



Spring/Summer 2015

Issue 38

Paisley Family Research and News

The Guilford Limner and Elizabeth Paisley Gibson

A limner is an untrained portrait painter. These folk artists traveled the country, picking up work wherever they could. Most did not sign their work. If a local newspaper was available, they would send advance notice and invite people to hire him to paint their portraits.

In the 1820s a limner came through Greensboro, NC. He painted a large number of watercolor portraits, signing none. He is thought to have painted at least 40 portraits within five miles of Greensboro. Many of the known Guilford subjects were connected, which exemplifies how a limner picked up work by word-of-mouth. His identity is still unknown but his style is distinctive. This mystery folk artist is referred to as the Guilford Limner. He was a miniaturist. He painted details around the face and shoulders of the people. Objects further away were more primitive.

One North Carolina portrait has a tantalizing clue to the artist's identity. On the back, the granddaughter wrote that "a traveling French artist" had painted her grandmother. From an inscription on the back of a Kentucky portrait, there was a note that it was painted by Dupue. Extensive research has turned up no artist or even a person with this name. The size, originality, and technical proficiency of the Guilford Limner would support the evidence that this is an undocumented foreign-born artist who introduced a new style of portraiture to America.

In 1827 the Guilford Limner painted families of Greensboro. Four of those portraits were of Moses Gibson, his wife Elizabeth Paisley Gibson, and their two daughters. Moses was married in 1810 to Elizabeth Paisley, the daughter of Col. John and Maryann Denny Paisley. They had nine children to survive to adulthood: Eliza Ann, John, Andrew, Joseph, Lemuel, Anna Jane, and William born in 1825. It is unknown if portraits were also made of the boys. Later, in 1841, the family would migrate to Benton County, Mississippi, four miles south of the Tennessee line.

One hundred and eighty three years later, Alice Fitzgibbon of Nashville, TN, packed up the portraits of her great-great-great grandparents and their daughters and took them to the Antiques Roadshow in Biloxi, MS. Mr. Ken Farmer, an antiques specialist from Radford, VA and well known folk art appraiser on the Antiques Roadshow, appraised the paintings of Moses Gibson and family at \$60,000. He said "One of the characteristics of his portraits are not only the real good detail on the interior, but he also did oversized eyes, with the irises being just a little bit larger than what you normally see. These were all watercolors painted on laid down paper. They're fantastic from an aesthetic point of view. They're beautiful."

In 2011, Fitzgibbon and her family generously placed the Moses Gibson family portraits on long-term loan to the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) at Old Salem Museums & Gardens in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. These rare early North Carolina portraiture are displayed in the gallery representing an interior of the 1766 McLean house, which stood only a few miles from the Gibson family home.

MESDA curator Sally Gant started a search on the Guilford Limner. She found that he possibly worked in Clark County, Kentucky and possibly in Virginia and South Carolina. She describes his work as distinctive with mostly single, straight-forward portraits that often have the names of the subjects and the date written on the picture. The subjects also hold accessory items that tell something about them. Other features include large, luminous eyes, colorful dress and surroundings, and the use of high-quality woven paper and gouache, a watercolor mixed with gum arabic to render a more opaque quality. [Sparks, Central Kentucky News. 8/6/13]

The portraits and their appearance on the Antiques Roadshow apparently went unnoticed by members of the Paisley Family Association until this year! Denise Ramo of New York contacted Harvey Lee McCollum (our past-president) through the Paisley Family Society USA Facebook page. Harvey sent Denise's contact information to Diane Langston. Diane corresponded with Denise, trying to find her place in the puzzle. Turns out, Denise is descended from Moses Gibson's son John. This line was not represented in the *Paisley and Allied Families* book. Diane viewed Denise's line on her ancestry.com family tree. It was there that Diane discovered the incredible folk art portrait of Elizabeth Paisley Gibson.

An internet search turned up the Antiques Roadshow clip of Alice Fitzgibbon and her paintings, the information on their loan to MESDA, and finally the artist search by MESDA curator, Sally Gant. Unsure about copyright issues since the portraits are now at a museum, Diane contacted Gary Albert at MESDA. He generously sent high resolution digital copies, waived the fee, and granted permission to reproduce the portraits in this newsletter.

[Article references on page 6. The following images are from the Collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA). Permission to publish is graciously granted by MESDA.]



Moses Gibson, son of the emigrant, Andrew Gibson and wife, Jane Freeland, was born in Guilford, N.C. He was a farmer and an Elder in the Bethel Church Presbyterian for 25 years. In 1841 with family he moved to Jackson County, Ark., arriving at Dunar farm on Black River, Dec. 24. In the spring of 1842 he moved to Litchfield, the old county seat, and rented the entire farm, including the old court house, and put in a ten horse crop of corn. In Dec. 1842, he moved down the river about 30 miles to a point called Taylor's Bay, where he remained until the fall of 1844, when he moved back by wagons, bringing family, negroes and household goods, crossed the Mississippi River at Memphis and thru Holly Springs into Tippah County, Mississippi. He bought 160 acres of land, being northeast quarter of section 2, east, about four miles south of the Tennessee line in what then was Tippah County, Miss., after 1870, Benton County, Miss. There he built his home and lived until death, being buried a few hundred yards southwest of his home by the side of the wife. (p. 438, *Paisley and Allied Families*, complied by Silva Partridge, 1973)



Elizabeth Paisley's birth was recorded in the family Bible as the 25th day of June 1785; born in Guilford County, NC to Col. John and Maryann Denny Paisley. "From tradition—of a plain gold band ring which was worn by Elizabeth Denny from Ireland to America 1735-6. She gave the ring to her niece Maryanna Denny wife of Col. John Paisley. Maryanna gave it to her daughter Elizabeth Paisley who became the wife of Moses Gibson. Their daughter Elizabeth gave it to her daughter Anna Jane who married Dr. Ralph Bouton, Anna Jane gave it to her son Dr. William Paisley Bouton whose wife as of 1950, Mildred Thomas Vaughn, has the ring. The ring is in the Will and has now been given to Mildred Bouton 1964. The ring is very thin and looks like our present-day wedding ring." [From the book *Paisley and Allied Families*, (compiled by Silva Partridge, 1973), p. 312, information from George Ralph Bouton]



ELIZABETH GIBSON

1827

Age 16

ANNY J. GIBSON. 1827.



T. G. C. 10

Do You Have a 17th or 18th Century Paisley Family Artifact?

The “discovery” of the portrait of Elizabeth Paisley Gibson, has opened up a whole new area of research. I never dreamed that any members of the Paisley or allied families had portraits painted. Many of the known Guilford County subjects are connected to the Paisley family (see list on next page). The possibility that other portraits are out there waiting to be discovered is exciting. Think—do you remember seeing or hearing anyone talk about portraits? The paintings are small and could easily be stuck in a chest or between book pages. Start asking questions of your relatives, visit antique shops and museums, share this newsletter with any Paisley relatives you are in contact with.

Each generation, family memorabilia gets disbursed to the children and grandchildren. Some times it gets sold off at auction. Hundreds of years later, family heirlooms (and distant cousins) are lost. What do you have? What can you share? In past years this newsletter has shared Bible records, letters, and photos that are in private hands.

Please contact me and let me know what artifacts were passed down your branch of the family.



Guilford Limner article references:

Antiques Road Show, Biloxi, MS, episode #1515. Guilford Limner appraisal by Ken Farmer. Appraised July 24, 2010; aired May 16, 2011. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/201004A19.html>

Beach, Laura. *Antiques*. “Beyond moonlight and magnolias: The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts moves forward and looks westward,” Sept/Oct 2012, p.26. <http://laura-beach.com/writings/MESDA.pdf>

Carroll, Karen Cobb. *Windows to the Past: Primitive Watercolors from Guilford County, North Carolina in the 1820s*. [booklet] Greensboro Historical Museum, 1983,1989. http://archive.org/stream/windowstopastpri00carr>windowstopastpri00carr_djvu.txt

Gant, Sally, Director of Education & Special Program, MESDA. Information sheets, booklets, flyers, and emails. September 2015.

Museum of Early southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) [press release, May 10, 2011]. <http://www.mesda.org/assets/files/Portraits%20Discovered%20on%20Antiques%20Roadshow%20on%20Display%20at%20Winston-Salem%20Museum.pdf>

Schlosser, Jim. *Jim's Landscape: Travels Through Greensboro With Jim Schlosser* [blog]. May 22, 2011. <https://ibbeale.wordpress.com/2011/05/22/who-was-the-guilford-limner-his-works-are-valuable/>

Sparks, Kendall. “North Carolina museum director is in pursuit of mysterious 1800s painter with possible ties to Clark County.” *Central Kentucky News*. September 06, 2013 [website, accessed 9/5/2015] http://articles.centralkynews.com/2013-09-06/winchestersun/41841229_1_clark-county-harry-enoch-portraits

Denise White Ramo's Paisley ancestral line:

William Paisley & Elenor McLean Paisley

Col. John Paisley & Maryanne Denny Paisley

Moses Gibson & Elizabeth Paisley Gibson

Elizabeth b.25 Jun 1785 Guilford Co, NC; m.10 Feb 1810 Guilford NC; d. July 1846 Tippah, MS

John Paisley Gibson & Damaris Porter

John b. 10 Aug 1813 in Guilford NC; m.1st) 23 Apr 1838 Rockingham Co NC; d. 18 Sep 1883 Canaan, Benton Co MS

Henry Clay Gibson & Lucy A. Young

Henry b. 17 Feb 1839 Guilford Co NC; m. 26 Dec 1866 Tippah MS; d. 14 Jan 1906 Shelby, TN

Leonard Paisley Gibson & Vira Cowley

Leonard b. 1 Sep 1887 MS; d. 20 Nov 1952 Shelby TN

Clyde Paisley Gibson & Joan L. Stroup Gibson

Clyde b. 25 Aug 1914 Memphis, TN; m. 16 Sep 1945 St. Louis MO; d. Aug 1978 Smithtown, Suffolk, NY



List of 70 Paintings Attributed to the Gilford Limner

Housed at MESDA, Winston-Salem, NC

Moses Gibson
Elizabeth Paisley Gibson
Eliza Anne Gibson
Anney Jane Gibson
Jacob Foust
Mary Clapp Foust

Housed at the Greensboro NC Museum

Daniel Gillespie
Lucretia Gott Gillaspie
Robert Gillespie
Nancy Hanner Gillespie
John McClintock Logan
Nancy Dick Patrick Logan
Hanner family (9 portraits):
John Hanner (1777-1850),
[son of Robert and Isabella Erwin Hanner]

Ann Gillespie Hanner
Alfred Emsley Hanner
John Gillespie Hanner
Orpheus Smiley Hanner
Allen Armstrong Hanner (1813-1886)
Daniel James Hanner (1815-1901)
Ann Eliza Hanner (d.1894)
Caroline Isabelle Hanner (1823-1903)

NC portraits in private collections or location unknown:

George Albright (portrait lost, photo in Greensboro Museum)
Martha Albright (portrait lost, photo in Museum)
Andrew Caldwell
Robert Craighead Caldwell
Elizabeth Caroline McAdoo Cunningham
John Milton Cunningham
Robert Donnell
Nancy McCabe Latta Donnell
Daniel Faust
Elizabeth "Betsy" Nicks Gibson [Richardson]
Col. Daniel Gillespie [in uniform]
Col. Daniel Gillespie [in suit]
Margaret Hall Gillespie
Margaret Hall Gillespie
John Patterson Gillespie
Susan A. Gilmore
Andrew Lindsey and daughter Mary Eliza
Elizabeth Dick Lindsey and daughter Susanna Julia
David Mebane
Elizabeth Tate Mebane
Thomas Y. Mebane
Margaret Patterson [Rankin]

Nancy Gillespie Rankin

Thankful Rankin [Wharton]

Samuel Shelton

Jane Shelton

Francis Lucas Simpson

Priscilla Simpson

Margaret Lloyd Osborne Davidson (Mecklenburg Co., NC)

Robert "Robin" Davidson (Mecklenburg Co., NC)

Rachel Carson [Mills] (Rutherford/Iredell NC)

Dr. Nathaniel Ewing McClelland (Rutherford/Iredell NC)

Kentucky portraits housed at the Kentucky Historical Society:

<http://history.ky.gov/inventory-brings-exciting-find-this-week/>

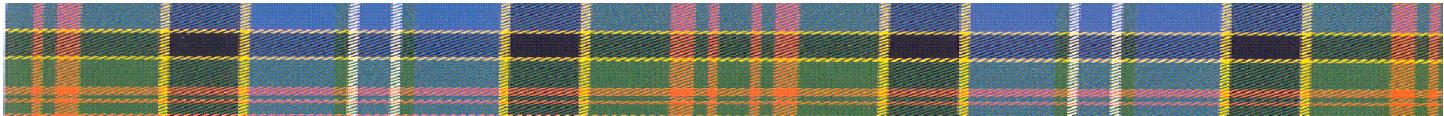
William Trigg
Thomas Hollinger Gaines, Jr.
Elizabeth Gaines
William Ezekel Gaines

Other Kentucky families in private collections or unknown location:

- * Nancy Buckley (born in 1824 in Surry County, North Carolina, the 8th child of Alexander and Lucy Buckley.)
- * James and Frances Burrus Ragland on their Clark Co., Kentucky estate, 1820. (sold at auction \$8225.)
- * James R. and Carolina Eubanks Ragland of Clark County, KY
- * Nathaniel Ragland & Martha Smith Ragland of Kentucky (sold at auction)
- * Frederick Couchman and Elizabeth Petitt Donalson Couchman of Clark County, KY (can view at <http://www.prices4antiques.com/Dupue-The-Guilford-Limner-Watercolor-Ink-Painting-attributed-Portrait-of-Frederick-Couchman-D9713346.html>)
- * Jonas Markey of Bourbon Co., KY
- * Robert Mitchel, possibly of Harrison Co., KY
- * Teresa Mullican of Washington Co., KY
- * Lucretia Greenwood [Bright] of Liberty Co., KY
- * Unknown woman of Franklin Co., KY
- * Unknown man of Franklin Co., KY

Other States:

- * Samuel Farrow Rice (Union Co/Spartanburg, SC)
- * Sarah Pines Herndon Rice (Union Co/Spartanburg, SC)
- * Mary Elizabeth Rice [Gist] (Union Co/Spartanburg, SC)
- * Catherine Amen [Stover] (Botetourt Co., VA—possibly a Fraktur Certificate instead of a Limner)
- * Unknown couple of Brunswick Co., VA (possibly Joshua Lucy and Ann Hunnicutt Lucy)
- * Unknown female child



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The 2016 Paisley Family Association meeting and luncheon will be held July 9th at the Tomahawk Ruritan building, 4101 N. Bailey Bridge Road, Midlothian, VA 23112. Exhibits & visiting start at 11:00am. Lunch at 12:00 followed by meeting and program.

Membership

Annual dues are \$5.00. Make checks payable to "Paisley Family Association."

Members receive two issues per year of *Family Research and News*. The newsletters are available as printed copies or online at

sites.google.com/site/paisleyfamilyassociation/

Other web sites of interest:

Paisley Family society:

<http://www.paisleyfamilysociety.org.uk/>

Paisley Family Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Paisley-Family-Society/195070730565352>

Paisley Family DNA Project web page:

<http://www.familytreedna.com/public/paisley/>