

WASHINGTON

CROSSING THE DELAWARE



CHRISTIE'S



WASHINGTON

CROSSING THE DELAWARE

by Emanuel Leutze



TABLE OF CONTENTS

WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE 9

THE BATTLE OF TRENTON 15

A WASHINGTON OF ACTION..... 23

AN AMERICAN STUDIO IN DÜSSELDORF 31

THE LOST FIRST VERSION 37

BACK IN THE STUDIO 41

CRITICAL RECEPTION..... 49

AN ENDURING AMERICAN ICON..... 55

LOT DETAILS 63

SALE INFORMATION..... 69

“Leutze’s picture is universally admired. It is without doubt the most effective painting of American history yet achieved. Besides masterly excellence, of a purely artistic kind, in regard to the drawing, grouping, color, arrangement and general effect, it has the transcendent merit of vital action. There is true spirit, vigour, and moral power in the figures. It has confirmed our high estimate of Leutze’s ability as a dramatic artist. The picture tells its own story with dignity, eloquence and truth. It is worthy of the subject, and brings home to the spectator the trials and triumphs, the noble self-sacrifice and fearful perils of the Revolutionary army and its stainless chief.”

Home Journal, November 8, 1851



Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2011.
Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897.

WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE

BY EMANUEL LEUTZE

Late on Christmas night 1776, General George Washington famously rallied his troops across the half-frozen Delaware River to Trenton, New Jersey, where a camp of Hessian mercenaries hired by England unsuspectingly rested after holiday

“Great paintings tend to come and go in the mind’s eye, but for millions of Americans a first history book impression of ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware’ is apt to go on forever.”

Time, 1952

celebrations. The success of the ensuing surprise attack proved critical in raising the morale of the American army after several defeats, importantly changing the course of the Revolutionary War and moreover the history of the nation. This key moment in the fight for American freedom remains such a well-known story almost 250 years later due to the

enduring image in our collective memory of Washington bravely standing tall at the bow of his rowboat, leading his army while looking off toward the battle ahead with grim determination.

“Infused with patriotic fervor and nobility, especially in the lofty calm of Washington’s profile, the Metropolitan’s picture has become a national monument.”

Margaretta Salinger





Washington Crossing the Delaware
From a Painting by Emanuel Leutze / Eastman Johnson



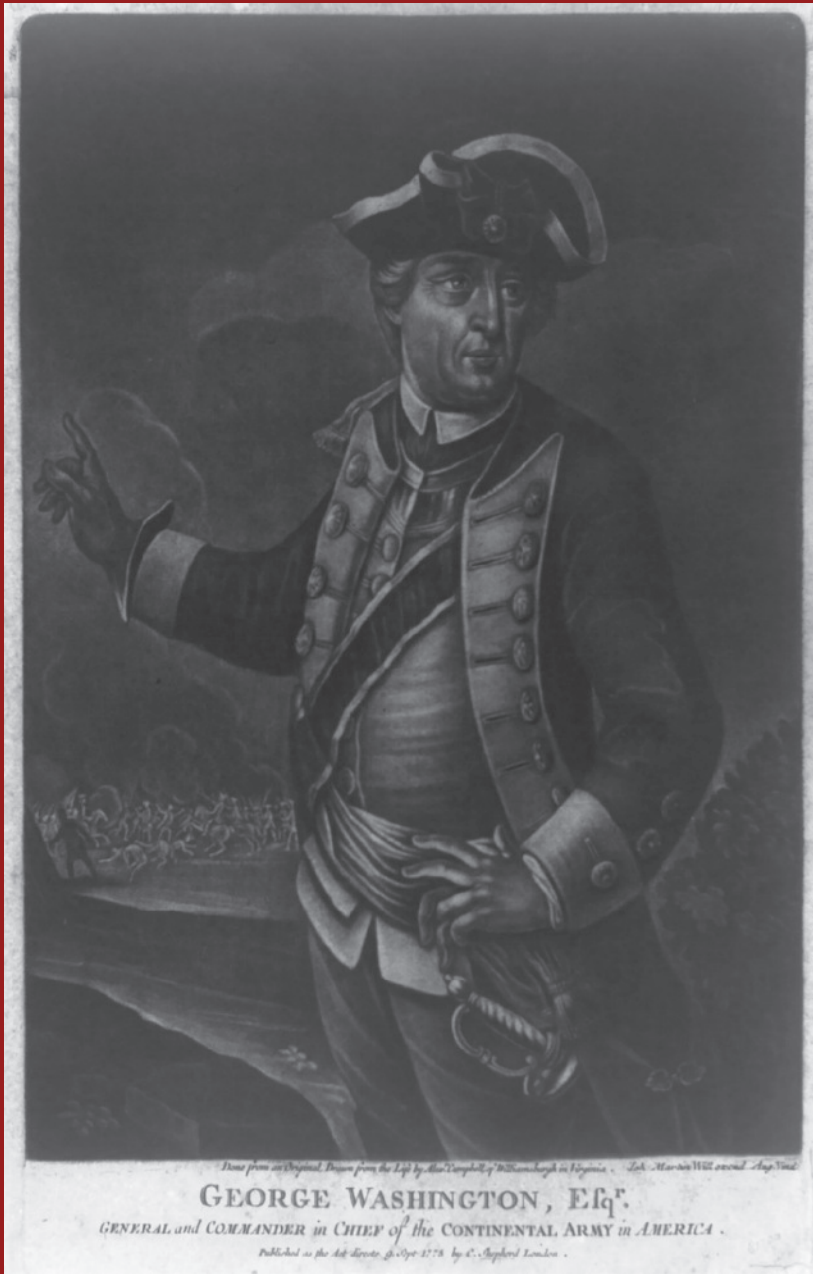
This iconic likeness of Washington, published countless times in textbooks and articles, seen on U.S. postal stamps and the New Jersey state quarter, and ubiquitous in popular culture, is the creation of the artist Emanuel Leutze. Leutze with the help of his studio assistants, including the up-and-coming young artist Eastman Johnson, only produced

three known complete paintings of this scene: the first, previously in the collection of the Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany, and tragically destroyed in a World War II air raid; the second, forming the centerpiece in the American Wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the present work. Almost identical in composition to the

“This is a picture that, because it has been reproduced more often than almost any other American painting, has shaped more Americans’ concept of the Revolutionary War than any other.”

Marshall B. Davidson, Elizabeth Stillinger

Metropolitan’s version, and widely exhibited in its own right, including for several decades in The White House, the present version was painted by Leutze with Johnson’s assistance and reproduced as the engraving by which *Washington Crossing the Delaware* first garnered international fame.



Engraving of George Washington, Esq'r. general and commander in chief of the Continental Army in America, by Johann Martin, circa 1775. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-3620.

THE BATTLE OF TRENTON

“The minds of the people are much altered. A few days ago they had given up the cause for lost. Their late successes have turned the scale and now they are all liberty mad again...”

Nicholas Cresswell, 1776

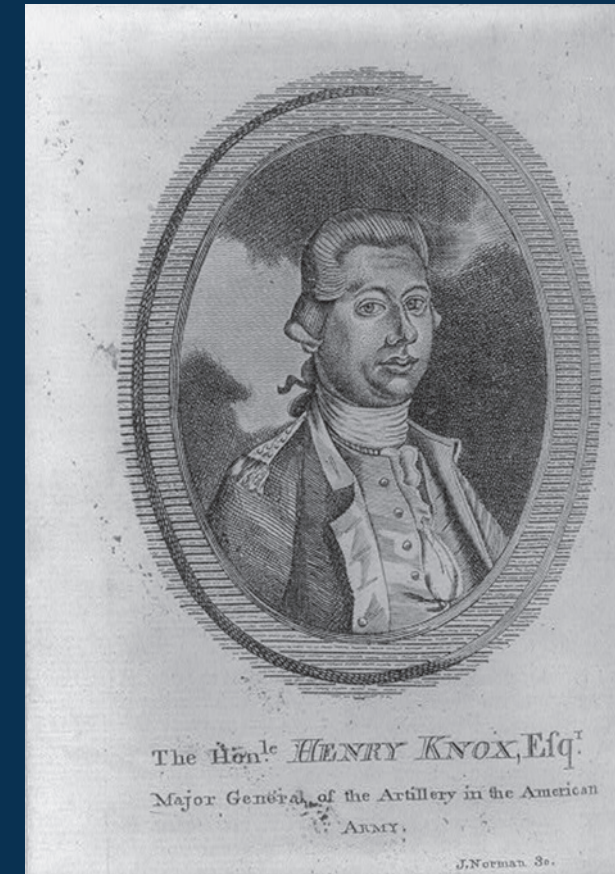
easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us—that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.” (*The American Crisis. Number I*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, December 19, 1776)

As the year 1776 drew to a close, the Americans were firmly behind in their fight for independence from the British following defeats at Fort Washington and Fort Lee and the retreat of Washington’s Continental Army to Pennsylvania on the west bank of the Delaware River. The Continental Congress fled Philadelphia for Baltimore and, on December 19, 1776, Thomas Paine memorably declared, “These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not

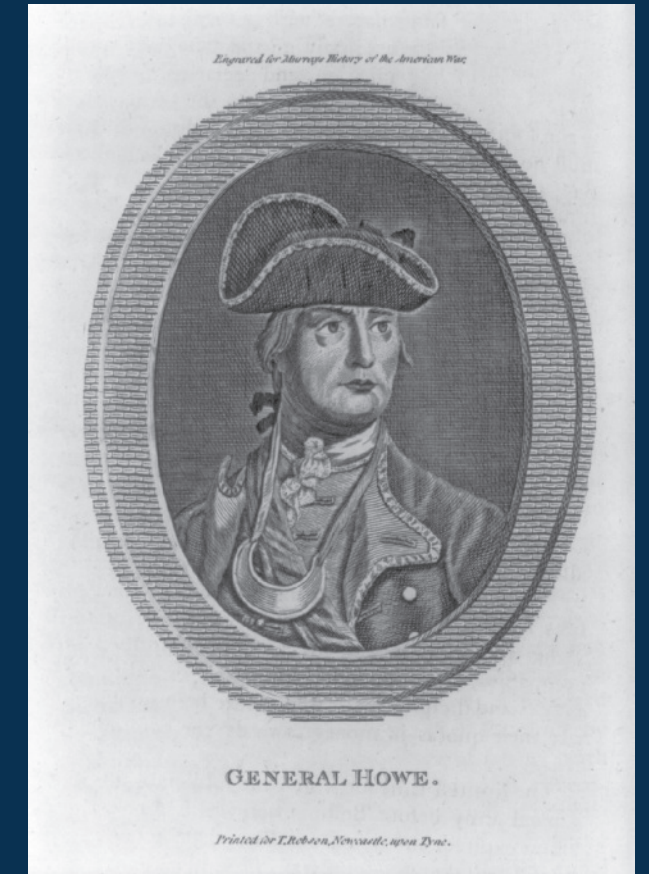
“These are the times that try men’s souls... yet we have this consolation with us that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.”

Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, December 19, 1776

This moment of crisis provided the inspiration for the surprise attack and triumph that would shift the momentum back towards the American side. While British Commander William Howe planned to wait until the Delaware River fully froze before pursuing further engagements with the Americans on the opposite side, Washington had other plans. On the night of December 25, 1776, Washington led an assault group including Col. John Glover's 14th Continentals from Massachusetts and an artillery train under the command of Colonel Henry Knox across the treacherous icy waters. As Knox, who later became Washington's Secretary of War, recounted, "a party of the army consisting of about 2,500 or 3,000 passed the river on Christmas night, with almost infinite difficulty, with eighteen field pieces. The floating ice in the river made the labor almost incredible. However, perseverance accomplished. About two o'clock the troops were all on the Jersey side; we then were about nine miles from the object. The night was cold and stormy; it hailed with great violence; the troops marched with the most profound silence and good order." (as quoted in J.K. Howat, "Washington Crossing the Delaware," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, March 1968, p. 297)



Engraving of The Honle. Henry Knox, Esqr., major general of the artillery in the American Army, by John Norman, 1782. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-45244.



Engraving of General Howe, 1778; engraved for Rev. James Murray's *History of the American War*, 1782. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-45303.

“a party of the army consisting of about 2,500 or 3,000 passed the river on Christmas night, with almost infinite difficulty, with eighteen field pieces. The floating ice in the river made the labor almost incredible. However, perseverance accomplished.”

Colonel Henry Knox about Christmas night 1776





With the Americans sneaking across under the cover of night, Hessian Colonel Johann Rall's camp of 1,400 men, whom Howe had left as the British defense at Trenton, were completely surprised in their groggy, post-holiday stupor. The battle lasted only forty-five minutes before Washington's men had captured 900 prisoners and a significant amount of weapons and ammunition. The scale of the battle itself was not particularly notable, but Washington's victory nonetheless importantly renewed the spirits of the colonists and recaptured their enthusiasm for the nation's freedom from England.

Following the Battle of Trenton, Englishman Nicholas Cresswell wrote in his diary: "The minds of the people are much altered. A few days ago they had given up the cause for lost. Their late successes have turned the scale and now they are all liberty mad again..." (as quoted in J.K. Howat, "Washington Crossing the Delaware," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, March 1968, p. 297) While the war would continue for almost six more years, the key victory at Trenton on December 26, 1776 proved that Washington truly possessed the strategic and courageous leadership needed for his Continental Army to defend the American claim of independence that had been boldly declared months prior on July 4, 1776.



A WASHINGTON OF ACTION

While the Battle of Trenton inspired some of the most important painters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the now pervasive archetype of Washington leading his troops across the icy waters on Christmas night

“As a likeness of the Father of His Country we can only say that it is the only one that we have ever seen that has the slightest semblance of vitality—Thanks, Mr. Leutze, that you have at last shown us a Washington who looks like a man of action.”

The Albion, November 1, 1851

unquestionably finds its origins in Emanuel Leutze’s paintings of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Former Metropolitan Museum curator John Howat explains, “Leutze had no desire to paint a thorough reconstruction of the scene – he was trying to capture the spirit of a great leader and the importance of a great event.” (“Washington Crossing the Delaware,” *Metropolitan Museum*

of Art Bulletin, March 1968, p. 298) While perhaps not as historically accurate as preceding depictions, Leutze’s artistic vision is the image of the General and future President that has endured the test of time and come to be accepted as truth for generations of Americans.



Thomas Sully, *The Passage of the Delaware*, 1819, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. Photo: Peter Barritt / Alamy Stock Photo.

John Trumbull, who had served as Washington’s aide-de-camp during the war, had painted *The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton, December 26, 1776* (1786-1828, Yale University Art Gallery) to celebrate the General’s “true heroism” and “mercy and kindness to a fallen enemy.” (J. Trumbull, *Autobiography, Reminiscences, and Letters of John Trumbull from 1756 to 1841*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1841, p. 420) Trumbull depicts Washington as the sympathetic leader in the wake of the battle, seated on horseback as he checks on the fallen soldiers and ensures that even his opponents are properly treated. Thomas Sully’s 1819 *The Passage of the Delaware* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts) captures Washington as a more heroic figure than Trumbull’s likeness, posing the General dramatically with hand on hip atop his white steed. Yet, while boats filled with



Painting by Thomas Sully; etched by William Humphrys; engraved by George S. Lang. *Washington passing the Delaware, evening previous to the Battle of Trenton, Dec. 25th, 1776*, 1799. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pga-07291.

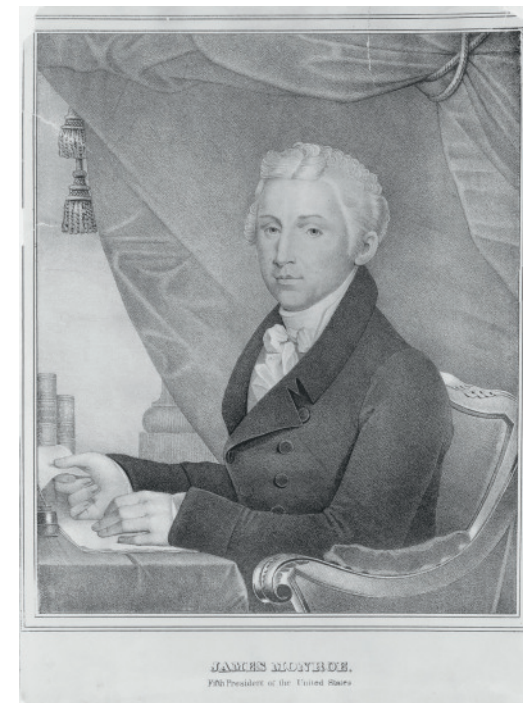
troops are visible in the distance, Sully’s Washington nonetheless stays above the fray on high ground as he prepares for the upcoming battle.

Leutze’s interpretation of the event stands apart for its immersion of Washington on a boat in the midst of the heroic river crossing. The art critic for *The Albion* declared upon the composition’s preview, “As a likeness of the Father of His Country we can only say that it is the only one that we have ever seen that has the slightest semblance of vitality—Thanks, Mr. Leutze, that you have at last shown us a Washington who looks like a man of action.” (as quoted in R.L. Stehle, “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” *Pennsylvania History*, vol. XXXI, July 1964, p. 279) Indeed, as in the large-



scale Metropolitan picture, the present work captures Washington onboard one of the boats, nestled amongst his hard-working soldiers navigating through the treacherous iceberg-laden waters. At once a man of the people and a leader to look up to, the General stands tall in his tricorn hat, holding his billowing cape as he faces boldly ahead toward forthcoming danger. With gleaming sword sheathed at his hip and a brass telescope in hand, he is a leader of both vision and action as he carries with him the fate of the nascent country.

Leutze directs all attention to Washington at the center of his composition. The proudly lifted American flag behind him both visually and metaphorically underscores his importance in this particular scene, and moreover as a forefather of the nation. The flag itself is an anachronism, as Leutze's "Stars and Stripes" version would not actually be adopted until June 14, 1777. The flag bearer to Washington's immediate right is likely 18-year-old Lieutenant Colonel James Monroe, who would go on to suffer a near-fatal shoulder wound during the action, be promoted to Captain for his bravery and later become the fifth President of the United States.



D.W. Kellogg & Co., *James Monroe, fifth President of the United States*, circa 1840. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-DIG-pga-11239.



Right: H.A. Thomas & Wylie., *Birth of our nation's flag* / C.H. Weisgerber, 1893. Photo: Library of Congress: LC-DIG-pga-02842.

“Leutze had no desire to paint a thorough reconstruction of the scene – he was trying to capture the spirit of a great leader and the importance of a great event.”

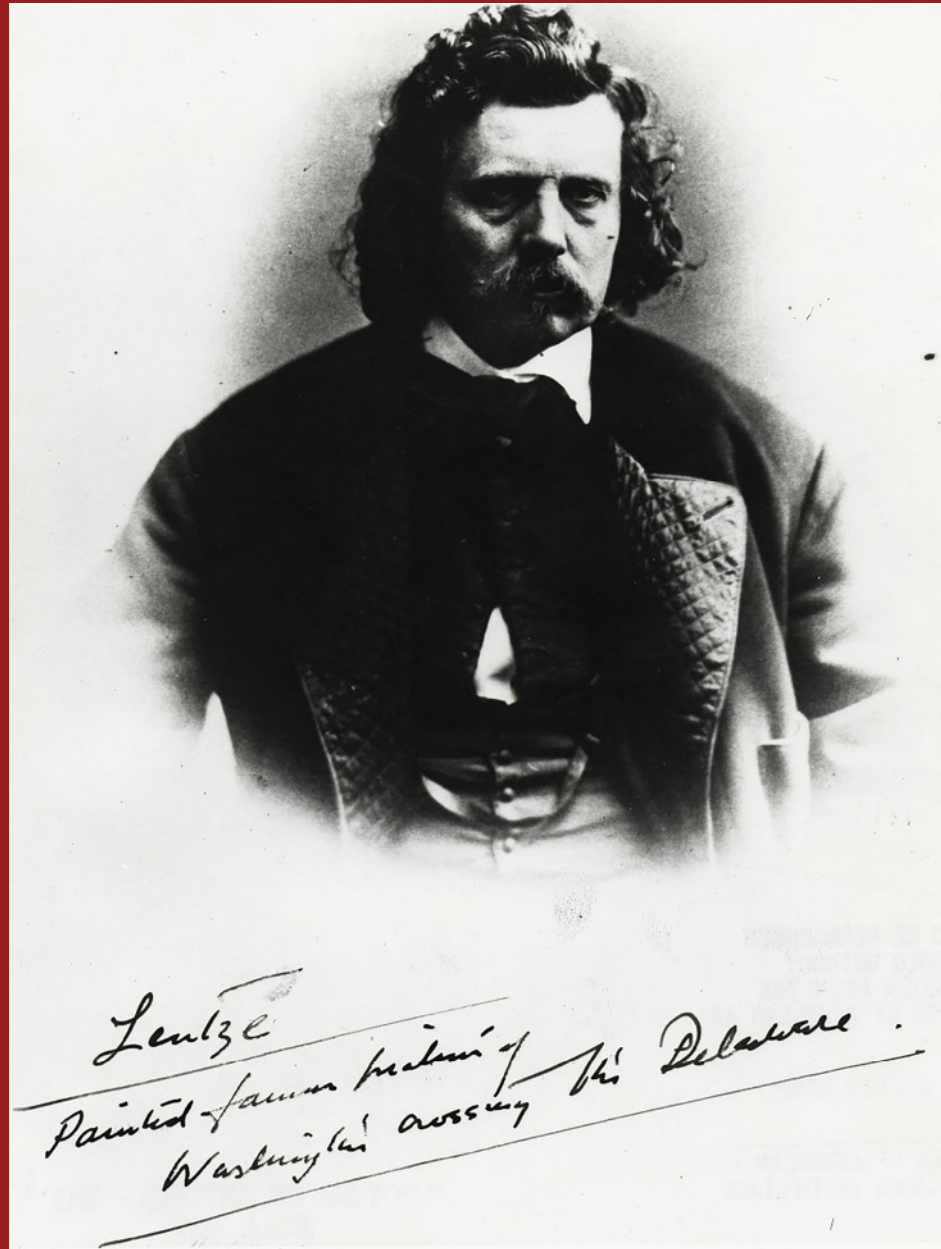
John Howat, Metropolitan Museum of Art Curator, 1968



Engraving of Majr. Genl. Greene, by James Trenchard, 1786.
Photo: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-45507.

Below Monroe, Major-General Nathanael Greene leans over the side of the craft to see the approaching New Jersey shoreline. To Washington’s immediate left is an African-American man in military dress who has historically been identified as Prince Whipple. The slave of Declaration of Independence signatory Colonel William Whipple, Prince was one of the many enslaved who were promised their freedom in exchange for their participation in the Revolutionary War and bravely joined the fight. More recent scholarship has suggested that the Black figure could alternatively be Washington’s enslaved valet and military aide William (Billy) Lee. The surrounding men, while not identified as specific historical figures, encompass the range of local fishermen and militiamen who made the midnight mission across the river a success against all odds. A Scottish tam o’shanter hat, coonskin caps and moccasins reminiscent of the Western frontier, and other variations in uniform point to the melting pot of cultures that formed the United States of America.





Emanuel Leutze, *circa* 1840, Unidentified photographer. Photo: Miscellaneous photographs collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

AN AMERICAN STUDIO IN DÜSSELDORF

While he considered himself an American artist, Emanuel Leutze was an immigrant from Germany who created many of his most important works,

“He always considered himself an American, although born in Germany, yet he was as prominent in the art life of Düsseldorf as any native painter... His art, as he saw it, was a public art, and it was finally to the American public that he wished his art to speak.”

Joshua C. Taylor, Director of the National Collection of Fine Arts, 1975

including *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, while living abroad in his native country. Leutze was born in a small town near Stuttgart in 1816, moving with his family to Philadelphia in 1825. Legend has it that as a child, when his father fell ill, he helped support his family by drawing portraits for five dollars each. As a young man, he enrolled in art classes, and in 1837 began to travel as an itinerant painter, successfully garnering portrait commissions and exhibiting annually at the Artists’ Fund Society’s annual show in Philadelphia. His patrons supported him enough such that in 1840 he departed for studies abroad in Europe.

Following a brief sojourn in Amsterdam, Leutze enrolled as a *historienmaler*—history painter—at the Düsseldorf Academy, which was considered at the time the most famous art school in Europe. As a contemporary critic noted of one of his Christopher Columbus historical scenes from this period, “the struggle of Leutze’s originality against the rules of the Academy” soon led to the artist’s break with the institution. (as quoted in B. Groseclose, *Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom Is the Only King*, exhibition catalogue, Washington, D.C., 1975, p. 20)

Leutze declared himself Düsseldorf's first artist independent of the Academy, and following some travels around Germany, Italy and Switzerland, he returned inspired to paint, as he later described, "the course of freedom...a long cycle, from



Emanuel Leutze, *Self-portrait*, circa 1865. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Photo: © 2020 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Gift of John Frederick Lewis.

the first dawning of free institutions in the middle ages, to the reformation and revolution in England, the causes of emigration, including the discovery and settlement of America, the early protestation against tyranny, to the Revolution and Declaration of Independence." (as quoted in *Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom Is the Only King*, p. 25)

While he married a German woman and remained in Düsseldorf, as noted Leutze scholar Barbara Groseclose writes, "All of his professional efforts were directed toward the establishment of an American career, and it was American fame he first sought." (*Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom Is the Only King*, p. 25)

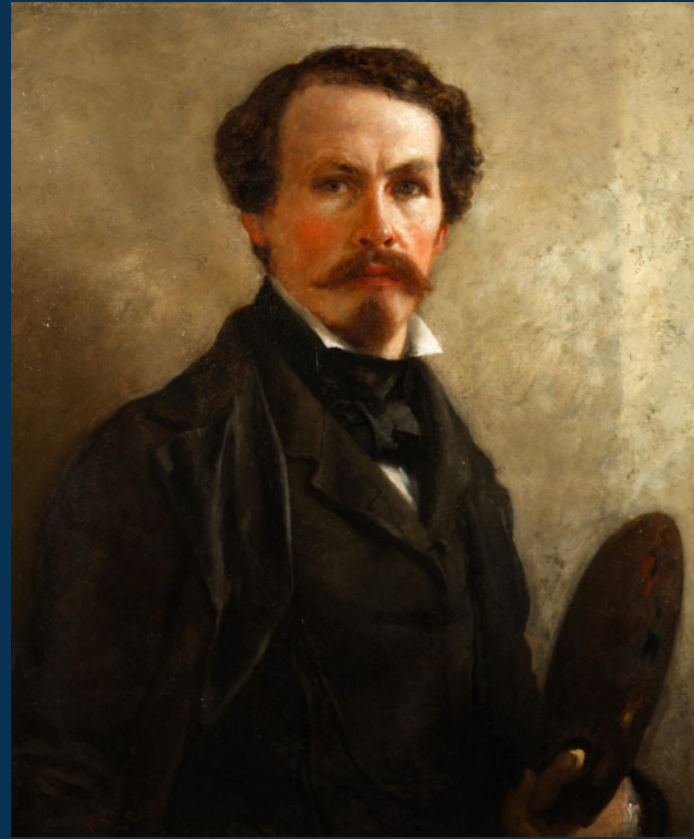
Joshua C. Taylor furthers, "He always considered himself an American, although born in Germany, yet he was as prominent in the art life of Düsseldorf as any native painter." (p. 11)



Andreas Achenbach, *The Academy Courtyard (The Old Academy in Düsseldorf)*, 1831. Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf. Photo: Niday Picture Library / Alamy Stock Photo.



Eastman Johnson, *Thomas Worthington Whittredge*, circa 1854. Cincinnati Art Museum.
Photo: © 2022 Cincinnati Art Museum, Bequest of Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Wichgar.



Eastman Johnson, *Self-portrait*, 1853. Thomas H. and Diane DeMell Jacobsen Ph.D. Foundation.

“I have now recently gone with Mr. Leutze & am painting under his instruction in an immense atelier which he rented for his big picture, with two others beside himself, excellent artists & both engaged on large works, forming an atmosphere & an aspect of art not less delightful than it is improving.”

Eastman Johnson, January 16, 1851

Leutze’s Düsseldorf studio became a hub for other American painters traveling to Germany for experience abroad. His studio mates and students notably included several artists who would go on to become icons of American art in their own right, including Eastman Johnson and Worthington Whittredge, and in later years Albert Bierstadt, Sanford Gifford and William Stanley Haseltine. Johnson described the

“The Düsseldorf School therefore was not alone the teachings of a few professors in the Academy but of the whole mass collected at that once famous rendezvous, and America had Leutze there, the most talked about artist of them all in 1850.”

Worthington Whittredge

convivial and collaborative environment under Leutze’s leadership: “I have now recently gone with Mr. Leutze & am painting under his instruction in an immense atelier which he rented for his big picture, with two others beside himself, excellent artists & both engaged on large works, forming an atmosphere & an aspect of art not less delightful than it is improving & I regret now that I had not been with him during my entire stay in Düsseldorf...& hope that

the benefit of my present advantages may show itself in my improvement.” (as quoted in P. Hills, “The Genre Painting of Eastman Johnson: The Sources and Development of His Style and Themes,” Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1973, p. 34)



Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, Bremen version, 1850. Painting destroyed during World War II. Photo: Kunsthalle Bremen.



Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, Colored reproduction of Bremen version, 1850. Painting destroyed during World War II. Photo: Kunsthalle Bremen.

THE LOST FIRST VERSION

In October 1849, the *Bulletin of the American Art Union* announced, “Leutze has postponed his visit to America until next year. He is about to paint Washington Crossing the Delaware, the figure to be of life size.” (*Bulletin of the American Art Union*, vol. II, October 1849, p. 25) Leutze’s interest in the subject was likely sparked by the political upheavals in 1848 across Europe, including in Germany, which prompted comparisons to the American Revolution. Groseclose explains, “Leutze’s subject matter is thus both a historical symbol and a brilliant metaphor for psychological encouragement. The American Revolution had

“Leutze has postponed his visit to America until next year. He is about to paint Washington Crossing the Delaware, the figure to be of life size.”

Bulletin of the American Art Union, October 1849

already served as prototype and symbol for the Forty-eighters—the American constitution acted as a model for the Frankfurt Parliament’s considerations and Heinrich von Gagern, president of that parliament, was called ‘the Washington of his country.’...Its apt relation to the events of 1848-49 for Leutze’s German audience is easily discerned: the demoralized, nearly paralyzed men of 1848, caught in the tight web of the reaction, could yet rally and overcome their defeat, even as Washington had led the Americans from despair to victory.” (*Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom Is the Only King*, pp. 36-37)



Daylight bombing of Bremen, B-17 Flying Fortress in the foreground, 1945.

Leutze's process in painting the picture was recorded by the leading art publications of the day. By August 1850, Leutze had made enough progress that the American Art Union correspondent predicted, "I think it ought to be very fine—far superior to anything he has yet produced. It is energetically drawn and composed and full of character." (*Bulletin of the American Art Union*, May 1850, p. 31)

"I write to you with a heavy heart... My picture of Washington is so much injured that I must give up all hope of being able to finish it without commencing it entirely anew."

Emanuel Leutze, November 10, 1850

In November 1850, Leutze had the painting ready to bring back to America when tragedy struck. A fire broke out in the stable below Leutze's studio, and while the painting was cut from its frame and rolled up to save it from the encroaching flames, it was very badly damaged. Leutze made an insurance claim, was paid immediately and ordered a new canvas to begin again within days.

It turned out, however, that this first version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was not unsalvageable. The insurance company paid Leutze to repair the piece and by the end of the year it was ready for exhibition. In 1863, the work was sold to the Kunsthalle in Bremen, Germany, where unfortunately disaster would strike again during World War II. In 1943, an air raid unfortunately completely destroyed Leutze's first version of his iconic image.



Emanuel Leutze, Incomplete study for *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, circa 1850. Private collection, Connecticut.



Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo: Bridgeman Images.

BACK IN THE STUDIO: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM VERSION AND THE PRESENT WORK

In January 1851, while Leutze was waiting for his new large canvas to arrive, according to Eastman Johnson, “Leutze [was] engaged on a small one the same which is progressing delightfully, with sundry other things.” (as quoted in P. Hills, “The Genre Painting of Eastman Johnson: The Sources and Development of His Style and Themes,” Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1973, p. 34) This “small one” was likely a half-unfinished study (Private Collection, Connecticut), which features elements of both the first Bremen picture and what would be the second

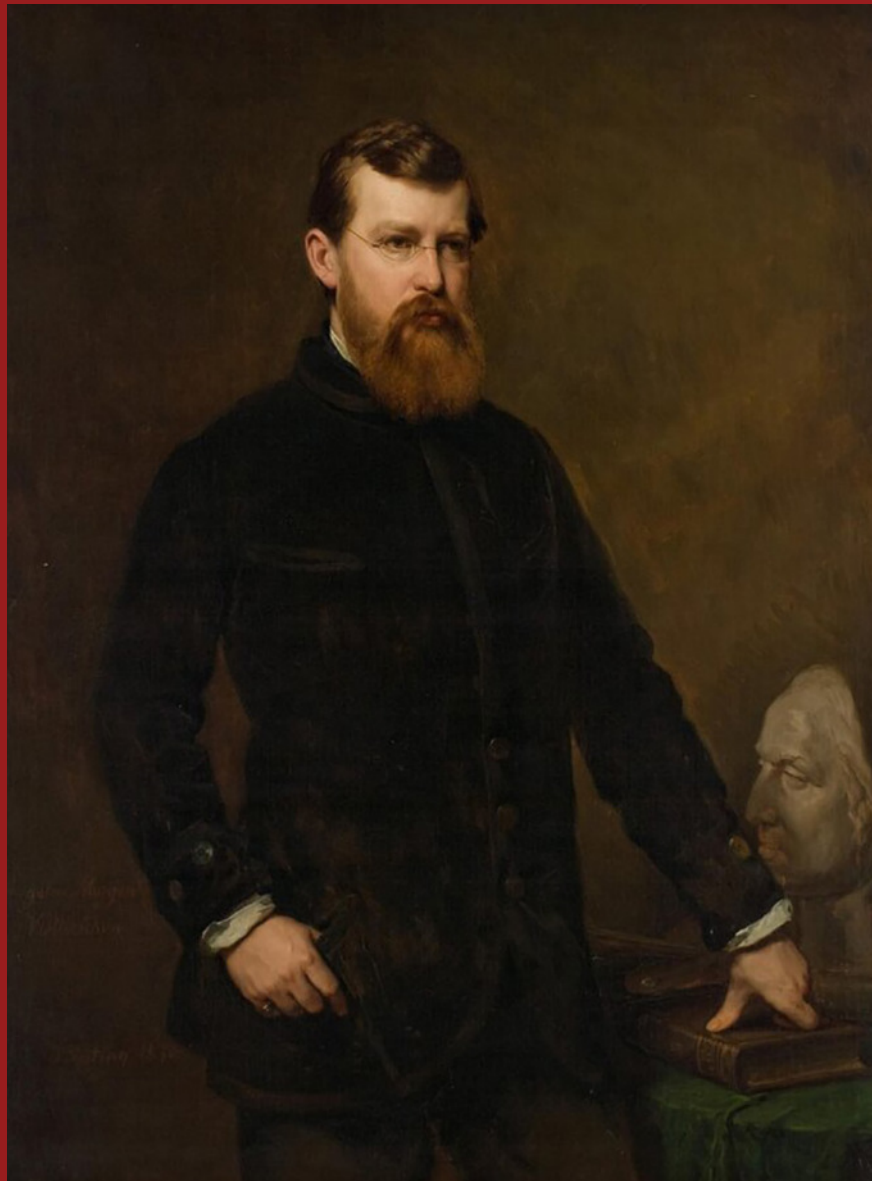
finished version that is now hanging in The Metropolitan Museum.

*“I have ordered another canvas,
and shall go to work upon it
at once as soon as I receive it.
Nothing shall deter me.”*

Emanuel Leutze, November 10, 1850

Leutze worked quickly on his second full-scale canvas, but he did make changes to the composition; for example, adding red to Washington’s previously golden cloak. In closely comparing the Bremen and Metropolitan

versions, conservators Lance Mayer and Gay Myers note, “although the two versions are nearly identical in most respects, Leutze took the opportunity to change his composition in subtle but significant ways. Many of these changes make the scene more dramatic.” (“Emanuel Leutze’s ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware’ through Conservators’ Eyes,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 69, no. 2, Fall 2011, p. 23) They explain that he moved the positions of some of the oars so that they appeared to more forcefully drive through the ice, and made the ice floes in front of the boat closer together to appear even more treacherous.



Julius Amatus Roeting, *Emanuel Leutze*, 1850. City Museum of the State Capital Düsseldorf.

Mayer and Myers also note adjustments to the composition that Leutze apparently made in the middle of painting the Metropolitan picture, as evidenced by both infrared photography and pentimenti now visible to the naked eye. “Among the changes that are visible as discrepancies between the underdrawing and the final paint layers are the outline of Washington’s hat, the size of his hair ribbon, and the profile of his face. The outline of the middle section of the flag was originally drawn to extend farther out to the right, as in Leutze’s first version of the scene.” (“Emanuel Leutze’s ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware’ through Conservators’ Eyes,” p. 24)



Jean-Antoine Houdon, *Mask of George Washington*, model 1785, cast possibly by 1849. Photo: National Gallery of Art, Corcoran Collection (Gift of Edward J. Stellwagen).

Writings by Leutze’s studio assistants Worthington Whittredge and Eastman Johnson provide further insight into Leutze’s creative process behind *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Whittredge recounts in his autobiography that Leutze based the head of Washington on Jean Antoine Houdon’s bust of the President, and in Julius Amatus Roeting’s 1850 portrait of Leutze he poses alongside a Washington life mask cast, which was likely used as reference. Whittredge himself posed for the body of Washington, and Johnson’s father based in Washington, D.C. was convinced to send a copy of an authentic military uniform for Washington’s costume. Whittredge recalled that Leutze “found great difficulty in finding American types for the heads and figures...He caught every American that came along and pressed him into service...

Clad in Washington’s full uniform, heavy chapeau and all, spy-glass in one hand and the other on my knee, I was nearly dead when the operation was over. They poured champagne down my throat and I lived through it.” (as quoted in J.K. Howat, “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, March 1968, p. 292)

“Leutze mixed the colors for it overnight and invited Andreas Achenbach and myself to help him cover the canvas the next day, it being necessary to blend the colors easily, to cover it all over in one day. It was done; Achenbach thought of the star, and painted it, a lone

invisible star, the last to fade in the morning light. This picture is now after having had two other owners...in the possession of our Metropolitan Museum, a good place for it.” (as quoted in J.K. Howat, “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” p. 292)

By April 1851, the Metropolitan version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was completed enough that Paris art firm Goupil, Vibert & Co. had already purchased the painting with the plan to exhibit and reproduce the work as an engraving for the subscribers to their International Art-Union membership program. *The Bulletin of the American Art Union* reported, “Mr. Goupil, it is said, is one of the best judges of art in Europe. He visited Düsseldorf on purpose to see this picture, and bought it immediately upon Leutze’s own terms, viz., 10,000 thalers—about \$6,000 of our money.” (*Bulletin of the American Art Union*, April 1851)

Worthington Whittredge about the large-scale version

INFRARED PHOTOGRAPHS OF PARALLEL ARTIST CHANGES

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM VERSION



Infrared reflectogram of *Washington crossing the Delaware*, showing changes that Leutze made to the outline of Washington’s hat and the flag. Photo: © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

THE PRESENT WORK



Infrared images of the present lot showing similar changes that Leutze made to the outline of Washington’s hat and the flag as in the Metropolitan’s version. Photo: © 2022 MACC Midwest Art Conservation Center.



The present lot.

As part of this plan, Goupil commissioned Leutze to paint the present work—a version on a reduced scale from the monumental picture, which engraver Paul Girardet could use as the basis of his plate for the engraving of the composition. Almost identical to the large-scale Met painting, the present work shows very similar artist changes to the flag and Washington’s hat under infrared photography, which suggest that the paintings were finished in parallel in Leutze’s studio.

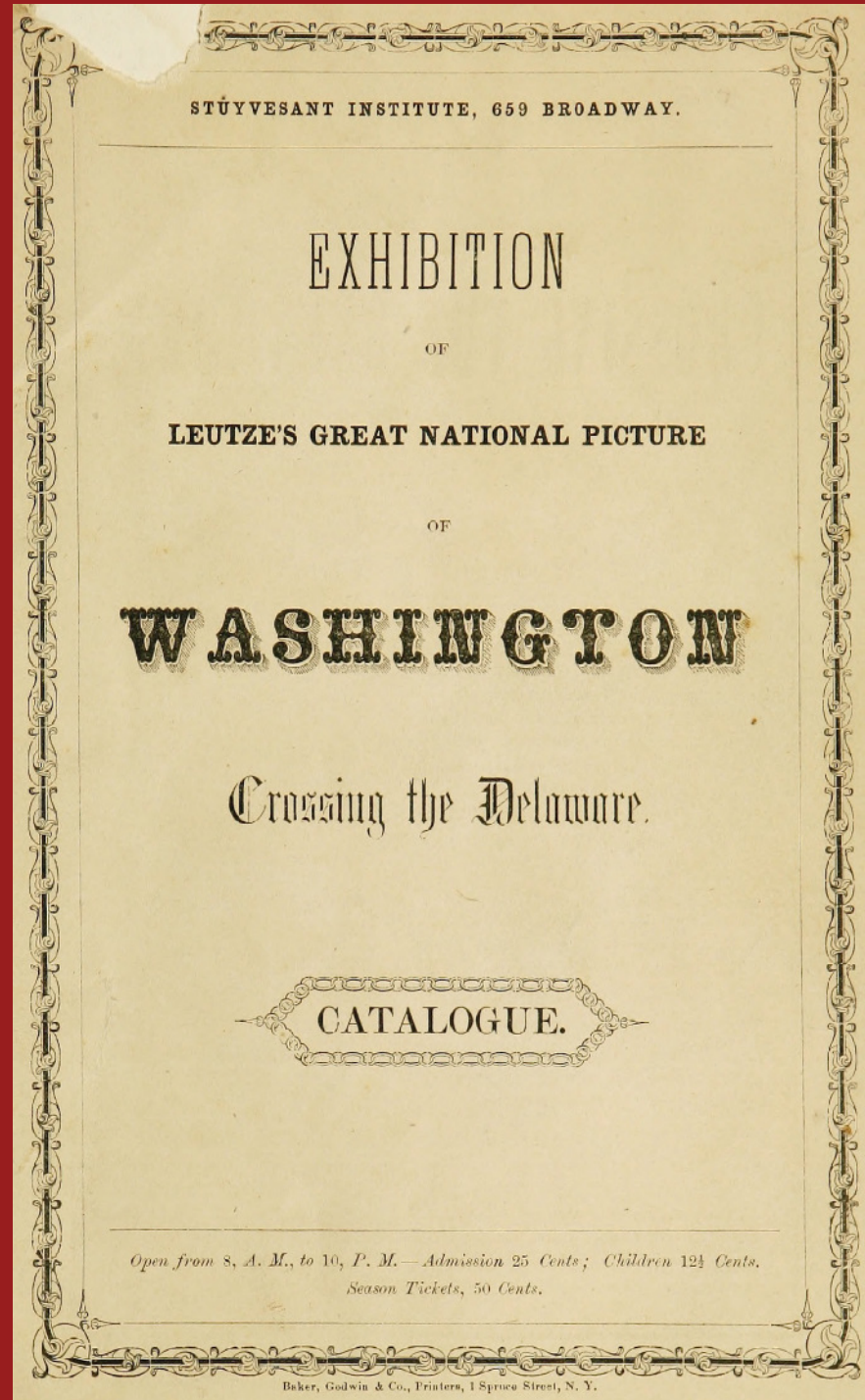
Indeed, Eastman Johnson wrote to a friend on March 1851, “Since the first of January I have been with Leutze. Our studio is a large hall where six of us paint with convenience, three on large pictures. The chief is Leutze’s of ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware,’ 20 feet by 16, figures size of life. It is already perhaps two-thirds finished and I am making a copy on a reduced scale from which an engraving is to be made. It is sold to the International A[rt]



Engraving of Washington Crossing the Delaware, by Paul Girardet, 1853. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-71276.

Union of New York and will be exhibited through the States in the fall.” (as quoted in P. Hills, “The Genre Painting of Eastman Johnson: The Sources and Development of His Style and Themes,” Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1973, p. 37)

Based on Johnson’s correspondence—just as Whittredge and Achenbach assisted Leutze in completing the sky on the large version—the present work was also completed by Leutze with the assistance of one of his students, in this case Eastman Johnson. The painting is recorded in the Goupil stock books on July 26, 1851, and following its analysis for printmaking, would be exhibited as Leutze’s smaller version of his famous *Washington Crossing the Delaware* at New York’s Crystal Palace in 1853-54 and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1854. The work was then sold by Goupil in New York in November 1857, likely to Alexander White of Chicago, who would loan the present work to an exhibition at his city’s Burch Building in 1859.



Stuyvesant Institute Exhibition catalogue of Leutze's great national picture of *Washington crossing the Delaware*, 1851. Photo:Yale University Library.

“THE GREATEST PRODUCTION OF THE AGE”: CRITICAL RECEPTION

In October 1851, Leutze's second large-scale version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was unveiled in New York City, where by February 50,000 visitors had paid 25 cents each to view the picture. Henry James recounted the experience in *A Small Boy and Others*, “No impression here...was half so momentous as that of

“No impression here...was half so momentous as that of the epoch making masterpiece of Mr. Leutze, which showed us Washington crossing the Delaware in a wondrous flare of projected gaslight and with the effect of a revelation to my young sight...”

Henry James

the epoch-making masterpiece of Mr. Leutze, which showed us Washington crossing the Delaware in a wondrous flare of projected gaslight and with the effect of a revelation to my young sight...We went down, after dinner, in the Fourteenth Street stage, quite as if going to the theatre; the scene of exhibition was near the Stuyvesant Institute...We gaped responsive to every item, lost in the marvel of the wintry light, of the sharpness of the ice-blocks, of the sickness of the sick soldier, of the protrusion of the minor objects, that of the strands of the rope and the nails of the boots...above all, of the profiled national

hero's purpose, as might be said, of standing up, as much as possible, even indeed of doing it almost on one leg, in such difficulties, and successfully balancing. So memorable was that evening to remain for me...”



Emanuel Leutze, *Washington rallying the troops at Monmouth*, 1853–1854. UC Berkeley, Berkeley Art Museum. Photo: University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Gift of Mrs. Mark Hopkins.

In addition to the public, the American art critics immediately praised the picture with such superlatives as “incomparably the best painting yet executed for an American subject” (*Literary World*) and “the grandest, most majestic and most effective painting ever exhibited in America.” (*New York Evening Mirror*) Abraham Cozzens, President of the American Art-Union, declared, “I consider the picture of ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware’ as one of the greatest productions of the age, and eminently worthy to commemorate the greatest event in the military life of the illustrious man whom all nations delight to honor.” (*Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, October 1852, p. 118)

In March 1852, the large-scale painting was then displayed in the Rotunda of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., where the Senate agreed to a proposal by Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire that it be purchased for the President’s Mansion. Since the work had already been sold by Goupil to New Yorker Marshall O. Roberts for in excess of \$10,000, Leutze instead proposed he create a second version for the Capitol with a companion work of *Washington Rallying the Troops at Monmouth*.

“We do not hesitate to pronounce this picture the grandest, most majestic, and most effective painting ever exhibited in America. The subject, the design, the grouping, the coloring, and all the details, combine to tell the story of this great event, and to thrill all who gaze on this master work of Art with a touch of what the rhetoricians term the ‘Moral Sublime.’ The scenery, the atmosphere, the ice, the frost particles upon the clothing of the men, the expression of the sturdy oarsmen, and the heroic countenance of Washington, who carries the American Revolution in his heart, are all depicted to the life—and in a style to baffle criticism. It is the best commentary upon the ‘times that tried men’s souls’ that we have ever seen, and we hope it will be exhibited in every city of the Union, until it has been visited and revisited by every man, woman and child in the Republic of Washington.”

New York Evening Mirror, November 7, 1851



Picture gallery featuring *Washington Crossing the Delaware* at the Metropolitan Fair, New York, 1864. Photo: The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library.

While the government commission unfortunately never came to fruition, Leutze would complete the pendant piece under the patronage of David Leavitt of Massachusetts (1854, now in the collection of the Berkeley Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley). Leutze would also complete a painting of *Washington at Dorchester Heights* (1852) for the Public Library of the City of Boston.

“I consider the picture of ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware’ as one of the greatest productions of the age, and eminently worthy to commemorate the greatest event in the military life of the illustrious man whom all nations delight to honor.”

Abraham Cozzens, President of the American Art-Union, October 1852

Through these popular early exhibitions, and the engraving based on the present work, Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was soon ubiquitous in popular culture. As Mark Twain sarcastically noted in his 1883 *Life on the Mississippi*: “Every town and village along that vast stretch of double river-frontage had a best dwelling, finest dwelling, mansion...Over middle of

mantel, engraving—Washington Crossing the Delaware; on the wall by the door, copy of it done in thunder-and-lightning crewels by one of the young ladies—work of art which would have made Washington hesitate about crossing, if he could have foreseen what advantage was going to be taken of it.”



The present work hanging in the West Wing lobby of the White House, July 2005. Photo by Peter Vitale. © 2005 White House Historical Association.

The present work is among “the most important American paintings ever to hang in the White House.”

White House Curator Clement Conger, 1979

AN ENDURING AMERICAN ICON

170 years later, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* remains as relevant and renowned in American culture as when the work inspired praise upon its initial debut. With The Metropolitan Museum’s version prominently displayed as the central piece in the American Wing, the present version also has a notable exhibition history, from multiple shows at

“It is a work that will be as immortal as its subject.”

The Knickerbocker, December 1851

The Metropolitan, to the Smithsonian Institutions in Washington, D.C. and even back in Düsseldorf.

This painting hung in The White House for decades,

beginning in Nixon and Carter’s administrations in the 1970s through President Obama’s tenure, when it hung in the West Wing lobby. When installed on long term loan in 1979, White House Curator Clement Conger remarked that this work was among “the most important American paintings ever to hang in the White House.” (*Washington Post*, May 19, 1979)



Cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*, February 24th, 1951. Photo: © SEPS licensed by Curtis Licensing Indianapolis, IN.



Drawing by Barry Blitt, cover of *The New Yorker* from November 1st, 2021. © The New Yorker Magazine, Condé Nast Publications



George Caleb Bingham, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1856–71. Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA. Photo: IanDagnall Computing / Alamy Stock Photo.

Moreover, the iconic nature of Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* has over the past century and a half far transcended the artist's paintings, and even the related engraving, to become firmly imbedded in the collective consciousness. In addition to countless pop culture references and parodies, the imagery appears again and again in the work of artists following in Leutze's footsteps. For example, just a few years later in 1855, George Caleb Bingham declared his intention to produce a picture of Washington "in a manner that would rival the far famed picture by Leutze," resulting in his *Washington Crossing the Delaware* of 1856-71 in the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia.



Grant Wood, *Daughters of Revolution*, 1932. © 2022 Figge Art Museum, successors to the Estate of Nan Wood Graham/Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: © Cincinnati Art Museum / The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial / Bridgeman Images.

Reinterpretations have persisted throughout the 20th and even 21st century, utilizing Leutze's iconic archetype as a starting point for modern commentary. Grant Wood caricatures his gray-haired *Daughters of Revolution* with a version of the engraving behind them (1932, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio), and Roy Lichtenstein and Larry Rivers have adapted Leutze's composition via their own personal styles. The Metropolitan Museum has juxtaposed their Leutze with Jacob Lawrence's 1954 interpretation of the scene as well as Kara Walker's 2017 reaction *The Crossing* (Private Collection), and Robert Colescott riffs on the image to underscore racist stereotypes in traditional accountings of American history in his 1975 *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware River: Page from an American History Textbook* (Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, Los Angeles, California).



Left: Roy Lichtenstein, *Washington Crossing the Delaware II*, 1951. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein. Right: Larry Rivers, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1953. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2022 Estate of Larry Rivers / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY. Photo: © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



Left: Jacob Lawrence, *We crossed the River at McKonkey's Ferry 9 miles above Trenton ... the night was excessively severe ... which the men bore without the least murmur...*—Tench Tilghman, 27 December 1776/*Struggle Series - No. 10: Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1954. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. © 2022 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation / Art Resource, NY. Right: Kara Walker, *The Crossing*, 2017. © Kara Walker; Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.



Robert Colescott, *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook*, 1974–75. Private collection. © 2022 The Robert H. Colescott Separate Property Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



“I wish that every school child and teacher could see the original of the famous Leutze painting of ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware.’”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware* has not only forever changed how America remembers one of its first heroes, cementing the cult of Washington into the culture of the nation, but also has over the past 170 years become an icon of American history in its own right. As *The Knickerbocker* urged its readers in 1851, “Go and see Leutze’s great painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*...It is itself the orator of the scene and the occasion. The crowds who throng to see it by day and by night attest its character. It is a work that will be as immortal as its subject.” (*The Knickerbocker*, vol. XXXVIII, December 1851, p. 660)

EMANUEL LEUTZE (1816-1868)
WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE

signed 'E. Leutze' (lower right)
oil on canvas
40 x 68 in. (101.6 x 172.7 cm.)
Painted in 1851.

\$15,000,000-20,000,000

PROVENANCE:

Goupil, Vibert & Company, New York, commissioned from the artist, until 1858.
Alexander White, (probably) acquired from the above, by 1859.
Sale: Henry Leeds and Co., New York, 22 May 1863, sold by the above.
William H. Webb, New York, acquired from the above.
Sale: H.D. Miner's Art Gallery, New York, *First Evening's Sale, A Very Fine Assemblage of Works of Art; Comprising the Private Gallery of Paintings, Statuary, Bronzes and Art Library of Mr. Wm. H. Webb*, 29-30 March 1876, lot 65, sold by the above.
Stephen R. Leshner, New York, (probably) acquired from the above.
Arthur Lawrence Leshner, New York, by descent, 1895.
Mrs. Arthur Lawrence Leshner, New York, by descent, 1931.
Mrs. Dewey Everett, New York, by descent, 1946.
Mr. Francis Dewey Everett, Jr., New York, by descent, 1953.
Ambassador and Mrs. J. William Middendorf II, New York, acquired from the above, 1967.
Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 25 October 1973, lot 13, sold by the above (as Eastman Johnson, after Emanuel Leutze).
Duane Hillmer, Omaha, Nebraska, acquired from the above.
Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 20 April 1979, lot 28, sold by the above (as Eastman Johnson, after Emanuel Leutze).
Manoogian Collection, Taylor, Michigan, acquired from the above.
Acquired by the present owner from the above, 2014.

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Washington, D.C., The U.S. State Department, *circa* mid-1970s, on loan.





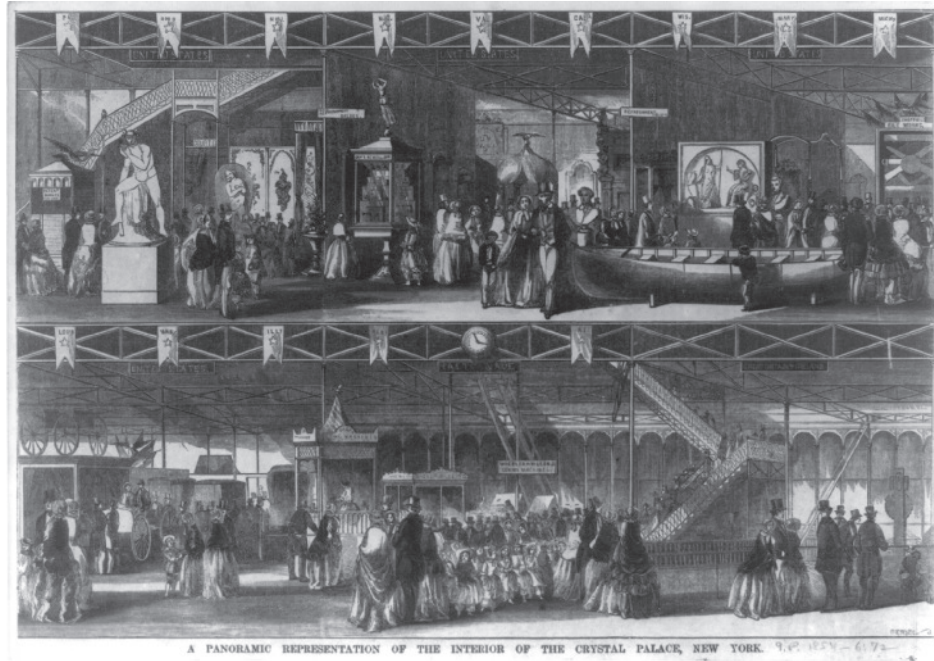
The large-scale version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1907. Photo: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Omaha, Nebraska, Joslyn Art Museum, *circa* mid-1970s, on loan. Washington, D.C., National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, *Emanuel Leutze, 1816-1868: Freedom Is the Only King*, January 16-March 14, 1976, pp. 38-39, 83-84, no. 57, fig. 23, illustrated (as Emanuel Leutze With Eastman Johnson). Düsseldorf, Germany, Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, *The Hudson and the Rhine: Die amerikanische Malerkolonie in Düsseldorf im 19. Jahrhundert*, April 4-May 16, 1976, pp. 69-70, no. 105, cover illustration (as *Washington Überquert Den Delaware*). Washington, D.C., The White House, 1979-2014, on extended loan. Washington, D.C., National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, *G. Washington, A Figure Upon the Stage: An Exhibition in Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of His Birth*, February 22, 1982-January 7, 1983, pp. 50-51, fig. 25, endsheet illustration (as Eastman Johnson, after Emanuel Leutze). New York, IBM Gallery of Science and Art; Washington, D.C., Corcoran Gallery of Art; Dallas, Texas, Dallas Museum of Art; Miami, Florida, Center for the Fine Arts; Phoenix, Arizona, Phoenix Art Museum, *Picturing History: American Painting, 1776-1930*, September 28, 1993-November 13, 1994, pp. 6, 183, no. 166, pl. 124, cover illustration (as Eastman Johnson & Emanuel Leutze). Winona, Minnesota, Minnesota Marine Art Museum, 2015-22, on extended loan.

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A panoramic representation of the interior of the Crystal Palace, New York, 1854. Photo: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-11450.

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Photograph of the present lot in the exhibition "Picturing History: American Painting, 1770-1930," May 1-July 10, 1994, held at the Dallas Museum of Art. Photo: Dallas Museum of Art Exhibition Records Collection.

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