

*LeConte Stewart Masterworks* is a comprehensive monograph highlighting the artist's eighty-year career. This long-awaited volume includes more than 300 paintings, many never before seen or brought together in one work, and will introduce Stewart's work into the national conversation on both Regionalist and American Scene art.

This volume includes essays on LeConte Stewart's life and work by Mary Muir, Donna Poulton, Robert Davis, James Poulton, and Vern Swanson. It also features an introduction by noted American art scholar, curator, and collector William Gerdts.

Mary Muir is one of the foremost authorities on LeConte Stewart and his work, and the author of *LeConte Stewart: The Education of the Artist and the Artist-Educator*.

Donna Poulton, Ph.D., is a curator of the art of Utah and the West at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts.

Robert Davis is curator of art for the LDS Church History Museum in Salt Lake City.

James Poulton, Ph.D., is a psychologist in private practice in Salt Lake City and a faculty member of the International Psychotherapy Institute.

Vern Swanson, Ph.D., is director of the Springfield Museum of Art in Utah.

William Gerdts, Ph.D., is the author of more than twenty-five books on American art and an expert on American Impressionism.

Art/Regional



LECONTE STEWART  
MASTERWORKS

# LECONTE STEWART MASTERWORKS

MARY MUIR, DONNA POULTON, ROBERT DAVIS,  
JAMES POULTON, AND VERN SWANSON

MUIR • POULTON • DAVIS • POULTON • SWANSON



GIBBS  
SMITH

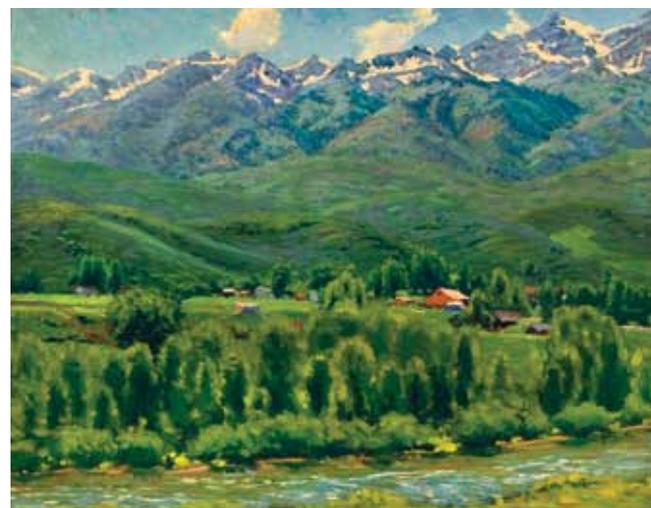
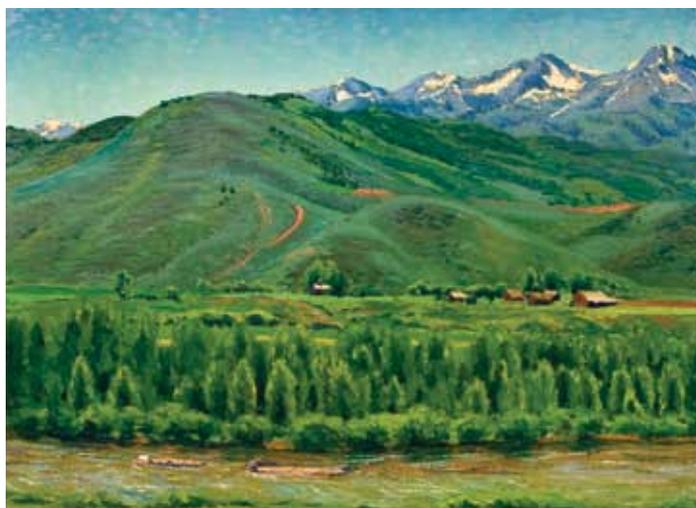
## LECONTE STEWART MASTERWORKS

MARY MUIR, DONNA POULTON, ROBERT DAVIS,  
JAMES POULTON, AND VERN SWANSON

LeConte Stewart (1891-1990) spent much of his early life in the shadows of the iconic natural splendors of southern Utah. But it was small-town life, notably in Kaysville, Utah, and the surrounding farms and urban landscapes of Davis County, that captured his imagination. Stewart created images of Utah and the West, at once epic and intimate. Though he studied with a number of important American artists, he internalized the technique and philosophy of John Carlson. He later passed this on to his students while he was chair of the Art Department at the University of Utah. Stewart was highly regarded by the art community and cultivated enduring friendships with some of the greats of the time, including Maynard Dixon. Wallace Stegner likened Stewart's Depression-era work to that of Edward Hopper, whom LeConte acknowledged as an important influence.

## Contents

5	Foreword by Gibbs Smith
8	Introduction by William H. Gerdts
11	The Education of LeConte Stewart by Mary M. Muir
15	LeConte Stewart: The Soul of Rural Utah by Robert O. Davis
20	Looking Inward: LeConte Stewart's Depression-era Art by Donna L. Poulton
26	Creative Vision: The Imaged World of LeConte Stewart by James L. Poulton
31	LeConte Stewart in Perspective: The Painter of "Ordinary Places" by Vern Grosvenor Swanson
46	One / The Loveliest of Harmonies
61	Two / The Atmospheric Envelope
74	Three / The Mystery of the Desert
89	Four / I Stand in Awe and Reverence
104	Five / Nothing More Interesting Than Life
119	Six / Hard-Mouthed Integrity
135	Seven / Very Ordinary Matters
153	Eight / The Painter Must Care
168	Nine / Postmaster General
182	Ten / Such a Beautiful Spot
197	Eleven / I Love Barns
213	Twelve / A Far More Exquisite Use of Color
228	Bibliography
232	Index





*Main Street, Salt Lake City*  
1922, oil on canvas, 9 x 12 inches  
Collection of Spence and Cleone Eccles

**EVERYTHING THAT I PAINT HAS AN ABSTRACT DESIGN. . . . IN THAT SENSE IT IS ANOTHER UNDERCOAT OF STUDY. I FIRMLY BELIEVE IN THAT, AND EVERYTHING THAT I DO HAS A DESIGN—A PATTERN OF SPOTS, SPACES, AREAS OF DARK AND LIGHT, AND COLORS . . . EVERY PICTURE SHOULD HAVE THAT. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT, BUT IN ITSELF, IF YOU LEAVE IT . . . AS AN ABSTRACTION, I'VE GOT NO USE FOR IT.** - LeConte Stewart



*In November*  
c. 1922, oil, 20 x 24 inches  
Private Collection

# The Education of LeConte Stewart

Mary Muir

## RICHFIELD, UTAH, 1893–1917

LeConte Stewart's art education began while he was a young student attending Richfield Elementary School in Richfield, Utah. With the conclusion of classwork each day, he would hurry home to collect paper and pencil, and then dash to the banks of Spring Ditch. In seclusion, seated on a clump of dry grass, he practiced sketching directly from nature while observing the shapes and structures of willows, bull berry, and wild currant bushes. With each visit, he meticulously observed nature's changes during the day and with each season.

A no-nonsense attitude dominated the small, struggling community during LeConte's childhood. At that time, the fine arts were not understood and pursuit of a professional art career was openly derided. While few understood LeConte's interest in drawing, his teacher Sophia Golbranson recognized his unique ability and encouraged him. On special occasions, she urged him to draw on the blackboard with colored chalk for the class. "It was an exciting and new experience for me," LeConte recalled. From her quiet reassurance he knew it was right to keep working at his art, despite the fact that other teachers and the school principal ignored his skill<sup>1</sup> and, he noted, "There was really nothing in Richfield to inspire a young artist."<sup>2</sup> During the dry summer and winter months, endless miles of gray sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and greasewood dotted the ashen valley floor and surrounding hills (1929, plate 452). "The Richfield landscape created a negative impression on me until my father took me with him in his one-horse buggy to neighboring villages throughout Sevier County.<sup>3</sup> LeConte's father, Isaac, was a lawyer who traveled within the district to visit his clients. It was a new experience for LeConte, and upon approaching one town he observed a little house, a cottage hidden by trees, and he remembered being intrigued and moved by the scene. Throughout his travels he saw barns and rustic cattle sheds, some maintained with pride and others unkempt through neglect or hard times. LeConte absorbed the images from his childhood, the blue-green sagebrush spreading over plains and hills, and that house nestled in the trees. With these memories he experienced a peculiar isolation, an indescribable loneliness, "which all my life I have yearned to put down in paint."<sup>4</sup> Contributing to the loneliness that young LeConte experienced was a devastating series of deaths within his family: his mother, Anna, and her new baby girl, as well as other younger brothers and sisters of his. Various children's diseases as well as accidents were ever-present.<sup>5</sup>

## REXBURG, IDAHO, 1907–1911

In 1907, LeConte's father and his new wife moved to Rexburg, Idaho. LeConte joined them after he graduated from elementary school. There he attended Ricks Academy, a four-year high school, where he experienced recognition and confirmation of his artistic abilities (fig. 336). He was staff artist for the monthly magazine, *Student Rays*, and eventually became the art editor (figs. 319, 320). He was disappointed in the art classes, however, evaluating them as just "kids stuff" and of no significance to his art education. But art did remain the dominant focus of his interests and life.<sup>6</sup>

**Top (fig. 336):** *LeConte Stewart, Student Rays staff, Ricks Academy, Rexburg, Idaho, c. 1910. LeConte Stewart standing far left. Image courtesy of Mary Stewart. Below (figs. 319, 320): Student Rays cover and section art.*

