JOHN STEUART CURRY

Artist of Rural Life

EARLY LIFE

John Steuart Curry was born in 1897 on a farm near Dunavant, Kansas, the eldest son of an educated family of Scotch Covenanters which had originally emigrated from South Carolina. With the exception of a winter in Arizona at the age of eleven Curry’s youth was spent on the family farm in Kansas; he went to high school at Winchester, became a star halfback on the football team, a consistent ten-second performer in the hundred-yard dash and equally outstanding in other track events. At the end of his junior year he left school to study art, first at the Kansas City Art Institute, then at the Chicago Art Institute under Timmons and John Norton, where for two years he managed to support himself meagerly by washing dishes and doing odd jobs wherever he could.

As a special student in 1918 he joined his brother at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, more, it seems, for the sake of playing football than anything else, and remained there until the end of the football season the following year. He then set out in earnest on an artistic career. At Tenafly, New Jersey, he worked with Harvey Dunn, the well-known Saturday Evening Post illustrator, and from that time until as late as 1925 Curry made a good living as an illustrator, being particularly adept at the lusty blood-and-thunder scenes for the Western thrillers of popular story magazines. In 1923 he married and as a successful artist moved first to New York then to Westport, where he established a permanent studio of his own.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

As an illustrator, however, Curry soon encountered difficulties. He did not always adhere to the traditional type of ruddy hero or