

## *A Wooded Watershed, 1926*

**Daniel Garber, 1880–1958**  
oil on canvas  
129.25 x 257.25 inches  
James A. Michener Art Museum  
Acquired with a Legislative  
Initiative Grant awarded by  
Senator Craig Lewis



### **Biography**

Daniel Garber was born on April 11, 1880 in North Manchester, Indiana. His father was a Mennonite farmer. Garber started pursuing an interest in art early, at the age of 17, by entering into the Cincinnati Art Academy. Later he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and in Europe. After he returned to the United States in 1907, he settled down to painting in his home, Cuttalossa, in Lumberville, Pennsylvania. Garber began to teach at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (now Moore College of Art and Design), and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts the same year. He stayed at the academy until 1950—over 40 years! As a result, Garber influenced many artists who attended the academy. Garber is well known for his paintings of Bucks County’s forests and quarries. He was also known as a portraitist. He died on July 5, 1958 by accidentally falling off a ladder outside his studio.

### **Why is this painting in the shape of a half circle?**

This mural was commissioned for the April 1926 Sesquicentennial International Exposition held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The mural was made in the shape of a half circle to fit in with the other murals in the exhibit. This exposition celebrated the 150th anniversary of the birth of the United States, which was the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The mural was displayed in the Pennsylvania Building with other murals created by artists such as Violet Oakley. It was installed on a wall in the “Natural Resources” exhibit. Garber didn’t have much mural-making experience when he was asked to do this painting, so he looked for an apprenticeship with Will H. Low, an American muralist. He traveled in Europe from 1905 to 1907 to look at the great murals of England, Italy, and France, including the murals by Puvis de Chavannes.

### **How did they get this painting into the museum?**

This painting is the largest painting in the Michener Art Museum’s collection. It is close to 11 feet high and 22 feet long, which is about the length of four average-sized adults. Daniel Garber completed this mural in only six weeks in his studio at Cuttalossa! When you visit the museum, you can see that museum staff built a special door to the right of the painting that allowed installation staff to fit it into the galleries!



Sometimes murals are created on the outside of buildings in towns or cities. Do you know of a mural in your community or neighborhood? Who created the mural?

**Did you know that this painting was lost for many years?**

After the Sesquicentennial closed in December 1926, the state dismantled the site, sending this mural to the State Forest School at Mont Alto. The painting was installed in the Science Hall. Two years later, the campus became part of Pennsylvania State University, and the Science Hall was transformed into its General Studies Building. This mural was lost, until one day a staff member looked at the signature on the painting and called the Michener Art Museum. It was very dirty and damaged. The sides of the 22-foot canvas were folded back to fit on a wall that was too small (19 feet) to accommodate the mural's full width. Garber's mural had become the backdrop for the stage of the school's auditorium and was lost for over sixty years! This mural had to undergo extensive restoration before it could be hung in the Michener Art Museum. The museum hired a conservator to repair any holes it may have had, to replace any paint that may have flaked off, and to clean the painting before it was installed at the Michener.

**There aren't any people in this painting. Why?**

Garber imagined Pennsylvania before human intrusion. He painted it before industry and agriculture. He portrayed Pennsylvania as a paradise. What feeling would this painting give you if Garber had included people in it? If you wanted to visit an area in this painting, where would it be? If you visited this location today, how do you think the landscape may have changed?

**How can a painting like *A Wooded Watershed* teach me about nature?**

This painting depicts the Delaware River and an area specifically known as the Delaware Water Gap. The Delaware is a significant river that forms the eastern border of Pennsylvania and has its source in New York State. The river flows through Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and is the subject of many Pennsylvania impressionist paintings. By the 1920s, the railroad had made the Delaware Water Gap a popular vacation spot for Philadelphians and New Yorkers. Travel brochures, like one handed out at the Sesquicentennial, promoted this "natural wonder" of Pennsylvania.

The cliffs in this painting give an indication as to the type of region this landscape portrays, which is the Ridge and Valley Region of Pennsylvania. Garber also included Pennsylvania's state flower, the mountain laurel, in this painting. Take a look and see if you can find it. If you are not from Pennsylvania, do you know your state's flower? If the mountain laurel is in bloom in this painting, what season do you think it is? Garber also included Pennsylvania's state animal, the whitetail deer, in this painting. If you are not from Pennsylvania, what is your state's animal?



## Learn More

How is *A Wooded Watershed* related to Pennsylvania landscape and history? Learn more while engaging in the activity “Pennsylvania Landscape and History,” below.

Create a landscape showing your ideal place. Read about it in the activity “Landscape: An Ideal Place,” below.

### **Garber studied with artist and designer Will Hickok Low. What did Low design?**

Even though Daniel Garber apprenticed himself to Will H. Low to learn about murals, Low was also well known as a graphic designer. A graphic designer is someone who might illustrate stories, or design the text of a book. Low did those things but he also designed a new version of our paper money! M. Johnson, Chief of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving in 1893, had definite ideas about the role of art in paper money and decided that four artists should design the different values of currency. They were the muralists Edwin H. Blashfield, Will H. Low, C. S. Reinhart and Walter Shirlaw. The artists were awarded a commission of \$800 for each design the Bureau of Printing and Engraving accepted. The artists did the designs, but engravers copied them so the money could be printed. We no longer use the money that was designed by these artists in 1893.

### **Symbols Everywhere**

Pennsylvania is divided into many counties, some of which have their own symbols. In Bucks County, where the Michener Art Museum is located, the ninth graders in all the school districts picked the symbols. Here they are:

The county flower is the violet.

The county bird is the cardinal.

The county mammal is the cottontail rabbit.

The county tree is the dogwood.

The county fish is the catfish.

The county rock is the diabase.

Do you know your county symbols? How would you find out about them? Does your school have a symbol? What is its story? And what about your favorite sports teams? Why do we use symbols for so many things?

Learn more about Bucks County, Pennsylvania, on the official Bucks County website, [www.buckscounty.org](http://www.buckscounty.org).

### **Related Images**

Garber studied with Will Hickok Low, in order to learn more about murals. Look at Low’s *Early Morning, Gloucester* at [www.questroyalfineart.com](http://www.questroyalfineart.com).



The Delaware Water Gap was not close to Daniel Garber's home, but he painted a view of *Lambertville Beach* along the Delaware River, which was. See the painting at the website of the James A. Michener Art Museum, [www.michenermuseum.org](http://www.michenermuseum.org).

The Delaware River was very popular with artists Charles Rosen, John Folinsbee, and Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze. See the work of Rosen and Folinsbee at [www.michenermuseum.org](http://www.michenermuseum.org). Leutze's *George Washington Crossing the Delaware* is on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art at [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).

Elsie Driggs, another Bucks County artist, shows us a baby deer resting in one of her paintings. Look at her work at [www.michenerartmuseum.org](http://www.michenerartmuseum.org).

Daniel Garber's mural was first exhibited in Philadelphia in 1926. It was displayed inside. Philadelphia now has many murals displayed on the outside of buildings. Do you think you could create a mural somewhere in your home? In your neighborhood? In your school? What would you include in the mural? You can see a slideshow of the Philadelphia murals at [www.time.com](http://www.time.com).

### **Related Links**

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission lists several Pennsylvania state symbols, such as the state insect. Read more at [www.phmc.state.pa.us](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us).

Today, the Delaware River Water Gap is still a beautiful place where people like to canoe and kayak. It is part of the United States National Park Service. Read more at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

Can you guess why *A Wooded Watershed* was given to the School of Forestry at Penn State University? This university currently offers an excellent course of study in forestry. Learn about the program at [www.sfr.cas.psu.edu](http://www.sfr.cas.psu.edu).

### **Are you a rock hound? Here is some information, and a challenge!**

In *A Wooded Watershed*, Daniel Garber shows a lot of rocky areas on each side of the Delaware River. One type of the rocks is called diabase (the same rock that is the Bucks County rock). These are the dark rocks in the foreground of the painting. These rocks were made 140-250 million years ago. Look at the rocks in the background of the painting that make up the cliffs. Can you discover what kind of rocks they are? Do you think the color is really the color of the rocks? If you are interested in rocks and rock formations, learn more at the National Geological Survey, [vulcan.wr.usgs.gov](http://vulcan.wr.usgs.gov).

### **Pampering your painting**

This painting was not taken care of; it took several months with many people working on it to repair, or conserve, the painting. A person who repairs a painting is called an art conservator. This is the perfect job for someone who



loves art and science. Learn more about art conservation at the Conservation Register, [www.conservationregister.com](http://www.conservationregister.com).

