

EMANUEL LEUTZE PAINTING:

~WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE~

With the possible exceptions of DaVincis' Mona Lisa and the Last Supper, this painting by Emanuel Leutze is perhaps the most universally recognized image in the entire history of art.

Born in Germany in 1816, Leutze emigrated to Philadelphia with his parents fourteen years later. It was there that he took his first art courses. He worked in Washington and New York and then in 1841 he left America for Europe where he settled in Dusseldorf as a pupil of Karl Friedrich Lessing whose influence led him to paint historical episodes, a style of painting much in vogue in Germany at the time.

After having studied in Munich and in Italy, where he painted a number of pictures that met with great success, Leutze executed the work destined to celebrate Washington's victory at Trenton, New Jersey. It was exhibited in the United States Capital in 1851. Its success brought the painter back to the United States where he was commissioned to decorate the Capital of Washington.

"Washington Crossing the Delaware" was reproduced many times, though his romantic interpretation of a crucial moment in the War of Independence has a dramatic impact that is hardly equaled by its aesthetic value.

On Christmas eve 1776 General Washington succeeded in ferrying 2,400 men and 18 cannon across the ice-choked Delaware River where he launched a stunningly successful surprise attack on a brigade of mercenary Hessian troops, saving his depleted army from extinction.

Washington's victory became a pivotal moment in the faltering American revolution. It was an astounding achievement forever etched in the history of the United States, raising the hopes of the American people from the depths of despair.