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### "Lecture on Birger Sandzén, Famed Kansas Artist and Educator"

Larry Griffis

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# Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture Seventh Annual - October 5, 2004

**"Lecture on Birger Sandzén, Famed Kansas Artist and Educator"**

*Larry Griffis, speaker*

*McCray Hall Auditorium*

*7:00 p.m.*

On October 5, 2004, Mr. Larry Griffis, Director of the [Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery](#) in Lindsborg, Kansas will present the 7th Annual Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture in McCray Hall Auditorium, on the campus of Pittsburg State University, at 7 PM. The lecture will deal with the life and works of the Swedish American artist Birger Sandzén. Birger Sandzén's landscapes, titled Autumn Symphony and Wild Horse Creek, decorate the entrance foyer of McCray Hall. A brief reception will follow the lecture.

Birger Sandzén was born in Blidsberg, Sweden on February 5, 1871. He immigrated to Lindsborg, Kansas at the age of 23 to teach at Bethany College. He taught French, Swedish, German and Spanish until 1899 when he became the principal art instructor at Bethany. A true Renaissance man, he was the tenor soloist with the Bethany Oratorio Society (1896-1901 and 1903-1905) and gave many recitals with his wife, Alfrida Leksell Sandzén, a talented pianist. Sandzén was an accomplished writer as well, contributing articles and folktales to Swedish-American newspapers for many years. As a professional artist, Sandzén produced oils, watercolors, and prints which now hang in homes, schools and galleries throughout the United States. In the early twenties and thirties he exhibited extensively, including two exhibitions at the Babcock Galleries in New York. In addition to his Kansas landscapes, he is famous for his paintings of the Rocky Mountains, Colorado, Utah and the Southwest. Birger Sandzén died in Lindsborg, Kansas on June 19, 1954.

Mr. Larry Griffis became aware of the art and life of Birger Sandzén while attending Bethany College in the early 1960s. He was good friends with Margaret and Pelham Greenough, Birger Sandzén's daughter and son in law, and with Carl Peterson, who was co-director of the Sandzén gallery along with Mr. Greenough. After graduate studies at Kansas State University and the University of Kansas as well as at the University of Iowa, he became a high school art teacher in Clay Center, KS. In July of 1981, Carl Peterson called him and asked him to become director of the Sandzén gallery. Mr. Griffis began his work at the gallery in August, 1981. His professional goal has always been to encourage new generations to share the life and art of Birger Sandzén. Mr. Griffis will bring some archival photo enlargements along with about thirty slides to show the work of Birger Sandzén.

The lecture, which is sponsored by the Friends of the Leonard H. Axe Library, is in honor of the late Mr. Gene DeGruson, formerly curator of Special Collections at Axe Library.