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Minerva Painting

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"Minerva Painting"

Legend

Informant:

Sid Thornton is my father. He was born in American Falls, Idaho then was raised in McCall. He would build houses in the summer for work. He was brilliant in school and was accepted to study at BYU. He studied mechanical engineering and then moved to Arizona to build satellites for a space program. He met my mother and they moved to Utah so he could receive his master's in mechanical engineering and his PhD in biomedical engineering. They bought houses and flipped them for a profit while they were raising five children. He began working for Intermountain Health Care in their medical informatics field. His personality is reserved and altruistic. He enjoys gardening, playing the piano and organ, and working on puzzles.

Context:

My father had told this story to me once before. But not many of the younger people in the family know about it. When he told me this legend for the interview, we were on the phone. He was at his house in Salt Lake and I was at mine in Logan. Minerva Teichert is a very distinguished and famous painter from Utah. She grew up in Idaho and that is where she lived next to my ancestors. My parents have many prints of her work. One of their neighbors in Salt Lake is a very wealthy real estate developer, and he has a whole collection of many of her original pieces. I have seen them myself and he is very proud.

Text:

Before there was the reservoir there was just the snake river and there were homesteads and farms.

[Me: And, where are we?] We are in Aberdeen, Idaho. And so, um Liberty Independence and Sarah Janette Weaver [my ancestors] had the farm land that was right next to the Teichert's. [pause] And you know, they were neighbors for I don't know how many years, and then Minerva was you know doing, she would do her paintings for payment, you know to pay for a dentist or to pay a medical bill or whatever, she would barter with her paintings [Me: Did she have notoriety at that point?]. Um, everyone knew that she had studied in France, so she was you know, she was known as a painter, but

she wasn't, her reputation was just local, and there were no local art critics, so everyone just trusted her is the way I take it. But anyway, when the civil conservation core, no it was probably before then, when they came in and built the dam to make the American Falls reservoir, um there farmland was flooded so the Teichert's had to you know, they were compensated for their land, Liberty Independence moved further down the river to Lake Channel, and Minerva Teichert went to Cokeville, or Coalville, Coalville I guess [actually Cokeville] um up in Wyoming um but so when they were making their preparation to move and you know they had to settle all their stuff and they were sitting around, let's see, Liberty was sitting at the dining table of the Teichert family and they were talking and he said something like, "well you know, everyone thinks you're such a hot artist but you have never drawn me" and she says, "well I'll solve that" and so she cleared away the plated and got out her paints or whatever she was using and just did the self portrait right there [Me: On the tablecloth.] On the tablecloth and said, "Here, take this" because it was just a cotton tablecloth. Then of course they framed it and whatever. Well it hung for, it was given then to my grandma, which is Connie, she got it and it hung in her house for a long time, like all the time I was growing up and then when they um when grandma died you know all of the artwork, all of grandpa's carvings, all of that stuff was sorted out or whatever and the painting went missing [pause] and it showed up in, one of the other cousins came and absconded with it so that would have been one of the nieces and um then it just disappeared, but then it showed up on family search, a picture of it, so it is still around but nobody knows exactly where it was. [pause] It wasn't a big deal, but in the time that- in the 30 years, the 40 years that grandma has, since her death, Minerva Teichert has become so famous I mean the portrait is worth quite a bit now. Everyone wants a share in it now that it's famous.

Texture:

My father was speaking with very deliberate sentences. One could hear the punctuation after each phrase. He was not emotional or passionate. However, he did seem to have pride in his ancestors and contempt for his relatives. His attitude expressed annoyance at his cousins for what happened. The way he told the story, conveyed his belief that this legend actually occurred.

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