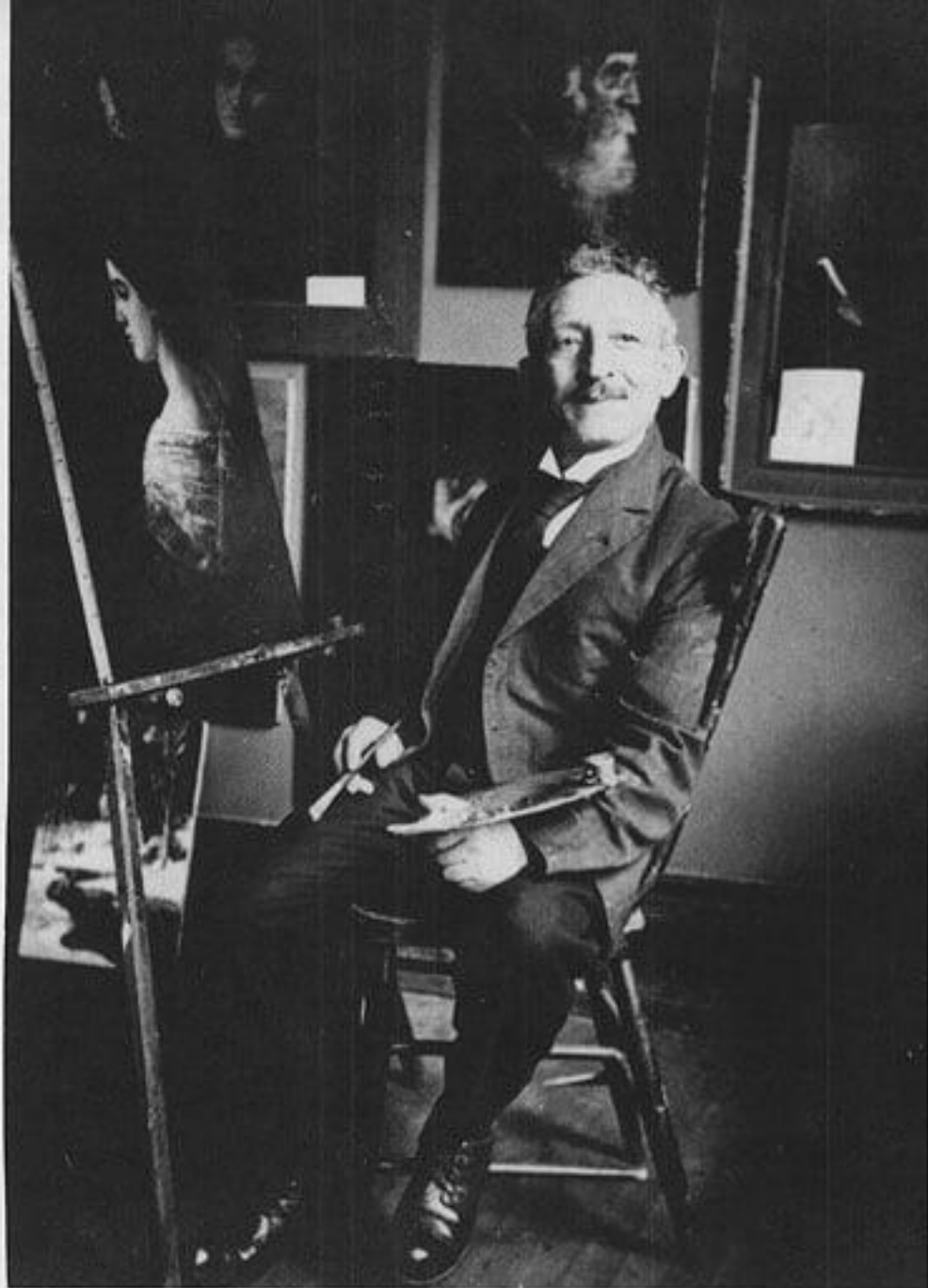


Julius Segall (1860-1925) arrived in the United States from Germany at the age of fourteen and settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As a young man he returned to Germany to study art at the Munich Academy and was active as a professional artist for the rest of his life. His varied output includes portraits, landscapes, religious subjects, still lifes, and genre painting. Segall seldom exhibited work at public exhibitions, but was well enough known nationally to merit obituary articles in the *New York Times* and the *American Art Annual*. Segall certainly deserves more attention than he has generally received, and the present article accordingly seeks to bring together some background information about his career.

Segall was born January 4, 1860 in the village of Nakel an der Netze in the Prussian province of Posen, now a part of Poland. His father was Ludwig Segall, and his mother, Johanna Bratsch Segall, died a month after he was born; his father later remarried. Segall immigrated to the United States in 1872 with his father and stepmother and five other children. Julius had at least two sisters, one of whom was still living in 1942. One brother, the printer Hugo Segall, was living at the same Milwaukee address as Julius in 1878; the artist Arthur I. Segall, whose name appears in the Milwaukee city directory for 1899, was probably also a brother.

Julius appears in the Milwaukee city directory for the first time in 1877. From then until 1879 he was a boarder at 618 Third Street and was variously employed as a clerk, peddler, and jeweler. His father, a watchmaker, had a jewelry store in Milwaukee, where Julius probably worked. The 1880 directory gives his occupation as student and indicates that he was then living at 505 Chestnut Street.



Julius Segall was five feet two inches tall. A professional artist for fifty-five years, Segall was also an amateur poet and author. (Photo courtesy of Rita Segall Pscheidt)

By Peter C. Merrill

Julius Segall

Immigrant Artist in Wisconsin

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In July 1881 Segall left Milwaukee to study art in Munich. On the way he visited his birthplace in Posen, where he was greeted at the station by his uncle, aunt, and a female cousin. He later wrote an account of this visit for a German-language newspaper in Milwaukee.

Segall registered as a student at the Royal Academy in Munich on October 10, 1881. Among the artists with whom he was acquainted in Munich were the San Francisco painter Toby Edward Rosenthal (1848-1917) and the Milwaukee painter Robert Schade (1861-1912). By the fall of 1883 Segall was back in Milwaukee; Schade returned about the same time, and the two young artists each acquired studio space in the Iron Block on Wisconsin Avenue. The Iron Block, named for its unusual metal facade, was constructed in 1860-61 and is still standing. The portrait artist Conrad Heyd (1841-1912) and the wood engraver William Brah (1850-1916) also had studios there during the 1880s.

Two other local artists with whom Segall was acquainted were Friedrich Wehle (1831-1901) and Frank Enders (1860-1921). Enders, like Segall, had received his training at the Munich Academy. The lithographer Louis Kurz (1883-1921) was apparently a close friend, as Segall painted two portraits of Kurz which he kept for himself. Kurz, an Austrian who was twenty-five years older than Segall, left Milwaukee for Chicago in 1878.

Segall is often mentioned by the *Milwaukee Sentinel* during the 1880s. News items for 1883, for example, reported that he had completed a pen drawing of an Indian scene and that he was working on a picture entitled *Hamlet*. The *Sentinel* had this to report on August 12:

Mr. Segall's studio is filled with efforts of all conceivable things. He has still-lives and landscapes and marine subjects and what-nots enough to stock a gallery, but yet he works away untiringly. He will rush out an order for seven dozen blazing show-pictures, and



Segall's wife, Regina, was born in Bucovina, now part of Rumania. Segall painted this rural scene during a visit to the region. (Photo courtesy of Rita Segall Pscheidt)

then fall to painting the sentimental face of a Netherland beauty. Between times he is not loth to expatiate upon the beauties of a Venus de Medici or Milo.

Other news items in 1884 reported on a painting entitled *Dutch Mandolin Player*, a still life symbolizing music, and two large landscapes done on commission. In July 1884 the *Sentinel* reported that Segall was working on a portrait of the actress Bertha Fiebach. Later that summer it mentioned that he had been commissioned to do a miniature portrait of a child and that he had recently painted an ideal female head as well as several small landscapes. A news item on February 14, 1886, gave the following information:

Mr. Segall has painted a portrait of himself, and a large picture entitled "Sad Tidings." It shows a woman in blue who has just finished reading a letter, which she holds listlessly in her hand. The artist has had the painting photographed.

Segall was married in Milwaukee on December 30, 1889 to Regina Werner (1869-1927). One of the

witnesses to the ceremony was Segall's friend and fellow artist, Robert Schade. Regina was born in the Austrian province of Bucovina, now a part of Rumania. Segall and his wife were both of Jewish descent, but the marriage was a civil ceremony performed by a justice of the peace. Their two children were Rose, born in 1890, and Edward, born in 1892.

In 1890 Segall and his wife moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where they remained until 1903. Before leaving Milwaukee, Segall had given instruction to a few private pupils. In St. Paul he taught drawing and painting at Hamline University for two years. In St. Paul Segall and his family lived for three years at 50 West Fifth Street, but moved in 1895 to a residence at Bunker Street south of downtown St. Paul. His studio in St. Paul was in the Globe Building at 36 East 4th Street.

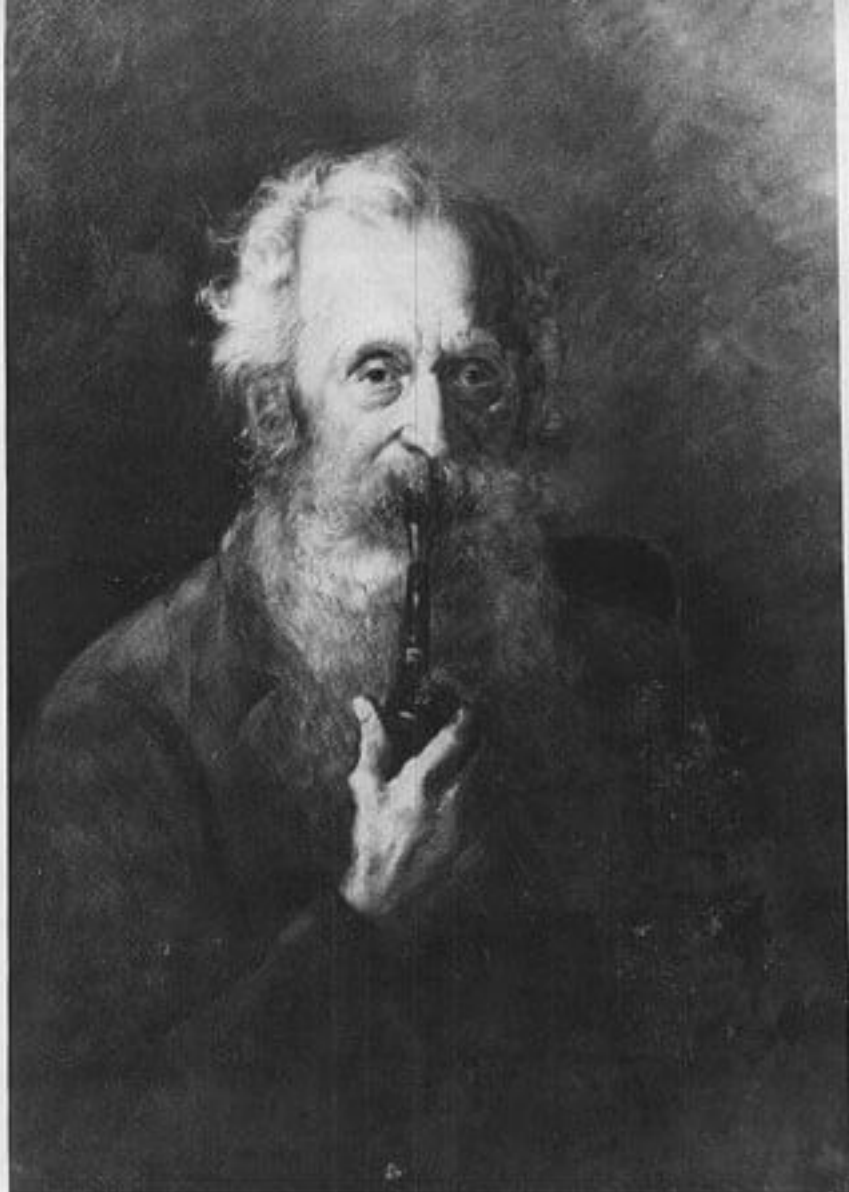
After spending the winter in Munich with his wife and two children, Segall returned to Milwaukee in 1904 and eventually established a studio on the fifth floor of the Mack Building at 69 Wisconsin Avenue. He remained in Milwaukee and continued to use this studio for

the rest of his life. Late in life he gave private instruction to the artist and designer Max Pagel (1904-1958).

Segall made five trips back to Europe for periods of study and painting. The first such trip began in 1881 when he went to study in Munich. On later trips to Europe he visited Karlsruhe and Venice, Russia and Rumania. One of his trips was made following his departure from St. Paul in 1903, and his last trip was reportedly made shortly before the First World War.

Segall's best known painting is *Der alte Heinrich* (Old Henry), a portrait of a white-haired man with a full beard who is smoking a pipe. The model for this painting was a Milwaukee street peddler who used to act regularly as Santa Claus for Gimbels department store. The painting is now in the collection of the Milwaukee Art Museum. Segall frequently painted genre portraits of a similar type, an example being *The Skat Player* at Ratzsch's Restaurant in Milwaukee. For *Praying Jew*, which Segall painted in Munich at the turn of the century, his model was a Jewish cigarette peddler. *The Morning Prayer* (1900) is one of several Segall paintings depicting women in peasant dress. Although Segall's main source of income probably came from formal portraits, his range of subject matter was considerable. *Dogs in a Field*, which depicts two hunting dogs, recalls the work of Segall's contemporary Edmund Osthaus (1859-1928). This painting, which was at one time owned by Milwaukee's Socialist Mayor Daniel W. Hoan, is now at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

As a nonprofessional activity, Segall wrote German verse which he contributed to the *Freidenker* and the *Germania-Herold* in Milwaukee. Several of his poems were reportedly set to music, and some were translated into English by Segall's friend and literary mentor, the German-born poet and dramatist Otto Soubbron (1846-1917). Segall



Der alte Heinrich, 1911, oil on canvas, 32" x 26". (Photo courtesy of Milwaukee Art Museum, gift of Mrs. Regina Segall, presented in memoriam.)

Dogs in a Field, undated, oil on canvas, 12 1/16" x 18". (Photo courtesy of Milwaukee Art Museum, gift of Hon. Daniel W. Hoan.)





Untitled mythological scene (undated), oil on canvas, approximately 12" x 21". Signed J. Segall at lower left. (Photo courtesy of Marc David, Limited, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.)

admired Soubron and contributed a short commemorative poem to the *Freidenker* on the occasion of Soubron's seventieth birthday. Segall also wrote plays in German, some of which were staged evidently by amateur players, as there is no record of any of his plays having been performed by any professional theater company in Milwaukee. He also wrote critical essays for the German-language press. His most ambitious literary work, however, is his book *Gedichte* (1920), a privately published volume of verse. The poems are usually philosophical, many of them reflecting Segall's pacifist reaction to the First World War. Martin Fuchs, who had known Segall when both were contributors to the *Freidenker*, gave a sympathetic assessment of the book, stressing the optimism of Segall's poetry. Fuchs had this to say about Segall himself in the Chicago *Sonntagspost* (December 12, 1920):

He had the heart of a child. He was a dreamer who did not see people the way they were, but as he would have liked to see them. An almost unshakable trust in the goodness of man burst forth from everything he said.

Fuchs was not the only observer who saw Segall as a dreamer. A newspaper reporter who interviewed Segall in 1917 used similar

language to describe him in the Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin* (March 30, 1917) article entitled, "World is Hate-Crazy, Says Milwaukee Artist." He was a Socialist throughout his life and was at one time a contributor to the Socialist newspaper *Vorwärts* in Milwaukee. In the economic sphere, he was alarmed by the rise in food prices during the First World War and favored the creation of a state price control commission. His preference for a civil marriage ceremony and the fact that he contributed to the *Freidenker*, a free-thought periodical, suggest that he was probably a free thinker. But although he was not religiously observant, he was without prejudice toward those who were. He admired the tradition of Christian religious art and depicted Christian devotional subjects in a number of paintings, while in other paintings he reveals a sensitivity toward Jewish cultural values.

Segall died at his home in Milwaukee on January 20, 1925 and was buried in a family plot at Spring Hill Cemetery in Milwaukee. His tombstone bears the following German inscription:

Ein edler Mensch, ein Künstler./ So war dein ganzes Erdenwallen./ Nun ist's vorbei. Die Nebel fallen./ Doch was du schufst lebt

ewig fort./ Nun ruhe sanft am schlichten Ort.

A noble human being, an artist./ Such was your life's pilgrimage./ Now it is past. The mists fall./ But what you created lives on forever./ Now rest in peace at this homely place.

Segall's passing was noted by obituary articles in a number of Milwaukee newspapers. A year after the artist's death the Milwaukee Art Institute held a memorial exhibition featuring forty of his paintings.

Although few of Segall's paintings are now to be found in public collections, several works are known to exist. Many of these are owned by Segall's descendants or by private collectors, one of whom was the late Edward G. Robinson. One of his paintings is now at St. Rita's Catholic Church in Milwaukee and another is at Temple Shaarei Tefila in Los Angeles. Paintings by Segall also appear from time to time at auction galleries and other art dealers.

Segall's art is rooted in the Munich realism of the late nineteenth century and in his admiration for the great masters, such as Van Dyck. His work appears to have been little influenced by impressionism or by any other modern trend. As an artist Segall was neither important nor influential. He was, however, a competent craftsman and a thorough professional. I hope that future critics will find time to give his work a more careful appraisal than has been done heretofore.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance I received from Julius Segall's granddaughters, Rita Segall Pscheidt and Rainbow Johnson. Mrs. Pscheidt graciously made available family photographs and papers so that copies of these could be permanently deposited in the research collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society. Rainbow Johnson was kind enough to provide me with a copy of Julius Segall's Gedichte. ■