

COURTESY PAUL E. KELLENBERGER

Carl Flick and Grant Wood

A Regionalist Friendship in Amana

by Peter Hoehnle

In 1929, Carl Flick, a young clerk at the West Amana general store and the father of three, was confined to his house after his face was partially paralyzed by exposure while hunting in the winter. To fill the long hours of his recovery, Flick began to copy the colorful pictures he found on calendars around his home. In the beginning he used his daughter's crayons; then, later, he ordered a set of paints from a catalog and began to experiment in oils.

Meanwhile, a shy, soft-spoken artist in Cedar Rapids was on the verge of developing the regionalist style of painting that would bring him international fame. Grant Wood was little known beyond Cedar Rapids, where he had

Carl Flick at his easel in his home in West Amana, photographed July 18, 1937, by Paul E. Kellenberger.

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



Grant Wood often set up his easel outdoors to capture Amana scenes on canvas. Here, he paints the William and Susanna Moershel home in Main Amana, October 1927 (photographed by their son-in-law, Peter Stuck). Wood was already well acquainted with the Moershels a year or two before he met Carl Flick.

taught art in local schools and had completed some commissioned portraits, hotel murals, and a memorial stained glass window. Although his art hung in many area homes, few suspected that Grant Wood would win national acclaim when he painted *American Gothic* in 1930.

Wood was probably first introduced to Amana in the late 1920s by one of the many Cedar Rapids residents with friends in its seven small villages. Their old stone, brick, and wood buildings set amidst a profusion of flower and vegetable gardens imparted an Old-World charm sorely lacking in Cedar Rapids in the 1920s. Resi-

dents of Cedar Rapids had long made excursions to the Amana villages to buy Amana-made products and, in some cases, antique family heirlooms. To Carl Flick, of course, these "quaint villages" were home.

Carl Flick and Grant Wood did not meet immediately, although the Cedar Rapids artist often ate at the Amana communal kitchens and frequently set up his easel outside to paint quick, impressionistic, *plein air* oil sketches. In these, Wood celebrated the rich color of Amana sandstone and the lush foliage of Amana gardens. The presence of an artist with an easel was an event in Amana, es-

pecially for young children who curiously observed the friendly man in a fedora from a safe distance. Then a child, Marie Stuck Selzer watched Wood as he painted a sketch of her grandfather's house: "He wanted to wipe his brushes," she later recalled, "and since he had no rag, he just tore off a piece of his undershirt and used that."

Still recovering from facial paralysis, Carl Flick heard about this Cedar Rapids artist painting in the colonies. Anxious for some expert advice, Flick wrote him a letter asking about brushes and paints. In reply, Wood appeared one day on the young man's doorstep.

Wood quickly recognized that Flick had tremendous natural ability and began to take him along on sketching trips in the Amana area, during which the two men sketched side by side.

Thus began first a mentorship and then a friendship between Grant Wood and Carl Flick. Today, in the annals of Iowa art, Wood remains Iowa's best known artist whereas Flick is relatively forgotten. Yet during the 1930s, Flick was a visible and prolific member of the school of Iowa regionalists established by Wood.

Carl Flick had always been interested in art, a trait that seems to have been almost hereditary. As a schoolboy his favorite activity was the art instruction held on Saturdays as part of the Amana school curriculum. He also apparently received encouragement in artistic pursuits from his paternal grandfather, a schoolteacher. Flick's

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



Flick's first attempts at art (like this one, painted in 1928, of mountains and waterfalls) were copied from calendar pictures and commercial illustrations—until Grant Wood encouraged him to look to his own Amana surroundings for subject material. This painting was purchased for \$2.25 as a gift to Linda Graesser of West Amana when she got her own bedroom at the age of 14. Her brother, who worked in the village wagon shop, made a frame for it.



This Clayton County landscape, created in the 1930s, is one of the very few paintings that Flick did outside of the Amana area.

great-grandfather, Johann Georg Flick, had also demonstrated an ability with watercolors, and had produced and illustrated a handwritten volume that was among Carl's treasured possessions.

Nevertheless, Flick was born and raised in the strict communal atmosphere of the pietistic Amana Society, which strongly discouraged its members from indulging in decorative arts that it deemed

“worldly.” Aside from the occasional needle-pointed pillow or bit of handmade lace, Amana artistry was limited to the production of woolens and furniture with designs that, while plain, nevertheless received widespread recognition and interest in the world beyond the community. The strict controls over artistic expression had been lessened in Amana by the late 1920s—about when Grant Wood first visited the villages and Flick began to experiment with paint and brush.

Wood was a generous mentor for Flick. He taught him to turn his back on his subject and view it through a small hand-held mirror, in order to isolate the scene and notice the details. And according to Flick family tradition, Wood built for him a portable easel with iron-tipped legs to stabilize it in

the field. He promoted him to a *Cedar Rapids Gazette* reporter, whose March 1931 story extolled how Wood had discovered this young Amana "colonist painting atrocious poster scenes with brushes dipped in genius." Most importantly, he turned Flick away from copying "atrocious" calen-

dar art and instead opened his eyes to the beauty of his Amana surroundings and the incredible amount of material to be found there. Wood had "pushed aside the vivid copies of gaudy sunsets and Venetian moonlights," the *Gazette* reporter wrote, "to show the young man the wealth of painting

material that lay around him—the corner of the mill, his own backyard, the quaint blue doorways, the picturesque stone homes and the millrace fringed with pickerel weed and willows."

In directing Flick's attention to his native surroundings, Wood was, in a sense, replicating his own

PRIVATE COLLECTION



Flick's eye learned to appreciate the details of his Amana surroundings—here, the blue door on the front porch of the Heine-mann house in Middle Amana (painted in the 1930s). "The homely beauty of the rows of stone houses and other characteristics that belonged to Amana soon will be gone," Flick said in 1935. "I must hurry my work."

transformation in his own approach. Prior to his European travels of the late 1920s, Wood had experimented with a loose, impressionistic style and had mostly overlooked his native landscape. Following his exposure to Northern Renaissance painters, Wood returned to Iowa in 1928, convinced that his own state held fit subjects for an artist to paint. He quickly became an impassioned and vocal champion of what came to be called Regionalism.

Although Flick's work reflects his own distinct personality, he was heavily influenced by Wood. Indeed, he adopted Wood's style as well as his regionalist outlook. In Flick's 1932 self-portrait (page 19), for example, the vivid colors and the rounded trees show the

influence of Wood, who called this painting one of Flick's best. Exhibited in Des Moines, the self-portrait also appeared in a picture section of the April 1932 *Des Moines Register*, along with Wood's own self-portrait.

Wood's attention paid off as Flick's work quickly gained state and national recognition. In 1931, likely at Wood's insistence, Flick entered three paintings in the Iowa State Fair art competition, where, little more than two years after first taking up a brush, he received third place for oils and two honorable mentions. Soon after, his *Amana Harvest*, an unusual still life of a cow's head amid garden vegetables, took first prize for a game picture at the Iowa Artists Club exhibit. Another of his

works, *Amana Interior*, was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in early 1932. He was one of only two Iowa artists whose work was selected, and the judges ranked him as the fifth most promising artist of the 140 exhibitors. In 1933 several of Flick's works were displayed at the Chicago World's Fair.

Wood also made a point of publicizing and promoting Flick's work in the Cedar Rapids area, and it was probably largely through his efforts that a Flick exhibit was set up in the city's "Little Gallery" in 1932 (where Flick, at Wood's suggestion, periodically attended art classes taught by Adrian Dornbush). Wood also apparently saw to it that Cedar Rapids residents made purchases; by 1932 Flick reported that 40 of his works had been sold. On one occasion, according to *Amana* tradition, a Cedar Rapids matron was offered a choice of two pictures, one by Wood and the other by his protégé. Since neither painting was signed, she chose the one she thought was the better of the two, which turned out to be Flick's.

Like Wood, Flick preferred to paint on artist panels rather than canvas. He generally sketched a scene on a sheet of plain typing paper or brown wrapping paper before painting, and he sometimes sketched in oil on site, using his collapsible easel. But he did much of his painting at night by lamp-light, in the laundry room of his home, standing before a walnut easel he had made himself. He sometimes used photographs, particularly when working on his projected series of paintings depicting scenes of life in communal *Amana*. Only two, *Liebesmahl* and *Amana Funeral*, were ever completed. He maintained a meticulous collection of notes on color

COURTESY THOMAS P. JOHNSON



Sometime in the 1930s, Flick painted this scene of the arbor and back porch of the Lower South Amana Hotel for its co-manager, Lizzie Siegel (seen in the kitchen doorway). Flick was a frequent visitor to the hotel, as was Grant Wood. Siegel's son-in-law Ferdinand Ruff once took Wood down to see the wine cellar. His wife, Henrietta, upon learning that a guest had seen what she deemed a disorderly cellar, apologized profusely. Wood, however, laid his hand on her shoulder and made her promise never to clean the cellar because, as the artist said, "the cobwebs and mildew give it atmosphere."



Flick painted *Amana Interior* (1931) entirely by lamplight. In 1932, it was exhibited in a Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts show, at which Flick was one of only two Iowa artists to be included. The view depicts the home of Flick and his wife and their three children (Marie, Elsie Mae, and George). The heating stove and hand-woven carpeting were typical of Amana homes. The wall hanging was a rack that could hold newspapers. Although decorating one's home with pictures was frowned upon in Amana, the wall hanging was allowed because it had a practical application.

mixtures and kept a color wheel handy to aid in his composition.

Throughout Flick's period of greatest artistic activity, he maintained close ties with Grant Wood, whose visits to Amana continued with

some frequency in the early 1930s. Wood typically appeared on Sunday afternoons, usually managing to stay for supper at the Flick home, where he was always served a favorite dish of his—spinach cooked in the Amana way (finely chopped in a cream sauce)—and where he occasionally stayed overnight. Sometimes Wood's friends from

Cedar Rapids, including fellow artists Marvin Cone and Adrian Dornbush, came along for a day of sketching with Flick. Often, Flick's friend, Ferdinand Ruff of South Amana, ferried Flick and Wood to promising locations in his truck. On other occasions, Flick and his family visited Wood in Cedar Rapids in the studio apartment

CARL FLICK

The work of Carl Flick, representing our own Amana scenery and interiors, should serve to awaken a deeper appreciation of the artistic beauty of our surroundings. Carl sees his subjects in a true Amana way, seriously and sincerely, and paints the way he sees, adding no flourish or grandeur to his work. It is as charming as it is true and understandable.

For those who are interested to the extent of studying further, these paintings may prove a foundation to work on, as they are the very connection between our surroundings and modes of Art. They interpret for us what we all see daily, but only very few of us appreciate in an artistic way. Carl has truly brought out an opportunity for the dormant artistic possibilities in and around us.

We sincerely hope that our humble efforts along this line may be of mutual benefit to all.

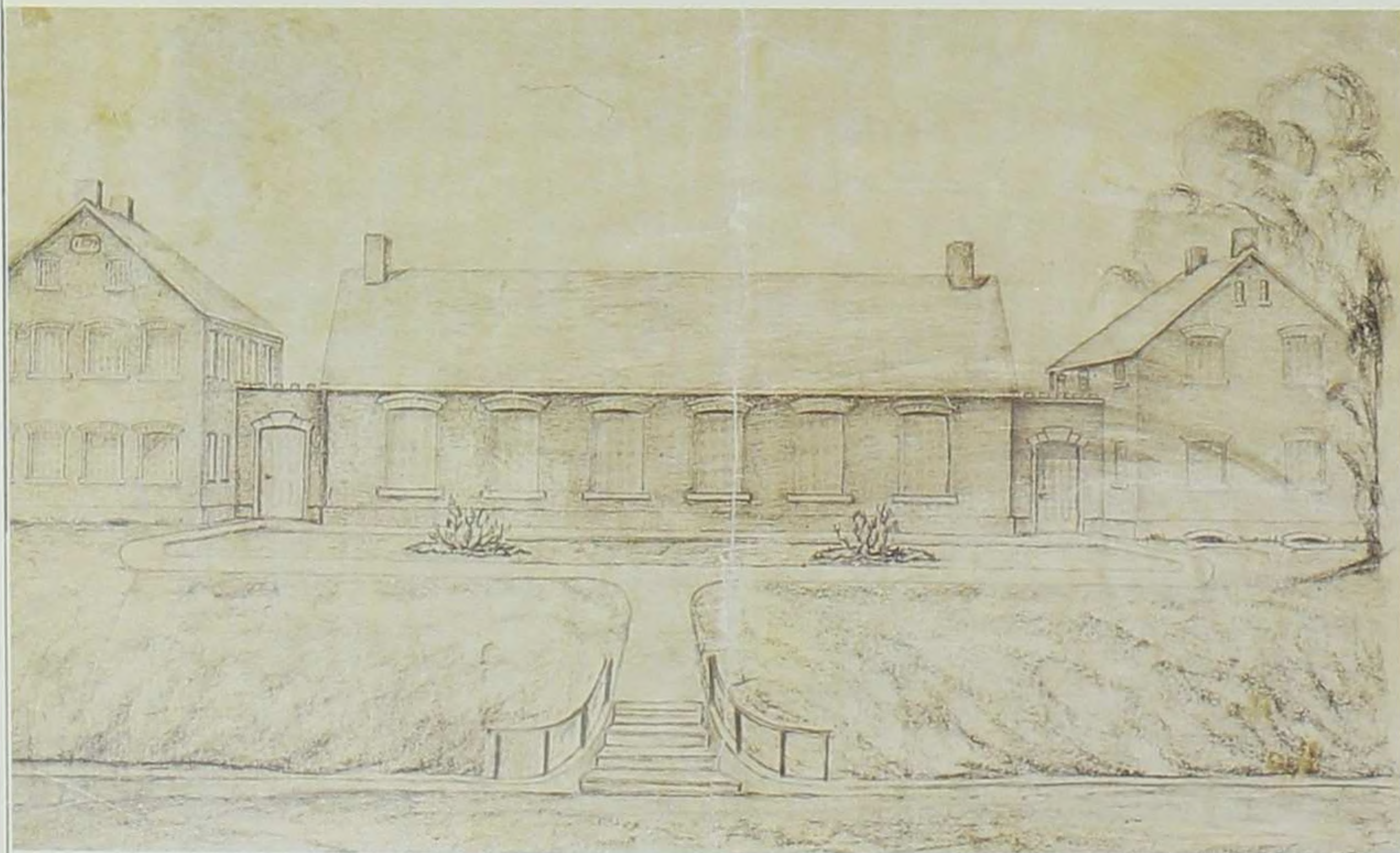
The Sponsors.

TITLES

1. Amana Blue
2. Amana Doorway, No. 1.
3. Amana Interior
4. Mill Stone, No. 1
5. Milk Pails
6. West Amana
7. Landscape
8. Amana Doorway, No. 2
9. Front Porch
10. Blue Door
11. Back Porch
12. Composition
13. Potted Plants
14. Green Door
15. Open Window
16. Millstone, No. 2
17. The Red Geranium
18. Amana Porch
19. Amana Harvest

Flick was recognized in his own community with a 1932 exhibit at the Homestead Hotel; the program (above) emphasizes that he paints "in a true Amana way, seriously and sincerely." The list of titles shows his commitment to Amana subjects. While the reorganization of the Amana Society in 1932 opened the way for greater freedom and expression, both Flick and Grant Wood also encouraged local people to take pride in and preserve their traditions.

Flick is the likely artist of this sketch (ca. 1935) showing the proposed addition to the newly formed Amana High School, which linked the original village school building (left) with the house where Amana children attended church (right). Flick was closely associated with the school and particularly its superintendent, J. R. Neveln, who made a point of promoting Flick's work at every opportunity.



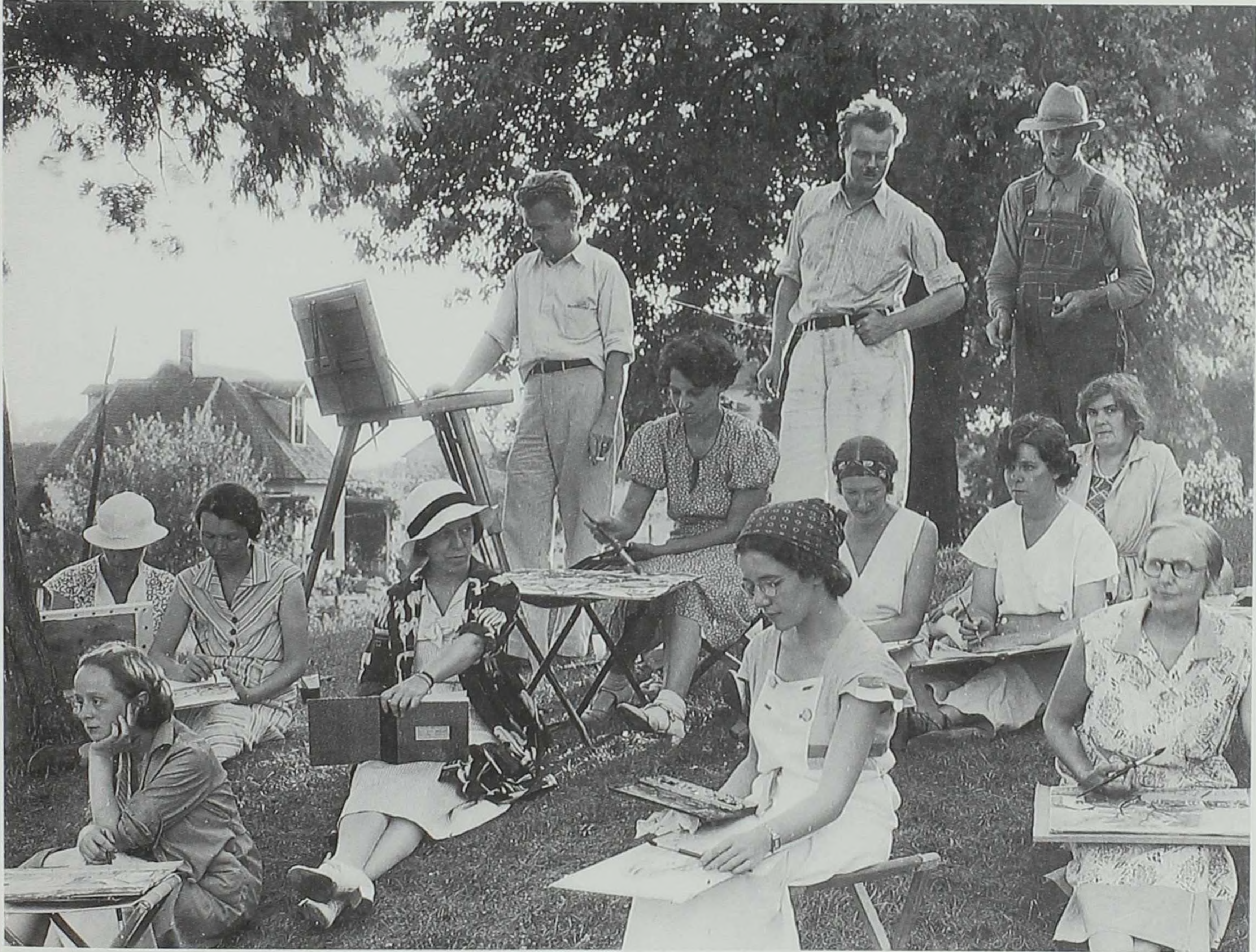
AMANA HERITAGE SOCIETY (AMANA)

he had created over a carriage house behind the Turner Mortuary.

As the Flick-Wood friendship deepened, Wood brought his own family to the Amanas; there, his elderly mother, Hattie, bought goat's milk and enjoyed working in the Flick garden, and his sister, Nan, became an example of refined beauty to the colony women accustomed to braided hair and calico dresses. Wood's Amana friends, mindful of the hard times his family had faced when Wood, his mother, and sister survived on his salary as a teacher in the Cedar Rapids schools, often sent cabbages and jars of canned goods, and, on one occasion, an entire raccoon, home with the artist. This last gift, Wood's sister recalled years later, "helped wonderfully with the meat bill," and no doubt added variety to the family's diet.

The Flick family watched Wood's sudden rise to fame, as the prices for his paintings climbed from a few dollars to several thousand after he painted *American Gothic* in 1930. Flick carefully pasted clippings about Wood in his scrapbook, alongside clippings and letters concerning his own work.

In 1932 the Amanas underwent what is locally referred to as the "Great Change," during which the communal system was abandoned. Flick served on the elected committee that planned the reorganization and, like many Amana people his age, must have felt the thrill of new possibilities promised by this sanctioned release from a strict communal life. For Flick, one of these new opportunities was attending the Stone City Colony and Art School near Anamosa (near Wood's birthplace), which Wood and some friends founded and operated during the summers of 1932 and



Students at the Stone City Colony and Art School concentrate on their work in the summer of 1932, as Iowa artists Marvin Cone (at easel) and Adrian Dornbush (center) oversee their work. Wood helped found the art colony, which flourished for two summers near Anamosa, Iowa. Carl Flick was one of the dozens of art students who attended.

More Amana artists paint at Stone City

Perhaps influenced by the success of Carl Flick, two other Amana men also took up their brushes in the early 1930s. Like Flick, the two benefited from the generosity of Grant Wood, attended sessions of the Stone City Colony and Art School, and painted scenes of Amana life.

John Eichacker was the postmaster at Homestead (one of the Amana colonies). George Schoenfelder was a carpenter in Main Amana. Both began painting as a hobby shortly after the 1932 "Great Change"—the reorganization of the Amana Society.

Eichacker was also a talented poet, gardener, and violinist. Although he painted mainly in oils, while he was in the military in World War II, he asked his family to send him a watercolor set so that he could continue to paint. The watercolors that he produced during that period were among his best and most promising work.

Tragically, in 1945, he was killed in an airplane crash in the Philippine Islands.

George Schoenfelder, the third of Wood's Stone City students from Amana, continued to produce one or two oil paintings each winter until his death in 1987. Shortly before he died, Schoenfelder was honored at a special ceremony during the Grant Wood Days celebration in Stone City as one of the last survivors of the art colony. During this tribute he presented to the local museum a sketch that Wood had made for him as a farewell gift when Wood left the colony.

Like Flick, both John Eichacker and George Schoenfelder have been the subject of exhibits at the Amana Arts Guild, which was formed in the 1970s—half a century after the Amana Society frowned upon such a worldly activity as painting. —by Peter Hoehnle

Self Portraits of Iowa Artists Exhibited by Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs



REPRODUCED ON THIS PAGE ARE a few of the self portraits which go on exhibition today at the art gallery of the Des Moines public library. The exhibition will continue through the month of April. Above: Arthur A. Dillon and family, Des Moines. He worked with three mirrors to make this study. He is a member of the Iowa Artists Guild.

IOWA'S most distinguished member of the painting fraternity: Grant Wood of Cedar Rapids. His "American Gothic" won him nationwide fame.



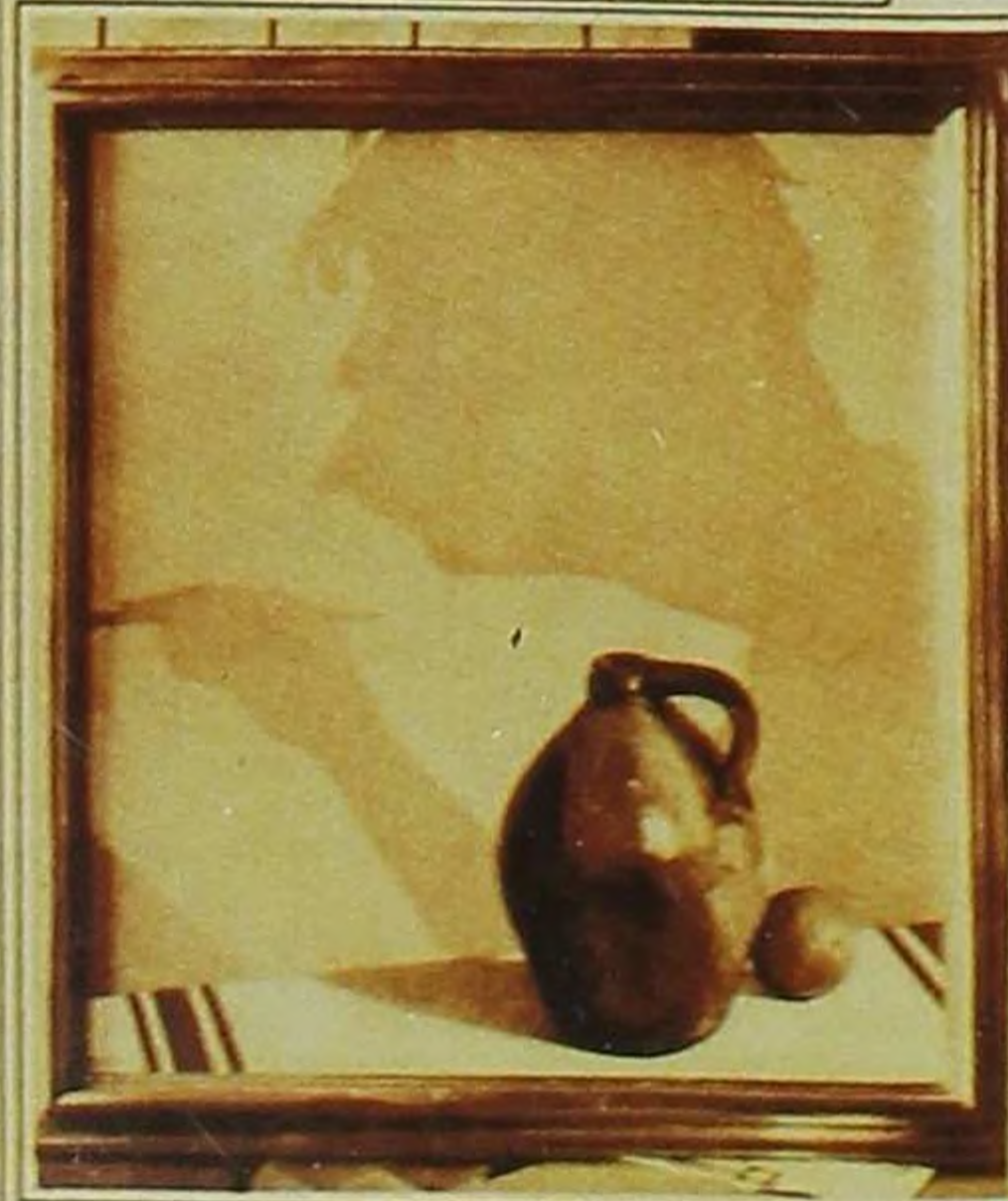
LOUISE Grant McEwen, Des Moines. She is a member of the Iowa Artists Club.



WILLIAM HENNING OF CEDAR RAPIDS.



CARL FLICK OF AMANA, member of Iowa Artists Club. He exhibited at the Pennsylvania academy this year.



MARVIN CONE OF CEDAR RAPIDS effects an interesting allusion in his self portrait. Mr. Cone has exhibited in Chicago and elsewhere and is best known for his still life paintings.



NANA LATHE, instructor of art at Cornell college, Mt. Vernon.



BYRON BEN BOYD OF DES MOINES, president of the Iowa Artists Club. Mr. Boyd has exhibited throughout the country.

Self-portraits of Flick, Wood, and six other Iowa artists were showcased in 1932, in a special exhibit in Des Moines and in the *Des Moines Register*. Flick's self-portrait, with an Amana background, bears a striking resemblance to Wood's well-known portrait of his mother, *Woman with Plants* (1929).



Intrigued by the back porch of the Heinemann house in Middle Amana, Flick painted this typical Amana scene, circa 1939.

1933. Dozens of students studied with Wood, Marvin Cone, and other prominent local artists. The entire Flick family, including Carl's sister Elsie and her husband, made the 40-mile trip with him to Stone City to spend time with their old friend Grant Wood.

The opportunity to study at Stone City must have been both exhilarating and bittersweet to Flick, who once confided to a reporter,

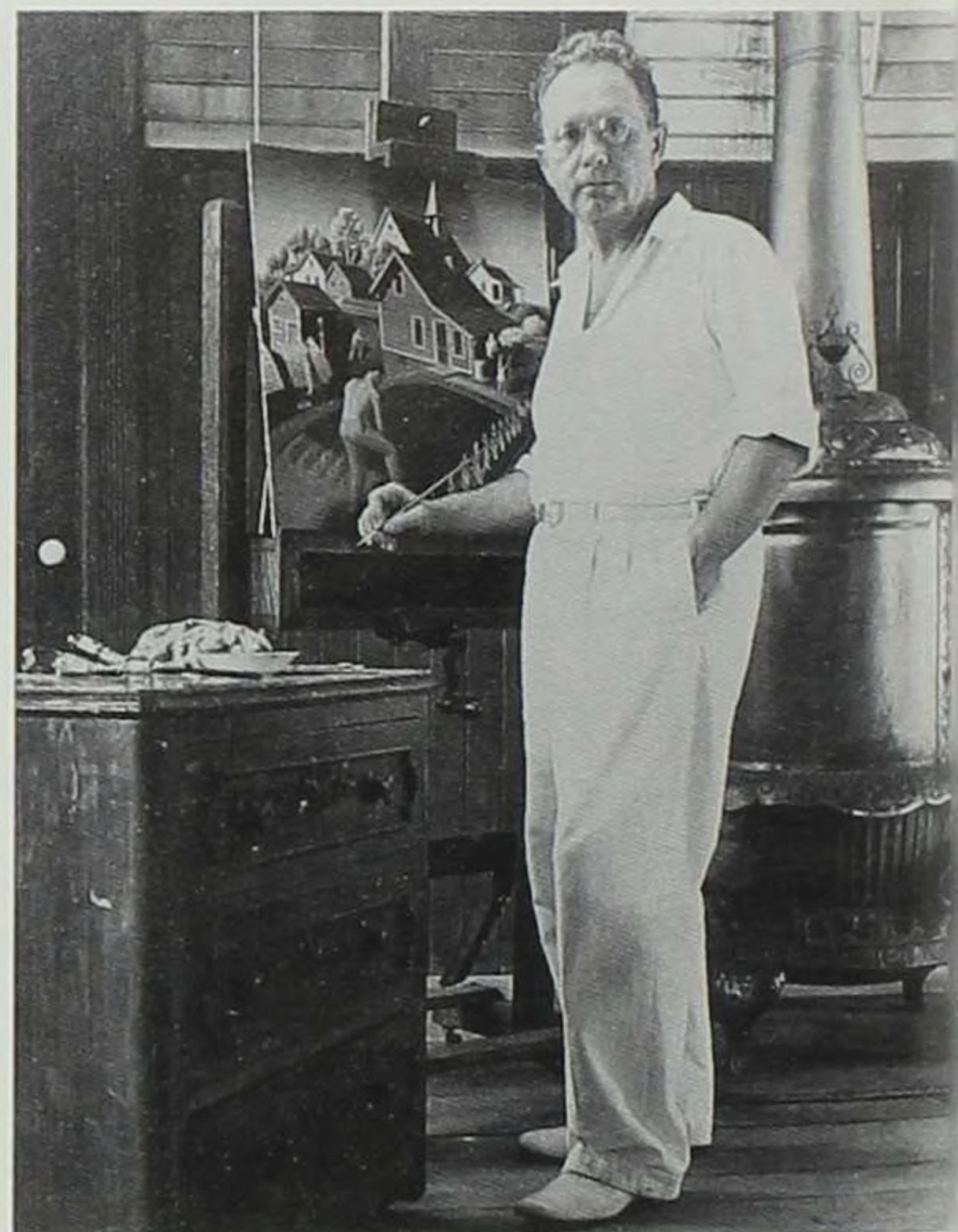
"When I think of what I might have accomplished by early training I sometimes feel a little sad."

In 1932, Wood made a special trip to Amana to speak at the opening of an exhibit of Flick's paintings at the Homestead Hotel. He used the occasion to

urge his listeners, mostly Amana residents, not to alter the charming character of their villages even though the "Great Change" from the communal system would give them the opportunity to modernize their homes. He extolled the beauty of the Amana environment, and he took the time to give his audience an object lesson on the elements of a painting, using as his example a picture of a large



BOTH PHOTOS: SHSI (IOWA CITY)



In the summer of 1941, Wood found peace and privacy in his "Kare No More Studio," an old railroad depot that had been moved to a farm by Clear Lake. Here, Flick visited him, and here, Wood painted *Spring in Town* (on easel above).

white draft horse on a wall calendar in the hotel dining room. Looked upon as an authority in artistic matters by Amana residents, Wood was also asked to judge an exhibit of locally made rugs at the Homestead Hotel in 1933. As a former metal worker and sometime interior designer, he had long appreciated the artisanship of the furniture made in the local cabinet shops and of the many antiques that graced Amana homes.

During the late 1920s, in fact, when Wood was designing and decorating homes in the Cedar Rapids area in partnership with a friend, contractor Bruce McKay, he often helped his clients buy furniture from Amana residents. And in years to come, for his own home in Iowa City, he hung kerosene lamps purchased in Amana in his dining room, had chairs made to his design at the Amana

furniture shops, and asked local women to make two Amana comforters. Wood not only appreciated the Amana environment and the crafts it produced, but he urged local residents to appreciate these things as well, and to preserve them. By buying craft items in Amana, Wood was supporting the artisans while at the same time drawing attention to their work.

In 1934, Wood accepted a teaching position at the University of Iowa. His teaching duties, growing celebrity, and regionalist proselytizing kept him busy and cut him off from Amana and his friend and protégé Carl Flick. Wood's marriage in 1935 to Sara Maxon, a former actress and operetta singer with a well-known

aversion to many of Wood's friends, may also have led to a decline in contact between the two artists.

Then in 1941, beset by problems at the university and following his divorce, Wood retreated to a studio in a converted depot in Clear Lake, Iowa. Here he hoped to concentrate solely on his painting. He did so in relative quiet, because very few people knew where he was, and even fewer were welcome to visit.

One person, however, whom Wood invited to Clear Lake was Carl Flick. He would come bearing jars of canned goods from Amana for Wood, who had always enjoyed the cooking of Carl's wife, Marie. What the two old friends talked about in those visits is unrecorded. What neither of them knew was that Wood was already suffering from the inoperable liver cancer that would end his life.

Flick was commissioned to paint this picture (right) of the Moser house in Main Amana in late 1957 as a Christmas gift. It is one of his last dated works. Before reorganization, the sandstone home had been a kitchen house, cooled in the summer by trellises of grape vines.

One of Flick's last paintings is this 1957 depiction (below) of two buildings in High Amana—the brick schoolhouse, built in 1871, and the wooden washhouse and woodshed, topped by a belltower. In communal days, the schoolmaster and family lived on the school's second floor. The village bell had first functioned in High Amana to signal the start and end of the communal workday and the midday meal, and to rally help in case of fire. On Sunday mornings, villagers used the 8 a.m. ringing to synchronize watches and clocks. After reorganization, the bell called students to school and villagers to church.



ABOVE: COURTESY HENRY AND NOLA MOSER

BELOW: COURTESY THOMAS P. JOHNSON

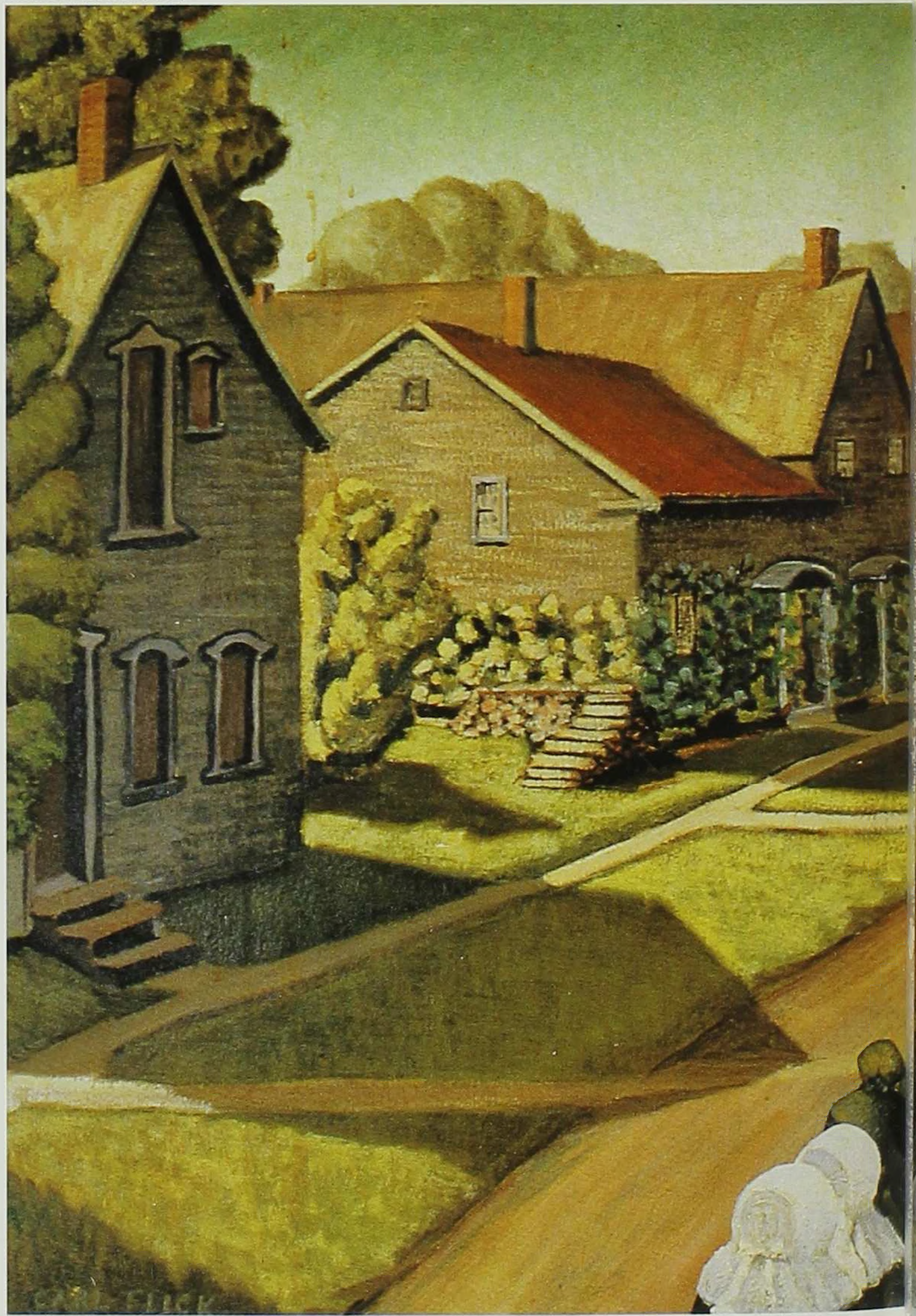


During that last summer, before he was diagnosed with cancer, Wood painted *Spring in the Country* and *Spring in Town*, his last major pieces. He visited Amana at least once (during the late summer of 1941) before his death in Iowa City on February 12, 1942—just two hours before his fifty-first birthday. Carl Flick, with his wife and daughter, attended the small funeral in the chapel of Turner Mortuary in Cedar Rapids, later commenting to his sister on how few people had attended.

Flick continued to paint for a few years until cataract surgery and illness forced him to temporarily lay aside his brushes. By the summer of 1954, however, he had resumed painting. The work of this later period, while continuing to draw on earlier influences, also showed a new concentration on less intense colors. These later pictures have a distinctive quality all their own, which may be attributable to Flick's declining eyesight or, perhaps, a conscious attempt to alter his style.

Flick painted several pictures in the late 1950s, including a particularly striking view of the Amana Meat Market. In 1954 he was photographed at his easel for an article in *The Iowan* magazine, which, aside from a final exhibit at the local high school in 1967, was the last recognition accorded this Amana regionalist in his lifetime. During visits to the homes of individuals who owned earlier examples of his work, he often asked permission to rework them. Generally, this involved retouching the colors that Flick thought

AMANA HERITAGE SOCIETY (AMANA)



had faded through the years.

As the years passed, the hallway of Flick's home gradually filled with his paintings. Although he sold or gave away the early landscapes he had copied from calendars, he never sold his major works or prize-winning paintings.

In 1966 he retired from his position at Amana Refrigeration, where he had been employed since the mid-1930s. He had always vowed that he would paint more when he retired, but his eye troubles precluded much work. By the 1960s, Flick had given up

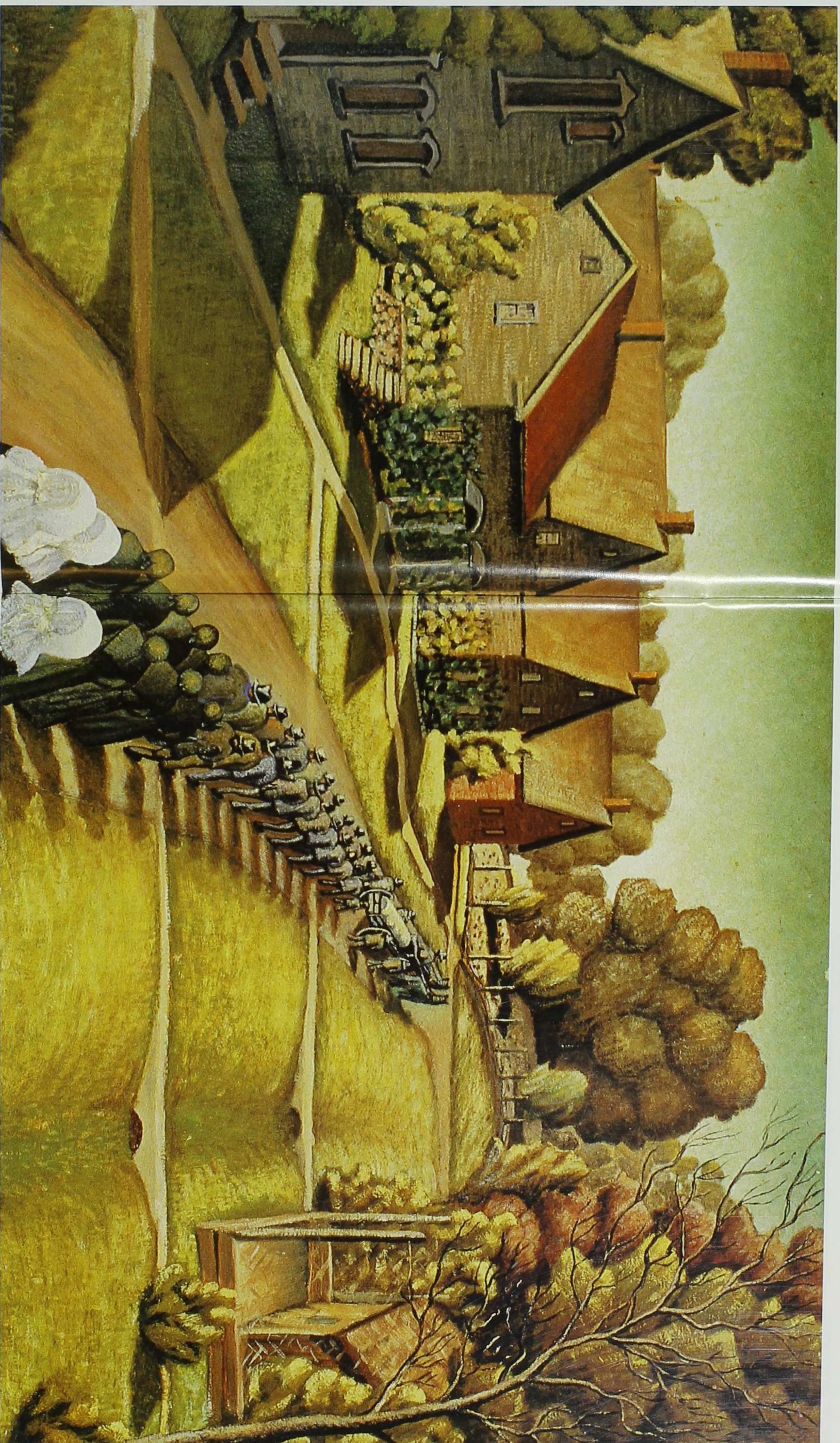


Probably the best known of Flick's works, *Amana Funeral* (1935?) was one of a proposed series in which Flick wanted to capture scenes of "old Amana" that he felt would pass from view. (In this instance, Flick was correct: the last Amana funeral using a horse-drawn wagon and followed by the villagers occurred in 1951.) This particular procession is set in East Amana. The hearse is followed by the pallbearers, then the male members of the community, and finally the women. A white pall covers the casket, and the men and women are dressed in the traditional black church garb. University of Iowa researcher Richard H. Roberts commented in the 1930s on Flick's paintings in the series: "These paintings and many others like them will preserve as no verbal description or interpretation could, or even the art of the photographer could, the old scenes of life in the colonies that have passed or are rapidly giving way to the new material and social culture of the colonies." The painting received an honorable mention at the Iowa Artists Show at Cornell College in 1938, and it was included in the Iowa section of the National Exhibition of American Art in New York that summer. Later, it was part of a traveling exhibit.

During that last summer, before he was diagnosed with cancer, Wood painted *Spring in the Country* and *Spring in Town*, his last major pieces. He visited Amana at least once (during the late summer of 1941) before his death in Iowa City on February 12, 1942—just two hours before his fifty-first birthday. Carl Flick, with his wife and daughter, attended the small funeral in the chapel of Turner Mortuary in Cedar Rapids, later commenting to his sister on how few people had attended.

Flick continued to paint for a few years until cataract surgery and illness forced him to temporarily lay aside his brushes. By the summer of 1954, however, he had resumed painting. The work of this later period, while continuing to draw on earlier influences, also showed a new concentration on less intense colors. These later pictures have a distinctive quality all their own, which may be attributable to Flick's declining eyesight or, perhaps, a conscious attempt to alter his style.

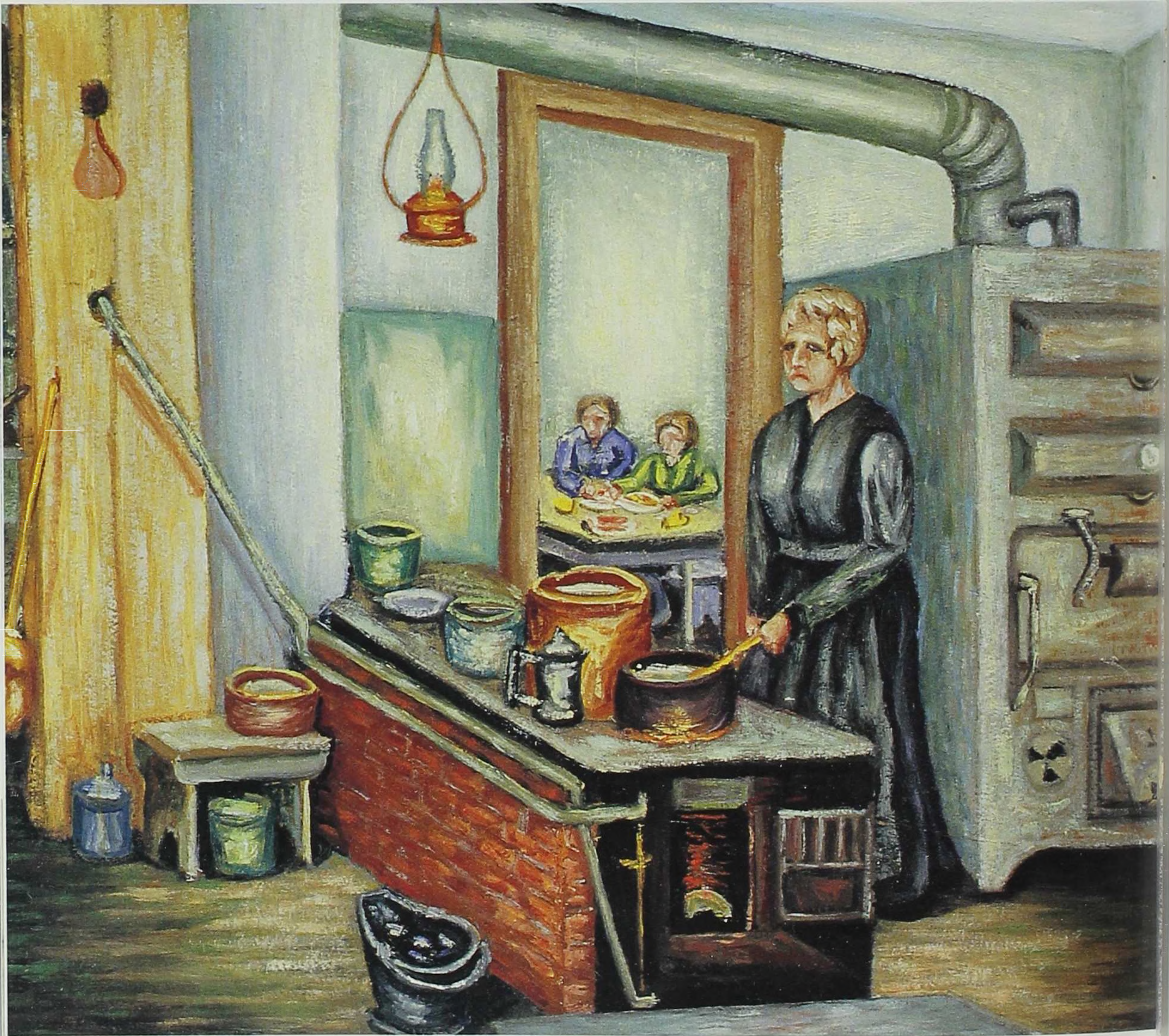
Flick painted several pictures in the late 1950s, including a particularly striking view of the Amana Meat Market. In 1954 he was photographed at his easel for an article in *The Iowan* magazine, which, aside from a final exhibit at the local high school in 1967, was the last recognition accorded this Amana regionalist in his lifetime. During visits to the homes of individuals who owned earlier examples of his work, he often asked permission to rework them. Generally, this involved retouching the colors that Flick thought



had faded through the years. As the years passed, the hallway of Flick's home gradually filled with his paintings. Although he sold or gave away the early landscapes he had copied from calendars, he never sold his major works or prize-winning paintings.

In 1966 he retired from his position at Amana Refrigeration, where he had been employed since the mid-1930s. He had always vowed that he would paint more when he retired, but his eye troubles precluded much work. By the 1960s, Flick had given up

Probably the best known of Flick's works, *Ammana Funeral* (1935) was one of a proposed series in which Flick wanted to capture scenes of "old Amana" that he felt would pass from view. (In this instance, Flick was correct: the last Amana funeral using a horse-drawn wagon and followed by the villagers occurred in 1951.) This particular procession is set in East Amana. The hearse is followed by the pallbearers, then the male members of the community, and finally the women. A white pall covers the casket, and the men and women are dressed in the traditional black church garb. University of Iowa researcher Richard H. Roberts commented in the 1930s on Flick's paintings in the series: "These paintings and many others like them will preserve as no verbal description or interpretation could, or even the art of the photographer could, the old scenes of life in the colonies that have passed or are rapidly giving way to the new material and social culture of the colonies." The painting received an honorable mention at the Iowa Artists Show at Cornell College in 1938, and it was included in the Iowa section of the National Exhibition of American Art in New York that summer. Later, it was part of a traveling exhibit.



This is one of the very few paintings in which Flick included a human figure. Given the sorrowful expression on the woman's face, Flick intended this painting to mark the closing of the communal kitchens on April 11, 1932, and to record a vanishing tradition. This kitchen house was one of 53 in the Amanas, each run by a kitchen boss and operated by Amana women, some as young as age 14 (after eighth-grade graduation). Here the five daily meals for the villagers were prepared and eaten (although by the time of the reorganization, most were taking food home and eating it there). Pies and cakes were baked in the large oven on the right; bread was baked elsewhere, in the communal bakeries. A kerosene lamp lights the kitchen. Pipes from the outside bring air into the coal-burning stove. The woman at the stove is Elsie Flick Zuber, the artist's sister, and the scene is probably the Miller kitchen house in West Amana, where she worked at the time of reorganization. Although she is wearing the more traditional dark clothing (unlike the women in the dining room), her hair is worn in a shorter, more fashionable style. Titled *The Last Supper in Amana* (1933?), the painting is based on a photograph that survives in Flick's papers.

painting for good, although his easel and equipment remained in place at his home until the death of his wife, Marie, in 1995.

Flick's talents were not all connected with painting. In later years he continued his lifelong interest in the outdoors, particularly fishing, and he spent hours tying flies that he packaged and sold through the West Amana Store and Armstrong's Department Store in Cedar Rapids. He also helped maintain the enormous vegetable garden that still covered the south-facing hill behind his home, and that had once so fascinated Grant Wood.

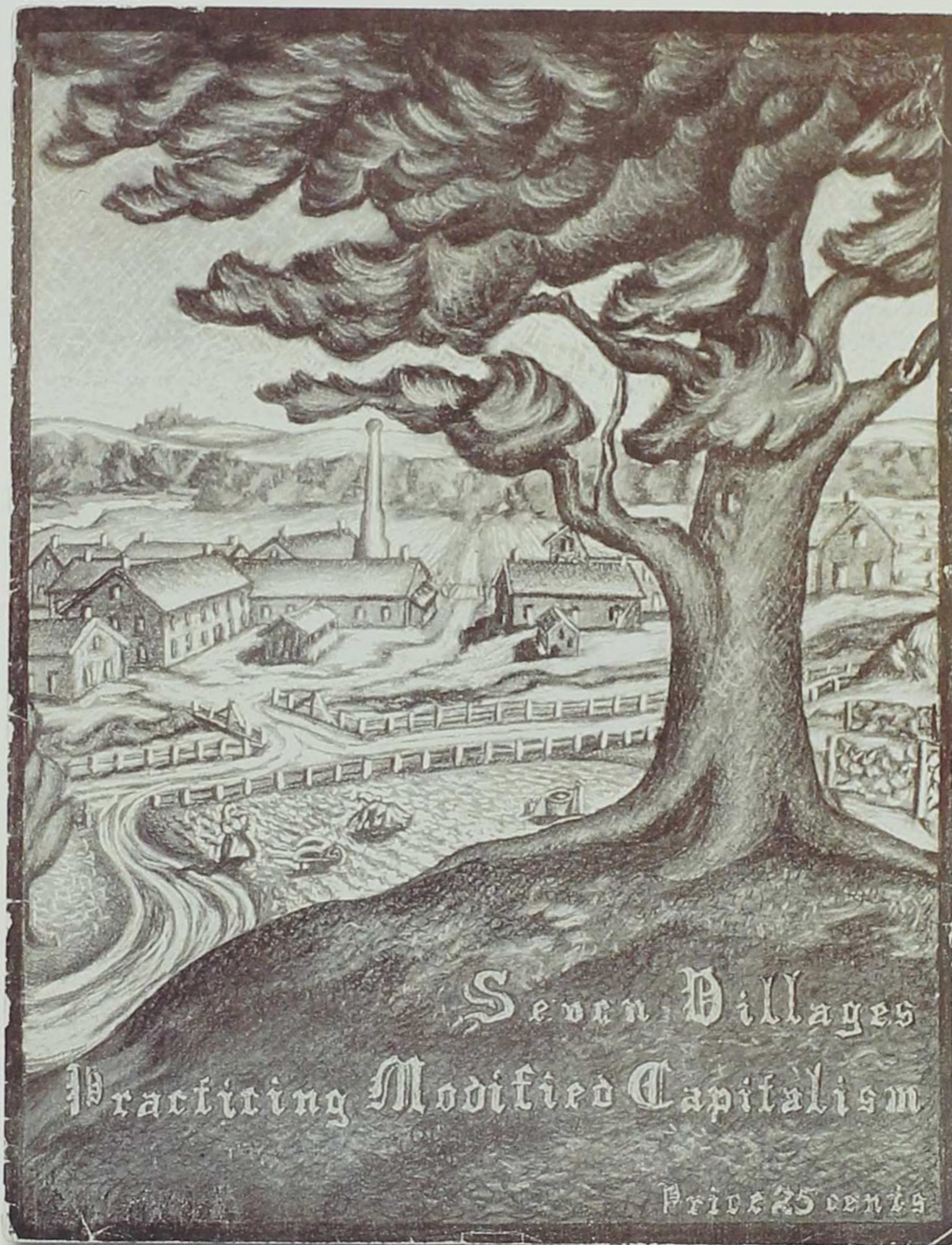
Flick died on September 16, 1976, having lived almost his entire 72 years in the same West Amana house. At his funeral, his artwork, the defining aspect of his life, was mentioned, but only as a distant glow of a meteor that had long ago passed from sight.

In the years following his death two major exhibitions of his works were mounted locally by the Amana Arts Guild in 1986 and the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art in 1997.

Significantly, at the Cedar Rapids museum, the small, temporary exhibit of Flick's work opened into the museum's massive display of works by Grant Wood.

In a 1932 letter that Flick wrote in reply to a reporter's questions about his life, and which was frequently reprinted in subsequent stories on him, he had said, "I give full credit to Mr. Grant Wood for all I have accomplished so far because it was through his influence and his continued interest in my efforts that I have accomplished a certain

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



Flick's stylized depiction of the Middle Amana Woolen Mill illustrated the Amana Society's first major tourist publication, printed in 1936. Inside the booklet, the credit reads: "The charcoal drawing on the cover of this folder, interpreting Amana atmosphere, was drawn by Carl Flick of West Amana, a member of the Society."

amount of success." If one examines Flick's early calendar pictures, which are essentially copies of illustrations, and then compares them with his work of only a year later, the obvious and beneficial influence of Wood is clearly evident. Within three years under Wood's influence, Flick progressed from copying calendar pictures with a child's crayons to exhibit-

ing and receiving state and national notice.

Despite the influence of Wood, a proficient portraitist, Flick avoided painting portraits or including human figures in his work, with the notable exception of his self-portrait. He was most comfortable with landscapes and structures. Far from beginning architectural renderings, however,

his paintings show careful composition and attention to light and detail. He seldom depicted a complete building; instead he generally focused on an interesting feature such as a porch, doorway, or potted plant. Aside from a few sketches done in Clayton County in the 1930s, and a few miscellaneous sketches from his Stone City period, Carl Flick's subject matter was almost entirely "Amana" in its scope. As a true regionalist, he looked in his backyard for subject matter, and found it.

In a rather circumspect way, Grant Wood's regionalist fascination with Amana and his visits to the area received official commemoration in 1996, when the Iowa Sesquicentennial stamp featured a portion of the painting *Young Corn*. Wood had completed *Young Corn* in 1931 as a memorial to Linnie Schloeman, a teacher in Cedar Rapids who had grown up north of High Amana. He did the initial sketches while standing in the Lenox Cemetery where she is buried. The painting

depicts rolling Iowa hills. In the foreground, a field of young corn plants represents the children whose lives the schoolteacher had nourished. North of High Amana, the field and hills still strike many today as an ordinary Iowa scene. It took an artist to see its beauty and meaning.

Another hill, two miles from the Iowa River, affords a panoramic view of West Amana. Carl Flick selected this vantage point—with its view of the village he loved and that had shaped his art and

AMANA ARTS GUILD, ON PERMANENT LOAN FROM ALEX AND JOANN MEYER



This striking view closely resembles the land features of the Clayton County landscape on page 4. Flick produced several versions of this scene. The painting, with its less intense colors, is a prime example of his later style and dates to the 1950s.



PRIVATE COLLECTION; PHOTOGRAPHED BY GORDON KELLENBERGER

Flick's self-portrait (1932?) uses his home village of West Amana as background. The building with the tower was the meat market. The composition places the subject in the foreground of a landscape that holds personal meaning to the artist, similar to Flemish paintings that had attracted Grant Wood's attention in his trips to Europe.

life—as the background for his self-portrait. There was something in the soil of Iowa, in its hills and its communities, from which these two regionalist painters drew their inspiration. Here they found subject, voice, and friendship. ❖

The author is a Ph.D. candidate in the agricultural history and rural studies program at Iowa State University. His article "Community in Transition: Amana's Great Change, 1931–1933" appeared in the Winter 2001 Annals of Iowa.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The author gathered much of the information in this article from interviews and conversations with the following Amana residents: Marie Flick Fritsche, Louise Hergert, Irma Hess, Emilie Zuber Hoppe, Helen Haldy Kippenhan, Elizabeth Parvin, Johanna Kippenhan Reihmann, Henrietta Moershel Ruff, Henry Ruff, Ruth Herman Schmieder, Arthur Selzer, Marie Selzer, Elsie Flick Zuber, and Janet Zuber. Thanks also to Gordon Kellenberger.

The Flick family papers, in the family's possession, were also extremely useful; copies of some of those materials are held at the Amana Heritage Society (Main Amana). Also useful was Richard H. Roberts, "Report to Benjamin F. Shambaugh upon field research in the Amana Colonies, 1934-35, 1935-36" (Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City). Newspapers that covered Flick, Wood, and other Amana artists include the *Amana Society Bulletin*, *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, *Des Moines Register*, *Marengo Pioneer-Republican*, and *Posaune* (the Amana High School newspaper in the 1930s).

Secondary sources consulted were: Hazel Brown, *Grant Wood and Marvin Cone: Artists of an Era* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1972); Wanda M. Corn, *Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Federal Writers' Project, *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State* (New York: Viking, 1938), reprinted as *The WPA Guide to 1930s Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1986); Nan Wood Graham, *My Brother, Grant Wood* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1992); and Marjorie Wightman, "The Straight and Simple Line," *The Iowan* (June-July 1954).

Annotations to the original manuscript are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City).