



EMANUEL LEUTZE

Self-portrait, not dated. May be the picture mentioned in the New York "Evening Post," March 19, 1860, where a self-portrait of Leutze is listed. It was probably painted after Leutze's return to the United States in 1859 and before 1860. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts acquired it in 1943.

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE

BY RAYMOND L. STEHLE*

IT WAS in Philadelphia that Emanuel Leutze grew up, was educated, and entered upon his career as an artist. Philadelphia was his home from the age of nine, when he arrived from Germany with his immigrating parents, until he left at the age of twenty-four to continue his training in art in Düsseldorf.

About 1849, having been abroad for eight years, he began preparations to return home. At Düsseldorf he had taken up historical painting, a field in which artists in the United States had shown but little interest. Thinking that an appealing example of what could be done with an American theme in this field would bring commissions, he devoted about two years to painting what turned out to be his most famous picture, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. The reception it received when it arrived in New York was all he could have desired. But commissions were not forthcoming. Why not will be related in what follows. Disappointed, for he had hoped to be able to bring his young family to America, he returned to Düsseldorf.

In 1859 the prospect for commissions again seemed good. The extensions to the Capitol had been completed, the walls were ready for murals, and his reputation was high. However, it was only after two years of waiting and uncertainty that, in 1861, he finally received a commission. Its fruit was *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, a mural in one of the four large stairways of the Capitol. Opinion regarding it was so overwhelmingly favorable that other commissions would undoubtedly have been awarded him, except that Congress in 1862 and the following years was in no mood to make appropriations for art. After finishing *Westward Ho!* as the mural is also called, Leutze brought his family to America. Even though the likelihood of commissions from a government at war was small, he seems to have regarded future prospects as favorable. His subsequent life in the United

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States was probably much like that of other artists of the period, but for some time before his death in 1868 there is reason to believe that he was in poor health and heavily in debt. He is buried in Washington under a simple stone which bears only his name and dates.

Leutze painted only three really large pictures: *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, *Washington Rallying the Troops at the Battle of Monmouth*, and *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*. The first two are oil on canvas, the last is a mural. All three were time-consuming labors, and the first, because of an accident, had to be painted a second time.

In 1849 Leutze was expecting to return home to America from Düsseldorf. Something went wrong with this plan. In the *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union for October, 1849, one reads:

Leutze has postponed his visit to America until next year. He is about to paint *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, the figures to be of life size. He has already made a number of studies for this work.¹

The same journal for May, 1850, says:

Leutze, having obtained a large apartment over the railroad depot, is at length fairly at work on his *Washington Crossing the Delaware* for which he has for some time been making studies.²

This item is somewhat inaccurate. According to the Düsseldorf correspondent of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, November 8, 1850, Leutze's studio at this time was an apartment in the inn "Im Kuxhaven." This inn was located between Düsseldorf's two railroad stations, which were then near what is now Graf-Adolf-Platz.

In August, 1850, a correspondent of the American Art-Union wrote from Düsseldorf:

I have seen Leutze's picture (The Passage of the Delaware). It being only half underpainted one cannot, of course, see what the effect will be. On the whole I think

¹ *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, II (October, 1849), p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, May, 1850, p. 31. In 1850 and 1851 this *Bulletin* did not use volume numbers.

it ought to be very fine—far superior to anything he has yet produced. It is energetically drawn and composed and full of character.³

Charles Lanman in his *Haphazard Personalities* (1886), in a biographical sketch of Leutze, described one of the difficulties which faced him in painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. He writes:

The difficulty was the want of a type of American character, especially a type which would help him delineate the men whose characters were moulded by the Revolution. While all the more prominent countries of the world were old enough in civilization to be characterized by a type, he saw that the United States, though marching on to immense power and greatness, was without this symbol of distinction. He discovered the type he was seeking in a peculiar contraction of the brow and a brilliant eye, and a mouth which denoted indomitable perseverance, industry, energy and fearlessness. No sooner had he made this discovery than it appeared to him plain as a solved riddle. This type was the enigma of his life, and absorbed his thought for a period of six years. In less than nine months after his mind had settled itself upon his new ideas, he painted his first American picture of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*.⁴

In 1850 and 1851, while Leutze was engaged on this painting, Worthington Whittredge and Eastman Johnson were in Düsseldorf and watched the development of the work from sketches to the finished picture. Some details are to be found in Whittredge's *Autobiography* (1942) and in *Eastman Johnson* by J. I. H. Baur (1940).

Whittredge says:

He found great difficulty in finding American types for the heads and figures, the German models being either too small or too closely set in their limbs for his purpose. He caught every American that came along and pressed him into service.⁵

³ *Ibid.*, August, 1850, p. 83.

⁴ Charles Lanman, *Haphazard Personalities* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1886), pp. 254 ff.

⁵ J. I. H. Baur, ed., *Worthington Whittredge, Autobiography, 1822-1910* (*Brooklyn Museum Journal*, Brooklyn Museum of Arts and Sciences, 1942), pp. 22 ff.

Whittredge goes on to state that for the only figure not painted from an American model the artist used a Norwegian acquainted with ice and accustomed to boats. A friend from Cincinnati, who was visiting him, posed for the wounded man with a bandage on his head. Whittredge says that on one occasion he himself posed as Washington for two hours steady, so that Leutze could paint the general's cloak at one sitting. The head of Washington is based upon a Houdon bust, according to the same authority; by this is probably meant the mask shown in Roeting's portrait of Leutze.⁶ Since this portrait was painted in 1847, it seems that Leutze's thoughts were upon "Washington pictures" several years before the first one appeared. Where he obtained the mask is not known. Actually he had three of them and at dates unknown gave them to friends, one to C. K. Stellwagon, a second to John R. Briggs, and a third to George W. Riggs. All three are in Washington; the first is in the Corcoran Gallery, the second in the museum of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the third is privately owned.

In order to have the sky as he wished it Leutze wanted the canvas to be covered completely at one session. He therefore enlisted the services of Andreas Achenbach and Whittredge, having himself mixed the paint the night before. Eastman Johnson is said by Whittredge to have obtained the Washington uniform for Leutze. Johnson's father was then in the government service in the capital, and he had a uniform once worn by Washington copied by a local tailor.

Johnson shared Leutze's studio while the big picture was being painted. In a letter now in the possession of his nephew, Admiral A. N. Johnson of Washington, a few words of which are missing because of damage, he wrote:

With six in a room, a cask of the best baierisch beer behind the great canvas and a disposition to be jolly you may be sure it does not want for animation. Leutze is an energetic, talkative fellow, generous and full of spirits. He is one of the . . . [?] artists here, and in an atelier a vast deal of company as he paints, sings and fences

⁶ This portrait is now in the Historical Collections of the City of Düsseldorf. An engraving made from it by A. H. Payne, which first appeared in Payne's *Universum und Buch der Kunst* (Leipzig, New Series, III, 1856), is occasionally reproduced.

altogether. To give a more decided tone to the place three cannons were recently brot and a battery constructed with the stars and stripes waving on one side and the black and white of Prussia on the other. Nothing could exceed the enjoyment produced by the sound of the entire battery, so that almost every one that enters is received with three guns, and accordingly up to the present time there has been a pretty uninterrupted cannonade. The fun has been increased by shooting with bullets also and the walls are fearfully scarred with the continued bombardment. . . . With so much tumult you might suppose there could be very little work, but Leutze has painted the most of his immense picture in the last three months.⁷

Parke Godwin was apparently among the Americans who saw Leutze at work on *Washington Crossing the Delaware* and later watched him at work in the Capitol. Long afterwards he recalled these experiences in an address given at the fiftieth anniversary of the Century Association of New York in 1897. He said:

I have stood beside the burly Leutze as he portrayed our Washington among the ice of the Delaware or depicted the multitudinous trains of emigrants making their western way.⁸

The author of an article in the *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union for October, 1850, saw the new picture when it was nearly finished. He gives a full description of it and ends with "the picture will be an ornament to our country."⁹

The *Literary World* for November 30, 1850, under "Fine art gossip" reported: "Mr. Leutze is expected home next month bringing with him his great painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*."¹⁰

This was not to be. "We stop the presses to announce a most melancholy event," said the *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union for December, 1850.¹¹ Then follows a letter from Leutze dated at

⁷ J. I. H. Baur, *Eastman Johnson, 1824-1906* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, 1940), pp. 11-13.

⁸ *Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Century* (New York: The Century Association, 1897), p. 56.

⁹ *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, October, 1850, p. 117.

¹⁰ *Literary World*, New York, VII (November, 1850), 433.

¹¹ *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, December, 1850, p. 159.

Düsseldorf, November 10, 1850. It relates that five days before, just as he had put down his palette to leave for dinner, flames broke into the studio from below. The painting was cut from the frame and rolled up successfully, but the people outside in their zeal to help handled it so roughly that it was broken in five places. Leutze regarded it as beyond salvaging. The insurance company paid the amount of its liability immediately and thereby became the owner of the damaged picture. The company did not regard the painting as beyond repair, and Leutze wrote that their intention was to dispose of it by lottery, ten thousand chances at one thaler per chance, the proceeds to go to a charity. The copy-right remained Leutze's, and he was to have the right to use the picture for six months to assist him in its reproduction. He had already ordered a new canvas when he wrote his letter. The studio accident was reported in the *Düsseldorfer Journal und Kreisblatt* the next day and in the *Kölnische Zeitung* for November 8. Both accounts are much like Leutze's but provide the additional information that the fire broke out in the stable of the inn, which was beneath the large room used as a studio by Leutze and several fellow artists. Leutze's picture found temporary refuge in the Elberfelder railroad station.

Actually the picture was not beyond repair. Cutting it from the frame had reduced its dimensions, and rolling it up had caused some creases, but by December 22, 1850, it had been rehabilitated sufficiently to be put on exhibition in the great hall of the Kaufhaus Guericke, a fifteenth-century building in Cologne. There it was to remain until tickets to the value of thirty-five hundred thaler had been sold. Whether the lottery was ever held the writer does not know. There is a hiatus in the history of the picture between December, 1850, and July 1852, when it was on exhibition in Düsseldorf. The following September it was in the Berlin exhibition and was awarded a gold medal. The catalog of this exhibition stated that the picture had not been completed. Several German periodicals of the time review it enthusiastically: *Morgenblatt*,¹² *Die Grenzboten*,¹³ and *Deutsches Museum*.¹⁴ The *New York Evening Post* for December 15, 1852, mentions this exhibition in Berlin. In 1863 this first version of *Washington Crossing*

¹² *Morgenblatt*, Stuttgart, 1852, p. 1003.

¹³ *Die Grenzboten*, Leipzig, XI Jahrgang (1852, Band 4), 157.

¹⁴ *Deutsches Museum*, Leipzig, II Jahrgang (1852, Juli-Dezember), 780.

the Delaware found a resting place in the art gallery of Bremen. It was shown again in Berlin at the Jubilee exhibition in 1886. According to the catalog of the Bremen gallery for 1933 the picture hung in the "Washington Room." In 1943 it was consumed by fire in the gallery, the consequence of an air raid.

That Leutze's spirits had not been overwhelmingly depressed by the accident to his picture is clear from a document dated November 9, 1850.¹⁵ Shortly before, Robert Schumann had come to Düsseldorf to be Director of Music, and he was speedily made an honorary member of the Malkasten, the social club of the city's artists, which Leutze had helped to found. Leutze's signature is easily discernible among those of the many signatories to the proposal.

Let us return to the replica. In the letter written by Eastman Johnson from Düsseldorf in March, 1851, and quoted in part above, Johnson says that at the time of writing the picture was two thirds finished; then he continues:

I am making a reduced copy from which an engraving is to be made. It [Leutze's painting] is sold to the International Art-Union New York, and will be exhibited throughout the States in the fall.¹⁶

According to the *Düsseldorfer Journal und Kreisblatt* for July 16, 1851, the replica had been finished the day before. The news item stated that for a short time the picture would be on exhibition in the studio of the artist and would then be sent first to Paris (probably to Goupil and Company) and then to New York.

On September 1, 1851, Leutze arrived in New York on the steamship *Atlantic*. The *New York Evening Post* for September 3 welcomed him as follows:

We are happy to announce the arrival of our distinguished countryman E. Leutze, Esq. He has been absent in Europe for about ten years and has, during this period, devoted himself with unremitting energy to his profession. . . . We welcome the artist once more among us.

An item in a German magazine in the autumn of 1851 throws

¹⁵ *Hundert Jahre Künstler Verein Malkasten. 1848-1948* (Düsseldorf, 1948), p. 23.

¹⁶ Baur, *Eastman Johnson*, pp. 11-13.

some light on Leutze's intentions when he came to America with his picture. It reads:

Leutze, who has sold his large picture, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (which he completed in six months) for eight thousand thaler in New York, has followed his painting and will not return until the end of the year in order to get his family.¹⁷

This would indicate that Leutze intended at this time to remain permanently in America, and it is to be assumed that he did not do so because his hope for a commission was not fulfilled and because the future for a painter of historical subjects was not bright.

The picture was probably aboard Leutze's ship on his trip to the United States, but it was no longer his property. The *Providence Journal* for September 4 stated that the picture had been received by Goupil and Company, New York, that it would soon be exhibited, and that a fine large engraving would be published. Eastman Johnson had said that it had been purchased by the International Art-Union, which was another way of saying Goupil and Company. This French establishment engaged in selling works of art. Many of its engravings were made from pictures bought directly from the artist for this purpose. Sometimes the original picture was sent on a tour of exhibitions, orders being taken for the reproduction wherever it was shown. The *Literary World* in the spring of 1851 said:

Leutze's painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware* has been purchased by Goupil and Company who intend exhibiting it throughout the United States and will have it engraved in line style equal to the best publications.¹⁹

The *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union added a little later that Mr. Goupil had gone to Düsseldorf soon after the replica was started and contracted to buy it for ten thousand thaler, the picture to be finished by the following July.²⁰ *Harper's Magazine* for

¹⁷ *Illustrierte Zeitung*, Leipzig, XVII (September 1, 1851), 251.

¹⁸ *Providence Journal*, September 30, 1851.

¹⁹ *Literary World*, VIII (March 1, 1851), 175.

²⁰ *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, September, 1851, pp. 95-96.

June, 1851 stated that the price paid by Goupil was six thousand dollars and that the picture was nearly finished.²¹

At the meeting of the American Art-Union in New York on September 22, 1851, a big event in the art world, Leutze was present and was warmly greeted as an American artist who had gained fame abroad as well as at home. The New York *Evening Post* on September 23 reported:

Among the conspicuous persons of the occasion were, first and foremost Mr. Leutze, the great historical painter whose presence gave much delight to the admirers of his genius, Mr. Gray, who has recently returned from a brief visit to Europe, Mr. Brown, the sculptor, and Elliot, Rossiter, Flagg, Wenzler, and several other artists.

The President of the Art-Union, Abraham Cozzens, said, among other things:

Mr. Leutze left us young in years, and when just emerging on a career which his genius and talents have so greatly adorned. He returns with a reputation which confers credit and distinction on his country. He brings back to us not only the fame and honor he has acquired abroad, and which we have as common property, but he comes to present his countrymen with a noble monument to the memory of the Father of His Country. I do not hesitate to say to you, gentlemen, that I consider the picture of "Washington Crossing the Delaware" as one of the greatest productions of the age, and eminently worthy to commemorate the grandest event in the military life of the illustrious man whom all nations delight to honor. I am quite sure you will join me in cordially wishing health and happiness to Mr. Leutze.

At the mention of the name of Leutze the company gave three enthusiastic cheers, which brought the artist forward to return his thanks for the warmhearted manner in which he had been received.

In the course of this meeting a toast was proposed to the Art-Union of Philadelphia. A gentleman from that city, Joseph Sill, responded to it. The portion of his remarks relevant to our sub-

²¹ *Harper's Magazine*, III (June, 1851), 136.

ject was reported in the *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union as follows:

He has seen with great pleasure the welcome extended Leutze. You do well, he said, to honor him. He deserves all you can do or say in his behalf. But we claim him also. We think he belongs peculiarly to Philadelphia. It was there he first displayed his ability—he first developed his genius there. It gives me great pleasure to learn the high object for which he has now returned. He desires to establish a school of Art here which shall do honor to the country. This is an object in which we all have an equal interest. It is a national object, one which will tend to raise the Arts in this country to an equal standing with schools abroad. I hope that the design of Leutze will be highly successful and that he may be able to carry his noble purpose into complete fulfillment.²²

A correspondent of the *Providence Journal* had evidently attended the meeting. His communication, published on September 30, said:

Leutze was the hero of the occasion and charmed all by his simplicity and heartiness. He has no peculiar look of genius, but has a pleasant, florid countenance, quite as expressive of the good fellow as of the artist.

In October the picture was prepared for exhibition. A writer for *The Knickerbocker* for October, 1851, had evidently seen it. He wrote:

Within two short weeks of the present writing (September 18) will open at the Stuyvesant Institute, No. 659 Broadway, the exhibition of Leutze's grand picture of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, a production worthy in every way of the high reputation of our great American historical painter from whose gifted pencil it proceeds.²³

A writer for the *Literary World* had also seen the picture. He found it "incomparably the best painting yet executed of an American subject." About Washington he said that the portrayal had

²² *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, October, 1852, p. 118.

²³ *The Knickerbocker*, XXXVIII (October, 1852), 475.

"more energy than we have ever seen thrown into any painting of the great hero." He gave a detailed description of the work.²⁴ On October 23, 1851, a reporter of the New York *Evening Post* wrote that on that day he had seen at Waller and Kreeps the elegant frame intended for the picture.

On the night of October 28 about three hundred invited guests attended a preview; the picture seemed to be universally admired. Then followed the exhibition to the public. The press printed many enthusiastic notices. The November 1 issue of *The Albion* was, with minor reservations, very favorable in its long review of the picture. It observed that it differed from many first-class historical pictures, which must be examined before they can be appreciated, in that in this case, the merits immediately struck the eye. The reviewer wrote:

You feel imbued with its spirit, animated by its impulse and flushed with its excitement, ere you have breathing time to break it up into groups or see its details. [Concerning the figure of Washington the writer declared:] 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.²⁵

A New York correspondent of the Richmond *Whig* who signed himself "Battery" sent his paper a long review of the picture (dated November 1 and published in the issue of November 7). The New York *Evening Mirror* published its opinion on November 7. It said:

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

²⁴ *Literary World*, IX (October 18, 1851), 311.

²⁵ *The Albion*, new series, X (November 1, 1851), 525.

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.

On November 8, 1851, the *Home Journal* of New York said:

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.

The November issue of the *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union contained a review of the picture, written with practical certainty by Henry T. Tuckerman. One can be fairly sure that Tuckerman was among the first to see the painting after its arrival but was not free to describe it until the public exhibition had opened. After discussing the actual “crossing” as treated by historians, he described Leutze’s representation of it in considerable detail and with great enthusiasm and concluded his article with the suggestion that the decoration of the “halls” in the additions to the Capitol, the construction of which had been started not long before, be put under Leutze’s control. He deplored Americans’ failure to promote art in public places and looked with envy at the King of Prussia, who was then employing both Cornelius and Kaulbach in the decoration of the Camp Santo and the Museum, respectively, in Berlin. He said he did not see why “second rate powers so far excel our own great nation in rewarding Genius and in appropriating its use for public purposes.”²⁶

The Knickerbocker for December, 1851 reverted to the picture, saying:

Go and see Leutze’s great painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* at the Stuyvesant Institute exhibition room.

²⁶ *Bulletin* of the American Art-Union, November, 1851, pp. 130-132.

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.²⁷

By December more than 20,000 had paid to see it (twenty-five cents for adults, half as much for children). The *New York Observer* for February 5, 1852, said:

Notwithstanding the many thousands who have visited the splendid picture of Washington Crossing the Delaware there may be some who have not seen it. By all means let them seize the first opportunity. It is, in our opinion, altogether the noblest painting exhibited in this country for many a year and should be viewed and studied by every American.

A pamphlet announcing the exhibition at the Stuyvesant Institute states that the engraving was being done for Goupil and Company by Paul Girardet. The engraving was not distributed until 1853, when a copyright was issued to M. Knoedler,²⁸ who eventually became the successor to Goupil and Company in New York.

On February 20, 1852, the *New York Evening Post* noted that the unprecedented success of the superb picture of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* has induced the proprietors to open another season. Over 50,000 had crowded the exhibition. Then suddenly on February 23 the announcement was published that the picture had been sold for ten thousand dollars and that the exhibition would positively close on February 28. On the last day the exhibition was kept open until midnight for the thousands who wished to see the painting.²⁹ The purchaser was probably Marshall O. Roberts of New York. That he owned it early in 1853 is certain, as we shall see. The transaction evidently provided for the exhibition of the picture in Washington before it passed into Mr. Roberts's possession.³⁰

²⁷ *The Knickerbocker*, XXXVIII (December, 1851), 660.

²⁸ *Copyright Records*, New York, Southern District, June 1853-September 1853. No. 455, September 24, 1853.

²⁹ *New York Daily Tribune*, February 28, 1852.

³⁰ This account of events may be over-simplified. The *New York Daily Tribune* for February 23, 1852, said: "Leutze's great picture of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* has passed from the hands of its recent proprietors, Goupil and Vivert, into the artist's possession. It is his intention to remove

While the picture was on exhibition in New York, *Sartain's Magazine*, Philadelphia, said:

Leutze's picture is attracting great and deserved attention in New York. Apart from the merit of the figures, which surpass praise, we may mention that in this work the artist displays an incredible knowledge of the resources latent in aerial effect and perspective.³¹

The same magazine for March, 1852 noted that the picture continued to attract numerous visitors.³² Many newspapers throughout the country contained news of the exhibition sent in by their own correspondents or copied from New York publications.

The first mention of Leutze's picture which has been noted in Washington papers is in the *Republic* for March 11, 1852. It runs thus:

Lovers of the fine arts will, within a few days, be afforded the opportunity of examining Leutze's painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. This magnificent picture is, we believe, to be placed in the rotunda of the Capitol, and being the production of one of the first of living American artists cannot fail, apart from the interest of the subject, to command the admiration of the discerning public.

On March 15 the same paper announced the arrival of Leutze at Willard's Hotel.

On March 16, 1852, the *Daily National Intelligencer* of Washington carried this item:

It will gratify all our readers in the city to know that the great picture, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, has arrived in this city and yesterday was put up in the Rotunda of the Capitol for inspection. The painting, re-

it to Washington where, we are sure, it will attract the same unusual admiration that has followed it here." If this is accurate then Mr. Roberts probably acquired the picture from Leutze. There is some support for such a sequence of transactions at this time in an item from Washington published in the *Tribune* for March 30, 1852, which states that the picture had been sold for thirteen thousand dollars. It would seem from the simple account given above that Goupil and Company had found the exhibition of the picture so profitable that they wished to continue its exploitation. This could not have been to Leutze's liking, he being interested in exhibiting it in Washington with the hope of obtaining new commissions. The sale of the picture to Leutze and by him to Mr. Roberts may have been a way out of some obscure conflict of interests.

³¹ *John Sartain's Magazine*, X (January, 1852), 92.

³² *Ibid.*, X (March, 1852), 268.

markable for its size as well as for the high interest of its subject and its masterly execution, has won a wide celebrity and only a brief glance at it yesterday satisfied us that it deserves all the praise that has been bestowed upon it elsewhere.

The issues of this paper for March 22 and 26 and April 9 and 16 contain much about the picture and its painter and indicate that it had excited great enthusiasm in the city. On March 24 the *Intelligencer* carried an advertisement announcing that a subscription book for the large line engraving was open at Taylor and Maury's bookstore, where an "etching of the unfinished plate" could be seen.

No detailed reviews of the picture have been found in the Washington papers, but there are many references to it. A good part of the city and the vicinity undoubtedly saw it. On March 18 the Georgetown *Advocate* called attention to the exhibition then in course, and on March 23 the Alexandria *Gazette* stated that during the past week the picture had been visited by "a large number of our citizens," adding "it is a beautiful picture and reflects great credit on the artist." On April 3 Grace Greenwood, in one of her news letters (*National Era*, Washington, April 1, 1852) wrote:

Leutze's great painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* now being exhibited in the rotunda of the Capitol is attracting much attention and eliciting much praise. And it is a noble work. I think I never saw a picture so gloriously alive, in every figure, in every point. It has great boldness of design and execution—but no extravagance I think, no seeking after dramatic effect. It is vividly but not highly colored—thoroughly finished but not overdone. It would make an enviable fame for the artist were not that good work already accomplished.

The exhibition in the Capitol lasted from March 15 through April 4. On April 6 the Georgetown *Advocate* said, under the caption "Leutze's Painting":

This great painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was removed from the Capitol on Saturday evening. While there it was constantly surrounded by groups of admiring spectators. It had that kind of historic interest which seemed to send a thrill through the system and to

carry the mind back to the time when Washington, at the head of the Continental troops, worn down by want and sickness and dispirited by the successes of the enemy, thought it necessary to make a daring attempt to save the great cause in which the future liberty of the country was involved.

The presence of the picture in the Capitol soon had repercussions in Congress. The first reference to it is to be found in the *Congressional Globe*³³ for March 24, 1852. Here Senator John H. Clarke of Rhode Island, in introducing a petition in favor of George W. Greene of Rhode Island, a grandson of General Nathanael Greene of Revolutionary fame, referred to the painting saying: "In the splendid picture now in the rotunda you see him [General Greene] with his chief crossing the Delaware." Two days later, March 26, 1852, Senator John P. Hale of New Hampshire offered the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Committee on Public Buildings be instructed with the propriety of purchasing the great national painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, and occasioning the same to be placed in the mansion of the President of the United States.³⁴

The *Congressional Globe* in recording the deliberations of the Senate on March 29 said:

The Senate proceeded to consider the resolution of inquiry, submitted by Mr. Hale, the 26th inst., respecting the purchase of a historical painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, to be placed in the Mansion of the President of the United States, and it was agreed to.³⁵

This might seem to have settled the matter, but other artists or their friends soon introduced complications into the project which had started off as a burst of enthusiasm for Leutze's picture and a desire to acquire it for the nation.

The *Congressional Globe* for April 8, 1852, records a speech

³³ *Congressional Globe*, 32nd Congress, 1st Session, XXIV, Part 2 (March 24, 1852), 844.

³⁴ *Ibid.* (March 26, 1852), p. 878.

³⁵ *Ibid.* (March 29, 1852), p. 903.

and the presentation of a petition by Senator James Cooper of Pennsylvania. Both are interesting. The Senator said, in part:

I hold in my hand an application from Mr. Leutze, the distinguished American artist, the author of the painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, exhibited for the last two or three weeks [the exhibition had ended on April 4] in the rotunda of the Capitol. . . . The application of Mr. Leutze is addressed to Congress and proposes to repeat, with such emendations as experience may suggest, the beautiful painting to which I have just referred, together with a fellow to it the subject of which is to be *Washington Rallying Our Retreating Troops at the Battle of Monmouth*. . . . I hope the matter will not end with the presentation of the memorial but that the Committee on the Library, to whom I design to refer it, will give it an attentive and favorable consideration. . . . Since the application of Mr. Leutze was placed in my hands an artist of equal eminence and merit, has expressed the wish to execute for Congress, from subjects connected with our Revolutionary history, two paintings, the subject of one to be *The Throwing Overboard of the Tea in Boston Harbor*, the other *The Battle of Bunker Hill*.³⁶

The entry in the *Congressional Globe* concludes with: "The memorials were referred to the Committee on the Library." The House records that it likewise was referring the matter to the Committee on the Library. Whether the Committee on the Library ever considered Senator Cooper's resolution of April 8 is an open question.

Leutze's petition, according to the *Daily National Intelligencer* of Washington for April 9, 1852, was presented by him in response to suggestions made to him by "a large number of prominent men both in and out of Congress." The petition, which is still preserved in the National Archives, runs as follows:

The undersigned, being a citizen of the United States, and feeling a deep interest in whatever tends to promote a patriotic spirit in the hearts of his countrymen, has turned his attention to representing on canvas, the deeds of noble daring that bought for us our liberties; one of his efforts, has been exhibited for some time in the Rotunda of the Capitol, representing "Washington Crossing the Delaware," and this picture, having been pur-

³⁶ *Ibid.* (April 8, 1852), pp. 1004-1005.

chased for a private gallery,³⁷ he is desirous to repeat the same (with such emendations as his subsequent experience may suggest) for the government of the United States, and to make a fellow to it, exhibiting "Washington rallying the troops, at the Battle of Monmouth," both of which pictures would make appropriate embellishments for the Executive Mansion, or the new Capitol.

The undersigned therefore prays that he may have an order from Congress to paint two pictures as herein described.

E. Leutze

Washington, D. C., April 5, 1852.³⁸

It is clear that G. P. A. Healy (the other artist referred to by Senator Cooper) had heard of Leutze's petition even before it had been presented to Congress and had prepared a petition of his own so quickly that it could be presented simultaneously with Leutze's on April 8. Healy could act promptly because he was then in Washington to exhibit his picture, *Webster Replying to Hayne*, at the Washington City Hall.³⁹

Another artist, Peter Rothermel of Philadelphia, had many friends who thought that his merits deserved consideration if Congress were to commission any pictures, and more than twenty-five of them, including Rembrandt Peale and Thomas Sully, presented a petition in his behalf which reached the Senate May 11, 1852. To Leutze the likelihood of his receiving a commission must have seemed to have vanished. On May 16, 1852, he sailed for Europe on the steamship *Baltic*.

When the matter of paintings was taken up again in the Senate on June 8 the Rothermel petition was included along with the petitions of Leutze and Healy. The *Congressional Globe* states:

The Senate proceeded to consider the resolution submitted by Mr. Cooper on the 8th of April, respecting the employment of Leutze and Healy to execute certain paintings for Congress; and having been amended it was agreed to as follows: "Resolved, that the Committee on the Library is hereby instructed to inquire into the

³⁷ The "private gallery" referred to in this petition was probably, as suggested above, that of Marshall O. Roberts.

³⁸ In the National Archives this petition may be found under Senate Records R.G.46, Senate 32A-H5.

³⁹ This picture is now in Faneuil Hall, Boston; it is much larger than *Washington Crossing the Delaware*.

expedience of employing Mr. Leutze to repaint for Congress his painting representing *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, together with a fellow to it representing *Washington Rallying the American Troops at the Battle of Monmouth*; also of employing Mr. Healy to paint two pictures, one representing the *Throwing Overboard of the Tea in Boston Harbor*, the other the *Battle of Bunker Hill*; also Mr. Rothermel to execute two paintings the subjects likewise to be drawn from American Revolutionary history.⁴⁰

Here the matter stood until February 5, 1853, when Senator Cooper introduced the following resolution in the Senate:

Resolved, that the Committee on the Library be instructed into the expediency of commissioning Messrs. Healy, Leutze and Rothermel, or such other eminent native artists as they may think proper, to paint, with a view to the encouragement of American artists and the decoration of the chambers now being built for the use of the Senate and the House of Representatives, two pictures each, representing scenes in our Revolutionary history.⁴¹

The writer has not been able to find the records of the deliberations of the Library Committee, but Charles E. Fairman in his book *Art and Artists of the Capitol* states that it deliberated on the matter on February 10, 1853, and again on February 23. He does not give the result of the deliberations.⁴² On March 3, 1853, the 32nd Congress came to an end, and the new Congress seems not to have been interested in paintings for the Capitol or the Executive Mansion.

In recent years the statement is sometimes made that *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was refused a place in the Capitol. The foregoing account of the deliberations of Congress concerning it shows that this statement is pure invention; it was first made, so far as the writer has observed, in 1946.⁴³

A bit of speculation concerning Leutze's object in painting this

⁴⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 32nd Congress, 1st Session, XXIV, Part 2 (June 8, 1852), 1532.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 32nd Congress, 2nd Session, XXXI (February 5, 1853), 514.

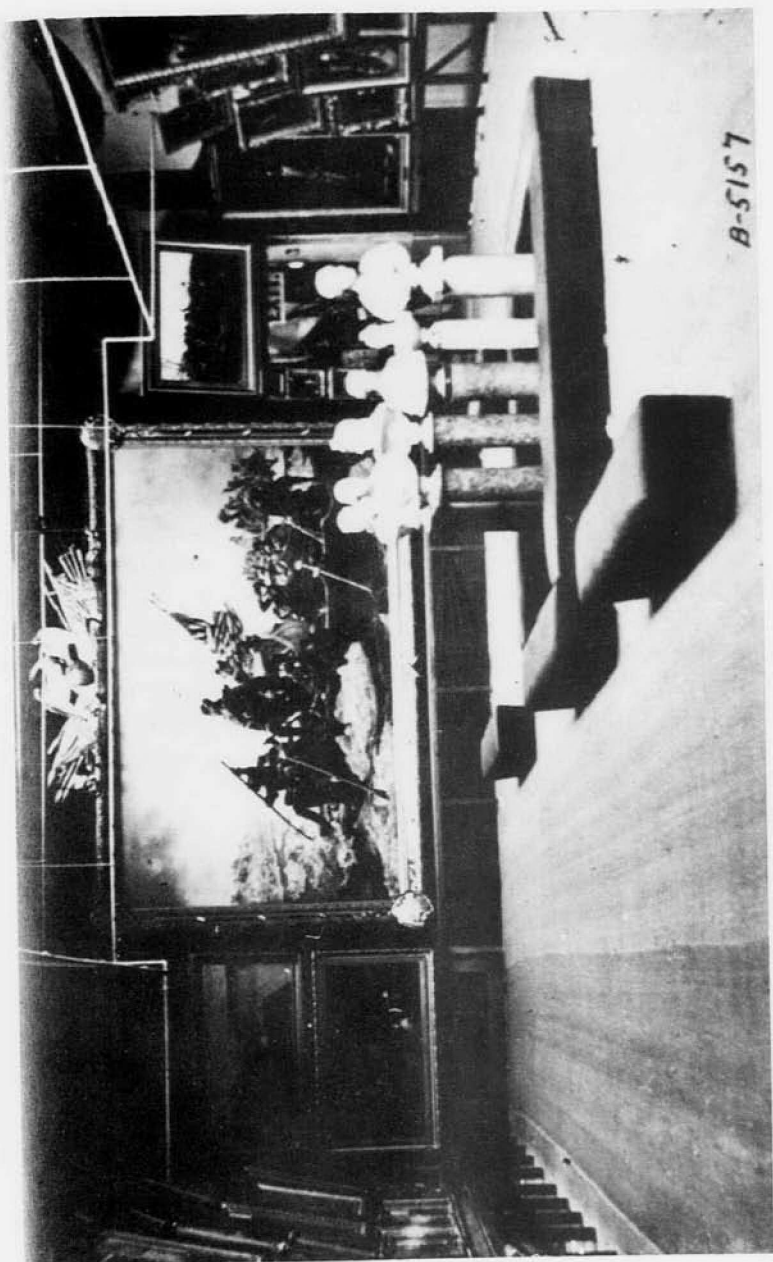
⁴² Charles E. Fairman, *Art and Artists of the Capitol* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 138.

⁴³ *Antiques*, XL (January, 1946), 110.

picture may not be out of place here. Its dimensions, 12 ft. x 21 ft., are such that it could have been fitted into one of the niches in the rotunda of the Capitol, and when he began work on his picture in 1849 one of the eight niches was still unfilled.

In the *National Intelligencer*, Washington, for November 14, 1846, two letters were published, one written by a layman, the other by someone with greater claim to knowledge in art matters. Both urged the same proposal, namely, that Leutze be commissioned to paint the picture for the remaining niche, the eighth, in the rotunda. The seventh had not yet been filled, but John W. Vanderlyn's picture was then finished and was installed early in 1847. By reading between the lines of these letters one may conclude that other people besides the authors had thought of Leutze in this connection too. However, still others with opinions about the matter maintained that Leutze was not an American—he had been in Europe for six years and was still there. This objection was heartily rejected by the writers of the letters in the *Intelligencer*, who pointed out that even if he had not been born in the United States he had grown up in this country and had been educated in it. In the layman's opinion Leutze "stood beyond dispute at the head of the American school . . . as the successor of Washington Allston to whose general excellence he joins a fertility, an ease of invention and execution, which the other was as far as possible from possessing." The connoisseur, in all probability Henry T. Tuckerman, described the virtues of Leutze's latest picture, *Puritans Sacking a Catholic Church*, in the greatest detail and with unstinted praise; he regarded Leutze as "the greatest artist we possess." Whether Leutze ever heard of the publication of these letters is not part of the record. We have seen that later, in 1852, when *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was on view in New York, Tuckerman again urged turning over to Leutze the supervision of decorations in the Capitol.

Following the installation of Vanderlyn's picture the next step in the art history of the rotunda was the award of a contract for a painting for the eighth niche to William H. Powell. At the very time that Vanderlyn's picture was put in place Powell was exhibiting a picture in the Library of the Capitol—*Columbus before the Grand Council of Salamanca*. This undoubtedly brought him to the attention of the Library Committee, so that about a year



THE METROPOLITAN FAIR

Held in New York City to aid the United States Sanitary Commission, April 4-23, 1864.
The National Archives

later, January 14, 1848, he was selected as the artist to paint the picture for the vacant niche (it was not installed until 1855). Just when Leutze heard of this award is also not on record. Eventually he must have heard of it, but when he started work on *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, some time in 1849, he seems not to have known of the Powell contract. The dimensions of the picture could be interpreted to mean that he thought the niche was still free and that a picture by him, into which he had put his best effort, might be found acceptable for it. When knowledge of the Powell contract finally reached him he sold his picture to Goupil and Company, but without abandoning hope that Congress might like it well enough to want a replica, and if it did would find a place for it somewhere in the Capitol or White House.

Washington Crossing the Delaware appears again in the news in 1853. A group of citizens of New York, interested in the establishment of a public gallery in the city, was sponsoring an exhibition called the "Washington Exhibition" in the galleries of the recently dissolved American Art-Union at 497 Broadway. *Putnam's Monthly* for April, 1853 states that the collection was the best ever assembled in the city,⁴⁴ an opinion expressed also by the *New York Tribune* for April 8, 1853. *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was one of the items in the exhibition; it was a loan from Marshall O. Roberts. Leutze's *Washington at Dorchester Heights* was also in the exhibition. Indeed a portion of the proceeds of the exhibition (the admission charge was twenty-five cents) was to be used to purchase the latter picture for the collection eventually to be installed in the hoped-for public gallery.⁴⁵

In 1864 *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was exhibited at the Metropolitan Fair held in New York in aid of the United States Sanitary Commission, the predecessor of the American Red Cross. In the catalog of the gallery it was item number one, loaned by Marshall O. Roberts. The *New York Herald* of April 4, 1864, the first day of the Fair, has this to say concerning the art exhibit:

The grand center piece, which stands at the north end of

⁴⁴ *Putnam's Monthly*, I (April, 1853), 471.

⁴⁵ This painting came into the possession of a Boston art dealer a few years ago; from him it was purchased through the gifts of citizens and school children of the City of Boston and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in 1955 was installed in the Boston Public Library.

the main gallery, is the celebrated historical painting,
Washington Crossing the Delaware.

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper for April 23, 1864, has a large woodcut of the gallery, and Leutze's picture is easily identifiable. The National Archives, Still Pictures Branch, has a Brady photograph of the gallery with this picture as the center of interest. Six other pictures by Leutze were in this exhibition.

On January 20, 1897, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was sold at the auction of the Roberts Collection. Representatives of the Corcoran Gallery of Washington (which was to occupy its new building on February 22) competed for the picture, which was bought by John S. Kennedy for \$16,100. The directors of the Corcoran Gallery were chided for not acquiring it.⁴⁶ At the completion of the sale the auctioneer announced Kennedy's intention of presenting it to the Metropolitan Museum. According to the *New York Times* the announcement was greeted with a shout of approval.

The picture has been the property of the Metropolitan Museum ever since. On April 27, 1897, at the opening of the 32nd Annual Exhibition, it was among the acquisitions which were shown to the public for the first time. Before the First World War was over it had become the subject of acrimonious news items and letters. This phase of its history is the subject of a chapter in Ann H. Hutton's book *Portrait of Patriotism* (1959);⁴⁷ here also the reader will find the story of the transfer of the painting in 1952 from the Metropolitan Museum to the site of the event itself, that is, to Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania. (Actually the transfer was from the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas, Texas, to which the Metropolitan had lent it.) Mrs. Hutton deserves the credit for this transfer. To her and her fellow members of the Washington Crossing Park Commission, who provided the solid, dignified little building which now shelters it, the thanks of those for whom Leutze painted it, his fellow Americans, are due.

One small version and several partial studies for *Washington Crossing the Delaware* are extant. The small version is in the Union Club, New York, on loan from Francis D. Everett, Jr.

⁴⁶ *Art Interchange*, XXXVIII (April, 1897), p. 82.

⁴⁷ Ann H. Hutton, *Portrait of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1959), esp. pp. 11-12.

This picture has been a family possession since 1863, when it was acquired by Stephen R. Leshner, the great-grandfather of the present owner.⁴⁸ It was probably acquired at the auction held in New York on May 21 and 22 of that year by H. H. Leeds and Company. According to the advertisement of the sale, the picture to be sold was "the second and smaller picture on this subject and the one from which the fine engraving was taken in 1856 [*sic*]." It is pertinent to say that the Everett version is not a study for the Bremen painting; it is identical with the Metropolitan version except for size. At the auction this picture was sold to an unnamed purchaser, probably Leshner, for eleven hundred dollars.⁴⁹ The picture is signed but not dated.

The account just given leaves a hiatus in the history of this picture between its first owner, Goupil and Company, and Leeds and Company which may be partially filled. In an exhibition of the fine arts held in Chicago in 1859 there were many pictures owned by Alexander White of that city. One of them was *Washington Crossing the Delaware* (no dimensions were given). At the Leeds auction of 1863 besides this picture there were many which White had had in the Chicago exhibition. Hence the owner of the small version in the Leeds auction was probably White, even though his name is not mentioned in connection with the auction.

The hiatus is thus reduced to the period between the middle of 1854 and some time prior to its exhibition in Chicago in 1859. Up until the latter half of 1854 it was undoubtedly still the property of Goupil and Company. Their engraver, Paul Girardet, must have needed it until some time before the copyright was issued (the date of copyright is September 24, 1853), for in a review of the American paintings in the Industrial Exhibition at the Crystal Palace published in the New York *Evening Post* for September 13, 1853, this small version is mentioned. The New York *Herald* for September 18, 1853, also makes it clear that the picture was the small one. A writer in the Newport, Rhode Island, *Mercury* for November 5, 1853, on seeing the picture at the Crystal Palace was moved to write: "We wish the artist could have had the vacant panel in the Capitol to fill, for obvious rea-

⁴⁸ Letter from F. Dewey Everett to the author.

⁴⁹ New York *Evening Post*, May 16, 1863.

sons." The last phrase could be interpreted to mean that while in New York he had seen Powell's *DeSoto* picture, which now fills the then vacant panel, but which was at that time on exhibition at the National Academy of Design. In the middle of 1854, at the 31st Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Number 48 of the catalog was *Washington Crossing the Delaware*; its owner was Goupil and Company, and it was for sale. This must have been the small version; it could not have been the large version, for, as we have seen, that had become the property of Marshall O. Roberts early in 1853. Just when Goupil and Company sold this small version to Alexander White is unknown.

A possibility exists that there may have been another owner of the small version between Goupil and Company and White. In an exhibition of the Rhode Island Art Association in 1854, among the three Leutze items listed was one entitled *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, contributed by W. H. Whitney. If this was a painting it could only have been the small version. Inasmuch as the exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy had closed only about August 12, and the Providence exhibition had opened about September 5, the acquisition of the picture by Whitney must have taken place some time after the opening of the academy exhibition on May 8. Alexander White could then have acquired the picture from W. H. Whitney. A simpler explanation for the complication caused by the Providence exhibition suggests itself. Mr. Whitney was a bookseller and an agent for Goupil and Company's reproductions. Since the Girardet engraving had been issued only a matter of months before the opening of the Providence exhibition, it may be that it was the engraving that Whitney had entered. This explanation is rendered plausible by the fact that in the brief notices of the exhibition which the writer has found (in the New-*port Mercury* for September 16 and October 7) Leutze is not even mentioned.

Above, reference was made to a statement by Eastman Johnson that he was making a copy of the picture from which an engraving was to be made. This plan seems not to have been carried out. An unfinished small version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, now owned by H. P. McCullough of North Bennington, Vermont, may be the Eastman Johnson version. Unfortunately

Mr. McCullough has no information respecting the history of the picture before he acquired it.

A study for Washington as he appears in the big picture is to be found in the National Academy of Design, New York. It was presented to the Academy by Leutze on his election to regular membership in 1860.

A study for one of the occupants of the boat is in the possession of J. D. Hatch, Jr., of Lenox, Massachusetts. It once belonged to Eastman Johnson, who had undoubtedly obtained it from Leutze himself.

In concluding this historical sketch of our title picture a few words about what may be called its companion piece, the second of the two pictures mentioned in Leutze's petition to Congress, seem appropriate. This picture, *Washington at Monmouth*, is one of the three large works which the artist painted. Congress failed to award him a commission to paint it, but a citizen of New York, David Leavitt, did, and its execution was the first thing to occupy Leutze after he returned to Düsseldorf. In 1854 the picture arrived in New York, where it was exhibited publicly for several months; it was then set up in Mr. Leavitt's private gallery at Great Barrington, Massachusetts. At his death in 1879 it is said to have been purchased by Mrs. Mark Hopkins for installation in the new Hokpins mansion in San Francisco. Events unrecorded obscure the whereabouts of the picture until 1882, when Mrs. Hopkins presented it to the University of California. Until 1885, or perhaps later, it was exhibited in the University Art Gallery and then, at an unknown date, was rolled up and put into storage—where it remains. Not even a photograph of this picture exists. We have called *Washington Crossing the Delaware* and *Washington at Monmouth* companion pieces. But fate has not been equally kind to them. One is known to every American and has recently been honored with a building of its own; the other has rested in a warehouse, unseen for seventy-five years.