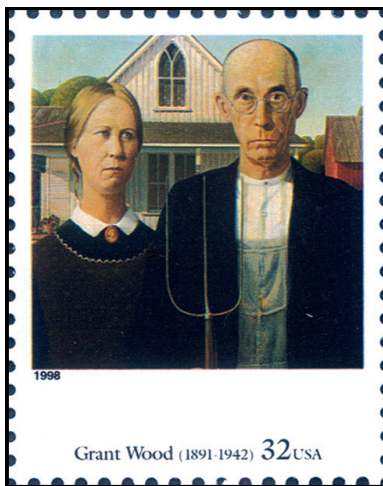


## Masterpieces on U.S. Stamps:

# Grant Wood & The Stone City Colony

by John Dunn



Scott 3236q, part of the Masterpieces of American Art sheet of 1998, features one of the most familiar couples in American Art on Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.

It was first exhibited in 1930 at the Art Institute of Chicago, where it is still on display. Interestingly, the painting was one of two selected for display, the other being *Stone City*.

Illustrated at the right and across to page 35 is a letter Grant Wood wrote on October 28, 1930, which reads:

**HURRAY!**

*Two paintings of mine in the American Show—"Stone City" and "American Gothic"! Two is the maximum and only a few make it each year. I am having photos of the two made in the Art Institute and will get them when I go in next week. Intend to have writeup. Am holding off on the cover letter till this is published so that I can include a clipping.*

*Am enclosing a page torn from the art section of the Chicago post which includes a write up of the Colorado State Fair awards. If they get mentioned, why can't we?...*

*Did you know that the Cedar Falls art teachers at the N.E.I.T.A. convention here railroaded Ed Rowan in as head of this section—electing him over Ed Bruns who was also nominated. Rowan has newspaper matrixes made of the best photo and has an article written about it by a professional press agent I know in Chicago. In it the credit for my luck will be put just where it belongs—with you and the State Fair.... Am delighted over the idea of your coming here for a visit....*



Self Portrait

*Sincerely,  
Grant Wood.*

The person to whom Wood wrote this frank letter was Mrs. Henry Ness of Ames, Iowa, the director of the Ames chapter of the American Federation of Arts.

The other painting referred to in Wood's letter, *Stone City*, is seen below. It also can be seen on the facing page, with Wood standing beside it, in a photo that is signed by Wood, "To

Mrs. Ness - In appreciation. Grant Wood ("Exhibit A").

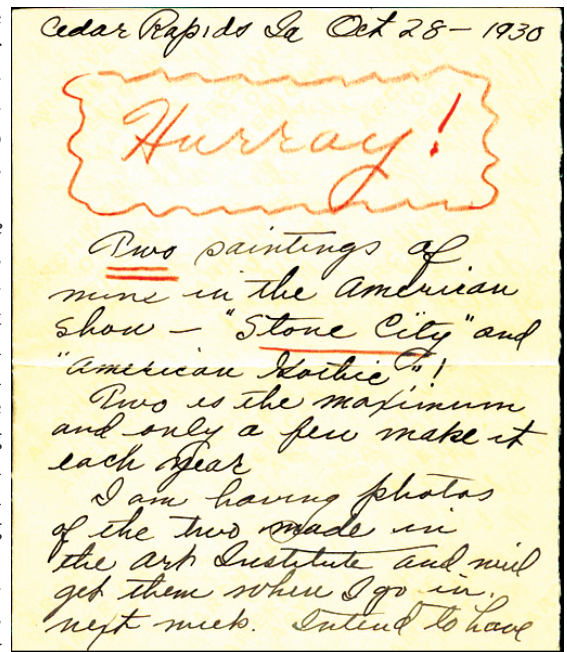
The Stone City Art Colony was situated on an estate in the small town of Stone City, Iowa. The colony was started



Stone City

by Ed Rowan, director of the Little Gallery in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Adrian Dornbush, former director of the Flint Institute of Art and a Little Gallery art instructor, and Grant Wood. It was meant as an alternative for midwest artists to artist colonies in Woodstock and Santa Fe. Residents lived in ice house wagons that they decorated themselves—Grant Wood's wagon being seen on the facing page.

Wood later employed many of the artists at the colony in the Federal Works of Art Program he administered for





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Sincerely,  
Grant Wood

From Grant Wood  
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Adair Rapids, Ia.  
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10¢  
2 CENTS

Mrs Henry Ness  
Ed Hellogg Sup  
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Iowa

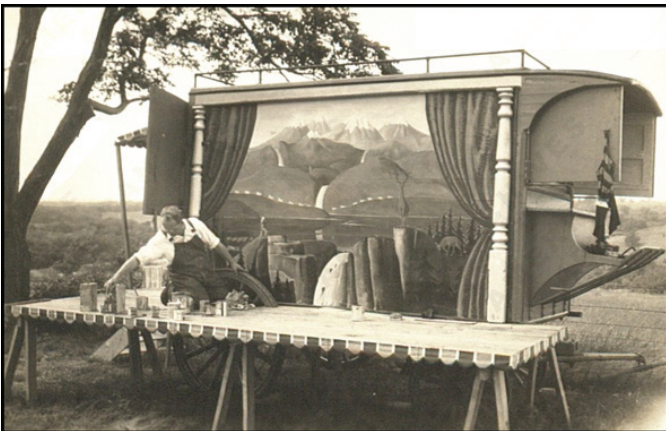
Grant Wood's October 28, 1930 letter to Mrs. Henry Ness and a separate Special Delivery envelope (cancelled Apr. 22 \_\_\_) in which another letter to Mrs. Ness was mailed. From the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art.

Wood's inspiration for American Gothic came from Eldon, southern Iowa, where Wood came upon a cottage designed in the Gothic



Grant Wood in his studio

the state of Iowa, producing a large number of Depression Era murals that still decorate many post offices and public buildings in Iowa.



Grant Wood at the Stone City Art Colony

Revival style with an upper window in the shape of a medieval pointed arch. Wood decided to paint the house along with "the kind of people I fancied should live in that house." The painting shows a farmer standing beside his spinster daughter, figures modeled by Wood's sister, Nan, and his dentist, Dr. Byron McKeeby.