

Clyde Keller (1872-1962)

By Jody Klevit

Painter Clyde Keller, born in Salem on February 22, 1872, showed early signs of artistic talent. By age twelve, he was enrolled in a drawing class at Willamette University under the tutelage of artist Mary Bridges. He would return to the university as a young man to continue his art education under Marie Craig LeGall.

In 1894, Keller followed his mentor Homer Davenport, a well-known cartoonist from Silverton, to San Francisco, where both men worked as cartoonists for the *San Francisco Examiner*. Keller opened an art shop and continued to study and to paint landscapes, seascapes, and portraits. He lost everything in the earthquake of 1906 and decided to return to Oregon to begin again.

Settling in Portland, Keller opened an art and frame shop on Southwest Washington Street, where he taught, painted, exhibited, and held meetings for the short-lived Society of Oregon Artists (1912-1913). He was a founding member of the Oregon Society of Oregon Artists and was the organization's president in 1931.

Keller produced over 450 works of art, received more than 250 awards, and was represented in countless local and national exhibitions. In 1923, he won an award at the Seattle Art Museum Annual Exhibition; the next year, he won an award in an exhibition by the Society of Fine Arts in New York. Keller worked in oil and watercolor, and his subject matter was familiar Oregon scenery. One of his favorite painting locales was Sauvie Island on the Columbia River.

When Keller was eighty-three years old, he presented a painting to his childhood friend, President Herbert Hoover, who had lived in Salem as a boy. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had one of Keller's paintings of Bonneville Dam hanging behind his desk in the White House.

Keller retired to Cannon Beach on the Oregon Coast, where he continued to paint until his death in August 1962.

Sources

Allen, Ginny, and Jody Klevit. *Oregon Painters the First Hundred Years 1859-1959*. Portland, Ore.: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1999.

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