

= Gilbert Stuart =

Gilbert Charles Stuart (born Stewart ; December 3 , 1755 ? July 9 , 1828) was an American painter from Rhode Island .

Gilbert Stuart is widely considered one of America 's foremost portraitists . His best known work is the unfinished portrait of George Washington that is sometimes referred to as The Athenaeum , begun in 1796 and never finished . Stuart retained the portrait and used it to paint 130 copies which he sold for \$ 100 each . The image of George Washington featured in the painting has appeared on the United States one @-@ dollar bill for over a century , and on various U.S. Postage stamps of the 19th century and early 20th century .

Throughout his career , Gilbert Stuart produced portraits of over 1 @, @ 000 people , including the first six Presidents of the United States . His work can be found today at art museums throughout the United States and the United Kingdom , most notably the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Frick Collection in New York City , the National Gallery of Art in Washington , D.C. , the National Portrait Gallery , London , Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts , and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Gilbert Stuart was born on December 3 , 1755 in Saunderstown , Rhode Island , a village of North Kingstown , and baptized at Old Narragansett Church on April 11 , 1756 . He was the third child of Gilbert Stewart , a Scottish immigrant employed in the snuff @-@ making industry , and Elizabeth Anthony Stewart , a member of a prominent land @-@ owning family from Middletown , Rhode Island . Stuart 's father worked in the first colonial snuff mill in America , which was located in the basement of the family homestead .

Gilbert Stuart moved to Newport , Rhode Island at the age of six , where his father pursued work in the merchant field . In Newport , Stuart first began to show great promise as a painter . In 1770 , Stuart made the acquaintance of Scottish artist Cosmo Alexander , a visitor of the colonies who made portraits of local patrons and who became a tutor to Stuart . Under the guidance of Alexander , Stuart painted the famous portrait Dr. Hunter 's Spaniels when he was fourteen years old ; it hangs today in the Hunter House Mansion in Newport . The painting is also referred to as Dr. Hunter 's Dogs by some accounts .

In 1771 , Stuart moved to Scotland with Alexander to finish his studies ; however , Alexander died in Edinburgh one year later . Stuart tried to maintain a living and pursue his painting career , but to no avail , so he returned to Newport in 1773 .

= = = England and Ireland = = =

Stuart 's prospects as a portraitist were jeopardized by the onset of the American Revolution and its social disruptions . Stuart departed for England in 1775 following the example set by John Singleton Copley . He was unsuccessful at first in pursuit of his vocation , but he then became a protégé of Benjamin West with whom he studied for the next six years . The relationship was beneficial , with Stuart exhibiting at the Royal Academy as early as 1777 .

By 1782 , Stuart had met with success , largely due to acclaim for The Skater , a portrait of William Grant . It was Stuart 's first full @-@ length portrait and , according to art historian Margaret C. S. Christman , it " belied the prevailing opinion that Stuart ' made a tolerable likeness of a face , but as to the figure , he could not get below the fifth button ' " . Stuart said that he was " suddenly lifted into fame by a single picture " .

At one point , the prices for his pictures were exceeded only by those of renowned English artists Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough . Despite his many commissions , however , Stuart

was habitually neglectful of finances and was in danger of being sent to debtors ' prison . During this period , he married Charlotte Coates . In 1787 , he fled to Dublin , Ireland where he painted and accumulated debt with equal vigor .

= = = New York and Philadelphia = = =

Stuart ended his 18 @-@ year stay in the British Isles in 1793 , leaving behind numerous unfinished paintings . He returned to the United States and settled briefly in New York City . In 1795 , he moved to Germantown , Pennsylvania , near (and now part of) Philadelphia , where he opened a studio . It was here that he gained a foothold in the art world and lasting fame with pictures of many important Americans of the day .

Stuart painted George Washington in a series of iconic portraits , each of them leading in turn to a demand for copies , and keeping Stuart busy and highly paid for years . The most famous and celebrated of these likenesses is known as The Athenaeum and is currently portrayed on the United States one dollar bill . Stuart , along with his daughters , painted a total of 130 reproductions of The Athenaeum . However , he never completed the original version ; after finishing Washington 's face , he kept the original version to make the copies . He sold up to 70 of his reproductions for a price of US \$ 100 each , but the original portrait was left unfinished at the time of Stuart 's death in 1828 . The painting was jointly purchased by the National Portrait Gallery and Museum of Fine Arts , Boston in 1980 , and was on display in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington , D.C. in late 2014 .

Another celebrated image of Washington is the Lansdowne portrait , a large portrait with one version hanging in the East Room of the White House . This painting was saved during the burning of Washington by British troops in the War of 1812 through the intervention of First Lady Dolley Madison and Paul Jennings , one of President James Madison 's slaves . Four versions of the portrait are attributed to Stuart , and additional copies were painted by other artists for display in U.S. government buildings . In 1803 , Stuart opened a studio in Washington , D. C.

= = = Boston , 1805 ? 1828 = = =

Stuart moved to Devonshire Street in Boston in 1805 , continuing in both critical acclaim and financial troubles . He exhibited works locally at Doggett 's Repository and Julien Hall . He was sought out for advice by other artists , such as John Trumbull , Thomas Sully , Washington Allston , and John Vanderlyn . In 1824 , he suffered a stroke , which left him partially paralyzed ; but nevertheless , he continued to paint for two years until his death in Boston on July 9 , 1828 at the age of 72 . He was buried in the Old South Burial Ground of the Boston Common . Stuart left his family deeply in debt , and his wife and daughters were unable to purchase a grave site . He was , therefore , buried in an unmarked grave which was purchased cheaply from Benjamin Howland , a local carpenter .

The Boston Athenæum held a benefit exhibition of his works in August 1828 in an effort to provide financial aid for Stuart 's family . Over 250 portraits were lent for this critically acclaimed and well @-@ subscribed exhibition . This also marked the first public showing of Stuart 's unfinished 1796 Athenæum Head portrait of Washington .

Stuart 's family recovered from their financial troubles roughly ten years later , and they planned to move his body to a family cemetery in Newport , Rhode Island . However , they could not remember the exact location of his body , and it was never moved .

= = Legacy = =

By the end of his career , Gilbert Stuart had taken the likenesses of more than one thousand American political and social figures . He was praised for the vitality and naturalness of his portraits , and his subjects found his company agreeable . John Adams , for example , said :

Speaking generally , no penance is like having one 's picture done . You must sit in a constrained

and unnatural position , which is a trial to the temper . But I should like to sit to Stuart from the first of January to the last of December , for he lets me do just what I please , and keeps me constantly amused by his conversation .

Stuart was known for working without the aid of sketches , beginning directly upon the canvas . This was very unusual for the time period . His approach is suggested by the advice which he gave to his pupil Matthew Harris Jouett : " Never be sparing of colour , load your pictures , but keep your colours as separate as you can . No blending , tis destruction to clear & beautiful effect . "

Stuart 's works can be found today at art museums and private collections throughout the United States and Great Britain , including the University Club in New York City , the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City , the National Gallery of Art in Washington , D.C. , the National Portrait Gallery in London , and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston .

His daughter Jane Stuart (1812 ? 1888) was also a painter . She sold many of his paintings and her replicas of them from her studios in Boston and Newport , Rhode Island .

A life mask of Stuart was created by John Henri Isaac Browere around 1825 .

In 1940 , the U.S. Post Office issued a series of Postage stamps called the " Famous Americans Series " commemorating famous artists , authors , inventors , scientists , poets , educators , and musicians . Gilbert Stuart is found on the 1 cent issue in the artists category , along with James McNeil Whistler , Augustus Saint Gaudens , Daniel Chester French , and Frederic Remington .

Today , Stuart 's birthplace in Saunderstown , Rhode Island is open to the public as the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum . The museum consists of the original house which Stuart was born in , with copies of paintings from throughout his career hanging throughout the house . The museum opened in 1930 .

= = Notable people painted = =

This is a partial list of portraits painted by Stuart .

Abigail Adams - Second First Lady of the United States , wife of John Adams

John Adams - Second President of the United States

John Quincy Adams - Sixth President of the United States

John Jacob Astor - First American multi-millionaire , fur trader , art patron

John Bannister - Owner of Bannister 's Wharf in Newport , Rhode Island

Commodore John Barry - Father of the American Navy

Ann Willing Bingham - Philadelphia socialite

Horace Binney - Prominent Philadelphia lawyer

Hugh Henry Brackenridge - early American writer , Pennsylvania Supreme Court justice , and founder of the University of Pittsburgh

Jean Baptiste Casmiere Breschard - Performer and theatrical impresario

Rosalie Stier Calvert - Belgian born heiress and mother of Charles Benedict Calvert

Mary Willing Clymer - Philadelphia socialite

John Singleton Copley - American colonial portraitist

Horatio Gates - American Revolutionary War general

King George III - King of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland , 1760 ? 1820

King George IV - King of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland , 1820 ? 30

John Jay - First Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court

Thomas Jefferson - Third President of the United States

Rufus King - a signer of United States Constitution .

Robert Kingsmill - Admiral in Royal Navy during American and French Revolutionary Wars

King Louis XVI - King of France , 1774 - 1792

James Madison - Fourth President of the United States

Daniel McCormick - New York merchant and banker

Samuel Miles - Revolutionary War General , Philadelphia Mayor , and America 's first faithless elector

James Monroe - Fifth President of the United States

Daniel Pinckney Parker - Prominent Boston Merchant

John Randolph of Roanoke - Virginia Congressman and Senator

Joshua Reynolds - English artist

Henry Rice - Boston merchant and Massachusetts state legislator

Thomas Townshend , 1st Viscount Sydney , in whose honour the cities of Sydney in New South Wales , Australia and Sydney in Nova Scotia , Canada , are named , in 1785 and 1788 respectively

George Washington - First President of the United States

Martha Washington - First First Lady of the United States , wife of George Washington

Benjamin West - American painter

Catherine Brass Yates - Philadelphia socialite

= = Portrait gallery = =

= = Stuart 's art on postage stamps = =

Gilbert Stuart 's paintings of Washington , Jefferson and others have been served as models for the engravings found on dozens of U.S. Postage stamps released over the years . Washington 's image from the famous Washington portrait , The Athenaeum , is probably the most noted example of Stuart 's work on U.S. Postage .

For other examples of Stuart 's art on US Postage see : US Presidents on US postage stamps

= = Artworks = =