

Extremes in Weather

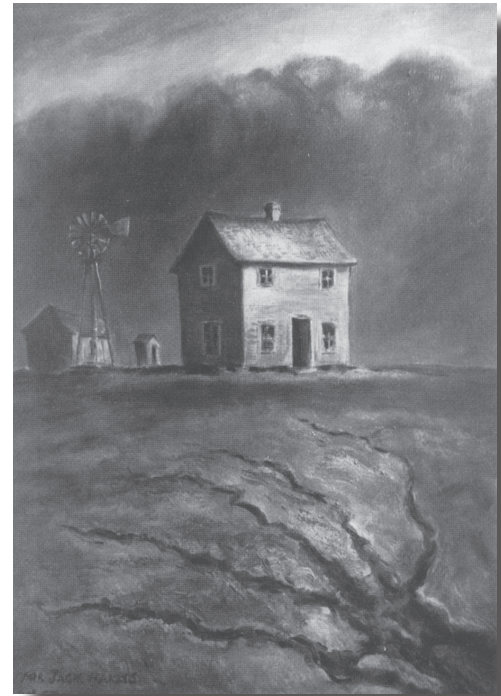
The Great Plains is home to hot summers, cool winters, wind, and severe storms and tornados. Drought years were common, the worst being 1884,1894, and the Dust Bowl of 1934-39. On the other hand, floods were frequent and farmers using bottom lands near rivers and creeks were especially susceptible to loosing crops. Accounts of the 1951 flood abound. In the winter, torrential rains manifested themselves as blizzards. Add to that the wind which sweeps through the Great Plains on a consistent basis. American Scene painters reveled in painting and drawing these forces of nature which impacted daily life. The Regionalist focused on the impact on the land, while the Social Realists were interested in the impact of nature on the people.

The tornado, a product of dry air masses from Canada and wet air masses from the Gulf of Mexico, seems to be endemic to Kansas, but it was not until the movie *The Wizard of Oz* came out in 1939 that Kansas became synonymous with the storm. While Curry was not alone in depicting tornados, it was his images that were seen in New York City, and viewed by Kansans as supporting the negative stereotype of Kansas.

The Dust Bowl, which impacted southwestern Kansas the most, was a product of a drought and the disruption of the grassland ecology. Overgrazing by cattle and sheep had depleted the perennial grasses, allowing wind and water erosion. Sodbusting, overflowing and planting, frequent stubble burning, etc., had eroded the top soil. This was followed by four years of drought beginning in 1931. The most famous Dust Storm hit in April 1935, beginning in Oklahoma and continuing into Western Kansas.

Despite their depressing topic, paintings and prints of the Dustbowl were widely collected during the 1930s. Artists like Herschel Logan and Curry experienced these events first hand, while other artists created their work from photographs by Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange.

It is in this area of conservation that many of the artists of the era become political. John Steuart Curry intended to teach conservation in his 1937-41 work *Soil Erosion and Dust*, explaining “Sheet erosion and the shoe string gully are two of the great calamities of our nation, and in the Midwestern plains can be added wind erosion. In the foreground of this panel is the clutching hand of erosion directed toward an abandoned farm home. Beyond is the threatening cloud of dust. This panel is designed as a significant warning and voices the concern of government and education forces interested in preserving the nation’s resources.” (*Rethinking Regionalism*, M. Sue Kendall, Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986, p. 45). This work was intended as one of the eight for rotunda mural at the Topeka Capitol which was never completed. Alexander Hogue represented the tractor and plow as a monster pillaging the earth. Joe Jones portrayed images of the beaten farmer, worn from wind and dust.



John Steuart Curry
Erosion and Dust, 1937-41
Birger Sandzen Memorial Gallery



Approaching Storm

Herschel C. Logan

HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)
Approaching Storm, 1930

HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)

Approaching Storm, 1930

Woodcut on paper

7 x 7"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, gift of Peggy L. Sondergard & Samuel H. Logan, 2002.59

“Out on the High Plains, storm clouds are often as welcome as a lover’s smile because they herald precious precipitation, which becomes scantier and less dependable in the westward progression from the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains. Very often, however, there are malignant exceptions such as tornadoes, blizzards – and hail.”

Home on the Range: A Century on the High Plains, James R. Dickenson, University Press of Kansas, 1995, p. 15.



PEPPINO MANGRAVITE (UNITED STATES, BORN IN ITALY, 1896-1978)
Tomorrow's Bread, ca. 1939

PEPPINO MANGRAVITE (UNITED STATES, BORN IN ITALY, 1896-1978)

Tomorrow's Bread, ca. 1939

Lithograph on paper

8 3/4 x 13 1/2"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, bequest of Raymond & Melba Budge, 1992.193

Mangravite spent time in Colorado Springs, Colorado, during the 1930s, working and teaching with Boardman Robinson at the Broadmoor Art Academy. During this period he painted a number of Midwestern scenes, including the oil painting, *Tomorrow's Bread*, in 1939, which is related to this lithograph. The scene depicted is unusual because it shows a woman trying to harvest wheat before the impending storm hits, rather than the more typical view of a man at work in his fields.

“At harvest time, things didn’t go on in their usual way. The women came out of the houses and gardens wearing gloves, overalls, and shoes that were too big for them. But they were ready for work, ready to bring in what everyone had been waiting for.

Where did they learn to do all of these things? You never saw them on tractors at other times... somehow they knew how to shock the bundles in perfect little teepees all over the stubble.”

From “The Harvest” in *The One-Room Schoolhouse: Stories About the Boys*, Jim Heynen, Vintage Books, 1993, p. 196.



Tornado

Herschel C. Logan

HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)
Tornado, 1938



HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)

Tornado, 1938

Woodcut on paper

9 x 7"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, acquisition made possible with funds provided by the Friends of the Beach Museum of Art, 2000.41

“It was just like they always said – a hot muggy day, the air too still at supper time, and then that big belly of a black cloud, a little band of sky beneath it, coming at them from the southwest. Everybody was phoning everybody, getting blankets ready for the cellar, then standing outside watching. When a piece of the cloud started to fall down across the sky below it like a section of hair working its way down somebody’s forehead, the boys had to get into the cellar and stay there.”

From “Tornado” in *The One-Room Schoolhouse: Stories About the Boys*, Jim Heynen, Vintage Books, 1993, p. 107.



Tornado damage, Sheridan County Kansas, 1920s, by Bill Long, *Hoxie Sentinel*.
Courtesy John Schlageck



John Stewart Curry 1932

"The Tornado" 25-prints

JOHN STEUART CURRY (UNITED STATES, 1897-1946)
The Tornado, 1932



JOHN STEUART CURRY (UNITED STATES, 1897-1946)

The Tornado, 1932

Lithograph on paper

11 3/8 x 15 3/4"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, gift of Ann Thackrey Berry, in honor of the late Russell I. Thackrey, 2003.222

This lithograph is based on Curry's 1929 painting of the same name, which won first prize at the 1933 Carnegie International. Curry's depiction of the violent weather of the Midwest was one of the reasons for the artist's unpopularity among Kansans, who viewed Curry as deliberately perpetuating a negative stereotype. The painting developed from sketches done after the 1929 tornado in Winchester, Kansas, and possibly from photographs taken by Ira Blackstock of the tornado that struck Hardtner, Kansas, in 1929.

"I look up and to my astonishment I saw right into the heart of a tornado. There was a circular opening in the center of the funnel, about fifty to one hundred feet in diameter and extending straight upward for a distance of at least half a mile, as best I could judge under the circumstances. The walls of this opening were rotating clouds and the whole was brilliantly lighted with constant flashes of lightning which zigzagged from side to side."

Will Keller, Kansas farmer, June 22, 1928, in *Twister: The Science of Tornadoes*, Keay Davidson, New York: Pocketbooks, 1996, pg. 90.



CHARLES B. ROGERS (UNITED STATES, 1911-1987)
Victim of the Winds



CHARLES B. ROGERS (UNITED STATES, 1911-1987)

Victim of the Winds

Lithograph on paper

6 3/4 x 9"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, gift of Charles L. Marshall, Jr., 2000.133

Rogers was born in Great Bend, Kansas, and despite his travels and time spent living in New York and California, the Midwestern prairies remained a major subject in his work. A friend and student of Birger Sandzén, Rogers headed the art department at Bethany College, and settled in Ellsworth, Kansas.

“Kansas is herself again. The wind blows and the dust and sand flies but no rain descends. A newcomer asked one of our fellow townsmen if it always blew this way in Kansas. He replied that there were perhaps two or three days during the year that it did not.”

Salina Journal, Brookeville correspondent-1880 *Quotable Kansas* by Tom Averill, Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies, 2002-2005.



HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)
Dust Storm, 1938



HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)

Dust Storm, 1938

Woodcut on paper

7 x 9"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, acquisition made possible with funds provided by the Friends of the Beach Museum of Art, 2000.39

Commenting about *Dust Storm*, Logan recalled: "The black clouds of dust completely hid the sun, when they rolled over the parched plains. Windows and doors failed to keep out fine dust. Not exactly a Chamber of Commerce illustration."

"When the soil has become finely pulverized by too much working over, by the action of water followed by wind, or, particularly, when the surface is blow dirt from a previous storm, the dust begins to blow with only a slight breeze. As it continues to rise into the air it becomes thicker and thicker, obscuring the landscape and continuing to grow in density until vision is reduced to thousand yards, or less. If this is to be a real dust storm, a typical black blizzard of the Dust Bowl, the wind increases its velocity until it is blowing at forty to fifty miles an hour. Soon everything is moving – the land is blowing, both farm land and pasture alike. The fine dirt is sweeping along at express-train speed, and when the very sun is blotted out visibility is reduced to some fifty feet; or perhaps you cannot see at all, because the dust has blinded you, ..."

Farming the Dust Bowl: A First-Hand Account from Kansas, Lawrence Svobida, University Press of Kansas, 1940, p. 123.



Photographs of a Western Kansas dust storm by Eddie L Moore, ca. 1935.

Courtesy of the Morse Department of Special Collections, Hale Library, Kansas State University



Victim of the Dust

Herschel C Logan

HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)
Victim of the Dust, 1938



HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)

Victim of the Dust, 1938

Woodcut on paper

7 x 9"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, acquisition made possible with funds provided by the Friends of the Beach Museum of Art, 2000.42

From The Ghosts of the Buffalo III

**Great winds blew across the plains—
physical counterpart of delirious doctrines
blasting the Old World;
the dust from the despoiled prairies
rose in a great sky-clutching, earth hugging cloud—
The Ninth Plague of Egypt**

The Kansas Poems of Kenneth Wiggins Porter, Thomas Fox Averill, Washburn University, Center for Kansas Studies, 1992.



Drifted sand on the Bowers Farm, Kiowa County, Kansas April 17, 1935 by F. Stell, from the Forestry Archives. This photograph was taken right after the famous dust storm of April 15, 1935.



CHARLES L. MARSHALL, SR. (UNITED STATES, 1905-1992)
Kaw River Flood - 41, 1941



CHARLES L. MARSHALL, SR. (UNITED STATES, 1905-1992)

Kaw River Flood – 41, 1941

Lithograph on paper

9 x 11”

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, gift of Charles Marshall, Jr., 2001.117

The Kansas River flooded twice in 1941, once in June and once in October. The June 1941 flood had the following recorded water levels.

Manhattan (flood stage 17 feet) June 4, 1941, 27.95 feet, June 11, 1941, 23.5 feet

Wamego (flood stage 16 feet) June 11, 1941, 21.88 feet

Topeka (flood stage 21 feet) June 12, 1941, 25.84 feet

**Tell me, little river, tell me
Why you clamber o’er the bank,
Filling all the land with dampness
And a smell so loud and rank.**

**River, river, raging river,
Full of mud and dirt and slime,
Like the bile upon the liver
During watermelon time.**

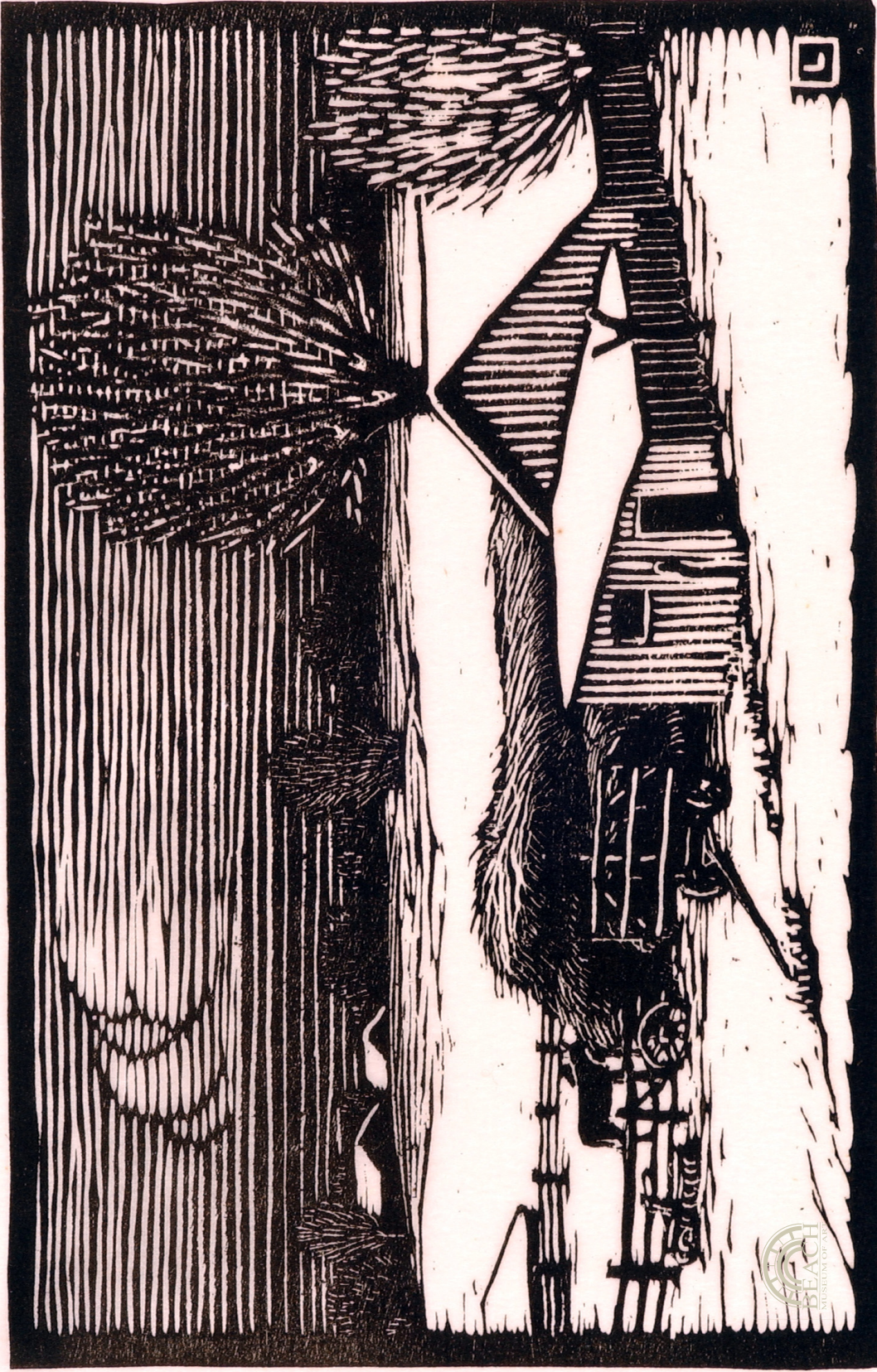
From “High Water Time” by Albert Stroud in *Verdigris Valley Verse*, Coffeyville, Kansas: The Journal Press, 1971, p. 122.



Flood water near Manhattan, Kansas, June 12, 1941.

Photograph ordered by L. H. Schoenleber, Department of Agricultural Engineering.

Courtesy of the Morse Department of Special Collections, Hale Library, Kansas State University



Herschel C Logan

Barnyard in winter



HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)
Barnyard in Winter, 1926

HERSCHEL C. LOGAN (UNITED STATES, 1901-1987)

Barnyard in Winter, 1926

Woodcut on paper

3 1/2 x 5 1/2"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, acquisition made possible with funds provided by the Friends of the Beach Museum of Art, 2000.98

Logan was born in Magnolia, Missouri, but grew up on a farm near Winfield, Kansas. After attending the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, Logan went to work for McCormick-Armstrong, a commercial printing firm in Wichita, Kansas. Like many other young artists in the state, Logan was influenced by Wichita printmaker C. A. Seward. In 1929 Logan went to work for the Consolidated Printing and Stationery Company in Salina, Kansas, serving as art director from 1931 to 1967.

“The imperfections of the farmscape were hidden by the anonymity of white, and the tempo slowed as the temperature dropped. Winter was a time of pleasure, and of recuperation, of gaining new strength for the exertions of spring.”

Farm Town, A Memoir of the 1930s, photographs by J. Wes McManigal, text by Grant Heilman, Brattleboro, VT: The Stephen Green Press, 1974, p. 79.



THOMAS HART BENTON (UNITED STATES, 1889-1975)
The Woodpile (also titled *Wood Cutter*), 1939

THOMAS HART BENTON (UNITED STATES, 1889-1975)

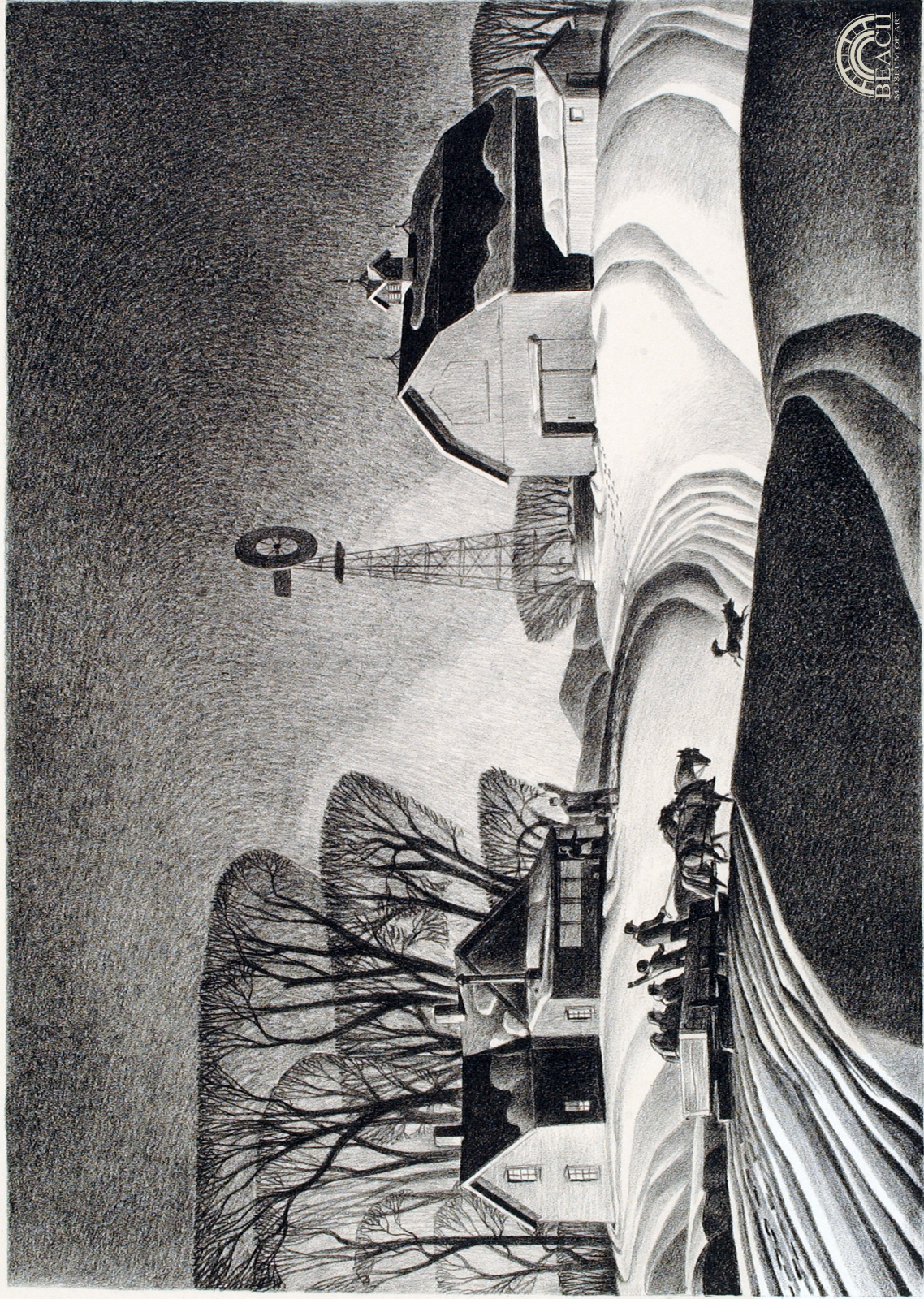
The Woodpile (also titled *Wood Cutter*), 1939

Lithograph on paper

9 1/2 x 11 3/8"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, bequest of Raymond & Melba Budge, 1992.112

According to Benton the scene depicts a, "Missouri farm set up in the winter. Splitting wood for the kitchen stove."



DALE NICHOLS (UNITED STATES, 1904-1995)
Company for Supper, 1948

BEACH
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Dale Nichols '48

DALE NICHOLS (UNITED STATES, 1904-1995)

Company for Supper, 1948

Lithograph on paper

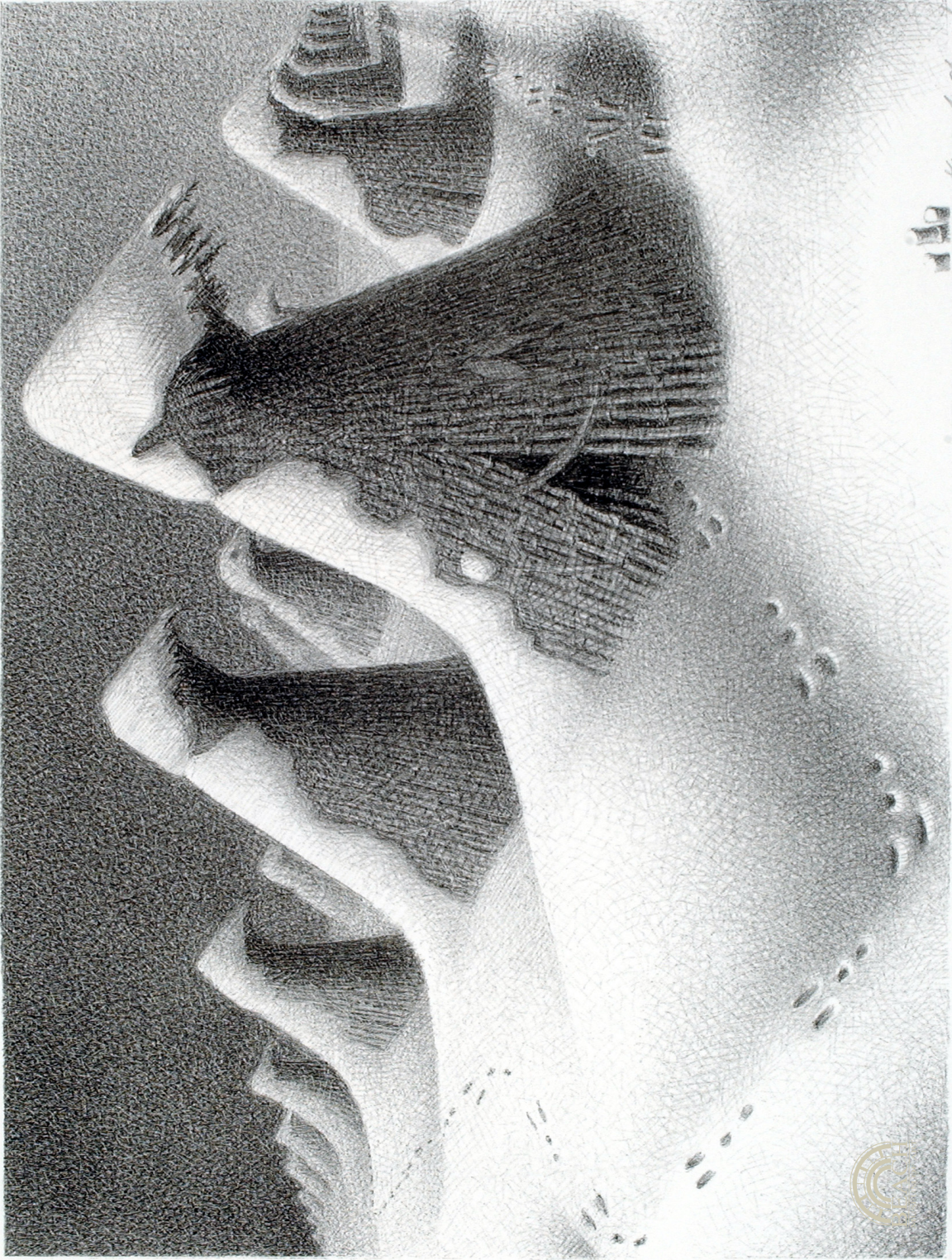
9 7/8 x 13 3/4"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, bequest of Raymond & Melba Budge, 1992.76

Dale Nichols was born on a grain and livestock farm in David City, Nebraska. According to Nichols, "None of my works are actual scenes. They are experiences which I attempt to express by composing the pictures in multiple symbols, both abstract and real, toward an 'orchestration' of a theme." Nichols continued, "I feel that an artist paints best what he has been exposed to during his youth. I think my memory paintings of my home state may be my only creations that I sign with full confidence."

About *Company for Supper*, Nichols wrote: "Before the advent of World War I, the radio and the hard road, country people, particularly those of the Middle West, lived more or less isolated lives. Therefore, company for supper was an exciting event usually held on Sunday evenings. For the children these evenings meant hilarious fun; the building of chair and blanket houses; of games like hide-and-go-seek. For the grown-ups these were evenings of feasting upon fried chicken and gossip, both of which were highly spiced."

(Quotes from *Contemporary American Painting*, Grace Pagano & Donald Bear, NY: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1945.)



GRANT DEVOLSON WOOD (UNITED STATES, 1891-1942)
January, 1938

GRANT DEVOLSON WOOD (UNITED STATES, 1891-1942)

January, 1938

Lithograph on paper

12 x 16"

KSU, Beach Museum of Art, 1985.1

Beautiful Snow

I knew that it was coming the night before it came, for my rheumatically shoulder was threateningly lame; I went out on a walk to see the flakes descending over me, and watched them falling, falling – then I slipped and did the same.

Thou art a boon of nature for thou wilt help the wheat and drive the nimble rabbit to his narrow, warm retreat. If I can track him to his den, I'll swat the beef trust once again; I'll take him home and eat him, for we haven't any meat."

Verdigris Valley Verse, Albert Stroud, Coffeyville, Kansas: The Journal Press, 1917, p. 15.