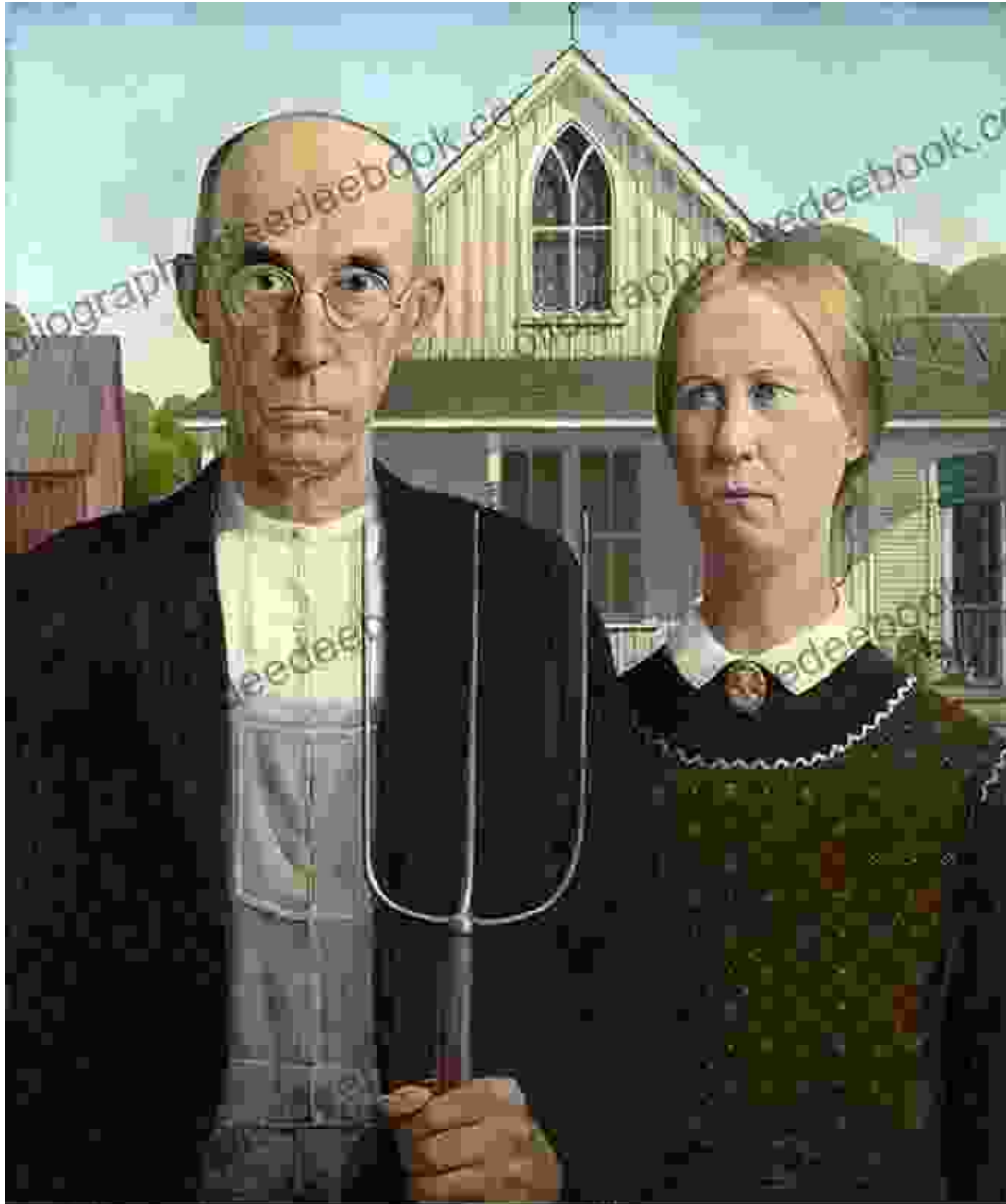


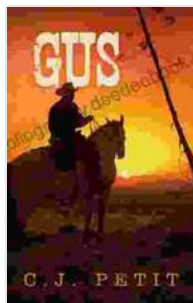
## Gus Petit: The Man Behind the Iconic "American Gothic" Painting



Grant Wood's "American Gothic" is one of the most recognizable paintings in American art. The image of a stern-faced farmer and his daughter, standing in front of their white farmhouse, has become an enduring symbol

of rural America. But who were the people depicted in the painting? And what was their connection to the artist?

The farmer is Gus Petit, a lifelong resident of the small town of Eldon, Iowa. Petit was a devout Lutheran and a pillar of his community. He was also a close friend of Wood, who lived in the neighboring town of Cedar Rapids.



### **Gus** by C.J. Petit

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

- Language : English
- File size : 3277 KB
- Text-to-Speech : Enabled
- Screen Reader : Supported
- Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
- X-Ray : Enabled
- Word Wise : Enabled
- Print length : 285 pages



In this article, we will explore the life and legacy of Gus Petit. We will learn about his humble beginnings, his close relationship with Wood, and his enduring fame as the face of "American Gothic."

### **Early Life and Education**

Gus Petit was born on January 29, 1875, in Eldon, Iowa. He was the son of French immigrants, who had come to America in search of a better life. Petit's father was a farmer, and his mother was a homemaker. Petit had four siblings: two older brothers, one older sister, and one younger sister.

Petit attended the local one-room schoolhouse until the age of 14. He then began working on his father's farm. Petit was a hard worker and quickly learned the skills of farming. He was also a devout Lutheran and attended church regularly.

In his early 20s, Petit married a local woman named Johanna. The couple had two children: a son named Jay and a daughter named Nan.

### **Relationship with Grant Wood**

Grant Wood was born in Anamosa, Iowa, in 1891. He studied art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Académie Julian in Paris. Wood was a talented painter and quickly gained recognition for his work.

In 1930, Wood was commissioned to paint a mural for the Cedar Rapids Public Library. The mural, titled "American Gothic," depicts a farmer and his daughter standing in front of their white farmhouse. Wood used his friend Gus Petit as the model for the farmer.

Petit was hesitant to pose for Wood at first. He was not sure how he would look in a painting. But Wood eventually convinced him, and Petit agreed to pose for the mural.

### **The Creation of "American Gothic"**

Wood worked on "American Gothic" for several months. He carefully chose the setting and the poses of his subjects. He also paid close attention to the details of the painting, including the farmhouse, the window, and the pitchfork.

When the mural was completed, it was unveiled to the public. The painting was an immediate success. Critics praised Wood's technical skill and his ability to capture the essence of rural America.

But not everyone was happy with the painting. Some people were offended by the stern faces of the farmer and his daughter. They felt that the painting was a negative portrayal of rural America.

Despite the controversy, "American Gothic" quickly became one of the most popular paintings in American art. It has been reproduced countless times and has been used in everything from advertisements to postage stamps.

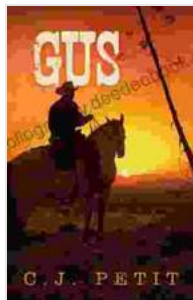
### **Later Life and Legacy**

After the success of "American Gothic," Petit became a celebrity. He was invited to speak at events and was featured in magazines and newspapers. But Petit never forgot his roots. He continued to live in Eldon and work on his farm.

Petit died on December 25, 1949, at the age of 74. He was buried in the Eldon Cemetery. Petit's legacy lives on through "American Gothic," one of the most iconic paintings in American art.

Gus Petit was a simple farmer who became an unwitting icon of American art. His stern face and pitchfork have become synonymous with rural America. But behind the image of the stern farmer was a kind and generous man who was loved by his community.

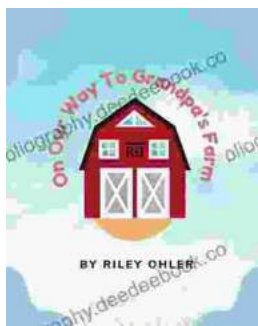
Gus Petit's story is a reminder that even the most ordinary people can have an extraordinary impact on the world. Through "American Gothic," Petit's legacy will live on for generations to come.



### Gus by C.J. Petit

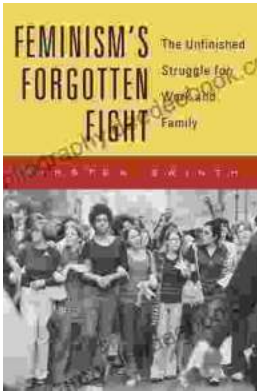
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