

Charles Courtney Curran (1861-1942)

By Jerry Long



Kentucky Historical Society Historical Highway Marker is in Hartford, Kentucky, Ohio County, KY. It is on the north side of the Ohio County Historical Society Museum at 415 Mulberry Street. Marker was erected On 21 March 1974.



Ohio County Messenger, Beaver Dam, KY, 14 December 1951, p.8:

Century-Old Hartford Residence, Birthplace Of Famous Sons, Is Razed

A two-story frame building—one of the oldest in Hartford and the birthplace of two of the town's famous sons—is being razed to make way for an apartment house.

The house, built almost 100 years ago, is the old "Griffin place," located on E. Union St.

Z. Wayne Griffin, top-flight director-producer for Metro Goldwyn-Mayer film studios in Hollywood, and Charles Courtney Curran, world famous American painter; were born in the rambling structure.

Present owners, of the home are Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Whobrey and the latter's sister, Miss Ora Hagerman, of Columbus, Ohio. The new apartment house will be a two story brick veneer building housing four apartments. The owners will occupy two of them.

John Brown, Hartford carpenter, is directing the razing of the building. He said the building was constructed of native hardwoods—ok and yellow poplar—and much of the wood is in good enough condition to be used in the new building.

Curran, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor Ulysses T. Curran, was born there on Feb. 13, 1861. He was barely six months old when his parents left the house and moved to Indiana, then to Ohio. He studied painting in both the United States and France and later became a member of the Academy of Design. His paintings were hung in art galleries and museums all over the world. He died in Paris, France, in 1942.

Z. Wayne Griffin III, the Hollywood executive, left the house with his mother, Mrs. Beatrice (Athey) Griffin, a brother, T. Larkin and sister, Beatrice. They eventually located in California where they all live now.

Z. Wayne Griffin III, is married to the former Miss Elinor Remick Warren, a composer and concert artist, and the couple have a daughter, Elayne and two sons, James and Z. Wayne IV. They live in the Wilshire district of Los Angeles, Calif.



Ohio County, KY 1860 federal census, town of Hartford – parents of Charles C. Curran:

SCHEDULE 1.—Free Inhabitants in Town of Hartford **in the County of** Ohio
of Kentucky **enumerated by me, on the** 24 **day of** Aug **1860.** R. T. Bell
Post Office Hartford

1	2	3	4			7	8		9	10	11	12	13
			Age	Sex	Color		Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate					
		Charles	12	m						Ky			
1006	1006	Willis G. Davis	43	m		Saddler		110		Ky			
		Mary A	32	f						Ky			
		Thomas O	18	m		Law student				Ky			
		Anna G	14	f						Ky			
		George	13	m						Ky			
		Mary	11	f						Ky			
		M. T. Curran	24	m		School teacher				Ohio			
		Lizzie	25	m						Ohio			



Fogle's Papers: A History of Ohio County, Kentucky, McDowell A. Fogle, Ohio County Historical Society, Hartford, KY, 1981, pp.84-85:

Whether one prosaically regards as merely an odd coincidence or inclines to be a psychic explanation, it is a fact that Hartford's two greatest celebrities in the field of the fine arts were born in the same house, which stood on Union Streets almost opposite the high school until December, 1951, when it was razed, but these nativities were, of course, in cultural eras some half-century apart.

The first of the two embryo artists to see the light of day there was the world-famed painter, Charles Courtney Curran, the other, the home-town boy whom many of us remember as a toddler, now the Hollywood cinema and radio director and producer, Z Wayne Griffin III.

The husky boy born in this old house during the early Civil War days, was the first-born of Ulysses T Curran, who, for a term or two, was a teacher in the Hartford Seminary, successor of the Hartford Academy, which was the first state-sponsored school in Ohio county.

The young teacher and his wife, Elizabeth, resided in the old two-story homestead, which, my generation knew as "the old Griffin place", on the site of which stands today an apartment house belonging to Miss Ora Hagerman and Mrs. Georgia Whobrey.

The young Curran couple had come from their home in Chillicothe, Ohio, to this border state, at the suggestion, it is said, of Dr. Samuel O Peyton, member of Congress from this district, but, unfortunately, at the very time the passions of the sections were about to burst into national armed conflict. It is the Hartford tradition that, as a result of their Northern nativity and sentiments, frequently expressed, their stay here was none too pleasant. Anyway, young Prof. Curran on December 29, 1859 began to teach in the Hartford Seminary and son, Charles Curran, was born here some fourteen months later.

This "Historic Hartford Home" was approximately 98 years old when razed in 1951. The Griffin and Curran families had made it famous. Further details of their interesting history follow.

County clerk's office records show that Godfrey W. Taylor, whose widow, Mrs. Maria Ann Taylor, married Z Wayne Griffin I, bought the property where the vanishing homestead was located, described on the original plat of Hartford as In-lots Nos. 59 and 60, on October 28, 1853, from William J. Eidson and his wife, Lucy H., for the purchase price of \$1,136. Mr. Eidson had bought it the same year for \$60, which conclusively indicates there was no dwelling on the lots when he bought them and that the residence which came to be known as the Griffin homestead was built, sometime in 1853.

Godfrey W. Taylor died in 1860. His widow, Maria Ann, had as tenants in all or a portion of the upstairs of the home left her by Mr. Taylor, Ulysses T. Curran, teacher for nearly two years in the Hartford Academy, and his young wife. There in the afternoon of February 13, 1861, was born to the Currans, a son, Charles Courtney, "in the north room upstairs", according to a letter written a number of years ago by the elder Curran to the late Mrs., Mary Taylor Logan, the contents of which were kindly made known to the writer by Miss Mary Barnett, authority on Ohio county history, now residing in Owensboro.

Due, no doubt, to a mounting wartime tension between them and their Hartford associates, the Currans did not long reside there, leaving in August, 1861, when Charles was only some six

months old. They went first to Lafayette, Indiana, then to Middletown, Ohio, where Prof. Curran taught the next year. The family then moved to Glendale, Hamilton county, a suburb of Cincinnati, where the little lad, Charles Courtney, began school life. The family later moved to Sandusky, Ohio, where the elder Curran was in charge of the school system, at which place Charles Courtney graduated from city schools. He went to Cincinnati Art School for six months where he was encouraged to go to New York to study. There he entered a private studio and soon was able to earn his living painting. He later went to Paris, where he spent two years studying drawing at Academie Julien.

So, after many years of study in this country and France, he became a world famous artist and member of the national Academy of Design, whose paintings hang in art galleries and museums the world over. He died in Paris in November, 1942.



Ohio County Times-News, Hartford, KY, 10 October 1996, p.5A, "Rough River Ripples" column by Dorothy Gentry:

... Charles Courtney Curran studied Art at the Cincinnati School of Design, then became a pupil of the Art Students' League and the National Academy of Design in New York; later studied with Benjamin-Constant and Doucet in Paris.

In 1900, he became a member of the American Arts' Commission at the Paris Exposition and was assistant director of fine arts at the Pan-American Exposition taught at the Pratt Institute and Art Students' League, and was a member of the Society of American Artists and other art associations.

In 1888 his picture, "A breezy day" received the third Hallgarten prize and his "Lotus lilies of Lake Erie" won honorable mention in the Paris salon of 1890.

Among his most important canvases are: "The sirens", "A deep sea fantasy", "The perfume of roses", "Catching minnows" and "The enchanted shore."

We were fortunate to get a negative from a New York Art Gallery of the painting "A breezy day" which was reproduced for the Ohio County Museum and one for the Ohio County Library.



Biography of Charles Courtney Curran – Wikipedia.org

Charles Courtney Curran (13 February 1861 – 9 November 1942) was an American painter.[1] He is best known for his canvases depicting women in various settings.

Curran was born in Hartford, Kentucky in February, 1861,[3] where his father taught at the school. A few months later after the beginning of the Civil War, the family left there and returned to Ohio, eventually settling in Sandusky on the shores of Lake Erie where the elder Curran served as superintendent of schools.

Charles Curran showed an early interest and aptitude for art, and in 1881 went to Cincinnati to study at the McMicken School (later the Fine Arts Academy of Cincinnati). He stayed there only a year before going to New York to study at the National Academy of Design and the Art

Students League. Many of the pictures he created during this period featured young attractive working-class women engaged in a variety of tasks.

One was particularly noteworthy: Breezy Day (1887, collection of Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts) and won the Third Hallgarten Prize for Oils from the NAD in 1888. Shortly thereafter Curran and his young bride Grace left the United States to study in Paris, where their first child Louis was born.

After two and half years abroad, the young family returned to the United States in June, 1891. For the next ten years Curran divided his time between New York where the couple had an apartment and Curran maintained a studio, and Ohio where they had extended family and spent most summers. In 1903 the Currans visited the summer arts colony of Cragmoor for the first time. Located in the scenic Shawangunk Mountains about 100 miles northwest of New York City, the spectacular scenery and native flora inspired Curran to build a summer home there. He died in New York City in 1942.

While in Paris Curran enrolled at the Académie Julian[4] where he began to concentrate on new subject matter and experimented with a variety of painting styles. Many of his pictures from this time were painted outdoors en plein air and features well dressed modern women enjoying a variety of leisure activities. Two pictures from this time spent in the French capital are In the Luxembourg (Garden) (1889, collection of Terra Foundation for American Art) and Afternoon in the Cluny Garden, Paris (1889, collection of The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco). Curran also showed three of his pictures at the Paris Salons.

There Curran often used family members as models when he painted on the shores of Lake Erie, experimenting with a variety of artistic styles including impressionism, symbolism, tonalism and naturalism.

After the Currans visited the summer arts colony of Cragmoor, the couple and their family would summer at Cragmoor for the next forty years, and Curran would create some of his best known paintings in the vicinity. They feature young attractive girls dressed in white or pastel colors posed in brilliant sunshine. Two examples of these pictures are On the Heights (1909, collection of the Brooklyn Museum) and Hilltop Walk (1927, collection of Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska, Lincoln). Although Curran continued to paint until shortly before his death, he never accepted or practiced newer artistic styles that emerged in the U.S. after World War I. He remained active with a number of arts organizations, especially the National Academy of Design where he served as secretary for fifteen years. He also became a successful portrait artist after 1920. In addition, Curran and his wife were avid travelers, visiting Europe at least five times and even mainland China in 1936.

Charles Curran's work is represented in numerous museum collections, and his outdoor paintings of youthful women have remained popular with individual collectors. It has been estimated that he produced more than 1500 pictures during his career. Besides oil paintings, these include watercolors and numerous illustrations for magazines in both color and black and white. Works by the artist may be found at the Art Institute of Chicago, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Flint Institute of Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Richmond Art Museum, and at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 29 December 1904, p.5:

OHIO COUNTY.
Charles C. Curran, who was born in Hartford, recently took the famous Carnegie prize in New York on a fine painting, called "At the Piano."



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 10 October 1923, p.10:

Hartford Native Is Famous Artist

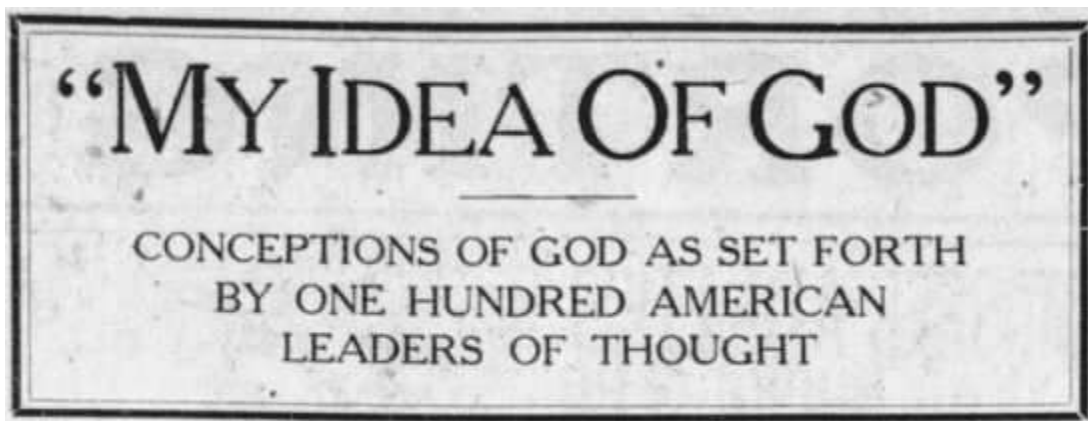
National Picture Week is being observed informally in all the city school with short talks on great artists and pictures each day and the local observance will culminate with an exhibit of selected color prints to be held by the Woman's Club at the Chamber of Commerce Friday and Saturday.

Among the artists to be represented will be Charles Courtney Curran, one of Kentucky's greatest artists, who has won for himself national and international fame.

Charles Courtney Curran was born in Hartford, Ohio county, in 1861, and at present is living in New York City. He received his art training at Cincinnati, afterwards going to Paris where in 1900 he was appointed a member of the American Arts commission at the Paris Exposition. He was assistant director of fine arts at the Pan American exposition. His "Lotus Lillies on Lake Erie" received honorable mention at the Paris Salon in 1890 and "Breezy Day," third prize at the Paris exposition in 1900. Curran is a painter of landscape, figure, genre and outdoor life, and imaginative scenes depicting fairy land.



Lexington Leader, Lexington, KY, 11 May 1924, p.5A:



BY CHARLES C. CURRAN, N. A.

ARTIST

I cannot think of the Universe, as far as it is known to Man, without a certainty that some great power, too great for the mind to understand, must have planned and created it. Such a world must have been created by a Spirit of utter Goodness and Love and Wisdom. I gave up long ago efforts to conceive of what God is like—My wish is that he should look like a man.

I cannot form an idea of what the life principle is. It seems to me to be beyond the power of Man to ever understand—just as time and space are impossible of conception—and yet must be.

I cannot understand how any human being intelligent enough to appreciate the wonders of the Universe—as far as Man's wisdom goes can escape a profound belief and trust in God.



Charles Courtney Curran (1861-1941)



Courier-Journal, Louisville, KY, 11 November 1942, p.9A:

Noted Artist, Native Of Kentucky, Dies

New York, Nov. 10 (AP)—Charles Courtney Curran, 81, American artist whose works hang in museums, universities and libraries throughout the Nation and who for more than twenty years was an officer of the National Academy of Design, died yesterday. He was born in Hartford, Ky.



A Breezy Day – 1887



On The Heights – 1909



Ladies on a Hill – 1914



Peonies – 1915



Conversation by the River – 1928