in its formative stage, when the brutal hideousness of rampant bad taste found expression in crude and glaring examples, both without and within, abhorrent to the trained and cultivated intelligence. The influence he exerted upon Minneapolis and, through it, upon the entire Northwest, by the exercise of his art and the faithful, persistent performance of his true craftsmanship cannot possibly be overestimated. He was an apostle of beauty sent, providentially, to redeem a promising but material community from the abyss of hopeless crudity and provincial mediocrity into which he would have fallen and doubtless remained but for him...\textsuperscript{227}

In sum, Bradstreet’s taste-making for Minneapolis customers complemented and directed the artistic understanding of the public towards the fine arts.
Chapter 13

Some Conclusions

Minnesotans took pride of the growth of the fine arts. Following the closing of the First Public Loan Exposition held in Minneapolis in 1883, University of Minnesota President William Watts Folwell stated, in his comments quoted previously, that this particular exhibit “...was the beginning of an era.”

The preface to the first Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Art Catalogue of 1886 noted that:

Growth of a true art spirit in the West has recently been gradually noted, and in this movement Minneapolis is already beginning to share. The practical as well as aesthetic value of such a spirit in the development of a new and rapidly growing city cannot be adequately estimated, but will become conspicuously apparent in future results.  

Under the headline “Art Atmosphere,” a writer for the Minneapolis Tribune provided a January 1, 1892, New Year’s Day reprise of the status of the fine arts in Minneapolis. He began by saying:

Minneapolis is but a precocious child among cities. What training has conduced to make her a city in which a good exhibition of paintings is always thronged, where fine pictures find ready sale; where many own masterpieces of art, and where two possess galleries which rank among the most important private collections of the country; where an art school is constantly growing in numbers and influence?

He answered his own question by noting that:

First, undoubtedly, that training has come from the exhibitions gathered by H. Jay Smith, for the Exposition, which have come to be eagerly awaited by those in this city who love and know pictures, and which are talked of all over the country... The value of such a yearly art exhibition both to the reputation of Minneapolis and to the culture of her citizens is clear.

And he concluded by stating that:

The permanent collections of T. B. Walker, Thos. Lowry and the Library may be mentioned as the next educating mediums, especially Mr. Walker’s magnificent collection, which, with his accustomed public spirit, is open to
the public constantly... The work of such artists as Fjelde and Fournier, too, modest and often unappreciated as it is, must be noted... Then, of course, the work of the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts, under the direction of Douglas Volk, has had an influence in keeping alive and nourishing the spirit of art.

All of these comments got it right. What would have undoubtedly pleased Messrs. Folwell and Bradstreet, Walker and Hill, and the other nineteenth-century participants in the growth here of the fine arts, is that not only do the two major museums they had supported still exist and flourish, but other galleries are likewise found on college and university campuses. Artists and art schools, as well as commercial art galleries and dealers with various specialties seem to be thriving as well. In sum, the arts community which they worked so hard to grow and mature, indeed has done so.

The Twin Cities metropolitan area now has over three and a half million residents, and two world-class art museums, the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. The latter was recently termed by the New York Times as “... one of America’s major encyclopedic museums.” The Minnesota Association of Museums recently noted that Minnesota has approximately 600 museums – one for every 9,000 residents and twice as many as the national average. “Every county in the state has at least one, and there are 55 in the Twin Cities alone (twice as many as Chicago!).” Among the top twenty-two largest acquisition endowments of American art museums, the Twin Cities has two – the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (a larger endowment than, for example, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Harvard Art Museums, and The Museum of Modern Art) and the Walker Art Center.

In addition, there are a number of important Twin Cities cultural organizations which are actively involved in the fine arts, including the Minnesota Historical Society, the Minnesota State Fair, The Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum of the University of Minnesota, and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The latter was once part of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. There are also many well-known professional and amateur artists as well as those who aspire to become active in the arts. There are, finally, colleges and universities which teach art and exhibit the fine arts, and there are dealers who market fine arts. Above all, there are many Twin City citizens who are interested in, and are active in supporting the arts.

These amazing, art-friendly results did not spring from nothing. There were two collectors of unmatched wealth who acquired art, exhibited art, and through their presence set the stage for the fine arts to flourish. There was an art director who was among the very first in the country to promote the display of the fine arts for the common man to view. There was an art school director whose efforts established the groundwork for on-going art
education. There was a dealer in the fine arts and furnishings who was, in effect, the principal taste-maker for decorative arts. And finally, there was an architect who, in his work, encouraged the birth of public art. The work of these six individuals is documented in the previous pages.
Acknowledgments

I have always been surrounded by the fine arts. My grandmother was a self-taught artist who painted and exhibited well into her eighties. My aunt is a sculptor and computer-based artist, impatiently awaiting her next scheduled show at age 100. My mother was an artist for her entire life. She had the first one-woman exhibition at the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis, and she also was Vice President of the Board of Directors of that institution. Finally, I have been married to my art historian wife for 56 years. I am thankful to them all for encouraging me to appreciate the arts.

I am grateful for research help and suggestions from the good people at the Minnesota Historical Society library, the archives of the Minnesota State Fair, the library of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the archives of the Walker Art Center, the Art Institute of Chicago, the library of the Hennepin History Museum, Patricia McDonald of the Afton Historical Society Press, and the Minneapolis Collection of the Hennepin County Central Library.

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1 Rena Neumann Coen selected the closing date of 1914 for the title of her historical book, *Painting and Sculpture in Minnesota, 1820-1914*, for a more simple reason: That was the terminal date for the Smithsonian Institution’s “Bicentennial Inventory of American Painting Executed before 1914.”


8 See Moira F. Harris, “Minnesota’s Community of the Book,” in *Minnesota’s Literary Visitors*, 176-224.


12 *St. Paul Daily Pioneer Press*, (August 22, 1875), 4; and (September 12, 1875), 4.


15 Coen, *Painting and Sculpture*, 41, 42.


18 Territorial Fairs were held before statehood; the first Minnesota State Fair occurred in 1859. Thereafter, until 1885, the fairs were held in various locations, including Rochester, Owatonna, Winona, St. Paul, and Minneapolis. For further information on the 1857 competition, see *Third Annual Fair of the Minnesota Agricultural Society* (St. Paul: Goodrich, Somers & Co. 1857), 23.


20 *The Daily Minnesotian* for September 25 through 28, 1860, provides extensive coverage of this fair.


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31 Julie C. Gauthier Papers (1883-1924), Minnesota Historical Society.


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86 Manuscript files in the Archives of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.


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97 New York Sun, April 12, 1912 and October 9, 1912.


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