

1830

1872

JOSEPH HIDLEY



SLHS

JOS



SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 492
WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196

JOSEPH HIDLEY

ARTIST

CARPENTER

TAXIDERMIST

SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 492
WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196

INTRODUCTION.....

The popularity of primitive painting came into its own several years ago with the discovery of many "primitive" artists and/or itinerant painters.

As Nancy Edwards (Castras) in 1968 stated in her paper "Hidley - The Renaissance Man of the Nineteenth Century," it is probably better to classify these artists as American primitives, to distinguish them from the primitive man of long ago.

Joseph Henry Hidley, a native of Poestenkill was one such primitive artist as well as a jack of all trades.

His townscapes of Poestenkill and vicinity were painted on canvas as well as wood. For the researcher and/or historian, perhaps the most significant consequence of his townscapes is that of documentation. Surveying Hidley's views of Poestenkill, one can still establish the location of many buildings in the paintings.

Aside from being a painter of townscapes, he was also known for some religious paintings, wood carvings, and work with floral and wool shadow-box pictures. This artist was also an adept taxidermist. Some of his stuffed animals exist today.

His skill as a carpenter was well known in the area. It is said that he built a beautiful desk for his friend and neighbor, Eleazer Wooster. This was sold at the Wooster Estate Auction to local residents, Dr. John Zweig and his wife Joan.

Few people realize that another member of the community, a neighbor of Hidley's was also an artist and/or craftsperson. A member of the prominent Clint family of that day, was "Aunt Mockie" (Margaret), who produced many beautiful and skillfully woven covered boxes. She could be seen roaming the fields, collecting sweet grass and other unusual bits of wild grasses and weeds. She also dyed straw, using natural dyes. These minute pieces were precisely detailed to cover tiny boxes. This artistic work is unbelievable. Several local people who are fortunate to have these treasure them highly.

An interesting theory advanced by Nancy Edwards Castaras follows. Many people disagree with it, but remember it's a theory only!

I have considered a theory based on the hot air balloon. Around the year of 1783, the brothers Montgolfier developed the first modern day balloon. In the nineteenth century, ballooning became a popular sport for the adventurous. During the autumns of 1855-58, John Wise one of America's first aeronauts, could be found making ascensions all over New England, mainly for enjoyment's sake and the satisfaction of his curiosity.¹¹

Surpassing the purpose of pleasure, balloons came to be a great aid to meteorologists for securing information about temperature, humidity and air currents. In 1862, two men Claishar and Coxwell rose to an altitude of 29,000 feet, a spectacular feat for the time. During the Civil War captive balloons were found to be of the utmost advantage when used in warfare.¹²

It seems only obvious to me that a creative young man like Hidley might be attracted by the abundant cultural and scientific advances that were surrounding him. We have possible evidence of this interest, in the fact that a balloon ascension occupies the upper right hand corner of Hidley's view of "West Sand Lake."

This interest in the young science of aeronautics could have had direct connection with Hidley's use of aerial perspective. One possible theory could be that some of Hidley's paintings were recollections of his observations as a passenger in a balloon. This may seem highly improbable, but because of the fact that many of his early townscapes seem to have been painted from an imaginary hill, it is quite possible. The imaginary hill theory developed from the concern of many to find the real point from which Hidley painted. In his view of "Poestenkill from Snake Hill", it is possible to actually locate this point, but in many of his other views the point is definitely imaginary. He may have used his imaginary hill theory for the purpose of covering a larger area and establishing a more revealing view of his villages. Until more evidence of his true purpose is found, one can only speculate as to what his intent was.

11 "Country Fair Ballonist," ed. Miriam Andrews, *Yankee* September 1966 (Dublin, New Hampshire) p.87.

12 "Balloon," *The New Modern Encyclopedia* (1946) p.90.

For those interested in additional information re: Joseph H. Hidley, consult *Brunswick, A Pictorial History*. Warren J. Broderick of Troy has an entire chapter related to this primitive artist and Poestenkill native.

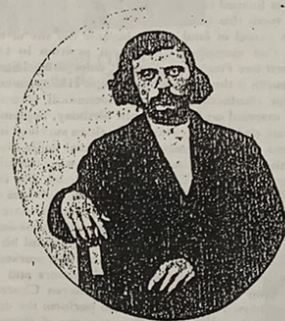
Since we consulted so many sources on this famous person, we realize there are duplications.

Florence Miller Hill

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....

Joseph H. Hidley

1830-1872



Joseph H. Hidley, 1860s. Courtesy of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.

In Poestenkill, a village approximately ten miles east of Troy, New York, Joseph Henry Hidley, house painter, carpenter, taxidermist, and handyman, painted some of the most personal views of rural life produced in nineteenth-century America.

Hidley was born on March 22, 1830, on Hidley Road in the town of Greenbush (now North Greenbush), Rensselaer County, New York. The son of George and Hannah Simmons Hidley, he was the only survivor of four children when his father died in 1834, just before Joseph's fourth birthday. Young Hidley spent the next seven years with his uncle Philip I. Simmons and his maternal grandparents, Christian and Patience Simmons, in the nearby town of Sand Lake, which had been settled in 1770 and would be incorporated in 1848 as Poestenkill (a combination of *posten* and *kill*, two Dutch words meaning "puffing or foaming creek"). In 1841, he returned to Hidley Road to live with his grandfather Michael Hidley and

(continued)

his aunt and uncle John and Christine Hidley. He lived with his mother, who had remarried, from 1844 until 1850, when his stepfather, William W. Coonradt, died and his mother moved to be with relatives in Monroe County, New York. Hidley, then twenty, remained in Poestenkill, where he lived until his death from consumption in 1872.

Hidley's family were descendants of German Lutherans, refugees from the Rhenish Palatinate who settled in the Hudson Valley in the early 1700s, joining descendants of the earliest Lutherans, who had come with the Dutch West India Company almost a century earlier. Descendants of the Palatinate settlers entered the Manor of Rensselaerwyck, which included the area of Poestenkill, between 1745 and 1765. Among them was a distant cousin of Joseph, John Heidley (an alternate spelling of the surname), who came to Greenbush from Germantown, New York. A Lutheran congregation was formed in West Sand Lake in 1776, and in 1832 representatives from this group paid John Heidley and his wife one dollar for a parcel of land which became the site of the Lutheran Church that occupies a prominent position in Hidley's views of the town (see *Poestenkill: Summer*, colorplate). Directly to the left of the church is the home where Joseph Hidley moved with his wife, Caroline Danforth, a native of Poestenkill, several years after they were married on her sixteenth birthday, September 18, 1853. They had six children, of whom only three survived infancy.

Poestenkill was known primarily for several mills along the creek that gave the town its name; among them were the mills that provided lumber for the New York Central Railroad. The Poestenkill census taken on June 23, 1870, lists Joseph H. Hidley as a house painter with real estate valued at \$600 and a personal estate valued at \$200. This information, recorded two years before his death, reveals his meager circumstances. From the shed behind his home, Hidley conducted his house painting business and worked at assembling decorative arrangements of dried flowers and stuffed birds and producing his paintings. The Lutheran Church next door paid him twenty-five dollars a year to perform the duties of sexton. Caroline Hidley died in 1870 at the age of thirty-three; when Joseph died two years later, the Hidley children were separated. One daughter was placed in a foster home near East Schodak, New York; the other daughter and a son were sent to live with relatives in Chicago.

Hidley left little more than his paintings, which for the next seventy years would be known only in the area of Poestenkill. There

are at least eight surviving townscapes—four of Poestenkill, two of nearby Glass Lake, one of West Sand Lake—and two unidentified rural scenes. In addition, his work includes fireboards and decorative paintings for underwindow panels in homes in the area as well as a few undistinguished portraits of his family and of residents of Poestenkill. The backs of three of his canvases are marked *R L G Drake, Artists Depot, Troy, N.Y.*, a drug store which advertised artists' supplies from 1850 to 1865.



Hannah S. Coonradt (1800-1879)
mother of Joseph H. Hidley



Caroline Matilda Danforth
wife of Joseph H. Hidley

This painting was lost or destroyed

LETTERS

As early as 1952, Poestenkill Elementary School with Mrs. Florence Hill as Grade 5 teacher, began research on Poestenkill's famous Joseph H. Hidley.

Miss Audna T. Clum (the only school librarian in the district at that time) became tremendously interested in this project. With her help we were able to amass this information from the following sources: Dr. Lewis Jones of the Cooperstown Historical Society, the New York State Historical Society in New York City, Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City among others.

The fifth grade pupils also wrote many letters for this project.

New York State Historical Association
Cooperstown, New York

August 11, 1952

Mrs. Kenneth Miller,
Poestenkill, New York

Dear Mrs. Miller:

Relatively little has been written about Hidley's work. There was an article written by Jean Lipman, which appeared first, as I recall, in the *Magazine Antiques* but has been reprinted in an anthology by Jean Lipman and Alice Vinchester, *Primitive Painters of America, 1700-1900* (Hendy & Company, 1950).

Janet B. MacFarlane had a brief article in *New York History*, January, 1947, establishing the spelling of Hidley's name and adding some biographical information about his occupations.

In 1949 the Albany Institute of History and Art brought out a catalogue of the Hildredy-Thomas Collection of American Provincial Paintings which includes four of Hidley's paintings.

It would be a very interesting project for you and your students to institute a vigorous search for information about Hidley and for other pictures by him which may be in Poestenkill and the surrounding area.

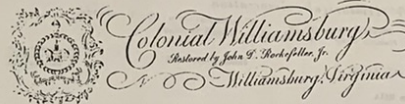
I enclose a colored postcard of the painting we have in the hope that it will stimulate interest in your class.

The Lipman-Vinchester book has three or four reproductions in black and white.

New York History will be interested in publishing any additional information you or your students can find and verify about Hidley. We consider him one of the important New York State painters and all too little is known about him.

LCJW - Enclosure

Cordially yours,
Louis C. Jones, Director



April 16, 1953

Dear Mrs. Jones:

In response to your letter of April 12, I am happy to enclose herewith two prints, one each of "Poestenkill-Winter" and "Poestenkill-Summer".

There will be no charge for the prints. With all good wishes,

Cordially yours,
Geo. B. Jones
George B. Jones
Director, Press Bureau

Mrs. Evelyn Skowg
701 Tuckamore Road
Yonkers, New York

March 4, 1958

New York State Historical Association
Cooperstown, New York

Gentlemen:

Can you suggest how we would go about finding what a dye factory looked like and how it manufactured dyes around 1850-1870 in upstate New York? According to the picture which Joseph Hidley painted of old Poestenkill in 1855, there is a building which people say is shaped like a dye house. This picture is reproduced in the *National Geographic* for September 1962 on pages 380-381. People seem to feel that the shape of one of the houses is that of a dye factory. I would be interested to know how dye was manufactured in those days.

I have done a little research in books of crafts of New York State and in books on dyeing from the State Library but really do not have primary sources for this sort of work.

I would appreciate any suggestions.

Yours very truly,

Audna T. Clum
Chairman of Libraries

ATC:mj

New York State Historical Association
Cooperstown, N. Y. 13326
Fennimore House • The Farmer's Museum

January 29, 1968

Mrs. Hilton Hill
Historical
Poestenkill, New York
12140

Dear Mrs. Hill:

Enclosed you will find a photograph of our Hildy painting. I shall enclose a colored post card too. I have written to Roger who just seems to have inadvertently forgotten that he had promised to send you the enclosed photograph. He is now a curator at Yale University and finds that he is primarily working with silver and furniture.

Today, I received Nancy's photographs and they have many "hot spots" but remind me of items I would like to learn still more about.

I really will be coming back come Spring and hope you do let me know when will suit you. Until then,

Sincerely,

W. W. Thomas, Jr.



THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED IN 1804

170 CENTRAL PARK WEST
NEW YORK 24, N. Y.
10024

JAMES J. HESLON
Director

March 18, 1968

Miss Audna T. Clum
Averill Park High School
Central School District No. 1
Towns of Nank Lake and Poestenkill
Averill Park, New York 12018

Dear Miss Clum:

In response to your letter of March 4, 1968, concerning dye manufacture in upper New York State, we regret to report that we have been unable to locate a picture of a dye factory. May we suggest, several books which describe the art of dyeing as it was practiced during the last half of the nineteenth century. These are:

Bird, Frederick J. The American Practical Dyer's Companion. Philadelphia, Henry C. Baird, 1882.

Gibson, Richard H. The American Dyer, a Practical Treatise on the Coloring of Wool, Cotton, Yarn and Cloth. Philadelphia, Henry C. Baird, 1873.

Sincerely yours,

W. W. Thomas, Jr.
(Director)

JJH/rc

New York State Historical Association
Cooperstown, N. Y. 13326

Fennimore House • The Farmer's Museum

W. W. THOMAS, JR.
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
FENNIMORE HOUSE

March 22, 1968

Miss Audna T. Clum
Chairman of Libraries
Averill Park High School
Averill Park, New York 12018

Dear Miss Clum:

The painting of Poestenkill by Joseph Hildy is in our collections and we have spent a great deal of time speculating about the dye house. One of the students in our Graduate Program devoted a great deal of time to this picture last year and was able to verify that the building was a dye house from old records in, I believe, the County Clerk's Office. We have never determined the purpose of the ramp, or what the building. We assume that the small structure in the back corner of the lot is some kind of an arrangement for sheltering dye pots. It would seem logical that at least some of these would be placed outside since certain dyestuffs tended to become quite fragrant.

In our library we have several dozen books which treat the subject of dyeing in the 19th century rather exhaustively. I have perused these casually and have found that though the processes of dyeing are treated in great detail there is no mention anywhere of the building in which the processes were carried on or what it may have looked like. If you are deeply interested in the subject, I would suggest that you pay us a visit and spend some time in our library perusing our rather extensive collection of material on the subject.

Yours very truly,

W. W. Thomas, Jr.
W. W. Thomas, Jr.
Assistant Director and
Chief Curator

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10028 212 TR 9-5200

October 30, 1978

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Poestenkill, New York

Dear Sir,

We are presently preparing a collection catalogue of the American paintings in the Metropolitan Museum. In conjunction with this I am researching the artist Joseph H. Hildy (ca. 1830-1872), who lived in Poestenkill, and painted views of that and surrounding towns.

I am enclosing a photograph of our view of Poestenkill. We are anxious to date our painting and identify the various buildings represented in it. Are you able to be of any help? In what direction is the viewer looking, and could the view have been made from a hill? Is the church with the tall steeple at the right the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and if so when was it built?

Are there by any chance any records in the church archives--births, deaths, etc. -- about Hildy or his family? He apparently died on September 28, 1872 and is buried in Poestenkill. We have an unidentified reference that notes that Hildy joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1859 and served as superintendent of the Sunday school at one time. Can you confirm this and/or add to our information?

We will be extremely grateful for any information with which you can supply us. If you can suggest another person who would be better informed we would also appreciate receiving his name.

Amy L. Walsh
Amy L. Walsh
Research Assistant
American Paintings and Sculpture

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1000 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10028 212 TR 9-5500

June 25, 1979

Florence M. Hill
Town Historian
Poestenkill, New York

Dear Mrs. Hill,

While sorting my research file on the painter Joseph Hildy today, I realized to my great embarrassment that I never thanked you for your lengthy and well-researched response to my request for information on Poestenkill. I was, in fact, overwhelmed by your efforts and found the information you provided both helpful and interesting. Thank you so very much for your patience and kindness in going through so much effort. Without the generosity of people like you, so much of our research would be incomplete.

I hope that you will have a pleasant summer.

Yours sincerely,

Amy L. Walsh

Amy L. Walsh
Research Associate
American Paintings and Sculpture

September 30, 1981

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter, directed to the Citizens Advisory State Committee, requests consideration in the matter of issuing a commemorative stamp in honor of primitive artist Joseph H. Hildy.

Through rediscovery of Hildy's work, mainly townscapes, the primitive American painters have been brought to a respected status in our culture. Some of Hildy's paintings accompanied with explanations and descriptions have appeared in the following publications:

American Heritage, Dec. 1959
National Geographic, Sept. 1967
House Beautiful, Dec. 1965
Snyder's Digest, Feb. 1972

All of the townscapes are of great importance to historians for documentation purposes.

In addition to painting, Hildy had other talents as well. An excellent carpenter, he was known for his fine cabinet making and wood window boxes which were filled with flowers, nuts and pressed native to the area. Finally, he was a proficient taxidermist.

Though Hildy's life was short, he made unforgettable contributions to his town and the art world. Unfortunately, he never knew the popularity of his work and remains sorely unrecognized in his lifetime.

With your assistance Joseph Hildy can receive the recognition he most certainly deserves for his many contributions to the town and county in which he lived and the art world, enjoyed by those who wish to take advantage of it.

Enclosed, please find a postcard sample of Joseph H. Hildy's work.

Sincerely,
Florence M. Hill
Florence M. Hill
Poestenkill Town
Historian

THE ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER
FOLK ART CENTER

307 SOUTH ENGLAND STREET, P.O. BOX C, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA 23185

27 November 1984

Mrs. Florence M. Hill
11A Bayside Blvd.
Bayside Estates
Fort Meyers Beach, FL. 33931

Dear Mrs. Hill:

The copy of West of Perigo just arrived and what a marvelous book! I wish I had had it in hand before starting research on Poestenkill. Thank you so much. It will be a welcome addition to our library.

Thank you also for the photocopies of Hildy's painting and the notations you made. They confirm much of what I have already discovered about the inhabitants. The information about which buildings still stand is especially valuable.

I do hope you get a chance to stop by the Folk Art Center on your return trip. Unfortunately, the exhibit will only be up until May 5. We will be exhibiting three of Hildy's townscapes - two of Poestenkill and one of Glass Lake - as well as a lithograph taken from one of Hildy's views of Poestenkill. In addition, three decorative panels that went under windows and a Noah's Ark that once served as a fireboard in homes near Troy, all attributed to Hildy, will be on display.

The exhibit examines Hildy's work not only as art but also as documents of life in small nineteenth century American towns. Using the 1870-71 directory of Poestenkill and a slightly later county map, I am putting people's names with buildings to bring Hildy's community more to life. The buildings we are illustrating will be either hand drawings or photographs.

Again, thank you so much for all of your help and for the copy of West of Perigo. I hope you had a safe trip to Florida. Let us know when you get to Williamsburg so we can get a chance to meet.

If not, I will certainly try to visit Poestenkill in the late spring on a visit to my grandfather's.

Sincerely,

Barbara E. Ausen

THE ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER
FOLK ART CENTER

307 SOUTH ENGLAND STREET, P.O. BOX C, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA 23185

February 28, 1985

Florence M. Hill
11A Bayside Blvd.
Bayside Estates
Fort Meyers Beach, FL. 33931

Dear Mrs. Hill:

Thank you for your nice letter of February 25. The Hildy exhibit is up and has been well received (at least by my friends who have seen it!). I wish you could have a chance to see it, but it will only be up until May 5 when two new exhibits will be installed. If your nephew plans to visit, it had best be in the next two months.

If you stop in Williamsburg on your way back to New York, I do hope you visit the Folk Art Center. If nothing else, it will give us a chance to meet and I can show you the photos I took of the exhibit so you can at least get an idea of what it looked like. Thanks again for all of your help in identifying the houses in Poestenkill. It certainly added to the exhibit.

I hope you are enjoying your winter in Florida and that you have a safe trip home. I look forward to seeing you in May and/or meeting some of your friends who might stop to see the exhibit.

Kindest regards,

Barbara Ausen

THE ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER FOLK ART CENTER

307 SOUTH ENGLAND STREET, P.O. BOX C, WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA 23187

April 18, 1985

Dear Mrs. Hill:

Excuse my delay in answering your note of April 5, but I have been busy writing labels for the exhibits which go up in less than three weeks. Time seems to be flying by!

I am delighted you are stopping in Williamsburg on your way home. It is a shame you will not be able to see the Hidley exhibit. I did take photographs, however, and I am getting copies made. In addition, I will try to keep what I call the photo collage intact for you to see. I identified several buildings in one of Hidley's paintings, and used photos or drawings to show them in greater detail. I will also photo-copy the labels I wrote.

Because of the exhibit change starting May 6, I will be at the Folk Art Center all week long, from 8:00 a.m. to about 4:30 p.m. The museum itself does not open until 11:00 a.m. which is when you would be able to visit.

I am certainly looking forward to meeting you. Please do come by the museum or give me a call at 229-1000 x2424 first.

Have a safe and pleasant trip.

Yours truly,

Barbara Austen

A NEWFOUND PRIDE IN AMERICA

The War of 1812 has often been described as a "second revolution" that affirmed American independence from Great Britain and provided Americans with a better sense of their separate identity. They perceived themselves as people different from the Europeans, living a different lifestyle in a different land, and they developed a stronger sense of national character and nationalist pride. One expression of this heightened pride was landscape painting. Whereas European inspired paintings of the eighteenth century often required a knowledge of literature, world history, and the classics, nineteenth century landscape paintings were more democratic and based on familiar American scenes.

Landscapes were equated not only with nationalist pride but also with virtue. Contemplating landscapes was believed to have a beneficial moral influence on society. To heighten that influence and because they were portraying God's world, artists were expected to paint specific and recognizable scenes, exact in every detail.

In his depiction of small towns in the vicinity of Troy, New York, Joseph H. Hidley's paintings reflect the general trend in landscapes of the nineteenth century. He painted specific American towns in detail, with American people living American lifestyles. It is because of the artist's attention to detail in such works that paintings like Hidley's can be used as research tools as well as enjoyed for their aesthetic value.

Courtesy of Barbara Austen, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center

PAINTINGS

The rediscovery of the works of artists such as Joseph H. Hidley has brought the art of primitive American painters to a respected status in our culture.

For, to Poestenkill, belongs one of the best and most popular of the primitive painters -----Joseph H. Hidley.

Joseph Hidley's paintings depict Poestenkill, Glass Lake, West Sand Lake, and possibly Eagle Mills, New York, towns within a twenty mile radius of the artist's home of Poestenkill. At least four of his townscapes show his own community over a seven year period.

An 1880 description of the town includes two churches, three stores, a grist and saw mill, three hotels, several blacksmith shops, a wagon manufactory, and about four hundred inhabitants.

Hidley's skill in providing detail is obvious but his devotion to accurate portrayals of buildings, their juxtapositions and functions are further documented by reference to Poestenkill's 1870 city directory and a period map of the county. Together these sources enable us to identify many of the buildings, put owners' names with them, and thus gain a better sense of the community of Poestenkill.

Using Hidley's views of Poestenkill, we can get a sense of the landscape as a research document, often as valuable as a will, a diary, a piece of furniture, or a handmade quilt in suggesting facets of everyday life in the nineteenth century. The most noticeable changes in these paintings are seasonal. From summer to winter, wheeled carriages are converted to sleighs, the woodpile at the house in the left foreground of two views is replenished, and animals are brought in from the fields. Another change is in the stand of trees behind the church at the right. Over the seven year period in which these views were painted, the trees were cut down. As you look at these works try and discover other changes that Hidley recorded.

HIDLEY AS A DECORATIVE PAINTER

Craftsmen in the nineteenth century often practiced more than one trade. Although primarily known as a painter of town views, Joseph Hidley was also a taxidermist, carpenter, and decorative painter. The three panels and the picture of Noah's Ark illustrate Hidley's work as a decorative painter. Inspired by popular prints, the panels, all from the same house, were placed either over doors or under windows. Noah's Ark covered a dining room fireplace in another home in the area. Many artists, like Hidley, used published prints as models for their own paintings. Panels of this type were popular throughout America during the late eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries.

While not signed by the artist, these pieces are attributed to Hidley on the basis of stylistic comparisons with other known examples of his work. In all, Hidley is credited with thirty landscapes, genre scenes, and still lifes painted on panels for at least nine homes in the area around Poestenkill between the years 1850 and 1870. He reportedly earned one dollar a day plus room and board for this type of work.

Courtesy of Barbara Austen, Curator at the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in Williamsburg, Va., who arranged an exhibit of the works of Hidley.

BEATRIX T. RUMFORD, GENERAL EDITOR

*Paintings and Drawings Other Than Portraits
from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center*

1988

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH
THE COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

-14-

The well-known artist Joseph Henry Hidley was the son of George M. Hidley and Hannah Susanna Summons Hidley and the great-grandson of John Hidley of Baltmaniswiler, Germany, who was probably the first of his family to immigrate to America, settling initially in Germantown, New York, in 1754. In 1769 the family moved to Greenbush (now North Greenbush) in Rensselaer County, where their children—nine of whom survived childhood—married and became members of the Greenbush and various nearby communities, including Brunswick, Wynantskill, Sand Lake, and ultimately Poeskenkill.¹ Most were farmers, and a few were involved in mercantile endeavors. The artist's parents were residing at the Hidley family homestead near Wynantskill when he was born on March 22, 1830.² He was the only one of four children born to George and Hannah Hidley to live to adulthood.

The artist's father died when Joseph Henry was four years old, and the next year his mother married William W. Coonradt of Brunswick. Family tradition indicates that the young boy spent the next seven years with his maternal grandparents, Christian and Patsience Simmons of Sand Lake. An unidentified source also claimed in the 1950s that Hidley returned in 1841 to the family homestead to live with his grandfather, Michael Hidley.² Apparently, the artist moved to Poeshtenkil before or in 1850, the year that his mother left the area for Monroe County, New York.

In 1853 Joseph Henry Hidley married Caroline Matilda Danforth, the daughter of Lyman and Emeline Kittredge Danforth of Poestenkill. The couple purchased land there during 1853, and the next year set up residence adjacent to the Lutheran church that appears in nos. 16 and 17 and was built in 1865.¹ The couple had five daughters and a son. One child, Emmeline Hidley Hunt, shared information about her father with the New York State Historical Association (Cooperstown) staff in 1950.²

The fine quality of Hidley's townscapes and some of his fancy interior architectural paintings suggests

1 American Folk Paintings

SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 492
WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196

that he had training or access to works by other, more accomplished artists, but research in local records has indicated that people who may have taught Hildley. The only documented references to his professional work are found in two 1870 business directories, where he is listed in one as a house and sign painter and in the other as a taxidermist and painter.⁴ His daughter Emmeline also claimed that he made articles of wood and shadow boxes decorated with dried flowers in addition to pursuing taxidermy and painting.⁵ There may be some, yet to be discovered, connection between Hildley and the Thomas Wilson who reputedly signed *Eagle Mills, New York* (no. 29), which shows a mill-town crossroads near Poestenkill.

During the relatively short span of Hildy's painting career, from about 1850 until his death, in Poestenkill in 1872, the artist decorated numerous houses in his hometown with grained woodwork and panel pictures of flowers, as well as religious, genre, and allegorical subjects, many of which were probably modeled after published prints.⁷ He also painted several portraits of family members. But he is best known for his landscape views of Poestenkill and surrounding towns.¹⁰

All biographical information on the Hidley family is from "John Hidley of Greenwich, Rensselaer County, New York and His Descendants," an unpublished manuscript compiled by Warren H. Broderick in 1981, Lansingburgh, N.Y., and subsequent correspondence with Broderick, unless noted otherwise.

Thomas N. Armstrong III, AARFAC catalyst, to Mrs. Lisle Cottrell (Hidley descendant), October 17, 1967, an entry in the West Sand Lake Lutheran Church baptismal records, p. 104, states that Joseph M. Henry Hidley was born on March 13, 1830, the son of George M. Hidley and Hannah Susan Hendley (sic), and was baptised there on July 11, 1830.

July 11, 1830. "Neither of the sources for the two theories regarding where Hildey spent his childhood can be documented by AARFAC correspondence or interview notes with descendants; however, a guardianship bond citing "John M. Hildeley [sic], an uncle, and "Michael Hildeley [sic], the artist's grandfather, was made out in March 1842; it named "John M. Hildeley" of Greenbush as young Joseph's official guardian.

named John M. Hickey of the family, the artist's maternal uncle, guardian.

Earlier, in 1815, Philip I. Simmons, the artist's maternal uncle, petitioned for and gained guardianship of Joseph Henry Hixley in the Rensselaer County Court. Warren F. Broderick to JANARY, 1982, "Rachel W. Cottrell (Hixley descendant) to AARFAC, JANARY, 1982." Cottrell's research on the artist revealed a series of sales transacted between Nicholas and Sarah Taylor (grandson) and Joseph Hixley (grantee) for February 23, 1853, and another for February 22, 1854, whereby the artist acquired a lot of land on which he lived until his death in 1872. It is interesting that Hixley is listed as being from Albion, Rensselaer County, the 1853 reference.

Emmeline Hixley Hunt furnished the information contained in a letter written by her daughter, Mrs. Carl H. Schermerhorn, to the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N.Y., June 1906. Her daughter also is deceased.

21, 1950. Both Hunt and her daughter are deceased.
 *Sampson, Davenport and Co., *The New York State Business Directory*, 1870, Containing Names, Business and Address of All Merchants, Manufacturers and Professional Men throughout the State (Boston, 1870), p. 870; Hamilton Child, comp. and pub., *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Rensselaer County, N.Y., for 1870-71* (New York, 1870), p. 187.

⁷See note 5 above.

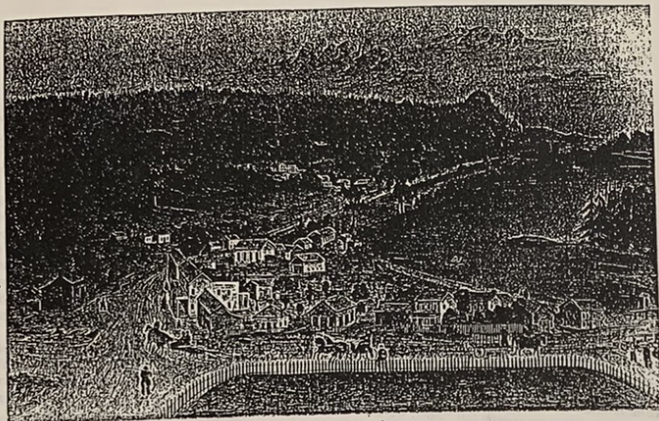
²Warren F. Broderick to AARFAC, September 15, 1977. In searching various federal census records, Broderick found a Thomas Wilson listed for Greenbush in 1855, 1865, and 1870 as a painter. Whether this man was the artist responsible for Eagle Mills (no. 29) remains speculative.

*For a discussion of these, see Thomas N. Armstrong III, "Joseph H. Hildley, His Life and Work" (M.A. thesis, New York University Institute of Fine Arts, n. d.), pp. 4-15.

¹⁰See note 5 above for source; photographic copies of the portraits, whose locations are now unknown, are in AARFAC research files.

-15-

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15 Glass Lake, New York 58.102.15
 Attributed to Joseph Henry Hidley
 Either Glass Lake or Poestenkill, New York,
 possibly 1860–1865
 Oil on canvas
 13 1/2" x 21 1/4" (34.0 cm. x 53.7 cm.)

Glass Lake is about six miles south of Poestenkill and approximately two miles southeast of Sand Lake, another small town in New York State that Hidley frequented and portrayed in landscape views. The two lake towns have been confused by some historians as being the same, but a comparison of the paintings

Inscription/Marks: Lettered in black paint on the side of the large white building at center and near the crossroads is "Fish House — J. H. Gabler."

Condition: Unspecified conservation treatment by Russell J. Quandt in 1959 included cleaning and filling and inpainting small scattered losses throughout. Probably late-nineteenth-century, 2 1/4-inch molded frame, painted black, with gilded liner.

Provenance: The Illings family, Glass Lake, N.Y.; a Dr. Krick, Glass Lake, N.Y.; a Mr. Woodroof, Glass Lake, N.Y.; A. Leland Lusty, Troy, N.Y.; J. Stuart Halladay and Herrel George Thomas, Sheffield, Mass.¹

Exhibited: AARFAC, New York, and exhibition catalog, no. 18; Halladay-Thomas, Albany, and exhibition catalog, no. 9; Halladay-Thomas, Hudson Park; Halladay-Thomas, New Britain, and exhibition catalog, no. 44; Halladay-Thomas, Pittsburgh, and exhibition catalog, no. 11; Halladay-Thomas, Syracuse, and exhibition catalog, no. 11; Pine Manor Junior College; "Selected Masterpieces of New York State Folk Painting," Museum of American Folk Art, New York, N.Y., February 23–May 22, 1977, and exhibition catalog, p. 12, no. 6.

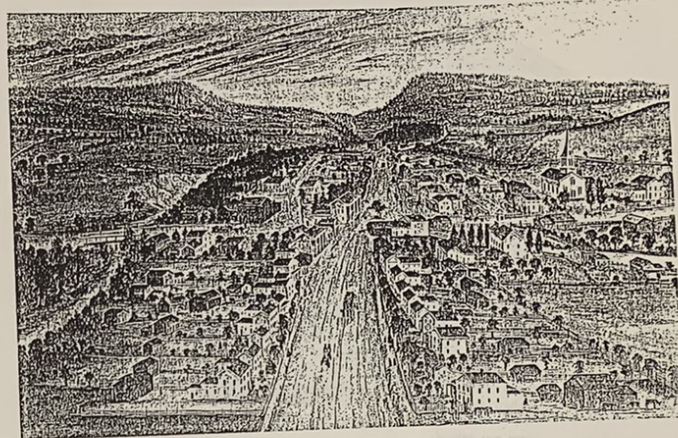
Published: Lipman and Winchester, *Primitive Painters*, illus. on p. 134.

clearly indicates that they were separate, with differing landscape elements and architecture.¹ Also, both mid-nineteenth-century and modern maps show two such locations.

Hidley's characteristic use of deep viridian greens intermingled with varying shades of blue for the far hill, trees, and other vegetation is a prominent feature of this painting since the village is small and nestled in the center of the picture and adjacent to the lake, where various men are fishing and boating. The shape and color of the scattered clouds are not only typical of Hidley's style but also capture the kind of skies known to the region during the warm months of the year. Both the sky and the lush landscape, as well as the architectural renderings, reflect his effort to portray Glass Lake faithfully as it existed in the early 1860s.

The large building at center, near the crossroads, was erected in 1860, but current research findings do not indicate when J. H. Gabler commenced his fish-house business near or in a portion of the building as recorded on the sign on the side. The less refined brushwork for no. 15 suggests an execution date earlier than those for the Poestenkill views (nos. 16 and 17); however, Hidley's work varied in quality throughout his career, and the dates assigned here remain speculative.

¹Compare with *West Sand Lake Village*, attributed to Joseph Henry Hidley, AARFAC, 1974, pp. 49–51, illus. as no. 43 on p. 46. Interview with Mrs. A. Leland Lusty at AARFAC in 1967 by curator Thomas N. Armstrong III revealed the line of descent. The Illings family owned a house in Glass Lake that subsequently was sold to Dr. Krick, and then by him to Woodroof. The painting was included as part of the house's furnishings until its purchase by Lusty and subsequent resale to Halladay and Thomas. It is not known whether the picture was installed as an architectural panel in the Illings home, but the possibility exists since Hidley did such work, usually on wood.



16 Poestenkill, New York: Summer 58.102.17
 Attributed to Joseph Henry Hidley
 Poestenkill, New York, probably 1865–1872
 Oil on wood panel
 23 1/2" x 22 1/4" (59.7 cm. x 56.2 cm.)

This is one of five known views of Poestenkill that Hidley painted during his lifetime, the earliest of which is dated May 10, 1862, and is owned by the New York State Historical Association at Coopers-town.¹ The earliest view differs significantly from no. 16 in both composition and detail, since it was taken from Snake Hill, at the east end of the town. One nearly identical composition showing the town in summer or spring and two winter views (no. 17 is one of these) were composed from a western location.² Together, all of the Poestenkill pictures form a remarkable series that documents the physical details and everyday life of the town over a period of about twenty years.

That Hidley's goal was to record in the most meticulous manner the locations and types of buildings and their uses is clear from a thorough study of the paintings along with city directories, other period documents, and the survival of many of the same structures in present-day Poestenkill. A few buildings were destroyed and others erected, while the ownership and function of some buildings changed during the 1860s and early 1870s. For instance, when the New York State Historical Association's version was painted in 1862, the large church in no. 16 at center right had not been constructed.³

(continued on next page)

One of the most interesting aspects of Hidley's approach to townscape painting is seen in this and the next entry. Either intentionally or because of lack of technical skill, Hidley used an unorthodox type of multiple perspective in rendering the town's buildings. There are few common vanishing points, and each structure has been turned so as to give the viewer a fuller pictorial description of its facade. Since these paintings were probably commissioned by townspeople, it was important that each element be accurate and easily identifiable. The elevated viewpoint in each of the Poestenkill pictures also was contrived by the artist and assisted him in achieving his goal, although the detailing and juxtapositions of the buildings, roads, and other elements must have been sketched on site.⁴

The artist's residence, which still stands in Poestenkill, is seen in this and the next view as the house on the far side of the crossroads, at the right corner, across from the large building with a colonnaded porch.⁵ According to family tradition, it was in the shed behind this structure that Hidley did his painting and taxidermy work. Although not detailed here, the cemetery where the artist and his family are buried is located on the hillside at left and just above the bridge that crosses the Poestenkill, the stream for which the town was named.

This version of Poestenkill ranks among the artist's finest in terms of overall execution. The radiating clouds in pastel shades of blues, pinks, and yellows were finely developed in a series of small brush strokes blending the colors; Hidley's typical palette of viridian green and soft blues for landscape elements was carefully balanced with the ochers and rich tans used (for the banks along the stream and for the roadways).

Painting, illus. as no. 41; Jean Lipman, "American Townscapes," *Antiques*, XXXV (December 1944), illus. as fig. 2 on p. 340; Lipman and Armstrong, illus. on p. 100; Lipman and Winchester, *Primitive Painters*, illus. on p. 133.

⁴The New York State Historical Association's view shows fewer buildings than no. 16, chiefly because it contains more trees in fall foliage within the town and does not view the village from a point in the center of its main street. Scholars have argued that it was actually drawn from Snake Hill and has no contrived elevated viewpoint, but the present-day Snake Hill, which has not been altered in size or topography, does not afford the elevated perspective of the town clearly evidenced in the 1862 picture. This is a critical point of the elevated vantage point indicates an early execution date for such paintings. See Thomas N. Armstrong III, "Joseph H. Hidley, His Life and Work" (M.A. thesis, New York University Institute of Fine Arts), pp. 8-11.

⁵Others include no. 17; *Poestenkill, New York*, acc. no. 63.203.5, owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.; and *Poestenkill, New York — Winter*, in the collection of L. L. Beas (Trenton, N.J.), in 1977, current location unknown. Additionally, a number of lithograph prints published by G. W. Lewis of Albany (ca. 1860-ca. 1870) and after a Hidley painting similar to no. 16 are known, including one example in the Folk Art Center's collections.

⁶The Evangelical Lutheran church shown in no. 16 was built in 1865 and still stands in present-day Poestenkill; information courtesy of Florence Hill, historian, Poestenkill, N.Y., who visited AARFAC on May 8, 1985. The presence of the church in this and similar versions helps in dating the artist's paintings.

⁷See note 1 above. A visit to Poestenkill by AARFAC staff in July 1984 confirmed the existence of a number of structures seen in the Hidley views and that Hidley had carefully recorded their details. It also confirmed that there were no hills in the area sufficiently high enough to afford the kind of perspective Hidley used.

⁸Information courtesy of Florence Hill, historian, Poestenkill, N.Y., who visited AARFAC on May 8, 1985.



17 Poestenkill, New York: Winter 58.102.16
Joseph Henry Hidley
Poestenkill, New York, 1868
Oil on wood panel
18 3/4" x 25 3/4" (47.6 cm. x 64.5 cm.)

Hidley's winter scene of his hometown is distinguished from others by its oval format on an octagonal panel and by the closer range of the view.¹ The third number in the year date is now obscured but must be a six since the Lutheran church seen at right was not built until 1865, and Hidley died in 1872.

The painting affords a better view of the artist's house, which because of its yellow color seems more prominent than most of the other structures surrounding it. Of particular interest are the variety of horse-drawn sledges, the vignette at lower right center that shows a blacksmith shop with a customer and his horse standing before the open door, and a broken wagon partially covered by snow and abandoned just beyond the smithy's shop. Hidley's familiarity with the

town and the day-to-day activities of its residents was essential to these scenes, giving them a degree of intimacy and reality that is often missing in the more polished topographical townscapes and cityscapes executed by trained professional artists.

Hidley used his basic palette of colors here but muted them in the far hills to capture the place on a snow-covered, late afternoon winter day. His light source comes from the west and beyond the pale green-blue hills, which are in shadow. His ability to capture the subtleties of changing light in these areas versus the violet-and-blue-tinted hills on the right is noteworthy as one of his best efforts in using color perspective.

Inscriptions/Marks: In white paint on the black border at lower right is "PAINTED BY J. H. H. FEBRUARY 11, 18[6]8." In black paint, the sign on the large white building with a colonnaded porch at lower left is "PO[ESTENKILL] HOTEL."

Condition: Unspecified conservation treatment by Russell J. Quandt in 1959 probably included cleaning, and filling and inpainting scattered losses.

Provenance: Purchased from an unidentified dealer in Troy, N.Y., by A. Leland Lusty, Troy, N.Y., ca. 1940; Clifton Black, location unknown; J. Stuart Halladay and Herrel George Thomas, Sheffield, Mass.²

Exhibited: AARFAC, American Museum in Britain; AARFAC, Minneapolis; AARFAC, New York, and exhibition catalog, no. 20; AARFAC, June 4, 1962-April 17, 1963; AARFAC, June 4, 1962-November 20, 1965; American Folk Painters; Artist Sees the City; Flooding of American Folk Art (shown only at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va.); Halladay-Thomas, Albany, and exhibition catalog, no. 7; Halladay-Thomas, New Britain, and exhibition catalog, no. 46; Halladay-Thomas, Pittsburgh, and exhibition catalog, no. 10, illus. opposite nos. 9-11; Halladay-Thomas, Syracuse, and exhibition catalog, no. 11; Halladay-Thomas, Whitney, and exhibition catalog, p. 31, no. 29.

Published: Black and Lipman, illus. as no. 143 on p. 157; Lipman, *Primitive Painting*, illus. as no. 40; Jean Lipman, "American Townscapes," *Antiques*, XXXV (December 1944), illus. as fig. 1 on p. 340; Lipman and Armstrong, illus. on p. 101; Lipman and Winchester, *Folk Art*, illus. as no. 66 on p. 34; Lipman and Winchester, *Primitive Painters*, illus. on p. 133.

¹Interview with Mrs. A. Leland Lusty of Troy, N.Y., by Barbara Luck, AARFAC curator, April 26, 1973. Lusty stated that when her husband purchased the painting about 1940 it was larger, with an outside band beyond the black, which was left unpainted. If this information is correct, it suggests that no. 17 was probably installed as an architectural panel in a yet to be identified house.

²See note 1 immediately above.

Biblical Subjects

AMERICAN HERITAGE



Noah's Ark by a folk artist, about 1850

December 1959

The December 1959 issue of *American Heritage* featured the religious painting, "NOAH'S ARK" on the front cover. The original is now in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Collection.

182 Noah's Ark

57.101.8

Attributed to Joseph Henry Hidley
Probably near Troy, New York, 1865-1872
Oil on wood panel
25 3/4" x 26 3/4" (65.4 cm. x 68.0 cm.)
(Reproduced on page 232)

This landscape scene showing the biblical story of Noah and his family preparing for the Flood and the loading of the ark with animals originally served as a fireboard in a farmhouse near Troy, New York. Several other decorative paintings on wood signed by the artist were found in the same house. According to a former owner, Hidley was paid one dollar a day and room and board for the work he did in the house after it was built about 1865.¹

No specific print source has been identified for Hidley's painting, although it is likely that he was inspired by some illustration of the event. His painted version has an almost surreal quality due to the vast empty and pastel-colored atmospheric space immediately behind the ark and the blasted tree trunk to the left. Noah is the only figure in the group facing the viewer, and his open mouth gives the impression that he is, in fact, addressing the viewer. Hidley used a variety of positions for the animals along the lower edge, perhaps to demonstrate his ability in portraying their lifelike movements and gestures. The towering palmetto-type trees and the large exotic plant beside them are picked out in the same shades of green seen in the artist's other paintings. Of his known panel pictures, this ranks among the important examples because of the fine quality of brushwork and the choice of subject.

Condition: The painting is in its original condition and has some wear at the extreme edges of the painted surface. Modern 3-inch cove-molded frame, painted black.

Provenance: Purchased by Harold Cranston, Troy, N.Y., from Paul Springer, occupant and owner of the farmhouse, in 1915; William A. Morrill, Jr., Proestekill, N.Y.; Harry Stone, New York, N.Y.; J. Stuart Halladay and Herrel George Thomas, Sheffield, Mass.; M. Knoedler & Co.

Exhibited: AARFAC, April 22, 1959-December 31, 1961; American Folk Painters; Hebrew Bible, and exhibition catalog, no. 21.

Published: Black and Lipman, illus. as no. 164 on p. 185; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "What the Babylonian Flood Stories Can and Cannot Teach Us About the Genesis Flood," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, IV (November/December 1978), pp. 32-41, illus. on p. 33; Lipman and Armstrong, illus. on p. 99.

¹According to AARFAC research notes provided by Harold Cranston, Paul Springer purchased the farm from the Casler family; Springer reported to Cranston the information about Hidley's wages and other panels that were originally in the house. See *Provenance* for this history.

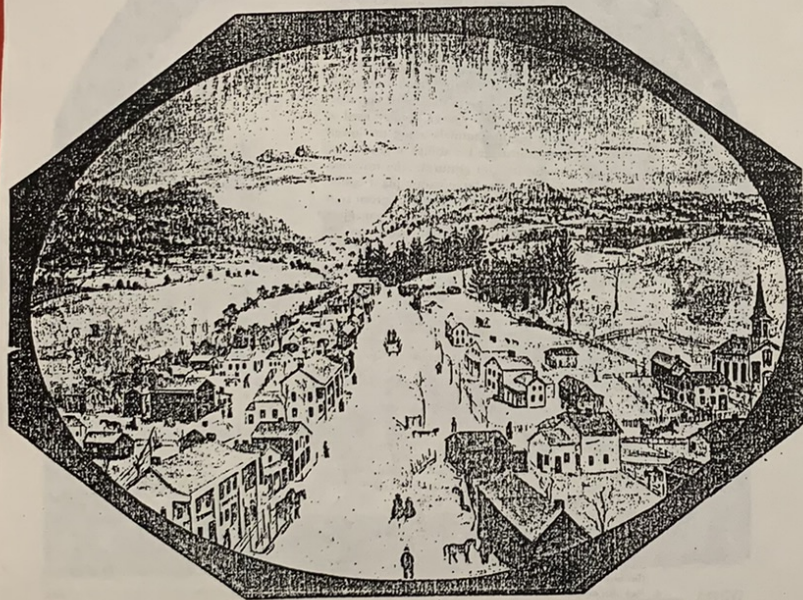
²See also note 1.

Courtesy of Barbara Austen
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk
Art Center, Williamsburg, Va.

JOSEPH H. HIDLEY
POESTENKILL'S PRIMITIVE PAINTER

The rediscovery of the works of artists such as Joseph H. Hidley has brought the art of primitive American painters to a respected status in our culture.

For, to Poestenkill, belongs one of the best and most popular of the primitive painters-----Joseph H. Hidley.

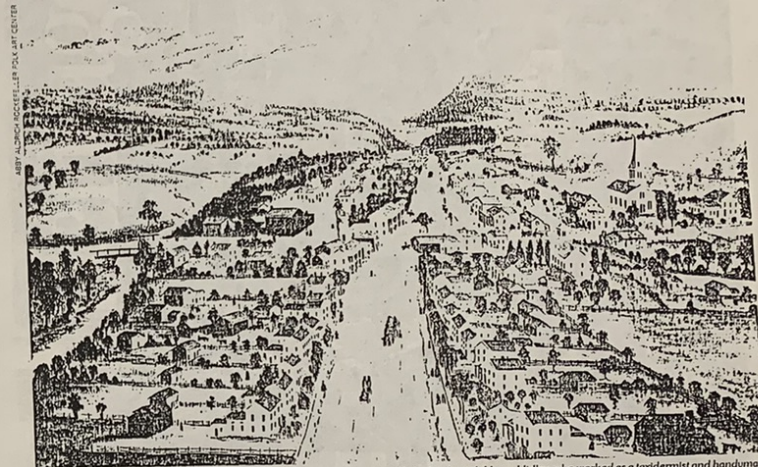


Mr. Hidley painted the first of his townscapes, "POESTENKILL, WINTER," about 1850. It is now part of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection in Williamsburg, Virginia. In this view of Poestenkill, one can see one-horse sleighs and cutters skimming along the side streets. Patiently standing by the Poestenkill Hotel is a strong team of horses hitched to a bob sleigh. Figures of people are shown quite clearly, scurrying along snow covered streets. Even wagon wheels can be seen leaning against the town blacksmith shop.

From "Festa" Epim Linnell Club - Winter 84-85

The Natural Charm of American Folk Art

By Martin Abramson



"Poestenkill, New York: Summer" (1865-72) is an oil painting on wood attributed to Joseph Henry Hidley, who worked as a taxidermist and handyman.

POESTENKILL, NEW YORK: SUMMER
Joseph H. Hidley (1830-1872)
Poestenkill, New York
1868-1872
Oil on wood panel

Characteristic of Hidley's later work, this view of Poestenkill is taken from a higher vantage point than that for Poestenkill: Winter.

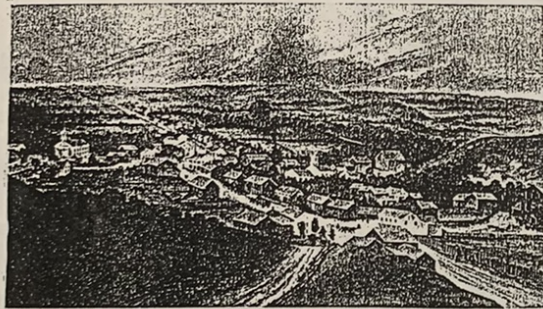
A higher elevation allowed him to fan open the sides of buildings to include as much architectural detail as possible. This technique was used in all of Hidley's townscapes, along with the use of multiple perspectives or vanishing points. The artist's attention to detail is best illustrated by comparing this view with one of Hidley's winter views of the town.

58.102.17

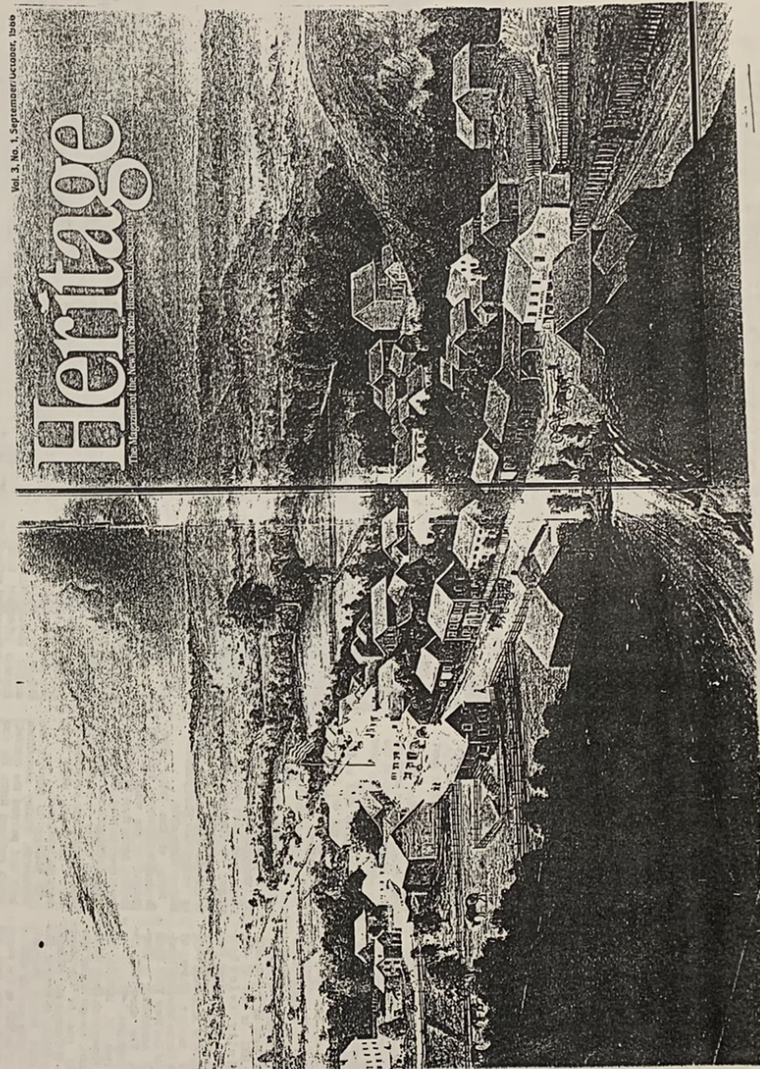
Courtesy of Barbara Austen, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center

VIEW FROM
SNAKE HILL
POESTENKILL, N.Y.

1862



"POESTENKILL FROM SNAKE HILL", shows the town looking in a north westerly direction. Here too, are shown many horse drawn vehicles, the side streets, Main Street, figures of people and Hidley's famous cloud formations.



Hidley painting in Cooperstown folk art show

The Sunday Record,
May 21, 1964

By JANE A. BENNETT
Focus Editor

Looking at a portrait of Joseph Henry Hidley, one sees a handsome young man, with somewhat dreamy eyes, and a slight smile. At the big direct gaze of his hands relaxed. He looks like a man who knew what he wanted and calmly set out to achieve it.

Reading about Hidley's life - a brief 42 years - one gets the feeling that he had a strong sense of purpose. He apparently wanted to paint - and paint he did - even though he had to turn his time to other things. He lived out his life to support his family.

Little is known about Joseph Hidley's life, probably the most completely obscured by war. His father, a Revolutionary War soldier, died in 1780. His mother, Mary, died in 1800. He was born in 1782, in the village of Postenkill, in Rensselaer County and painted a number of its villages in his memorable townscapes so popular today. One of his best known is "A Shiftin Wind: Views of American Folk Art," a major show at Fenimore House Museum, Cooperstown, through October.

Born Feb. 22, 1822, in the town of Postenkill, New York (now North Greenbush), Joseph Hidley was the only one of the four children of George and Hannah Sumner Hidley to survive. He died before his fourth birthday and his mother remarried in 1823, so the young Hidley lived with his first maternal, then his paternal

grandparents in Postenkill and Dutchess, respectively.

Hidley's grandfather, William Courant, died in January 1850, and shortly thereafter his mother and the children of her second marriage moved to Rensselaer County where she had relatives. Young Hidley stayed in Postenkill, helping to settle Courant's estate. In 1853 he married 15-year-old Caroline Mathilda Danforth, daughter of an East Postenkill farmer. The marriage publication shows her to have been a beautiful young woman. A few years after their marriage, Hidley moved to a farm in Postenkill village, where they lived out their short lives.

Joseph and Caroline Hidley had three children, two of whom died in childhood. Two of the three surviving offspring have descendants living today. In December 1870 and her husband, who had been married less than two years later, both died of consumption.

Although Joseph Hidley is known for his townscapes, his output included several portraits, especially of his family members, some of which were painted in the last century. There were also a number of landscapes done in what might be called a European-influenced style.

Many of this latter type, Broderick discovered, had been painted on the walls of area houses. More than 100 of these small paintings done on wooden panels, under windows and other, larger ones were used as fireboards, which were not being used.

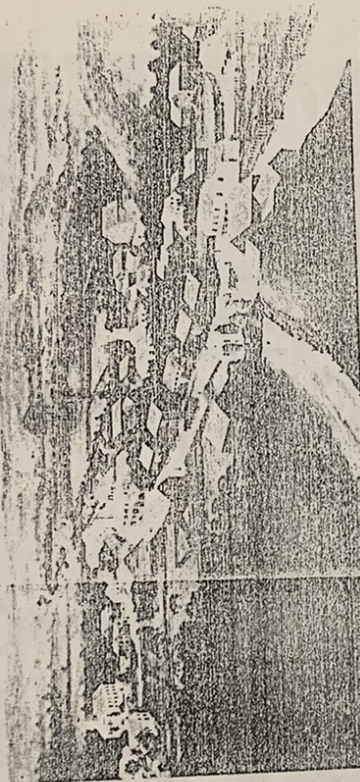
In addition to painting the fireboards, Hidley painted small pictures on tin, which he also used for built furniture and did odd bits

HIDLEY'S POSTENKILL One of four known townscapes of the village of Postenkill is one of 250 important pieces of folk art currently on display at the Fenimore House Museum in Cooperstown. The show

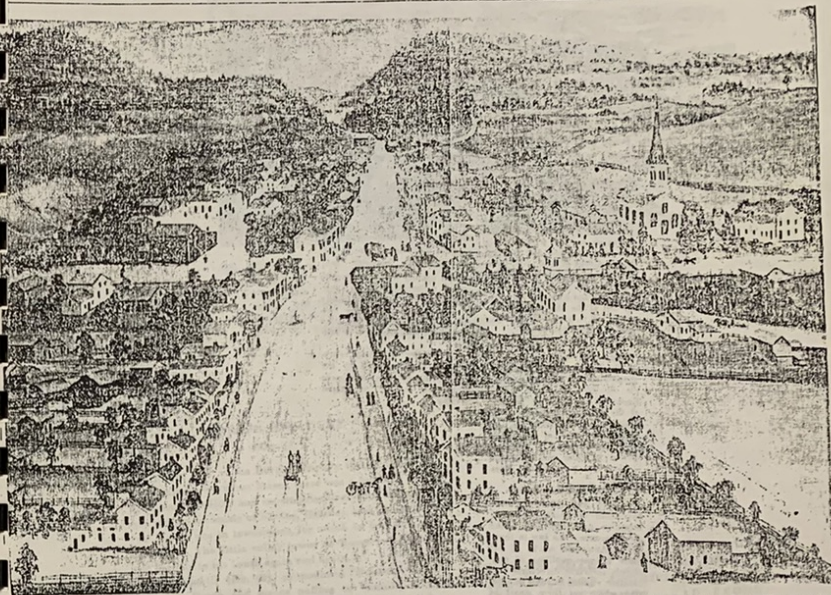
entitled "A Shiftin Wind: Views of American Folk Art" will remain through 1964. The museum is open daily through October.

1941. The folk art collection of J. Stuart Halliday and Harriet George Thomas began at the Fenimore House Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. In the collection are four Hidley works, three townscapes and a portrait. Admission is charged for the museum, but there is no charge for parking.

Springer. The collection was acquired by the Fenimore House Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. in 1941. The folk art collection of J. Stuart Halliday and Harriet George Thomas began at the Fenimore House Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y. In the collection are four Hidley works, three townscapes and a portrait. Admission is charged for the museum, but there is no charge for parking.



RECORD, SATURDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1967



PEACEFUL POSTENKILL GETS WORLD FAME—The September issue of the National Geographic magazine carries this two-page spread in vivid color of "A Crow's Eye View of Old Postenkill." The painting done in 1853 by Joseph H. Hidley of Postenkill, artist, taxidermist and cabinet-maker, is owned by Col. Edgar W. Garbisch and his wife, Brenner Chrysler Garbisch of New York City and is now among American primitives shown from their collection to be shown in major museums of the United States and Europe. The picture is copyrighted by the National

Geographic and is reproduced by permission of the society. The story by Dr. Hereward Lester Cooke Jr., curator of painting of the National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute, which accompanies the picture in the National Geographic says that, "Today, Postenkill retains its small town flavor though burgeoning. True, it's only seven miles away." Hidley painted for a room of the scene. The painting above was his idea of the village as viewed from an imaginary hill."

"A CROW'S EYE VIEW OF POSTENKILL", from the Garbisch Collection given to the Metropolitan in 1963, is quite interesting in that it appears to have been painted from an imaginary hill. Miss Nancy Edwards, in a paper entitled, "JOSEPH H. HIDLEY, RENAISSANCE MAN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY", now in the Rensselaer County Historical Society Library, theorizes that Hidley may have made an ascent in a balloon, thus giving him a view of the town from the air. Then, using his keen powers of observation, imprinted upon his mind certain objects which he wished to transfer to his wooden board, (many of his townscapes were on wood, not canvas). Thus it would appear that the painting was done from an imaginary hill since there is none in the area from which the town is viewed.

Please Note: Most authorities question this theory.

Hidley's paintings, with accompanying explanations and descriptions, have appeared in at least three national magazines. In September 1962, National Geographic carried a two page spread in vivid color of "CROW'S EYE VIEW OF POESTENKILL." February 1972, Reader's Digest also featured one of his townscapes.

National Geographic Puts Poestenkill On Map With Old Primitive Painting

Primitive paintings show early America through the eyes of her native artists. One of the famed painters of primitive was Joseph H. Hidley of Poestenkill who was probably better known to his neighbors as a cabinetmaker and taxidermist.

In the September issue of The National Geographic magazine, he and his native village of Poestenkill—as chosen from the collection of American primitives owned by Col. Edgar W. Garbisch and his wife, Bernice (Mrs. Garbisch for the "101 Masterpieces of American Primitive Painting" now being shown in major museums of the United States and Europe. The show opened at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City and was an instant success.

The Hidley painting is one of 23 chosen by the National Geographic to accompany an article by Dr. Hereward Leake Cooke Jr., curator of painting of the National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institute in the September issue of the magazine. It is given a two-page spread in color and is called "Crow's Eye View of Poestenkill."

Have 2,500 Paintings Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch have collected 2,500 American primitive paintings. They like them because, "We saw in these, native American works of art those unique qualities of simplicity, forthright directness and creative vitality in color and design which set them apart as being indigenous to our country, so genuinely American."

Included in their collection is the famous, "Pearls and King-don" by Edward Hicks, dean of American primitive painters.

Dr. Cooke says that Colonel and Mrs. Garbisch, both amateur painters in their younger days, "traveled thousands of miles tracking down such gems as the 'Flax Scutching Bed' and 'Poestenkill, New York.'"

Another Hidley painting of Glass Lake, recently was given to the Rensselaer County Historical Society as a bequest of the late Mr. and Mrs. Clark Clipperty and is hanging in the Troy room at the society home, 59 2nd St. H. Maxson Holloway, director of the society, has done much research work on the life of Hidley.

New Worth Thousands Primitive paintings which at the time of their creation might have been sold for a dollar or two were for many years unappreciated but now are worth thousands of dollars.

Dr. Cooke says in his article: "Despite the harsh task of

laminating a continent, a surprising number of early Americans drew, whittled, embroidered, carved and painted their thought themselves. Few ever saw an original work by even a secondary European master. Their motive usually was the same, to record a cherished scene, event or person. If the artist's family or friends recognized the subject and were pleased with the effect, the painting was a success."

The Hidley painting reproduction is copyrighted by the National Geographic which gave permission to the newspaper to copy it.



48. JOSEPH H. HIDLEY
Poestenkill, N.Y.
May 10, 1862; dated
Poestenkill, Rensselaer County
Oil on panel, 20 x 32"
New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N.Y.

JOSEPH H. HIDLEY
1830-1872

In the part of the Border Country that is patrolled these days by Grandpa Moses, there was a hundred years ago another prolific and expert primitive artist. His name was written variously as Hidley, Headley, and Hildley. His real metier was in townscapes, for which he had an unexcelled gift. The little valley towns of Rensselaer County fell happily to his brush again and again.

Poestenkill (No. 48), pronounced "Poos-en-kill," is from the Dutch and means puffing or foaming creek. Hidley painted it at least twice, there being a most delightful oval version, recently added to the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Collection at Williamsburg, Virginia. As Janet R. MacFarlane has written:

"Hidley's daughter . . . was born in the little red house pictured at the extreme left middleground in the illustrated view . . . This house is just in front of the churchlike building named 'Poestenkill Union Academy' formerly a girls' school. The barn to the left was Hidley's workshop. He did wood-carving of what-nots, was a taxidermist, and constructed wool floral shadow box pictures, in addition to his career as a painter.

"The road in center foreground goes to Snake Hill and the Poestenkill (the creek) follows the line of green trees. The Eagle Hotel building, the Poestenkill Union Academy, and Union Hall are still standing.

"About 1855, an impecunious young student from Williams College, named James A. Garfield, later to become President of the United States, opened a school in writing on the second floor of Blewer Tavern or Union Hall."

At least one house east of Troy has painted wainscote panels done by Hidley for his board. They are small and not in his finest vein, but interesting as social history.

PLEASE NOTE: *There is a discrepancy regarding the little red house . . . in front of the church like building named Poestenkill Union Academy.

This discrepancy arises because the author overlooked the fact that the little red house is on one road and the Poestenkill Academy is on another road. Close scrutiny will indicate travel on two different roads.

Florence Miller Hill

Please see the following page for an enlarged view of the particular area.



GLASS LAKE, NEW YORK

Attributed to Joseph H. Hidley (1830-1872)

Glass Lake, New York

About 1860

Oil on canvas

This is one of Hidley's two known paintings of Glass Lake, a small community near the artist's home in Poestenkill. Like other paintings by Hidley, Glass Lake exhibits the use of a high vantage point, a perspective that shows as much of the buildings as possible, scallop-edged clouds, and a close attention to detail.

Glass Lake, a village within the township of Sand Lake, consisted of a Methodist church, a hotel, and twenty-five houses in 1870. Notice how the architectural style of the houses is similar to that in Poestenkill.



The nearby community of Glass Lake was also favored by Mr. Hidley. He did two of that community, one called "GLASS LAKE" and one called "GLASS HOUSE LAKE". The citizens of Rensselaer County are very fortunate indeed to have the "GLASS HOUSE LAKE" painting in the Rensselaer County Historical Society Collection.

Please Note: The second Glass Lake painting can be found on p. 125, *American Folk Art Painters* by Ebert.

Courtesy of Barbara Austen, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Va.

The following excerpts were taken from *Brunswick: A Pictorial History*, written by Warren F. Broderick, published by the Brunswick Historical Society, 1978.



This remarkable farm scene, location unknown, brightly colored and sharply detailed, ranks as one of Hidley's finest accomplishments.

One of the few papers known to exist in Joseph Hidley's handwriting is this note, reproduced below. Isaac Nelson Conradt, four years Joseph's senior, was a step-brother of the artist. Isaac's mother (William W. Conradt's first wife) Sarah, was a Brunswick native, a daughter of John Melchoir Fife, one of the Town's earliest settlers, and his wife Catharine Hayner.

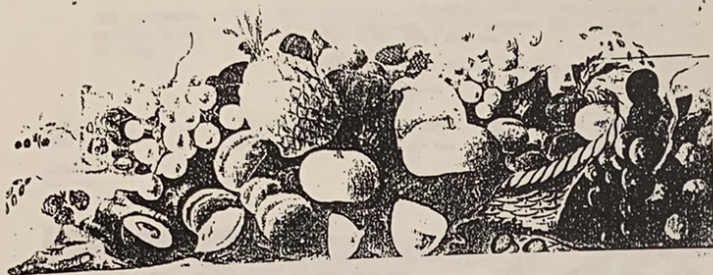
Poestenkill March 7th 1849
 Nine months from date for Value received
 I promise to pay to Isaac N. Conradt
 or Care S. G. with Interest
 Joseph N. Hidley

OVERDOOR PANEL: STILL LIFE
 Attributed to Joseph H. Hidley (1830-1872)
 About 1860

Still life paintings of all sorts were considered stylish decoration for use in parlors and dining rooms in mid-nineteenth century America.



Courtesy of Barbara Austen, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Va.



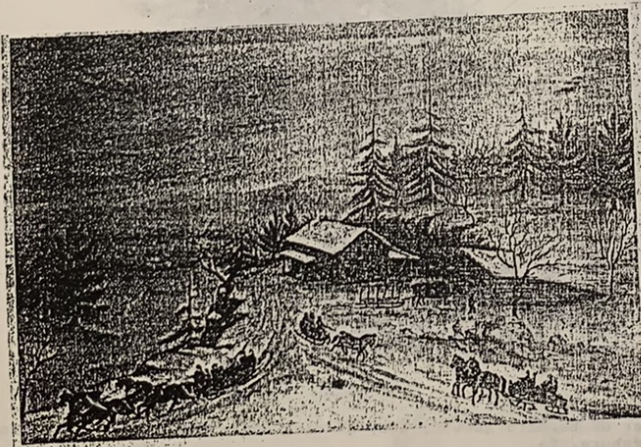
Joseph H. Hidley Painter

Hidley — Painter

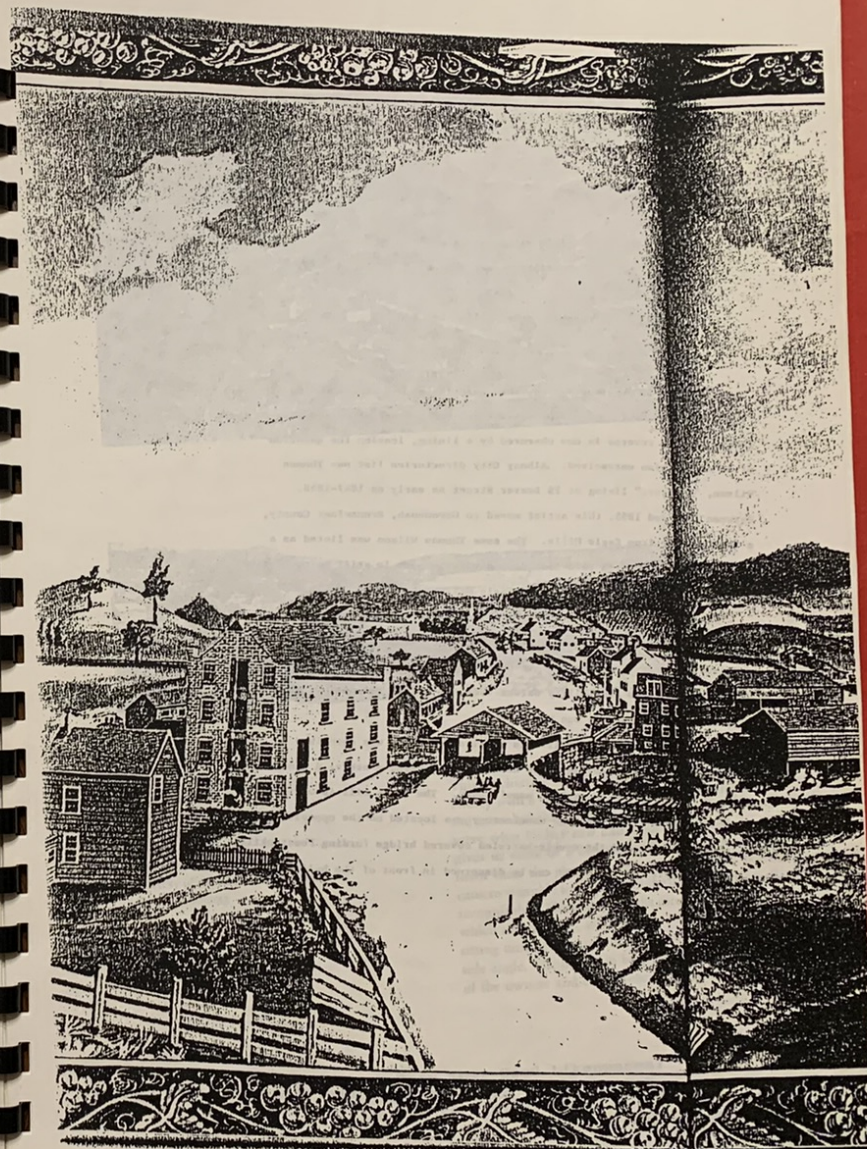
J-H-H PAINTER

One notes that Hidley used an older spelling of his surname with the letter "e" included.

Taken from *Brunswick... A Pictorial History*
published by the Brunswick Historical Society
1978



"WINTER SCENE"
(privately owned)



"Eagle Mill" unknown artist
dated (lower, right, front) 1845
(Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art
Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia)

EAGLE MILLS, NEW YORK
Possibly Thomas Wilson
1845
Probably Eagle Mills, New York
Oil on canvas

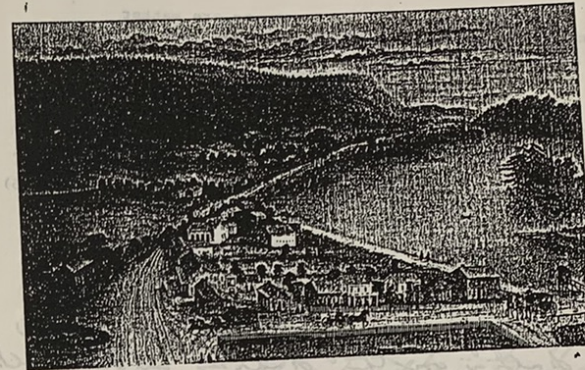
According to previous owners, this painting at one time bore the signature "Thomas Wilson", but Center staff have found no evidence of such a name on the front, and the reverse is now obscured by a lining, leaving the question of an inscription unresolved. Albany City directories list one Thomas Wilson, "painter," living at 26 Beaver Street as early as 1847-1848. Between 1850 and 1855, this artist moved to Greenbush, Rensselaer County, a town not far from Eagle Mills. The same Thomas Wilson was listed as a "carriage painter" from 1870 to 1876. However, there is still no conclusive evidence that this is the artist of Eagle Mills.

Some similarity between Eagle Mills and Hidley's paintings, such as the attention to detail and the bird's-eye view, have been noted although scholars continue to debate whether or not it is by his hand. If not the work of Hidley, the possibility exists that the artist responsible may have influenced Hidley or was his teacher.

Eagle Mills, known as Millville until about 1860, was described in 1842 as having 125 inhabitants, 20 houses, one tavern, a store, a flouring mill, a saw mill, and a carriage manufactory. The flour mill is obvious in the painting. The carriage manufactory was located on the opposite side of the street, beyond the double-barreled covered bridge fording Poestenkill Creek. Examples of its wares can be discerned in front of the building.

58.102.20

Courtesy of Barbara Austen, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center
Williamsburg, Va.



Joseph Hidley
View of Glass Lake
c. 1855-1860
Oil on canvas
19 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches (framed)
Courtesy of the Rensselaer County
Historical Society

Glass Lake
Photograph
c. 1855

This fascinating comparison of a painting by Joseph Hidley with a contemporary photograph from nearly the same location gives us a rare opportunity to observe what Hidley saw and what he painted. Hidley gives us more of a birdseye view perspective of the town than the photographer, with an earth bound camera was able to do, but still the buildings are easily recognizable. The camera looks directly at the homes which rim the lake, while Hidley, who appears to be sitting more above and south depicts the houses at a side angle. The homes in both views were the homes of the owners and employees of the glass works.

From: "But Were They Good Likenesses?"
Hirschl & Alder Folk Art, N.Y.
Jan. 14 to Feb. 25, 1989

GENEALOGY.....

Please Note: For genealogists these documents are matter of public records. Courtesy of Judy Rowe, Glass Lake

[Renunciation of their rights of guardianship of Joseph Henry Hidley (#275) by his mother, grandfather Michael Hidley (#9) and maternal grandfather] Rensselaer County probate records

We the undersigned, being the Mother, and Grand Father on the Father's and Mother's side of Joseph Henry Hidley, infant son of George H. Hidley, deceased, do hereby renounce our right to letters of Guardianship of the Person and Estate of said Joseph Henry Hidley, and request the Surrogate of Rensselaer County to appoint Philip I. Simmons, here or elsewhere appointed wife and our place, all or at 5th St. B.S.

Samson in care of
Philip I. Simmons

James H. Hidley
Michael H. Hidley
Christian Simmons

[Petition of Philip I. Simmons to be Guardian of Joseph Henry Hidley #275] Rensselaer County probate records

TO Philip I. Simmons
of Rensselaer.
THE PETITION OF Philip I. Simmons
Surrogate of the County

Respectfully represents That Joseph Henry Hidley son of George H. Hidley of the Town of Ensbury and County of Rensselaer is a minor within the age of Fourteen years, and that, according to the best of the knowledge and belief of your Petitioner was four years old on the twenty-third day of March last. That he is owner of and legally entitled to certain real estate in the County of Rensselaer in which estate your Petitioner is apprehensive that he may sustain loss for want of a proper person, legally empowered, to save and improve the same. That the mother of said deceased ^{deceased} has declined the appointment of Guardian of said deceased in writing now on file in your Office and that the Grandfather took on the father and mother side have consented to the appointment of your petitioner, the uncle of said deceased, to be his Guardian, and have also declined taking said appointment themselves, as will appear by this writing now on file in your Office.

your Petitioner therefore, prays the aid of this court, in the premises under the statutes of the state of New-York, in such case made and provided, and that your petitioner of the Town of Ensbury in the county of Rensselaer may be appointed Guardian of his person and estate until he shall attain the full age of Fourteen years. Dated March 5 1895.

Philip I. Simmons

[Guardianship bond of Michael Hidley (#9) and his son John M. Hidley (#74) for Joseph Henry Hidley (#275)] Rensselaer County probate records

Know all Men BY THESE PRESENTS, THAT WE,
 John M. Hidley and Michael Hidley
 of Rensselaer
 in the County of Rensselaer, are held and firmly bound unto Joseph Henry
 Hidley of the said County, a minor, in the sum of Eight
 hundred Dollars, lawful money of the State
 of New-York, to be paid to the said Joseph Henry Hidley
 by certain attorney, executors, administrators or assigns; and to
 which payment, well and truly to be made, we bind ourselves, our and each of our heirs,
 executors and administrators, jointly and severally, firmly by these presents. Sealed with
 our Seals, and dated the ~~thirteenth~~ day of March in the year of
 our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-two

The Condition of this Obligation is such, That if the above Bounden
 John M. Hidley
 shall faithfully in all things discharge the duty of a GUARDIAN to the above named
 Joseph Henry Hidley a minor, according to law, and shall
 render a true and just account of all moneys and property received by him, and of the
 application thereof, and of his guardianship in all respects, to any court having cognizance
 thereof, when thereunto required, then this obligation to be void; otherwise to remain in
 full force and virtue.

Sealed and delivered in the
 presence of

A. V. Peltz

John M. Hidley

Michael Hidley
 made

[Petition of future artist Joseph Henry Hidley (#275) that his step-father William Coonradt be appointed his Guardian] Rensselaer County probate records

To the Surrogate of the County of Rensselaer
 The petition of Joseph Henry Hidley of Rensselaer
 in the County of Rensselaer represents that he
 is a minor of the age of fourteen years on the 22^d
 day of March last past - that he is entitled to
 no real Estate, but is entitled to personal Estate
 of the value of four hundred three dollars & fifty
 nine cents & prays that William Coonradt
 of Rensselaer County be appointed his gene-
 ral guardian -
 Done 15th 1844 Joseph H. Hidley

Rensselaer County, N.Y. Joseph H. Hidley being
 personally sworn - the facts set forth in the foregoing
 petition are true
 Done before me
 Jan'y 15th 1844
Wm. Reynolds J. Surrogate

Joseph H. Hidley

[account of expenses of John M. Hidley (#74) as Guardian of Joseph Henry Hidley (#275); note that Lydia, widow of Michael Hidley (#9) was paid \$3.00 for a year's washing.]
Rensselaer County probate records

Joseph H. Hidley To J. M. Hidley
Guardian Dr
Amount brought forward \$31.70
April 1st 1844 To Cash paid J. Hidley
for one year Washing Sub \$3.00
Sept 1842 To Cash paid for Clothing
and Making same 12.56
To Cash paid for pr shoes 0.75
1 pr suspenders 0.12 1/2
To Cutting Making sum Clothes 0.31
To Shirts making &c }
To Linen & other Clothing &c } 2.91
To School Bill 0.96
To one Over Coat 6.00
To one Cap 1.50
To 2 fannel Shirts 2.13
Cash 1.00
Carried forward 62.94

[account of expenses of John M. Hidley (#74) as Guardian of Joseph Henry Hidley (#275); note that 63c was paid to Nicholas Warner (#52) of Wynantskill for mending shoes.]
Rensselaer County probate records

Joseph H. Hidley To J. M. Hidley
Guardian Dr
To Amount brought forward \$62.94
To Mitten Paper &c to Cash 1.19
To School Bill 1.00
To Nicholas Warner Bill for mending shoes 0.63
To Cash paid for Cloth & making 1.75
To Cash paid Dr Judson Bill 3.77
To one Shaw hat 0.25
1843 To Cash paid for Clothing Making 8.30
To 1 pair of Boots 1.75
To 2 pair Stockings 2/ 0.50
To Cap Mittens & Cash 3.13
To 1 pair pantaloons 2.25
To School Bill to Coffin 0.52
To Commission on \$457.22 at 5% 22.86
\$109.07

TO MOSES WARREN, ESQ., SURROGATE OF THE COUNTY OF RENSSELAER.

The petition of Hannah S. Coonradt of the City of Brochford in the County of Rensselaer, respectfully sheweth that your petitioner is the paternal Grandmother of Joseph L. [1381] [1383] [1383]

minor; that said minor reside in the County of Rensselaer, and is under fourteen years of age, and has no testamentary or other guardian, and whose father is deceased; That said Joseph L. Hidley was eleven years of age on the 6th day of November last past. And that said Emeline Hidley was seven years of age on the 3rd day of March last past; That said minor are entitled to personal property to the value of about One hundred Dollars to each of them, as your petitioner is informed and verily believes, and that the said seized of certain real estate, the annual rents and profits do not exceed the sum of Twenty Five dollars to each, and to protect and preserve the legal rights of said minor, it is necessary that some proper person should be duly appointed the guardian of this person and estate.

Your petitioner therefore prays that you will appoint John A. Uline of the Town of North Greenbush in the County of Rensselaer the guardian of the person and estate of said minor, until they shall respectively arrive at the age of fourteen years, and until another guardian shall be appointed. And your petitioner will ever pray.

Dated this 5th day of October A. D. 1872

[Petition regarding guardianship of two children of the deceased artist Joseph H. Hidley (#275)]

Hannah S. Coonradt
[widow of #76]

CONSENT.

I, John A. Uline of the Town of North Greenbush do hereby consent to be appointed the guardian of the person and estate of the above named minor during his minority.

Dated this 5th day of October A. D. 1872

John A. Uline

STATE OF NEW YORK, ss.
COUNTY OF RENSSELAER

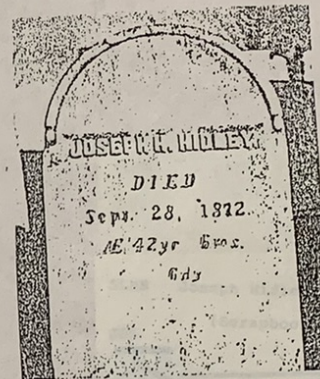
Hannah S. Coonradt of the City of Brochford the above petitioner, being duly sworn, deposes and says, that the matters set forth in the foregoing petition are true, as she is informed and verily believes.

Sworn before me, this 5th day of October A. D. 1872

William H. Labor
Notary Public
Renss. Co

Hannah S. Coonradt

PLEASE NOTE: There is a complete genealogy of the Hidley family filed in the Hidley folders. For more information, contact the Poestenkill Town Historian.



Hidley's dates are determined by this stone in the Poestenkill cemetery on the outskirts of the village.

Taken from New York State Antiques
by Janet MacFarland
Jan. 1992 issue

The National Museum of American Art - Smithsonian Institution, shows an inventory of 164 known paintings done by Joseph H. Hidley.

Oil was the medium of 159, water color 2, and the medium of the remainder was unnamed.

Architecture/landscapes are the most popular subjects followed by townscapes, portraits and still life as well as a few Biblical scenes.

Very impressive accomplishment for a home-town boy!

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[Faint, mostly illegible text from the reverse side of the page, appearing as bleed-through.]

[Faint, mostly illegible text from the reverse side of the page, appearing as bleed-through.]

SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 492
WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196

SLHS Joseph Hidley
(Scrapbook)
JOS

SLHS Joseph Hidley
(Scrapbook)
JOS

HISTORICAL	
BORROWER'S NAME	ROOM NUMBER
11/28/97 Diane Freeman	

SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 492
WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196

GAYLORD M

SAND LAKE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 492
WEST SAND LAKE, NY 12196