

SESSION 1.3: COLLABORATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924)

Architect

Nebraska's capitol was created by a gifted collaborative team, led by an architect of exceptional vision, Bertram Goodhue. Goodhue developed a new style, integrating a building's sculptural program with architectural forms to express complex designs and ideas in the creation of great civic monument.

Born into a socially prominent Connecticut Family, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue was educated at Connecticut's Russell's College. At fifteen he began a six-year study of architecture and art in New York.

Goodhue's early buildings were known for common-sense construction, artistic craftsmanship, and connections to the past. His later work explored historic styles, modern materials and the latest innovations in building. Traditional and modern, Goodhue's competition-winning Nebraska State Capitol reveals the architect at his most ingenious. Historically significant, architectural historians describe the capitol as "the most innovative state capitol of the twentieth century."

The Capitol Commission stressed collaboration: "to incorporate... the actual collaboration of sculptor, painter and landscapist with the architect and under his guidance." Goodhue, known for his collaborations with significant artists and artisans, selected a brilliant team to realize his artistic vision.

Goodhue died suddenly in 1924. William Younkin, colleague and supervising architect, carried Goodhue's design to completion.

Lee Oskar Lawrie (1877-1963)

Sculptor

"Of all the collaborations between Lawrie and Goodhue, the most important for both men was the design of the Nebraska State Capitol."

Born in Germany, Lee Lawrie immigrated with his family to the United States; they settled in Chicago. Apprenticed at fourteen to Chicago sculptors, he became part of the artisans team that produced the elaborate program of Beaux Arts statuary for the "White City" - the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

Lawrie received a degree in fine arts from Yale and began teaching at Yale's School of Fine Arts and the Harvard School of Architecture and began working with Goodhue in 1895.

They became close colleagues through a shared a commitment to "creating images and spaces to help people understand a building's purpose and function." Goodhue relied on Lawrie to decorate his buildings with unique architectural sculpture for over twenty years. They created a remarkable unification of history, politics, nature, and philosophy in the Nebraska Capitol.

Lawrie died in 1963. He completed over 300 commissions and his collaborations with Goodhue were regarded as the finest examples of architectural sculpture in America.

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Hartley Burr Alexander (1873-1939)

Thematic Consultant

The Capitol Commission declared: “The Capitol of a State is the outward sign of the character of its people...” Hartley Burr Alexander, born in Lincoln in 1873 and raised in Nebraska, attended the University of Nebraska and earned a PhD in Philosophy at Columbia University. He returned to the University of Nebraska as a professor of philosophy.

Goodhue hired Nebraska native Dr. Alexander in 1922 since his initial plans had been widely criticized for a lack of focus on Nebraska’s state history. Alexander was to focus on themes, sets of symbols, and quotations, that would tell a story that “connects people to knowledge and to Nebraska.”

Alexander proposed three themes to illustrate Nebraska’s history: 1) exterior symbolism represented the evolution of government and law in Western civilization; 2) events leading to Nebraska’s statehood; 3) interior decoration represented the growth and development of Nebraska, the people and the natural world.

In close collaboration the team created... “A building that reads like a book ... the Nebraska State Capitol tells the story of Nebraska’s history through mosaics, paintings, sculpture, and inscriptions. Each art element contributes to the story.” In 1989 when named to the Nebraska Hall of Fame, Dr. H. B. Alexander was described as “Nebraska’s Renaissance Man.” Alexander died at the age of 66 in Claremont, California.

Hildreth Meiere (1892 - 1961)

Artist

The imaginative mosaics in the Nebraska State Capitol were created by Hildreth Meiere. Recognized for her ability to integrate art into buildings, Meiere told stories through art and symbols.

Meiere’s artistic interests were encouraged by her mother. She studied at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in New York, in San Francisco, Chicago, and Florence, Italy. She worked as a mapmaker and architectural drafts-woman for the navy during World War I. At twenty-nine she was hired by architect Bertram Goodhue to create the interior art for the State Capitol.

Meiere studied the art of the past, experts and authentic voices. The images, in black and white marble mosaic, on the floors of the Great Hall and Rotunda portray cosmic and geologic evolution. They are precise copies of fossil drawings created by E. H. Barbour of the Nebraska State Museum. The East Chamber’s ceiling mosaics are in the style of Sioux painting and beadwork based on the inspirational ledger book drawings of Amos Bad Heart Bull.

Meiere collaborated with skilled European-trained craftsmen, especially the Guastavino Company of New York, to create elaborate structural and decorative installations. Meiere created her mosaics as cartoon drawings showing the color and size of each tile. Guastavino, responsible for the installation of each mosaic, manufactured the tile, matching color and size exactly. With bits of marble, tile and luminous-glass, they transformed ceilings, walls and floors into stories of Nebraska. Meiere saw the Nebraska State Capitol as her crowning achievement.

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Rafael Guastavino, Sr. (1842-1908) / Rafael Guastavino, Jr. (1872 -1950) Architects, Tile and Mosaic Artists

The Guastavinos played an important role in making the Nebraska State Capitol a wondrous reality.

An influential architectural craftsman in early-twentieth-century America, Rafael Guastavino Sr., was a Spanish architect, engineer and master builder.

Guastavino revived an ancient technique known as “timbrel” vaulting – a 500-year-old building system created by the Moors to build beautiful arches with fire-proof terra cotta tile. He immigrated to New York with his son, Rafael Jr., and continued the tradition of building with tile.

In 1889, he formed the Guastavino Fireproof Construction Company and 11 years later started a factory in Woburn, Massachusetts that produced custom tiles needed for his elaborate designs.

The Nebraska State Capitol was one of Guastavinos’ largest projects and took over a decade to complete. They manufactured more tile for the Capitol than for any of their other buildings. Rafael Guastavino Jr, meticulously manufactured and installed the tiles based on Meiere’s drawings.

Guastavino’s work can be seen in more than 1,000 buildings in 41 states – libraries, museums, state capitols, banks, universities, churches, synagogues – some of America’s most important landmarks.

Edward (Eduardo “Eddie”) Ardolino (1883-1945) Stone Carver, Scalpellini (Stonecutters; Italian) Architectural Sculptors

Edward Ardolino descended from a long-line of stone carvers and sculptors. An immigrant from Torre di Nocelli Italy, his company and studio created their own original sculptures and marble sculpture for artists that did not do their own carving. The Ardolino family was renowned for many monumental sculptural projects across the U.S.

The execution of Lee Lawrie’s Capitol sculptures was the work of Ardolino and his Italian-American master stone carvers - in situ - in Lincoln. Their work was considered the best of its kind. The workmanship on all the Capitol sculptures is exquisite and demonstrates why Lawrie relied on teams of skilled craftsmen assembled by sculpture fabricator Edward Ardolino.

“The skill and genius of these sculptors have served to beautify and adorn scores of notable public buildings in cities across this country.” (Washington Herald, Washington D.C., 28 August, 1915.)

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Alessandro Beretta (ca. 1900 -1979) Master Stone Carver, Sculptor

Expert stone carver and sculptor Alessandro Beretta traced his heritage in the craft to 17th-century Carrara, Italy. A family of master stone setters and masons who became expert carvers and sculptors, the Beretta's were accomplished artisans before immigrating to the United States.

Employed by Lee Lawrie and Ardolino's stone carving firm, Beretta was the artist that carved all 18 History of Law panels. Carved directly from the capitol's exterior stone walls, Beretta created each figure from Lawrie's maquettes. Faces were the most difficult. Beretta carved each face as an historically accurate portrait. In November, 1934 Beretta completed nine years of carving and sculptural decoration, including symbols on the balconies around the Rotunda and the column capitals. Without Ardolino and Beretta much of Lawrie's work would have been impossible.

E.H. Barbour (1856-1947) Paleontologist, Artist, Inspiration

A paleontologist and talented artist, Dr. Erwin H. Barbour came to Nebraska from Yale in 1892. He built the State Museum (Morrill Hall) into one of the outstanding collections of fossil mammals in the world.

Meiere and Alexander knew the mosaic images had to be scientifically and artistically correct. An in-depth knowledge of natural history and scientifically accurate drawings were needed. Alexander wrote to Barbour... "It is my notion the series [of pictures] should be broadly representative of the whole animal kingdom ... the movement from the more primitive to the more developed ... marine forms first, then primitive terrestrial forms ... flying forms, and finally ... the mammals."

Barbour created a significant series of drawings of prehistoric animals and plants. An important part of Barbour's contribution was lending his paleontological expertise to the service of the artist.

Erwin Hinckley Barbour, Museum Director, Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology, and artist died in 1947.

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Amos Bad Heart Bull (1869-1913) **Noted Oglala Lakota Artist and Historian**

Amos Bad Heart Bull's drawings were the most important source of imagery for Alexander and Meiere in creating the Indian motifs for the Nebraska Capitol.

Born into the Oglala Band of Teton Sioux (ca.1869) in present-day Wyoming, Amos was the son of Bad Heart Bull historian of the Oglala. Important Oglala Headman and warriors He Dog, Short Bull, Only Man and Little Shield were his uncles - all were nephews of the famous Oglala chief Red Cloud.

Amos lived nearly all his life on the South Dakota Pine Ridge Reservation. He lived the traditional Oglala life during a critical period of sweeping change in the life of his tribe. Having succeeded his father as band historian, he was determined to record and preserve Oglala history before their traditional way of life completely disappeared.

During the time he served as a scout for the U.S. army at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Bad Heart Bull, without any formal instruction but with great artistic talent, began creating annotated drawings of his people's history. In a used ledger book he bought from a clothing dealer in Crawford, Nebraska, Bad Heart Bull created a vividly accurate record of the civic, religious, social, economic, and military life of the Oglala.

He taught himself to write using a system of writing Lakota devised by the missionaries. He learned some English from the soldiers at Fort Robinson. Although he could not read them, he collected documents and reports concerned with relations between the federal government and his tribe. The work that forms an invaluable record from the American Indian viewpoint was completed between 1890 and 1910.

At his death in 1913 he had created more than 400 pictographs recording the life of the Oglala from the 1850s to the 1900s. He recorded important events including the Battle of the Little Big Horn, the Wounded Knee Massacre and several pictures of Crazy Horse to whom he was related.

When Amos Bad Heart Bull died, the ledger became the property of his sister, Dollie Pretty Cloud. She kept it until her death in 1947. Observing Oglala tradition, the manuscript was buried with her.

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Elizabeth Honor Dolan (1871-1948) Muralist

A graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago, Nebraska native Elizabeth Dolan attended the University of Nebraska's School of Fine Arts. She completed three years of at the Art Students League in New York City and the American School of Art at Fontainebleau, France. She painted landscapes, miniatures, portraits and designed stained-glass windows for Louis Tiffany. In 1927 she painted murals for the new exhibits at Morrill Hall. The project received high praise and established Dolan's reputation as a muralist and one of the finest fresco painters in the country.

Dolan offered to create a mural in the State Capitol as her gift to the people of Nebraska. The state paid for supplies needed to create the mural - Dolan donated her creativity, skills and time. Dolan chose a prairie mother as the exemplar of the prairie spirit. The Spirit of the Prairie is the only work of art in the Nebraska State Capitol.

Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) Sculptor

Daniel Chester French created monumental memorial sculpture most often inspired by American culture and history. He studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with sculptor Abigail May Alcott, and later in Italy and Paris.

French created statues and structures to honor and preserve the memory of people and events important to America's history. His most important works were created with American architects and he often placed portrait sculpture in architectural settings.

French's best-known works are his two statues of Abraham Lincoln. The first, a standing Lincoln in Lincoln, Nebraska. "In 1909 eminent American sculptor Daniel Chester French [and architect Henry Bacon] were commissioned by the citizens of Lincoln to create a statue of Abraham Lincoln for placement on the west side of the capitol square. Dedicated in 1912, this monument has become an important part of the city's landscape." (Ripley1990:100)

The second, French's most famous sculpture, is the massive seated Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

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Ervin Goeller (1882-1964) Master Stone Carver

Goeller's career in carving started when he was 13 and began his apprenticeship with a stone carver in Germany. He worked 28 years in Germany as a stone and wood sculptor. In 1924, Goeller sold his studio in Germany and with his wife immigrated to Lincoln. He worked with Forsburger Stone Company. He carved many large and small statues, friezes and headstones. Goeller was the master stone carver of the frieze "Spirit of the Pioneers" above the north main entrance of the capitol. When he retired from major projects, Goeller built grandfather clocks, with intricate moveable carved figures. His work reflected his pride in his ancestry and artistry.

Ernst H. Herminghaus (1891-1965) Landscape Architect

A native Nebraskan, E. H. Herminghaus was a landscape artist. He studied horticulture at the University of Nebraska and the Harvard Graduate School of Design landscape architecture program where he studied with renowned landscape architect F. L. Olmsted Jr.

Herminghaus designed the Capitol's landscape and plantings to compliment Goodhue's architecture. He followed Goodhue's sketches with three exceptions: 1) selected plant species that would best survive in Nebraska; 2) placed flowering shrubs in the interior courtyards, and 3) used false perspective in the alignment of trees at the north and south entrances. The development of the landscape was the fifth and final phase of construction of the State Capitol.

Herminghaus designed Pioneers Park with a Beaux-Arts plan that emphasized carefully controlled spaces. The plantings and spaces created two major vistas that direct the viewer's eyes to the Nebraska State Capitol.

Herminghaus' understanding of the relationship between art, science, and nature made him a valuable team member in the Capitol's collaborative design effort.

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Keats Lorenz (1889 – 1966) **Wood Carver, Architectural Modeler**

A prominent Lincoln craftsman, Keats Lorenz started carving at 15. He learned traditional English woodcarving during his apprenticeships in Boston and New York. Lorenz worked in the architecture office of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson as a stylist and modeler of classical details. He created architectural woodcarving for prominent buildings throughout the midwest. He created beautiful wood carved ornamentations for the Capitol and the Governor’s Mansion.

Lorenz is best known for carving the American Indian doors, designed by Lee Lawrie, for the Warner East Senate Chamber in the Capitol. The chamber represents Plains Indians—Nebraska’s first inhabitants. The mahogany doors commemorate the cultural contributions of Plains Indians. They depict a woman and man standing on either side of a tree of life composed of cornstalks and connecting all forms of creation. Each door weighs 750 pounds. Keats Lorenz, executed the carving in six months.

James Penney (1910-1982) **Muralist**

James Penney graduated from the University of Kansas School of Fine Arts and moved to New York City where he studied at the Art Students League. During the Federal Arts Project in the 1930s, Penney had many mural commissions and was recognized as a major American artist for his WPA Arts Project murals. Penney was a college art instructor and won national competitions, including the 1963 commission to paint the murals in the rotunda of the Nebraska State Capitol.

Penney’s task was to connect the interior murals with the exterior imagery and symbols. Above the North exterior main entrance, a bas-relief frieze depicts a pioneer family traveling west in their ox-drawn Conestoga wagon to a new home in Nebraska. When entering the Capitol, visitors see this panel and pass directly into the vestibule where Penney’s three monumental murals continue the story. Penney created images that celebrate Nebraska pioneers. “The Homesteaders’ Campfire,” “The House Raising,” and “The First Furrow” are a tribute to Nebraskans of the past and part of the heritage of present and future Nebraskans.

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Jeanne Reynal (1903-1983) **Artist, Mosaicist**

Born and raised in White Plains, New York, Jeanne Reynal instilled her pieces with a sense of light. She studied the ancient art of stone mosaic in Paris as an apprentice to Boris Anrep, a Russian mosaicist working in Paris in the early 1930s. She relocated to New York City in and became an active member and collector of the Abstract Expressionists. In 1955, she married the painter Thomas Sills.

Reynal developed mosaics using a variety of materials. Her cultural influences spanned the Byzantine period to the mid 20th century; historical Mexican and Greek civilizations to the American Southwest.

Mythological or mystical subjects, described as “omens, auguries, and the revelation of hidden knowledge,” are important in her art. In 1967 Reynal created a mystical mosaic for the Nebraska State Capitol - “The Blizzard of 1888.” Pieces of Venetian glass, stone, gold leaf tiles and mother-of-pearl set into colored cement catch the light and capture the mood and drama of the storm. Semi-abstract in style, the mural portrays the blizzard, school teacher, Minnie Freeman, and her young students. She led them through the terrifying storm to safety.

William Lefevre Younkin (1885- 1946) **Supervising Architect**

William Lefevre Younkin cherished the Nebraska Capitol Building. He was an architect and superb technician who understood every step of construction. He attended architecture school at Columbia University in New York and worked for Goodhue in New York from 1915-1922.

On April 15, 1922 construction began on the Nebraska Capitol. Younkin was sent to Nebraska in 1922 as “Supervising Architect” of construction, served as on-site representative on behalf of Goodhue, the Goodhue firm and was paid by the Nebraska Capitol Commission to serve as “Clerk of the Works” until the landscaping was completed in 1934. For over ten years, he supervised construction – learning about and getting to know the building better than anyone else.

An outstanding architect and engineer, Younkin was also a highly regarded landscape painter.