

How many of you are familiar with the famous painting of “George Washington Crossing the Delaware”? This is the most reproduced painting in America. Now you will learn the story behind the painting.

Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, was born in Schwaebisch-Gmuend on May 24, 1816. In 1825 his family immigrated to United States for religious reasons. His parents settled first in [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#), then at [Fredericksburg, Va.](#) Leutze’s father, a silversmith by trade, managed in America only with difficulty and died in 1831.

Emanuel Leutze received his first instruction in art from J. A. Smith, a portrait painter in Philadelphia. Emanuel's portraits attracted attention even as a ten-year-old, and his painting, "Indians Looking at the Setting Sun," enabled him to go abroad and study at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf, where he met the painter Albert Bierstadt, who also was originally from Germany and had grown up in America. While at Düsseldorf, Leutze and Bierstadt studied under the tutelage of Karl Friedrich Lessing, a German historical and landscape painter. Soon Emmanuel Leutze and Albert Bierstadt became good friends and shared the wish "of paying dramatic tribute to their new homeland on canvas".

In 1842 Leutze went to [Munich](#), studying the works of [Cornelius](#) and Karlbach, and the following year he visited [Venice](#) and [Rome](#). In 1845 he returned to Düsseldorf and was married, making Düsseldorf his home for 14 years.

Leutze’s first work, [Columbus before the Council of Salamanca](#) was purchased by the Düsseldorf Art Union. The portrait "The First Landing of the Normans in America" brought Leutze fame in Germany that extended to America. Painting upon painting followed, often with life-size figures, such as "The Settlement of Maryland.” Leutze became famous as the painter of two worlds exemplified by "Crown Prince Friedrich II's Return from Spandau" and "Washington in Monmouth"

A strong supporter of Europe's [Revolutions of 1848](#), Leutze decided to paint an image that would encourage Europe's liberal reformers with the example of the American Revolution. Using American tourists and art students as models and assistants, Leutze finished [Washington Crossing the Delaware](#) in 1850. The first version of "Washington's Crossing" which was restored after suffering damage in a gallery fire, is the property of the Kunsthalle in Bremen; the second version hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

In 1859, Leutze returned to America, crowned with gold medals from both continents and bearing the title of professor conferred by the King of Prussia. Upon his return, Leutze was commissioned with the task of painting a portrait of U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice [Roger Brooke Taney](#) which today hangs in the [Harvard Law School](#) . Leutze was then commissioned to decorate the House of Representatives in Washington D.C. For this purpose, he undertook long, difficult journeys into unexplored areas and into Indian territory, which resulted in the painting "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way" wherein Leutze combined realistic Western landscapes with an allegorical portrayal of settlements on the borders of civilization.

On July 18, 1868, Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze died suddenly in Washington D.C. while at work on "Abolition of Slavery", another painting intended for the United States Capitol.

"Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze introduced into America the sentimental realism of German historical paintings, and because of this, the contributions of Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze must always be remembered fondly. Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze was a true German-American patriot.

### **Works Cited**

Center, German Information. Cazoo.org. 1976.  
<<http://cazoo.org/Germans/EmanuelLeutze.html>>.