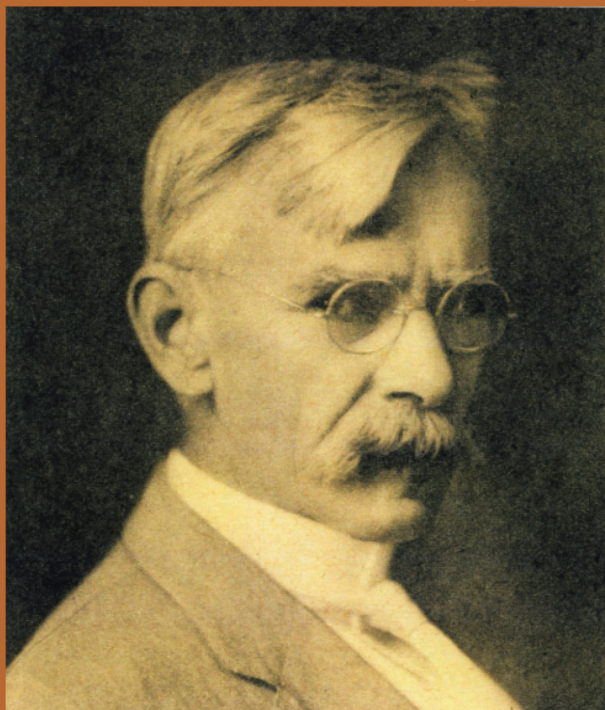
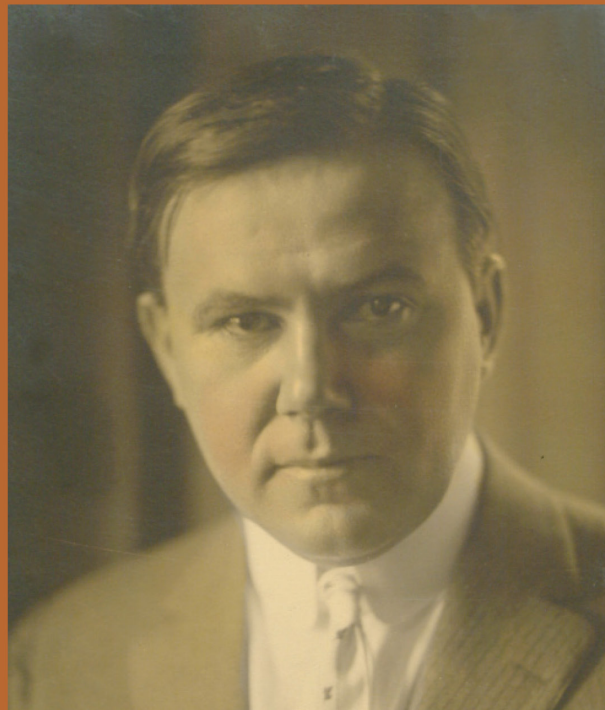


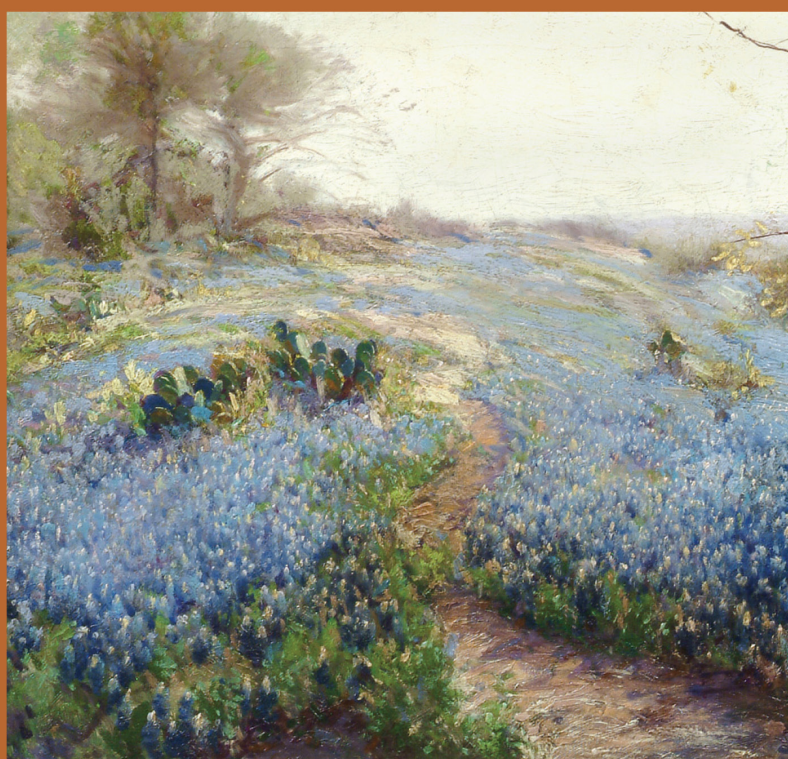
*Generations: Texas Masters
Robert & Julian Onderdonk*



Robert J. Onderdonk (Texan) 1852-1917



Julian Onderdonk (Texan) 1882-1922





Robert J. Onderdonk "Fall of the Alamo"
18" x 24" - Limited Edition Lithograph - 1904

Robert Jenkins Onderdonk was born at St. Timothy's Hall, Catonsville Maryland, in 1852. He had a very thorough academic education and was always sketching family members, classmates and landscapes on the back of his school books, or whatever was available. This sketching ethic was a process he subscribed to his entire life, always



Robert J. Onderdonk
"Mrs. R. J. Onderdonk"
10" x 8" - Pen and Ink - 1894

carrying a sketch book with him where ever he went, like a camera of today. In these sketches he would accurately capture figures, local natives and historic sites like The Alamo and other Texas Missions, parks and people of San Antonio.

He decided to make art his profession and traveled to New York.

Robert was not only a part of the academic beginnings of American Art while studying in New York at the renowned National Academy of Design in

1870, but also one of the founding student members with his instructor, Lemuel Everett Wilmarth of the Arts Students League, one of the most important art schools in the United States!



Robert J. Onderdonk "Watermelon"
19 1/2" x 28 1/4" - Oil on Canvas - ca 1890

There at the Art Students League, he studied and honed his craft with other teachers including Walter Shirlaw, William Merritt Chase and James Carroll Beckwith. Some of Roberts's classmates there include

George Inness, Jr., Frederick Stuart Church, John Henry Twahtman and a Texan from San Antonio named Edward Grenet. Robert was lured to Texas in 1879 by his childhood friend and rancher, William Negely



Robert J. Onderdonk
"Portrait of a Texas Woman"
28" x 22" - Oil on Canvas - 1887

and by stories he read in the tabloids of the day, that touted Texas as the "Promised Land."

He found the light, people and atmosphere of San Antonio fantastic and quickly settled in to live and paint his surroundings.



Robert J. Onderdonk
"A Dance to Spring"
 34" x 18" - Oil on Panel
 ca 1890

He soon met a fellow Texas Artist, Emily Gould whom he married in 1881. Her parents built a house called "Bella Vista" at 128 West French Place in 1882, where they all lived throughout their lives.

This house-studio is two miles north of town, had a wonderful view of the city and still stands today. There Robert lived and taught art classes, painted portrait commissions, landscapes, still lifes and supported

his family. Some of his students who later became famous Texas Artists were Mary Bonner, Edward D. Eisenlohr, Seymour Thomas, Rolla Taylor, among others.

Robert worked hard and encouraged his students



Robert J. Onderdonk "Roses"
 16" x 20" - Oil on Canvas - ca 1900



Robert J. Onderdonk
"Portrait of a Texas Man"
 28" x 23" - Oil on Canvas - 1887

to do their best. An interview I had with one of his students, Mary D. Booth (1898 - 1998), in Houston Texas, revealed his extreme interest and welfare of his students. Mary was taught by Robert at the Bonn Avon finishing school for girls in San

Antonio. Ms. Booth stated: "Mr. Onderdonk took us on many sketching trips to the Hill Country to paint the scenic landscapes there. At our school, he would have us copy European post cards of village landscapes over and over, until we got them perfect."



Robert J. Onderdonk
"Seated Black Boy"
 10" x 7" - Pen and Ink - ca 1890

Robert was part of and organized several of the first art clubs in Texas, further helping to develop an interest in Texas Art in the State and nation wide, but also giving Texas and American Artists, places to display their works, win awards and achieve much needed recognition.



*Robert J. Onderdonk "South Texas"
16" x 20" - Oil on Canvas - ca 1880's*

He helped organize "The Brass Mug Club", a revered group of San Antonio Artists that met on Sundays to enjoy friendship and go into the Texas Hill Country and paint. Members included Robert's son, Julian Onderdonk, José Arpa, Leo Cotton, Rolla Taylor, Tom Brown and Ernst Raba. In 1912, Robert and son Julian were involved in the organization of the San Antonio Art League. Like the previously mentioned National Academy and the Art Student's League, the latter which Robert helped form in New York, the San Antonio Art League was the first important art organization in Texas with the mission



*Robert J. Onderdonk "Mission San José, San Antonio, Texas"
6" x 8" - Oil on Panel - ca 1880*

to establish a free public gallery in San Antonio with exhibitions, lectures and classes in art.

Later, larger exhibitions that needed more room due to their extreme popularity of the League and its awards, were held at the



*Robert Onderdonk "Portrait of Eleanor"
20" x 16" - Oil on Canvas ca 1912*



*Robert Onderdonk "Farm Near San Antonio"
16" x 20" - Oil on Panel - ca 1880's*

Witte Museum, there in San Antonio.

While living in Dallas from 1889 to 1895, to obtain commissions, Robert organized the first real Dallas art school; The Dallas Arts Students League, where he was president and instructor. 1905 marked the first of many years in which Robert was chosen to select artists from New York and Texas to be represented and judged at the Dallas Fair (which later became the State Fair of Texas).

In 1901 Robert was commissioned by well known Texas Historian and Writer, James T. DeShields (1861 – 1948), to paint a large historic painting



Julian Onderdonk "Commodore Dewey's Battle of Manila Bay"
9" x 18 1/2" - Pen and Ink - 1898

ing a mortal shot from the enemy and falling backwards. The painting took three years to complete.

Our family would marvel at this painting, hanging over our fire place mantel, when we co-owned it back in the 1970's.

This is the most famous painting Robert ever painted, paying close attention to detail from the guns, military clothing, walls and the old Mission itself.



Julian Onderdonk "Brackenridge Park"
40" x 34" - Oil on Canvas - ca 1899

of the Alamo battle. Robert used his family, friends and fellow artists for this painting, including his son Julian. His friend Frank Edwards, posed as the model for Davey Crockett, swinging his Kentucky long rifle

known as "Old Betsy." Robert even put himself in the painting, as one of the Alamo Defenders, tak-

"The Fall of The Alamo" was first exhibited at the St. Louis Worlds Fair in 1904. It is the most famous painting ever done on Texas History and now hangs in the Governor's Mansion in Austin Texas.



Julian Onderdonk "Hillside - Southwest Texas 1909"
6" x 9" - Oil on Panel



Julian Onderdonk "Charcoal Studies on the Back of Brackenridge Park"

Among Robert's important commissions were the illustrations he provided for the autobiography by John Wesley Hardin, titled, "The Life of John Wesley Hardin as told by himself." This book was published in Seguin Texas in 1896. This was a courageous task by Onderdonk considering that Hardin, who had killed over forty men, was the fastest gun in the West, East, North or South.

Robert Jenkins Onderdonk was known as the Dean of Texas Artists. His contributions to Texas Art and the early artists of Texas are above and be-

yond important.

Julian Onderdonk, the first of Robert and Emily's talented children, was born in San Antonio in 1882. All of the Onderdonk children, Julian, Eleanor and Latrobe, exhibited early signs of artistic talent. Eleanor,

a very competent portrait, landscape and still life painter, teacher and later in life, a curator of art at the Witte Museum, was very good, but it was Julian who took the reins and became the most famous Onderdonk.

An early family photo from 1885 shows Julian at home when



Julian Onderdonk "View From Our Front Porch - San Antonio, Texas 1910" 12" x 9" - Oil on Panel



Julian Onderdonk "Frijolito - Mountain Laurel" 9" x 12" - Oil on Panel - ca 1915

he was 3 years old, holding a toy rifle in his right hand and his paint brushes in his left. He was a big strong boy who weighed 14 ½ pounds at birth and grew into a tall striking man. His teacher, who



Julian Onderdonk "Late Afternoon Bluebonnets, San Antonio, Texas 1914" 16" x 24" - Oil on Canvas

at an early age taught him the rudiments of art and stressed the importance of drawing, was his mentor and father, Robert Onderdonk. Like the old masters, Julian learned to draw before he was allowed to pick up the paints. Drawings he did in the 1880's and 90's are described by his critics of the day as being done by an accomplished artist far beyond his years. Drawing helped Julian throughout his life, making sketches of the shifting hilly South Texas landscapes and writing in reference notations to help him remember colors, color values, location of scene, types of trees and wagon tracks present, sun and shade and other technical instructions.



Julian Onderdonk "Cactus in Bloom - San Antonio, Texas 1921" 7 1/2" x 10" - Pastel - 1921



Julian Onderdonk "View of Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas 1921"
6" x 9" - Oil on Panel

When he was 10 years old he won second place for a water color he exhibited in the 1892 Dallas Fair. In 1898 when Julian was sixteen, he did a fine pen and ink drawing that he gave to his best boyhood friend, Willis Keller (1882 – 1957). Soon after that



Julian Onderdonk "Bluebonnets, San Antonio, Texas"
25" x 30" - Oil on Canvas - 1922

he presented Keller and family an unusual large colorful painting of Brackenridge Park, painted ca. 1899 for their dining room. It is the first example of his departure from his father's style with broad brush strokes, plenty of color and charcoal character sketches of bull fighters and bulls. Julian, Willis and family are on verso of this painting.

His paintings and drawings were starting to sell

and it was at this time, 1898-99 that Julian attended West Texas Military Academy, where he taught and was the editor of their magazine, "Bugle Notes." His pen and ink of Commodore Dewey's Battle of Manila Bay, 1898 was done for "Bugle Notes." Julian's military training definitely prepared him for his adventure to the Big Apple in January 1901. He studied at the Art Student's League, under Kenyon Cox and took classes under Frank DuMond and Robert Henri. It was under the tutelage of William Merritt Chase at Chase's



Julian Onderdonk "A June Morning 1909"
14" x 20" - Oil on Canvas



Julian Onderdonk "Bluebonnets - Sunny Morning - San Antonio, Texas 1914" 12" x 16" - Oil on Canvas

Shinnecock Summer School of Art at Southampton, Long Island, where everything for Julian fell into place. Chase's encouraged the young Onder-



Julian Onderdonk "Sunlight Through the Live Oaks - Uvalde, Texas 1915"
16" x 24" - Oil on Canvas

donk, criticized and helped him develop his own individual style which transformed him into a great painter. There is no doubt Chase was impressed with Julian's ability and work. Chase painted a portrait of Julian and gave it to him on his 19th birthday!

In 1902 Julian married Gertrude Shipman, a girl he met in the apartment next door. He struggled in New York, painting great paintings for little money, doing restoration and sometimes doing what he called pot boilers for extra income, which were his paintings, signed under the assumed names Roberto Vasquez and Tunison.



Julian Onderdonk "Old Live Oaks, Southwest Texas 1913"
16" x 24" - Oil on Canvas

Julian stopped painting these pot boilers because his work was starting to sell. His painting "An October Morning" was accepted by the Society of American Artists. In 1903 Julian and Gertrude were blessed with their first baby, Adrienne. He started an art school with fellow American Artist Guy du Bois in 1904 that was short lived and Julian pressed on. 1906 was the first year Julian was asked by the Dallas Fair Association to organize the art exhibit, a project he did for years until his death. Robert also had been involved with the State Fair and between both of them, they brought many artists works from up north,



Julian Onderdonk "San José Mission, San Antonio 1909"
8" x 12" - Oil on Panel

Texas and around the United States into the public eye. By doing this, Julian and his father increased the public's art IQ and sales for artists. Julian and Gertrude made the decision to return to Texas work and have their second baby, Robert Reid Onderdonk in 1909.

Immediately he started to take various trips out West of his home in San Antonio, to paint on ranches in Comfort, Bandera and Kerrville among other locations. He also painted historic structures in San Antonio like the Alamo, which is on loan from the Witte Museum to the White House, the Span-

ish Missions and homes like the Chandler house. The Chandler family were prominent citizens in San Antonio who lived across the street from the Onderdonks and like other affluent families of the day, purchased Julian's and Robert's paintings.



*Julian Onderdonk "Fall Stream"
12" x 16" - Oil on Canvas - 1910*

It was during this time that Julian molded together the tonalist style he learned from Robert and the progressive Impressionists style he learned in New York.



*Julian Onderdonk "San Antonio River at Brackenridge Park"
4" x 7" - Pen and Ink - 1898*

His first mystical panoramic Texas landscape of Bluebonnet fields, blues, grays, lavenders, lifting haze, cactus, yucca, live oaks with Spanish moss hanging and powerful Texas skies began to emerge. His orchestration of light and color, shifting landscapes and movement in his paintings, has never been duplicated by any artist, then or now.

Julian exercised his patriotism for our great na-



*Julian Onderdonk "Liveoak, near Kerrville, Texas 1918"
9" x 12" - Oil on Canvas*

tion during WWI by drawing large range finding targets for the Army, that were used by machine gun crews and rifle practice at Camp Stanley and Camp Bullis just north of San Antonio. Julian's art organizing at the Dallas Fair was cancelled in 1918 due to WWI. Because of this, Julian found he had more time to devote to his own painting.

Mrs. Henry P. Drought, an early patron and Onderdonk collector friend and president of the San Antonio Art League, invited Julian and his wife on a sketching trip to Bandera Pass and Mrs. Drought's country estate near Comfort Texas called "Droughtfels." There, Julian painted from her house on the edge of a cliff, looking down at the Guadalupe River below. Those paintings with the purple mountain laurels and Texas wild flowers in bloom along with the aerial views of the great Guadalupe River are fantastic. Julian caught up on his painting that year for his commission work for galleries around the country and buyers here in Texas. 1919 saw the young Onderdonk again organizing the Dallas Fair art show, where his sales were brisk.

The 1920 Fair turned out OK despite difficulties due to a shipping strike that kept many of the New York artist's paintings from arriving. Because of the problems and mammoth efforts to put on these Dallas Fair shows, Julian was not able to paint and



*Julian Onderdonk "La Villita - San Antonio, Texas"
6" x 9" - Pen and Ink - 1896*

fell behind on his own commission works.

The 1921 show was a great success when the Taos Society of Artists answered the call by Julian for paintings by sending twenty eight paintings from the entire group, as well as loans from artists in more cities in the USA.



*Julian Onderdonk "Afternoon Bluebonnets"
25" x 30" - Oil on Canvas - 1920*

In 1922, Julian was flooded with requests for his paintings from all parts of the country. He was behind in his work and lost some commissions. He made time for the San Antonio Art Leagues projects and shows, assisting them wherever he could. They made him an honorary life member.

He considered laying out of his chores with the 1922 Dallas Fair art exhibit due to his arrearage in



*Julian Onderdonk "Afternoon Bluebonnets, San Antonio, Texas, View of Fort Sam Houston in the Distance 1917"
8" x 10" - Oil on Panel*

production, but was pushed into it by the directors. Again, he went to New York to help his fellow artists out by having their works in the show. When he arrived back in Texas, he may have not felt well, as he considered again, not going to Dallas. He and his son Bob went to the Fair and the visitors greeted him with great enthusiasm and awe. Julian was a star!

Knowing he had \$20,000 dollars worth of orders, he and his son returned to San Antonio to begin working. Taking sick shortly after arriving home in San Antonio, he was rushed to Physicians and



Julian Onderdonk "A Sultry August Afternoon on the Guadalupe River 1910" 25" x 30" - Oil on Canvas

Surgeons Hospital, where he was operated on for an intestinal obstruction; probably appendicitis.

Julian Onderdonk lived for two more weeks and died on a Friday morning, 27 October, 1922. He was only 40 years old.

“Dawn in the Hills”, a 30” x 40” panoramic spring-time scene of bluebonnets was inspired in the hills, northwest of San Antonio. This and another painting, “Autumn Tapestry” were allowed to hang at the National Academy of Design in New York that year. This was an honor only allowed to members of the Academy who were living.



Julian Onderdonk "Southwest Texas"
16" x 20" - Oil on Canvas - 1912

Although Julian was not a member of the Academy at the time, his eligibility for membership was virtually guaranteed.

Texas artist Rolla Taylor paid tribute in Onderdonk's obituary in the San Antonio Express, Saturday morning, October 28, when he said: "Mr. Taylor declared that no artist in the South was equal to Onderdonk and that through his recognition in the highest artistic circles of America, Texas and San Antonio have become recognized for their wealth of material for the artists canvas. Since his landscapes came into Eastern fame, many other artists have joined the local art colony."



Julian Onderdonk "The Chandler House"
12" x 9" - Oil on Panel 1912

Herbert Barnard, also a new friend and fellow artist, said "Onderdonk has done more to make Texas scenery famous and to advertise Texas and San Antonio in art circles than any other man in the State. Now that his brush is stilled, his State and home city will appreciate him as never before and he will take his place among famous American Artists of all time."

Peter C. Rainone

Published June 2008, American Art Review.



Julian Onderdonk "A Misty Evening"
6" x 9" - Oil on Panel - 1909



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Left to right: Wanda Marshall, President, Fielder House Museum; Geraldine Mills, Director, Fielder House Museum; Pete Rainone, Curator of “Generations” and Vice President of Rainone Galleries.

I would like to thank the following people for helping me bring this wonderful exhibition to Life!

They are:

Cherry Rainone
Geraldine Mills
Gregory Rainone
Thomas Rainone
Marcy Svenson
Martha Martin
Cecelia Steinfeldt
Rebecca Huffstutler
Ezella Glover
Wanda Marshall
Becky Tucker
Nancy York
Karra O’Connell
Tony Grisham
Mary Ann Carrico

Jill Redmond
Thomas Kellaway
Kimble Dement
Jeff Prince
Michael Price
Karen Dement
The Witte Museum
David Wharton
Wharton Photography, Fort Worth, Texas
David Barron
Barron Litho, Fort Worth, Texas
Brad Birdsong
Bird’s Copies, Arlington, Texas
The Arlington Historical Society
and Rainone Galleries, Arlington, Texas