

Part of the Story

By Amy L. Metzger Hunt / Curator, Heritage Frederick



This portrait of an unidentified man was recently donated to Heritage Frederick's collection by Charles Markell III.

came those interested in having their portraits made to come to his lodgings and review his work. Markell had plans to travel to Italy to continue his studies, but his life was tragically cut short. Like his older brother, Markell died at age 23 on Dec. 2, 1844.

Surviving today in the collection of Heritage Frederick are many works by Markell, including early watercolors, portraits and a stunning landscape of Frederick as viewed from Prospect Hill in July 1844. Two of John Markell's self-portraits are also in the collection—one completed when he was 17 years old and the other when he was 22, painted just 10 months before his death. 

Even though the man depicted in this portrait is unidentified, much is known about the painter, John Johnston Markell, one of Frederick's earliest artists of note.

The third of Samuel and Amelia Schley Markell's five children, Markell was born in 1821 and reportedly already an accomplished watercolorist by the age of 8. At 17, he was a student of renowned artist Thomas Sully in Philadelphia. His coursework with Sully was left unfinished when he returned to Frederick due to his older brother William becoming very ill and dying at just 23 years old in April 1839.

Markell then traveled the region as an itinerant painter, advertising in June of that year in Leesburg, Va., that he wel-