Paintings by Kingman Exhibited at Art Club

"The Providence Sunday Journal" 1/25/52

By BRADFORD F. SWAN

EUGENE KINGMAN, a New England native and a frequent sojourner in these parts although now working and teaching in Nebraska, is having an exhibition of his recent paintings at the Providence Art Club, 11 Thomas Street, through Feb. 1.

Despite his heritage and background Kingman seems to have moved completely under the sway of the wide, rolling prairie country on the Nebraska farmlands, allowing the land and the turn of the seasons to inspire his art, and producing large, handsome paintings which go a long way to revive the validity of the one-pre-eminent Midwest school of American painting.

This school, which had its finest culmination in John Steuart Curry, has lost its vogue in recent years, in one of those inexplicable shifts which occur in art. The probable cause of the shift was the declining vogue for nationalism, to say nothing of the frenetic times in which we have been living.

Perhaps now is as good a time as any to re-examine the national scene, to seek out its formal beauties and build them into pictures which can give us a sense of the majesty and power of our land.

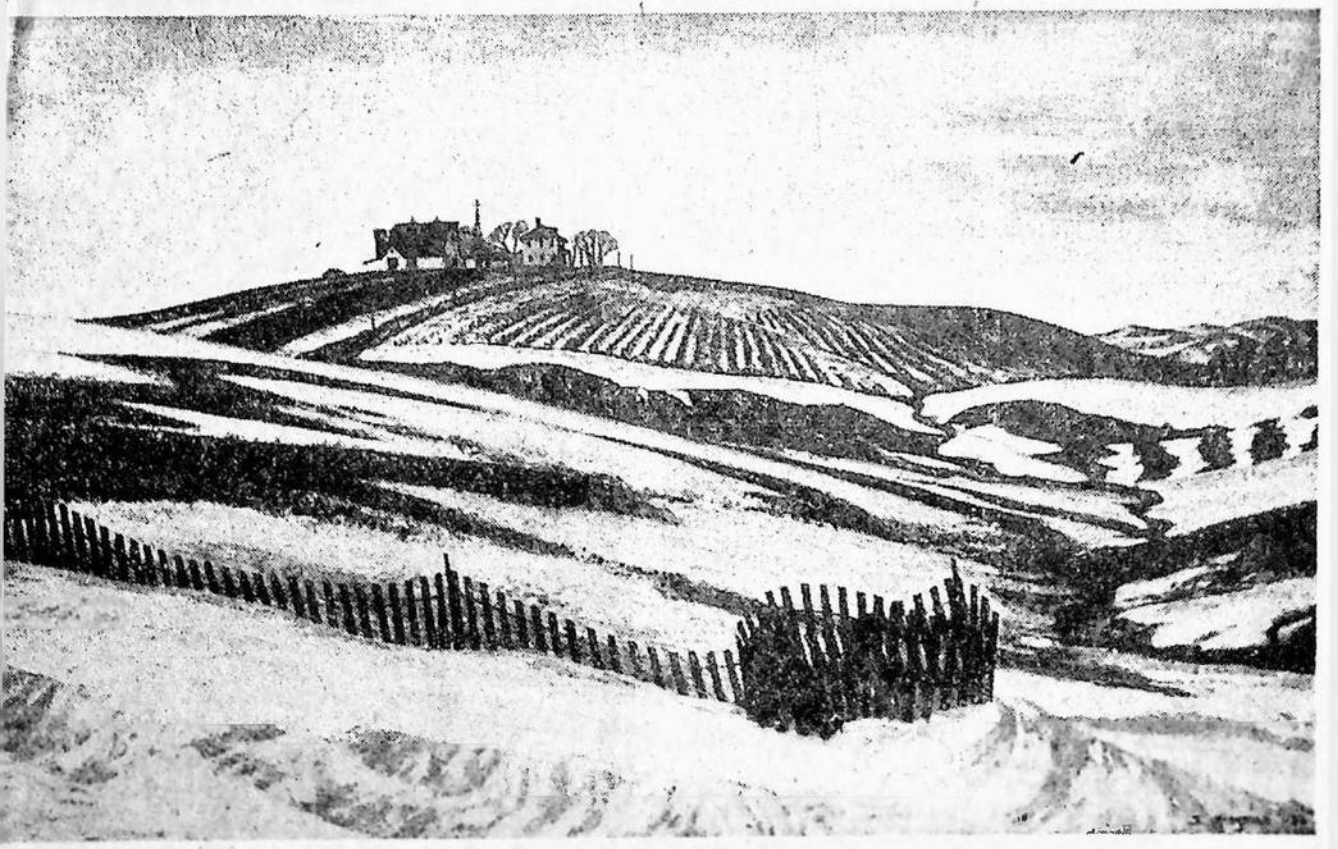
This I feel Kingman often succeeds in doing in these canvases. Some of them are less successful than others, but when they are good these pictures convey a simple elemental quality, the broad panorama of the land itself, and do it in a manner which should bring esthetic satisfaction to the beholder.

Kingman isn't always lyrical about his farmlands. Sometimes he depicts them in a raw and elemental mood—as in the weirdly lighted but strongly patterned "Melting Snows, No. 2," a picture of real merit both in its larger conception and in the painting of its details.

And he can use the simple farmhouse and barn forms to construct a canvas almost abstract in its feeling. No better example could be offered than "Two Sheds," one of a series of pictures painted around the Mt. Monadnock country of New Hampshire.

The artist has an interest in the American scene, but not in the merely picturesque. He carefully eschews the latter. His one weakness in the primary selection of subject matter is a tendency to take in more depth than the canvas can handle, with the result that, to maintain perspective, relatively small objects occupying the foreground have to be made gigantic, and one gets a feeling of a farm-belt poster rather than a work of art.

Fortunately this doesn't occur often, and in the big, sweeping views, the long looks across rolling country, the artist does capture the majestic power of the fertile land, the great mass of the towering grain elevator, the endless ribbon of the long highway.



Melting Snows, No. 2' by Eugene Kingman is in the exhibition of his paintings at the Providence Art Club here through Feb. 1.

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