

STORIES of New Jersey

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472 Orange Street, Newark, New Jersey

GEORGE INNESS



George Inness

The George Inness Junior High School in Montclair is one of the few schools in the United States named for a famous painter. The citizens of Montclair chose this name as a tribute to George Inness, the first great painter of American landscape, who spent the most important years of his career in their community. Although he moved about from place to place in America and passed many years in Europe, it was in Montclair that the painter reached the full development of his artistic powers.

Inness was born in Newburgh, N. Y., in 1825 and was brought to Newark at the age of four. Almost from earliest childhood he was interested in drawing and color. When he had failed repeatedly in his subjects his father withdrew him from Newark Academy and placed him in charge of a grocery store. It took but a month to prove that the 14-year-old boy had no talents for business. His father then decided to allow him to follow his own inclinations and sent him to a local artist

for instruction in drawing. Within a few months he had learned all his master had to teach. At 16 he worked for a period in an engraving firm, and when he was about 20 studied for a short time with a French artist in New York. His chief source of instruction, however, was his own experiments and observations.

From his boyhood he had experienced a deep love of Nature, and, as he told his son later, "he thought it the most wonderful thing in the world to make with paint the things that he saw around him, clouds, trees, sunsets, and storms." His mastery of landscape painting grew out of a long and faithful study of the forms of Nature.

When he began to paint, he tended to follow in the footsteps of the pioneer landscape artists of the United States, a group known as the Hudson River School. These painters strove in the main to reproduce the local scene with photographic accuracy. But Inness, a deeply emotional man, felt Nature in addition to seeing it; thus his canvases tended to express feeling rather than to