

ABOUT THE ARTIST

LeConte Stewart was born 15 April 1891 in Glenwood, Utah. After schooling at Ricks Academy in Rexburg, Idaho, he studied art in Salt Lake City in 1912, and with the Art Students League in Woodstock, New York, and New York City in 1913–14. While on a mission in Hawaii in 1917–19, he was assigned to paint murals and decorative detail for the temple in Laie. He married Zipporah Layton while in Hawaii, and taught school and proselyted as well. In 1920–22, he painted murals in the Cardston Alberta temple, and returned to settle in Kaysville, Utah, in 1923. He was head of the Ogden High School art department from 1923–38, and from 1938–56 was chairman of the University of Utah Art Department.

Stewart taught in elementary schools, high schools, and at the University of Utah, and after retiring in 1956 continued to teach, both with the University and privately in Davis County. His on-site landscape painting classes continued through the mid-1980s, and he worked actively in painting and drawing the landscapes of rural northern Utah to the age of ninety-five. Stewart's failing health has recently forced him to retire from painting, and at present he resides in a health care center in Clearfield, Utah.

In an essay accompanying a 1985 retrospective exhibit at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City (published in *LeConte Stewart: The Spirit of Landscape*, Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), Robert O. Davis wrote of Stewart's work:

Nature and landscape, God and religion, art and creative activity are all part of the same truth for Stewart. As an artist, he has attempted to portray both the surface appearance of things as well as the inner character of the subject. He does not mechanically copy nature as it would be seen through the lens of a camera. He simplifies and selects detail that brings out the essence of things through a kind of visual poetry. A secret of Stewart's method is to render on canvas not what the eye actually sees — all the small details — but to record the way the mind understands and feels the subject (p. 32).

Stewart's drawings, prints, paintings, and commercial illustrations have almost exclusively centered on Utah landscapes — the images of "Mormon country." Working in desert and mountain scenes, urban landscapes, or in the farm scenes that dominated his work after the 1940s, Stewart has recorded a cultural heritage:

The harmony between nature and the farmer supporting himself from the earth has the deep respect of LeConte Stewart. He supports the rich cultural and aesthetic legacy left by the Mormon pioneers and those who followed. The picturesque farms and honest homes, the fine civic buildings, and the beautiful Mormon chapels and tabernacles from the nineteenth century all exhibit a unique regional style and high level of craftsmanship. He sees in these structures the finest physical expression of the Latter-day Saint people (p. 22).