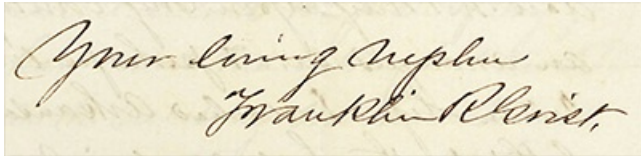


Grist, Franklin Richard ^[1]

Grist, Franklin Richard

by [William S. Powell](#) ^[2], 1986

22 Sept. 1828–25 Feb. 1912



The signature of Franklin Richard Grist, from an 1853 letter to an aunt. Image from the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

^[3]Franklin Richard Grist, artist, art critic, and diplomat, was born at Egypt plantation near New Bern, the son of Richard and Elizabeth Heritage Washington Grist. His father was a merchant of Washington, N.C., and his mother, the daughter of John Washington of Kinston, was the sister of Mrs. [William A. Graham](#) ^[4] and Mrs. [James W. Bryan](#) ^[5]. After the death of her husband, Elizabeth married Dr. Reuben Knox in 1840. Franklin Grist was the only surviving child of her first marriage; he referred to Dr. Knox as "father" in his letters and displayed genuine affection for his stepfather.

Young Grist attended the [Bingham School](#) ^[6] at Hillsborough and was graduated from Yale College in 1848 with the bachelor of arts degree. In 1848, while still a resident of New Haven, Conn., Grist, described as a "genre painter," exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York. In the spring of 1849 he joined a U.S. Army mission under Captain Howard Stansbury going to explore and survey the Great Salt Lake area, which had been acquired by the United States the previous year in the [Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo](#) ^[7]. Grist was engaged as an artist and to help with the mapping. The eighteen men composing the Stansbury expedition set out from Fort Leavenworth in May. Many of the handsome lithographs in Stansbury's *Exploration and Survey of the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah* ^[8] (Washington, 1852) were based on Grist's sketches.

Reuben Knox, who was now living with his family in St. Louis, Mo., planned a trip to California while Grist was on this expedition and, with two of his sons, a cousin, and a nephew, set out in mid-May 1850. On 1 July they picked up Franklin Grist along the way, as his work with the survey party was almost finished, and proceeded to California. During the course of his work in the West, Grist had also been to Oregon. After numerous unanticipated hardships, on 14 September the Knox party reached Sacramento where Dr. Knox expected to establish a store. He also planned to open a store in San Francisco and to engage in mining. Grist expected to work as an artist in San Francisco. The accidental drowning of Knox in the mouth of San Pablo Bay near San Francisco on 28 May 1851 ended all of these plans.

Grist returned to North Carolina with his half brothers and their relatives. Then, for about the next four years, he found employment in Washington, D.C., as a clerk in the Bureau of Construction and Repairs of the Treasury Department. He had for several years entertained the hope of studying in Italy, and in 1855 he sailed for Europe. He remained abroad for thirty-five years, traveling widely and gaining a solid reputation as an art critic. For about the first fifteen years he lived in Paris, but in 1871, following the Franco-German War, he was arrested as a suspected German spy. He was able to prove his American citizenship, however, and shortly afterward left to reside in Italy for twenty years, primarily in Florence, Rome, and Venice. During the administration of President Grover Cleveland he was named U.S. vice-consul in Venice, serving from 1885 until 1890, when he returned to North Carolina to reside in [Raleigh](#) ^[9] with his half brother, Dr. Augustus W. Knox. He died there at the age of eighty-three, unmarried.

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Additional Resources:

"Franklin Richard Grist." *Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased from June, 1910, to July, 1916* New

Haven: The University. 1915. 173. http://books.google.com/books?id=y2w_AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA173#v=onepage&q&f=false ^[11] (accessed August 15, 2013).

Image Credits:

Franklin Richard Grist to [aunt], October 12, 1853. Folder 18: 1851: Scan 45 . Elizabeth Washington Grist Knox Papers #4269, Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ead/id/186555> ^[3] (accessed August 15, 2013).

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