

The Three Cassatts

Cheryl Leibold

Newcomers to Tredyffrin Township often assume that Cassatt Road is named for the famous expatriate American painter, Mary Cassatt. In fact, the road's namesake is her brother Alexander Cassatt, who, in the second half of the nineteenth century was far more famous than his sister. Mary Cassatt's family connection to the Main Line - through her older brother Alexander and her younger brother Gardner - provides a reason to examine her career, and to look at the properties owned by her brothers in this area.

MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)

Mary Cassatt was the daughter of an affluent Pittsburgh businessman of French ancestry, Robert Cassatt, and Katherine Kelso Johnston. Mary was the fourth child to live to adulthood, preceded by Lydia, Alexander, Robert (who died at age thirteen), and followed by Gardner. Mary's father owned several brokerage houses and had many real estate dealings. He was relatively wealthy, and essentially retired in 1848 at age forty. Robert Cassatt was incredibly peripatetic, moving his family to over a dozen residences in central and eastern Pennsylvania between 1844 and 1871.

Two pivotal events formed Mary's early life. The first was the family's extended sojourn in Europe from mid-1851 to late 1855. They spent two years in Paris and a year and a half in Germany, where her parents sought medical help for young Robbie. All the children learned French and German, as well as studying literature and other academic subjects, and they probably also took drawing lessons. Robbie died in Germany of a bone disease at age thirteen, and the grieving family returned to the United States in 1855.

The second major event in Mary's maturation occurred in April of 1860, when at age sixteen she enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The Pennsylvania Academy was the most prestigious art school in America, and Mary studied there for two years. At the Academy, a student could experience



Photograph of Mary Cassatt, 1872. While visiting Parma, Italy, Mary Cassatt inscribed this photograph of herself to her friend Emily Sartain: "Alla distinta pittrice, Emila Sartain." (To the distinguished painter, Emily Sartain.) *Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.*

exhibitions of both European and American paintings, as well have access to the growing permanent collection. Her training consisted of copying, using both plaster casts of ancient sculptures and old master paintings. In addition, there was instruction in drawing, with some access to live models, and lectures on human anatomy.

During the Civil War, the family lived in Cheney, Pennsylvania, where they seem to have been little affected by the conflict, and may have stayed neutral. Mary was a good horsewoman, and spent time riding with her brother Alexander. She probably made many trips into Philadelphia, but little is known about these years. In late 1865, Mary, now twenty-one years of age and eager to begin studying art in Europe, left for Paris with her close friend and fellow Academy student, Eliza Haldeman. Mary's mother eventually joined them, and by 1877 both Mary's parents as well as her sister Lydia had settled permanently in Paris. The Cassatt family lived very comfortably there, supported by Robert Cassatt's wealth and a trust fund provided for them by the oldest son, Alexander. Mary returned to the United States for only four visits, in 1870, 1874, 1898, and 1908.

Since women were not admitted to the state sponsored art school, the *École des Beaux-Arts*, Cassatt had to find other opportunities. Mary and Eliza spent long days copying masterworks in the Louvre, standard practice for art students at the time. She and Eliza also attended more structured classes at a private art school for women, working from models every day. Mary was accepted as a private pupil of the prestigious teacher Jean-Léon Gérôme, a coup that thrilled and amazed her friends in both the U. S. and France. She told her biographer in 1912 that her father's reaction to the idea of her attending art school in Europe was: "I'd almost rather see you dead."¹ But she prevailed, and the family grew to understand that Mary would not be deterred in her goal of becoming a professional artist.

Later in her life, Mary recalled that as early as her days at the Pennsylvania Academy she never felt inferior to male students. She was outspoken and often opinionated and stubborn. She was also plain, had few if any suitors, and admitted to being uncomfortable in social situations. Her decision not to marry may have begun forming even in her late teens, although it was not an uncommon decision for young women at that time.²

In early 1867, Mary and Eliza left the formal and sophisticated art world of Paris for the French countryside. For about a year and a half, they lived in different small towns. Only one of these stops lasted as long as a year, a situation that foretold Mary's life-long predilection for incessant travel. They enjoyed rural French life enormously, and later Mary would return to the French countryside for lengthy periods. They studied informally with several older artists who had abandoned Paris for the country, and they painted the picturesque local people and places. This phase of her career, from her first efforts in 1867 to the mid-1870s, was still formative, and although she eagerly sought to sell some paintings, she saw little success. She eventually abandoned these subjects and turned to portraiture.

The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 forced Mary to abandon Europe, spending a year in the U. S. But by late 1871 she was back in France, where she resided until her death in 1926. She became a tireless and constant traveler, visiting dozens of European cities, occasionally alone, but more often in the company of friends. One of the few surviving photographs of her was taken in Parma, Italy. She visited that city in 1872 with her friend Emily Sartain, whose father was one of the premier artists and engravers in Philadelphia. They had met through the art circles of Philadelphia, although a later argument ended their friendship. Mary was always one to hold a grudge, and she never reconciled with Emily.³

From the late 1870s, Mary's portraits can be seen as the start of her mature career, and in general the subject for which she is famous. Her sitters are almost always women, usually looking serious and quiet, with only a suggestion of detail. Portraiture reflected Cassatt's interest in the pictorial qualities of everyday life, rather than subjects drawn from history, myth, or the Bible. Her primary subjects were her family and friends, posed in domestic settings or engaged in pursuits available to women in Paris, such as theatre and opera, taking tea, shopping, or visiting museums. The bustle of urban life in Paris and its streets never interested her, and she painted no landscapes or still life compositions.

While Mary Cassatt's early works were done in the dark and somber tones of the academic tradition, her works after about 1877 reflect a brighter color palette, loose brushwork, and an immediacy of observa-

tion. This change of style was the result of her discovery of the new style of impressionism, a movement in French art pioneered by Claude Monet, Jean Renoir and Edgar Degas. The Impressionists were a group of artists who had become disillusioned with the French art system. They decided to stage their own shows, advertise them, and hope for sales and critical praise. The group mounted eight exhibitions in rented rooms between 1874 and 1886. In 1877, just after the third Impressionist exhibition, Mary was invited by Edgar Degas to exhibit with the Impressionists. She “accepted with joy,” as she told her biographer, and “began to live.”⁴

In 1879, she exhibited with the group for the first time, making what she felt was her real debut at age thirty-four, and essentially abandoning the French art establishment for good. Twelve of her works were in the exhibition, and her work received significant press attention. One critic described her works as “all exquisite symphonies of color.” In typical impressionist style, the figures are often painted primarily in whites or very light colors, using many



Young Thomas and His Mother, by Mary Cassatt, ca. 1893, pastel on paper. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

clearly visible separate strokes of color. Instead of trying to capture a timeless moment, she and the other impressionists were more concerned with a casual observation. Her father commented in a letter to her brother: “She is now known to the Art world as well as to the general public in such a way as not to be forgotten...Every one of the French papers mentioned the exhibition and nearly all named [Mary] most of them in terms of praise...”⁵ She was the only American ever to show with them, exhibiting in four of their eight group shows.

The late 1880s saw the beginning of the long series of mother and child images that would grow into her greatest body of work, and her signature theme for the next twenty years. Still using the impressionist style and technique, she narrowed her subject selection to just two figures - a mother and a baby, or a child no older than about two. She “painted the subject in a serial manner, often to the exclusion of any other subject.”⁶ *Young Thomas and His Mother* exemplifies Cassatt’s genius in arranging a pose that always betrays an intimate and frequently physical bond, as well her genius for capturing the angelic child faces. Unlike her portraits of women, the mother and child images are almost never of friends or family; they are paid models.

These works quickly became so popular that Mary was hard pressed to fill the demand, and to some extent that is why Mary painted so many of them. Beyond sales, it is not entirely clear why she chose this theme and then kept to it so long. Perhaps she was just not courageous or adventurous enough to abandon it. Through the mother and child subjects, she became very famous and successful. People commented on her way with children. They were easy in her company because, for some reason, she was easy in theirs. Cassatt was at heart a realist, and this was a world she could easily observe very closely and capture on paper or canvas.

By 1880, Mary was painting steadily, as many as twenty-five canvases or pastels a year. With partial support from her parents’ income, she and her family lived very comfortably, and were assumed to be wealthy by many of the other American artists in Paris. Her association with the almost all-male Impressionist group was a comfortable one, since she had generally preferred male company to women. Cassatt was reticent, did not like to be photographed,

or to have her photograph appear in print. She wrote: “what one would like to leave behind one is superior art and a hidden personality.”⁷ She was also notoriously averse to awards and prizes for artists, especially for works shown in the large competitive exhibitions of the day, believing them to be unjust and discriminatory. In 1904, she turned down a prize from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts with these words: “I hope the fact of my not accepting the award will not be misunderstood... I however, who belong to the founders of the Independent Exhibition [the Impressionists] must stick to my principles, our principles, which were, no jury, no medals, no awards.”⁸

Mary Cassatt was also an accomplished printmaker, as well known for her prints as for her paintings. In

fact, the suite of prints she produced in 1890, influenced by Japanese art, is considered a milestone in printmaking. Mary had first learned printmaking in the fall of 1879 and winter of 1880, when she worked with Edgar Degas in his studio. They had hoped to start a small magazine, illustrated with original etchings. Mary found she loved the medium of etching, which allowed her to achieve spontaneous effects. This suited her, as she had never been an artist who produced dozens of detailed preliminary drawings in advance of a painting. (An etching is produced by sinking lines into a copper plate, inking those lines, and then impressing the image onto a sheet of paper by running the plate and paper through a press. Artists often find the making of prints an enjoyable change of pace from painting or sculpting because of its different challenges, and also because it is a way



The Barefooted Child, by Mary Cassatt, ca. 1896-97, color etching. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

of producing multiple images to sell at relatively low prices.)

In the 1890s, Mary produced scores of prints, initially inspired by the 1890 appearance in Paris of a large exhibition of over 700 Japanese prints. She and almost every other artist who saw this exhibition were deeply impressed by these Japanese prints – she visited it twice and later purchased several examples. Artists saw in these images a whole new way of depicting the world. The Japanese artists placed the figures in a non-western, two-dimensional space. Most of the compositional elements are simply black outlines filled in with delicate colors, and contrasting decorative patterns. The compositions are asymmetrical, often using a dramatic angled perspective, and various elements are cut off at the edges. Throughout the 1890s, she incorporated effects inspired by the Japanese prints into her own work. *The Barefooted Child* of the late 1890s is radically flattened, and projects almost no traditional depth perspective, by eliminating all background patterning. All of the compositional elements are just outlines, with pattern used only for the dress, and mere outlines for the faces, hands, and chair.

During the 1890s, Mary worked hard at her painting, when not consumed by her parents' declining health. She was pleased to be given three large solo exhibitions of her work, in Paris in 1893, and especially gratifying to her were two in New York, in 1895 and 1898. Mary felt they constituted a summation of her career. Her increased sales and growing reputation among American collectors allowed her to live a much grander life, if a rather lonely one. In 1891, Mary's mother wrote to her son Alexander: "Mary is at work again intent on fame and money, she says, and counts on her fellow countrymen, now that she has made a reputation here... she is immensely interested in her painting... After all a woman who is not married is lucky if she has a decided love for work of any kind, and the more absorbing the better."⁹

By the mid-1890s, Mary was financially independent and a successful painter. This success allowed her to realize a dream and buy a large country chateau, called *Beaufresne*, about fifty miles northwest of Paris. Mary had begun spending the summer months in the French countryside in 1880, and found she liked it better than Paris. By the end of her career she would routinely remain in the country into December. She

leased ten acres for gardens, stables and outbuildings and spent lavishly on her new property – the first she actually owned. She created several guest suites so that she could entertain family and friends. As early as 1880, the Paris Cassatts, consisting of Mary, Lydia, and their parents, were joined in the rented country homes by the eldest son Alexander, with his wife Lois and their children, for up to two months. These visits were so successful that Alexander and his family began to come to Europe every other year. A. J., as he was known, shopped for horses, and Lois was soon spending huge sums on clothes, as well as furniture and decorative objects to fill her homes in America. Mary renewed her close friendship with A. J. through these visits, and over the years produced numerous portraits of him and his family. Getting to know her nieces and two nephews, she rediscovered the joys of family. Later, when Mary's younger brother Gardner had married, he too brought his family to France to visit Mary and the grandparents.

1880 was also the year that year Mary began to advise A. J. on buying works of art. She encouraged, or, in some cases, actually ordered him to buy numerous works, many by her new colleagues in the Impressionist group. Thus he acquired a seascape by Monet, and later another Monet, and a Pissarro, and a horseracing subject by Degas, as well as many other important works. In this way, A. J. Cassatt became one of the first American collectors to own works by the French Impressionists, although his art collecting waned in later years. Cassatt also advised several of her friends on art purchases, most notably Louisine Havemeyer of New York. Although it is clear that she liked the works of the other impressionist artists and desired to help them, she didn't grow up the daughter of an investment advisor for nothing – she saw the possibilities of value increasing and actually mentioned the idea in several letters. Writing to her sister-in-law in 1886, she commented: "Monet exhibited at Petits Gallery... and on the opening day sold 7 pictures at 3000 francs each. I am only sorry we did not lay in more when they were at our price."¹⁰

As she aged, Mary never warmed to any of the new or progressive aspects of modern life and culture. She frequently disparaged artists like Matisse and Picasso, or collectors who enjoyed them, such as Gertrude Stein. She did, however, support the twentieth century movement for women's suffrage, and was distressed when several of her nieces took the oppo-

site side. Her friend Louisine Havemeyer lectured on Cassatt's painting in 1915, with Mary's blessing, as a fundraiser for the cause of women's rights in America. Mary also embraced one modern convenience, buying an automobile and learning to drive in 1906. Mary Cassatt became one of the most successful and well known American artists of her day. She accepted only one major award during her lifetime, the prestigious French Legion of Honor in 1904. She painted until about 1913, when diabetes and cataracts effectively ended her career.

ALEXANDER CASSATT (1839-1906)

Mary Cassatt's older brother, Alexander Johnston Cassatt, was an engineer with a degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In the early 1860s, he had gone to work as a surveyor, or "rodman," for the



Alexander J. Cassatt. *Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Railroad Museum.*

Pennsylvania Railroad. He was promoted to superintendent of machinery and motive power in 1867, with a salary of \$3000 a year. In 1870 he was promoted again, to General Superintendent. In 1871 he rose higher, to General Manager, and moved to Philadelphia. By 1882 he was a Vice-President and a member of the railroad's board of directors. He worked tirelessly and brilliantly for the railroad, as an engineer coming up with many technical innovations and operational improvements, and as a high level manager advancing almost every area he touched. He was literally world-famous in the railroad arena.

In 1868, he married Lois Buchanan, a niece of former President James Buchanan. Lois was apparently rather cold, and haughty. She did not enjoy art, and had a rather frosty relationship with her sister-in-law Mary. Alexander and Lois had four children: Edward Buchanan (1869-1922); Katherine Kelso (1871-1905); Robert Buchanan (1873-1944); and Elsie (1875-1931).

In 1882, he resigned from the Pennsylvania Railroad board. His biographer suggests that when he was passed over for the third time for the presidency of the railroad he decided to retire.¹¹ He was more than wealthy enough to assume the life of a gentleman, much as his father had done, even though his wealth never approached that of men like John D. Rockefeller or Andrew Carnegie. Near the end of his life in 1899, at age sixty, Cassatt returned to the Pennsylvania Railroad, accepting the presidency at last. He is remembered for his leadership in making the Pennsylvania Railroad a world class and nationally powerful line, and for his support of efforts to regulate the ever more powerful railroads. During this last seven years of his life he pioneered the first rail tunnel under the Hudson River, allowing passengers to travel straight into New York City on the "Pennsy." He also wanted an impressive station where travelers would arrive. Thus he conceived of the enormous Pennsylvania Station, inspired by the ancient Roman Baths of Caracalla, and designed by McKim, Mead, and White. Both projects were begun before his death, and he lived long enough to see the tunnel completed, but not the station.

Alexander Cassatt never left Pennsylvania to reside in New York or Europe. He had three significant properties in the state: a Rittenhouse Square town house in Philadelphia, a country home in Haverford, and his

farm in Tredyffrin Township. His “country home” in Haverford was built on a 56-acre tract he bought in 1872, near the Merion Cricket Club. He named the property “Cheswold,” derived from the old English word for chestnut. It was a large Queen Anne style home with thirty rooms, seven bedrooms, each with a bath, a large stable housing many coaches, and staff of fifteen. Only the gatehouse survives, near the grounds of the Merion Cricket Club.¹²

His connection to the upper Main Line is, of course, Chesterbrook Farm. While he loved Cheswold, and eventually owned a retreat in Bar Harbor, Maine, it was Chesterbrook Farm in Tredyffrin Township that was his passion. Starting in 1881, he put together a number of parcels, eventually acquiring over 600 acres. The farm’s footprint would fit neatly inside today’s Chesterbrook development, which is about 200 acres larger. The main house dated to the eighteenth century, and was significantly expanded after the property was purchased. Chesterbrook Farm is one of the most famous pieces of Tredyffrin history and has been the subject of several articles in the *Quarterly*.¹³



Main house at Chesterbrook Farm, ca. 1963. *TEHS Archives*.

Alexander Cassatt wanted good roads for his frequent trips to and from the farm. He paved, or to use the correct term, *macadamized* many roads to get to it from Haverford. He loved to drive his own carriages, and in fact coaching was one of his favorite pastimes. Chesterbrook Farm had so many buildings it was like a small town. A. J. wanted it to look that way, and encouraged what we might call casual tourism. He grew wheat, rye, corn, tobacco, and vegetables. He

raised Shropshire sheep, Berkshire pigs, Guernsey cows, and, of course, horses, his favorite country enjoyment. In the 1880s, he ran a thoroughbred racing stable, training many famous winners. At its height, his stable employed twenty-three men and boys. He was very successful and greatly enjoyed racing, entering races as far away as England, and joining many major turf clubs. He eventually became disillusioned with thoroughbred racing and sold his race horses. He then concentrated exclusively on his other equine passion, the breeding of hackney horses, an English breed of coach horse, known for combining speed and endurance. He showed and competed with hackneys almost to the end of his life.

The farm was always profitable, but it should be noted that farming was a kind of hobby for him, as it was for many wealthy men in the second half of the nineteenth century. Gentleman farm owners had a kind of club where they would discuss matters relating to agriculture, animal husbandry, and farm management. The family never moved to Chesterbrook - it was always Alexander’s personal passion. There is no evidence that Mary Cassatt visited Chesterbrook Farm on her third American visit in 1898. Even though her visit was four months long, she stayed with her younger brother Gardner and his family. She also spent time in New York, Boston, and Connecticut, where she carried out numerous portrait commissions. By her fourth visit, in 1908, A. J. Cassatt had died.

Off Bradford Road in Chesterbrook, one can still see two surviving structures from Chesterbrook Farm. In March of 1898 the dairy barn burned, and Cassatt replaced it that same year with an even bigger barn, built by the Philadelphia architectural firm of Furness and Evans. The barn was huge - 100 by 45 feet - with large hipped dormer windows. The structure survives today, but has been so often renovated that little of Furness’s signature style elements remain. Several photographs in the TEHS archives provide some information about it, and also an adjacent Furness structure which was used as one of the farm manager’s offices. The building has been used as a day care center in recent years, and is currently called The Chesterbrook Academy. Adjacent to the barn stood the Bradford-Lee House, which dates to the American Revolution and was used as the headquarters of Colonel Bradford and General Lee. The house was acquired with the land, and was used as a resi-



Barn at Chesterbrook, designed by Frank Furness in 1898. This photograph was taken about 1975 by TEHS President Robert Goshorn. *TEHS Archives.*



The farm manager's building at Chesterbrook, designed by Frank Furness in 1898, also taken about 1975 by Robert Goshorn. *TEHS Archives.*

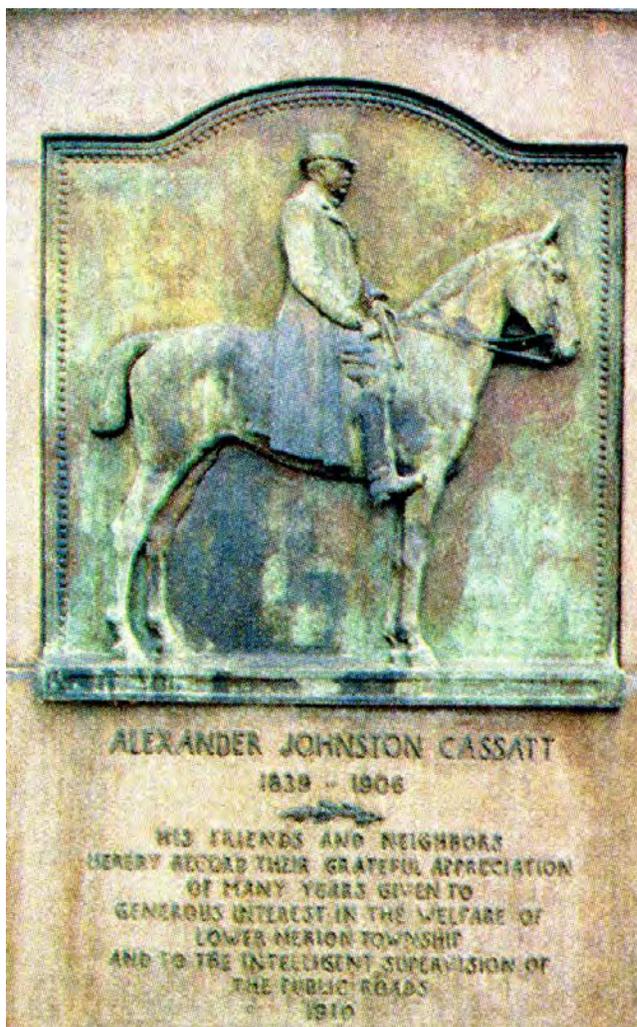


Some of the Chesterbrook Farm carriages on the day of a carriage auction in 1963. A. J. Cassatt's barn is visible behind the carriages, while a more modern form of transportation provides sharp contrast in the foreground. *TEHS Archives*.

dence by the farm manager. It survives today, and is now the Picket Post Swim and Tennis Club.

When Alexander Cassatt died suddenly in 1906, the farm went to his son Edward Buchanan Cassatt, who maintained it exactly as his father had done. Edward was a thirty-eight year old West Point graduate, and, like his father, he loved horses, especially the thoroughbreds. He raised and raced thoroughbreds at Chesterbrook, winning The Preakness in 1914 with his horse "Flying Fairy." Like his father, Edward passed away suddenly, dying in 1922 at age fifty-three. His second wife Eleanor (Bunny) was twenty years younger, and their only child had died. She loved the farm and lived there another forty years until her death in 1962. The huge dairy business kept the place financially viable through the 1930s and 1940s. The 1950s were a time of economic and financial deterioration, with both Route 202 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike cutting across the land. The 1960s were a period of absentee ownership, by a Cassatt grandson from out of state, who finally sold the farm for \$2 million to a development consortium in 1969, a year after the main house burned down. One can only wonder what A. J. Cassatt would have thought of Chesterbrook as we know it - an 850-acre complex of office, residential and commercial structures.

Alexander Cassatt was a man of boundless energy, and he showed a great deal of what we would call today "public spirit." He is well known in a dozen areas of activity beyond his gentleman's farm and the Pennsylvania Railroad. He played an important role in the history of Lower Merion Township, serving on the board of supervisors, and maintaining an active role in township politics. He pioneered paved, or macadamized, roads throughout the township. He insisted on the granite curbstones and iron street signs, which survive in the township today. The memorial plaque placed outside the Merion Cricket Club in 1910 reads: "His friends and neighbors hereby record their grateful appreciation of many years given to generous interest in the welfare of Lower Merion Township and to the intelligent supervision of the public roads." ¹⁴



Memorial to Alexander J. Cassatt, located at the Merion Cricket Club in Haverford. *Photo by the author.*

Alexander Cassatt traveled widely, and enjoyed a luxurious life. He loved yachting, and in 1895 he bought a yacht which he named *The Enterprise*. The ship cost \$500,000, and was fitted with the most lavish furnishings then available. In 1903, his summer home in Bar Harbor, Maine, "Four Acres," was completed, although he would enjoy it for only three more years. He was a co-founder, a financial backer of, or an early supporter of, the Merion Cricket Club, the Devon Horse Show, and the Haverford School, to name just three institutions that benefitted from his energy and support. His sudden death in 1906 (twenty years before Mary's death) is thought to have been due to whooping cough contracted from one of his grandchildren. At the time, however, he was under severe stress brought on during his defense against anti-trust allegations.¹⁵ He is buried at the Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, and there is a memorial chapel there in his honor. Lois Buchanan Cassatt, his wife of thirty-eight years, died in 1920, and almost all of his remaining art collection, except some family portraits, went to auction at that time.

J. GARDNER CASSATT (1847-1911)

By the mid-1890s, when Mary Cassatt purchased her country chateau near Paris, she saw much less of Alexander and his



Photograph of Gardner Cassatt, ca. 1895. Reproduced from *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, by Nancy Mowll Mathews, 1994, Villard Books.

now older, or almost adult, children. But she increasingly enjoyed the company of her younger brother Gardner, who visited often with his wife, Jennie, and their children. Joseph Gardner Cassatt was five years younger than Mary, and always known as Gard. He was named for his father's

brother-in-law, Dr. Joseph Gardner. He was reticent and retiring, unlike the older Alexander, and was never comfortable with public attention. Gardner ran Cassatt & Co., his father's brokerage house and bank. Eventually he brought A. J.'s son, Robert, into the firm. Gardner did not marry until age thirty-three. He wed Eugenia Carter in 1882. Gardner's wife, known as Jennie, was open, friendly and had a happy disposition. She and Mary got on very well, which was never the case with Mary and her older sister-in-law, Lois. Gardner and Jennie had three children: Joseph Gardner, Jr. (1886-1955); Ellen Mary (1894-1966); and Eugenia (1897-1979). These younger nieces and nephew were a new source of inspiration for Mary, who produced another round of delightful children's portraits during their visits.



Kelso, the country home of J. Gardner Cassatt, now the home of the Upper Main Line YMCA. Photo by the author.

Gardner's center city townhouse was at 1418 Spruce Street in Philadelphia. But, like many wealthy gentlemen of the day, including his older brother Alexander, he also owned a country house and farm. In 1907, Gardner Cassatt built a fifty-three-room man-

sion on his 124-acre farm called “Kelso” in Easttown Township. He had owned an earlier, smaller country house in Radnor, also called Kelso. The name Kelso was used often in his mother’s family, deriving from a place name in Scotland. The style of the second Kelso is French Renaissance, with the distinctive red brick, white trim and abundant dormers dotted across a mansard roof. He also built a carriage house, a barn and several outbuildings, some of which still stand, converted to residences long ago.

In early 1908, Gardner visited Mary in France, and the two of them traveled to Darmstadt to retrieve the casket of their brother Robbie, who had died there in 1855 at age thirteen. They interred the boy’s remains beside those of their parents and sister at Cassatt’s country home in France. Sadly, Gardner Cassatt was able to enjoy Kelso for only about four years. He died in Paris in 1911, after a long European tour and a Nile cruise with Mary and his family. Kelso remained in the family until after World War II. It had been used seasonally by Gardner and family (Jennie

Cassatt apparently was not fond of country living), and inherited by his oldest daughter Ellen Mary upon her marriage to Horace Binney Hare in 1924. They resided there until 1942, when they moved to Radnor. It was used seasonally by their daughter, Mrs. Ellen Mary Meigs, until its sale in 1950. At that time, the property was subdivided into two parcels, one of which would become residential housing, and the other which retained the mansion, the carriage house and grounds. This smaller tract was sold to the St. Norbertine order of Catholic monks, and served as their home for fourteen years. In 1964, the order acquired the property on South Valley Road that is known as Daylesford Abbey, and sold Kelso to the Upper Main Line YMCA for about \$200,000.¹⁶

Mary Cassatt’s career has placed her among the greatest of nineteenth century American artists, and she is featured in every textbook on Impressionist painting. But it was her family, in the persons of her brothers Alexander and Gardner, who were significant figures in Main Line history.

NOTES

1. Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 26.
2. *Ibid.*, 27-28.
3. *Ibid.*, 82-83.
4. *Ibid.*, 108.
5. *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman*. Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1998, p. 335.
6. Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, p. 182.
7. Jeffrey Meyers, *Impressionist Quartet*. New York: Harcourt, Inc. p. 269.
8. Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle – Selected Letters*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984, p. 291.
9. Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life*, p. 200.
10. Mathews, *Cassatt and Her Circle*, p. 200.
11. Patricia T. Davis, *The End of the Line: Alexander J. Cassatt and the Pennsylvania Railroad*. New York: Neale Watson Academic Publications, 1978, pp. 91-102.
12. Six excellent photographs of “Cheswold” are in *Frank Furness: The Complete Works*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991, pp. 172-73.
13. The most important *Quarterly* articles about Chesterbrook Farm are: “A. J. Cassatt’s Chesterbrook Farm,” Vol. 19, No.4, October 1981, pp. 121-28; “A Furness Barn in Tredyffrin,” Vol. 22, No. 4, October 1984, pp. 147-151; “The Chesterbrook Stock Farm,” Vol. 26, No. 4, October 1988, pp. 123-26; “The Chesterbrook Development,” Vol. 40, No. 1, January 2003, pp. 27-32; and “Images of Chesterbrook,” Vol. 40, No. 3, July 2003, pp. 79-82.
14. *The First 300: The Amazing and Rich History of Lower Merion*. Lower Merion Township Historical Society, 2000, p. 75.
15. Davis, pp. 197-198.
16. “The Cassatt Mansion—Then and Now,” *Tredyffrin Easttown History Quarterly*, Vol. 39, no. 4, October 2002. Also see “Kelso, Growing Up in the Era of Grandeur,” *Main Line Life*, June 25, 1998, p. 9, and “Kelso, The Cassatt Legacy Lives On in the Upper Main Line,” July 9, 1998, p. 9.