



IN MEMORY OF  
JUSTUS DALRE  
WHO WAS BORN IN  
PITTSTOWN, OCT 11 179  
DIED ——— ACED.  
YEARS.



# TO PLEASE THE EYE

## Justus Da Lee and His Family

DA LEE FAMILY MEMORIAL  
Attributed to Justus Da Lee  
(1793-1878)  
Cambridge, New York  
c. 1833-1834  
Watercolor and ink on paper  
14 1/2" x 20"  
American Folk Art Museum,  
promised gift of Elizabeth, Irwin,  
and Mark Warren



By Suzanne Rudnick Payne and Michael R. Payne

The American Folk Art Museum has received a promised gift of the elaborate watercolor memorial made by Justus Da Lee for his family. In an unusual format, with gravestones, this memorial contains portraits of Justus, his wife, Mary, and their first eight children. Who was the artist, Justus Da Lee?<sup>1</sup> A brief description of his life has been presented, but even his birth and death dates have not been published.<sup>2</sup> Yet our investigation of Justus Da Lee has uncovered many fascinating details about his life and times. Additionally, we have found that the small ink, pencil, and watercolor portraits traditionally attributed to him could also be the work of several other Da Lee family members. We have discovered that both his son Amon G.J. and his brother Richard W.M. also painted portraits in a similar style.

This family record is attributed to Justus Da Lee because the adult figures are similar to his printed family records. At some point, Justus's face was carefully cut out and replaced with a new face, which was sealed on the back with red wax. As the new face is consistent with the rest of the memorial, Justus may have been unhappy with his first attempt at a self-portrait. The memorial was made after the birth of daughter Ruth Anstis in 1833, who was included in the memorial. Her death in 1834 and the birth of son Albert Waterman in 1835 are not recorded on the piece. This allows us to date this memorial between 1833 and 1834.





**RISING FAMILY RECORD**  
Justus Da Lee  
Cambridge, New York  
Mid-1830s  
Watercolor and ink on  
preprinted paper  
14 x 11½"  
Private collection

Signed "J. Dalee  
Cambridge" at the  
lower right.



**PROFILES OF HENRY  
BURCH'S FAMILY**  
Justus Da Lee  
Cambridge, New York  
1838  
Watercolor, ink, and  
pencil on paper  
13½ x 11¼"  
Private collection

These portraits are  
accompanied by the  
Burch family record,  
which is signed  
"J. Dalee, Cambridge."



An account of Justus Da Lee's life begins with the saga of a group of Baptists who left Providence, Rhode Island, in 1793 to settle and establish churches in New York near the Vermont border. This was a group of Free Will Baptists, an evangelical sect that emphasizes the establishment of churches. The group included his parents, James (1765–1840) and Anstis (1775–1849), who had been married only seven months, as well as their parents. A letter from Albany dated June 1793 described their journey and how "every heart is animated with lively sensations of arriving soon at the promised land."<sup>3</sup>

The Da Lees first settled in Pittstown, New York, about twenty miles northeast of Albany. Justus was born there on October 1, 1793. He was the first of thirteen children, although five would die in infancy. The family moved several times within a twenty-mile radius over the next few years. By 1805 they were settled in the small town of Cambridge, New York, in Washington County. Located on a fertile plain that provided excellent farming as well as a clear title to the land, the town included what was probably the first Baptist church in Washington County.<sup>4</sup> Except for his traveling in search of portrait commissions, Justus would live in this town almost continuously until age forty-seven. His brother Richard was born on October 18, 1809.

During the War of 1812, Justus, at age twenty, enlisted in the Cambridge militia under the command of a local blacksmith, Col. Hercules Rice. He was probably enticed by newspaper advertisements offering a very generous \$124 enlisting bounty (\$50 for signing, \$50 when mustered, \$24 at discharge), \$8 per month pay, and 160 acres of land.<sup>5</sup> On September 1, 1814, as British warships were moving down Lake Champlain, Da Lee's company was called out, and he served as one of the musicians. The company went to Burlington, Vermont, but when news of the American victory at Plattsburgh on September 11 reached them, the company was discharged, on September 20, 1814.<sup>6</sup> Many years later, Justus would apply for a pension based on this military service.

Prior to 1815, Justus was teaching in the local Cambridge school. Public education had become a topic of intensive debate in New York with the passage of the Common School Act of 1812. This legislation was the first of its type in the United States and was meant to provide a basic education to all children between the ages of five and fifteen. It divided New York State into 12,000 school districts, so that no student had to walk more than three miles, and it provided each district with money for teachers' salaries. While the state controlled the school districts through an appointed state superintendent, each town was directed to provide matching funds and maintain the school buildings. In 1813 Cambridge voted to accept the provisions of the 1812 law.<sup>7</sup> The Rate Bill was passed in 1814 and ordered local taxation of parents with students in the schools, resulting in many poor people not sending their children to be educated.<sup>8</sup>

In 1815 Justus had "printed for the author" two editions of a twelve-page pamphlet, "An Address Delivered to the Scholars of the English School in District No. 27 in the Town of Cambridge. . . ." The first edition was a stern lecture to his students concerning the importance of learning, good behavior, and the dangers of swearing. The last page expressed his outrage at governmental control of the

school and his anger at being terminated for being overly strict. The address also exists in a "Second Edition" that had been "Corrected and Revised by the Author" with exactly the same title and publication date of March 22, 1815. The second edition was almost completely rewritten as a fatherly sermon to his students, with the complete deletion of the last page describing his complaints. Both editions contain the same delightful poem in which each of his students (forty-three boys and forty girls), as well as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, are briefly commented upon in individual stanzas. Additional stanzas include:

Let swearing language always cease  
And every person live in peace  
That baneful practice of mankind  
Destroys the virtue of the mind.

Let gold nor silver never make  
You put your own dear life at stake  
But scorn to live a life of sin  
And you'll the crown of glory win.

These documents show that Justus was a highly educated schoolteacher who lost his teaching position during the education turmoil of the 1810s for, in his own words, "usurping government."

On October 13, 1816, Justus married Mary Fowler in the Baptist church. Mary was born in Cambridge, and her father was probably a member of the 1793 Baptist group from Providence. Mary's brother, Jonathan, also served as a musician with Justus in Colonel Rice's militia.<sup>10</sup> Their first child, Mary Ann, was born in 1817. All but one of their ten children would be born in Cambridge. The first surviving son, Amon, who would be particularly close to his father, was born on August 9, 1820. Justus continued to teach school and was appointed to the Office of Inspector in the Cambridge school district, bearing responsibility for determining teachers' qualifications and the state of the school buildings. Common-school teachers were very poorly paid. In 1821, 659 children were taught in Cambridge and the town appropriated \$389.26 for teachers' salaries. In comparison, the local private Cambridge Washington Academy hired its first teacher in 1816 at \$600 annually to teach fifty-eight students and, in 1817, hired an assistant for \$300.<sup>11</sup>

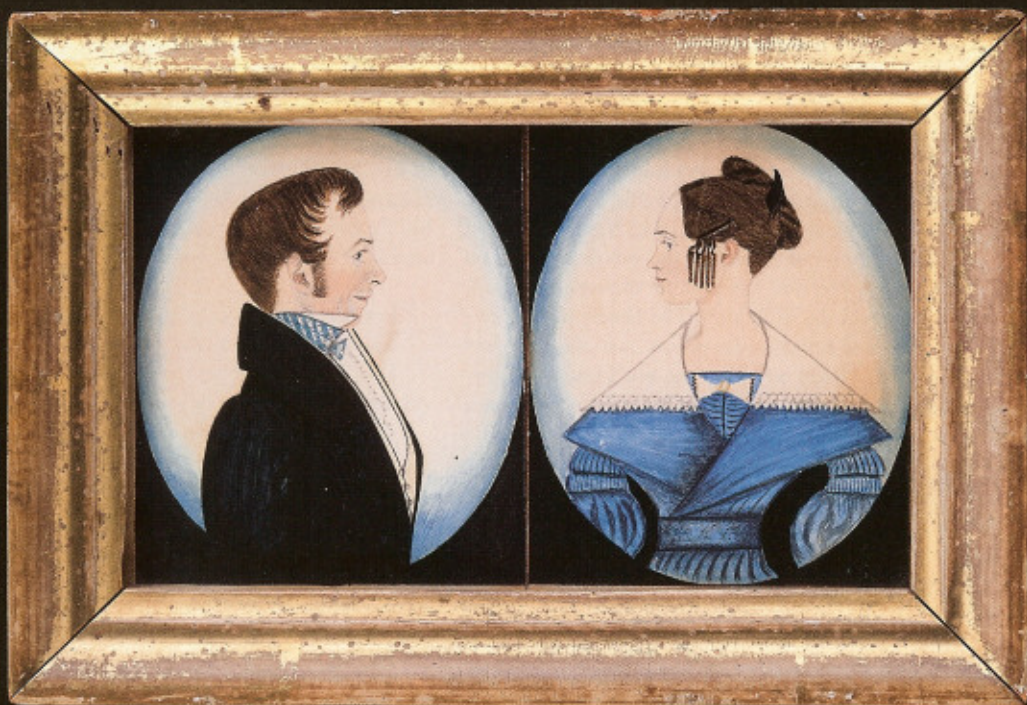
In 1824 Justus's parents and several sisters and brothers, including Richard, left Cambridge and settled in western New York next to Lake Erie around the town of Portland, in Chautauqua County. Justus stayed in Cambridge, and in 1825 his home included eighteen and three-quarter acres of farmland, one cow, and two horses.<sup>12</sup> Many years later, Amon would remember his father as "a man of education, a teacher and a merchant, a prominent man in the Baptist church, a man of eminent piety and marked ability."<sup>13</sup>

The first evidence of Justus's artistic interest is his sketchbook, *Emblematical Figures, Representations & To Please the Eye*.<sup>14</sup> The title page is dated May 19, 1826, the last dated drawing, February 12, 1827. It contains watercolor and ink drawings, including one in which he describes himself as a "professor of penmanship." The



Adult Half-Length Portraits

In these portraits, the faces are in profile, as are the men's bodies. A few earlier women's portraits have frontal bodies, but most women's portraits also have profile bodies.



NATHANIEL AND MARY CROCKER  
Da Lee family  
Cambridge, New York  
c. 1835-1840  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper  
3¼ x 2½" (sight, each)  
Private collection

GAVIN ASHWORTH



REV. JOEL BYINGTON AND HIS WIFE, MRS. DELIA BYINGTON  
Amon G.J. Da Lee  
Pittsford, New York  
1843  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper  
3 x 2½" (sight, each)  
Collection of Sally B. Louis

Inscribed, on the backboard, "Rev. Joel Byington and his wife Mrs. Della Byington taken August 8, 1843 in the 60th year of his age; & the 43rd of hers / by A.G.J. Da Lee, Pittsford, N.Y."



sketchbook contains both original compositions and drawings copied from the *Oxford Drawing Book*, a popular art instruction manual.<sup>15</sup> Justus would be remembered as "remarkable as a penman . . . to demonstrate his capacities of imitation he once made a bill on the Troy Bank . . . so completely simulated to the original that the bank officers examined it and pronounced it genuine. He wrote the Lord's prayer in a space less than the tenth part of the old fashioned American copper cent, every letter distinct."<sup>16</sup>

In 1827 Justus served as the clerk of the Baptist church.<sup>17</sup> He and his family traveled at some point to Franklin, Ohio, probably to visit one of his brothers, and a sixth child, Harriet L., was born there on April 18, 1829. In 1830 the Da Lees returned to Cambridge, after living

and two hogs. As Amon would later reminisce, "[My] father, in the latter part of his life, devoted himself to miniature painting."<sup>20</sup> During these years, Justus also taught Amon to paint portraits, as "the son naturally and from taste fell into the following of the same profession."<sup>21</sup> A December 17, 1837, letter from Justus to Richard (with a postscript to Amon) states that painting had become a family business, as both Amon and Richard were also actively taking portraits. "We have been at Troy for 2 months and I have taken only 60 [portraits] & lettered 2 records. . . . Amon assisted me greatly by painting the dresses . . . have on hand a constant supply of family records (I now have 200 unpainted)."<sup>22</sup> The postscript, to Amon, reads "As for Richard & I and you, we must all



UNIDENTIFIED  
COUPLE

Da Lee family  
c. 1840-1848  
Watercolor, ink,  
and pencil on paper  
3 x 2 1/2" (sight, each)  
Collection of Suzanne  
and Michael Payne

for a short while at 107 North Second Street in Troy, just outside of Albany. The birth of a seventh child, William S., is recorded in Cambridge in October 1830.<sup>18</sup> In 1833 Justus posted a bond in Cambridge to become the legal guardian for two of his cousins, Caleb and Isaac Twiss.<sup>19</sup>

The mid-1830s marked the beginning of Justus's painting career, when he was in his early forties. He had a family record printed that he then further embellished with figures, flowers, and decorative elements (see the *Rising Family Record*), and he also began painting the distinctive small profile portraits about this time. He was no longer farming, as his home described in the 1835 census consisted of one acre or less of land, a cow, one horse, a sheep,

attend to the profiles & records—And if we can only all earn a little we shall get along."

In 1839 Justus traveled west to Utica, New York, in search of portrait commissions. A letter dated May 11 describes his method of advertising, prices, and the time it took to produce the portraits. Without knowing anyone in Utica, he started by distributing forty advertising cards to homes along a single street. The next day, he returned to the homes showing samples, and "3 houses took—one man engaged 5 another 2 & another 2 . . . my price is 3 dol. for a single one, set [framed]—or 5 dol. for husband & wife, set," and a price of \$2.50 each if a whole family was painted. "No one finds any fault with the price, but all con-



sider it very low—The husband of the couple I delivered has his portrait (cost \$30) his wife told me and others, that the profile I took of him, was much more natural than his portrait—She jumped right up & down as quick as she sat her eyes on it, and exclaimed O! how near it looks like him!! Exactly!!! Justus preferred to take his time while doing the portraits. “I detained some of them from 1 or 2 hours,” he wrote, and he would usually deliver the portraits in several days, so he could further work on them, “being determined to give the very best satisfaction.” This need to identify the portraits for later delivery is the reason why a significant number of Da Lee portraits have the sitter’s name inscribed on the reverse. The name was usually written in very light pencil, but occasionally it was in ink. Justus hoped to do well in Utica and “make enough to pay off all I owe.”

Both the census and his mother’s will describe Justus as a resident of Cambridge in 1840. However, during this year, Justus and his family moved west to Rochester, New York. The *King’s Rochester Directory and Register* for 1841 lists them as living at 17 Adams Street. His occupation is appropriately described as a “side portrait painter.”

A November 30, 1841, letter from Richard to his wife, Hannah Maria, describes his portrait painting itinerancy with Amon. Together, they had traveled from Richard’s home in western New York to Meadville, Pennsylvania, in Crawford County, and went from house to house leaving advertising cards, later returning with samples. Richard was helping Amon with his portraits, noting, “We have taken 30 miniatures . . . Amon and I have drawn equal as to numbers. . . . We have made about \$50 between us while here—We have been here about 4 weeks, so that you can see that we have not done very well.” They then continued south to Pittsburgh and, as their letter ends, were in Cincinnati, “the best built up city that I was ever in,” where they ordered forty-eight portrait frames.

Based on the few examples that have a known sitter’s name or location, portraits that were produced from 1841 to 1843 present a confusing diversity of locations. Portraits during 1842 were taken in Berea, Ohio; Cabotsville (Chicopee), Massachusetts; Trenton, New Jersey; and New York City. In 1843 a portrait was produced in Philadelphia and another in Rochester. The varied locations during these years were a result of multiple artists working.

Letters written by Justus between 1843 and 1846 are addressed from Pittsford, New York, which is six miles from Rochester. Amon was also living in Pittsford, as evidenced by his signature, with location noted, on the back of the portraits of the Reverend and Mrs. Byington (see page 50). On May 8, 1843, Justus wrote to Richard that he could not pay \$100 to his brother John and that he “visited Palmyra a second time: made from 50 to 60 dol’s more, but instead of money it was mostly trade.” Another unsigned pair of portraits was inscribed as taken at Penn Yan, some fifty miles from Rochester, on October 25, 1844.<sup>23</sup> On March 22, 1845, Justus wrote to Richard and described himself as “one of the most celebrated Side portrait Painters in Western N.Yk.” He had returned to Pittsford from Geneva, forty-three miles by railroad, and was there with Amon. “I was in Geneva about 14 weeks; took 93 ports [portraits] made about \$110 Cash—A New Dress Coat

\$15—Trade at store & Tin shop \$15—Candy . . . \$6 . . . Rather moderate doings Rich’d but I can’t work at it as I used to do—The infirmities of age are coming fast upon me. . . .” A particularly large number of portraits are inscribed “Taken at Geneva,” and we have located one pair that is signed “J. Dalee.”<sup>24</sup> In 1845 Amon was married in Walworth, New York, near Rochester, to Clarinda E. Findley. Their marriage announcement in the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* described him as a professor living in Pittsford.<sup>25</sup>

On December 7, 1845, Justus wrote to Richard that “Amon and I were at Ithaca . . . we took miniatures to the Amt. of \$80 in all, while there, for which we rec’d Cash \$50, Shoes \$5.50—Webster’s large dictionary \$4—A N.Y. State Atlas . . . \$12 . . . other things \$8.50. . . . I have paid up all I owe, and have some \$20 To buy necessaries with, which will last some time. . . . Amon . . . has given up going out to take ports anymore, it does not agree with him at all . . . this portrait business is calculated to kill us all.” Justus discusses his plans “to go to R. [Rochester] in the spring and open a grocery, and so occasionally take a face.” From Pittsford on May 17, 1846, Justus wrote that he had twice traveled southwest to Attica, New York, to take portraits, and of one sitter “giving me one dol’r extra on account of writing on them—considerable.” Most of the letter concerns plans that he, Richard, and Amon had of beginning a medicine business using a root extract and the task of getting sufficient bottles.

The end of Justus Da Lee’s portrait career appears to have occurred sometime within the next few years, while he was living in Buffalo. The *Commercial Advertiser* directory of 1847 lists Justus as a portrait painter living on Carolina Street near Tupper. Richard is also listed as a portrait painter at the same address. The 1848 *Commercial Advertiser* directory first lists Justus as a portrait painter with a home address on Carolina Street at the corner of Seventh (a new address), and Richard as a portrait painter on Carolina near Tenth. It also lists the business address of Justus and Amon as grocers. It appears that portrait painting was no longer their full-time occupation. In 1848 the competing *Buffalo City Directory* listed Justus and three of his sons as living at a boarding house at Carolina and Seventh, with Justus’s and Amon’s occupations described as grocers.<sup>26</sup> After this date, no member of the Da Lee family would again be described as a portrait painter.

The 1850 census lists Justus as a teacher living in Portland, New York, where his parents and several siblings had



BOY IN STRIPED SHIRT  
Da Lee family  
c. 1835-1845  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil  
on paper  
3 × 2½"  
Present location unknown  
Courtesy Frank and Barbara  
Pollock, American Antiques  
and Art, Highland Park,  
Illinois





GAVIN ASHWORTH

**YOUNG WOMAN  
HOLDING BOOK**  
Da Lee family  
c. 1835-1845  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil  
on paper  
3 x 2½" (slight)  
Private collection

This portrait is unusual, as it shows a hand and book in front of the spandrel.





VAN BUREN DA LEE AGED  
YRS. 4  
Attributed to Richard  
Da Lee  
Probably Chautauqua  
County, New York  
1841  
Watercolor, ink, and  
pencil on paper  
4½ x 3"  
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller  
Folk Art Museum, The  
Colonial Williamsburg  
Foundation,  
Williamsburg, Virginia



YOUNG CHILD IN A RED  
POLKA DOT DRESS  
Da Lee family  
c. 1835-1845  
Watercolor, ink, and  
pencil on paper  
5¼ x 3½"  
Collection of Raymond  
and Susan Egan

YOUNG GIRL IN BLACK  
DRESS AND RED SHOES  
Da Lee family  
c. 1835-1845  
Watercolor, ink, and  
pencil on paper  
5¼ x 4¼"  
Collection of Raymond  
and Susan Egan





moved more than twenty-five years earlier. Unfortunately, he was in Buffalo during a cholera epidemic that swept through the city in 1852. His wife, Mary, their son Almanzon J., and Almanzon's son William A. all died from cholera between August 27 and September 1.

By 1856 Justus was recorded as being both blind and penniless.<sup>27</sup> The Bounty Land Act of 1855, which opened up federal lands in the Midwest to homesteading, included a provision that military veterans were to be given the standard 160 acres if they were poor. In April 1856, Justus submitted an application for this land, from Aurora, Illinois. His deceased son Almanzon J. had left a farm nearby, and several relatives had settled in the area. Included in his application was an affidavit from the local justice of the peace stating that he was "perfectly blind and poor." His

cemetery in Eden, Wisconsin.<sup>29</sup> Amon, after leaving Buffalo in 1848, farmed in Hillsdale County, Michigan, along with Richard until 1851. He next spent four years in California, first mining and then learning the daguerreotype business in San Francisco in 1855. Three years later he settled in Lawrence, Kansas, on the land awarded to his father, again marrying, and prospering as a daguerreotypist and farmer until his death in 1879.<sup>30</sup> By 1852 Richard had moved to Harvard, Illinois, where he taught school, farmed, owned a store, and served as the postmaster during the Civil War. He died in 1868.<sup>31</sup>

### The Paintings

We now understand that the Da Lees considered portrait painting to be a family business. According to their letters



**HELEN ARMITAGE**  
Da Lee family  
c. 1840-1848  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil  
on paper in original  
embossed leather case  
with gold mat  
3 x 2½" (sight)  
Collection of Sue and  
Dexter Pond

twenty days of military service during the War of 1812 just exceeded the fifteen-day minimum enlistment required. The land awarded to him was in Lawrence, Kansas, and would later be homesteaded by Amon.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1870 census, Justus was listed as living with his daughter Harriet in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. Harriet, who first married Josiah Odekirk, was by then widowed and remarried to Bemsley Williams. Justus was listed as a member of the Williams household and described simply as being blind. Justus scribbled a letter on August 1, 1871, stating, "My sight you know is entirely gone, my hearing is partly gone so that I cannot tell what they are talking about in the room. I have two teeth only and one of them is very loose." On January 5, 1878, Justus Da Lee died at age eighty-four and was buried in the Odekirk family

### Portraits in Pendant Frames



**CELIA BRADFORD**  
Da Lee family  
c. 1840-1848  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on  
bristol board with foil and paper  
appliqué in brass pendant frame  
2½ x 2¾" (sight)  
Collection of Suzanne and  
Michael Payne



**FREDERICK H. WASTE**  
Da Lee family  
c. 1840  
Watercolor, ink, and pencil on bristol board  
in brass pendant frame  
2 x 1½" (sight)  
Private collection

Inscribed, on the reverse, "Frederick H.  
Waste / Born Feb. 15, 1834 / Nov. 4, 1841"

and writings, both Justus and Richard taught Amon to paint these distinctive portraits.<sup>32</sup> They traveled together as itinerants, producing them in large numbers. It appears that Justus was the major artist of this group, as all of the signed family records and almost all of the rarely signed portraits are by Justus. Yet the portraits of the Byingtons, signed by Amon, are confusingly similar to Justus's work.<sup>33</sup> A signed example by Richard has not been located, but a probable attribution is the portrait of his son Van Buren, painted in 1841, when Richard and Justus were living in different areas of New York.<sup>34</sup> The previously cited 1841 letter from Richard to his wife describes his travels with Amon on a long itinerancy in search of portrait commissions. Justus wrote in 1839 that Amon was painting the dresses and he was doing the rest of the portrait. Knowl-



edge that some portraits are the work of both hands, and the similarity of these few signed examples, suggests that we should not distinguish between the portraits by the various family members at this time. Unless a portrait is signed, it should be attributed to the Da Lee family. When we locate more signed examples, we hope to be able to better recognize the characteristics of each individual artist.

There are four general categories of Da Lee paintings: the family memorial gifted to the American Folk Art Museum, printed family records, small profile portraits, and portraits in brass pendant frames. As noted earlier, during the mid-1830s Justus's attention was directed toward painting. The family records and small profile portraits were first produced about the same time. The earliest dated printed family record is that of the Isaac Peckham family of Cambridge, and it is inscribed "made the 26 Sep. 1834."<sup>35</sup> These family records, as seen in the *Rising Family Record*, feature, next to the births, a man with an anchor, symbolizing hope, and a cradle. Next to the deaths, a downcast woman in front of a stylized willow tree and a coffin represents mourning. Most family records are signed "J. Dalee," with a location of either Cambridge or nearby West Troy (now Watervliet). In Justus's characteristic penmanship, names are recorded in block lettering, while the details of birth, marriage, and death are entered with a meticulous cursive script. These printed family records were embellished to create a distinctive artistic statement as well as a functional family history document.

Some clients were supplied with both the family record and individual portraits of each family member. Several such combinations are still together today. Along with the Isaac C. Gunnison family record, which is signed "Made and sold by J. Dalee, West Troy," there are individual portraits of six family members. Mrs. Gunnison's portrait is inscribed "J. Dalee 1835."<sup>36</sup> This is the earliest dated portrait that we have located.

The Henry Burch family record is signed by Justus and is accompanied by twelve adult portraits with the name and age of each sitter written above the head (see p. 48). All twelve portraits are mounted on a single sheet that is inscribed at the bottom, in Justus's distinctive block-letter calligraphy, "PROFILES of Henry Burch's Family Delineated in 1838." A history of Washington County notes that "The profile portraits [of the Burch family] are such skilled likenesses that anyone familiar with present descendants can pick out several of the direct ancestors without reading the names which appear at the top of each."<sup>37</sup>

These small profile portraits were executed in watercolor, pencil, and ink with meticulous detail and delicacy using minute brushwork. A few portraits were painted on paper, but the vast majority was done on stiff bristol board, as it was called when the portraits were made. Ink and pencil were used to delineate the facial features and hair, and then watercolor was used to render flesh tones, hair, and clothing. Gum-arabic glazed highlights were used to further define the details of the clothing. Small details, such as jewelry and hair ornaments, were always so finely rendered

that they invite examination with a magnifying glass. The portraits have an unusual delicacy and quality of detail.

Sitters are depicted based on their age. Adults are usually presented half-length, while older children are often portrayed as three-quarter seated figures, sometimes holding a familiar object or pet. Young children's portraits are of a larger size, with full-length bodies. Several groups of family portraits that have remained together show examples of all three methods of representation. For example, the seven portraits of the Hart family of Canandaigua, New York (see page 45), include the parents and the three oldest children in half-length, one younger child seated in three-quarter pose, and a full-length view of the youngest child, who is standing. The profile portraits are generally about three by two and a half inches, except for those of the larger standing children, which vary in size.

The face in adult portraits is always presented in profile, as are men's bodies. For most women, the body is presented in profile, similar to the men, but, in a few (such as the one on page 50, top), the body is presented in a frontal view. Both frontal and profile women's bodies were done at the same time, as a few of the large family groups that survive intact today have both types. It appears that these frontal women's bodies were done only in the earlier portraits.

The majority of portraits are contained within solid-black painted oval spandrels, and many have a blue wash along the inside edges of the spandrel. It has been suggested that these black spandrels were a concession to the popularity of the daguerreotype, which was usually framed in a spandrel brass case.<sup>38</sup> However, the painted black spandrels are undoubtedly derived from stylistic considerations, as they are found on portraits from the mid-1830s, well before the introduction of photography. For example, it was not until 1841 that the first advertisements for daguerreotype studios appeared in the

Rochester newspapers. Some portraits do not have the black painted spandrels. Others that were painted with or without spandrels were originally framed in brass daguerreotype cases or elaborate velvet-trimmed leather cases with oval mats, as seen in the portrait of Helen Armitage (page 55). The Da Lees produced portraits until at least 1847, the year of the last known dated example that we have located. However, Justus and Richard were still listed as portrait painters in Buffalo during 1848.

There also exists a small group of portraits in miniature oval brass pendant frames designed to be worn as jewelry, such as the portraits of Celia Bradford and Frederick H. Waste (page 55). Similarly done on bristol board using ink, pencil, and watercolor, these portraits were meant to be placed in such frames, as several have a watercolor-and-ink border drawn around the edge of the oval. While a signed example among this group has not been found, we attribute them to the Da Lee family. These are the only portraits with paper and foil appliqué earrings and jewelry.

Unique in Justus Da Lee's artistic accomplishment is the memorial produced for his own family. This ambitious work



Gravestone of Justus Da Lee, Eden, Wisconsin



is the only memorial that we have seen that was not done on the preprinted form.<sup>39</sup> This touching and personal documentation of Justus Da Lee's family enhances the American Folk Art Museum's collection. It is an unusual example of a family record done by an American folk painter for his own family that also includes a rare self-portrait of the artist.

### Acknowledgements

It would not be possible to adequately thank the dozens of people who helped in our research. However, we must particularly thank Martha Da Lee Haidek and applaud her interest in her family history. It was quite a treat for us when we showed her the portrait of Van Buren Da Lee from 1841 and had her improbably respond, "Hey, this is my very own grandfather!" To aid future researchers, copies of the several hundred pages of documentation that we have gathered concerning the Da Lee family and their portraits will be deposited in the Shirley K. Schlafer Library at the American Folk Art Museum and at the Washington County Historical Society, Fort Edward, New York. ★

*Suzanne Rudnick Payne, Ph.D., and Michael R. Payne, Ph.D., are avid collectors and researchers of American folk paintings and are members of the American Folk Art Society. Their recent article on Abiah S. Warren appeared in Folk Art 28, no. 4 (winter 2003/2004). The Paynes would greatly welcome correspondence concerning Da Lee portraits that are signed, have a known sitter, or are from a specified location, so they can further research this family of artists. To contact the authors, e-mail them at mpayne@biodesignofny.com.*

### Notes

- 1 While Justus often signed his surname as "Dalee" in small block letters on the family records and portraits, he signed documents as Da Lee.
- 2 See Beatrix Rumford, ed., *American Folk Portraits: Paintings and Drawings from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center* (Boston: Little, Brown, in association with Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1981), pp. 77-79; Paul S. D'Ambrosio and Charlotte M. Emans, *Folk Art's Many Faces: Portraits in the New York State Historical Association* (Cooperstown: New York State Historical Association, 1987), pp. 56-57; and Stacy C. Hollander, *American Radiance: The Ralph Esmerian Gift to the American Folk Art Museum* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the American Folk Art Museum, 2001), pp. 403-404.
- 3 A copy of this letter is in the possession of Martha Da Lee Haidek.
- 4 *History of Washington Co., N.Y.* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1878).
- 5 Advertisement from (*Salem, N.Y.*) *Northern Post*, September 1, 1814.
- 6 Bounty Land Files, 1856 application of Justus Da Lee, filed in Aurora, Ill. (National Archives, Washington, D.C.).
- 7 *Washington Co.*, op. cit.
- 8 James D. Folts, *History of the University of the State of New York and the State Education System* (Albany: New York State Education Department, 1996).
- 9 The first edition is in the manuscript collection and the second edition is in the microfiche collection of the New York State Library, Albany. We believe that the English School stood on English Road and was common school number 27 in Washington County.
- 10 *Washington Co.*, op. cit.
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 Federal and New York State Census, 1820 through 1870.

- 13 "Amon G.J. Da Lee," *The United States Biographical Dictionary* (Chicago: S. Lewis & Co., 1879), Kansas Volume, pp. 622-623.
- 14 Collection of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.
- 15 Nathaniel Whittock, *The Oxford Drawing Book* (London: Edward Lacey, 1825).
- 16 *Biographical Dictionary*, op. cit.
- 17 *Washington Co.*, op. cit.
- 18 Census, 1820 through 1870, op. cit.
- 19 Laura P. Hulslander, *Letters of Guardianship, 1830-49, Washington County, NY* (Mililani, Hawaii: Sleeper Co., 1994), p. 10.
- 20 *Biographical Dictionary*, op. cit.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 Collection of the American Folk Art Museum, gift of Mary Benisek and Don Walters in honor of Gerard C. Wertkin. The gift includes eight letters and the Da Lee portraits of Richard Da Lee, his wife, Hannah Maria Da Lee, and his sister-in-law Mehetable Deming Da Lee. They were sold at Skinner Sale 2242, June 6, 2004, lot 100. There are several major discrepancies between the catalog description and the actual content of these letters. Unless otherwise specified, all letters quoted in this article are part of this gift.
- 23 Frank and Barbara Pollack advertisement, *Maine Antique Digest* (July 1980), p. 30-D.
- 24 Skinner Sale 1691, Jan. 14, 1996, lot 15.
- 25 Amon was not a professor at the nearby college but may have been a teacher at one of several local academics.
- 26 *Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo* (Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas and Co., 1847, 1848) and *Buffalo City Directory* (Buffalo: Thomas S. Cutting, 1848).
- 27 Bounty Land Files, 1856, op. cit.
- 28 *Biographical Dictionary*, op. cit.
- 29 Justus shares a gravestone with his daughter Mary Ann Vosburgh.
- 30 *Biographical Dictionary*, op. cit. Amon and his first wife were divorced, date unknown.
- 31 Letters written between Richard's wife, Hannah Maria, and her sister; see Cullman papers, collection of the Chicago Historical Society.
- 32 There are very brief descriptions in Justus's letters stating that Mary and their daughter Mary Ann were also painting portraits. In an 1837 letter, twenty-year-old Mary Ann wrote, "I am trying to learn to paint profiles and [family] records." In an 1843 letter, Justus mentions visiting Richard, but "Mary says if she goes, she is not going to draw portraits [along the way], but go straight there."
- 33 The portraits of the Byingtons have twice been sold as the work of Justus, even though they are signed "A.G.J. Da Lee." This is an understandable error, as it was previously unknown that Amon was a portrait painter. These portraits have the sitters' names inscribed on their reverse and a signed backboard. An 1838 watercolor drawing of two birds on branches signed by Amon has also been seen (collection of Allan and Kendra Daniel).
- 34 Van Buren's portrait descended with a group that included a portrait of Richard's sister-in-law Emily Caroline Minton. Richard and Justus both wrote letters with the addresses delightfully enhanced with calligraphy.
- 35 Collection of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y., 60.263.
- 36 Collection of Allan and Kendra Daniel; see D'Ambrosio and Emans, *Folk Art's Many Faces*, op. cit.
- 37 Jane B. Welling, *They Were Here Too* (New York: Washington County Historical Society, 1971), p. 449.
- 38 Rumford, *American Folk Portraits*, op. cit.
- 39 The Stover family record is a watercolor copy of the Da Lee printed family record and is not filled in with Justus's distinctive lettering; see the *Catalogue of Antiques & Fine Art* (winter 2002): 108.