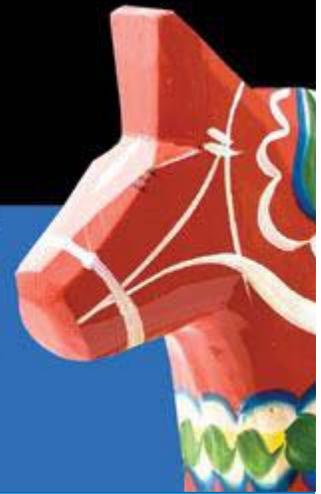


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Spotlight Article
09/01/2010

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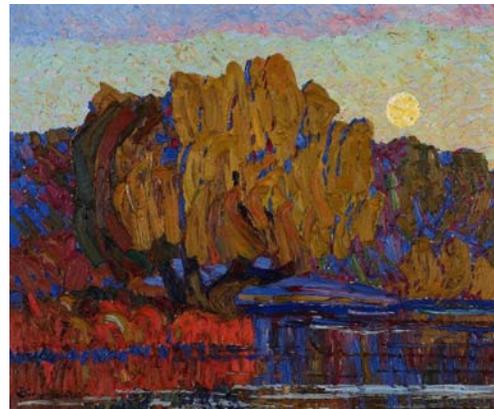
Birger Sandzén

"Poet painter of immense sun-washed spaces..."

LINDSBORG, KANSAS - 09/01/2010 -

(Sven) Birger Sandzén knew from an early age he was an artist. His father, a Lutheran minister, and his mother, an accomplished watercolorist, raised him in an intellectual and artistic household. Sandzén was born in Blidsberg, Sweden in 1871. Impatient with the lengthy wait for acceptance to the

Royal Academy he became a protégé of Anders Zorn and under Zorn's encouragement later traveled to Paris. While in France, Sandzén studied under Edmond Aman-Jean leaving a lasting impression in his art. Fueled by stories from an American colleague, Sandzen decided to travel to America. Emigrating to Lindsborg in 1894, under the behest of Dr. Carl Aaron Swensson, founder of Bethany College, he first taught languages. He became the art department head in 1899 until his retirement in 1946. Fluent in six languages, Sandzén also was a musician, singing in the oratorio society in the annual Handel's *Messiah* performance, author and W.P.A. artist.

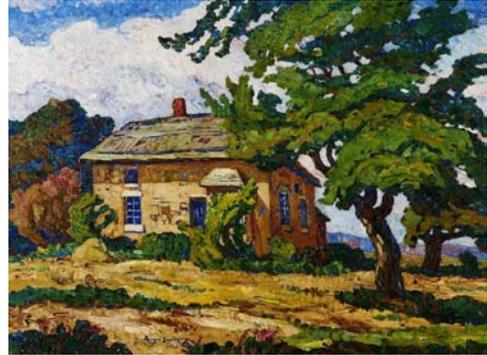


Smoky Hill River, 1921

Sandzén palette when living in Sweden was muted, predominately grays and browns. When he experienced the sunny, mostly cloudless light of Kansas, his range of color changed to very bright, unmixed paint leading some to say he painted in the style of fauvism, depicted by saturated color and heavy brush work. Others debate his approach was directed towards pointillism, as up close his subjects are hard to discern, but stepping back the whole of the

painting becomes clear. One art critic wrote, "Birger Sandzén is the poet painter of immense sun-washed spaces, of pine-crowned luminous, gigantic rocks and of color-shifting desert sands. The spectator is amazed at this captured beauty. This dreamer-painter is truly a master."

His paintings are included in the Library of Congress; Göteborg Art Gallery, Sweden; Art Institute of Chicago; National Museum of Stockholm; Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe; Denver Art Museum; British Museum, London; Metropolitan Museum of Art and many others. He was made a Knight of the Royal Order of Vasa, Order of the North Star in 1940 by the Swedish Government for promoting cultural relations between the United States and Sweden. He died in 1954 and is buried in the Elmwood Cemetery located on Wells Fargo Road, Lindsborg, Kansas. As the official [Birger Sandzén Memorial Art Gallery](#) website says, he died "on what was described as a beautiful 'Sandzén Day.'"



The Old Homestead, 1921

Written by Tricia Clark

Submitted by Carla Wilson, Director of the Lindsborg Convention & Visitors Bureau

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