Why is John Steuart Curry a Notable Kansan?

I have my own ideas about telling the story of pioneers coming into Kansas. I want to paint this war with nature and I want to paint the things I feel as a native Kansan.

—John Steuart Curry


John Steuart Curry at his easel.

Curry’s murals in the Kansas State Capitol depict much of the history of Kansas.
This mural, *Tragic Prelude*, added to the ongoing controversy over Curry’s Capitol murals. However, it has become an iconic image of turbulent days in Kansas.

_I sincerely believe that in the fragments, particularly the panel of John Brown, I have accomplished the greatest paintings I have yet done, and that they will stand as historical monuments. To the Mural Commission and to the children who donated their pennies, as well as to all others who have believed in me, I wish to express my appreciation and to assure you that I have done the best I could with the space at my command._

—John Steuart Curry


Topeka Daily Capital, August 30, 1946

*Kansas’ Famed John Steuart Curry Is Dead*

*Heart Attack Claims Life of Nationally-Known State Artist*

John Steuart Curry, 48, artist in residence at the University of Wisconsin, died yesterday of a heart attack in Madison, Wis. A Kansan, he was considered the state’s outstanding native artist.

. . . Thousands of Kansas school children contributed approximately $8,000 in pennies, nickels, and dimes to get the project under way in 1940. An additional $2,000 was appropriated by the 1941 Legislature for their completion.

. . . When the $2,000 appropriation was needed for completion of the murals, several Senators and Representatives complained that Curry’s work was not art and did not portray Kansas scenes. . .