

Portrait of Alexander J. Cassatt and his son Robert Kelso Cassatt

Oil on Canvas

1884

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Mary Cassatt

American



Painting Highlights: Mary Cassatt painted this portrait of her brother Alexander and his son Robert (age 11) in 1884, when they came to visit her in Paris. Her brother, Alexander Cassatt, was a prominent American became the 7th president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In fact, during their lifetimes, he was probably more famous than his artist sister! His son Robert was one of Mary Cassatt's favorite nephews. "Aleck" was happy to spend long hours posing, but eleven-year-old "Rob" was impatient—his grandmother described him as "wriggling about like a flea." Note how close together the father and son are sitting. Their heads are right next to each other; Rob's face overlaps his father's. This technique highlights how much they resemble each other. Their dark lothes merge together to form one large shape. Father and son were so comfortable with each other that Cassatt painted them almost as if they were one person with two heads! Cassatt used the technique of cropping, she has placed the figures so close to us that Rob's feet and Aleck's feet and legs are cropped beyond the edges of the painting. Cassatt used contrasts to emphasize that the father and son are the main focus of the painting: their clothes are painted in dark colors—black and brown—while everything around them is painted in lighter colors—tan, gray, and yellow, with accents of red and white. Cassatt was very organized about the colors she used in her paintings. In a letter to an artist friend she wrote, "One thing I have learned, the absolute necessity for system in painting. Prepare your palette." She arranged her paints on her palette, or wooden tray, so that she could find them easily when she was working. Use of Precise brushstrokes define the curving, solid forms of the heads, faces, and hands, making them look in-focus and quite real. But note how different the brushstrokes are on the chair—large and scribbly. Cassatt painted them this way to create an impression of the nicely furnished living room Aleck and Rob sit in. Although the father-and-son subject of this painting is unusual for Mary Cassatt—she more often painted pictures of mothers and children—in this double portrait she deftly combines her fondness for her brother and nephew with her passion for depicting the human figure naturally and accurately.

Mary Cassatt was the daughter of a well-to-do real estate and investment broker. Although women of her day were discouraged from pursuing a career, Mary Cassatt enrolled in Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts at age 16. She found the male faculty and her fellow students to be patronizing and resentful. She left for Paris in 1866 and began her study with private art lessons in the Louvre. She continued to study and paint in relative obscurity until 1868, when one of her portraits was selected at the prestigious Paris Salon. Cassatt submitted the well-received painting under the name Mary Stevenson. In 1870, soon after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Mary Cassatt reluctantly returned home to live with her parents. The artistic freedom she enjoyed while living abroad was immediately extinguished upon her return to the outskirts of Philadelphia. Cassatt was contacted by the archbishop of Pittsburgh. He wanted to commission the artist to paint copies of two works by the Italian master Correggio. Cassatt accepted the assignment and left immediately for Europe, where the originals were on display in Parma, Italy. With the money she earned from the commission, she was able to resume her career in Europe. The Paris Salon accepted her paintings for exhibitions in 1872, 1873 and 1874, which helped secure her status as an established artist. She continued to study and paint in Spain, Belgium, and Rome, eventually settling permanently in Paris. Though she felt indebted to the Salon for building her career, Mary Cassatt began to feel increasingly constrained by its inflexible guidelines. No longer concerned with what was fashionable or, she began to experiment artistically. Her new work drew criticism for its bright colors and unflattering accuracy of its subjects. During this time, she drew courage from painter. Edgar Degas, whose pastels inspired her to press on in her own direction. Her admiration for Degas would soon blossom into a strong friendship, and Mary Cassatt exhibited 11 of her paintings with the Impressionists in 1879. The show was a huge success both commercially and critically, and similar exhibits were staged in 1880 and 1881. While many of her fellow Impressionists were focused on landscapes and street scenes, Mary Cassatt became famous for her portraits. She was especially drawn to women in everyday domestic settings, especially mothers with their children. But unlike the Madonnas and cherubs of the Renaissance, Cassatt's portraits were unconventional in their direct and honest nature and content. Commenting in *American Artist*, Gemma Newman noted that "her constant objective was to achieve force, not sweetness; truth, not sentimentality or romance." Mary Cassatt's painting style continued to evolve away from Impressionism in favor of a simpler, more straightforward approach. Her final exhibition with the Impressionists was in 1886, and she subsequently stopped identifying herself with a particular movement or school. Her experimentation with a variety of techniques often led her to unexpected places. For example, drawing inspiration from Japanese master printmakers, she exhibited a series of colored prints, including *Woman Bathing* and *The Coiffure*, in 1891. Soon after, Mary Cassatt began taking an interest in young, American artists. She also sponsored fellow Impressionists and encouraged wealthy Americans to support the fledgling movement by purchasing artwork. She became an advisor to several major collectors.

BIOGRAPHY

HOME



Mary Cassatt

Painter (1844–1926)

American Mary Cassatt was one of the leading artists in the Impressionist movement of the later part of the 1800s.

Synopsis

Born on May 22, 1844, in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, Mary Cassatt was one of the leading artists in the Impressionist movement of the later part of the 1800s. Moving to Paris, her home for the rest of her life, she was befriended by Edgar Degas. After 1910, her increasingly poor eyesight virtually put an end to her serious painting, and she died in 1926.

Early Life

Artist Mary Stevenson Cassatt was born on May 22, 1844, in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. Mary Cassatt was the daughter of a well-to-do real estate and investment broker, and her upbringing reflected her family's high social standing. Her schooling prepared her to be a proper wife and mother and included such classes as homemaking, embroidery, music, sketching and painting. During the 1850s, the Cassatts took their children abroad to live in Europe for several years.

Study of Art

Though women of her day were discouraged from pursuing a career, Mary Cassatt enrolled in Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts at age 16. Not surprisingly, she found the male faculty and her fellow students to be patronizing and resentful of her attendance. Cassatt also became frustrated by the curriculum's slow pace and inadequate course offerings. She decided to leave the program and move to Europe where she could study the works of the Old Masters on her own, firsthand.

Despite her family's strong objections (her father declared he would rather see his daughter dead than living abroad as a "bohemian"), Mary Cassatt left for Paris in

1866. She began her study with private art lessons in the Louvre, where she would study and copy masterpieces. She continued to study and paint in relative obscurity until 1868, when one of her portraits was selected at the prestigious Paris Salon, an annual exhibition run by the French government. With her father's disapproving words echoing in her ears, Cassatt submitted the well-received painting under the name Mary Stevenson.

Growing Artistic Reputation

NAME

Mary Cassatt

OCCUPATION

Painter

BIRTH DATE

May 22, 1844

DEATH DATE

June 14, 1926

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania
Academy of Fine
Arts

PLACE OF BIRTH

Allegheny,
Pennsylvania

PLACE OF DEATH

Le Mesnil-
Théribus, France

FULL NAME

Mary Stevenson
Cassatt

In 1870, soon after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, Mary Cassatt reluctantly returned home to live with her parents. The artistic freedom she enjoyed while living abroad was immediately extinguished upon her return to the outskirts of Philadelphia. Not only did she have trouble finding proper supplies, but her father refused to pay for anything connected with her art. To raise funds, she tried to sell some of her paintings in New York, but to no avail. When she tried again to sell them through a dealer in Chicago, the paintings were tragically destroyed in a fire in 1871.

In the midst of these obstacles, Cassatt was contacted by the archbishop of Pittsburgh. He wanted to commission the artist to paint copies of two works by the Italian master Correggio. Cassatt accepted the assignment and left immediately for Europe, where the originals were on display in Parma, Italy. With the money she earned from the commission, she was able to resume her career in Europe. The Paris Salon accepted her paintings for exhibitions in 1872, 1873 and 1874, which helped secure her status as an established artist. She continued to study and paint in Spain, Belgium and Rome, eventually settling permanently in Paris.

Unique Artistic Expression

Though she felt indebted to the Salon for building her career, Mary Cassatt began to feel increasingly constrained by its inflexible guidelines. No longer concerned with what was fashionable or commercial, she began to experiment artistically. Her new work drew criticism for its bright colors and unflattering accuracy of its subjects. During this time, she drew courage from painter Edgar Degas, whose pastels inspired her to press on in her own direction. "I used to go and flatten my nose against that window and absorb all I could of his art," she once wrote to a friend. "It changed my life. I saw art then as I wanted to see it."

Her admiration for Degas would soon blossom into a strong friendship, and Mary Cassatt exhibited 11 of her paintings with the Impressionists in 1879. The show was a huge success both commercially and critically, and similar exhibits were staged in 1880 and 1881. Shortly thereafter marked a dormant period for Mary Cassatt, who was forced to withdraw from the art world to care for her ill mother and sister. Her sister died in 1882, but after her mother regained her health, Mary was able to resume painting.

While many of her fellow Impressionists were focused on landscapes and street scenes, Mary Cassatt became famous for her portraits. She was especially drawn to women in everyday domestic settings, especially mothers with their children. But unlike the Madonnas and cherubs of the Renaissance, Cassatt's portraits were unconventional in their direct and honest nature. Commenting in *American Artist*, Gemma Newman noted that "her constant objective was to achieve force, not sweetness; truth, not sentimentality or romance."

Mary Cassatt's painting style continued to evolve away from Impressionism in favor of a simpler, more straightforward approach. Her final exhibition with the Impressionists was in 1886, and she subsequently stopped identifying herself with a particular movement or school. Her experimentation with a variety of techniques often led her to unexpected places. For example, drawing inspiration from Japanese master printmakers, she exhibited a series of colored prints, including *Woman Bathing* and *The Coiffure*, in 1891.

Artistic Activism

Soon after, Mary Cassatt began taking an interest in young, American artists. She also sponsored fellow Impressionists and encouraged wealthy Americans to support the fledgling movement by purchasing artwork. She became an advisor to several major collectors, with the stipulation that their purchases would eventually be passed on to American art museums.

Later Years and Death

A 1910 trip to Egypt with her brother, Gardner, and his family would prove to be a turning point in Mary Cassatt's life. The magnificent ancient art made her question her own talent as an artist. Soon after their return home, Gardner died unexpectedly from an illness he contracted during the journey. These two events deeply affected Cassatt's physical and emotional health, and she was unable to paint again until around 1912.

Three years later, she was forced to give up painting altogether as diabetes slowly stole her vision. For the next 11 years, until her death—on June 14, 1926, in Le Mesnil-Théribus, France—Mary Cassatt lived in almost total blindness, bitterly unhappy to be robbed of her greatest source of pleasure.

Article Title

Mary Cassatt Biography.com

Author

Biography.com Editors

Website Name

The Biography.com website

URL

<https://www.biography.com/people/mary-cassatt-9240820>

Access Date

October 18, 2017

Publisher

A&E Television Networks

Last Updated

April 2, 2014

Original Published Date

n/a

Alexander Cassatt

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Alexander Johnston Cassatt (December 8, 1839 – December 28, 1906) was the seventh president of the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), serving from June 9, 1899, to December 28, 1906.^{[1][2]} The painter Mary Cassatt was his sister.

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Pennsylvania Railroad [edit]

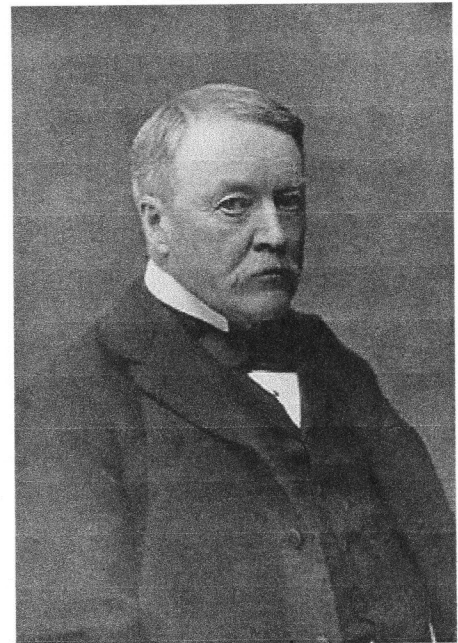
Frequently referred to as A. J. Cassatt, the great accomplishment under his stewardship was the planning and construction of tunnels under the Hudson River to finally bring PRR's trunk line into New York City. His purchase of a controlling interest in the Long Island Rail Road and the construction of tunnels under the East River created a PRR commuter network on Long Island. Unfortunately, Cassatt died before his grand Pennsylvania Station in New York City was completed.



Pennsylvania Station, New York, NY (1911, demolished 1963).

Cassatt joined the PRR in 1861 as an engineer and rapidly rose through the ranks. He was a vice president in 1877 when the Pittsburgh Railway Riots broke out in 1877, and had become Pennsy First Vice-President by 1880.^{[3]:326} He was disappointed to be passed over for the presidency and resigned from the company in 1882.

Alexander J. Cassatt



Alexander Cassatt somewhere between 1890 and 1900

Born	December 8, 1839 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Died	December 28, 1906 (aged 67) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Resting place	Church of the Redeemer Cemetery, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
Occupation	Railroad executive
Years active	1866-1906
Known for	President of Pennsylvania Railroad
Spouse(s)	Lois Buchanan (1847–1920)
Children	Edward Buchanan (1869–1922) Katherine Kelso (1871–1905) Robert Kelso (1873–1944) Elsie Foster (1875–1931)
Relatives	Mary Cassatt, sister
Honors	SS A. J. Cassatt

During his absence he devoted his time to horse raising but still was able to organize a new railroad the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad (NYP&N), that connected southern markets with the north. Despite no longer being an executive with PRR, he was elected to the PRR's board of directors and was recalled in 1899 to serve as president.^[4]

Cassatt more than doubled the PRR's total assets during his term, from US\$276 million to US\$594 million (an increase of 115 percent). Track and equipment investment increased by 146 percent. The route from New York through Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Altoona to Pittsburgh was made double-tracked throughout; to Washington, DC, four-tracked—Pennsy's "Broad Way." Many other lines were double-tracked; almost every part of the system was improved. New freight cutoffs avoided stations; grade crossings were eliminated, flyovers were built to streamline common paths through junctions, terminals were redesigned, and much more. Cassatt initiated the Pennsy's program of electrification which led to the road being the United States' most electrified system.

Cassatt was succeeded as Pennsylvania Railroad president by James McCrear.

Family and early life [edit]

Cassatt was born on December 8, 1839, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the eldest of seven children, the brother of Mary Cassatt born to Robert Simpson Cassatt (later Cassatt), and Katherine Kelso Johnston.^[5] The elder Cassatt, was a successful stockbroker and land speculator. He was descended from the French Huguenot Jacques Cossart, who came to New Amsterdam in 1662.^[6]

Her mother, Katherine Kelso Johnston, came from a banking family. Katherine Cassatt, educated and very well read ^[7] and it was said that it was Alexander who most resembled his mother in "appearance and temperament".^[5]

In 1856, he entered Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to study Civil Engineering where his senior thesis was entitled "Review of Pressure Turbine".^[5] After graduating in the summer of 1859, Robert Cassatt took Alexander to see a former neighbor from Lancaster Pennsylvania, James Buchanan, 15th President of the United States.

By the fall of 1860, Alexander had secured a position as a surveyor or rodman by the Georgia Railroad. By the time the State of Georgia voted to secede from the Union in January 1861, Cassatt had abandoned his work as surveyor on the Dalton-Knoxville line of the Georgia Railroad and returned to Pennsylvania without seeing any military service during the Civil War.^[5]

Civil engineer [edit]

In the Spring of 1861, Cassatt had been hired as part of the Engineer Corps of the Pennsylvania Railroad, again as a rodman where he worked on the Connecting Railway.^[5]

It is unknown how Cassatt managed to avoid the Pennsylvania militia draft during the Union mobilization in this period but in 1864, Cassatt was transferred to Renovo, Pennsylvania, as a resident engineer to work on the middle division of the Philadelphia and Erie railroad.^[5] In 1866, Cassatt became superintendent of motive power and machinery for the Oil Creek and Allegheny River Railway, recently reorganized in 1864 as the Warren and Franklin Railroad which was growing rapidly due to the discovery of oil in the region and coal mining.^[5]

In 1867, Cassatt was appointed as superintendent of motive power and machinery for the Pennsylvania railroad in Altoona with a salary of \$3,000 per year (\$₂₀₁₇=51,000) when a trainman made less than \$10 a week.^[5]

Sometime during Cassatt's tenure as superintendent, he married Lois Buchanan, daughter of the Rev. Edward Y. Buchanan and Ann Eliza Foster. Lois Buchanan was a niece of James Buchanan, 15th President of the United

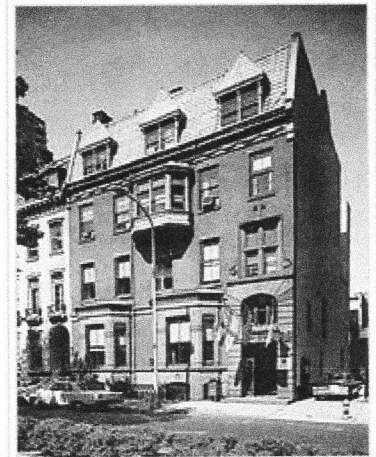
States, and through her mother, a niece of songwriter Stephen Foster.^[8] The couple had two sons and two daughters.

Chesterbrook Farm [edit]

Cassatt was a horse enthusiast and fox hunter who owned Chesterbrook Farm, outside Berwyn, Pennsylvania, where he bred Thoroughbred racehorses. The 600-acre (240 ha) property is today the site of a subdivision with office buildings and homes using the Chesterbrook Farm name. The original main barn designed by Philadelphia architect Frank Furness has been maintained and restored. (Furness also designed Cassatt's Rittenhouse Square townhouse.)^[citation needed]

Cassatt initially raced under the pseudonym, Mr. Kelso, and his horses as from the Kelso Stable.^[9] He owned the 1886 Preakness Stakes winner, The Bard, and the 1889 Belmont Stakes 1889 winner, Eric. As well, he bred the winner of the 1875, 1876, 1878, and 1880 Preakness Stakes and Foxford, who won the 1891 Belmont.^[citation needed]

In addition to flat-racing his Thoroughbreds, in 1895 Cassatt helped found the National Steeplechase Association to organize competitive steeplechase racing. He was also responsible for the introduction of the Hackney pony to the United States. In 1878 he acquired 239 Stella in Britain and brought her to Philadelphia. In 1891, Cassatt and several fellow Hackney enthusiasts founded the American Hackney Horse Society. The organization and registry continues to this day, with its headquarters now in Lexington, Kentucky.^[citation needed]



Cassatt's Rittenhouse Square townhouse at 202 South 19th St., Philadelphia, PA (demolished 1972). Now the site of The Rittenhouse Hotel.

Death [edit]

Cassatt died in 1906 at his Rittenhouse Square townhouse in Philadelphia, after a six-month illness.^{[10]:279} He was interred in the Church of the Redeemer Cemetery in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. His widow died in 1920.^{[10]:315}

Legacy [edit]

In World War II, the United States liberty ship *SS A. J. Cassatt* was named in his honor.^[citation needed]

The street crossing the former Pennsylvania Railroad tracks at Berwyn station is named Cassatt Avenue. Gramercy Mansion in Baltimore, Maryland was built by Alexander Cassatt in 1902.^[citation needed]

In 1910, the Pennsylvania Railroad erected a statue of Cassatt designed by Adolph Alexander Weinman at the new Pennsylvania Station, New York.^[11] The statue had the following inscription:

Alexander Johnston Cassatt

*President, Pennsylvania Railroad Company 1899–1906
Whose Foresight, Courage and Ability achieved the extension of the
Pennsylvania Railroad into New York City*



The statue is currently located at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania in Strasburg, Pennsylvania

His statue at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania