

*Pieces of Iowa's Past*, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the legislative session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All historical publications are reproduced here with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

## **THIS WEEK: Famous Artist Paints Portrait of Iowa State Capitol**

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **Henry Koerner, 1915-1991**

Koerner, a prolific painter, was considered a master of Magic Realism. His works are in the permanent collections of several museums, among them the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

Koerner moved to the United States in 1938, starting out in Brooklyn as a commercial artist. Throughout much of World War II, he designed posters for the Office of War Information and the Office of Strategic Services. His poster "Someone Talked" won an award from the Museum of Modern Art. He was sent to Germany after the victory in Europe to sketch the Nuremberg trials for the American Military Government.

Koerner visited Vienna and learned that his mother, father and brother had died in a concentration camp. Among his paintings was a memorial portrait, "My Parents," showing his mother and father, backs to the viewer, as lonely figures on separate paths in the Vienna Woods.

In 1952, Koerner moved to Pittsburgh. He taught at Chatham College and the Art Institute of Pittsburgh.



**Henry Koerner**

*Photo: George Silk.  
Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images*

# **“Capitol Scenes Intrigue Artist”**

By George Shane

***Des Moines Register***

January 7, 1952

Iowa's state capitol is the “most beautiful in America” in the opinion of Henry Koerner, noted American artist, who thinks so much of the statehouse that he spent all day Sunday painting a picture of it.

Koerner stopped in Des Moines over the week end. He is headed westward from his home in Brooklyn, N.Y., on a transcontinental tour to paint a series of pictures to be called “Winter Journey.”

He has been commissioned to make the trip by a magazine.

## **“Only Paintable One.”**

“This is the only state capitol I want to paint,” Koerner said. “It is the only paintable one I’ve seen; the only charming one.”

## **“It is beautiful, the way it builds itself up over the city.”**

Koerner first saw the Iowa capitol when he stopped in Des Moines last February and made a drawing of the city, with the capitol the center of interest. The drawing was purchased by the Des Moines Art center for its permanent collection.

## **Called “Nation’s Ugliest.”**

When Koerner praised the appearance of the capitol, he was informed that it has been called in the past “the nation’s ugliest” statehouse.

This did not alter his opinion.

## **Iowa’s capitol, he said, has about it a “porcelain charm” that he likes.**

“All the other capitols look about the same. They try to imitate the Baroque or the classical styles. But this one has some warmth to it. I like the gold dome. I find the capitol at Washington, D.C., only boring.

“No others have the charm of the Iowa state capitol.”

## **15 Paintings.**

Koerner’s “Winter Journey” pictures will total 15 oil paintings.

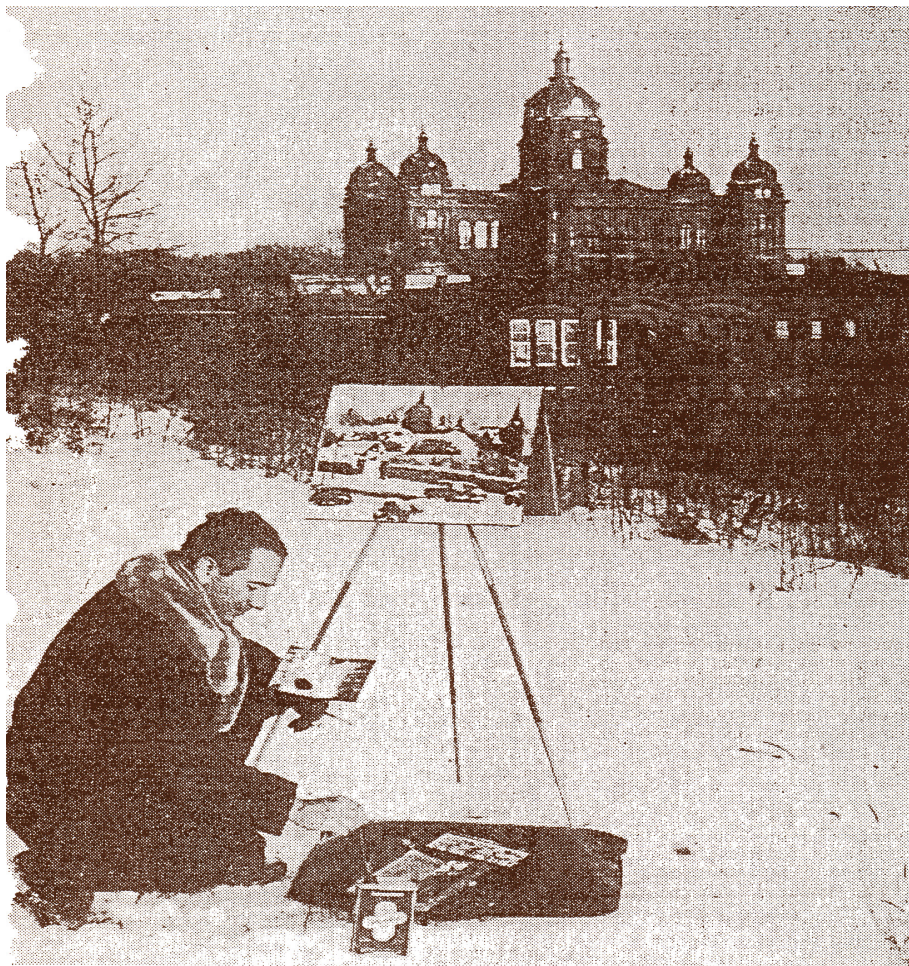
He is making preliminary sketches in water color, and his subjects will range from New York, N.Y. to Los Angeles, Cal.

Koerner's work is represented in numerous museum collections. One of his more widely known pictures, "Vanity Fair," is in the Whitney museum of New York.

A native of Vienna, Austria, Koerner has lived in America since 1939. He served with the American army in Europe during World War II.

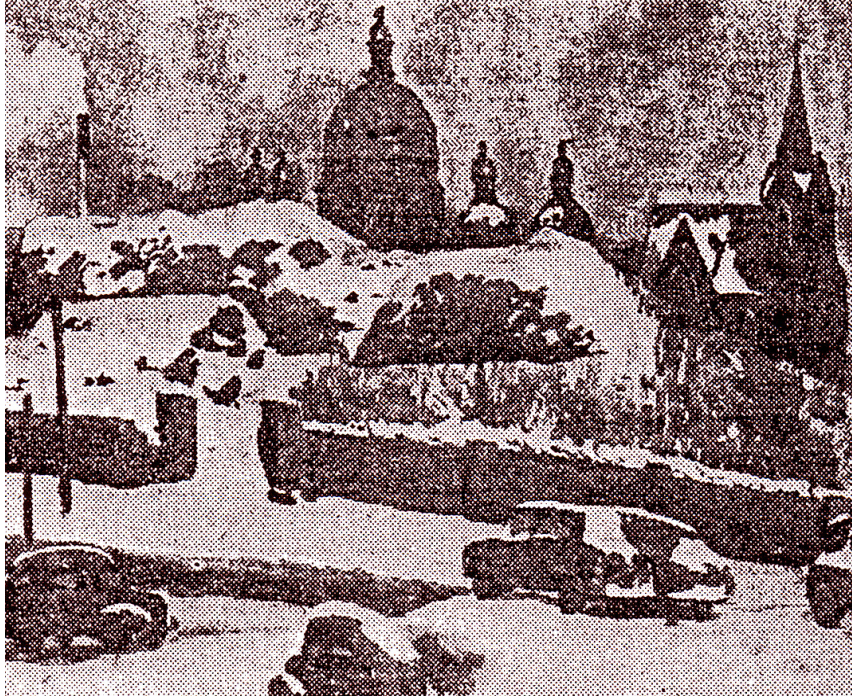
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## **Paints Statehouse Despite Snow and Cold**



Henry Koerner, one of America's most widely known artists, spent Sunday painting water colors of the Iowa state capitol. Here he is shown as he completed a view from Sixth Avenue East and Des Moines street. His other view was painted from E. Fourth and Walnut streets. These paintings are part of a series, "Winter Journey," depicting a trans-continental pictorial trip of America.





Here is a close-up of one of Koerner's watercolors of the Iowa state capitol. This view of the capitol is from Sixth Avenue East and Des Moines street.