Welcome!

Beloved KU professor Elden Tefft (1919-2015) created bronze works commemorating past chancellors and celebrating some of the most revered KU symbols on the University of Kansas campus. This self-guided walking tour allows viewers to admire Tefft’s sculptures while gaining a deeper appreciation of the contributions Tefft made to KU’s campus and his pioneering efforts within the medium of bronze.

As former Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little stated, “Elden’s pieces are such an integral part of Mount Oread—pieces such as ‘Moses’ and ‘Academic Jay’—that it is nearly impossible to imagine our campus without them.”

Follow this guide to experience Tefft’s works, those well-loved and those more unknown, amongst the beauty of KU’s campus.

**This tour does not have a specific starting or ending point. You may begin anywhere, using the locator map. It is suggested that viewers start or end their journey at the Moses sculpture in front of Smith Hall, as Tefft considered that piece his masterpiece.**

Walking time: 60-90 minutes. Walking allows you to closely examine the works, peek inside buildings that interest you, and enjoy the beauty of campus.

Distance: Around 3,000 feet, or just over half a mile.

Accessibility: Both sides of Jayhawk Boulevard have sidewalks with curb cuts. For access information about campus buildings and handicapped parking, request an accessibility map at the campus entrance booth. KU Info on the main level of the Kansas Memorial Union, or visit accessibility.ku.edu.

Restrooms and water fountains: Easy-to-locate restrooms and water fountains can be found in most campus buildings. The Kansas Memorial Union has family and accessible restrooms on the main level.

Building hours: When classes are in session, buildings are generally open from 7am to 10pm on weekdays.

Sources: University Archives documents, The Lawrence Journal World, The University Daily Kansan, Craig Voorhees’ Elden Tefft’s Walking Tour of Lawrence
Department of Religious Studies

Elden Tefft Campus Walking Tour

1. Moses, 1982
Located in front of the main entrance of Smith Hall
Moses and the complimentary stained glass burning bush window represent the University of Kansas seal in three dimensions. Tefft was commissioned to create the work for the new Kansas School of Religion building in 1967, due to his work redesigning the KU seal. Moses was installed in front of Smith Hall in 1982, and was a gift of Corrine Wooten Miller of Tonganoxie in memory of her husband, Charles E. Miller. Tefft considered the work his masterpiece, and his care and dedication is evident in the fifteen years and hundreds of student assistants it took to create the final sculpture. Filigreed bronze, a technique invented by Tefft, creates open surfaces in Moses to represent the spiritual and spiritual impact of Moses encountering the bush. The openings allow viewers to see the interior of the work, as well as offering glimpses of the stained glass window when the observer peers through the piece. The window was designed by Jacoby Studios in St. Louis, Missouri.

2. Seal of the University of Kansas, 1954
Located on level 2 of the Kansas Memorial Union, the right side of the Union stairwell, opposite the KU Bookstore
The University of Kansas commissioned Tefft to redesign the University seal in 1954. The seal features Moses kneeling in front of the burning bush from Exodus 3:3 in the Bible. The seal is an expression of the living spirit of the University; the “flame of fire out of the midst of the bush” symbolizes the light of knowledge and truth, attained within and disseminated by the university. During his redesign, Tefft conducted considerable research on the symbolism of the bush, vegetation, religious practices, and cultural modes of the time represented. The University of Kansas has used Tefft’s version of the seal since its creation in 1954.

3. Saramanawak (also known as Jayhawk II Kansas Sarimanok), 1965
Located on level 2 of the Kansas Memorial Union, KU Union Jayhawk Collection, down the hallway to the right of the KU Bookstore
While similar to Tefft’s “academic Jayhawk” of front of Strong Hall, the Saramanawak represents a mythical Filipino bird. This bird was originally cast for the University of the Philippines, where one of Tefft’s former students was a professor. The original Filipino statue was destroyed during the University student riots in 1984. Other bronze Jayhawks and KU symbols in the case were cast by Tefft, many as exercises in the casting process for his students in KU’s Fine Arts Department.

4. Centennial Medallion, 1966
Located on level 6 of the Kansas Memorial Union, outside of the Centennial Room (three doors down from hallway)
Tefft designed this medallion for the 1966 University of Kansas Centennial, the theme of which was “progress” (let us progress). The medallion showcases the Lawrence campus silhouette along the bottom of the work. The column on the left of the medallion is composed of twenty-six symbols: three Jayhawks; a salamander, trilobite, bee and others denoting scientific accomplishments of the university; the wheat and sunflower of Kansas; and a 10-pointed star symbolizing the Lawrence school and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences which comprised the University of Kansas at that time.

5. William Allen White, 1959
Located in Strother-Flint Hall, around the corner from the entrance
Tefft’s bust commemorates prolific Kansas writer William Allen White (1868-1944) for whom the School of Journalism is named. White was a successful journalist in Kansas and on a number of major newspapers publishing more than one hundred editorials and several books during his lifetime. Tefft also created the William Allen White Children’s Book Award medal, held in the collections of the Spencer Art Museum, and the William Allen White Foundation Award.

Located in Wescoe Hall, level 1. Take the outside stairs to the 1st level of the building, enter the building and go left and then right down the hall
W. Clarke Wescoe was the 10th chancellor of the University of Kansas, from 1960 to 1969. Wescoe led the university during a time of great campus growth and volatility during the unrest of the 1960s. Tefft’s bronze busts on campus all contain elements of the abstract and the real, as observed in the textured bust of Wescoe. Tefft created many portrait busts by first making a clay model, which would then be translated into wax, a plaster cast, and then the final bronze cast. Tefft often would retain elements from the original clay molds in the final works to impart abstract elements into the piece. Viewers on this tour can pay attention to the range between abstraction and reality when looking at the busts as a collection.

7. Academic Jayhawk, 1958
Located in front of the main entrance to Strong Hall
This Jayhawk was commissioned by the class of 1956. Tefft noted that his creation of the Academic Jayhawk was inspired by the sharp-beaked “fighting Jayhawk” that were mascots of the university from 1929 to 1946. The statue has also been called “The Perdocatyl.” Careful observers can see the inscription at the base of the statue which states that it was cast at the KU foundry established by Tefft. This foundry was the first university “lost wax” process sculpture foundry in the United States. The first bronze to be cast at the Jayhawk off its pedestal, damaging its head and wings. Tefft and his son, Kim Tefft, repaired and remounted it in February 1997.

8. Frank Strong, 1962
Located in the main rotunda of Strong Hall
Frank Strong was the 6th chancellor of the University of Kansas, leading the university from 1902 to 1920. Strong was known for his businesslike, straightforward, and professional in his role. He made significant improvements to the stability and prestige of KU, including gaining continuous funding for the university from the state legislature. All of the busts on KU’s campus were first clay models created by Tefft. Tefft finished all his clay portrait busts by pinching off a bit of clay, rolling it between his fingers, and then pressing it into the face. Viewers can see the impressions his fingers made in the little pieces of clay retained in the finished bronze surface of the bust’s face.

9. Regent’s Seal, 1956
Located on the 1st level of Strong Hall, past the building directory in the rotunda
Previously the Regents of the University of Kansas, this governing educational body became the Kansas Board of Regents in 1925. On the occasion of the new formation, the regents decided to adopt a new seal, leaving the University of Kansas with its traditional seal. The Regent’s Seal depicts the river, steamboat, plow, field, covered wagon, and rising sun

10. Francis Snow, 1962
Located within the east entrance to Snow Hall, to the left of the stairs
One of the first three faculty members at KU, Francis Snow taught math and natural sciences at the University of Kansas when it first opened for classes in 1866. Snow became KU’s 5th chancellor in 1890, holding the position until 1901. During his tenure, he saw enrollments increase and the addition of six buildings and twenty acres to campus. Observers can see where Tefft left tool marks from the creation process on the finished piece. Tefft preferred a “rough” and “not too finished” approach to art that reflected his straightforward Midwestern attitude towards life, as well as his desire to add abstract elements to his works.

11. Franklin Murphy, 1960
Located outside of Murphy Hall
Widely recognized at KU as an influential and beneficial chancellor, Murphy served as 9th chancellor from 1951 to 1960. During this time Murphy dealt with civil rights issues and political wars in Kansas, all while endeavoring to expand the research and educational stature of KU. Chancellor Murphy was instrumental in the creation of Tefft’s KU bronze foundry. In 1951, one of Tefft’s students told Chancellor Murphy that Tefft knew how to cast bronze busts and how to make a foundry. The chancellor reportedly called Tefft, asking, “What do you need?” From that conversation, the foundry became a reality in 1956. That same year “Academic Jayhawk, outside of Strong Hall, was one of the first sculptures cast from this groundbreaking foundry.

12. Donald Swahort, 1954
Located outside of Swarthout Recital Hall in Murphy Hall
Donald Swahort was the Dean of Fine Arts at KU from 1923 to 1950. Swarthout Recital Hall has been the principle academic performance space for the School of Music at KU since 1957. The bust’s creation in KU’s foundry, started by Tefft three years prior, illustrates the artist’s dedication to bring bronze casting out of large foundries and into the hands of artists. As Tefft noted in 1990: “When I was starting out, bronze casting was practically considered illegal. Sculptors thought you had to be in control of the work from beginning to end, and with bronze you had to send it out to a foundry, and they got their hands on it. What I’ve worked to do is bring bronze back into the studio, where the artist can control it.”