

MINNESOTA ARTISTS appear to be unusually adept at conveying the stark reality and raw beauty of winter. A search of the Minnesota Historical Society’s visual resources database reveals more than 125 works of art on the topic of winter. A similar search on “autumn,” for example, produces a list just half that size. So it’s safe to say that Minnesota artists know winter!

While regular folks may only see the harsh sameness of the season, visual artists see opportunity. Artist Charles Beck described it this way: “Winter reveals the landscape’s contours and infrastructure . . . its bones.” The season’s low sunsets and raking light create deep shadows in shades of grays, blues, and purples that are a source of inspiration for artists. Against this monochromatic backdrop, rare colors appear richer, deeper, and are certainly more appreciated by observers.

Two painters in the MHS art collection excel at winter painting. Frederick W. Bock (1876–1958) was born in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and moved to St. Paul in 1900 to launch a career as a commercial artist and illustrator. Henry Holmstrom (1900–81) was a Swedish immigrant who studied at the Minneapolis School of Art and at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Not as well known as some of their peers, both artists produced numerous paintings on the subject of winter, several of which MHS now owns.

I am grateful to them and other artists who’ve braved the elements and made the effort to capture the subtle beauty of Minnesota’s winters.

—*Brian Szott, curator of art*

To view more images of winter from the art collection at MHS, go to <http://discussions.mnhs.org/collections/2010/11/the-color-of-winter/>.



Henry Holmstrom, *Zero Morning*, oil, about 1940



Frederick W. Bock, *A Wintry Day*, gouache, about 1925



About the Cover

Lady Justice wields her scales and sword atop the Jackson County Courthouse in southwestern Minnesota. In September 1933 that stately hilltop building witnessed the first of two trials that would convict three petty criminals for the bold, daytime robbery of the First State Bank of Okabena. But did Lady Justice blink? For evidence that the era’s most notorious bank robbers pulled off the Okabena job, see the article beginning on page 124. Courthouse photo © Doug Ohman; details from mug shots (top to bottom) of Tony, Floyd, and Mildred Strain courtesy State Archives of South Dakota State Historical Society.



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