

March 31, 1941

Dear Mrs. Sudduth:

Thanks for your very kind letter, and please forgive my delay in replying. I have just returned from a long lecture trip in the East.

I enjoyed your reactions to "American Gothic" very much. The persons in the painting, as I imagined them, are small town folks, rather than farmers. Papa runs the local bank or perhaps the lumber yard. He is prominent in the church and possibly preaches occasionally. In the evening, he comes home from work, takes off his collar, slips on overalls and an old coat, and goes out to the barn to hay the cow. The prim lady with him is his grown-up daughter. Needless to say, she is very self-righteous like her father. I let the lock of hair escape to show that she was, after all, human.

These particulars, of course, don't really matter. What does matter is whether or not these faces are true to American life and reveal something about it. It seemed to me that there was a significant relationship between the people and the false Gothic house with its ecclesiastical window.

Incidentally, I did not intend this painting as a satire. I endeavored to paint these people as they existed for me in the life I knew. It seems to me that they are basically solid and good people. But I don't feel that one gets at this better by denying their faults and fanaticism.

In general, I have found, the people who resent the painting are those who feel that they themselves resemble the portrayals.

Thanks for urging me to come out to the West. I have been out there a few times and admire the country. But the mountains are not for me. This Midwestern farm country is in my blood. By build and by disposition, I am a prairie schooner.

It was an additional thoughtful gesture for you to enclose the spray of sage brush. I have enjoyed sniffing it.

With appreciation and best regards,

Sincerely,

Grant Wood

Mrs. Nellie S. Sudduth
King Hill
Idaho