

WILLIAM GILBERT GAUL, TENNESSEE ARTIST

'Cumberland Tales'

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William Gilbert Gaul (1855-1919) was not a native of the Upper Cumberland region or of Tennessee, but his career as an artist was much influenced by his living in this area for about 12 years, between 1881-1885, 1891-1895, and 1906-1910.

Gaul was born in New Jersey to a mother from Tennessee. At the age of 17, he enrolled in the National Academy of Design in New York, and he was elected to full standing in 1882, the youngest member to ever be elected. Gaul traveled to the Dakotas in 1876, and on his return to New York, he began painting western scenes. He also began producing Civil War paintings about this time, with a particular sympathy for the Southern Cause. "Charging the Battery" sold for a record price of \$1,500, and this painting later won medals at the Paris Universal Exposition and the Chicago World Columbian Exposition.

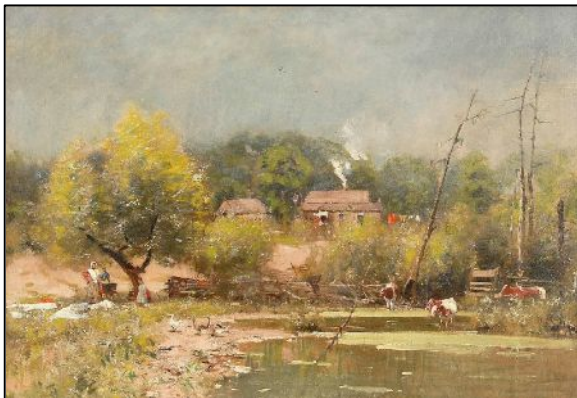
Other famous Gaul war paintings were "the Stragglers," "News from Home," "Holding the Line at All Hazards," "Leaving Home," and "Tidings from the Front." The Civil War paintings were largely products of Gaul's imagination, but they are the works for which he is most remembered today. Many publications about the war still reproduce prints of his canvases.

Gaul came to Tennessee in 1881, drawn here by a bequest of land. An uncle, Hiram Gilbert, died in Van Buren County and left Gaul his farm. The will stipulated that he must live on the farm at least four years in order to own it. Gaul, with his wife and parents, traveled to rural Van Buren County to claim the land. They found a log house on the land near Fall Creek Falls.



(Pictured: "Rafting on the Cumberland" by William Gilbert Gaul).

The Gauls built another log house and an art studio on the land and lived there for the required four years. During this period, with obviously difficult living conditions, Gilbert produced no significant paintings. In 1885 he returned to New York and resumed painting western and Civil War scenes.



In 1891, Gaul moved back to Tennessee and produced several genre paintings of the area. "Tennessee Farmyard," "Van Buren, Tennessee," "Homesteading in Tennessee," "Yellow Bush," "Gathering Wood in Tennessee," "Tennessee Cabin," "Tennessee Harvest," "Winter Sunset," and "Beauty of Nature" were some of the Tennessee subjects painted during this period. One of his most famous paintings of Tennessee, "Rafting on the Cumberland," was composed after 1900. Gaul depicted two men steering a raft down the river while two younger workers on the raft were seated and playing a game. Most of the Tennessee paintings are in private collections today, although Vanderbilt and Cheekwood own several of Gaul's works. The Tennessee State Museum owns some of the Civil War paintings. Gaul's style is usually denoted as realism with

some hints of romanticism, but his landscapes remind some critics of the famous Barbizon school of France.

(Pictured: "Van Buren, Tennessee" by William Gilbert Gaul).

In 1893 Gaul won medals at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, but by 1904, his popularity as a painter had declined. He moved back to Tennessee again and taught at Cumberland Female College in McMinnville for a short time. The next year he moved to Nashville and taught at Watkins Institute. Here he produced 12 paintings on Civil War subjects. Some of these paintings were installed in the newly built Hermitage Hotel in Nashville. In 1910 he won a gold medal at the Knoxville Exposition.

Moving back to New Jersey, Gaul painted World War I battle scenes. In 1919, he died of tuberculosis. His farm in Van Buren County is now part of Fall Creek Falls State Park, and there is a designated Gilbert Gaul Trail in the park. His painting are hanging in Tennessee private homes and in prominent museums. In 1992, the Tennessee State Museum organized an exhibition of Gaul's art.

"Cumberland Tales," created by Calvin Dickinson and Michael Birdwell and sponsored by the Cookeville History Museum, welcomes any tales of this region's history. For more information, contact Calvin Dickinson at cdickinson@tech.edu or Michael Birdwell at birdie@tntech.edu.

(To read more 'Cumberland Tales' go to: <http://www.ajalmbert.com>)



WILLIAM GILBERT GAUL

b. 31 March 1855, Jersey City, Hudson, NJ

d. 21 December 1919, NY

Wife: married Martha Halstead,

d/o Vice-Admiral G. A. Halstead, R. N. in Sept. 1898.

Father: George W. Gaul

Mother: Cornelia A. Gilbert (1834-1899)

Buried: Saint Michaels Cemetery

East Elmhursts, Queens Co., NY

(Pictured: Self Portrait of William Gilbert Gaul, by Wm. G. Gaul).

William Gilbert Gaul Obt.

G. W. GAUL PAINTER, DIES:

WON MANY MEDALS FOR HISTORIC AND GENRE CANVASES:

Gilbert William Gaul, artist, died yesterday morning at his home, 672 Edgecombe Avenue, after an illness of more than a year. Funeral services will be held in the home at 8 o'clock tomorrow night. Burial will take place Wednesday in St. Michael's Cemetery, Astoria.

Born in New Jersey City, N. J., March 31, 1855, a son of George W. and Cornelia A. Gilbert, Mr. Gaul studied art under John G. Brown and L. E. Wilmarth from 1872 to 1876. He specialized in historic and genre paintings and won many medals for his work. He received the medal of the American Art Association in 1882, medal of the Paris Exposition in 1889, two bronze medals of the Chicago Exposition in 1893, medal of the Buffalo Exposition in 1901, and a gold medal at the Appalachian Exhibition in Knoxville, Tenn., in 1910. He was a member of the National Academy of Design, being elected to membership when he was 27 years old.

New York Times