

# James Tellen (1880–1957)



James Tellen worked as a “striper” at the Northern Furniture Company in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Strippers added accent stripes and details to chairs and other furniture. After a stay in a local hospital in 1942 where he viewed marble statues of saints and grottos from his window, he was inspired to create his own sculptural environment.

Beginning in 1942 and continuing until his death in 1957, James Tellen created more than thirty sculptures out of concrete in the woods surrounding his family’s summer cottage in Wilson, Wisconsin. He built the cottage with his wife, Elizabeth, in the 1920s. When he built the cabin, he learned about the properties of concrete, which helped him understand how to use the material to create sculptures out of concrete later in his life.

His sculptures are inspired by historical, religious, and **mythical** people and stories. Visitors can visit the site as part of Wandering Wisconsin, a group of nine **artist-built environments** across the state.

## Mythical

Something that happens or exists in a fairy tale, myth, or folk tale. In some cases you might believe that it could be real, but there is no evidence.

## Artist-built Environment

A unique place—usually a home—that is transformed by an artist. Often inspired by the life experiences of the artist, they typically are made using nearby and easily accessible materials.

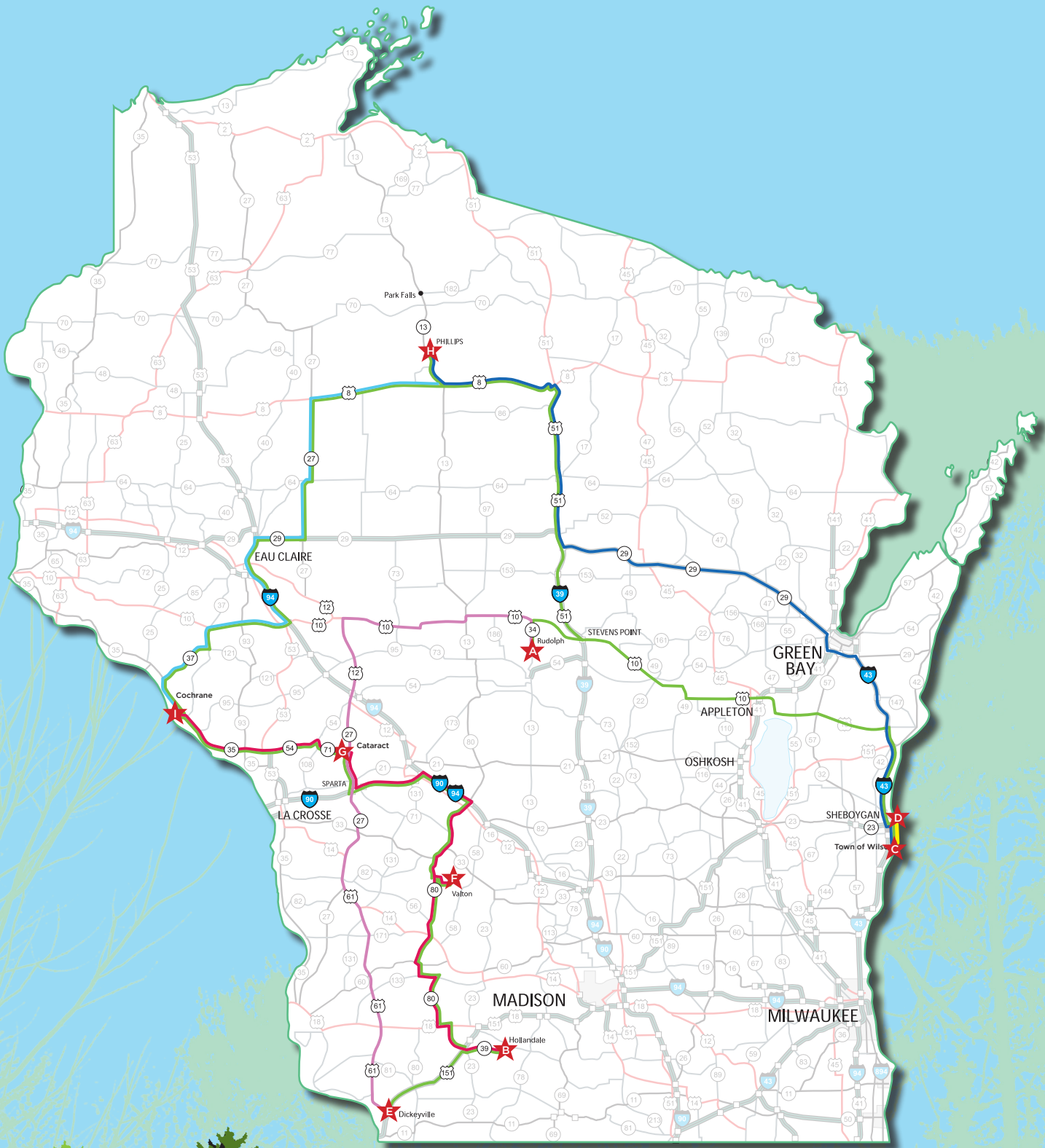


Artist Overview



- 1 James Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden (site detail, Native American family tableau, Town of Wilson, WI), c. 1942–1957. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.
- 2 James Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden (site view, Town of Wilson, WI), c. 1942–1957. John Michael Kohler Arts Center Collection, gift of Kohler Foundation Inc.





To learn more, visit [wanderingwisconsin.org](http://wanderingwisconsin.org).