

James Earle Fraser

Sculptor (1876–1953)

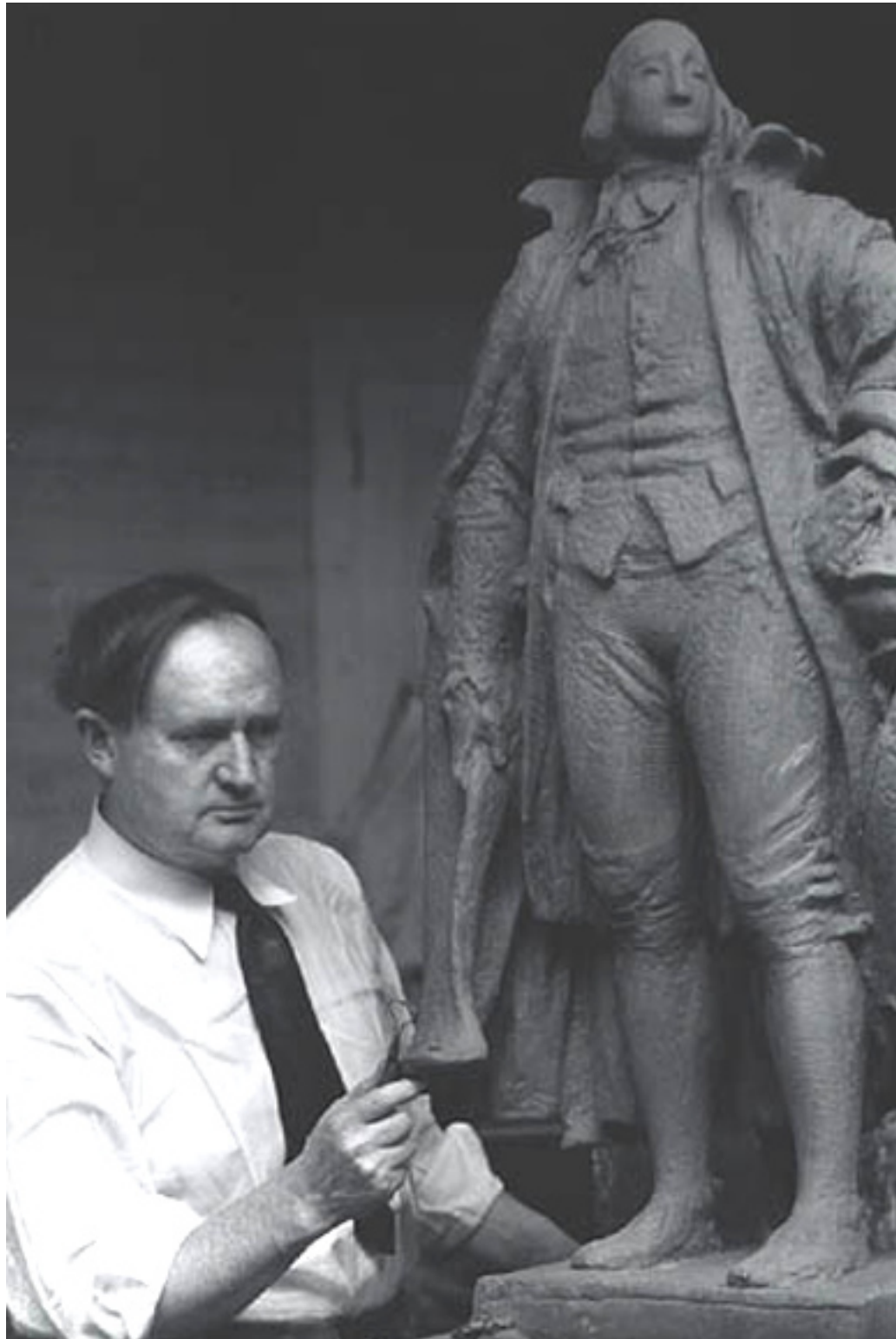


Photo by Peter A. Juley & Son



Frieze by Fraser is on Supreme Court Building in Washington.

James Earle Fraser at work on model for ALBERT GALLATIN

Fraser was born in Winona, Minnesota where he was exposed to the frontier life and to Native Americans, and these early memories were expressed in many of his works.

He began working as an assistant to sculptor Richard Bock and attending classes at the Art Institute of Chicago at age 14. Fraser arrived at a time when he could participate in much artistic work associated with Chicago's Columbian Exposition. In 1895, Bock helped him gain admission to the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris where his work soon came to the attention of AUGUSTUS SAINT GAUDENS, who hired Fraser.

When Fraser set up his own studio in New York in 1902 Saint Gauden's effect on his work was profound, and much of his early sculptures were bas-relief portraits. Fraser developed a reputation as a numismatist, creating his best-known work—the Indian Head or “Buffalo” nickel—in 1913. That year Fraser married a former student of his, sculptor Laura Gardin Fraser, who remained his partner for the rest of his life.

Fraser had several pieces in the Armory Show of 1913, and in 1915 he produced his most recognized work, the expressive *End of the Trail*. Over five million were struck of Fraser's Victory Medal, produced in 1919 to commemorate the end of World War I. But soon Fraser's attention turned to larger works, public monuments and architectural sculpture. His last major installation was *The Peaceful Arts* for the Arlington Memorial Bridge in Washington D.C.

Fraser was proposed for the Century in 1918 by fellow sculptor ALEXANDER S. CALDER, and he remained a member until his death in 1953. Muralist BARRY FAULKNER, a friend of Fraser's from their days in Paris together, said of him: “His character was like a good piece of Scotch tweed, handsome, durable and warm.”