

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: PORTRAITURE AND POLITICS IN NEW YORK CITY,
1790-1825: STUART, VANDERLYN, TRUMBULL,
AND JARVIS

Bryan John Zygmunt, Doctor of Philosophy, 2006

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Four prominent portraitists were active in New York City between 1790 and 1825: Gilbert Stuart, John Vanderlyn, John Trumbull, and John Wesley Jarvis. Despite working in the same geographic location, these four artists received different artistic training, developed distinct aesthetics, and often worked for distinct groups of patrons.

Upon returning to the United States in 1793 Stuart quickly established himself as the preeminent portraitist in New York City. This coincided with a moment of particular political harmony in the United States, a harmony that was broken by the vitriolic debates over the ratification of the Jay Treaty in 1795. Although Vanderlyn briefly studied with Stuart, Vanderlyn received most of his training in Paris in the studio of Vincent, a prominent French neoclassicist. When Vanderlyn returned to New York City, Democratic-Republicans—politicians who wished to tie the diplomatic future of the United States to France—quickly embraced Vanderlyn’s decidedly French aesthetic. This artistic style is characterized by an emphasis on linearity, a muted use of color, and compositions in which the artist places compositional focus on the sitter rather than objects around him. Conversely, Federalists who wished to further tie America to Great Britain preferred Trumbull and his English style: the energetic brushstrokes, colorful palette, and compositions that often contained ancillary elements that allude to the sitter’s occupation, education, and wealth. In contrast to both Vanderlyn and Trumbull, Jarvis did not receive European training. As a result, he developed an aesthetic that was quickly embraced by individuals who did not wish their portrait express political alignment. Indeed, this political neutrality—both social and stylistic—was one of the reasons members of the military preferred Jarvis over his politically inclined competitors.

PORTRAITURE AND POLITICS IN NEW YORK CITY, 1790-1825: STUART,
VANDERLYN, TRUMBULL, AND JARVIS

by

Bryan John Zygmunt

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Acknowledgments

The author of any written work of this length inevitably acquires many profound debts.

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doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, Dr. Miles has been a most wonderful resource for an aspiring scholar of early-American portraiture. She freely provided compliments and gently gave critiques. I shall long remain in debt for her overwhelming kindness.

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In addition to my thanks to Ellen Miles, I would like to express gratitude to others at the Smithsonian Institution and more specifically, the National Portrait Gallery, who made my tenure there not only an exceptionally productive time, but one filled with great joy and camaraderie. In particular, Brandon Brame Forture, Pie Friendly, Sid Hart, and Amy Henderson provided both encouragement and scholarly guidance. The wonderful librarians at the National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum—Cecilia Chin and Patricia Lynagh—were able to find the most obscure of texts at nearly a moment's notice. And as she has done with so many library patrons, Pat Lynagh has broken me of the habit of placing yellow Post-it notes in books, both the library's and my own. This dissertation could not have been written without the *Catalog of American Portraits* and the kind assistance of Linda Thrift, the Administrator of the Center for

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I feel I may be among the happiest doctoral students in the history of the higher education, and a part of that contentment resides in my overall experience at the University of Maryland and within the Department of Art History and Archaeology. During my time here I have benefited from countless pedagogical conversations with several gifted instructors who have shared with me their years of wisdom and experience. In particular, I thank Professor Sharon E.J. Gerstel and Professor Marjorie Venit. Indeed, Dr. Venit's office, which was adjacent to mine on the fourth floor of the Art/Sociology building, provided the locale for many coffee-infused discussions prior to class.

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Chapter One

Introduction

New York City was the locus of great excitement in 1789. On 30 April, Chancellor Robert R. Livingston stood on the steps of Federal Hall and administered the presidential oath of office to the newly elected George Washington, thereby temporarily establishing the federal government in the Empire City. A little over six months later, Colonel John Trumbull, the aspiring history painter and Washington's former aide-de-camp, arrived in New York City after residing in London for almost six years. Although neither Washington nor the federal government remained there long—the capital relocated to Philadelphia in August 1790—John Trumbull made New York City his primary home (diplomatic adventures and business trips aside) for most of his professional life. During the next thirty-five years—until shortly before the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825—three other prolific portraitists settled in New York City.

A recent exhibition (with accompanying catalogue) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art has highlighted artistic production in New York City during the years between the opening of the Erie Canal and the initial year of the American Civil War. In the introduction to this catalogue, Philippe de Montebello stated that the period covered by the exhibit “was a time of remarkable growth, when the small and lively city of New York became a great and vibrant metropolis.”¹ Certainly, New York was becoming more vibrant and experiencing growth as the nineteenth century progressed, but I contend that this shift, slight though it may have been to start, commenced thirty-five years prior

¹ Philippe de Montebello. “Director’s Foreword” in: Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K Howat, eds. *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*. (New York: Yale University Press, 2000), vii.

to the opening of the Erie Canal when the federal government was still present and John Trumbull was preparing to set up his studio.

An analysis of the census figures is instructive.² For example, the New York City census of 1790 reported a population of 33,131. Thirty years later the population had risen to 123,707, an increase of approximately 375%. By contrast, the 1830 census shows 202,589 residents in New York City, whereas the figure thirty years later was 813,669.³ This represents an increase of slightly more than 400%. So while it can be said that the Erie Canal had profound repercussions on the economic and social development of New York City during the time preceding the Civil War, this landmark event in the state's history merely perpetuated population growth that had been in progress since Trumbull's arrival in 1789. Simply put, the increased vitality of New York can be traced to the final decade of the eighteenth century. The numerous artists who were willing to set up and maintain painting studios there demonstrate this increased sense of dynamism.

In this dissertation, I explore two different but related topics within the realm of portraiture. The first involves the political dynamic in New York City during the decades that followed the foundation of the United States of America. The second avenue I explore aims to answer the questions why and how this political dynamic affected portraitists and portraiture in New York City. To begin with the first question, the political environment in the United States was relatively amicable in the years

² Such an analysis should be interpreted with caution, as the Erie Canal opened in 1825 and the censuses were taken at the conclusion of each decade.

³ Peter D. McClelland and Richard J. Zeckhauser. *Demographic Dimensions of the New Republic: American Interregional Migration, Vital Statistics, and Manumissions, 1800-1860*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

immediately following the ratification of the Constitution between 1787 and 1788. This feeling of goodwill between the Federalist and the Antifederalists (later to be renamed the Democratic-Republicans) was to last until 1795, when the violent debates over the ratification of the Jay Treaty divided both the New York and the national political landscape. Indeed, the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans never coexisted as peacefully after 1795 as they had before. Thus, Gilbert Stuart's time in New York City from 1793-1794 was particularly fortuitous, for he alone escaped the repercussions of the vitriolic political divide that the Jay Treaty caused.

In a matter of years, Stuart's portraits would be considered uniquely English. Such an aesthetic judgment is not surprising given that Stuart trained in London under Benjamin West. It was while in London that Stuart developed his English aesthetic, and this was an artistic style from which he seldom varied for the remainder of his prolific career. His portraits contain a number of elements that visually tie his works with those talented portraitists such as Thomas Gainsborough were painting in London. These characteristics include a bright and lively palette and an energetic use of brushstrokes. In addition, Stuart, like his English counterparts, often showed sitters in a half-length format and seated before a table with elements in the composition that allude to the sitter's occupation, political leanings, or education. In the typical British fashion, Stuart frequently included a classical column or a vibrantly painted drapery in the background of his composition. The overall effect—the painterly brushstrokes, the vibrant colors, the ancillary elements—firmly align Stuart's paintings within the English school of portraiture.

Although Stuart escaped the ruptured political landscape in New York that the Jay Treaty caused, this diplomatic decision had profound artistic repercussions. John Vanderlyn is a telling example. Vanderlyn came under the generous patronage of Aaron Burr during the final decade of the eighteenth century. Although an ambitious young politician in the Democratic-Republican Party, Burr was viewed as somewhat moderate by his Federalist counterparts during the closing years of the eighteenth century. This was to change; it was because of his political machinations that he became one of the most hated of all politicians at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As a result, the majority of Federalist politicians and merchants considered Vanderlyn to be the protégé of a political enemy when the artist returned to New York from Paris in 1801. Although Vanderlyn was the most talented portraitist in New York City between 1801 and 1803 when he departed again for Paris, the Federalists entirely avoided seeking his services. Indeed, during this productive stay in New York City, Vanderlyn painted only Democratic-Republicans and friends of Burr. As Vanderlyn's relationship with Burr makes clear, who your friends were was important to a portraitist during the years surrounding 1800.

But the reason why Federalists avoided Vanderlyn cannot be simply reduced to the artist's friendship with Aaron Burr. Just as important a consideration was the aesthetic in which Vanderlyn painted. In a generation when Americans flocked to the London studio of Benjamin West, Vanderlyn instead went to Paris and received training from a then-prominent French neoclassicist, François-André Vincent. While in France, Vanderlyn further developed his already strong draftsmanship, an unsurprising benefit of the emphasis the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* placed on drawing (rather than painting). The

small pencil portraits Vanderlyn completed for the small group of Americans active in Paris during the end of the eighteenth century fully demonstrate Vanderlyn's quick absorption of the neoclassical training the *Ecole* provided.

When Vanderlyn began to paint likenesses rather than draw them, the portraits he completed look visually akin to the works he would have seen exhibited in the annual French salons. Like his French-born neoclassical counterparts, Vanderlyn's portraits exhibit a severe sense of linearity and a restricted—and often a nearly monochromatic—use of color. Whereas his English-trained counterparts would often introduce personal and political attributes as elements in their compositions—inkpots, quills, books—Vanderlyn often painted his Democratic-Republican sitters seated (or standing) before a blank background, with all compositional focus upon the sitter's head. Americans quickly recognized Vanderlyn's style of painting as one that was different from the accepted norm. Thus, the anglophile Federalists rejected Vanderlyn's art for two profound and related reasons: the artist's French aesthetic and the artist's friendship with Aaron Burr.

Whereas Vanderlyn was a strident Democratic-Republican, John Trumbull was a committed Federalist. The youngest son of the former governor of Connecticut, Trumbull enjoyed the patronage of the Federalist aristocracy while he was in New York. However, whereas the vast majority of the Federalists despised Burr, Trumbull had no benefactor in the Federalist camp against whom the Democratic-Republicans could rally. As a result, Trumbull was thought acceptable to sitters on both sides of the political fence. As I will demonstrate, Trumbull adapted his mode of representation to suit the desires of the sitter or patron. For example, Trumbull painted a city-commissioned

portrait for the New York City Hall of a former Democratic-Republican major. This portrait strongly resembles portraits Vanderlyn painted at the same time. Like Vanderlyn's works, Trumbull painted his portrait of Edward Livingston with a concise linearity and restricted color palette. In addition, Trumbull placed Livingston in an otherwise blank composition; no drapery, desk, or column is present to clutter the overall visual effect of the portrait. In short, the *Edward Livingston* portrait contains all the traits of a work from the neoclassical school.

Trumbull's typical portraits, however, are more consistent with his English training. Like Stuart, his former classmate in West's studio, Trumbull generally painted with colorful hues and tones. Second, Trumbull frequently placed his sitters in an interior setting that contains elements such as a desk filled with papers and quills, a column and pull-aside drapery. In addition, once he acquired the skill to do so, Trumbull applied paint in the English fashion by loading his brush with paint and releasing that pigment through energetic brushwork, particularly in the clothing his sitters wear and the draperies that hang in the backgrounds. The aesthetic effect is a work akin to English Romanticism in the line of artists such as Thomas Gainsborough and George Romney. It is not surprising that anglophile Federalists were attracted to Trumbull's painterly portraits that aesthetically so differed from those he completed in a neoclassical vein.

In contrast to Trumbull and Vanderlyn, Gilbert Stuart and John Wesley Jarvis avoided political entanglements. Surely this was one factor in their flourishing portraiture practices. An analysis of Jarvis is particularly instructive. A perusal of his sitters, for example, shows that he painted both Federalists and Democratic-Republicans and was exceptionally popular with members of the military. Part of this popularity was

certainly due to the lack of competition: for a period of time, at least, both Trumbull and Vanderlyn were abroad. Without doubt, Jarvis's *joie de vivre* also played a role, as did his desire to concentrate on portraiture (in contrast to both Vanderlyn and Trumbull, who wished to avoid portraiture out of preference to large historical compositions). Jarvis received a large commission following the War of 1812 to paint full-length portraits of naval and army heroes for the New York City Hall. Not surprisingly, these commissions led to word-of-mouth recommendations to other soldiers and sailors who also commissioned portraits. Whereas Vanderlyn worked within the Democratic-Republican Party and Trumbull was preferred by the Federalists, it was Jarvis who became most popular in New York City with members of the military.

Whereas my first goal in this dissertation is to explore the political and aesthetic dynamic at work in New York City between 1790 and 1825, my second ambition is to explore the reasons behind those interactions. Lauro Martines wrote in *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence*, "Reading and Writing history pivot on acts of reason and imagination. With the mind's eye we try to see what happened and we reason about why."⁴ In addition to analyzing the political environment in New York City in this dissertation, I would like to add the question "how?" to Martines's suggestion of "why?" How and why did Stuart seem to hover above this political turmoil during his brief stay in New York City? How and why did Democratic-Republicans largely choose Vanderlyn? How and why did Federalists prefer Trumbull? How and why did Jarvis appeal to both sides of the political divide? The answers to

⁴ Lauro Martines, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 147.

these probing inquiries demonstrate the way in which politics and aesthetics interacted during the decades surrounding the year 1800.

To begin to answer these questions, it is important to note the differing diplomatic agendas of each of the active political parties. The Federalists, for example, wished to tie the social and economic future of the United States of America to Great Britain. In contrast, those with Democratic-Republican leanings wished to tie the future of America to France, a country that they considered America's brother in revolutionary zeal. Interestingly, the Federalists preferred a mode of representation that was British in nature, a style of painting characterized by vibrant colors, energetic brushwork, and compositions that often contained ancillary elements that alluded to the sitter's occupations or political leanings. The Democratic-Republicans preferred a neoclassical approach to portraiture, one that is signified by a restrained palette and a linearity that was influenced by the style of painting then fashionable in Paris.

Thus, because of Trumbull's political connections and his English training, patrons considered Trumbull's typical mode of portraiture to be strongly Federalist. Without doubt, the inclusion of details in the portraits, such as books, letters, inkpots and quills, speak to the Federalist ideal of deriving political leadership from the economic and social elite. Trumbull's portraits of elite Federalists clearly resemble the portraits earlier artists had painted of Britain's monarchs and aristocrats. These paintings in the Grand Manner, which Trumbull emulated both in London and New York for Federalist sitters, show sitters before extravagant interiors and vast landscapes. Luxurious draperies are pulled aside, classical columns proudly stand in a corner. This tie with European

aristocratic representations was a deliberate attempt by both the artist and the sitter to anchor American Federalists with their European, blue-blooded counterparts.

In contrast, Vanderlyn's neoclassical portraits have much in common with those he saw and studied in post-revolutionary France. In addition to the linearity and muted color scheme, these portraits also share one other key component of those from France: the (often) total lack of ancillary compositional elements commonly seen in portraits of Federalists. This complete compositional focus on the sitter, rather than props that allude to occupation and social rank, speak to the Democratic-Republican ideals of meritocracy rather than aristocracy. On the political level, the New York Democratic-Republicans attempted to secure the middle-class and yeoman vote, generally a class of people who did not have a Yale, Harvard, Princeton, or Columbia education, or an extensive manor in upstate New York. While the portraits Vanderlyn painted did not often have a public audience, this political mindset of individual achievement rather than family heritage was clearly an undercurrent in the political ideology of the Democratic-Republicans. This same aesthetic trend can be seen in portraits Trumbull painted of Democratic-Republicans during the early years of the nineteenth century. Indeed, these portraits look exceptionally similar to the portraits Vanderlyn painted during the same period of Aaron Burr and his political associates.

John Wesley Jarvis is an instructive example on the middle of the aesthetic road. Although born in England, Jarvis was the only artist of the four I discuss who received artistic training in the United States. This training—or lack thereof, as Jarvis himself would classify it—also had an effect upon his career. He developed an aesthetic that was more moderate than his more politically-inclined competition. Jarvis often painted in a

linear style, but with the free inclusion of the elements that Vanderlyn and his sitters so deliberately avoided. In addition to possessing a vibrant and engaging personality, Jarvis also remained apolitical, and it was this lack of political engagement that assisted his popularity on both sides of the political divide. Indeed, Jarvis was particularly popular with members of the Navy and Army in the years surrounding the War of 1812, a group of patrons who in theory, at least, were politically neutral.

Thus, I have two related goals in this dissertation. The first is to show the ways in which social and political structures influenced portraiture production in New York City between 1790—the year after the federal government was established in the Empire City—and 1825—several years before the opening of the Erie Canal. I explore four artists in this study, and each had a different method of working within New York City. Stuart and Jarvis were the most politically neutral, and as a result, they were the artists who most worked within various social groups and within the (politically neutral) military. In contrast, Vanderlyn and Trumbull both remained firmly entrenched on opposite sides of the vitriolic political divide. For example, given Vanderlyn's political allegiances to the Democratic-Republicans and his friendship with Aaron Burr, it is not surprising that the majority of his sitters were also Democratic-Republicans and friends with Burr.

My second important goal is more nuanced in its reading, and requires a close examination of American history, the aesthetics of the four portraitists, and the point in which those two topics intersect. It would be difficult to overestimate the importance the Jay Treaty had on the political landscape in the United States during the end of the eighteenth century, and in New York more specifically. Although the debates over the

ratification of the Jay Treaty may not have created the two-party American political system, those proceedings certainly affected how members of opposing political parties interacted. It was at the moment—the time immediately following the 1795 ratification of the Jay Treaty—that the politicization of aesthetics began. From this moment on, the anglophile Federalists almost exclusively chose to be depicted in an English style of portraiture, a style of art characterized by a florid use of color and energetic use of brushstrokes. In contrast, those who wished to steer the American ship of diplomacy to France, the Democratic-Republicans, rejected the British style preferred by their opponents and instead chose a more French mode of representation, one much more linear in nature. Linear, sparse, and muted rather than painterly, extravagant, and colorful, these neoclassically-inspired portraits indicated a political identity for the sitter, and announced deeply held political beliefs. The portraits Trumbull completed of his Federalist allies do similar political work.

Chapter Two

The Triumphal Return of Gilbert Stuart:

Portraiture Before the Political Fray

Gilbert Stuart was born in the shadow of a snuff mill outside Newport, Rhode Island, on 3 December 1755. While still a teenager, Stuart met Cosmo Alexander, a Scottish-born and Italian-trained portraitist who was traveling along the eastern seaboard of the American colonies in search of commissions. Stuart accompanied Alexander to Scotland sometime in 1771 or early 1772, and the Scotsman promptly rewarded his adventurous young apprentice by dying in August 1772. Abandoned and alone, Stuart returned to Rhode Island in the fall of 1773, but was shortly thereafter deserted again, this time by his family, which relocated to Nova Scotia in hopes of avoiding the forthcoming conflict in the American colonies. His close friend Benjamin Waterhouse also departed for London to pursue his medical studies. Upon the eve of the American Revolutionary War, Stuart found himself in a period of loneliness and despair. Although perhaps a rash decision at the time, he packed his trunks and sailed for London on 8 September 1775.

Stuart arrived in London about two months later, not yet twenty years of age. In a situation he would repeat eighteen years later when he arrived in New York City, Stuart had few preexisting social or professional contacts in London. Given such a situation, it is not surprising that he was unable to immediately acquire portrait commissions in a thriving metropolis stocked with talented portraitists. Stuart's first employment in London was not painting portraits, but as an organist at Saint Catherine's, a small parish church near Saint Paul's. The 150 pounds per annum salary was not sufficient to meet

his expenses, however, and Stuart found himself so poverty stricken that he penned desperate a letter to Benjamin West in December 1776 pleading for assistance. Stuart moved into West's fashionable home shortly thereafter and was provided with artistic instruction and the job of completing backgrounds for his instructor's large historical compositions and portraits. Stuart's 1785 portrait of William Grant—usually called *The Skater*—fully announced the artist's artistic maturity (**figure 1**). This was the precise moment when Stuart's fortunes began to rise; by the time he departed London a little over a decade later, he had ascended to as near atop the portraiture ladder as he could have ever hoped. Because of increasing debt—and perhaps because of the desire to be a larger fish in a smaller portraiture pond—Stuart accepted an invitation from an Irish nobleman and arrived in Dublin during October 1787.

Stuart spent about five and a half years in Ireland and this time constitutes an incredibly productive period of his career. Yet despite being the most fashionable portraitist in a dynamic and growing city, Stuart had his eyes upon a return to the United States so that he could paint the first president. Given this aspiration—and considering he had been away from his native land for a period approaching two decades—New York City was an ideal locale for Stuart's return. Although George Washington was living in Philadelphia, which was then the new nation's temporary capital, the few social and professional contacts Stuart knew lived in New York.

It was through these gentlemen that Stuart planned on building a reputation on the west side of the Atlantic that would help secure a letter of introduction to President Washington. While in New York, Stuart painted approximately forty sitters who were engaged in a number of political and social endeavors. Interestingly, whereas artists who

followed Stuart in New York largely worked within a particular political party, Stuart instead worked within several important social organizations, and also benefited from word-of-mouth recommendations within large, affluent families. In addition, Stuart arrived in New York at a most fortuitous time in regards to state and national politics; members of the Francophile Republican Party had not yet become averse to his British aesthetic. As a result, individuals on both sides of the then small political divide commissioned Stuart to paint their likeness. This political animosity between New York Federalists and Republicans increased following the ratification of the Jay Treaty. At that time a British “touch” implied Federalist political leanings, and a French style took on Republican connotations. By the time of the Jay Treaty, however, Stuart was in Philadelphia preparing to paint George Washington.

* * *

John Shaw and the Merchant Connection

Although he eventually sailed for New York, past scholars have assumed that Stuart’s initial desired destination was Philadelphia. This would have been a wise and prudent decision, for the federal government had recently relocated from New York to the City of Brotherly Love. Furthermore, not only was his desired subject, George Washington, in office there, but so too was the artist’s uncle, Joseph Anthony, a prospering merchant who had assisted his nephew’s introduction to Benjamin West while in London.¹

However, a tale—perhaps apocryphal—survives that states that on the verge of leaving

¹ William Dunlap. *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2 Volumes. (1834; 2 volumes in 3, New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969), 1: 199.

for Philadelphia, Stuart learned that a traveling circus would be aboard the same boat.² Deeming the situation unacceptable, Stuart opted, instead, to sail for New York City, where his only known contact was an important one, namely, John Jay, then Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. In the words of Carrie Reborá Barrett, however, “The tale that Stuart sailed from Dublin to New York to avoid the circus with ‘horses and dancing devils and little devils that was on the boat to Philadelphia may be a tall one. His trip to New York as a preamble to Philadelphia was no mistake.”³

Whereas the exact date that Gilbert Stuart departed from Ireland for New York City remains something of a mystery, there is more information and yet much speculation regarding his arrival in America. However, newspaper articles prove to be useful when attempting to pin down Stuart’s departure and arrival dates. All indications point to the fact that Stuart may have departed Ireland by the end of February 1793. He had most certainly sailed by March 19th of that year. On that date, *The Dublin Chronicle* published an item announcing, “Mr. Stewart’s quitting of this kingdom for America gives a fair opening for the abilities of Mr. Pack, who now stands unrivalled.”⁴ Although his exit cannot be accurately determined, his arrival date aboard the *Draper*, a ship owned by a New York-based merchant, can be projected with greater precision. A brief statement in the *New York Daily Advertiser* on 6 May 1793 announced the arrival of this vessel from Dublin.⁵

² Dorinda Evans. *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 53.

³ Carrie Reborá Barratt and Ellen G. Miles. *Gilbert Stuart*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 101.

⁴ *The Dublin Chronicle*, 19 March 1793.

⁵ *The Daily Advertiser*, 6 May 1793.

John Shaw owned the ship that ferried Stuart and his family across the Atlantic, and he was a merchant who seems to have obtained at least a moderate level of success in the trading business by 1793 (**figure 2**).⁶ Park notes, “He was a New York financier, a wine merchant and merchant fleet owner.”⁷ His success is indicated by the fact that he was financially able to commission two portraits from Stuart, and by his involvement in several social groups normally reserved for men of elevated social standing. With the exception of 1794, Shaw was a counselor of the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick from 1789-1795. Shaw was also active with the Mutual Assurance Company as a member of its Board of Directors from 1790-92.

Given his social and economic prominence, it should come as no surprise that Stuart painted two portraits of John Shaw while in New York. Due to the artist’s then limited social circle, Shaw was likely among Stuart’s first patrons after he returned to America. Moreover, knowing Stuart’s financial past, the anecdote told by Mason that Stuart painted Shaw in exchange for his family’s passage across the Atlantic is plausible.⁸ Trading portraits for services or goods was not an uncommon practice for Stuart. Although eventually undelivered, Stuart had agreed to paint a portrait of George Washington for Thomas Barrow, an English merchant living in New York. Barrow was

⁶ There were two John Shaws in New York at this time, and both were merchants; John Shaw, the owner of the boat on which Stuart traveled, and a John C. Shaw. In *The New York City Directory and Register*, and in newspaper articles, a distinction is clearly made between John Shaw and John C. Shaw. The former was a founding member of the Saint George’s Society, whereas the latter was of Irish decent and active with the Saint Patrick’s Society. Further, they lived upon different streets during 1793-95. See the 4 May 1793 edition of *The Daily Advertiser* for an advertisement from John C. Shaw. Also: Charles W. Bowring and Francis H. Tabor. *A History of St. George’s Society of New York From 1770 to 1913*. (New York: St. George’s Society of New York, 1913), 282. This lists John C. Shaw as a founding member of the St. George’s Society; he was a Steward from 1786-96, and Vice President from 1898-16.

⁷ Lawrence Park. *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of his Works*. 4 volumes. (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1926), 677.

⁸ George C. Mason. *The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart*. (New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, 1972 reprint of 1879 original), 254.

able to acquire for Stuart the fine English canvases and pigments that he had become accustomed to while in Great Britain, and it seems probable that such a portrait of Washington was to be a repayment for providing past painting supplies.⁹

Two of Stuart's most well known portraits from his time in New York are of George Pollock (**figure 3**) and Catherine Pollock (**figure 4**), a part of a prospering Irish-American mercantile family. The case has been made in prior scholarship that Stuart arrived in America with a letter of introduction to a pair of Irish-American merchants, George and Hugh Pollock. James Thomas Flexner wrote in 1955 that Stuart's "reputation had traveled before him, in particular to two Irish-American merchants, George and Hugh Pollock, whose sister Stuart had painted in Dublin."¹⁰ Writing in 1964, Charles Merrill Mount agreed, saying, "It is probable, too, that Stuart carried from Dublin a letter to George Pollock, Dr. Hartigan's Irish born brother-in-law."¹¹ Hartigan, a professor of anatomy at Trinity College, was married to Anne Elizabeth Pollock, the older sister of the Pollock brothers. Thus, the notion that Stuart carried a letter of introduction to either George or Hugh Pollock seems to rest on the assumption that Stuart painted their sister and brother-in-law during his time in Ireland.

However, as peripheral scholarship makes clear, it seems less and less likely that Stuart had a letter of introduction to either of the Pollock merchants active in New York. While scholars once attributed the portrait of Elizabeth Pollock Hartigan to Gilbert Stuart, John Hayes has assigned this likeness to Carl Fredrik von Breda, a Swedish-born

⁹ Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 166 & 190. The 21 June 1792 edition of *The New York Daily Gazette* contains two Thomas Barrow advertisements selling "new and elegant prints" as well as "Prepared Cloth for Portraits."

¹⁰ James Thomas Flexner. *A Great Life in Brief: Gilbert Stuart* (New York: Knopf Publishers, 1955), 101-102.

¹¹ Charles Merrill Mount. *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964), 167.

artist who worked in England between 1787-1796.¹² Furthermore, although the portrait of Dr. Hartigan at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is believed to be by Stuart, the identification of the sitter is now in doubt.¹³ Thus, while it is doubtful that Stuart carried a letter of introduction to a member of the Pollock family, it is likely that Shaw provided Stuart with an introduction to this prominent Irish, mercantile family.

There is proof that Shaw and George Pollock not only knew one another, but that they were very close acquaintances. First of all, both were Irish-American merchants engaged in Irish-American trade.¹⁴ If for no other reason, this fact alone indicates that they must have been aware of each other's activities. Furthermore, Shaw served as a director of the Mutual Assurance Company from 1790-92, and George Pollock seems to have been his successor from 1793-1795.¹⁵ In addition, it is clear that Shaw also must have known Hugh, Carlile, and George Pollock through an Irish organization that is now referred to as The Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. All four were among the sixty-three founding members in 1784.¹⁶ It is obvious that Shaw must have been very

¹² John Hayes. *British Paintings of the Sixteenth Through Nineteenth Centuries*. (Washington, D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 24-27.

¹³ Ellen G. Miles. *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 179-183.

¹⁴ On Friday, 10 May 1793 there was an advertisement in *The New York Daily Gazette* announcing that George and Hugh Pollock were selling "Irish Linens" and "a few Pipes of Port Wine." The same issue announced "A general assortment of Linen, Just arrived in the Ship Draper, from Dublin. They will be sold on reasonable terms for cash, produce, or notes at short date, by John Shaw. Who has for sale as usual, Maderra, Sherry, Port and Lisbon Wines, in any quantity. Also, Porter and Brown Stout, Spirits, Brandy, Geneva, Teas, Sugar, &c. &c."

¹⁵ This information is deduced through an examination of the city directories for New York City. See: *The New-York Directory, and Register, For 1790*. (New York: Hodge, Allen, and Campbell, 1790), 131. William Duncan. *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1791*. (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1791), 27. William Duncan. *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1792*. (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1792), 191. William Duncan. *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1793*. (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1793), 210. William Duncan. *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1794*. (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1794), 247. William Duncan. *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1795*. (New York: T. and J. Swords, 1795), 289.

¹⁶ Richard C. Murphy and Lawrence J. Mannion, *The History of the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in the City of New York 1784 to 1955* (New York: Published for the Society, 1962), 535-537.

familiar with George Pollock as early as 1785, for they were among the six named counselors of the Society.¹⁷

Aside from the obvious social and business ties that George Pollock and John Shaw shared, they were practically neighbors during Stuart's time in New York City. In 1793, Shaw resided at 213 Water Street and Pollock diagonally across at 210 Water Street.¹⁸ Both men had changed addresses before the 1794 publishing of *The New-York Directory and Register*, but were still living within a short distance from one another; Shaw was located at 85 Water Street and Pollock at 91 Water Street.¹⁹ Thus, no further evidence is needed to prove that John Shaw and George Pollock not only knew of one another, but that they were, in fact, close acquaintances; Shaw was likely the key link between Stuart and the prosperous Pollock family.

Whatever the case may have been, the introduction to George Pollock was an extremely profitable encounter for Stuart. George Pollock was the son of John Pollock of Newry, Ireland, and although his exact arrival date in America has not been determined, it seems unlikely that he came to America prior to turning eighteen in 1780. Parish records show that he married Catherine Yates on 17 March 1787 at Trinity Church in New York City. This fact suggests that Pollock probably came to New York at sometime between 1780 and 1784, when he was among the founding members of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. Upon arrival, he began to work with his two brothers, Carlile and Hugh, both of whom were established importers and shipping underwriters in the city. By 1793,

¹⁷ Murphy and Mannion, *Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick*, 530. Shaw was a counselor in the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick from 1785-1787, 1789-1792 and 1794-1796. George was a counselor from 1785-1786 and president during 1796. Carlile was a counselor from 1789-1796. *Ibid.*, 524, 530-31.

¹⁸ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1793*, 136, 173.

¹⁹ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1794*, 166, 209.

the separate mercantile families of Yateses and Pollocks were extensively interwoven. As mentioned above, George Pollock had married Catherine Yates in 1787. The Yates and Pollock families were further interwoven when George's older brother Carlile married Catherine's sister Sophia. With this in mind, it comes as no surprise that Stuart was commissioned to paint portraits of three members of the Yates family. These include Richard Yates (**figure 5**) and his wife Catherine Brass Yates (**figure 6**), and Richard's brother, Lawrence Reid Yates (**figure 7**).

Richard Yates, the father of Catherine and Sophia, must have arrived in New York from England before 1757, for that is the year he married Catherine Brass. Over the years, Yates gained a respectable position within the New York community. By 1768, he had become a member of the Chamber of Commerce. Later, at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he was elected to serve on the Committee of One Hundred, a group comprising local economic and political leaders who planned to take control of the city during the disorder. His brother, Lawrence Reid Yates, joined him in the trade business as a junior partner in 1792. Together, the Yateses were active in trade with Jamaica, exchanging flour, bread, crackers and other staples for rum, ginger, coffee and sugar.²⁰ George Pollock joined his father-in-law as junior partner after Lawrence Reid Yates's death in 1796.

Stuart was certainly thankful for Shaw's introduction to the Pollocks, and by extension, to the Yates family. The Yates family also resided on Water Street in 1793 and 1794, and lived just a few doors down from Shaw and Pollock. During his time in New York, Stuart painted George Pollock, his wife Catherine, her parents Richard and

²⁰ Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*, 192.

Catherine Brass Yates, and Richard's brother, Lawrence Reid Yates. One member of this extended family was particularly thankful for Shaw's introduction of Stuart. On 2 August 1794 Stuart wrote a letter of introduction to his Philadelphia uncle, Joseph Anthony, on behalf of Hugh Pollock. Less than a year later, Hugh Pollock married Anthony's daughter Martha. Thus, less than two years after meeting the Pollock and Yates families through John Shaw, Stuart was related to all of them (although distantly) through marriage.

The portrait Stuart painted of Henry Cruger demonstrates that the artist's relationship with the Yates and Pollock families was far reaching (**figure 8**). Cruger is an interesting example within Stuart's New York *oeuvre*. Although a native New Yorker who matriculated at King's College, Cruger departed for Bristol in 1757 to join his father's British mercantile enterprises. In all, he spent over thirty years in England and served in several political capacities, including as a member of the House of Commons, and as the mayor of Bristol in 1781. Cruger returned with his family to his native New York in 1790, and joined his brother Nicholas in a prosperous exporting business.

Cruger was intimately acquainted with the Yates and Pollock families no later than 1795, for it was in that year that Lawrence Reid Yates married Cruger's daughter, Matilda. Thus, it seems likely that a member of the extended mercantile family introduced Cruger to Stuart.²¹ The resulting portrait—which Cruger shipped back to England—shows the merchant seated at a table looking directly at the viewer. Cruger rests his ungloved right hand on top of some papers laid upon the table; a quill pen and

²¹ The National Gallery of Art owns a portrait of Matilda Cruger Yates that was once attributed to Stuart. Although such an attribution is now in question, it is possible that it is a later replica after a now lost Stuart original. See: Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*, 367-368.

book can also be seen towards the left edge of the portrait. Stuart painted Cruger's visage with the usual felicity. In contrast to several New-York portraits, however, Stuart put forth a great effort into the depiction of the sitter's attire and on the ancillary elements upon the table. Rather than be shown as a merchant at work—as Richard Yates was shown, for example—Cruger chose instead to be depicted in extravagant political regalia. He wears the ceremonial attire of his position of Lord Mayor of Bristol, an ensemble that includes a red mink-lined robe and long leather gloves accented with golden embroidery.

Interestingly, the same sense of compositional finish cannot be seen in the *William Bayard* portrait (**figure 9**). Indeed, this portrait is both typical of Stuart's likenesses of prominent merchants, but also unique among the artist's New York paintings. In the small mercantile community in New York, William Bayard was better known and more prosperous than most.²² In fact, Bayard may have become aware of Stuart through Daniel McCormick, another prosperous merchant and neighbor on Wall Street whom Stuart painted in New York.²³ Like the other merchants Stuart painted—McCormick, Pollock, Shaw, the Yateses, among others—Bayard has been shown seated at a table with tools indicative of his trade placed before him. As will be demonstrated, such elements also often appear in the portraits Stuart and Trumbull painted of prominent Federalist politicians. The portraits of Robert R. Livingston and John Jay immediately

²² Although Bayard was likely introduced to Stuart through one of his merchant associates such as Yates or Pollock, there is a possibility that the introduction came through Jay. Bayard married Elizabeth Cornell Bayard, whose sister married Matthew Clarkson, a Revolutionary War veteran who was related to Jay through marriage. Stuart also painted Elizabeth Cornell Bayard while in New York; the portrait remains in a private collection.

²³ McCormick was close friends with both John Shaw and George Pollock, and served with both when president of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. In 1794 and 1795, Bayard lived at 49 Wall Street, McCormick several doors down at 57 Wall Street. See: Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1794*, 12, 117. Also: Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1795*, 15, 135.

come to mind. However, the *Bayard* portrait is singular among Stuart's New York compositions. While Stuart painted the sitter's face with a great deal of finish, it was not uncommon for him to paint clothing with a great deal of virtuosity. However, an examination of Bayard's green jacket and inkpots upon the desk shows that Stuart employed a loose and sketchy brushwork. "While these elements define the painting as unresolved, Stuart's virtuosic finish of the figure of Bayard seems to require nothing else."²⁴ Such an "unresolved" compositional decision was more acceptable for a prospering merchant than a dignified politician.

The ways in which Shaw influenced Stuart's patronage does not end with the portraits the Pollock and Yates families commissioned. The commission for one final portrait, that of Mrs. James Arden, can be traced through John Shaw and George Pollock (**figure 10**). Although now a historically obscure figure, James Arden was a prominent merchant in New York during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Park writes that Arden acquired considerable wealth as an East India merchant. Elizabeth Deane, his future wife, came to America from Ireland with her parents in 1763 at the age of about six. Arden and Deane were joined in marriage ten years later in New York City.²⁵ Although men dominated Stuart's New York patronage, Elizabeth Deane Arden stands as one of the ten women Stuart painted there.

At first glance it seems that James Arden would have been somewhat isolated from the Yates, Pollock, and Shaw families. With the exception of being a merchant and thus sharing the same profession, there seems to be few direct or immediate social ties between Arden and the other merchants whom Stuart painted. Whereas the Shaw,

²⁴ Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 116.

²⁵ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 111.

Pollock, and Yates families were involved with different organizations—such as the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, the Saint George’s Society and the Mutual Assurance Company—the New York City Register does not indicate that Arden was associated with comparable social organizations. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Arden knew both John Shaw and George Pollock. According to the New York City Directory, Arden resided at 33 Water Street from 1789-91.²⁶ While not exactly next door to John Shaw, who lived at 213 Water Street, it was, at the very least, on the same street. When Arden relocated in 1792, he moved to 210 Water Street, which was very close indeed to John Shaw, who remained a door down at 213 Water Street.²⁷ Although Arden moved the following year to 51 King Street, it is certain that he and his Irish wife became acquainted with their immediate neighbor, who was also a merchant.²⁸ Perhaps not coincidentally, George Pollock moved into the very house that Arden vacated in 1793. Considering all these factors, James Arden must have known both John Shaw and George Pollock, and Arden’s commissioning Stuart was almost certainly arranged through these parallel social and commercial channels.

Past Stuart scholars—such as Mason, Flexner, and Mount—believed that Gilbert Stuart painted Dr. Hartigan and his wife Betsy Pollock Hartigan during his sojourn in Ireland. However, it is now evident that Stuart did not paint Betsy Pollock Hartigan at all. Further, although the painting at the National Gallery of Art is attributed to Stuart, the identification of the sitter as Dr. Hartigan is now in doubt. It therefore seems logical

²⁶ *The New-York Directory, and Register, for the Year 1789*. (New York: Hodge, Allen and Campbell, 1789), 109. *The New-York Directory, and Register, For the Year 1790*, 6.

William Duncan. *The New-York Directory, and Register, For the Year 1791*, 7.

²⁷ William Duncan, *The New-York Directory, and Register, For the Year 1792*, 6.

²⁸ William Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1793*, 5.

that Stuart did not carry a letter of introduction to Betsy Pollock Hartigan's brothers George, Hugh, and Carlile Pollock, as was once thought, but rather met them through John Shaw, another Irish merchant active in New York City when Stuart returned to America on 6 May 1793. The evidence that Shaw knew the Pollocks seems overwhelming, as Shaw and several members of the Pollock family were active with the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick and the Mutual Assurance Company. Accordingly, we can deduce that Stuart's commissions from both the Pollock and Yates families evolved through his relationship with Shaw, the owner of the ship that returned Stuart to America. Moreover, Shaw and George Pollock likely knew James Arden, another New York-based merchant. Stuart's patronage by all these individuals certainly came through these connections with Shaw. Even though Stuart did not meet John Shaw until the artist arrived in New York, the prominent merchant certainly provided Stuart with several commissions that quickly helped to establish his reputation and enhance his income on this side of the Atlantic.

The Family and Circle of John Jay

In retrospect, one can see that two main groups assisted Stuart's patronage in New York. The first of these was a group of merchants that largely developed because of Stuart's association with John Shaw. John Jay was very much at the head of the second group, a collection of patrons that consists of family, friends, and political associates. The name John Jay is not one easily recognized by Americans today. His image does not grace American currency; his picture seldom hangs on schoolroom walls. The first full-length study of his life in over seventy years was published in 2005, yet it failed to capture the

interest of Americans, as had the slightly earlier biographies of other Founding Fathers such as John Adams and Alexander Hamilton.²⁹ Whereas Jay “was eclipsed by Adams as a revolutionary legislator, by Jefferson as an author of revolutionary justifications, by Franklin as a diplomat, by Madison as a constitution-maker, by Washington as an executive, by Hamilton as a party leader, and by Marshall as a chief justice,” it would be difficult to overstate Jay’s social and political importance within the United States during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, or his overall contributions to revolutionary America.³⁰ As Stuart’s success in New York was so tied to Jay’s connections and family, it is pertinent to examine the politician’s life and career up until Stuart’s second return to America.

Jay was born into a prosperous family; his father was a wealthy merchant of Huguenot origins, and his mother was a daughter of Jacobus Van Cortland. Jay studied at King’s College (now Columbia University) and graduated in 1764 at the age of nineteen. Shortly after being admitted to the bar in 1768, Jay formed a close professional partnership with Robert R. Livingston, a former college classmate and close friend. Together they represented both Tory and Whig clients, which was somewhat unusual for New York attorneys working in a country on the verge of a civil war. Jay and Livingston remained associated together (to varying degrees of civility) throughout the remainder of their political careers. Their relationship rapidly evolved from being merely professional, for they soon became related through marriage. Robert R. Livingston probably introduced Jay to his future wife, Sarah Livingston, during the winter of 1772-3. Jay obviously married into a politically powerful family in 1774; Sarah was the daughter of

²⁹ Walter Stahr. *John Jay: Founding Father* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2005).

³⁰ *American National Biography*, s.v. “Jay, John.”

William Livingston, the governor of New Jersey, and Robert R. Livingston was the patron of one of New York's most powerful families.

Jay began a public career shortly after his marriage, and this career extended until 1801. He served as secretary to the Royal Commission to determine the boundary between New York and Canada in 1773. One year later he was a member of the first Continental Congress that met in Philadelphia on 5 September 1774. Robert R. Livingston and Jay served together on the constitutional drafting committee for the Provincial Congress of New York during 1776-1777.³¹ Shortly thereafter, Jay was elected to the position of chief justice of the New York Supreme Court and Livingston was elected to the position of chancellor.³² Jay, joined by Livingston, was elected to serve in the sixth Continental Congress during 1779, and, in fact, was elected president. During this time in congress he resigned his position as chief justice of the New York Supreme Court. He then resigned the presidency of the Continental Congress during October 1779 and accepted a position as Minister to Spain.

Jay remained in Spain for a period approaching three years, and was neither exceptionally happy nor completely successful in achieving a commercial treaty with the Spanish government. He eventually joined Benjamin Franklin in Paris during June 1782 to work upon a treaty ending the American Revolutionary War. John Adams and Henry Laurens (whom Jay had defeated for the presidency in the Continental Congress in 1779) soon joined the pair in Paris. The preliminary Treaty of Paris was completed on 30 November 1782. Jay arrived in London on 15 October 1783, less than one year later, and

³¹ Alfred F. Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York: The origins 1763-97* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 17.

³² Young, *Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 22.

was the guest of William Bingham, an American merchant and political figure who had been an occasional correspondent with Jay since at least 1779.³³ When Jay departed is less clear, although he did write a letter on 24 December 1793 to Kitty Livingston, his sister-in-law and close friend, which sheds some light on the matter. He wrote: “I propose next week to return to London, and from thence make the best of my way to France.”³⁴ Jay’s health wavered slightly while in England; he stated to Gouverneur Morris after returning to Paris that, “On my arrival [in London] a dysentery and fever brought me low, and a sore throat, which still plagues me, succeeded. Bath has done me good, for it removed the pain in my breast, which has almost been constant for eighteen months.”³⁵

Jay met Benjamin West during his brief time in England. Despite Jay’s poor health, he went on a guided tour West gave of Buckingham Palace on 8 November 1783.³⁶ Adams, Franklin, Laurens and William Temple Franklin, grandson of Benjamin Franklin, who served as secretary to the American commissioners during the course of the Treaty of Paris, soon joined Jay in London. West took all of their likenesses for a historical group portrait. What survives is a small and unfinished composition, which was originally intended to be a study for a large-scale picture. Entitled *The Signing of the*

³³Robert C. Alberts. *The Golden Voyage: The Life and Times of William Bingham*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989),123. See also: *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, ed. Henry P. Johnston, 4 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1971), 3:96. Jay wrote a letter to Charles Thomson dated 14 November 1783 and wrote, “I have been here a month, and well only two days.” If “a month” is interpreted as 28 days, his arrival would have been 15 October. See also: *John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary, Unpublished Papers 1745-1780*, ed. Richard B. Morris. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), 547.

³⁴*John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary*, 101.

³⁵*John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary*, 112.

³⁶*John Jay, the Winning of the Peace*, 620.

*Preliminary Treaty of Peace in 1782 (figure 11).*³⁷ The right side of the composition contains ample space for the British representative Richard Oswald and Caleb Whiteford, his secretary. West's inability to acquire a likeness of Oswald was the cause for the eventual abandonment of the ambitious project.³⁸

Although Stuart left Benjamin West's London studio to pursue a solo career by the time Jay had arrived in London, Stuart was presumably a constant visitor and guest in the studio of his former teacher. The Stuart-West relationship was a healthy one, for Stuart painted three different portraits of West after opening his own portraiture practice in 1782. Furthermore, even if Stuart was not physically around West's painting room that often, he certainly had a rising reputation within the social circles of London by the time Jay visited Bingham in London. Although Park dates the first portrait of John Jay as 1782, it was initially begun during the winter of 1783-84 when Jay was first in London (**figure 12**). Whereas whether Stuart actually painted two portraits of Jay while in London is not certain, Jay certainly paid Stuart for two. Writing to Stuart on 22 February 1784, Jay wrote: "In the Price I paid you for my Picture and the Copy <to be paid> <made> of it for Mr. Bingham, I find <on Recall> <that> no Provision was made for the Frame of the latter. To supply that omission I now <therefore enclose> subjoin an order in your Favor on Messrs. Smith, Wright and Gray for five Guineas. In the choice of the Frame be pleased to discover and be directed by Mr. Bingham's Fancy."³⁹

³⁷ Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 105.

³⁸ Von Erffa and Staley, *Paintings of Benjamin West*, 105. See also: John Jay Ide. *The Portraits of John Jay*. (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1938), 52.

³⁹ *John Jay: The Winning of the Peace*, 696.

Jay left Europe less than six months after visiting London. A letter he wrote to the President of Congress on 25 July 1784 provides accurate information about his departure from Europe and his return to New York. According to Jay, he and his family eventually departed from Paris on 16 May 1784 and left Dover for America aboard the ship *Edward* on the first day of June. The Jay family landed in New York on 24 June, after being abroad in Europe for over four and a half years.⁴⁰ Thereafter, the Continental Congress appointed Jay the secretary for foreign affairs on 21 December 1784, a position he more or less held until Thomas Jefferson became the first Secretary of State on 22 March 1790. It was during this time in office that Jay—who was joined by James Madison—contributed several essays to *The Federalist*, Alexander Hamilton’s opus in support of the United States Constitution. Furthermore, although Jay had been involved with national politics before being sent abroad, his correspondence from this time bears the stamp that he had become an immensely powerful and influential political figure.

Perhaps as a reward for his past political loyalty, the recently elected President Washington nominated Jay to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on 26 September 1789. Robert R. Livingston also actively sought this same appointment. Other members of the Livingston family also sought out federal appointments from Washington, but without success. Livingston had been Chancellor of New York since 1786, but his jealousy of Jay was seemingly growing by the day. As Alfred Young has noted, “the Chancellor would have been satisfied to become Chief Justice, Secretary of State, or Secretary of Treasury, probably in that order of preference.”⁴¹ However, as these positions went to Jay, Jefferson, and Hamilton, a broad divide was created between Jay

⁴⁰ *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 3:128.

⁴¹ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 159.

and Livingston. The extent of this schism can be seen by Livingston's supporting George Clinton over John Jay in the 1792 gubernatorial race. This was the first time since 1783 that Livingston had supported the incumbent Clinton for governor, and was probably due to the fact that "the prospect of John Jay as governor, an office a notch higher than chancellor, made him livid with jealousy."⁴²

Thus, by the time that Gilbert Stuart sought out John Jay in 1793, Jay was politically well traveled. Since his own return to America in 1784, Jay had been the first secretary for foreign affairs, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and an unsuccessful Federal candidate for governor in the state of New York. He was also the only person currently in New York whom Stuart had painted while abroad, and Stuart used this fact to gain access to Jay's circle of family, friends, and political associates. While the case may be made that Stuart was somewhat aligned to the Federalist Party, a more accurate description is that the vast majority of his patronage was directly tied to the people closely associated with Jay. Without doubt, Stuart was able to hover above the increasing political fray.

Park believed that Stuart completed four portraits of John Jay while in New York. The first portrait shows Jay in his judicial robes (**figure 13**). In a letter dated 2 August 1794, Sarah Livingston Jay wrote to her husband, who at the time was in London working upon what would later be called the Jay Treaty: "Would you believe that Stuart has not yet sent me your picture? I call on him often. I have not hesitated telling him that it is in his power to contribute infinitely to my gratification, by indulging me with your portrait; he has at length resumed the pencil, and your nephew has been sitting with

⁴² Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 290. For a comprehensive look at the 1792 New York gubernatorial race see Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 277-303.

your robe for him; it is now nearly done, and is your very self.”⁴³ In a second portrait, Jay does not wear his judicial robes, but rather a black coat and gray waistcoat; this likeness was delivered to Mrs. Jay on 5 December 1794.⁴⁴ Jay gave a replica of this portrait to Stephen Van Rensselaer in 1795 while Van Rensselaer was Lieutenant Governor of New York and Jay was serving as Governor.⁴⁵ Jay gave a final replica to his oldest son, Peter Augustus Jay.⁴⁶

When speaking of John Jay, two groups of Stuart patrons can be distinguished. Member of Jay’s family constituted the first group, although it must be said that all related more to his wife, Sarah Livingston Jay, than to Jay himself. The second group, which will be covered afterwards, involved personal friends, social acquaintances, and political allies of Jay. The patrons in the first group included Robert R. Livingston, his mother Margaret Beekman Livingston, and Rachel Cox Stevens. The members of this group were more tied to Robert R. Livingston than to Jay, although it is certain that Livingston became aware of Stuart through the artist’s association with Jay. Matthew Clarkson is somewhat more difficult to classify. Although a cousin to Sarah Livingston, Clarkson was more associated with Jay and his circle of friends than were others such as

⁴³ Quoted in Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 180. This version is owned by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C, and is # 437 in Park’s cataloging system. On 15 November 1794, Mrs. Jay informed her husband, “Just as I laid aside my pen to take tea, Mr. Stuart arrived with your picture.”

Quoted in Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 184.

⁴⁴ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 437. This portrait is # 438 in Park’s cataloging system and was purchased by the State Department on 25 January 1986. Sarah Booth Conroy, “State Buys Stuart,” *The Washington Post*, 27 January 1986, sec. B1, col. 1 & sec. B3, col.1.

⁴⁵ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrate Descriptive List of His Works*, 438. This is Park #439, and is currently owned by The Brook, New York.

⁴⁶ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 439. This is Park #440. Interestingly, the portrait of Jay wearing his judicial robes shows a receding hairline, whereas the three replicas (#438-440) show a more full head of hair. The heads of these portraits are more similar to the portrait that Stuart had begun in London during 1783-84.

Robert R. Livingston's mother or Rachel Cox Stevens. Thus, I discuss Matthew Clarkson with other friends of Jay.

It is highly probable that Chancellor Robert R. Livingston was the first member of Jay's family whom Stuart painted (**figure 14**). As previously mentioned, Livingston and Jay were classmates at King's College during the mid-1760s. They quickly formed a close friendship that seems to have peaked when they practiced law together from 1768-70. Jay became related to Livingston through marriage when Jay wed Sarah Livingston in 1774. About this time both Jay and Robert R. Livingston became politically active. Although their relationship was often strained due to Livingston's jealous feelings for the immediate political success of Jay—for example, Livingston was envious of Jay's election as President of the Continental Congress in 1778—the two carried on a regular correspondence while Jay was abroad in Spain, France, and England. However, by the time of Stuart's arrival in New York, the divide between Supreme Court Chief Justice Jay and Chancellor Livingston was widening and deepening from merely a personal rivalry into a political one. Whereas both were once loyal Federalists, Livingston had become more of a political opponent to Jay than an ally by 1793.⁴⁷ Further, Chancellor Livingston was one of the largest slave owners in New York, whereas Jay was the President of the Manumission Society as early as 1786.⁴⁸

It comes as no surprise that Stuart painted Jay shortly after that artist's arrival in New York. However, it is uncertain how Stuart came to meet Robert R. Livingston considering the social and political distance that existed between the two politicians. Jay

⁴⁷ For information on the Jay-Livingston political rivalry, see Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 290-93, 386.

⁴⁸ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 252-253. See also: Noah Webster. *The New York Directory for 1786*. (New York: H.J. Sachs & Company, 1786), 94.

and Livingston were not likely on friendly enough terms at this time to exchange ideas regarding portrait painters. However, because of their political positions, Jay and Livingston had many mutual associates who would have relayed to Livingston the fact that Stuart had painted Jay. Knowing the overall jealous tendencies of Livingston, one likely thought is that he would not have wanted to be out done yet again by Jay. In order to keep up with someone he had been attempting to keep up with for nearly twenty years, Livingston may have thought that he had to have his likeness taken by the same artist. Stuart also painted four different portraits of Robert R. Livingston's mother, Margaret Beekman Livingston (**figure 15**).

A brief comparison of the *Livingston* and *Jay* portraits is enlightening, for such an analysis demonstrates the ways in which aesthetics had not yet become completely politicized during Stuart's time in New York. Stuart painted Livingston in what has been aptly described as a "highly traditional three-quarters-turn-at-the-desk pose."⁴⁹ The aristocratic politician sits on a red mahogany chair, and before a table draped with a matching scarlet tablecloth. Two books stand upright on the table, which also supports a quill and the inkpot from which it extends. He holds a sheet of paper with the words "Council of Revision" written on the top, and an additional piece of paper with "Constitution of S.N.Y" penned on it can be seen underneath his left hand. Such compositional elements allude to the sitter's prominent political position within New York and the early Federal government. Livingston wears a white shirt underneath a simple black coat; a light dusting of powder from Livingston's hair can be seen on his shoulders. Livingston's direct gaze is mimicked by the ways in which Stuart painted the

⁴⁹ Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 118.

portrait. Rather than employ a loose, energetic brushstroke with a vibrant use of color, Stuart instead painted Livingston in a restrained and republican manner.

Such an aesthetic is in contrast to the *John Jay* portrait Stuart painted in 1794. Like Livingston, Jay sits at a table covered with a red tablecloth. However, the quill, inkpot, and paper present in the *Livingston* portrait have been replaced with a single book that has been placed spine down on the table. Whereas Livingston was shown wearing a restrained black coat and white shirt, Jay instead wears the academic robe Harvard College presented him in 1790 as part of an honorary doctor of laws degree.⁵⁰ Stuart painted Jay's face with the typical fidelity, but in contrast, completed his black, red, and white robes in a vigorous and lively manner. Indeed, a side-by-side comparison of the clothing in the *Jay* and *Livingston* portraits is compelling. Livingston's attire is somber, plain, and subdued, whereas Jay's is ostentatious, extravagant, and florid. Clearly, the politicizing of aesthetics was underway even during the years leading to the Jay Treaty and was caused by the increasing unrest between the Federalist and the Democratic-Republicans. This aesthetic break would grow as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed.

Stuart's relationship with Chancellor Livingston provided another commission. The artist also painted Rachael Cox Stevens, the young wife of John Stevens, an engineer and inventor from New Jersey (**figure 16**). John Stevens had several siblings, one of whom was Mary Stevens, the eventual bride of Robert R. Livingston. John Stevens and

⁵⁰ Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 120.

Robert R. Livingston were essentially next-door neighbors in 1793 and 1794.⁵¹ Himself a 1768 graduate of King's College, Stevens inherited his father's vast estate in 1792. This inheritance allowed him to donate time to mechanical experiments involving steam engines and locomotion. One of his influential backers was his brother-in-law, Robert R. Livingston. The two had a good working relationship at the time of Livingston's departure for France in 1801. As John Stevens was not a major political figure and his social circle was relatively small compared to those of Jay and Livingston, it seems likely that Stevens met Gilbert Stuart through his brother-in-law.

Even though Jay and Livingston were not on the friendliest of terms in 1793, it can be assumed that Livingston became aware of Stuart's talents through his portraits of Jay. This was probably the inspiration for Livingston to hire Stuart to paint his own likeness and for his commissioning Stuart to paint his mother. Although John Stevens was a minor political figure—he was at one time a customs officer for the port of New York—his meeting of Stuart must have come through his brother-in-law.⁵² Whereas the patronage trail with Rachael Cox Stevens probably ended there, the connection with Robert R. Livingston, just like the connection with John Jay, continued to prove profitable for Stuart during his entire stay in New York.

John Jay had been deeply involved in local, then national, and even international politics long before Stuart sailed into New York harbor on 6 May 1793. He had practiced law for several years and had married into an extremely wealthy and influential family.

⁵¹ John Stevens lived at 4 Broadway in 1793, and Livingston resided at 3 Broadway. The following year, Livingston lived at 5 Broadway and Stevens at 7 Broadway. Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, for the Year 1793*, 91 & 146.

Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, for the Year 1794*, 112 & 177.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 240.

He had served the Continental Congress as a delegate and later as president. He had been appointed to posts in Spain and Paris, and had also served in London. After returning to America, he had been Secretary of Foreign Affairs, a nominee for governor of New York, and had been appointed the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Jay had met and served with many prominent social and political figures during the course of his public career. Jay's social circle was immense, as was his involvement in different social organizations. Thus, although Jay was only one of two people whom Gilbert Stuart knew upon his return to America, the artist could not have picked a better acquaintance: The vast majority of Stuart's patrons in New York knew John Jay, politically, socially, or in both contexts.

One of John Jay's closest associates, a man Stuart also painted after arriving in New York, was Egbert Benson, Jay's former classmate at King's College (**figure 17**). Benson graduated in 1765—one year later than Jay and Robert R. Livingston—and had a long and distinguished public career. Admitted to the bar in January 1769, Benson's legal career got off to a slow start that caused him to relocate from New York City to Red Hook in Dutchess County in 1772. Five years later, however, Benson was elected attorney general of New York; this was at the same time that Jay was elected Chief Justice of the New York Supreme Court.⁵³ Politically, Benson was a fierce Federalist and a supporter of Jay and Hamilton, yet remained on friendly terms with Governor Clinton. He served as attorney general from 1777-1788; afterwards in 1789 he was elected to the House of Representatives from New York. After four years there he accepted an appointment to the New York Supreme Court that extended from 1794-1802.

⁵³ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 22.

Benson's relationship with Jay obviously continued well after they were classmates together. For example, writing from Spain in 1780, Jay asked rhetorically, "When shall we again, by a cheerful fire, or under a shady tree, recapitulate our juvenile pursuits or pleasures, or look back on the extensive field of politics that we once have trodden?"⁵⁴ Later that same year, Jay again wrote to Benson and asked him to "make a visit to my father and send me a minute account of his health, and that of the family."⁵⁵ The affectionate correspondence that the two shared while Jay was abroad speaks volumes about their friendship. This closeness was so deep, in fact, that Jay wrote again to Benson, this time from France, to announce the birth of his daughter and to inform his friend that he was the godfather.⁵⁶

Stuart painted Egbert Benson twice: once while in New York and again many years later in Boston. Knowing the extent of Jay's friendship with Benson, it should come as no surprise that Stuart's New York portrait of Benson was commissioned and owned by Jay. The provenance in Park and the Christie's auction guide match; it was owned initially by John Jay and was passed along to his descendants.⁵⁷ It was purchased by the State Department on 25 January 1987 for \$77,000.⁵⁸ A previously mentioned portrait of John Jay was purchased by the State Department at the same auction. Thus, not only did Benson meet Stuart through John Jay, but the painting was paid for and was owned by Jay himself.

⁵⁴ *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 1:363.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:447.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:75.

⁵⁷ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 146-47.

⁵⁸ Sarah Booth Conroy. "State Buys Stuart," *The Washington Post*, 27 January 1986, sec. B1, col. 1 & B3, col. 1.

Another King's College associate of Jay whom Stuart painted was William Samuel Johnson (**figure 18**). John Jay was the second youngest of ten children born to Peter and Mary Jay. Of the seven who survived into adulthood, four were plagued with either emotional or physical handicaps. The first-born son, Augustus Jay, was mentally retarded, and was unable to read or write despite being tutored by Samuel Johnson, the father of Jay's future patron.⁵⁹ Samuel Johnson became the first president of King's College in 1754 and continued in that position until 1763. Jay matriculated at King's College on 29 August 1760. Considering the relatively small size of the institution, Jay probably knew the college's president while engaged in his studies. It must have been a fond relationship, for Jay and Johnson carried on a warm correspondence long after Jay's graduation. Johnson moved to Stratford, Connecticut, after retiring from King's College and began to live with his son, William Samuel Johnson. From his son's home, the elder Johnson wrote to Jay on 27 October 1763: "I should have long since have answered your kind Letter but heard you and Benson intended me a visit in the Vacation, which I should have been very glad of, and since that, I have been much engaged either in Company, riding, or writing. It was with much pleasure that I received your letter and the Account you gave me of the good Condition of things at the College since I left it..."⁶⁰

The younger Johnson, William Samuel, had a successful political life, and, also, an educational career that in many ways emulated his father's. A 1744 graduate of Yale, he returned home to briefly study theology with his father. William Smith, Jr., a Yale classmate, urged Johnson to study law, and he opened his law practice in 1749. Johnson later enrolled in King's College and obtained an advanced degree in 1761. A career in

⁵⁹ *John Jay: The Making of a Revolutionary Unpublished Papers 1745-1780*, 33.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

politics followed thereafter; Johnson was elected to serve the Continental Congress in 1784 and was named a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787. That same year he was elected as the first president of Columbia College, as King's College had been recently renamed. A strong Federalist and supporter of Alexander Hamilton, Johnson was elected as one of the first senators from Connecticut in 1788, and remained in office until he resigned in 1791 in order to focus all his attentions on his position as president of Columbia.⁶¹

The next question to consider is whether Doctor William Samuel Johnson knew John Jay and could Jay have introduced him to Stuart? After a review of the available information, the answer is a resounding "yes." First of all, Jay enrolled at King's College during the fall of 1760. William Samuel Johnson was a 1761 graduate of King's College. In light of the fact that the two were in school together for a year and the total enrollment of King's College was less than fifty, Jay likely met William Samuel Johnson early in his academic career.⁶² Park writes that, "Doctor Johnson was consulted by eminent men not only upon legal and political affairs, but also upon literary, philosophical and ecclesiastical matters."⁶³ The fact that "Dr. William Samuel Johnson" appeared on the Jay social invitation list during the years 1787 and 1788 further indicates that Johnson was a frequent guest within Jay's Broadway home.⁶⁴ Jay and Johnson certainly

⁶¹ Biographical information on William Samuel Johnson taken from: Elizabeth P. McCaughey. *From Loyalist to Founding Father: The Political Odyssey of William Samuel Johnson*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). George C. Groce, Jr. *William Samuel Johnson: A Maker of the Constitution*. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967). Franklin Bowditch Dexter. *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History, October, 1701-May, 1745*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1885), 762-764.

⁶² *Samuel Johnson, President of King's College: His Career and Writings*, eds. Herbert Schneider and Carol Schneider, 4 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 4:245-48.

⁶³ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 444.

⁶⁴ Rufus Wilmot Griswold. *The Republican Court*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1867), 98-99.

exchanged professional advice. In 1793, Columbia College was beginning a school of law and was in search of its first faculty member. The lawyer Columbia College hired was James Kent, a former clerk within the law office of Egbert Benson. It seems unlikely that Johnson would have approved such a decision without first speaking with Jay, who was not only Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, but one of the regents for the state of New York.⁶⁵ Park suggests that the portrait of Dr. Samuel William Johnson was the first portrait begun by Stuart in New York.⁶⁶ Whereas this assertion is uncertain, what is more significant is that Johnson was a close confidant of Jay. Thus, we may safely conclude that Jay was again the crucial link in Stuart's expanding chain of patronage.

Another patron who came to Stuart through Jay was Matthew Clarkson (**figure 19**). A relative through marriage, Clarkson was a distant cousin of Sarah Livingston. It was for perhaps this reason that Jay took pen in hand to write to General Benjamin Lincoln during April 1779 on behalf of Clarkson, writing:

Although I have not the honour of a personal acquaintance with you, yet I am so well informed of your character as to believe you will always be happy in leading a young soldier to glory, and to afford him that countenance and protection which a brave and generous youth seldom fails to invite. Permit me, therefore, to recommend to you Major Matthew Clarkson, who is going to place himself under your command; and be assured that you will confer an obligation on me by becoming his friend and his general.⁶⁷

However distant at first, Clarkson and Jay became close friends as the years passed.

Again inspired to take pen to paper for Clarkson, Jay wrote to President Washington on 13 March 1791 requesting that Clarkson be appointed to the position of marshal after the previous person (and future Stuart patron in New York), Colonel William S. Smith, was

⁶⁵ McCaughey, *From Loyalist to Founding Father*, 257.

⁶⁶ Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 444.

⁶⁷ *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 1:195.

promoted to supervisor of the district. Describing Clarkson, Jay wrote, “I think him one of the most pure and virtuous men I know.”⁶⁸ The supporting words from Jay obviously influenced Washington; Clarkson was listed as marshal for the New York district, serving under James Duane.⁶⁹ The connection between Clarkson and Jay only grew stronger in time. Jay’s oldest son, Peter Augustus Jay, married Clarkson’s oldest daughter.⁷⁰

Clarkson was an extremely busy New Yorker after retiring from active military service in 1788. Although involved in the New York political scene, Clarkson’s greatest contributions were civic in nature. De Witt Clinton, who defeated Clarkson for a seat in the United States Senate in 1802, said, “Whenever a charitable or public-spirited institution was about to be established Clarkson’s presence was deemed essential. His sanction became a passport to public approbation.”⁷¹ Both he and Jay were committed abolitionists; Jay was the president of the Society of Promoting the Manumission of Slaves as late as 1789. Although Chief Justice Jay did not serve as president the following year—Alexander Hamilton held this position—Matthew Clarkson was elected vice president.⁷² In 1791, Clarkson began his tenure as president of the Society, a post he held for several years.⁷³

In addition, Clarkson was also active in political and social organizations during Stuart’s time in New York. The voters of the city and county of New York elected Clarkson to one term in the state assembly from 1789 to 1790. He also served in the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3:412.

⁶⁹ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, for the Year 1792*, 166.

⁷⁰ John Caldwell and Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque. *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art Volume I: A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born by 1815*. (New York: Princeton University Press, 1980), 168. This information can be deduced from subheading of related works: “Mrs. Peter A. Jay (the subject’s daughter), copy, oil on canvas, unlocated.”

⁷¹ Quoted in Caldwell & Roque, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 167-68.

⁷² Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, for the Year 1790*, 135.

⁷³ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, for the Year 1791*, 51.

State Senate from 1794 to 1795. During his time in office he worked alongside such prominent and upcoming New York politicians as Isaac Roosevelt, Stephen Van Rensselaer, and Josiah Ogden Hoffman. Clarkson was also extremely active within the Society of Cincinnati, a social group of former Revolutionary War officers. Although Clarkson had retired from military service in 1788, Stuart depicts him in the uniform of a Continental Army officer and Clarkson proudly wears the badge of the Order of Cincinnati upon his left lapel. Like other such organizations, the Society of Cincinnati proved to be a profitable organization for Stuart.

Most of Stuart's patrons in New York, such as Matthew Clarkson, were natives of the New York area. However, several clients were originally from Virginia, and two, Gabriel Manigault (**figure 20**) and his wife Margaret Izard Manigault (**figure 21**), were primarily residents of South Carolina. Ralph Izard, Margaret's father, was born in 1742, the oldest surviving son of an extremely wealthy South Carolina planter. Sent to England for formal education around 1754, Izard returned to South Carolina in 1764 after matriculating at Cambridge University. Eager to see the other colonies, Izard traveled northward, and eventually spent time in New York, where he met and married Alice Delancey in 1767. Alice Delancey was from a wealthy and politically powerful family herself; Delancey's uncle, James, was a former New York chief justice and lieutenant governor, and John Delancey joined Richard Yates as a member of the Group of One Hundred that guided New York during 1775.⁷⁴ Ralph Izard and his wife went to the European continent during 1769 and visited London in 1771. While again in Rome

⁷⁴ From London, Ralph Izard wrote John Delancey "I am very glad to find your name on the list of the committee of New-York and beg leave to congratulate you on it." Ralph Izard. *Correspondence of Mr. Ralph Izard, of South Carolina, From the Year 1774 to 1804; with a Short Memoir*. (New York: Charles S. Francis & Co., 1844), 105.

during 1774, the Izards commissioned John Singleton Copley to paint an ambitious double portrait.⁷⁵ Although they returned to London the following year, the Izards went to Paris when the hostilities began in the colonies. In 1777, the Continental Congress appointed Ralph Izard Commissioner to Tuscany. Izard was unable to travel to Italy for political reasons, but corresponded with Tuscan officials from his Parisian headquarters. Izard himself departed Paris for America during 1780, but his wife and family stayed behind and did not rejoin him until 1783.

It is not surprising that the Izards and Jays became friends while both families were abroad in Paris. This is well demonstrated by a letter Mrs. Jay wrote to Mrs. Izard on 5 September 1782. Explaining that she was attending the opera that evening with the Marquis de la Fayette, Sarah Livingston Jay wished to offer a seat in her carriage to her friend. Replying that she “supped out last night,” Alice Delancey Izard thought it wise to spend the evening at home.⁷⁶ The relationship between the Jays and Izards doubtlessly continued when both were again on American soil, with Ralph Izard serving as a United States Senator from South Carolina and Jay working as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during this same span.

Margaret Izard was one of the fourteen children born to Ralph Izard and Alice Delancey Izard. Born in 1768 before her parents went abroad together, Margaret Izard married Gabriel Manigault, a wealthy planter from Charleston, in 1785. Manigault served in the general assembly of South Carolina from 1785-94, when he resigned due to poor health. Afterwards, he and his wife spent time each year in the northern part of the

⁷⁵ For an interpretation on Copley’s double portrait of the Izards see Maurie D. McInnis. “Cultural Politics, Colonial Crisis, and Ancient Metaphor in John Singleton Copley’s *Mr. And Mrs. Ralph Izard*” in *Winterthur Portfolio* 34 (Summer/Autumn 1999), 85-108.

⁷⁶ *The Public Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 2:336

United States.⁷⁷ Margaret Izard Manigault was about fourteen years old while her parents (and the Jays, whom she undoubtedly knew) were living in Paris. With this in mind, it is not surprising that she and her husband were social guests of the Jays while visiting New York during the winter and spring of 1794.

Whereas the Manigault's relationship with the Jay family was social, Jay's relationship with Stephen Van Rensselaer was far more political in nature. Stuart painted three portraits of Van Rensselaer, and the proof is overwhelming that Van Rensselaer came to know Stuart through Jay (**figure 22**). Two of Stuart's portraits of Van Rensselaer are now located in Washington, D.C. A completed portrait is at the National Gallery of Art, while an unfinished portrait is at the State Department. Stephen Van Rensselaer was the original owner of the completed portrait; it passed to his son William Patterson Van Rensselaer through the Van Rensselaer family until Kiliaen Van Rensselaer finally sold it to Thomas B. Clarke in 1919. Kiliaen Van Rensselaer refers to the third version of this painting when writing to Clarke on 13 February 1919: "Colonel John Jay, who has a duplicate of this portrait, told my Father-in-Law, Mr. Thomas L. Manson, that an ancestor of his was an intimate friend of General Van Rensselaer's, and he admired this portrait so much that General Van Rensselaer had Stuart paint a duplicate of it, which he presented to Colonel Jay's ancestor."⁷⁸ The Albany Institute of History and Art in New York currently own this "duplicate" portrait. At one time, Stephen Van Rensselaer owned the Stuart portrait of John Jay that is currently at The Brook Club in

⁷⁷ *American National Biography*, s.v. "Gabriel Manigault."

⁷⁸ Letter from Kiliaen Van Rensselaer to Thomas B. Clarke, 13 February 1919. From the National Gallery of Art.

New York. The exchange of portraits between two individuals was an act that speaks to a friendship that surely extended beyond that of political courtesy.

Stephen Van Rensselaer is a fascinating figure within New York politics. Born in 1764, he was born into an immensely wealthy family and was the eighth and final patroon of his family's vast estate in Rensselaer and Albany counties. Van Rensselaer graduated from Harvard in 1782, and married Margaret Schuyler, daughter of General Philip Schuyler the following year. The marriage was politically practical; both Schuyler and Van Rensselaer were Federalists and supporters of Hamilton. In fact, Schuyler's older daughter, Elizabeth, married Alexander Hamilton in 1780. Van Rensselaer was elected to serve in the state assembly in 1789 at the precocious age of 25. While his service in the state assembly has been classified as "undistinguished," he was later elected to the state senate.⁷⁹ After four years, he again moved up in the New York political world by serving as lieutenant governor to the newly elected governor, John Jay.

However, Stephen Van Rensselaer and John Jay had a political relationship that went back further than 1795 when they were elected together. Governor George Clinton was up for reelection in 1792, and the Federalists had initially planned to support Aaron Burr, a moderate Antifederalist. A similar ploy had nearly elected Judge Peter Yates, another moderate Antifederalist, during the previous gubernatorial election. However, this strategy changed when Jay agreed to the nomination.⁸⁰ Later, Stephen Van Rensselaer was named as Jay's running mate. Rather than support Burr, the Federalists put their collective might against Governor Clinton upon the backs of Jay and Van Rensselaer. Although eventually unsuccessful in 1792, the pair was elected in 1795.

⁷⁹ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 282.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

Clearly, Jay and Van Rensselaer were not only political allies, but were also close enough friends to exchange portraits Stuart painted.

Cincinnatus, George, and Patrick

The Society of Cincinnati was founded on 13 May 1783 near the encampments on the Hudson River where many of the remaining regiments of the Continental Army were stationed during the closing stages of the Revolutionary War. According to the founding members, the purpose of the organization was:

To perpetuate, therefore, as well the remembrance of this vast event, as the mutual friendships which have been formed under the pressure of common danger, and, in many instances, cemented by the blood of the parties, the officers of the American Army do hereby, in the most solemn manner, associate, constitute and combine themselves into one Society of Friends, to endure as long as they shall endure, or any of their eldest male posterity, and in failure thereof, the collateral branches who may be judged worthy of becoming its supporters and members.⁸¹

The Society of Cincinnati was described in 1932 by Bryce Metcalf, Vice President-General, as “a military, benevolent, social and non-political Order.”⁸² This final point is worth emphasizing, for members of the Society of Cincinnati could be found in both Federalist and Antifederalist camps. Membership guidelines were specific: “All the officers of the American army, as well as those who have resigned with honor, after three years’ service in the capacity of officers, or who have been deranged by the resolution of Congress upon the several reforms of the army, as those who shall have continued to the end of the war, have the right to become parties to this institution.”⁸³ Honorary memberships, however, were not unheard of, yet reserved for “men in the respective

⁸¹ Quoted in: Bryce Metcalf. *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of the Cincinnati*. (Strasburg, Virginia: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1938), 7.

⁸² *Ibid.*, i.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.

States eminent for their abilities and patriotism.”⁸⁴ Membership cost one month’s salary, and was generally hereditary; the first-born son of each member was also eligible. One exception was in the case of honorary members, whose sons were not eligible to later join the organization.

This fraternal organization was one that its members were extremely proud to be a part of, and it was not unusual to observe members wearing their Society of Cincinnati medal on their lapel in public.⁸⁵ As the introductory quotation above demonstrates, the members of this organization were extremely close to one another, and their camaraderie certainly went beyond their time spent together during chapter meetings, extending into society in general, and even into the political world. Gilbert Stuart’s financial situation benefited greatly from this camaraderie, not only from the Society of Cincinnati, but also from other fraternal organizations such as the Saint George’s Society and the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. Further, the patronage circle established within these societies expanded to include individuals with whom Stuart would not have normally had contact.

In particular, the Society of Cincinnati provided a great deal of employment for the artist. In total, he painted seven founding members of this organization while in New York: Aaron Burr , Matthew Clarkson, Peter Gansvoort, Horatio Gates, Aquila Giles, William Stephens Smith, and Joseph Williams.⁸⁶ However, it is not enough to merely point out that Stuart painted members of the same organization; first, I show who Stuart became acquainted with through the society of Cincinnati. Second, I note other ways that

⁸⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁵ Although the design of the medal varied slightly, an excellent reproduction of a Society of Cincinnati medal can be found in: Lewis Sorley. *Warfare in 18th Century America: A Showcase of the Society of Cincinnati Collections*. (Washington, D.C.: Society of the Cincinnati, 1994), 35.

⁸⁶ Metcalf, *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of the Cincinnati*. Robert R. Livingston was later elected an honorary member.

Stuart could have become acquainted with members of this organization. Several of these men, most notably Burr and Clarkson, were active within political and social spheres in New York. Others, such as Williams and Giles, were at most only minor political figures. Finally, several others were not even from the state of New York, and thus their social circles in that state may not have initially extended far beyond their fraternal brothers within the Society of Cincinnati.

Clarkson and Burr, the two members of the Society of Cincinnati with the largest social circles, most likely met Stuart through other means and recommended him to their friends in the Society; the artist must have somehow been introduced within this large organization. Burr was perhaps the most politically influential member of the Society of Cincinnati whom Stuart painted in New York (**figure 23**). Stuart painted two portraits for Aaron Burr; one of Burr himself, and an additional portrait of his young daughter, Theodosia (**figure 24**). In a letter dated 5 January 1795, Burr wrote to his daughter, “Your picture is really like you; still it does not quite please me. It has a pensive sentimental air, that of a love-sick maid. Stuart has probably meant to anticipate what you may be at sixteen, but even in that I think he has missed it.”⁸⁷

Aaron Burr is an interesting figure within the scope of Stuart’s patronage. Burr graduated from the College of New Jersey in 1772 and began to study law in 1774. His studies were interrupted by military conflict; Burr joined the Continental Army that was besieging Boston in 1775. He ascended to the rank of lieutenant colonel during the Revolutionary War, and served under Benedict Arnold and George Washington, neither of whom he liked, as well as Major General Israel Putnam. Burr resigned his

⁸⁷ Quoted in: Milton Lomask. *Aaron Burr: The Years from Princeton to Vice President, 1756–1805*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 1979), 196.

commission in 1779 because of poor health, and resumed his legal studies the following year. He was admitted to the New York bar in 1782 and shortly thereafter began his legal career. Despite his past troubles with Washington, Burr seemed not to have hesitated joining the Society of Cincinnati in 1783, knowing that Washington was to be the first president; Burr was among the founding members from New York.⁸⁸

Burr began his political career in 1784 when he was first elected to the New York state assembly. Governor George Clinton appointed Burr to the post of New York attorney general in 1789. Whereas the majority of Stuart's New York patrons were members of the Federalist Party (an unsurprising fact, given that New York was a center of Federalist activity during the final quarter of the eighteenth century), Burr was a clear Antifederalist, although more moderate than many during Stuart's time in New York. Although Burr enjoyed occasional and conditional support from the Federalist Party, there was an overall sense of distrust towards him, particularly by Alexander Hamilton, whose father-in-law, Phillip Schuyler, Burr defeated for a seat in the United States Senate in 1791.⁸⁹ For a brief time in 1792 Burr felt the warmth of Federalist support during the gubernatorial election. This was in an effort by the Federalists to eject the incumbent Clinton by aligning themselves with a more moderate Antifederalist. This support, however, ended when John Jay entered the election.

Even a quick inspection of the *Aaron Burr* portrait reveals it to be different from the vast majority of portraits Stuart painted while in New York. A typical portrait of a politician or merchant during the 1790s shows the sitter seated at a desk, often before a curtain-draped background, and with skillfully arranged ancillary elements that indicate

⁸⁸ Metcalf, *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of Cincinnati*, 128.

⁸⁹ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 187-92.

social position or occupation. The 1794 portrait of John Jay wearing his academic robe is but one example. Collectively, the portrait announces Jay's political and social prominence. This is partially achieved through the ambitious 50" x 40" size of the composition. The portrait of Aaron Burr contrasts with Stuart's norm, and is not surprising considering Burr and Jay were in opposing political camps. Although Stuart has retained the loosely painted style in Burr's attire, the similarities end there. Rather than sit before a desk topped with quill, inkpots, and papers, Burr instead either stands or sits before a blank background; the composition is devoid of anything other than the sitter. A smaller 30" x 25" canvas, Stuart has painted the portrait in such a manner as to spotlight Burr's face, which lends an oval feeling to the portrait despite its rectangular shape.

Although these may at first appear to be unimportant compositional decisions, they do, in fact, indicate an important aesthetic shift that would reverberate during the early decades of the nineteenth century. In a matter of a decade, the energetic brushstrokes Stuart utilized in Jay's robes would be interpreted as a Federalist aesthetic. In turn, a portrait of a sitter without compositional distractions would become a French, Republican aesthetic. The compositional ploy of showing the sitter seated at a desk was to become more open to interpretation. Whereas some Republicans chose such a composition—Vanderlyn's 1804 portrait of Robert R. Livingston is a well-known example—few Federalist decided in favor of a portrait before a blank background. Ever the Federalist, Jay himself would violently react against the French aesthetic in 1802, when the Common Council of New York asked him to sit for Vanderlyn, the French-trained protégé of Burr.

Aaron Burr is unusual in terms of Stuart's Society of Cincinnati patrons. Burr was well connected in the political and social spheres in New York, and, like Matthew Clarkson, it seems that he may have helped bring Stuart to the Society himself, rather than directly learning of Stuart through the Society. In addition to his political positions, Burr was also socially active in New York with other prominent citizens who were also patrons of Stuart. Burr was a governor of the New-York Hospital beginning in 1789.⁹⁰ During the next five years he worked in this capacity with Robert R. Livingston, Isaac Roosevelt, and Matthew Clarkson, all of whom Stuart painted.⁹¹ Further, despite the political barrier that would so severely divide them fifteen years later (as will be shown in the discussion of the commission Vanderlyn was awarded for a full-length portrait of Jay), Burr was at least on cordial terms with John Jay during the 1780s and early 1790s. Burr's name is upon Jay's guest list for 1787 and 1788.⁹² Rather than learning of Stuart through his associations with the Society of Cincinnati, whose members were not as socially connected as he, like Matthew Clarkson, Burr probably learned of Stuart through auxiliary sources and then introduced the artist to his fellow members.

One of Burr's classmates at the College of New Jersey, whom Stuart also painted in New York, was William Stephens Smith, a graduate in 1774 (**figure 25**). He began to study law shortly after his graduation, but quit that pursuit to join the Continental Army. During the course of his military career, he served with Generals John Sullivan and Lafayette, and afterward was an aide-de-camp to General Washington. Smith became the personal secretary to John Adams in London after the Revolutionary War, and later

⁹⁰ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register for the Year 1789*, 121.

⁹¹ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register for the Year 1792*, 207.

⁹² Griswold, *The Republican Court*, 98-99.

married Adams's daughter. Returning to America in 1788, Smith was one of the Masters of Ceremony at Washington's first inauguration, and was later appointed by Washington as Marshal of the district of New York, a position that Matthew Clarkson later resumed in 1791.

Smith commissioned two portraits from Stuart. It is stylistically impossible to determine which was completed first, and in typical Stuart fashion, neither is dated. Smith wears fashionable civilian attire in one portrait, while the second portrait shows the sitter wearing his Continental Army uniform. Not surprisingly, Smith wears his Society of Cincinnati medal on the left lapel of his Army uniform. An active member, Smith served at different times as president, vice president, and secretary of the New York chapter.⁹³ Although to a lesser degree than Clarkson and Burr, Smith was also involved in New York politics, and was well connected through family and the relationships forged during the Revolutionary War. In spite of this minor political activity, it seems likely that Smith met Stuart through a fellow member of the Society of Cincinnati.

Much like Clarkson and Smith, Aquila Giles wears his Continental Army uniform in the portrait Stuart painted (**figure 26**). Giles was an aide-de-camp to General Arthur St. Clair during the Revolutionary War.⁹⁴ His uniform complies with the Militia Act of 9 March 1793, which stated that regimental officers such as Giles were to wear a uniform consisting of a dark blue coat with red facings and yellow buttons.⁹⁵ As another founding member of the Society of Cincinnati, Giles wears the Society's medal on his left lapel. Socially speaking, there is little trace of Aquila Giles within *The New-York Directory and*

⁹³ Metcalf, *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of Cincinnati*, 16-17.

⁹⁴ Metcalf, *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of Cincinnati*, 136, 274.

⁹⁵ Letter from Albert W. Haarman to Ellen G. Miles, NPG. 23 October 1978.

Register for the years when Stuart was in New York. Although he did not live in New York City as did the vast majority of Stuart's patrons, Giles did serve his home district of King's County in the state assembly from 1788-92. His only other significant political activity was his position as Secretary for King's County to the Agricultural Society during 1793-94. With the exception of Robert R. Livingston, whose duty as Chancellor required him to act as president, there is not another Stuart patron to be found within the Agricultural Society.⁹⁶ Further, he was evidently not especially familiar with John Jay, as there is no trace of his name within Jay's correspondence, or were they actively engaged in similar social activities. Thus, the probability is high that Giles became acquainted with Stuart through another member of the Society of Cincinnati.

A pair of brothers, Peter (**figure 27**) and Leonard Gansevoort (**figure 28**), also paid Stuart to paint their likeness. Peter Gansevoort began his military career as a major in 1775 and ascended to the rank of colonel during November 1776. The following spring he was appointed to the command of Fort Stanwix (later named Fort Schuyler). He retired from active line duty on 1 January 1781, but was appointed as major general of the militia in the western district on 8 October 1793.⁹⁷ Peter Gansevoort is shown wearing a general's star upon his epaulettes in the portrait Stuart painted. The uniform Peter Gansevoort wears is similar to the one Matthew Clarkson wore in his Stuart-painted portrait, and not surprisingly, the Society of Cincinnati medal hangs from Gansevoort's left lapel.

⁹⁶ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register for the Year 1793*, 217-218. Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register for the Year 1794*, 254.

⁹⁷ Metcalf, *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of Cincinnati*, 133. Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works*, 335-36.

Whereas Peter took the military path through life, and Leonard himself was briefly commissioned a lieutenant colonel of a cavalry regiment, the younger Gansevoort was more active in the political world.⁹⁸ During 1776, Leonard Gansevoort and John Jay were both members of the Committee for Detecting Conspiracies, a group created “for the express purpose of enquiring into, detecting and defeating all conspiracies which may be formed in this State, against the liberties of America.”⁹⁹ Although Leonard Gansevoort and Jay served together on this committee for approximately four and a half months, they had little correspondence afterwards.¹⁰⁰ One notable exception is a letter that Jay sent to Gansevoort stating that, although flattered, he wished to decline the Federalist nomination for the upcoming gubernatorial election.¹⁰¹ Leonard was later elected to the Continental Congress in 1787, and also won a seat within the New York state senate in 1791. However, aside from these political positions, there is little trace of Leonard (or his brother Peter, for that matter) within social clubs in New York at this time. Whereas there is a small chance that Leonard Gansevoort met Stuart through Jay, a far more likely scenario is that his older brother Peter, an active member in the Society of Cincinnati, met Stuart first through another member in this organization.

Horatio Gates is an interesting figure within the Revolutionary War and the Society of Cincinnati (**figure 29**). He was born in England in 1728 and began to serve in the English army while still a teenager. He was stationed in Germany and later within North America during the French-Indian War, during which he was badly injured. Gates

⁹⁸ *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971*. (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1971), 989.

⁹⁹ *Journals of the Provincial Congress, Provincial Convention, Committee of Safety and Council of Safety of the State of New-York* (Albany: Published for the State, 1942), 1:638.

¹⁰⁰ *John Jay The Making of a Revolutionary*, 331.

¹⁰¹ *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 1:140.

later served with General Robert Monckton during a successful expedition against Martinique, and was responsible with returning the victorious news to London. Gates settled in London after the conclusion of the war, where his skills in military administration and leading men in battle were not fully appreciated. This, in addition to his inability to get promoted beyond the rank of major, was the primary reason that Gates sold his military commission in 1772 and departed for Berkley Country, Virginia, where he began a new life as a middle-class farmer on his estate.¹⁰²

His existence there was quiet and peaceful until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. A former officer within the British Army, Gates began to voice his support for the Whigs, although he may have done so only because he believed it to be more personally advantageous to support them rather than the Tories.¹⁰³ Excited to have a line officer with extensive combat experience, Congress commissioned Gates as an adjunct general within the Continental Army on 17 June 1775. “Gates’s service during the Revolution was marked by some real successes, one bitter defeat, and an inordinate number of squabbles and controversies.”¹⁰⁴ The best documented of these controversies was an alleged plot by his subordinates to replace George Washington with Horatio Gates as commander-in-chief. Although ultimately exonerated of such charges, Gates was left with a permanent aversion to Washington, who seems to have used these imaginary allegations against Gates.

Despite the apparent animosity between Gates and Washington, and Horatio Gates became the first vice president of the Society of Cincinnati, indication that the

¹⁰² For biographical information on Gates, see: Samuel White Patterson. *Horatio Gates: Defender of American Liberties*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

¹⁰³ Caldwell and Roque, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 172.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Society of Cincinnati was not so much an organization devoted to the canonization of George Washington as some claimed, but rather an association of Revolutionary War officers.¹⁰⁵ Gates moved to New York from his estate in Virginia shortly after his second marriage in 1786. Although he served a term in the state legislature from 1800-01, there is little record of Gates either politically or socially in New York during the preceding years. Furthermore, he and John Jay were on less than cordial terms during this time and Jay—who believed that the Society of Cincinnati elevated Washington to king-like status—was among the most outspoken opponents of the organization.¹⁰⁶

Although he retired from active service in 1783, Gates is shown wearing a uniform similar to the one worn by Matthew Clarkson. Like Clarkson, Gates proudly exhibits the Society of Cincinnati medal on his left lapel. Gates also wears a medal that was struck in his honor after the victory at Saratoga in 1777.¹⁰⁷ Ebenezer Stevens, the original owner, close friend and fellow founding member of the Society of Cincinnati, may have commissioned Gates's portrait. This portrait was then passed on to Stevens's eldest son, Horatio Gates Stevens. Once again, the Society of Cincinnati appears to have been the connecting link between Stuart and another patron.

The final person affiliated with the Society of Cincinnati whom Stuart painted while in New York was Joseph Williams (**figure 30**). Whereas the vast majority of the members of the Society of Cincinnati were shown wearing their Continental Army uniforms—Aaron Burr is the only other member who wore civilian attire rather than his army uniform—Williams decided against his army uniform and instead is shown wearing

¹⁰⁵ Metcalf, *Original Members and Other Officers Eligible to the Society of Cincinnati*, 9. Gates served as vice president from 1784-87 and Washington was president from 1783-1800.

¹⁰⁶ Samuel White Patterson, *Horatio Gates*, 354-55.

¹⁰⁷ Caldwell and Roque, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum*, 172.

a dark blue coat and a white shirt. Williams was politically active in Roxbury, Massachusetts, both before and after the Revolutionary War, and was one of the founding members of the Massachusetts chapter of the Society of Cincinnati. Hence, Williams probably contacted fellow members of the Society of Cincinnati during his time in New York. Given his lack of political and social connections in New York, Williams's commissioning Stuart probably came through recommendations from members in this fraternal organization.¹⁰⁸

The spreading of the word among members of the Society of Cincinnati was extremely profitable for Stuart. However, this was not the only such association through which the artist worked. Stuart also painted members of the Saint George's Society and the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. In each instance, Stuart had an entry into the group, and it seems highly likely that this connection was from a merchant whom he had become acquainted with shortly after his arrival in New York.

The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick was discussed when linking John Shaw with George Pollock. However, these two were not the only members of the St. Patrick's Society whom Stuart painted while in New York. A merchant by trade, Daniel McCormick was the first president of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick and one of Stuart's patrons in New York. He obviously would have been very familiar with both Pollock and Shaw by 1793, for all three were members of the society when it was

¹⁰⁸ "Family tradition has it that the Williams family were friends of the artist" *Antiques*, April 1969. p. 528. Although this may be possible—Stuart painted additional portraits of the Williams family—it is somewhat doubtful that the Williams family was acquainted with Stuart prior to his time in New York. If such a friendship existed, it is probable that it grew from commissions, and not that the commissions grew from a pre-existing friendship.

founded in 1784. His mercantile associates were also vast; William Bayard was his next-door neighbor on Wall Street during part of Stuart's stay in New York.

McCormick was extremely wealthy by 1793, but he remains difficult to politically classify.¹⁰⁹ Although a Federalist and a backer of Hamilton, he was an intimate friend to the Antifederalist governor of New York, George Clinton. In fact, McCormick supported Clinton rather than Jay during the 1792 New York gubernatorial election.¹¹⁰ McCormick was probably not on intimate terms with Jay, and there is no trace of McCormick within the tomes of Jay's correspondence.

John Burke, a former president of the Society of the Friendly Sons of Patrick, found McCormick's portrait in a private collection in London during 1948. The omission of this work by Park is therefore understandable, as it had yet to be discovered. It was, however, included among Stuart's other American portraits by Mount in 1964. Furthermore, the reported provenance seems to fit. McCormick likely requested his brother Hugh to send this portrait to their cousin, William McCormick. From him it descended to Gerald Piers Dumas. During 1962 it was in the possession of Dumas's widow. The Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick has attempted unsuccessfully to acquire McCormick's portrait since its discovery in 1948.¹¹¹ It remains in a private collection in Great Britain.

Two of Stuart's New York patrons, William Seton and Charles Wilkes, were directly affiliated with the New York City Bank (**figure 31**). In fact, Wilkes replaced

¹⁰⁹ McCormick's wealth is indicated by being the second-largest single shareholder in the New York City Bank. Henry W. Domett. *A History of the Bank of New York: 1784-1886*. (New York, Greenwood Press, 1969), 136-139.

¹¹⁰ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 213.

¹¹¹ Murphy and Mannion, *The History of the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick*, 213.

Seton as cashier of the bank in June 1794. Since both men were in positions at the bank that brought them into contact with many prominent politicians, and they were also active in the Saint George's Society, they very likely met Stuart through a contact within that organization. This contact must have been either Richard or Lawrence Yates, whom Stuart painted shortly after his arrival in New York.

William Seton, a merchant by trade, became involved with the Bank of New York upon its organization in 1784. Like Richard Yates, Seton was also a member of the Committee of One Hundred that guided New York through the turbulent events of the Revolution. His mercantile business was a prosperous one, and he established the firm of Seton, Maitland & Co. during the late 1780s.¹¹² During this time he became acquainted with the Saint George's Society, a fraternal organization founded to lend aid to Englishmen. Although the organization dates to 1770, it took on its present form in 1786; this was the year when Seton became a member. In fact, Seton was the organization's first vice president, serving from 1786-91.¹¹³ Seton obviously knew the Yates brothers by 1786. Like Seton, Lawrence Reid Yates was a founding member, and his brother Richard Yates joined in 1789.

Again, *The New-York Directory and Register* provides interesting information regarding Stuart and his patrons. Stuart was first listed in 1794, with his address as 63 Stone Street.¹¹⁴ Perhaps not by coincidence, the address for Seton, Maitland & Co.,

¹¹² William M. MacBean. *Biographical Register of Saint Andrew's Society of the State of New York*. (New York: Printed for the Society, 1922), 118-19. Seton is interesting, for he was active in the Saint Andrew's Society from 1765-72, and afterwards put increased effort into the Saint George's Society.

¹¹³ Bowring & Tabor, *A History of St. George's Society*, 21, 282.

¹¹⁴ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, for the Year 1794*, 178. The listing reads: "Steward, Gilbert, limner, 63 Stone do."

William Seton's business, was next door at 61 Stone Street.¹¹⁵ One can speculate that Stuart met Seton through Richard or Lawrence Reid Yates, fellow members of Saint George's Society. Seton not only commissioned a portrait after this meeting, but also helped Stuart acquire housing next door to his business.

Stuart painted several members of the Saint George's Society, several of whom have already been discussed. Although their connection to Stuart can be easily explained through other means, the Yates brothers, Aquila Giles, and Horatio Gates were also members of this particular organization. One additional member was Charles Wilkes, Seton's successor as cashier at the Bank of New York. Like Seton, Wilkes was not elected to political office in New York, and although he would have come in contact with political figures such as John Jay, the link with Stuart likely seems to have come through Seton, a former employee at the Bank of New York, and fellow member of the Saint George's Society.

As shown, Gilbert Stuart had patrons who were in several different social organizations, and like all good portrait painters, he gained the vast majority of his commissions through word-of-mouth recommendations. One happy customer in the Society of Cincinnati would recommend Stuart to another within the same organization. This easily accounts for Stuart's painting seven members of this particular association. Further, several of these members were neither politically nor socially active, and the Society of Cincinnati seems to have been the most plausible avenue of their introduction to the painter. Stuart also had patrons within several other organizations who were able to recommend him to acquaintances. A perfect example of this pattern is Richard and

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 166.

Lawrence Reid Yates, who had met Stuart through George Pollock, a relative through marriage. The Yateses, who were both members of the Saint George's Society, were then able to recommend Stuart to William Seton, a fellow member within the same organization. Seton, in turn, could have recommended Stuart to Charles Wilkes, another member with Saint George's Society, and Seton's successor as the cashier at the Bank of New York. Thus, Stuart's patronage can be traced through several different organizations whose members were quick to recommend the portraitist.

Loose Ends and George Washington

Whereas the vast majority of Stuart's patrons can be traced through the artist's connections through John Jay, prosperous New York merchants, and several social organizations, some patrons cannot be traced through any of these avenues. As with any business, a certain amount of "walk in" traffic is inevitable. Of Stuart's New York patrons, there are four New Yorkers and two Virginians whose link to Stuart cannot be determined; perhaps they truly were walk-up clients. Another distinct possibility, however, is that a person who remains unknown referred them to Stuart.

The four names from New York are John Campbell, Josiah Ogden Hoffman, John Jacob Astor (**figure 32**), and Isaac Roosevelt (**figure 33**). With the exception of Campbell, who has slipped through the historical cracks into obscurity, the other three all had ties to other Stuart patrons. Isaac Roosevelt, the great-grandfather of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was involved with many social groups with other patrons of Stuart,

and was also a close friend of Alexander Hamilton.¹¹⁶ The 1793 *New-York City Directory* indicates that Roosevelt was president of the New York Hospital. Also active within this group was Matthew Clarkson, Robert R. Livingston, and Aaron Burr.¹¹⁷ Aaron Burr was also an associate of John Jacob Astor, an extremely wealthy Antifederalist financier and fur trader whom Stuart painted twice during his tenure in New York City.¹¹⁸ The first portrait Stuart painted of Astor is similar to the *Burr* portrait, both in size (a rectangular 30" x 25" canvas) and in composition (an oval within a rectangle). Moreover, the portraits of Burr and Astor—two Antifederalists—share compositional similarities when compared to portraits of their Federalist counterparts. In both of their portraits, Stuart has painted Burr and Astor before a blank background without the presence of other compositional elements such as a table, desk, or column. The final New Yorker, Josiah Ogden Hoffman, was a rising legal mind in the 1790s, and was appointed to the post of attorney general in 1795 shortly after Jay was elected governor.

Cyrus Griffin (**figure 34**) and William Branch Giles (**figure 35**), both from Virginia, are the last two of Stuart's patrons whose direct ties to the artist can only be speculated. George Washington appointed Griffin a district court judge for Virginia in 1789, and Giles was a fierce Antifederalist who was first elected to Congress in 1790. Whereas both were involved with national affairs, how they came to be acquainted with Stuart cannot be determined.

¹¹⁶ Peter Collier with David Horowitz. *The Roosevelts: An American Saga*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 17.

¹¹⁷ Duncan, *The New-York Directory and Register, For the Year 1793*, 227-28.

¹¹⁸ Derek Wilson. *The Astors 1763-1992: Landscape with Millionaires*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 36-37.

Although the above six patrons remain somewhat of a mystery, the remainder of Stuart's patronage provides a great deal of information regarding the artist himself, as well as about the dynamics of New York during the final decade of the eighteenth century. As shown by *The New York Daily Advertiser*, Stuart arrived in America on 6 May 1793. He essentially had only one preexisting contact in New York: John Jay, who was then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. A contact that developed either during Stuart's journey across the Atlantic or shortly after his arrival was John Shaw, the owner of the *Draper*, the ship that carried Stuart and his family to the United States. The vast majority of Stuart's patronage extended from his association with these two men.

Although past scholars have speculated that Stuart came to New York with a letter of introduction to George Pollock, this now seems less than likely. What is certain, however, is that Pollock and Shaw knew of one another due to their mutual involvement with the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick and their respective locations on Water Street during Stuart's time in New York. Water Street, a hotbed for mercantile activity, was a profitable thoroughfare for Stuart: at one time during the 1790s John Shaw, Richard Yates, George Pollock, and James Arden all lived within a short distance of one another.

While Stuart's only contact in New York was John Jay, the artist could not have picked a better person to know. Jay, whom Stuart had painted nearly a decade before in London, was as well connected in New York as any other citizen. He married into a wealthy and powerful family, and, after returning to America himself, he became one of the leading socialites in the city. Further, being a staunch Federalist, Jay was politically allied with many prominent New Yorkers. Not surprisingly, Jay's Federalist friends made up the bulk of Stuart's patrons.

This is not to say, however, that Stuart painted only Federalists, or that he avoided painting their political rivals. The feud between the Federalists and Antifederalists was certainly increasing during the late 1780s and early 1790s, and reached a boiling point in 1795 during the congressional debates over the ratification of the Jay Treaty. Yet in spite of this growing tension, Stuart painted several prominent Antifederalists. Robert R. Livingston was one such patron, and although he was a Federalist during the spirited debates over the ratification of the Constitution, he gradually changed his political allegiances and eventually despised both Jay and the Federalist Party on the way to becoming a Republican and firm Jeffersonian.¹¹⁹ Aaron Burr, Aquila Giles, and William Branch Giles (no relation) were also outspoken Antifederalists. Furthermore, although most prominent merchants were generally aligned with the Federalist Party, John Jacob Astor was more of an Antifederalist, and in fact later became involved with Aaron Burr.¹²⁰ Further, some patrons were more “middle of the road.” For example, Daniel McCormick, although a Federalist, remained good friends with the Antifederalist governor of New York, George Clinton. What is perhaps most important is that Stuart was able to stay above the political fray, and that his English style had not yet taken on a political connotation. In less than a decade, John Trumbull’s English touch would be an aesthetic almost uniquely embraced by Federalists and avoided by their Republican counterparts. When Trumbull painted Democratic-Republicans, he did so with a decided French, neoclassical touch.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 566.

¹²⁰ Wilson, *The Astors 1763-1992*, 36-37.

As an entrepreneur, Stuart was uninterested in the political affiliation of his patrons, and instead worked in social circles in general rather than within political spheres specifically. As important, Stuart's aesthetics remained untainted in the minds of those on both sides of the growing political divide. Rather than work through political channels, it is clear that Stuart's patronage worked in several key ways, the first of which was the fortunate relationship that Stuart had with Chief Justice John Jay. Secondly was Stuart's introduction to John Shaw, the merchant who owned the ship that carried Stuart and his family across the Atlantic. Shaw was able to recommend the artist's services to other prosperous merchants. Finally, Stuart had an excellent ability to interact positively with people, and once introduced to an organization or society, he made the most of that opportunity. The Society of Cincinnati is an excellent example, for that particular organization had seven members who were patrons of Stuart while the artist was in New York.

If Stuart traveled to New York with one goal in mind—that is, to acquire a letter of introduction to George Washington—he knew that one person in particular would have been able to make that possible: John Jay. Yet, upon Stuart's departure for Philadelphia, Jay was in London hard at work on the treaty that would bear his name. Exactly when Stuart left New York for Philadelphia is unknown. However, in a letter dated 15 November 1794, Sarah Livingston Jay wrote to her husband that Stuart was to leave for Philadelphia in ten days.¹²¹ Within another letter she also reminds Jay of a promise that he had made to the artist. That this promise was very likely a letter of introduction to

¹²¹ Quoted in Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 184.

President Washington.¹²² Once established in Philadelphia, Stuart was so overcome with requests for his George Washington portraits that he welcomed the return of a talented pupil who had joined him for a short period of study while in New York. That student's name was John Vanderlyn.

¹²² Evans, *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart*, 142.

Chapter Three

John Vanderlyn and Aaron Burr:

Portraiture of the Democratic-Republicans

John Vanderlyn's fame today rests on the reputation of his history paintings. Indeed, a perusal of survey books on American art shows that when he is mentioned at all, he is considered in the context of such works as *The Death of Jane McCrea* (**figure 36**), *Marius Amid the Ruins of Carthage* (**figure 37**), and *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos* (**figure 38**). Nonetheless, through the practice of portraiture, Vanderlyn made a living as an artist. Despite the lasting reputation of *McCrea*, *Marinus*, and *Ariadne*—and his much later *The Landing of Columbus on San Salvador* (1839-46) in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol—Vanderlyn painted hundreds of portraits during a professional career that lasted more than fifty years.

Survey books also focus attention on one other facet of Vanderlyn's career: the fact that he studied in France rather than in England in a generation when English training was the norm for American artists. What scholars often neglect, or mention only in passing, is that Vanderlyn's initial time abroad was made possible through the financial generosity of Aaron Burr. These two factors—Vanderlyn's French training and Burr's patronage—had a profound effect on the artist's career and one that he could not have anticipated when he departed for Paris in 1796. While in France, he developed a style of portraiture modeled after the neoclassical one then *en vogue* in Paris. Returning to the United States in 1801, Vanderlyn brought with him a French touch that distinguished his work from the English mode practiced by artists such as Gilbert Stuart.

The early years of the nineteenth century were complicated ones regarding the American diplomatic relationship with France. Whereas the Federalists desired to develop a strong economic and diplomatic tie with Great Britain, the Democratic-Republicans wished to give the favor of American diplomacy to France. I contend that as a result of this political climate, members of the Democratic-Republicans Party preferred a French style of portraiture to the then typical English-oriented representation. Burr provided his young artistic protégé with introductions to valuable political and social associates during Vanderlyn's early stay in New York. While Burr maintained some degree of political neutrality prior to 1800, by the time Vanderlyn returned to the United States, Burr was both feared and loathed by the Federalists. As a result, there can be no doubt that Vanderlyn's association with Burr was unsatisfactory to many potential Federalist patrons who would have disagreed with Burr's politics and consequently found fault with Vanderlyn's style. Indeed, the debacle over a commission for a full-length portrait of John Jay for the New York City Hall is an excellent example of how Vanderlyn's politics and style of painting affected who was willing to sit for him.

A great deal occurred in United States during Vanderlyn's extended stay in Europe from 1803-1815. In 1803, Burr was merely a suspicious political figure. By 1804, after his 11 July duel with Alexander Hamilton, Burr was suddenly one of the most hated men in the United States. Moreover, the War of 1812 further widened the gulf between those who still wished to tie the new nation to England and those who preferred France. As a result, Vanderlyn's style gained a more highly politicized significance, and his patronage upon his return depended almost exclusively on those with Democratic-Republican ties. Without doubt, the artist's affiliation with Burr—which was not to be

forgotten by Federalists nationwide—must have played an important role in Vanderlyn’s failure in the competition for the decoration of the Rotunda of the United States Capitol, a commission that was awarded to John Trumbull, a life-long Federalist.

Because of his difficulty in securing commissions for large-scale history paintings, Vanderlyn was forced to paint what he was most hoping to avoid: portraits. Yet he could not deny his ability as a portraitist or the demand for portraits among the upward moving Democratic-Republicans. Generally speaking, between 1815 and 1825, Vanderlyn depicted his patrons in a French, neoclassical style, one that displayed a somber color scheme and emphasized linearity. Largely ignored for public commissions in New York, those he did complete for the Common Council are notable for their tempered neoclassicism, a mode more agreeable to the Federalist-controlled committee that commissioned them.¹

* * *

Kingston, New York, and Philadelphia

John Vanderlyn was born into an artistic family on 15 October 1775 in Kingston, New York. He was the third child of Nicholas and Sarah Tappen Vanderlyn; John’s grandfather, Pieter Vanderlyn, was a prominent painter within colonial New York, and his father was an established sign and house painter in the Kingston area. Despite a family history in the trades, Vanderlyn received a classical education, first at the English School and later at the prestigious Kingston Academy. By the time he finished his

¹ I focus in this study on portraits solidly attributed to Vanderlyn when biographical information that pertains to the sitter is available. As with Stuart, Vanderlyn neither signed nor dated the majority of his portraits, which makes attribution problematic. Moreover, many of Vanderlyn’s patrons have slipped into historical obscurity. In such cases, they have been omitted from this inquiry

education, he had learned Greek and Latin in addition to the Dutch that was common in and around the Kingston area. Clearly, Vanderlyn possessed a keen intellect.

Vanderlyn made his first visit to New York City in 1791 after completing his education at the Kingston Academy. Traveling with Peter, his older half-brother, the two Vanderlyns made a social call on George Clinton, then governor of New York. In fact, the governor was a distant relative; Clinton's wife, Cornelia Tappen Clinton, was related to John Vanderlyn's mother, Sarah Tappen Vanderlyn. In addition to the visit with Governor Clinton, "the leading incident in this excursion is to be found in his acquisition of some colours and an illustrated manual of drawing."² This drawing manual was probably a copy of Charles Le Brun's *Heads Representing the various Passions of the Soul, as they are Expressed in the Human Countenance*. In his flowing script, Vanderlyn labeled a bound notebook "Jno Vander Lyn's Drawing Book. 1792." Opposite this "title page" was his copy of Le Brun's "Admiration," complete with an English translation of the original French text (**figure 39**). In all, Vanderlyn copied four of Le Brun's emotions into this notebook: "Admiration," "Horror," "Attention," and "Hatred or Jealousy."³ Although Vanderlyn had received no formal artistic training at this point in his life, these copied heads show the strong, linear draftsmanship that would distinguish his later portraits. Moreover, "the drawing of 'Attention' is dated 1791, confirming that Vanderlyn *labored* over these literal copies for some time."⁴ This excessive attention to

² Robert Grossman, "Biographical Sketch of John Vanderlyn, Artist," unpublished manuscript from the Reverend Rowell Randall House Collection in the New-York Historical Society. Transcribed in Louise Hunt Averill, "John Vanderlyn, American Painter (1775-1852)" (Ph.D diss., Yale University, 1949), 292-338. Hereafter, quotations from Grossman will be cited as Grossman (Averill), Averill's pagination. For the above citation, see: Grossman (Averill), 302.

³ William Townsend Oedel. "John Vanderlyn: French Neoclassicism and the Search for an American Art." (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, International, 1981), 23.

⁴ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 23. Emphasis added.

detail in facial expressions was to plague Vanderlyn throughout his career and caused frustration in many inpatient patrons.

Vanderlyn was not the only person of note to arrive in New York City during 1791. On the second day of October, Archibald Robertson, an English-trained Scottish artist, stepped ashore for what he intended to be a short visit to the New World. Indeed, Robertson had come to New York “in the spirit of adventure and not with any serious intention to remain.”⁵ Yet despite such plans, Robertson stayed and was joined a year later by his younger brother Alexander. Together they became two of the most influential figures in the development of the arts in New York City during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their significance did not go unnoticed; in 1834, William Dunlap devoted more than ten pages in the *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* to the Robertson brothers.⁶ Indeed, when commenting on the neglect into which Archibald had fallen, one late-nineteenth-century writer stated that, “in the beginning of this century no name was more familiar to New Yorkers than his.”⁷ Although this may have been overstating Archibald Robertson’s position, he certainly played a prominent artistic role within a dynamic and growing city.

Born in 1765 in Monymusk, Scotland, Archibald Robertson began his artistic training in 1782 when he traveled to Edinburgh to study with a group of Scottish artists that included Henry Raeburn, Walter Weir, and George Watson. Edinburgh had no formal art school, so Robertson relocated to London in 1786 and enrolled at the Royal

⁵ Edith Robertson Cleveland, “Archibald Robertson, and His Portraits of the Washingtons,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* 40, no. 1 (May 1890): 5.

⁶ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, II: 79-88, 112-114.

⁷ Cleveland, 3.

Academy, studying under the leadership of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West. His integration into the London art world came quickly and with great success. Before he returned north to his native land, he had become known as “The Reynolds of Scotland.” His reputation obviously had an international dimension: in 1791 he accepted an invitation from two prominent New Yorkers—Chancellor Robert R. Livingston and Dr. Samuel Bard—to visit New York.⁸

Archibald Robertson completed several miniatures of George and Martha Washington during his first year in America, and also delivered a gift to the president from David Steuart Erskine, the eleventh Earl of Buchan.⁹ Robertson wrote a letter to his younger brother shortly after arriving in New York City and urged him to come to New York. Exactly when Alexander Robertson, then studying miniature painting with an English artist named Shelly, sailed to or landed in New York City remains unclear, but he wasted little time in crossing the Atlantic, for he arrived no later than 8 October 1792. It was on this day that this notice appeared in the *New York Daily Advertiser*:

Painting and Drawing,
At the Columbia Academy,
No. 89 William-street, New-York.
Archibald Robertson,

Duly and sensibly impressed by the encouragement the citizens of New York have bestowed upon his endeavors to establish an academy for the arts of painting and drawing in this city, begs leave to acquaint the public, that his brother, Mr. Alexander Robertson, has lately arrived from the royal academy of painting in London, where he has been under the tuition of the most celebrated artists.

They therefore, by joint and unremitting attention to their pupils, hope to merit a continuation of that encouragement, which Archibald Robertson has for twelve months experienced, and the public may depend that no pains or expense will be

⁸ Ibid., 4, 5.

⁹ For information on Archibald Robertson’s miniatures of the Washingtons, see: Ellen G. Miles, *George and Martha Washington: Portraits from the Presidential Years*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1999), 26-28.

spared to make their academy useful to the citizens of the state, and to the United States in general.

They will continue to paint portraits and miniatures, make draughts of all kinds, from nature, designs for engravings, &c.

At their academy instruct Ladies and Gentlemen in the arts of designing and drawing (in India ink, water colours, chalks, &c) of heads, figures, landscapes, flowers, patterns, architecture, and perspective.

Classes for Ladies and Gentlemen as usual.

Ladies and Gentlemen who find it inconvenient to attend the public classes, will be waited upon.

An evening class is opened for Gentlemen, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.¹⁰

Although one scholar has written that the Robertsons assumed “that women were there only to prepare for the genteel life of a refined wife and mother while the men were there to train for professions like engineering and architecture,” the Columbia Academy must not be so quickly dismissed as merely a finishing school.¹¹ Although oil painting was not taught—at least one of the Robertsons found oil painting disagreeable to his health—there was a great emphasis placed on drawing. The Robertsons’s school was certainly not on par with the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* in Paris or London’s Royal Academy of Arts, but for a city (and country) that had little tradition in art instruction in 1792, it was a most adequate artistic beginning.

Coincidentally, Vanderlyn returned to New York City during the fall of 1792, this time not to call on Governor Clinton, but instead to begin an apprenticeship with Thomas Barrow. A friend of Peter Vanderlyn, Barrow was an English-born art dealer who sold painting supplies, framed works of art, and was (in the words of William

¹⁰ *New York Daily Advertiser*, 8 October 1792.

¹¹ Frances K. Pohl, *Framing American Art: A Social History of American Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 115.

Dunlap), in fact, the “only dealer in good prints” in New York City.¹² Thus, a situation with Barrow was ideally suited for an aspiring artist. Indeed, while there were countless printers, booksellers, and bookbinders in New York City from 1790 to 1795, there was only one published dealer in prints or art supply store: Thomas Barrow’s shop at 58 Broad Street.¹³ Although it may have been possible to procure painting supplies at another dealer or merchant, there can be no question that Vanderlyn there came into close contact with the practicing artists working in New York City. After he returned to America, Gilbert Stuart—who lived but a short distance away at 63 Stone Street—repeatedly visited Barrow’s shop to buy supplies and leave completed portraits to be framed.¹⁴

In addition to working at Barrow’s shop during the day, Vanderlyn also attended the Robertsons’s Columbia Academy during his free evening hours. John Pintard, a philanthropic Federalist merchant who would later help found the New-York Historical Society, generously paid Vanderlyn’s tuition.¹⁵ While there, Vanderlyn “found himself in high society,” meeting such influential personalities as John R. Murray, Isaac G. Ogden (future member of the New York State Senate), and the Macomb brothers.¹⁶ Margaret Livingston, the youngest daughter of Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, was

¹² Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, II: 157.

¹³ George L. McKay, comp., *A Register of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers, Bookbinders, Printers & Publishers in New York City, 1633-1820* (New York: The New York Public Library, 1942), 7-78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69. For a reproduction of a 1797 map of Manhattan, see: Ellen G. Miles, *Saint-Memin and the Neoclassical Profile Portrait in America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 68. Both relatively short thoroughfares, Stone Street intersected Broad Street between Field Street and Bridge Street. Although street numbers are not provided on this map, there is no doubt that Stuart’s home and Barrow’s shop were in close proximity to one another. Moreover, William Street is near both Stone Street and Broad Street. Stuart maintained a relationship with Barrow even after the artist packed his trunks and moved to Philadelphia to paint George Washington, for Barrow’s name is on a list of patrons ordering a portrait of the first president. For this list of patrons, see: Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 133.

¹⁵ For biographical information on Pintard, see: James Grant Wilson, *John Pintard, Founder of the New York Historical Society: An Address Delivered Before the New York Historical Society, December 3, 1901* (New York: Printed for the Society, 1902).

¹⁶ Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 25.

another student at the Columbia Academy during Vanderlyn's time studying with the Robertsons. Vanderlyn's first introduction to Chancellor Livingston—a patron who greatly advanced Vanderlyn's career and the patriarch of a family Vanderlyn painted or drew many times—likely came through his classmate at the Columbia Academy.¹⁷

While Vanderlyn learned drawing from the Robertsons, Gilbert Stuart taught the younger artist to paint. Stuart was a constant visitor to Barrow's shop, and the two artists first become acquainted there. Past scholars have suggested that Vanderlyn saw Stuart's portraits of Egbert Benson and Aaron Burr when Stuart left them with Barrow to be framed, and that Vanderlyn copied them there (**figure 40**).¹⁸ Still others believe that Vanderlyn copied these portraits during an apprenticeship with Stuart that began sometime during 1794.¹⁹ Regardless of when or where the copies were made, Vanderlyn's first professional instruction in the realm of oil painting came from Stuart. Yet this initial apprenticeship in New York City was short lived. Stuart, armed with a letter of introduction from John Jay to George Washington, departed New York for Philadelphia during November or December of 1794.²⁰ In contrast, Vanderlyn returned home to Kingston sometime during the fall of 1794, carrying his copied portraits and an increased sense of confidence.

¹⁷ Salvatore Mondello, ed. *The Private Papers of John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), American Portrait Painter*. (Lewison, New York: 1989), 4-5.

¹⁸ Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 185. See also: Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 6.

¹⁹ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 31. Oedel compares Vanderlyn's portraits of Benson and Burr to the portrait of Vanderlyn's nephew Henry completed during a visit to Kingston in 1793 or early 1794. As this portrait is a "flat, stiff, virtually colorless essay," it seems that the more painterly portraits of Burr and Benson were completed during or after his time studying with Stuart, and were thus painted after Vanderlyn worked in Barrow's shop. Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 30.

²⁰ Writing to her husband in London, Sarah Jay wrote on 15 November 1794 that, "In ten days he [Stuart] is to go to Philadelphia, to take a likeness of the President." The editors of the Jay Papers have not yet located this letter. Quoted in Mason, *The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart*, 206, Whitley, *Gilbert Stuart*, 92, and Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 184, and Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 123.

With prestigious training from Stuart—the most skilled portraitist in America, and one of the few with an exclusive pedigree of European training—Vanderlyn was unquestionably the most able portraitist in the Kingston area. During the months that followed his return, Vanderlyn occupied himself by painting members of his family, a staple exercise for any aspiring portraitist. A clearer indication of his painting competence is demonstrated in the quality of the commissioned portraits Vanderlyn produced during this time in Kingston. A successful lawyer, Conrad E. Elmendorf purchased Vanderlyn’s copy of Stuart’s portrait of Egbert Benson. In addition, he later commissioned a small portrait of his young son, Edward Jones Elmendorf (**figure 41**). Indeed, the Elmendorf family was prominent within Kingston; Lucas Conrad Elmendorf, a close relation, served three terms in the House of Representatives and later in the New York State assembly and senate. Although Vanderlyn did not paint Lucas Conrad Elmendorf, working within prominent families was a strategy Vanderlyn pursued throughout his career.

Whereas the copy of the Benson portrait seems to have led Vanderlyn to only a single portrait commission from a prominent family, his copy of the Burr portrait led to many more. Peter Van Gaasbeek acquired this portrait of Aaron Burr. Van Gaasbeek was an enterprising Kingston merchant who sold items such as cloth, horses, furs, iron, nails, and flour, and he later built ships and barns.²¹ Also active in politics, he was elected to the Third Congress, and served in the House of Representatives from 1793 to 1795. Van Gaasbeek served as a state senator at the same time as Aaron Burr, a close friend who would later become the artist’s greatest benefactor. While Congress was in

²¹ Michael D’Innocenzo and John Turner. “The Peter Van Gaasbeek Papers: A Resource for Early New York History, 1771-1797,” *New York History* 47, no. 2 (April 1966): 155. Van Gaasbeek was related to the Bruyn family—to be discussed shortly—through marriage.

session in Philadelphia during the spring of 1795, Van Gaasbeek met with Burr and stated that he had acquired the copy of Burr's portrait that Vanderlyn completed while studying with Stuart. Thus, although there is no direct evidence that Van Gaasbeek mentioned Vanderlyn by name, a seed was planted in Burr's mind regarding the artist who copied the portrait.

As demonstrated by a letter Burr wrote to Van Gaasbeek on 21 June 1795, this seed did not take long to germinate. The correspondence contains two parts. In the first, Burr chronicled the distressing state of his financial affairs and reassured Van Gaasbeek that "if I weather the Storm, of which there can be no doubt I shall be as rich as a reasonable man need wish."²² The second part of this letter is somewhat of an extended postscript, and contains what William Oedel has called a "Dickensian proposal:"²³

I understand that a young Mr. Van De Lyne who lived a short time with Stewart the Painter, left him for want of means of suitable support. You must persuade him to allow me to remove that objection—If he was personally acquainted with me, he would, I am confident, accept this proposal without hesitation—I commit to you then, to overcome any delicacy which he may feel on this head. I shall never imagine that I have conferred on him the smallest obligation; but shall be infinitely flattered by an opportunity of rescuing Genius from obscurity.

He may draw on J. B. Prevost, New York for any sum which may be necessary for his outfit. And on his arrival in this City, where Mr. Stewart now lives, he will find a letter from me addressed to him pointing out the channel of his future supplies, the source of which will never be known except to himself. I acknowledge that I should have not communicated this even to you, if I had known how otherwise to get at Mr. V. D. L. I ask you to consider it as confidential.

This arrangement is intended to continue as long as it may be necessary for Mr. V. D. L. to cultivate his genius to [the] highest point of Perfection. From the inquiries I have made concerning him, I have been lead [sic] to believe that his character and talents are such as he may do honor to himself, his friends and his Country.²⁴

²² Aaron Burr to Peter Van Gaasbeek, 21 June 1795, Edward Coykendall Collection, State House Museum, Kingston, New York.

²³ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 34.

²⁴ Aaron Burr to Peter Van Gaasbeek, 21 June 1795, Coykendall Collection.

Without question, such an offer would have made any aspiring and patronless artist feel like Pip from *Great Expectations*. Not surprisingly, Vanderlyn quickly accepted Burr's offer, moved to Philadelphia, and took up residence with Stuart.

This letter has been misinterpreted, however. As Burr began his offer with the phrase "I understand that a young Mr. Van De Lyne," past scholars have suggested that Van Gaasbeek did not mention Vanderlyn's name to Burr when speaking of the portrait he purchased, and that Van Gaasbeek's role in Burr's patronage was largely coincidental.²⁵ While the first of these two suggestions may be true, Van Gaasbeek was certainly an instrumental link between Burr and Vanderlyn. Having already discussed the matter with Stuart, Burr would have known that Vanderlyn had both studied with the older artist and had copied his portrait of Burr. Aware of this, Burr likely deduced that this was the portrait that Van Gaasbeek had acquired. For this reason, Burr's offer was communicated through Van Gaasbeek rather than another contact in Kingston. While the tone of this letter may indicate to twenty-first-century readers that Burr was unaware of the relationship between Vanderlyn and Van Gaasbeek, the formality of eighteenth-century letter writing cannot be forgotten. After all, Burr was not Van Gaasbeek's "obedient and humble servant," the customary closing of a letter between two friends at the time.

Vanderlyn arrived in Philadelphia to take up residence with Stuart sometime in July 1795, and studied with the older artist for a period of ten months. Having moved to the City of Brotherly Love to paint George Washington, Stuart was overwhelmed by the reception of his first likeness, the so-called *Vaughan Portrait*. The artist found himself

²⁵ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 35.

besieged with requests for copies soon after this first portrait was completed in the spring of 1795. In April 1796, Stuart completed—as much as he was ever to complete—his more famous *Athenaeum Portrait* of the first president (**figure 42**). Stuart frequently copied this portrait during his tenure in Philadelphia and throughout the remainder of his entire career. In addition to producing likenesses of Washington, Stuart also maintained a portraiture practice, painting what was essentially the Federal aristocracy of Philadelphia, then the largest city in the United States.

With such activity in his studio, Stuart needed an assistant as much as he wanted a student, and Vanderlyn was often responsible for preparing canvases for Stuart's painterly flourish. Despite being urged by Stuart to proceed to Europe for further training in March 1796, Vanderlyn remained in Philadelphia long enough to copy the *Athenaeum Portrait* (**figure 43**) and the pendant portrait of Martha Washington (**figure 44**).

Although the copy of George Washington shows a significant improvement in coloring and technique when compared with Vanderlyn's earlier Kingston portraits, it is, as Oedel has rightly noted, "a student's work, linear, and studied in its parts, rather than conceived as a whole."²⁶ Despite these faults, Vanderlyn departed a much-improved artist after ten months training with Stuart. With his economic viability in Burr's generous hands, Vanderlyn did eventually travel to Europe for further study, as Stuart had suggested. However, Vanderlyn did not follow the path that Stuart had envisioned.

Rather than immediately crossing the Atlantic following his time in Philadelphia, Vanderlyn instead returned to Kingston. There he again painted portraits of his family and some well-to-do citizens, and these portraits show the younger artist's indebtedness to Stuart's instruction. Clearly based on Stuart's 1794 portrait of Catherine Brass Yates,

²⁶ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 40.

Vanderlyn's portrait of his mother, Sarah Tappen Vanderlyn, shows a more refined use of color and highlight, particularly in her facial expression (**figure 45**).²⁷ During this time, Vanderlyn began to receive commissions from outside his family. The patriarch of an established Kingston family, Jacobus Severyn Bruyn was a Revolutionary War officer and a civic leader within the Kingston area (**figure 46**). Vanderlyn not only painted Bruyn, a future member of the New York State Senate from the Middle District, but also two of his sons: Edmund (**figure 47**) and Severyn (**figure 48**), both of whom were students at the Kingston Academy, Vanderlyn's former school. These portraits, like the one of his mother, show Vanderlyn's increased ability to model the human face, although they remain relatively flat when compared with the portraits he saw Stuart paint in Philadelphia. Nevertheless, the Bruyn commissions undoubtedly demonstrate the speed with which Vanderlyn absorbed Stuart's teaching.

Vanderlyn returned to the New York City area during the late spring or early summer of 1796 and stayed at Richmond Hill, Burr's residence on the outskirts of the city, until the second week of September. Although Burr originally intended for his patronage to remain a secret, accommodating Vanderlyn for such a length of time could not have gone unnoticed. Although the artist could not have been aware of it at the time, I contend that Burr's financial assistance was perhaps the most important factor in determining the direction of Vanderlyn's career and his future patronage. As the unique relationship between Burr and Vanderlyn is of such importance, a brief discussion of Burr's political career through 1796 is useful.

Although now most well known for having shot Alexander Hamilton at Weehawken, New Jersey, during the summer of 1804, Burr began his political career

²⁷ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 42.

twenty years earlier. His mercurial rise in both New York and national politics began in 1784, when at the age of twenty-eight, the Princeton-educated, former colonel in the Continental Army accepted a position in the New York State Assembly. Although later identified as a Democratic-Republican, Burr's early career was surprisingly non-partisan. Governor George Clinton saw a potential rising political star and appointed Burr New York's Attorney General in 1789. Burr retained this post until his election to the United States Senate in 1791, and this particular election was important in terms of the political direction of Robert R. Livingston, another of Vanderlyn's powerful patrons.

As noted during the discussion of Livingston's portraits by Gilbert Stuart in the previous chapter, Livingston sought a high-ranking appointment from Washington in 1789 when the president was selecting his cabinet. Livingston had been a faithful Federalist and expected to become either the Chief Justice, the Secretary of State, or Secretary of the Treasury; he was furious when these prestigious posts went to his brother-in-law John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton, respectively.²⁸ Livingston was further disgruntled during a special session of the state legislature that was called by Governor Clinton at Albany in 1789. The primary goal of this gathering was to appoint New York's first federal senators. Many New-York elite assumed that General Philip Schuyler, the patriarch of a powerful family and the father-in-law of Hamilton, would be appointed to one of these seats. In turn, Schuyler made an agreement with Livingston to support James Duane, then mayor of New York City and a member of the Livingston family through marriage. This would ensure that both New York Senators were Federalists and from influential families. However, Hamilton worried that if Duane were elected, someone who was not as easily manipulated would assume the post of

²⁸ Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 159.

mayor. Rather than support Duane, Hamilton decided instead to put his political might behind Rufus King, a recently transplanted New Englander. As a result, Hamilton convinced his father-in-law to withdraw his support from Livingston's candidate and to instead back King. When the smoke settled from the 16 July 1789 meeting of the state legislature, Schuyler had one seat in the United State Senate, and Rufus King the other. Livingston was left with little other than a bruised ego and a political grudge. As a result, he shifted his political allegiance—and that of the majority of his family—from the Federalists to the Democratic-Republicans.²⁹ This seemingly insignificant event had a pronounced effect on the political climate in New York, and in hindsight can be seen as the distant genesis of Burr's movement to the Republican Party.

Due to a constitutional requirement, Schuyler's senatorial seat expired on 4 March 1791; he and King had drawn lots to determine who would receive the two-year and six-year terms.³⁰ With a profound political chip on his shoulder, Livingston collaborated with Clinton to find a candidate to take over Schuyler's seat in the United States Senate. Aaron Burr was an attractive choice. While hindsight makes it difficult to accept the notion that Burr was not always in opposition to the Federalist programs supported by Hamilton, at this time, "[Burr] came as close as an active politician could to having no identifiable party coloration."³¹ Indeed, Burr assisted Hamilton during the 1789 gubernatorial election, and thus appealed to the moderate section of the Federalist majority in the legislature. On the other hand, the Democratic-Republicans were attracted to Burr because of his opposition to the ratification of the Constitution in 1787

²⁹ Milton Lomask, *Aaron Burr: The Years from Princeton to Vice President 1756-1805* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), 137-141.

³⁰ Lomask, 141. Also: Bayard Tuckerman. *Life of General Philip Schuyler, 1733-1804* (1969; reprint, Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1903), 257.

³¹ Lomask, 142.

and for his noteworthy performance as Attorney General under the Clinton gubernatorial administration.³² Several political ends were reached on 19 January 1791 when Burr was elected to the United States Senate. Chancellor Livingston struck a personal political blow to Schuyler and Hamilton for their perceived treachery two years before, and Burr temporarily quenched his political ambition. Most importantly, one of the first cracks in the Federalist stronghold in New York had become shockingly evident. As Robert Troup wrote to Hamilton on the day of the election, “The Chancellor is singularly happy. It would take a quire of paper to give you a minute detail of our present situation. We are going headlong into the bitterest opposition to the general government. I pity you Most sincerely...”³³

While Burr and Hamilton shared a cordial and professional relationship prior to 1791, Hamilton held Burr personally responsible for Schuyler’s ejection from the United States Senate. This was the origin of the vitriolic relationship between the two politicians that would eventually culminate in Hamilton’s untimely death in 1804. What the young Vanderlyn was unaware of in 1796, however, was the ways in which his association with Burr would profoundly affect the nature of his career. For Hamilton—as well his political allies—the friend of his enemy was also an enemy. For Vanderlyn, this would later become a crucial blow, as wealthy Federalist politicians and merchants would avoid commissioning a portrait from the protégé of a political adversary. Indeed, this was but one strike against Vanderlyn. He would acquire another several years later when he returned from his first European sojourn with a French, neoclassical style of painting.

³² Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 189.

³³ Harold C. Syrett, ed. *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 7: 445.

Before his first trip to Europe, however, Vanderlyn lived in Burr's home just outside New York City. Rather than proceed to London where he could have studied with Benjamin West, the recently elected President of the Royal Academy of Arts, Vanderlyn sailed instead for Paris. While the fact that Vanderlyn was the first American artist to study in Paris is generally noted during a discussion of his life and art, his reasons for doing so are seldom mentioned. Without doubt, this departure from the norm was exceedingly important and influenced the remainder of the artist's career.

There are several reasons why Vanderlyn decided to study in Paris rather than London. The first was hatred towards the British army that burned Vanderlyn's hometown of Kingston during his youth; this event of the Revolutionary War left an indelible mark upon the young artist. Burr's political disposition was another important factor. Already in charge of the progressive education of his daughter Theodosia, Burr designed a course of study to prepare Vanderlyn for his time in France. Moreover, Burr exposed the artist to many personal and political friends while the artist lived at Richmond Hill in 1796. The vast majority of the politician's associates were either Republicans who desired a well-established diplomatic relationship with France, or they were French nationals living abroad. Burr's home became a sort of safe haven for French sympathizers. During Vanderlyn's short stay, he met and mingled with the French Minister to the United States, Pierre August Adet, as well as the exiled Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. In addition, countless American friends and political allies were in and out of Richmond Hill during the time preceding Vanderlyn's departure. In fact, Vanderlyn painted now lost Burr-commissioned portraits of Adet, and Albert Gallatin,

the future Secretary of the Treasury during the Jefferson administration.³⁴ As a result of this living arrangement, Vanderlyn was placed in a Francophile environment that suited his preexisting disposition against Great Britain.³⁵ In addition, Vanderlyn was aware that Stuart and Trumbull were British-trained artists, and with the urging of his patron, Vanderlyn likely wished to carve out his own niche. France was thus a logical choice, and Vanderlyn departed New York City for Paris on 8 September 1796, funded by and with letters of introduction from Burr. The decision to train in France affected the remainder of the artist's career.

Paris, 1796-1801

Vanderlyn landed at Bordeaux after a month-long passage across the Atlantic. He wasted little time there, as he enrolled at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* on 21 November 1796 after passing the semi-annual entrance examination.³⁶ The successful completion of this examination without further art instruction in Europe not only demonstrates Vanderlyn's natural talent, but also validates the education he received at the Robertsons' Columbia Academy and in Stuart's studio. Vanderlyn searched for an instructor prior to this examination, and was faced with four popular options: Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Baptiste Regnault, Joseph-Benoît Suvée, and François-André Vincent. David was the most famous of the four, but was also the most politically extreme. Both Suvée and Regnault specialized in religious art, a genre that had little appeal to Vanderlyn's non-Catholic sentiments. As a result, Vanderlyn entered the studio of Vincent and studied

³⁴ Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 9.

³⁵ H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1991), 25. See also: Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 43-50.

³⁶ Weinberg, 27.

under his guidance until the winter of 1798 or the spring of 1799, when the well of Burr's patronage began to want for water.³⁷

Although well regarded during his own day, the art and life of François-André Vincent has been neglected in modern scholarship of neoclassical art in France. Although Vincent won the Prix de Rome in 1768, much of his career was cast in the shadow of David's brilliance. Yet, Vincent was a successful painter who operated an even more successful atelier. Between 1790 and 1815, six of his students won the Prix de Rome, and seven more took second place.³⁸ As important for an apprehensive foreigner, Vincent "was an amiable, smiling, even witty man," who had a particular interest in portraiture.³⁹ Vanderlyn certainly found Vincent's focus on portraiture attractive, for the American was aware that this genre would constitute a large part of his art production after he returned to the United States. During the more than two years he studied with Vincent, Vanderlyn "absorbed the draughtsmanship, the enamel-like color, and the firm sculptural style of the French neoclassic school."⁴⁰ Indeed, although he arrived in Paris with a technique that somewhat mimicked Stuart's English, painterly approach, Vanderlyn gradually replaced it with a more linear, concise style modeled after Vincent's French neoclassicism.⁴¹

Vanderlyn benefited from Burr's generous patronage during his time in Vincent's studio. After Burr was forced to curtail his spending—possibly because of failed land

³⁷ For information on Vanderlyn's teaching options, see: Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 62-70, Weinberg, 25-31, and Gosman (Averill), 313-314. Also: Yvon Bizardel, *American Painters in Paris*, trans Richard Howard (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 52-54.

³⁸ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 65-66.

³⁹ Bizardel, 53, Weinberg, 27.

⁴⁰ Edgar P. Richardson, *Painting in America: The Story of 450 Years* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956), 89. Mondello copies the first 13 words of Richardson's phrase, substituting "fine" for "firm": Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 10.

⁴¹ For information on Vincent, see: Pierre Rosenberg and Robert Rosenblum, *French Painting, 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 669-674.

speculations which caused a severe economic pinch—Vanderlyn searched out commissions from Burr’s relatively small but influential network of friends in Paris that consisted largely (although not exclusively) of Republican politicians. During Vanderlyn’s final two and a half years in Paris—that is, from his final six months in Vincent’s studio, until returning to New York City in the spring of 1801—Vanderlyn deliberately secured avenues of patronage that would benefit him after his homecoming to the United States. This was largely achieved through the completion of small portrait drawings, a practice that supplied little income, but was lush with the possibility of advancing his reputation on the American side of the Atlantic.

The end of the eighteenth century was a complicated time for Franco-American relations, and Vanderlyn was not only aware of this, he witnessed it firsthand. Perhaps the largest contributor to this turmoil was the 1794 signing of the Jay Treaty, a pact that gave American diplomatic and economic favor to Great Britain, which at this time was at war with France. So hated was this treaty, in fact, that Jay, who was elected governor in 1795, was burned in effigy not only in his home state of New York, but throughout the country.⁴² Moreover, Federalist president John Adams recalled James Madison, the American ambassador to France, in 1796. The French government refused to formally recognize his successor, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a Federalist member of the House of Representatives. As a result, and in an attempt to maintain some kind of diplomatic relationship with France, Adams appointed a three-person committee to correspond with the French Directory, then headed by the newly appointed Foreign Minister, Charles-

⁴² James Savage, once president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, recalled seeing “Damn John Jay! Damn every one that won’t damn John Jay!! Damn every one that won’t put lights in his windows and sit up all night damning John Jay!!!” written in large, white chalk letters. Quoted in: George Pellew, *John Jay* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894) 315-16.

Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, the former French exile and guest in Burr's New York home. Elbridge Gerry and John Marshall (a Virginian who succeeded John Jay as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1801), joined Pinckney in Paris, and formal talks with Talleyrand began during October 1797.

Gerry, in particular, was an interesting choice (**figure 49**). Although an Antifederalist during the ratification of the Constitution, Gerry was as non-partisan as a political figure could be during the end of the eighteenth century. In this regard, he was much like Adams, his lifelong friend, who often fought within his own political party. One need only be reminded that Adams called Alexander Hamilton, the de facto leader of the Federalist Party, “a bastard brat of a Scotch pedlar” to recognize the second president's anti-party leanings.⁴³ As Ralph Ketcham has noted, “His [Adams] continuance of Washington's cabinet, encouragement of a militant patriotism in response to the XYZ affair, and the dispatch of the successful peace mission to France [in 1799] were to Adams required by national, as opposed to party, interest.”⁴⁴ Gerry was similarly independent-minded, both in his domestic politics and in his diplomatic decisions. Without doubt, Adams stridently fought Federalist opposition for Gerry's appointment. Not only were the two close friends, but Adams believed Gerry would not be swayed by party politics. As his biographer has stated, “Gerry was no more an Anglophobe than he

⁴³ Quoted in: Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 62.

⁴⁴ Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party: The First American Presidency, 1789-1829* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 96. As Ketcham later notes, Adams “dispatched a peace mission to France that helped so to fracture the Federalist party...that it lost the next presidential election...He simply could not be partisan either in seeking or conduction office.” Ketcham, 98.

was a Francophile.”⁴⁵ Thus, he was particularly suited to avoid a potential conflict with France.

Yet despite the good intentions and qualifications of Gerry, Pinckney, and Marshall, the negotiations—if the discussions deserve such an appellation—were frustrating. During the following seven months, Talleyrand, through his agents, who became known through their aliases of X, Y, and Z, attempted to extort and bribe the American diplomats, in addition to making impractical diplomatic demands. In April 1798, Marshall and Pinckney departed France in frustration.⁴⁶ Although he showed a profound resolve for peace and a greater forbearance towards Talleyrand’s shenanigans, Gerry departed Paris the second week of August 1798, having accomplished little.⁴⁷ Certainly, the Federalists used this diplomatic failure with France as further justification for the Jay Treaty, the negotiations of which had widened the gulf between the Federalists and Republicans in 1795. A small victory though it was, the Federalists were happy to accept any Republican failure.

As an active member of the American community in Paris—and a friend of Elbridge Gerry—Vanderlyn was fully aware of these machinations. Such political happenings only deepened Vanderlyn’s longstanding predisposition against the British. With a vitriolic pen, Vanderlyn wrote to his brother on 10 March 1798, shortly before the departure of Pinckney and Marshall:

⁴⁵ George Athan Billias, *Elbridge Gerry: Founding Father and Republican Statesman* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 253, 255.

⁴⁶ For information on this aspect of Franco-American relations, see: William Stinchcombe, “The Diplomacy of the WXYZ Affair,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 34 no. 4 (October 1977), 590-617.

⁴⁷ On 15 May 1798, Gerry wrote to his wife that he would depart for the United States “some time in June” aboard the *Sophia*, a 12-gun navy transport. Despite such optimism, Gerry did not depart Paris until 26 July 1798, and the *Sophia* sailed for the United States on 8 August. See: Russell W. Knight, ed., *Elbridge Gerry’s Letterbook: Paris 1797-1798* (Salem, Massachusetts: The Essex Institute, 1966), 41, 44.

I hear nothing extraordinary nowadays. Preparations for the Descent on England are going on bravely, Bounaparte is returned from visiting the preparation in the different Ports & Haughty Britania already trembles I dont doubt.

Our minister has had no audience yet & how matters will be settled is not known neither, & we must thank those pretended Patriots of ours for all this, however I trust you have changed your principals at present with a great many others I imagine those eyes have so long purblind for all I don't know how affairs are in America, but could wish them to appear better in the eyes of this Government whose menace they deserve.⁴⁸

Although the remainder of the letter discusses art matters and Vanderlyn's course of study under Vincent, the remarkable part of this correspondence is how clearly Vanderlyn expressed his Republican sentiments and his blame for the "pretended Patriots." Although he did not say so in this letter to his brother, Vanderlyn began to complete small portrait drawings of American statesmen and businessmen in Paris around this time.

What is important to note first about these works in Paris is how non-political they are. As will be shown, wealthy Federalists avoided Vanderlyn after his return to New York in 1801. For several reasons, however, his early commissioned works in Paris do not reflect this same political tension. First of all, Vanderlyn undoubtedly carried letters of introduction to friends and political allies of Burr. Moreover, most political or businessmen in Paris during this time were likely Republican; finding a Federalist merchant active in Paris during the end of the eighteenth century would have been a difficult task, as men with such political leanings would have rather conducted business in Britain. Considering the small American community in Paris at this time, an American expatriate living abroad in Paris would understandably desire to support a fellow American. Finally, whereas Vanderlyn's neoclassical style would take on a political—

⁴⁸ John Vanderlyn to Peter Vanderlyn, 10 March 1798, Vanderlyn Papers, New-York Historical Society.

that is, a Republican—meaning in America, where the English model was the more typical artistic style, in France at the close of the eighteenth century, it was the most accepted style of painting and drawing, and was thus devoid of any underlying partisan subtexts.

Vanderlyn's 1798 drawing of Gerry is an excellent example of many of these points. Although an Antifederalist during the Constitutional Convention, Gerry was, by all practical measures, as non-partisan as a politician could be during the last decade of the eighteenth century. He arrived in Paris after Vanderlyn, and there is no evidence Burr asked Gerry to search out Vanderlyn. Instead, Vanderlyn and Gerry likely met through the small American contingency in Paris, and Gerry's small portrait drawing—which was not commissioned, but was instead a gift to the sitter—was not intended to be a political statement for either Vanderlyn or Gerry.

Although it may seem unusual, the medium of portrait drawings was ideally suited to Vanderlyn's talents and desires, and to the economic good sense of Vanderlyn's patrons. Even at the age of 17 and prior to any formal training, Vanderlyn demonstrated his strong sense of draftsmanship in his drawings based on Le Brun's treatise on facial expressions. Moreover, given that Vincent and the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* focused on the drawing rather than painting of the nude human form, Vanderlyn's ability to draw undoubtedly far exceeded his ability to paint. Vanderlyn could quickly complete these drawings, and they would have been inexpensive for the sitter, if Vanderlyn charged at all. These works were most valuable for Vanderlyn in terms of announcing his forthcoming arrival in the United States than in terms of money in his pockets while in France. Vanderlyn wrote to his brother in July 1798 and succinctly expressed this

sentiment. After commenting on his drawing of Elbridge Gerry, Vanderlyn stated, “already there is one of my doing [drawings] in Boston (in or on the way, at least)...I run the chance of being known before I am seen.”⁴⁹

Although lost, the portrait “in Boston (in or on the way, at least)” is possible that of Richard Codman, a Bostonian living just outside Paris. As an early Vanderlyn biographer noted, “Mr. Vanderlyn passed four happy weeks [in July and August 1798] at the seat of Mr. Richard Codman a Bostonian of some eccentricities, who invited him thither with a commission to make some landscape sketches.”⁵⁰ Vanderlyn likely drew Codman prior to completing the landscapes while living at his estate. Not only does this follow the pattern we know Vanderlyn hoped to establish during his early stay in Paris—that is, smaller drawings leading to more lucrative commissions—but it also fits with what is known about Codman. From a prominent Bostonian family, Codman was an avid art collector who purchased more than 100 works of art during his time in Europe.⁵¹ On his way to Paris, Codman visited London during 1794, commissioned a portrait from John Singleton Copley, and sent it to family in Boston.⁵² As described by a twentieth-century descendant, Codman was “fond of society, careless in money matters, but with nice taste in pictures and statuary.”⁵³

Yet despite the landscapes and possible portrait for Richard Codman, Vanderlyn was clearly most interested in the realm of history painting. A July 1798 letter to his

⁴⁹ John Vanderlyn to Peter Vanderlyn, 13 July 1798, Darrow Collection, State House Museum, Kingston, New York.

⁵⁰ Grossman (Averill), 320-321. Also: Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 99, 122.

⁵¹ Cora Codman Wollcott, *The Codmans in Charlestown and Boston, 1637-1929* (Brookline, Mass; by the author, 1930), 16.

⁵² Nancy Carlisle, *Cherished Possessions: A New England Legacy* (Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 2003), 38-41. When this painting was shipped from London to Boston, the crate also contained two “polygraphic” pictures, a Copley-painted portrait of Codman’s father, and two prints after Copley paintings: *The Death of Chatham*, and *The Tribute Money*.

⁵³ Wollcott, 15.

brother makes clear that although Vanderlyn wished to favor history paintings upon his return to the United States, he understood that he was instead to be dependent upon what Neil Harris has called “an exclusive slavery to portraiture.”⁵⁴

I have since the last Spring [1797] made myself a good deal known among the Americans here by making a few little portraits in black chalk of some of my acquaintances which has also brought me a few guineas. However, I don't wish to attach myself too much that way for I choose rather to devote myself mostly to the historical part and for that reason must employ the chief part of my time that is the morning at my master's school in painting after the naked model. And this at the same time will be advancing me in the painting of heads or portraits which branch I fancy I will be obliged to do in America being the only one encouraged there as well as its being the most lucrative.⁵⁵

For a time, history paintings would wait. Despite Vanderlyn's yearnings, he focused on portraiture, drawing Americans abroad such as Fulwar Skipwith, Joel Barlow (**figure 50**), Robert Fulton (**figure 51**), William R. Davie, and members of the Edward Church family. Compositionally, these drawings have the same vertical orientation, and were composed upon similar-sized paper.⁵⁶ Even the analysis of such a small group of sitters demonstrates that while in Paris, Vanderlyn worked from both sides of the political fence and drew sitters from a variety of occupations.

William R. Davie, for example, was a colonel during the Revolutionary War, the future founder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a dedicated Federalist. His relationship with Vanderlyn is an excellent example of the artist's comparative political indifference while in Paris. Elected governor of North Carolina in 1798, Davie shortly thereafter attempted to give the choice of presidential electors to the state legislature rather than to the popular vote. This was clearly an attempt to aid the

⁵⁴ Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860* second edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66.

⁵⁵ John Vanderlyn to Peter Vanderlyn, 13 July 1798, Darrow Collection, SHM.

⁵⁶ The drawings of Davie and Skipwith are lost and are known only through documentary evidence or later copies. The drawings that survive measure about 8.5" x 6.25".

Federalist bid for the presidential election in 1800.⁵⁷ As a gesture for past political kindness, John Adams asked Davie in 1800 to serve as one of three delegates who, with William Vans Murray and Oliver Ellsworth, successfully negotiated a treaty with France that narrowly avoided the formal declaration of war. Clearly, Davie remained loyal to his Federalist party.

Whereas Davie's political affiliation indicates that Vanderlyn was not yet deemed a political adversary by the Federalists—as would later become the case—the artist drew many of Davie's associates while in Paris, and the majority of whom were Republicans. Joel Barlow, Robert Fulton, and Fulwar Skipwith were among the small American community in Paris during the end of the eighteenth century. The former American consul at Martinique, Skipwith was the highest-ranking American diplomat in France after Gerry returned to the United States in 1798.⁵⁸ He and Vanderlyn were close friends, and Vanderlyn lived at Skipwith's estate during the summer of 1798.⁵⁹ This relationship was obviously advantageous for Vanderlyn. Skipwith and Barlow, the part-time diplomat, mercantile agent, and future poet, were acquaintances and frequent guests at the home of Madame de Villette, a French socialite. Barlow was also an intimate friend of Robert Fulton, another common guest at de Villette's home.⁶⁰ Her next-door neighbor beginning in 1801 was Robert R. Livingston, Fulton's future brother-in-law. To some extent, all of these men—Livingston in particular—assisted Vanderlyn after his return to the United States.

⁵⁷ *American National Biography*, s.v. "Davie, William Richardson"

⁵⁸ The only full-length biography of Skipwith remains: Henry Bartholomew Cox, *The Parisian American: Fulwar Skipwith of Virginia* (Washington, D.C.: The Mount Vernon Publishing Company, 1964).

⁵⁹ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 98.

⁶⁰ Fulton eventually moved in with Barlow and his wife. For information on this risqué friendship, see: Cynthia Owen Phillip, *Robert Fulton: A Biography* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1985), 85-90, 227-228. For information regarding Barlow and Skipwith, see: James Leslie Woodress, *A Yankee's Odyssey: The Life of Joel Barlow* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1958), 221-222.

While the sitters and portraits discussed above were all individuals, Vanderlyn also worked within families—much as he did in Kingston with the Bruyn family, and much as he would do with the Livingstons. The best example of this practice in Paris is the portraits completed in 1799 of the Edward Church family. Identifying the sitters in these four drawings, however, has been problematic.⁶¹ The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York currently lists these Vanderlyn portraits as *Daniel Strobel, Jr. (figure 52)*, *Mrs. Daniel (Anna Church) Strobel, Jr. and Her Son George (figure 53)*, and two additional daughters of Edward Church, *Sarah Russell Church (figure 54)*, and *Elizabeth Maria Church (figure 55)*.⁶² Unfortunately, both Strobel and Church are somewhat historically obscure, although both served in diplomatic positions. The Bostonian patriarch of the family, Edward Church was appointed the American consul to Portugal and was among Skipwith's network of friends in Paris.⁶³ In fact, Church seems to have preferred Paris to his post in Lisbon. In 1797, John Quincy Adams wrote a letter to Timothy Pickering, then Secretary of State, explaining, "The consulate at Lisbon is in a very unpleasant situation. Mr. Church has been long absent, and the management of the office does not appear to be in very fit hands."⁶⁴ Church's son-in-law, Daniel Strobel,

⁶¹ Traditionally, these four portraits have been identified as Edward Church, Mrs. Edward Church and Infant Fanny, and individual portraits of the Church daughters: Elizabeth Maria Church, and Sarah Russell Church. See: Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 99-103, and Kenneth C. Lindsay. *The Works of John Vanderlyn: From Tammany to the Capitol*. (Binghamton, New York: University Art Gallery at the State University of New York at Binghamton, 1970), 25, 33, 35, 127-128. Also: Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 12.

⁶² Kevin J. Avery, *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 116-119.

⁶³ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 100. Also: "Monthly Register: Domestic Occurrences," *The New York Magazine, or Literary Repository* (December 1793), 766. A letter published in the above periodical indicates that Church was at his post in Lisbon in 1793, and was therefore appointed during a Federalist administration. Moreover, his home state may assist in politically aligning Church, as Massachusetts remained a Federalist stronghold well into the 1820s.

⁶⁴ Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 2: 124-25.

and grandson, George Strobel, would each later serve as United States Consul to the French port of Bordeaux.⁶⁵

Vanderlyn's drawings of the Church daughters are particularly important. More so than any of his other Parisian drawings, these works exhibit both a neoclassical style—as demonstrated by the strong linear draftsmanship—but also a neoclassical subject matter. Whereas Daniel Strobel wears a dark, double-breasted jacket with a white cravat—clearly a late-eighteenth century ensemble—all three women wear the Greek-inspired, high empire dresses, and what Oedel has described as *à la Grec* hairstyles.⁶⁶ Vanderlyn based his composition of *Anna Church Strobel and Her Son, George* on François-André Vincent's portrait of *Mme Boyer* (**figure 56**). Vanderlyn likely saw this work shortly after his arrival in Paris when it was exhibited at the 1796 Salon. In both portraits, the seated mothers reach around and clasp their hands behind the backs of their child. In addition to copying the poses in his instructor's earlier painting, Vanderlyn also copied the use of flowing white drapery.⁶⁷ Whereas Anna Church Strobel, like her husband, is shown in an interior space, thus making these portraits pendants, Vanderlyn placed Elizabeth Maria Church and Sarah Russell Church in an Arcadian outdoor setting with Greek elements about them: behind Sarah is what looks to be a fourth-century B.C. statue, and over Elizabeth's right shoulder is a Greek urn atop an ivy-covered pedestal. Clearly, Vanderlyn absorbed neoclassicism, both in style and in content.

⁶⁵ "Appointments By the President," *Workman's Advocate* (23 April 1831), 9. Also: *Calendar of the Correspondence of James Madison* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 468. On 16 February 1816, Madison wrote to William Lee expressing his wishes to return to the United States and to appoint "Mr. Stroebel" as his replacement. Madison reiterated these wishes in another letter to Lee 11 days later.

⁶⁶ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 102.

⁶⁷ Vincent's portrait of Mme Boyer is located at the Musée du Louvre. For a reproduction, see: Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David after the Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 69.

After Vanderlyn spent several years drawing portraits, it was in 1799 that he began in earnest to paint them. In a letter from late 1800, Vanderlyn wrote his brother:

...at this moment I have no reason to be uneasy for I have several portraits in hand & some in expectation. I have made the portrait of Mr. David one of [hole in manuscript]...which pleased him much & may make me known in Carolina. Indeed I believe I have now some of my portraits in almost every State, & as they are done in a new style & very strong likenesses (as all agree to) it may be of the means of preparing the way or recommending of me when I return.⁶⁸

It would not be surprising if the portrait of “Mr. David” is that of Jacques-Louis David. The identification of the person in Carolina is more obscure. This reference may refer to either William R. Davie or Daniel Strobel, Jr., who were from North Carolina and South Carolina, respectively. What this letter does make clear, however, is that Vanderlyn deliberately planned for the future by having patrons return to the United States with examples of his work, and that he was aware that his French, neoclassical style would be “new” in the United States.

Unfortunately, only two oil portraits from this period of Vanderlyn’s career survive: one of William Fowler (**figure 57**), and an 1800 self-portrait Vanderlyn painted that was intended as a gift to Aaron Burr (**figure 58**). Oedel has noted that although the portrait of Fowler is “unsigned, undated, and of a man whose identity has remained obscure,” it can be attributed to Vanderlyn and dated from late 1798 or 1799.⁶⁹ This portrait may have joined the more celebrated *Self-Portrait* at the 1800 French Salon. Collectively, these two works testify to Vanderlyn’s progression as a portraitist under Vincent’s guidance, and exhibit several characteristics of French neoclassical portraiture:

⁶⁸ John Vanderlyn to Peter Vanderlyn, 15 November 1800, Darrow Collection, SHM.

⁶⁹ Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 106. The Fowler portrait is owned by the Deerfield Academy in Deerfield Massachusetts and is part of the Charles P. Russell Collection. The catalog entry for this portrait contains no biographical information on the sitter. See: *The Charles P. Russell Collection* (Deerfield, MA: The American Studies Group, Deerfield Academy, May 1969), 57.

“the muted coloring, blank background, and probing realism [that] reflect the fashionable Parisian mode of portraiture,” in addition to Vanderlyn’s linear draftsmanship and strong sense of compositional finish.⁷⁰ Even Jacques-Louis David, perhaps the highest authority on neoclassicism in France, commented favorably on the American’s paintings when visiting the 1800 Salon.⁷¹ This fact clearly demonstrates Vanderlyn’s absorption of his neoclassical training. Indeed, so unique was Vanderlyn’s style that no potential American patron could confuse these two works with portraits exhibiting Stuart’s more English and painterly brushwork. In a letter to his brother, Vanderlyn wrote that he hoped to paint enough portraits during the winter of 1800 to allow time to complete “something of consequence.”⁷² Yet there was no opportunity to complete a history painting, as Burr wrote to Vanderlyn requesting him to return to America. In addition, Burr enclosed a draft for \$500 to cover the expense of an unknown painting. And thus, in the spring of 1801, Vanderlyn returned to New York City.⁷³

New York Interlude, 1801-1803

Vanderlyn could not have picked a better time to return home. Professionally, New York City was wide open and lacked an artist of Vanderlyn’s skill, prestige, or training. Stuart, who was in Philadelphia when Vanderlyn departed, had since moved to Washington, D.C. Trumbull painted in New York during the early 1790s, but had traveled to London with John Jay in 1794 and had not yet returned to the United States. John Wesley Jarvis

⁷⁰ Weinberg, 30.

⁷¹ John Vanderlyn to Peter Vanderlyn, 15 November 1800, Darrow Collection, SHM.

⁷² John Vanderlyn to Peter Vanderlyn, 15 November 1800, Darrow Collection, SHM.

⁷³ Gosman (Averill), 322. Also: Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 110-11.

was still in Philadelphia in 1801 serving an apprenticeship with Edward Savage.⁷⁴

Without doubt, there were active portraitists in the Empire City at this time—the Robertsons and Caleb Boyle among them—but none could have professionally competed with Vanderlyn.⁷⁵ He was the most skilled portraitist in the state of New York, and was perhaps only surpassed by Stuart in the United States. Moreover, the population of New York City had exploded during the previous decade, swelling from 33,131 in 1790 to 60,515 at the close of the eighteenth century.

In addition, the political climate was exceptionally advantageous for Vanderlyn. When he departed New York for Paris in September 1796, Aaron Burr was only a United States senator. Upon returning less than five years later, the Republicans were gaining the political might that the Federalists were losing, and Burr had been elected vice president. Although John Adams had avoided a war with France, he had so lost the faith of his political party that Alexander Hamilton wrote and published a “Letter Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams.” It was partially due to this party infighting that Adams was defeated in the presidential election of 1800. Burr’s political manipulations during spring 1800 contributed to this crushing defeat.⁷⁶ The election of Thomas Jefferson in 1800 marked the beginning of twenty-four years of Democratic-

⁷⁴ Harold Edward Dickson. *John Wesley Jarvis: American Painter, 1780-1760, with a Checklist of His Works*. (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1949), 66-67.

⁷⁵ According to McKay’s *A Register of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers, Bookbinders, Printers & Publishers in New York City, 1633-1820*, “Boyle, Caleb, portrait painter,” lived in New York City from at least 1800 to 1805. McKay, 13. Boyle was living in New York City in July 1791, for it was then that his marriage to Eliza Stanton was announced. See: “Marriages,” *The New York Magazine or Literary Repository* (July 1791), 424.

⁷⁶ Stephen G. Kurtz, *The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800* (New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1961), 406. “This change was brought about by Aaron Burr’s cleverness and hard work. By convincing [Robert R.] Livingston, [George] Clinton and [Horatio] Gates to run for the assembly in the spring of 1800, Burr was able to present the people of New York with a ticket...difficult for Hamilton to defeat...When the New York legislature met in the fall the Republican majority selected twelve men pledged to cast their electoral ballots for the Republican candidates, Jefferson and Burr.” Adams would have retained the presidency if all of New York’s votes gone to his way, as they had in the 1796 election.

Republican presidents from Virginia. This shift in political climate, from the English-loving Federalist to the Francophile Democratic-Republicans, was ideal for Vanderlyn, as was the political position of his patron, Burr. All these factors indicate, as William Oedel has noted, that, “Vanderlyn was in a position to become a wealthy man and the premier portrait painter of his day. He became neither.”⁷⁷

Vanderlyn’s refusal to recognize the American art market, and his unsuccessful attempts to change that market are the main reasons for these failures. He returned to New York expecting commissions for paintings other than portraits. Unfortunately, these commissions never came. In England, both Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley had completed large history paintings in hopes of gaining financial riches in the mass sale of engraved reproductions. In 1801, Vanderlyn sought to mimic that pattern in the United States with a thoroughly American subject matter: the great falls of Niagara. Employing the neoclassical attention to the most minute of details, Vanderlyn completed several compositions of this great landmark in the hopes of completing a panorama painting.⁷⁸ With a return to Paris already in the planning stages in 1802, Vanderlyn proceeded with the utmost alacrity on his Niagara compositions. Burr wrote to his daughter in December 1802: “[Vanderlyn] is run down with applications for portraits, all of which, without discrimination, he refuses. He is greatly occupied in finishing his Niagara views, which, indeed, will do him honour. They will be four in number, and he

⁷⁷ Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 125.

⁷⁸ Vanderlyn may have gotten the idea from Joel Barlow, who had been interested in the panorama concept for some time. Only two of the four paintings of Niagara that Vanderlyn began during 1801-02 are finished, and these two served as the basis for the 1804 engraving. For information on these Niagara pictures, see: Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 127-52.

thinks of having them engraved in France. You hear the roaring of the cataract when you look at them.”⁷⁹

An analysis of Vanderlyn’s output while in New York indicates that there were many sitters who he did not refuse to paint. While there is no doubt that Vanderlyn was selective as to whom he painted during this brief two-year stay in New York City, the artist also discovered that despite his best efforts and intentions, New Yorkers were resistant to anything other than portraiture. As important, Vanderlyn also learned that while Burr was able to open doors for possible commissions, important doors were also slammed shut because of him. While many Federalists had an indifferent opinion of Burr in 1796, he was one of the most despised of the Democratic-Republicans at the opening of the nineteenth century. In addition, we shall see that while Burr’s patronage was a secret early in Vanderlyn’s career—at Burr’s request, it might be added—this patronage was a commonly known fact by 1801 when the artist returned from Paris. As a result, those with Federalist leanings—be they wealthy merchants, politicians, or otherwise—would deliberately avoid Vanderlyn’s services. Not only did these Federalists abstain from patronizing a friend of a political nemesis, they would also disapprove of Vanderlyn’s French, neoclassical style of portraiture, preferring, instead, a more English representation. In short, Burr’s patronage and Vanderlyn’s French training would become both a blessing and a curse for the artist.

Despite his aversion to portraiture, Vanderlyn was extraordinarily active in this genre during his two-year stay in New York. An analysis of his patronage during this period is instructive, both in terms of whom he painted, but also in regard to whom he did

⁷⁹ Mark Van Doren, ed., *Correspondence of Aaron Burr and His Daughter Theodosia* (New York: Stratford Press, 1929), 101.

not. Unsurprisingly, those whom Vanderlyn painted include friends and political allies of Burr. However, there were many who were in a position to aid Vanderlyn upon his return to the United States. Among them were New Yorkers John R. Murray and John Pintard. Murray and Vanderlyn had met while both were students at the Columbia Academy and the two became close friends. Yet despite purchasing works of art from Vanderlyn, Murray never commissioned a portrait. Pintard, the person who paid for Vanderlyn's tuition at the Columbia Academy, was one of the most philanthropic of New Yorkers during the early nineteenth century, but neglected Vanderlyn after the artist's return from France. Clearly, both the artist and his art were politicized by 1801.

While Oedel stated that, "Although much in demand, [Vanderlyn] accepted a minimum of requests for portraits, judiciously selected for reasons of friendship and politics," I contend that Vanderlyn was not the only person doing the "selecting."⁸⁰ Whom Vanderlyn turned away is only half of the story. Without doubt, this process was a two-way street; while Vanderlyn may have been so much "in demand" that he was forced to turn away Republicans, or friends of Burr who wished to have their likeness taken, it is unlikely that he was approached by Federalist for portraits in the first place. The magnitude of commissioning a portrait is lost on those in the post-photography world. Given the cost of such endeavors, such a decision was no doubt labored over. Even for the wealthiest of citizens, this was a process undertaken only once or twice in a lifetime. Consequently, potential patrons expected to be painted in a way similar to their friends and political allies. In addition, as portraiture recommendations often worked through social channels and through political allies, given two portraitists of near equal skill, potential sitters would select the artist with political views closest to their own.

⁸⁰ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 152.

The portrait of Roger Strong is an excellent introduction to Vanderlyn's initial stay in New York (**figure 59**). Although Burr moved from New York City to Washington, D.C. when elected Vice President, he opened many doors for his protégé. Roger Strong's commissioning a Vanderlyn-painted portrait is a good example of how Burr's friendship directly yielded an employment opportunity for the artist. Strong, a former soldier in the Continental Army, later studied law under Burr and became his partner.⁸¹ During Vanderlyn's time in New York City, Strong was engaged in a legal partnership with Ogden Edwards, a member of Burr's extended family, and their firm was located a short distance from the boarding house where Vanderlyn lived during 1802-03.⁸² The portrait commission was only the beginning of what was to become an enduring relationship between Strong and Vanderlyn. Strong also served as an alderman, a member of the New York state legislature, and as inspector of the state prison, and he later worked as Vanderlyn's legal council and financial advisor during the artist's extended European sojourn from 1802-1815.⁸³

Compositionally, the portrait of Roger Strong is similar to the self-portrait Vanderlyn completed in Paris a short time before. In both, the sitter is shown in a three-quarter view, displaying the right side of his face. The portraits also share the same even lighting and blank background, both common elements in smaller neoclassical portraits. These artistic ploys—in addition to the lack of ancillary elements such as books, quills, or inkpots—force the viewer to directly address the sitter without compositional distractions. Such structural austerity, including the muted color scheme, is far removed

⁸¹ New-York Historical Society, *Catalogue of Portraits in the New-York Historical Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 772-73. Also: Lindsay, *Works of John Vanderlyn*, 38, 129.

⁸² Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 159.

⁸³ Lindsay, *Works of John Vanderlyn*, 129.

from the American portraits of John Singleton Copley. Indeed, Vanderlyn's portrait of Strong is much closer to those by Jacques-Louis David than to those by Vanderlyn's colonial counterpart. Both in arrangement and in linearity, Vanderlyn's portrait of Roger Strong is nothing short of an example of French neoclassicism.

Such differences were clearly evident to Vanderlyn's contemporaries, and members of the Federalist Party shunned Vanderlyn's style of portraiture. Portraits by Stuart were the expected status quo. Vanderlyn's portraits were not only different, but they also looked decidedly French in style. These elements, when combined with Vanderlyn's close relationship with Burr, politicized both the artist and his art. Whereas he had intended to introduce a new style of portraiture to America, one that was morally instructive, Vanderlyn instead polarized the portrait-seeking clientele of New York. Even during this short stay in New York—he again departed for Paris in 1802 and remained in Europe for a dozen years—Vanderlyn painted only like-minded Republicans and associates of Burr.

Although a good illustration, the *Roger Strong* portrait is but a single example of Vanderlyn's painted oeuvre after his return to New York. Vanderlyn's surviving correspondence from this time largely consists of letters to and from Aaron Burr, and letters to Vanderlyn's brothers. In many cases, these documents are instrumental in identifying sitters and dating their portraits. The letter Vanderlyn wrote to Nicholas on 28 March 1802 is a good example:

I have now in hand a portrait of Mr. and Mrs. John Livingston & one of Doct. Bard who resides at Staatsburgh near Doct Tillisons & who was here a few days ago, but did not remain long enough to finish it, which is now put off intill another time. I have likewise begun another one of G. Clinton Jun. whose likeness I made at Esopus [the colonial name for Kingston] previous to my going to Europe. This one & Mr. Livingston I hope I shall get through with without

interruption & finish them about the middle of the next month. My purse will need to be a little replenished by that time.⁸⁴

This letter is an invaluable account in terms of identifying Vanderlyn's sitters. The above-mentioned 1802 portrait of George Clinton, Jr., a distant relative and childhood acquaintance of Vanderlyn, remains lost. The portrait of Dr. Samuel Bard has suffered a similar fate. Although the portrait is unlocated and the image survives only in a copy by another artist, this letter establishes that it was begun during the middle of March 1802.⁸⁵ Bard is an interesting sitter within Vanderlyn's oeuvre, for although Bard was not actively engaged in politics, he was professionally associated with the elite of New York City. Bard not only served as a physician to George Washington—surgically removing a carbuncle in 1787—but also treated both Burr and Hamilton in the early nineteenth century. The relationship between Bard and these two politicians was more than doctor-patient, for all three served on the governing boards of the medical school and hospital at Columbia University.⁸⁶

The double portrait of Mrs. Marinus Willett and her son Marinus, Jr. is another commission that clearly resulted from the Vanderlyn's association with Burr (**figure 60**). A former officer in the Continental Army, Marinus Willett served as sheriff of New York City for eight years between 1784 and 1796. Although over sixty years of age, Willett was active in the fickle New York Republican politics of the first decade of the

⁸⁴ John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 28 March 1802, Darrow Collection, SHM.

⁸⁵ Lindsay, *Works of John Vanderlyn*, 108, 147-148. Columbia University owns a portrait of Bard, and although it was at one time attributed to Vanderlyn, it is now thought to be a later copy of Vanderlyn's original by Thomas McClelland.

⁸⁶ John Brett Langstaff, *Doctor Bard of Hyde Park: The Famous Physician of Revolutionary Times, the Man Who Saved Washington's Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1942), 205. Despite his relationship with Burr, Bard was clearly apprehensive of him: "The intrigue which followed Hamilton's death led up to Burr's attempt to raise the western territory of the United States, and was full of Danger. Sam Bard, therefore, warned William [his son] on September 21, 1804 to be 'particularly cautious how you express yourself respecting Burr. I have no doubt he has his spies and emissaries in all companies and that he will leave no stone unturned to crush a young opponent.'" See Langstaff, *Doctor Bard*, 218.

nineteenth century, eventually becoming mayor of New York City in 1807.⁸⁷ During this period he and Burr became close friends. So deep was their friendship, in fact, that Willett supported Burr for party leadership of the New York Republicans after his duel with Hamilton. Given their relationship, Burr was the link between Vanderlyn and Willett.

Thirty-five years his junior, Margaret Bancker married Willett around 1800 and had their first of five children in 1801. Although compositionally reversed, the portrait of Mrs. Willett and her son is similar to Vanderlyn's earlier drawing of *Mrs. Daniel Strobel Jr. and Her Son, George*, which in turn was based on a portrait Vincent painted that Vanderlyn likely saw either at the 1796 Salon or in his teacher's studio. However, whereas Mrs. Strobel wears classically inspired Greek garments and a Greek hairstyle, Mrs. Willett wears more contemporary attire, thus indicating that Vanderlyn tempered his neoclassicism for an American audience. Although the attire is more nineteenth-century American than fourth-century B.C. Greek, Vanderlyn included many neoclassical elements, such as the strong light streaming in from the left side of the composition, and the restrained use of color. Moreover, Vanderlyn placed the sitters against a dark wall—complete with neoclassical molding—which forces the figures forward into the picture plane. Neoclassical portraitists such as David, Vincent, and Angelica Kauffman frequently employed such compositional tropes.⁸⁸

While Vanderlyn's relationship with Burr led to several commissions, the artist also secured several commissions from the Livingston family, a relationship that began when Vanderlyn met Catherine Livingston at the Columbia Academy in the early 1790s.

⁸⁷ I discuss this portrait in the next chapter. Interestingly, Trumbull painted Willett in an austere and linear fashion.

⁸⁸ Caldwell and Roque, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 254-56.

Although the Livingston family paid for more portraits later, two date from Vanderlyn's brief stay in New York from 1801 to 1802: those of John R. Livingston (**figure 61**) and his wife Eliza McEvers Livingston (**figure 62**). Compositionally, the latter is particularly interesting. Wearing a white dress with a dark sash, Mrs. Livingston sits with her arms folded across her lap. Her face, shown in a three-quarter view, is also reflected in profile in the mirror to her left. Although Vanderlyn's method of achieving a profile portrait is rare but not unheard of, depicting a sitter in profile was a common neoclassical ploy during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁸⁹ Indeed, such depictions are reminiscent of classical cameos or coinage. Gilbert Stuart's 1805 grisaille portrait of Thomas Jefferson is an excellent example of this practice (**figure 63**). Painted in profile to resemble an antique coin, Stuart transformed Jefferson from an American president to a Roman leader.⁹⁰

Although portraits in profile are rare within Stuart's oeuvre, it was a popular pictorial device that strongly appealed to the neoclassical tastes of Vanderlyn and his sitters. Burr not surprisingly approved of such depictions considering how strong of a neoclassical signifier profile portraits were during this time. In fact, Vanderlyn's 1802 portrait of Burr's daughter Theodosia is in profile rather than in the more traditional three-quarter view (**figure 64**). In addition to Theodosia, Vanderlyn painted two portraits

⁸⁹ Vanderlyn may have been inspired by Vigée LeBrun's 1787 portrait of her daughter. See: Joseph Baillio, *Elizabeth Louise Vigée LeBrun, 1755-1843* (Fort Worth, Texas: Kimball Art Museum, 1982), 24, 74-76. Ingres later used a mirror to achieve a similar end. See: Gary Tinterow and Philip Conisbee, eds, *Portraits by Ingres: Image of an Epoch* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1999), 134.

⁹⁰ For information on the profile portrait, particularly in America, see: Miles, *Saint-Memin*, 27-59. I argue that the profile portrait took on a Republican meaning (rather than Federalist) in the early nineteenth century, when it began to align specifically with French neoclassicism. Furthermore, it is important to note that while profiles and neoclassical in their linearity, the drawings and engravings by Saint-Memin do not follow this same trend of having Republican undertones. Patrons who sat for Saint-Memin knew their portrait would be in profile, they did not choose the depiction as a way of making a political statement. Moreover, Saint-Memin's portraits were far more egalitarian, with a likeness costing eight dollars for a male sitter. The drawing, twelve engravings, and the plate cost twenty-five dollars.

of Burr between 1802 and 1803. While one shows the politician with his upper body frontal with his head turned slightly to his left (**figure 65**), the second shows the politician in profile and facing to the right, a strong, even light illuminating his visage (**figure 66**). The exact size of the Theodosia portrait, these two were likely pendants and were intended to face one another.⁹¹

While one scholar suggested that Vanderlyn “accepted a minimum of requests for portraits, judiciously selected for reasons of friendship and politics,” such a sentiment implies that the artist did all the selecting.⁹² This is clearly not the case, however. Without doubt, other portraitists in New York were receiving commissions at this time, and as Vanderlyn was arguably the artist with the greatest skill active in New York City, there must be an explanation as to why some patrons passed him over in favor of artists with inferior ability. The reasons for such neglect could include dislike of Vanderlyn’s known benefactor, or an aversion to a style of painting that carried deep political associations. Whereas Vanderlyn the businessman was willing to overlook political differences, Federalist sitters—who would have been left with disagreeably charged political portraits—were not. The most reliable proof is Vanderlyn’s own list of sitters. In a city filled with wealthy Federalists between 1801 and 1803, Vanderlyn painted only Republicans and friends of Burr. Given Vanderlyn’s artistic prominence in New York City, Federalist sitters were certainly aware of his talent and availability

Whereas this interpretation is partially reached through the absence of Federalist patrons within Vanderlyn’s oeuvre, there is a well-documented case where a politician refused to sit for Vanderlyn. On 6 February 1802, John B. Coles, the chairman of the

⁹¹ Lindsay, *Works of John Vanderlyn* 37, 128-29. *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 116-117.

⁹² Oedel, “John Vanderlyn,” 152.

committee of the Common Council of New York, wrote to John Jay. “Dear Sir,” Coles began:

Some time in the last year the Common Council of this city entered into a resolution to procure your portrait at full length, for the purpose of placing it in one of the publick rooms.

Richard Varick, Esq., then Mayor, communicated to you this resolution, and you were pleased to inform him that you would sit for this purpose when necessary. Mr. Stewart, residing at Philadelphia, has been applied to paint this portrait, but has delayed coming here as he had promised to do, and a Mr. Vanderline, born at Esopus, who has been in France for a number of years, having returned to this State, with a high reputation as a painter, and having seen some of his performances in this line, I have engaged him. He is now ready to commence this painting. I have, therefore, now to request the favor of you to come here for the above purpose as early as you can make convenient.⁹³

Unsurprisingly, Stuart was the first choice for this commission. What this letter also makes clear, however, is that Vanderlyn had so established an artistic reputation in New York City less than a year after his return that only his former teacher eclipsed him in reputation. Moreover, the commission was for a full-length portrait, a format that Vanderlyn had not yet completed. Despite Jay’s political leanings and the feigned indifference Vanderlyn expressed to his brother, Vanderlyn was undoubtedly ecstatic with the opportunity laid before him. At the end of March, Vanderlyn wrote to Nicholas, “I am totally indifferent to make his portrait, still I should have preferred a work of this kind as both productive of some reputation & cash, affording also more pleasure in the variety of its different parts & inclined as well as permitted to work more constantly and steadily at it...”⁹⁴ Indeed, Vanderlyn was so concerned with making his art available to

⁹³ John B. Coles to John Jay, 6 February 1802, John Jay Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, no. 13018. The Common Council set forth the original commission on 13 July 1801. Thus, it took approximately 6.5 months for the committee to decide on Stuart, for Stuart to needlessly delay, and for the commission to eventually be handed down to Vanderlyn.

⁹⁴ John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 28 March 1802, Darrow Collection, SHM.

view that he drew portraits that he hoped patrons would show to family and friends after they returned to the United States from their stay in Paris. The city of New York offered him a commission for a portrait of a prominent citizen for public exhibition. While he may have been apathetic in his correspondence to his brother, Vanderlyn must have brimmed with excitement and pride at the prospect of establishing himself as an American artist of the first rank.

Vanderlyn became more and more suspicious of Jay's absence from New York as time went on. February and March had come and gone, and Vanderlyn had not yet heard when Jay might be available for the first sitting. Vanderlyn wrote to his brother at the end of March and expressed frustration: "I have not yet heard whether Jay is recovered from his illness, I am inclined to think he is averse to having it done by me more especially on account of the ill will he bears towards my Patron, for I do not think him above those littlenesses." Jay's oldest son, Peter Augustus Jay, wrote encouraging words to his father, explaining that "[Vanderlyn] is said to be one of the best portrait painters in the world—far superior to Stuart." Nonetheless, Jay remained at his estate at Bedford.⁹⁵

After waiting what he felt was the requisite period of time, the elder Jay finally wrote to Robert Lenox on 3 April 1802 to explain his situation:

Immediately on receiving the letter of Mr. Colles {sic} which informed me that Mr. Vanderlyn was ready to take my portrait, I wrote to him that as soon as roads would admit of it, that I would go to New York. I accordingly set out in February by the way of Rye; while there the late long storm came on, and before it ended I was taken with an intermittent fever, which rendered it prudent for me to return home. On finding this to be the case, I mentioned it to Mr. Colles {sic} by letter before I left Rye. Although since my return I have been less unwell than I was there, yet my health neither is, nor probably will be, in such a state as to permit

⁹⁵ Peter Augustus Jay to John Jay, 8 March 1802, John Jay Papers, no. 6101.

me to visit New York at a period as early as Mr. Vanderlyn's convenience may require. This delay is unavoidable...⁹⁶

Five days later, on 8 April, Lenox visited Burr and informed him that snowy roads, storms, or the sniffles would likely prevent Jay from visiting New York in the foreseeable future. Vanderlyn wrote to Burr the same day and expressed suspicion as to Jay's motives.⁹⁷ Although Vanderlyn made several trips to Washington, D.C. during the twelve months remaining in his stay in New York, he spent the majority of his time at Richmond Hill, and had Jay been agreeable to the portrait, there is no doubt that Vanderlyn could have painted the politician prior to April 1803. Clearly, Vanderlyn believed that Jay had political and personal reasons to avoid his services.

But Jay was far more indifferent towards Vanderlyn than the artist ever could have been towards Jay, and the wily politician was willing to wait until Vanderlyn departed for Europe before visiting New York City. Other artists were anxious for the prestigious commission. One such artist was Caleb Boyle, who although never offered the commission, nonetheless wrote a letter to the Common Council on 11 July 1803 requesting them to purchase his full-length portrait of Jay (**figure 67**).⁹⁸ On 26 March of the following year, the committee agreed "it would be proper to procure a likeness of Mr Jay to be executed by Mr Boyle provided it shall prove a good likeness and the Common Council shall be satisfied with the painting." Boyle's portrait—which appears to be a hybridization of Stuart's 1794 portrait of Jay placed on top of Washington's body and background from Stuart's *Lansdowne Portrait* (**figure 68**)—was harshly judged by the

⁹⁶ Robert Lenox to John Jay, 3 April 1802, John Jay Papers, no. 9024.

⁹⁷ John Vanderlyn to Aaron Burr, 8 April 1802, Pennsylvania Historical Society.

⁹⁸ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York* (New York: Published by the City of New York, 1917), 3:339.

committee: “the portrait of the late Governor Jay made by Mr Boyle is not such as meets the ideas of the Board, and therefore that they will not purchase it.” As a backhanded thank you, the city offered Boyle fifty dollars to keep the portrait on 29 November 1804.⁹⁹

Unbeknownst to Boyle, Trumbull was in the background. He arrived from London on 27 June 1804 after a decade abroad and was offered the commission for the full-length portrait of Jay less than two weeks later (**figure 69**).¹⁰⁰ A letter Jacob Morton wrote to Jay on 30 October 1804 asked the politician to sit for Trumbull sometime in the coming winter.¹⁰¹ That Trumbull was appointed the artist must have been agreeable to Jay, considering their long-lasting friendship. If the sitting occurred during the winter as the committee requested, it likely happened in early December when Jay was visiting New York from his home in Bedford.¹⁰²

Trumbull’s portrait of Jay—which was finished in 1805 and was hung next to his earlier portraits of George Washington and George Clinton—established the older artist as the undisputed winner in the Jay-commission fiasco. Trumbull not only reaped the monetary rewards and prestige that such a portrait provided, but he also maintained his monopoly on portrait commissions for the New York City Hall—a monopoly that would extend for another seven years.¹⁰³ Even Caleb Boyle, who completed a portrait on

⁹⁹ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 3:476.

¹⁰⁰ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 3:567.

¹⁰¹ Jacob Morton to John Jay, 30 October 1804, John Jay Papers, no. 13019.

¹⁰² John Jay to Maria Jay Bayner, 9 January 1805, John Jay Papers, no. 5947. In this letter, Jay states, “Early in the last month I went to New York...” An examination of Jay’s correspondence from 1805 does not indicate that he made other visits to New York. Thus, barring the possibility that Trumbull traveled to Bedford for the initial sitting, it seems to have occurred in December 1804.

¹⁰³ The commissions for the City of New York by Trumbull and Jarvis will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Vanderlyn also completed two works for the city of New York: one of James Monroe and Andrew Jackson, discussed below. See: The Art Commission of the City of New York, *Catalogue of the*

speculation that was rejected by the Commission, walked away not only with his portrait in hand (although, perhaps, with damaged pride), but also with fifty dollars. Vanderlyn was the most unfortunate person in this affair. The Jay portrait, which would have been his first full-length work and further secured his reputation, ended up being nothing short of both an embarrassment and an epiphany for Vanderlyn. More than ever, Vanderlyn realized that while Burr opened many doors, he was equally responsible for others being slammed shut. This became especially true after Burr's political fall from grace following his duel with Alexander Hamilton on 11 July 1804.

Return to Europe

Vanderlyn was not in New York on the fateful day of the Burr-Hamilton duel, however, but was instead in Europe. He had sailed for Paris the first week of April 1803.

Although he had anticipated a return trip to Europe since the moment he set foot back on American soil, it was not until Edward Livingston—then mayor of New York and the founding president American Academy of Fine Arts—approached the artist to acquire plaster casts of sculpture and copies of paintings on behalf of the newly formed Academy that Vanderlyn had the financial means to return.¹⁰⁴ Vanderlyn's selection is not surprising considering his familiarity with the Livingston family and the political disposition of Major Livingston.¹⁰⁵ In June 1802, Edward Livingston circulated a

Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York (New York: Art Commission of the City of New York, 1909).

¹⁰⁴ Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 174.

¹⁰⁵ Vanderlyn's correspondence indicates that he painted a picture—likely a portrait—for Edward Livingston prior to his return to Europe. Writing from Paris to Nicholas, Vanderlyn indicated that Edward Livingston still owed sixty dollars. Nicholas responded in March 1804 that Livingston had paid ten dollars less than the agreed price. This painting does not survive. See: John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 1 July 1803, Darrow Collection, SHM. Edward was the youngest brother of Robert R. Livingston.

subscription list to acquire the \$5000 necessary to procure the casts and paintings. At fifty dollars a share, nearly \$3000 had been raised by late October of 1802. The initial shipment of sculpture into New York was announced the first week of June 1803, thus indicating that Robert Livingston—in Paris working on, among other things, the Louisiana Purchase—completed the primary legwork on this project prior to Vanderlyn's arrival in Paris on 6 May 1803.¹⁰⁶ In addition to the \$2000 the Academy gave Vanderlyn for the procurement of art, the artist also received a \$500 stipend for a single year's work. He stayed for a dozen.¹⁰⁷ While this study is most concerned with how his portraits were able to convey a political message to those in and around New York City, this second stay in Europe—much like his first—is important in terms of the people Vanderlyn met and painted, and the ways in which some were able to assist the artist after his return to the United States.

Vanderlyn had other pursuits while in Europe in addition to working on behalf of the American Academy of Fine Arts. In England, for example, he expected to find an engraver for his paintings of Niagara Falls, the sales of which were to give the artist a level of financial security. Moreover, Vanderlyn realized that his aspirations to paint something other than portraits would find a more accepting market in Europe than in the United States; not coincidentally, Vanderlyn's most famous works—*The Death of Jane McCrea*, *Marius amid the Ruins of Carthage*, and *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*—were painted during this extended stay in Europe. Yet despite the income and

Vanderlyn had already painted Mr. and Mrs. John Livingston while in New York, and as mentioned, likely met Robert while a student at the Columbia Academy with Robert's daughter.

¹⁰⁶ I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909*, 6 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1928), 5:1391, 1395, 1409. Also: Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 19.

¹⁰⁷ For information on Vanderlyn's arrangement with the American Academy of Fine Arts, see: Mary Bartlett Cowdrey and Theodore Sizer, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953), 3-12.

prestige large works provided, Vanderlyn often turned to portraiture when his financial situation dictated or when it was politically advantageous.

For example, Vanderlyn met James Monroe, then serving as American minister to Great Britain, early in July 1803, and joined the politician in an extended visit to London that began at the end of the month (**figure 70**). The primary goal of this venture for Vanderlyn was to secure an engraver for his view of Niagara, but he was also delighted to further his acquaintanceship with Monroe, someone who could provide professional assistance, both in Europe and then later in the United States. In a letter he penned on 30 July, Vanderlyn stated that he was to commence a portrait of Monroe before returning to Paris.¹⁰⁸ Although not mentioned in this correspondence, Vanderlyn also painted Monroe's wife, presumably as a way to pay for his return to Paris after depleting his coffers during the London stay. Such financial difficulties were to plague Vanderlyn throughout his European stay. Even while in London, Vanderlyn was forced to borrow money from John R. Murray, his friend and former classmate at the Columbia Academy.¹⁰⁹

Financial considerations also influenced Vanderlyn's most well known portrait from this second stay in Paris, that of Robert R. Livingston (**figure 71**). Vanderlyn and Livingston became close friends while in Paris, as shown by Vanderlyn's celebrating Independence Day with a "great patriotic feast" at the diplomat's Parisian home shortly after arriving from New York.¹¹⁰ The half-length portrait Vanderlyn completed the following year was painted as a gift to the American Academy of Fine Arts. The artist

¹⁰⁸ John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 30 July 1803, Darrow Collection, SHM. In addition, Vanderlyn painted Monroe at least twice more years later after they returned to the United States.

¹⁰⁹ Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 20-21.

¹¹⁰ John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 1 July 1803, Darrow Collection, SHM.

painted Livingston seated in a high-backed chair with his right arm resting on two documents placed on the table next to him. The first of these documents has the phrase “Plan for establishing an Academy of Fine Arts in New York” written on it. The second document is an addressed letter that alludes to Livingston’s diplomatic role as minister plenipotentiary to France. In Livingston’s mind, the foundation of the American Academy of Fine Arts and his prominent role negotiating the 1803 Louisiana Purchase were clearly his most enduring civic achievements.

This year was a busy one for Vanderlyn, and one that was life-altering for Burr. In addition to the Livingston portrait, Vanderlyn also worked on his first historical piece, *The Death of Jane McCrea*, and saw the completion of the Niagara engraving. However, Vanderlyn found himself in a precarious predicament. Although he wished to dedicate the engraving to Burr, Vanderlyn was aware this would alienate a large contingent of potential consumers in America who were political enemies of the Vice President. Instead, Vanderlyn dedicated the engraving to the American Academy of the Fine Arts. Vanderlyn also sent the Academy his two original paintings. Vanderlyn hoped the sale of prints taken from these paintings would provide independence from portraiture after he returned to the United States. Vanderlyn wrote to his brother and stated that the prints “please all who see them here and I flatter myself that they will please equally in America.”¹¹¹ Despite such high hopes, the print failed to sell as well as Vanderlyn anticipated, presumably because of his affiliation with Burr.

Vanderlyn was in a dire financial predicament due to the slow sales of the Niagara print, and as a result, he was forced to rely on old friends such as Fulwar Skipwith and John R. Murray for help. Vanderlyn also found new friends upon whom he could

¹¹¹ John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 3 July 1804, Darrow Collection, SHM.

depend. William Maclure, for example, was partially responsible for funding Vanderlyn's later stay in Rome. When times became particularly tough, Vanderlyn set aside his history painting aspirations and returned to portraiture as a way to earn enough money to keep financially afloat. Vanderlyn wrote in a June 1808 letter to Nicholas,

I am now engaged here in the portrait line and trust I shall be able to support myself the length of time I propose to remain here & to have some time to devote to some more agreeable & instructive branch of the art. I confess I find little or no pleasure in painting portraits & that the Painter needs a great deal of patience whenever he has to do with an impatient sitter, which occurs most frequently—& I am not able to paint them as expeditiously as Mr. Stewart—and this makes me anxious to remain here some time longer, in hopes of acquiring a degree of facility from some further practice & further study of the works of the Old Masters which double advantages one does not find in America or I would certainly prefer it for I would be better rewarded there than here for my labours.¹¹²

This passage is important for several reasons. First, it indicates that Vanderlyn was forced to rely upon portraiture, despite his desire to pursue “some more agreeable & instructive branch of the art.” Moreover, Vanderlyn recognized the potential market in the United States for copies of the Old Masters, a mode of painting that remained largely apolitical. Portrait commissions often resulted through preexisting contacts. The Livingston family is but a single example. Vanderlyn completed a small drawing of General John Armstrong—Livingston's brother-in-law who then lived in France—in 1808 (**figure 72**). Two years later, Vanderlyn painted a double portrait of Alida Livingston Armstrong and her daughter Margaret (**figure 73**). Thus, Vanderlyn utilized the pattern of small, inexpensive portrait drawings leading to larger oil-on-canvas commissions during his second stay in Europe. Shortly thereafter, Vanderlyn painted a portrait of General Armstrong (**figure 74**). While Vanderlyn would have preferred to avoid portraiture, he acknowledged its value when experiencing financial hard times.

¹¹² John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 14 June 1808, Darrow Collection, SHM.

Vanderlyn left Paris once he was relieved of his duty of procuring casts for the American Academy of the Fine Arts. He started out for Switzerland in August 1805, and then departed for Italy two months later. He did not lack for acquaintances while living in Rome, but Washington Allston, whom Vanderlyn had met while in London, remained his only close friend and was one of the few American artists then working in Rome. Their studios were close to one another, and the two painters developed a strong and enduring friendship. As he had done while in Paris, Vanderlyn searched out local Americans living in Rome to secure patronage. Despite the acclaim Vanderlyn had achieved in 1803 with *The Death of Jane McCrea*, this patronage came in the form of portraiture rather than history paintings. Unfortunately, financial problems continued to plague him, notwithstanding the aid of Maclure, Skipwith, and Murray. Without doubt, Vanderlyn's financial situation and lack of close friends were the two greatest sources of his self-acknowledged periods of depression. Vanderlyn wrote to his brother, "I deeply feel the want of social and domestic pleasure."¹¹³ Painting portraits, an activity in which Vanderlyn took no pleasure, only compounded this problem.

George Gibbs, the eldest son of a Rhode Island merchant, met Vanderlyn during the artist's second European excursion (**figure 75**). Although Salvatore Mondello suggests that Vanderlyn met Gibbs while in Rome, the portrait Vanderlyn painted of Gibbs was certainly shipped to the patron while Vanderlyn was in Paris.¹¹⁴ Vanderlyn's relationship with Gibbs is an excellent example of how the artist's European contacts benefited him—in a backhand way, no less—after his return to New York. Gibbs

¹¹³ John Vanderlyn to Nicholas Vanderlyn, 2 January 1807, Darrow Collection, SHM.

¹¹⁴ For information on Gibbs and Stuart in Rome, see: Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 28. In a letter written to Gibbs on 5 July 1811, Vanderlyn noted that the painting was almost ready to be shipped. Quoted in: Ellen G. Miles, "'Memorials of great and good men who were my friends': Portraits in the Life of Oliver Wolcott, Jr." *American Antiquarian Society* (107:1): 143.

married Laura Wolcott, the daughter of Oliver Wolcott, Jr., in 1810; Gibbs was then related through marriage to one of the most prestigious Federalist families in all of New England.

Despite a political break from the Federalist Party over the War of 1812, Oliver Wolcott, Jr. was elected governor of Connecticut in 1817 as a member of the American Toleration and Reform Party (**figure 76**). During the preceding years, Joseph Delaplaine, a book publisher from Philadelphia, had wished to include an engraved portrait and biographical sketch of Wolcott in a project of prominent Americans, an idea the politician received with lukewarm indifference. The first volume of *Delaplaine's Repository of the Lives and Portraits of Distinguished Americans* appeared in 1816.¹¹⁵ In a June 1817 letter to his son-in-law, Wolcott stated,

Joseph Delaplaine has written to me, proposing that I should sit for my Portrait, to be presented to him, & to furnish a sketch of my Life, to be introduced into his Repository. It is out of the question for me to write anything about myself to be published at this time. All I can do, is to furnish a copy of Stuart's Portrait, to be made by Vanderlyn or Jarvis in New York.¹¹⁶

With Wolcott unable or unwilling to travel to New York or Boston for the sake of a portrait, commissioning a copy, especially an admired example by Stuart, was a logical compromise (**figure 77**).

As Vanderlyn had painted Gibbs while both were in Europe, there seems to be little doubt that it was at his urging that the commission went to Vanderlyn rather than to Jarvis, who may have been opposed to copying a portrait by Stuart, an artist he considered somewhat of a nemesis. Interestingly, this portrait was a copy after Stuart's

¹¹⁵ Miles, "Portraits in the Life of Oliver Wolcott, Jr.," 141.

¹¹⁶ Wolcott to Gibbs, postscript of letter of 30 June 1817. Quoted in Miles, "Portraits in the Life of Oliver Wolcott, Jr.," 141.

1813 original rather than the portrait John Trumbull painted in 1806 (**figure 78**).¹¹⁷ Vanderlyn's copy lacks the linearity that generally marks the portraits from his pencil. Moreover, the portrait that Wolcott chose to have copied—Stuart's rather than Trumbull's—is also significant. Whereas Stuart remained above the political fray, Trumbull, as will be shown, was and remained a strong Federalist, a political party from which Wolcott was attempting to distance himself. Wolcott's commissioning Vanderlyn to copy Stuart's portrait is an interesting compromise, a political *via media* in portraiture. Such a decision was also more practical, for the Stuart portrait was more accessible than was a portrait Trumbull painted. As a publisher hoping to appeal to both sides of the divided political landscape, Delaplaine was pleased with Wolcott's decision, writing to him in early April 1818, "I am happy to learn that the copy is to be from a portrait by Stuart."¹¹⁸ Clearly, an original Vanderlyn composition carried more political meaning—perhaps distressingly so to many—than one by Stuart.

Yet despite the political meaning that his portraits often possessed, Vanderlyn found enough commissions in Paris—and certainly could have had more if he had wished to work more diligently in that genre—to remain financially afloat. Many of his most striking likenesses come from this period of his career. The half-length portrait of Sampson Vryling Stoddard Wilder, demonstrates Vanderlyn's technical abilities as a portraitist (**figure 79**). Seated at a desk, atop which rests a letter addressed to the sitter's Parisian residence with a Lyon postmark, Wilder turns to his left and looks directly at the viewer. The apparent smoothness of the canvas, with little evidence of the artist's brush, securely places this work within the French neoclassical school of David and Ingres.

¹¹⁷ The Trumbull portrait of Wolcott was commissioned and owned by Josiah Quincy. See: Miles, "Portraits in the Life of Oliver Wolcott, Jr.," 130

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Miles, "Portraits in the Life of Oliver Wolcott, Jr.," 143.

Moreover, the linearity and somber palette further position this portrait within the French school, an appealing formal style for a Francophile such as Wilder.¹¹⁹

Vanderlyn not only painted portraits, as demonstrated by the striking composition of Sampson Vryling Stoddard Wilder, but as the artist mentioned to his brother in 1808, he also copied works by the Old Masters. The best example of this practice is his 1809 copy of Correggio's *Antiope* (1519), a work Vanderlyn often saw during visits to the Louvre. He intended this copy to be somewhat of a companion to his more famous *Ariadne* painting, which he began to sketch around 1809. Vanderlyn was encouraged by the recent successful and profitable exhibition in Philadelphia of *Danaë Receiving the Shower of Gold* by the Swedish artist Adolph Ulric Wertmüller, intending to exhibit these two, full-length female nudes in the United States (**figure 80**).¹²⁰

As the year 1810 came to a close, Vanderlyn anticipated his return to the United States. In an attempt to financially secure return passage, Vanderlyn wrote to his friend John R. Murray and asked him to purchase the *Antiope* painting (**figure 81**). Although Vanderlyn did not receive a response—assuming, perhaps optimistically, that a British vessel had seized Murray's affirmative reply—Vanderlyn shipped the painting to Murray through General John Armstrong, Vanderlyn's Parisian patron who was returning to the United States after his term as American ambassador to France had expired. Reluctantly, and perhaps only as a favor to a friend, Murray purchased the then-shocking piece. However, although Murray admired the work privately, he felt the nudity of the figures made the painting too indecent to hang in his home.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of this portrait, see: Susan E. Strickler, "A Paris Connection: John Vanderlyn's Portrait of Sampson V. S. Wilder," *Worcester Art Museum Journal* V (1981-1983): 33-47.

¹²⁰ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 165. Also: Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 37.

Whereas the story of Vanderlyn's *Antiope* may seem inconsequential, it explains a great deal about the ways in which Murray would assist his friend. Despite the fact that Vanderlyn and Murray had been friends since their time as students in the Robertsons's Columbia Academy, Murray never commissioned a portrait from Vanderlyn, opting instead to have Stuart paint a portrait in 1800. As demonstrated by his purchase of *Antiope*, however, Murray was willing to purchase from Vanderlyn what was thought to be an inappropriate painting, as such a work had no political undertones. There was a limit to that generosity, however, and the Federalist merchant was unwilling, despite a longstanding friendship, to commission a portrait that was not in line with his political ideology.

Although Vanderlyn expressed interest in returning to New York during 1812, the conflict between Great Britain and the United States delayed this departure. The Treaty of Ghent, signed by President James Madison on 17 February 1815, brought this war to a formal conclusion, and Vanderlyn sailed for the United States four months later.

Although unhappy and depressed for most of this stay in Europe, he had the most professionally productive period of his career. Vanderlyn completed three well-received history paintings while in Europe, and expected—or at the very least hoped—to complete similar works upon his return to New York. He was to be disappointed.

Disappointment in New York City

While one scholar has stated that Vanderlyn's return to the United States “was really the end of his career,” the artist had every reason to be optimistic when arriving in New

York.¹²¹ To begin, patriotic feelings were sweeping the country after the victorious conclusion of the War of 1812, and artistic commissions were certain to follow commemorating the great battles and heroes of the conflict. Vanderlyn's return, thus, can be seen as an attempt to position himself in line for prestigious governmental commissions. Such a move was not grounded in lunacy. Indeed, Vanderlyn had every reason to feel positive. Trumbull returned to London in 1808 and had not yet returned to his native land. In the realm of portraiture, Jarvis was the most fashionable painter in New York City, and had been since Trumbull's departure. Vanderlyn wished to avoid portraiture, however, so the presence of Jarvis would have been of little concern. Moreover, when Vanderlyn left for Europe in 1803, Jarvis had not yet completed an oil portrait of note, and it is doubtful Vanderlyn would have foreseen Jarvis's mercurial rise in the New York art world. With two extensive European stays under his artistic belt, Vanderlyn expected to be the favored artist of the Democratic-Republican-controlled federal government. Although he had friends in prominent political positions—Madison and Monroe, whom the artist met in Europe, each served consecutive terms as president from 1809 to 1825—Vanderlyn was unable to secure governmental funding for the large-scale history paintings he wished to complete. As a result, Vanderlyn's oeuvre from 1815 to 1825 consists of two distinct branches: portraiture and panoramas.¹²²

Vanderlyn's political alignment both of these fields.

Vanderlyn likely first met John Henry Purviance, the personal secretary to James Monroe, when the artist accompanied the future president to London in 1803. A letter

¹²¹ Charles Henry Hart, "Portrait of Abraham Hasbrouck Painted by John Vanderlyn," *Art in American* 5 no. 11 (February 1917): 105.

¹²² For information on Vanderlyn's panoramas, see: Kevin J. Avery and Peter L. Fodera, *John Vanderlyn's Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988).

Vanderlyn wrote to Purviance in early 1804 indicates to the friendship that was quickly made and long maintained.¹²³ In 1815, Purviance was still personal secretary to Monroe, who was serving as Madison's Secretary of State in 1815, and this made him a valuable contact for Vanderlyn after his return to the United States. It is not surprising, then, that Vanderlyn contacted Purviance shortly after returning from Europe. Responding to an earlier letter, Purviance wrote to Vanderlyn on 30 November 1815 expressing his affection: "Yesterday's mail brought me the favor of the 24th. I sincerely congratulate you upon your return to our native country. You have long known my wishes for it. I need not here repeat those."¹²⁴ It becomes clear later in Purviance's response that the primary objective in Vanderlyn's unlocated first letter was to acquire assistance in securing a governmental commission for a portrait of Andrew Jackson, who had recently risen to fame after the Battle of New Orleans: "I immediately took an opportunity of mentioning your wish on the subject of General Jackson's portrait to Doctor Blake, the mayor of the City [Washington, D.C.], who felt every disposition to promote it, but he states that when that subject was lately submitted to the consideration of the Common Council, there was rather a disposition to save it, on account of the penury of funds." Clearly upset at passing along less than favorable news, Purviance concluded that his portrait by Vanderlyn had recently arrived, and that "I should be glad to shew it to your friends here." Closing his letter, Purviance urged Vanderlyn to write to Monroe "informing him of your return, referring to his past attentions, and requesting a

¹²³ Vanderlyn to John Purviance, 15 January 1804, Darrow Collection, SHM.

¹²⁴ John Henry Purviance to Vanderlyn, 30 November 1815, Darrow Collection, SHM.

continuance of his friendly sentiments and good offices when any suitable occasion may offer.”¹²⁵

Clearly, Vanderlyn wasted little time in accepting Purivance’s offer for assistance, or in writing to Madison and Monroe to secure patronage.¹²⁶ By the end of 1816, Vanderlyn had completed a 26 x 22 inch bust-length portrait of Monroe for Madison (**figure 82**), and a similar-sized portrait of Madison for Monroe (**figure 83**).¹²⁷ Obviously, such commissions were strongly influenced by party politics and were exchanged as tokens of friendship between the two presidents, one incoming and the other outgoing.¹²⁸ Vanderlyn was a logical choice—politically and formally—for the painting of such personalities. Not only did the artist have a long-standing relationship with Monroe, but Vanderlyn’s cool, austere style was particularly well suited to the pragmatic personalities of the sitters. The two are shown wearing black, their heads turned slightly to their left. With the exception of a column in the background of each—

¹²⁵ John Henry Purviance to Vanderlyn, 30 November 1815, Darrow Collection, SHM. It appears that this portrait, which must have been completed in 1815 or before, is lost. The only other portrait of John Henry Purviance listed in the *Catalog of American Portraiture* is one dated to c. 1819 and attributed to either Vanderlyn or Charles Bird King. At the Maryland Historical Society, this unsigned portrait has a stiffness displayed only by Vanderlyn’s earliest portraits, and it therefore appears unlikely to be by Vanderlyn and dated c. 1819. A King attribution is far more likely.

¹²⁶ Vanderlyn was well acquainted with both Monroe and Madison when he returned to the United States in 1815. As mentioned, Vanderlyn accompanied Monroe to London in July 1803. In addition, Vanderlyn drew Dolley Madison earlier that year before he departed for Europe. Although lost, its existence is known through a diary entry by a Mrs. Thornton: “February 28, 1803. Saw Mr. Vanderlyn begin Mrs. M’s picture in black lead pencil.” Allen D. Clark, ed. *Life and Letters of Dolley Madison* (Washington, D.C.: Press of W. F. Roberts Company, 1914), 505.

¹²⁷ There is a copy of the Monroe portrait at the Museum of Art at the University of Michigan. Purchased in 1895, this portrait is attributed to Vanderlyn, but solely on the basis that it is a copy after his 1816 original now owned by the White House. In a 1978 letter in the curatorial file, Aida El-Khalidi wrote: “The portrait was ‘restored’ sometime in the 1930’s by a local portrait painter. A former curator suggests that some of the original feeling of the work has been lost through over-zealous retouching.” As such subsequent attempts at formal analysis has been inadequate to firmly establish Vanderlyn as the artist, and it is just as likely a later copy by another artist.

¹²⁸ William Kloss, *Art in the White House: A Nation’s Pride* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 1992), 78.

over Monroe's right shoulder and Madison's left—the compositions themselves are devoid of ancillary compositional elements.

Vanderlyn clearly had ulterior motives in mind when he undertook this commission. In order to gain further artistic favor and advertise his talents—and for financial reasons, no doubt—Vanderlyn had the 1816 portrait of Monroe engraved for mass distribution.¹²⁹ Aware that a large-scale governmental commission was on the horizon for the decoration of the Rotunda of the Capitol, Vanderlyn attempted to position himself through his political contacts for such an award. However, Trumbull was given these commissions and worked on them from 1817 until 1824. Vanderlyn, disgruntled at the inability of his political friends to assist him for this particular prominent commission, returned to portraiture and began to plan the decoration of his own Rotunda that was to open in New York City in 1823.

While Monroe was of little assistance to Vanderlyn in the Capitol Rotunda commission, the Virginian undoubtedly exercised influence regarding his portrait for the New York City Hall (**figure 84**). The commission was awarded during December of 1817, and Vanderlyn finished it by 27 November 1821 when he displayed it in his Rotunda in New York City.¹³⁰ This portrait was eventually moved to City Hall where it hung alongside earlier full-length portraits that were completed by several artists including Trumbull, Jarvis, and Thomas Sully. Commissioned by the city of New York—which retained some Federalist inclinations during the first quarter of the nineteenth century—the portrait of Monroe, intended to be publicly displayed, formally

¹²⁹ Unfortunately, Vanderlyn met with an indifferent public for his Monroe engraving. Only one of the twenty-five engravings sent to Nicholas Biddle in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, were sold, despite being shown to the entire state legislature. Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 46-47. Also: J. Biddle to John Vanderlyn, 3 April 1817, Darrow Collection, SHM.

¹³⁰ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 9:410, 12:114-115.

resembles a Stuart or Trumbull portrait more than the French, neoclassical portraits typical of Vanderlyn. In fact, in several regards, Vanderlyn's portrait of Monroe is reminiscent of Stuart's 1796 *Lansdowne Portrait*, a work the younger artist would have seen while an assistant in Stuart's Philadelphia studio. This resemblance to Stuart's full-length portrait follows with the status quo for such works; a full-length portrait with a sitter before a blank background would be exceptionally unusual. In each of these portraits, the subject stands between a table to his right and a high back chair to the left. Both gesture to the table with their right hand, and their left arm hangs along their body. Symbolically important elements sit atop the table in both portraits. In the Monroe portrait, for example, the fifth president rests his right hand on a map of Florida that alludes to the recent purchase of the Florida Territory from Spain in 1819.

What is important about this portrait is the way Vanderlyn tempered the neoclassical style he had successfully utilized in France that appealed to a Democratic-Republican audience for a Federalist-sponsored commission. Vanderlyn's trademark linearity has been exchanged for a more painterly, loose brushwork. Moreover, his typically somber palette has been replaced with flashes of green, red, and yellow. Had Trumbull not been busy with his paintings for the Capitol, there can be little doubt that the New York City Common Council would have chosen him as the painter, even if the sitter would have preferred Vanderlyn. Given Monroe's political leanings, however, Vanderlyn was a logical and appealing second option. In addition, given the prestige of the commission, there is no doubt that Vanderlyn would have been willing to abide by whatever stipulation the Common Council set forth in the hopes of securing additional commissions.

The Common Council, however, was satisfied with the progress that Vanderlyn had made on the Monroe portrait by the Spring of 1819, for before his first commission for the City Hall was completed, the artist was offered \$200 upfront for a full-length portrait of General Andrew Jackson in his dress uniform; Vanderlyn later billed the city an additional \$300 when he completed the painting (**figure 85**).¹³¹ Although this fee may at first seem considerable, it is important to remember that Vanderlyn had sought the \$32,000 commission for the history paintings to decorate the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C. Indeed, Vanderlyn took little joy in the fact that the \$500 payment for the Jackson portrait was twice, for example, what Jarvis was paid for his earlier full-length portrait of William Bainbridge. However, whereas Jarvis painted full-length portraits quickly, Vanderlyn labored over his. Vanderlyn worked on the Jackson portrait for more than nineteen months, a disproportionate amount of time even considering the monumental size of the portrait. Without doubt, the more than a year and a half that Vanderlyn worked on the Jackson portrait seems infinitesimal when compared with the four years Vanderlyn required to deliver the full-length portrait of Monroe. The Common Council was so delighted when finally in possession of the Monroe portrait that they issued Vanderlyn an additional \$100 in December 1821.¹³²

Although Jackson visited New York City during February 1819, this stay was only for a few days.¹³³ Busy with his panorama and unable to acquire anything other than a brief sketch, Vanderlyn traveled to Washington, D.C. in March 1819 to paint the

¹³¹ James G. Barber, *Andrew Jackson: A Portrait Study* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 65.

¹³² *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 12:139-140.

¹³³ In a letter to his daughter, John Pintard wrote on 23 February 1819: "I have just returned from the City Hall seeing Gen[era]l Jackson sworn in as a citizen of this City. See: *Letters from John Pintard to his Daughter Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, 1816-1833* 4 vols. (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1940), 4:168.

soldier's likeness from life. Vanderlyn received his first sitting in Washington, D.C. and requested another when unhappy with this initial attempt. Jackson, however, informed the artist that he would be unable to sit again until the autumn. Vanderlyn's dissatisfaction with this first likeness is demonstrated in several ways. First, Vanderlyn wrote a letter on 2 April 1819 to Ralph E.W. Earl, an artist who was familiar with Jackson, and asked Earl to send a small painted portrait through the post. A receipt from Vanderlyn in Earl's papers indicates that he complied with Vanderlyn's wishes. In addition, Vanderlyn painted an additional bust-length portrait in 1819 that is now in the City Hall Collection in Charlestown, South Carolina (**figure 86**).¹³⁴ With minor differences, this smaller portrait is close enough to the slightly later full-length portrait to be considered a finished study. Finally satisfied with his likeness of Jackson, Vanderlyn traveled to New Orleans—the locale of the background of the portrait—and used the 1819 bust-length portrait as the likeness for the final full-length composition.

As with his earlier portrait of Monroe, Vanderlyn restrained his typical neoclassicism in this particular portrait of Jackson. Formally, this makes the portrait of Jackson—with the General in full military dress during the Battle of New Orleans—visually analogous to the full-length portraits of naval heroes that John Wesley Jarvis completed immediately following the War of 1812. While time has darkened Vanderlyn's painting, an 1828 engraving by Asher B. Durand makes clear compositional elements that are now obscure in the original painting. Jackson's right arm crosses his body, with his right hand holding a saber that points to the movement of troops to his left. The attendant and horse to Jackson's right give the composition an overall sense of movement from upper left to lower right. The use of smoke and light in the background

¹³⁴ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 64-66.

enhances this theatrical feeling of motion. Dramatic and emotional rather than prosaic and intellectual, Vanderlyn painted this portrait more in the vein of English romanticism than French neoclassicism.

Not everyone in New York was pleased with Vanderlyn's full-length portrait; John Pintard, for example, thought Jarvis should have been awarded the commission for the portrait.¹³⁵ However, the likeness must have pleased both the sitter and the City Council of Charleston, South Carolina, for in January 1824, Vanderlyn—who had been elected an honorary member of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts in May 1821—was commissioned to paint an additional full-length likeness for the growing portrait collection of the city (**figure 87**).¹³⁶ As before, Vanderlyn traveled from New York to the District of Columbia to secure initial sittings with Jackson, who had recently been elected to the United States Senate. Afterwards, Vanderlyn returned to New York and modeled Jackson's figure from that of his friend and fellow artist, John James Audubon, whom Vanderlyn had met in 1821 while in New Orleans.¹³⁷ Delivered by March of 1825—a swift 14 months from commission to completion—Vanderlyn's work was shown at the fourth annual exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of the Fine Arts.¹³⁸ The City Council paid Vanderlyn \$600, while the exhibition earned the portraitist increased prestige.

¹³⁵ *Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter*, 1:168-69.

¹³⁶ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 79. For information on the portrait collection at City Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, see: Anna Wells Rutledge, *Catalogue of Painting and Sculpture in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Charleston, South Carolina* (Charleston, South Carolina: The City Council of Charleston, 1943).

¹³⁷ Mondello, *Private Papers of John Vanderlyn*, 54. Holzer, 1037. Writing in his journal, Audubon wrote, "Met the artist Vanderlyn, who asked me to give him a sitting for a portrait of General Jackson, since my figure considerably resembled that of the General, more than any he had ever seen." Quoted in Lindsay, *Works of John Vanderlyn* 131.

¹³⁸ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 79. Anna Wells Rutledge, "Paintings in the Council Chamber of Charleston's City Hall," *Antiques* 98 (November 1970), 795.

A comprehensive comparison of Vanderlyn's two full-length portraits of Jackson reveals a great deal of information about the ways portraits were able to do political work. Jackson wears a full-dress uniform in each. Yet, whereas the earlier portrait for the New York City Hall is brimming with the drama of battle, the Charleston portrait is restrained and calm. Jackson's facial expression in the New York portrait bespeaks the tension of conflict, whereas his facial expression in the later work is more serene. In the 1821 portrait, Jackson grips his sword with his right hand and gestures across his body to the troops to his left, thus giving the composition a sense of dynamism. There is no such movement in the later work, and while Jackson holds a similar sword, here it is hangs along his right side with the tip planted in the earth, serving more as a cane or prop than as a weapon used in battle. In all, Vanderlyn's first full-length painting of Jackson is a portrait of a general in the midst of battle. In contrast, Vanderlyn's 1824 work is a portrait of Jackson, with only a stationary cannon to the general's right to indicate the presence of the Army. In the words of Michael Quick, "The result is a formal work of relatively peaceful mein {sic}; the cannon, seen dimly in the background, suggests the sitter's former military triumphs but does not dominate the spirit of the work."¹³⁹

Without doubt, Vanderlyn's second portrait is more successful, both as a likeness of the seventh president and as a compositional whole. An explanation for the success of the second portrait resides in the fact that Vanderlyn was working in a more familiar style than he had in the portrait painted for the City Hall of New York City.

To state that Vanderlyn's first full-length portrait of Jackson is more "English" in style than the second may be overly simplistic, but there is more than an element of truth

¹³⁹ Michael Quick. *American Portraiture in the Grand Manner: 1720-1920*. (Los Angeles: Museums Associates of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1981), 138.

in such an observation. In the portrait commissioned for the Charleston City Hall, Jackson is shown far more (to use an earlier phrase) prosaic and intellectual than dramatic and emotional. Indeed, whereas Vanderlyn's earlier full-length was painted in a more English, painterly style to appease the New York Federalists who commissioned the work, Vanderlyn's second full-length portrait of Jackson retains the linearity and calmness that were characteristic of the vast majority of the artist's privately-commissioned portraits. Without doubt, the 1824 portrait is much more neoclassical in execution, and such a stylistic decision was a logical one given the political temperament of Charleston in particular, and the South more generally. It is not surprising to learn that when exhibited at the 1825 exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts, Vanderlyn's portrait of Jackson hung near Jacques-Louis David's 1804 masterpiece, *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (**figure 88**).¹⁴⁰ Although this painting by David is less neoclassical in temperament than his works from the end of the eighteenth century and contains a sense of motion and drama that Vanderlyn's obviously lacks, both paintings exhibit a profound sense of linearity, and both artists utilized a subdued color scheme. Subject matter is also important. The public exhibition of a propagandistic portrait of Napoleon, whom most Federalists labeled as a tyrant of the highest order, would have been unthinkable in New York. In the South, however, both Bonaparte and neoclassicism were embraced. As such, Vanderlyn's two full-length portraits of Jackson aptly demonstrate how politics could permeate portraiture in important and profound ways.

Although these prestigious portrait commissions and his *Panoramic View of the Palace and Gardens of Versailles* remain Vanderlyn's most well known paintings

¹⁴⁰ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 79.

between his return to the United States and 1825, he also completed more than a dozen, smaller and privately-commissioned portraits during the same period. With Trumbull still hard at work with his Capitol Rotunda paintings and Jarvis often spending time away from New York on commission-seeking trips, Vanderlyn remained the preeminent portraitist at work in New York City. Not surprisingly, patrons often selected Vanderlyn as an artist because of family or political associations. Indeed, Vanderlyn's patronage remained overwhelmingly Republican during this period; only one Federalist sitter whose identity is certain commissioned a Vanderlyn portrait between the artist's return to the United States and 1825. Clearly, Vanderlyn's style still carried a political meaning so profound that Federalists were unwilling to overlook it.

However, others seemed less concerned with Vanderlyn's style of portraiture and the political messages with which these portraits could be charged. Indeed, not all of Vanderlyn's sitters in New York were politicians, and such people who were not politically engaged would have wished for a less political likeness. Samuel Ringgold was one such patron, and one of only three sitters Vanderlyn painted of officers wearing military attire (**figure 89**). A member of the first graduating class at West Point and afterwards a national hero following his death at the Battle of Palo Alto during the Mexican-American War, Ringgold was a member of General Winfield Scott's New York staff during the mid-1820s. In his portrait—a 1996 acquisition by the National Portrait Gallery—Ringgold wears an artillery uniform, complete with gold bullet buttons, herringbone twill fabric, red cape, and a high, 'V' neck collar, which helps date the work from between 1821 and 1827. Ringgold stands before a background that suggests clouds and blue sky, his blue eyes gaze to his right. Although not as neoclassical in style when

compared with other works by Vanderlyn from this time, the portrait of Ringgold exhibits a painful linearity when compared with the virtuosic paintings of military officers painted by Jarvis or Thomas Sully.¹⁴¹

In contrast to sitters such as Ringgold, a politically neutral junior Army officer, others were eager to embrace Vanderlyn's linear, neoclassical style. Daniel D. Tompkins, a rising star in the Democratic-Republican Party, was one such patron (**figure 90**). Tompkins's political and personal lives were exceptionally complicated. As his biographer made clear, Tompkins assisted Aaron Burr during the 1800 presidential election, and it therefore possible that Vanderlyn met the young politician between 1801-03 when Burr was introducing the artist to political friends and allies.¹⁴² Like Burr, Tompkins experienced a quick rise in both state and national politics. He served in the New York State Legislature, and then in the United States House of Representatives. He was elected Governor of New York in 1807 when only 33 years old. He served in that capacity for a decade, when, in 1817, he resigned so that he could serve as James Monroe's vice president, a post he held for eight years.

A number of portraits of Tompkins survive; among them are an 1808 full-length by Trumbull (**figure 91**), an 1816 bust-length work by Sully, and an additional full-length portrait Jarvis painted in 1820 (**figure 92**). In each of these likenesses, Tompkins has been shown with a youthful, somewhat fleshy face that is oval in shape. Tompkins's face in the portrait attributed to Vanderlyn lacks this fleshiness; the once oval shape here is

¹⁴¹ Carolyn Carr and Ellen G. Miles, *A Brush With History: Paintings from the National Portrait Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 90.

¹⁴² Ray Watkins Irwin, *Daniel D. Tompkins: Governor of New York and Vice President of the United States* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1968), 42-44.

more gaunt. This has led to the suggestion that while the portrait is by Vanderlyn, the sitter cannot be Tompkins, but is instead an unknown man, and dates from about 1816.¹⁴³

Such a suggestion, however, is easily dismissed. To begin, an analysis of the sitter's attire is enlightening. The sitter in Vanderlyn's portrait wears a dark, double-breasted coat with an M-notch in the lapel, with a visible white stock tied at the throat and ruffle. A comparison of his clothing to those worn by Matthew Clarkson in his 1823 portrait by Samuel Lovett Waldo and William Jewett firmly establishes Vanderlyn's portrait from around the same time (**figure 93**).¹⁴⁴ A comparison between this work and Vanderlyn's portraits from around 1816 is also instructive, for his patrons at this time are shown wearing a high collared shirt and a tied white stock. The recently discussed 1816 bust-length portraits of Madison and Monroe aptly illustrate this point.

The problem of Tompkins face appearing thinner in Vanderlyn's portrait than in earlier portraits remains. However, this is easily explained. The last decade of Tompkins's life, that is, from about 1815 until 1825, were tumultuous. To begin, he was experiencing extreme financial difficulties, particularly during his tenure as vice president.¹⁴⁵ In addition, his wife was extremely ill during his second term as vice president, causing Tompkins to largely neglect his duties as President of the Senate. If these stresses were not enough, Tompkins was himself terribly ill during this time, and was finding himself more and more disposed to alcoholism. Given these stresses—financial, health, and family—it would not come as a surprise if Tompkins had lost

¹⁴³ Lindsay, *Works of John Vanderlyn* 148.

¹⁴⁴ Indeed, the attire is so similar between the Vanderlyn portrait of Tompkins and Waldo and Jewett's portrait that they may have actually painted the portrait. The M-notch began to appear in men's clothing around 1812, but it was not until a decade later that it became fashionable.

¹⁴⁵ For example, Sully wrote Tompkins a letter in September 1817 requesting the \$200 owed him for the portrait painted the year before. See: Irwin, *Daniel D. Tompkins*, 227.

enough weight to slightly alter the shape of his face. Indeed, “had Trumbull painted Tompkins in 1825, the year he retired from public life...he would have captured a vastly different likeness.”¹⁴⁶ Considering the available information, Vanderlyn’s portrait is likely of Tompkins and dates from around 1823.

Having painted members of the Livingston clan in each phase of his professional career, Vanderlyn utilized his association with this large and influential family during this period of his career as well. The most striking of these portraits is of Henry Brockholst Livingston, a cousin of Robert R. Livingston (**figure 94**). Henry Brockholst Livingston was a strong Antifederalist and was named to the New York State Supreme Court in 1802; four years later Thomas Jefferson appointed him to the United States Supreme Court. Referred to during his lifetime as either Judge Livingston or Brockholst Livingston, he is shown in the portrait owned by the New-York Historical Society seated, turned to his right, and intently gazing at the viewer. Vanderlyn shows a balding man against an austere, blank background, emphasizing Livingston’s “fine, Roman face” with the linearity and somberness of color that is characteristic of Vanderlyn’s Parisian portraits.¹⁴⁷ Given the political sentiments of the sitter, such a neoclassical depiction was both appealing and appropriate.

In contrast to Judge Livingston, who was involved in government at the highest level, his cousin Catherine Livingston Garrettson, the wife of the Methodist itinerant preacher Freeborn Garrettson, was unengaged in political service. Indeed, both she and her husband distanced themselves from politics as far as possible, and thus, the sitter did not expect her portrait to perform any kind of political work. As a result, Vanderlyn’s

¹⁴⁶ Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), 73.

¹⁴⁷ *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 471.

portrait of her, dated from around 1820, does not follow the same strict adherence to French neoclassicism as does the portrait of Judge Livingston. Garrettson was born in 1752, and Vanderlyn painted her in somber black and white attire appropriate to her advanced age. A reddish-brown drapery that hangs on the right has been pulled aside on the left to reveal ships sailing on a river. A vase with pink flowers sits atop the table in front of the open window, as does the book Garrettson holds open with her left hand. Although this portrait exhibits the linearity that is typical of the majority of Vanderlyn's portraits, it is far less austere than the portrait of Judge Livingston. The reason for this discrepancy is simple: Livingston expected his portrait to do political work on his behalf, whereas his cousin, the wife of a Methodist preacher, had no such desire. Indeed, for Livingston, Vanderlyn's portrait was able to visually speak to the sitter's commitment to the Democratic-Republican Party, and that party's continued commitment to a strong diplomatic relationship with France rather than Great Britain, especially after the War of 1812.

The War of 1812 ushered in an infusion of young political and military talent; Whereas Jarvis painted many members of the military, Vanderlyn was preferred by members of the Democratic-Republican Party. Young politicians such as Mahlon Dickerson were often keenly interested in establishing and securing their political identity (**figure 95**). A native of New Jersey, Dickerson rose to political prominence in the years surrounding the War of 1812. From the Princeton class of 1789, Dickerson's entrée into politics came during the late 1790s when he moved from his native Morris County, New Jersey, to Philadelphia, where he worked on Thomas Jefferson's behalf prior to the 1800 presidential election. As thanks for the help, Dickerson was given consecutive minor

political posts in and around the Philadelphia area during the first decade of the nineteenth century. Dickerson's return to New Jersey in 1810 signified the beginning of his political maturity: he served on the New Jersey Supreme Court from 1812-1815, as governor from 1815-17, and in the United States Senate from 1817-1833. Afterwards, he served as the Secretary of the Navy during the presidential administrations of Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren.¹⁴⁸

As a junior senator and a rising force in national politics, Dickerson would have been keenly interested in the ways a portrait could announce political affiliation. Dickerson presented the portrait to a political ally as a gift, and the likeness, now owned by the Harvard University Law School, "shows the influence of French neoclassicism portraiture. The rich, brown background and clearly lighted head are derived from [Jacques-Louis] David."¹⁴⁹ Compositionally unembellished and with a somber color scheme, Dickerson sits facing to his left and holds a light brown pamphlet in his left hand. He wears a black coat and waistcoat, and a white shirt with stock, ruffles and cuffs; the portrait is devoid of color with the exception of the dark brown wood chair that shows a flash of red upholstery, and the sitter's blue eyes. As with the portrait of Judge Livingston, Dickerson's visage is pale, and even his lips seem to lack a blood supply.

¹⁴⁸ *American National Biography*, s.v. "Dickerson, Mahlon."

¹⁴⁹ File on the Mahlon Dickerson portrait by John Vanderlyn at the Harvard University Law School at the Catalog of American Portraiture. Fogg Art Museum, *American Art at Harvard* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), no. 29. There is an additional portrait of Mahlon Dickerson that has traditionally been attributed to John Vanderlyn at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark. This second portrait, clearly by an inferior artist, exhibits many of the characteristics of a later copy, and was obviously based upon Vanderlyn's original. For example, the copyist ran out of canvas on the lower part of the canvas before he could paint in Dickerson's left hand holding the pamphlet he holds in the first. Furthermore, as the background in portrait at Harvard is brown in hue, and the background in the portrait at the New Jersey Historical Society is more of an olive color, it is also possible that the later of these two works was based upon a print source, as Vanderlyn's likeness of Dickerson was included in volume 3 of *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans*. Thus, the general composition of the portrait would have been available to copyists, but not Vanderlyn's choice of colors for such elements as the background and the chair.

The linearity that appears in almost all of Vanderlyn's portraits of politicians is also present. In all, Dickerson chose to follow the pictorial norm that was dictated by the majority of Vanderlyn's similarly minded, Democratic-Republican patrons.

Two years Vanderlyn's junior, Abraham Joseph Hasbrouck moved to Kingston in 1795 and became engaged in mercantile affairs (**figure 96**). Given the relatively small size of Kingston during the end of the eighteenth and that he was related to the Bruyn family Vanderlyn knew well, there is no doubt that Hasbrouck was familiar with Vanderlyn's family, if not John himself. Hasbrouck served as Kingston's representative in the New York State legislature from 1797 until 1811. He was elected as a Republican to the United States House of Representatives in 1813. Although he served only one term in the House of Representatives—deciding to return focus to his mercantile affairs—Hasbrouck once again entered the political arena in 1822 when he was elected to the New York State Senate.¹⁵⁰

Vanderlyn frequently visited Kingston after his return to the United States, and there would have been many opportunities for Hasbrouck to sit for a portrait after he returned to Kingston following his term in the United States House of Representatives. Hasbrouck's attire, which consists of a dark coat with a slight M-notch on the lapel, and a prominent shirt frill worn with a high white stock, is very similar to the clothing seen in an 1823 portrait of Matthew Clarkson by Samuel Lovett Waldo and William Jewett at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹⁵¹ But whereas the *Clarkson* portrait by Waldo and Jewett

¹⁵⁰ Diego Suarez, *The Collection of Portraits of American Celebrities and Other Paintings Belonging to the Brook* (New York: Published for The Brook, 1962), 71.

¹⁵¹ The Albany Institute of History and Art own another portrait of Hasbrouck attributed to Vanderlyn. Although the two portraits are clearly related, the work in Albany does not appear to be by Vanderlyn, as the sitter's complexion exhibits a ruddiness that Vanderlyn portraits of males generally lack. When compared with the portrait at The Brook, the sitter in the Albany appears more youthful, with darker hair.

displays a Stuart-inspired brushwork and color scheme—indicating that Vanderlyn was not the only skilled portraitist in New York during the 1820s—the neoclassically-inspired portrait of Hasbrouck exhibits the subdued color scheme indicative of Vanderlyn’s work of Democratic-Republicans, and it may have been commissioned to commemorate Hasbrouck’s recent return to politics. Thus, while the portrait commission came through what was probably a longstanding relationship with the artist’s family if not the artist himself, Vanderlyn still painted the sitter in a way that was agreeable to his political party.

Zachariah Schoonmaker is another of Vanderlyn’s Kingston patrons who had ties to the Kingston area (**figure 97**). Schoonmaker and Vanderlyn were close friends, and Schoonmaker’s son, Marius, wrote the first biography on the artist. The portrait—which can be dated from around 1816 on the basis of Schoonmaker’s attire—displays a distinct departure from the linearity of the majority of Vanderlyn’s portraits: “The white vest and neck-cloth that he wears under his high collared, double-breasted dark blue coat are freely painted. The visible brushstrokes in the face and attire mark a stylistic departure from the crisp, detail-oriented portraits Vanderlyn had painted earlier in the century under the influence of his teacher Françoise-André Vincent, and of Jacques-Louis David.”¹⁵² Although Schoonmaker was commissioned as a second lieutenant during the War of 1812, he was unengaged in politics, and thus he accepted such a departure from Vanderlyn’s more political, neoclassical style of portraiture. A comparison between this portrait and those of Madison and Monroe from the same year is instructive. All three sitters wear similar double-breasted coats and neck-cloths. The Madison and Monroe

¹⁵² Richard Wilson Torchia, *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century, Part II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 210.

portraits, however, exhibit a linearity that the portrait of Schoonmaker lacks. Moreover, Vanderlyn painted Schoonmaker's face with a slightly ruddy complexion, a trait uncommon in Vanderlyn's portraits of politicians. Without doubt, the portrait of Schoonmaker is about as close to a "Stuartesque" portrait as Vanderlyn painted. Clearly, expectations for an apolitical family friend were vastly different from those completed for Republican presidents.

From the beginning of his career through the conclusion of this study around 1825, Vanderlyn depended on the upper echelon of the Democratic-Republican Party for the vast majority of his patronage. After training in Paris, an education made possible through the generosity of Aaron Burr, Vanderlyn returned to the United States with a distinctly French style of painting, a style that uniquely appealed to a political party that desired a strong relationship with France rather than Great Britain. The proof of this appeal resides in the portraits Vanderlyn is known to have painted prior to 1825. When the patron or commission dictated, Vanderlyn restrained his linear and somber style. His portraits of Democratic-Republicans, however, retain a smooth, French neoclassical style that was shunned by the Anglophile members of the Federalists Party.

With this pattern in mind, I conclude this discussion with the exploration of Vanderlyn's portrait of William Jay (**figure 98**). Although Vanderlyn drew Federalists during his first stay in Europe—William R. Davie is a good example—William Jay remains the only Federalist whom Vanderlyn painted from life during the artist's time in the United States prior to 1825.¹⁵³ The second son of John Jay, William's political views did not differ significantly from those of his father. Although not as politically active, William received an 1818 judicial appointment in Westchester County by Governor De

¹⁵³ Recalling that Vanderlyn copied the portrait Stuart painted of the once-Federalist Oliver Wolcott, Jr.

Witt Clinton, the Federalist who replaced Daniel D. Tompkins as governor the year before. A 28 May 1819 entry in John Jay's financial ledger makes clear that this portrait was a gift to his son, perhaps as a way of congratulating him on the recent judicial appointment. This entry lists a payment of \$100 to William "to pay Van Derline for portrait."¹⁵⁴ The portrait was completed no later than 4 August 1820 when Peter Augustus Jay, William's older brother, wrote to their father, "I have at length got William's picture from Vanderline. I cannot say that I think it a good likeness."¹⁵⁵ Why might it not have been a good likeness? Perhaps Vanderlyn was unable to accurately replicate William's facial characteristics onto a canvas. Given Vanderlyn's skill in portraiture, however, there remains the possibility that Vanderlyn was guilty only of painting William Jay in a way that was politically averse to what both the sitter and his family expected.

When considering the ill feeling between Vanderlyn and Jay that extended back to 1801, this seems a perplexing commission. However, Trumbull was occupied elsewhere, hard at work both painting and promoting his historical paintings for the Capitol Rotunda, and Jarvis was constantly traveling outside New York on portrait-seeking adventures. Vanderlyn remained the most established and prestigious portraitist in the state. A close inspection of the portrait of William Jay shows how far away from his neoclassical roots Vanderlyn could sway if forced. Like Schoonmaker and other non-Democratic-Republican individuals such as Catherine Livingston Garretson, William Jay is shown with a red, rosy complexion that is more typical of a Stuart portrait than one by Vanderlyn. Further, an ochre-colored drapery to the sitter's right contrasts with the green

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Linda McLean-Connelly in the curatorial file from the John Jay Historic Homestead, New York States Office of Parks, Recreating, and Historic Preservation.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Augustus Jay to John Jay, 4 August 1820, John Jay Papers, no. 6244.

background. This inclusion of a pulled-aside drapery, a compositional element more English in style at this time than French, was rare in Vanderlyn's American portraits during the time of this study. Clearly, Federalist and Democratic-Republicans had different expectations as to how their portraits should look. Whereas Vanderlyn was able to monopolize one side of the political fence, his Federalist counterpart in portraiture, John Trumbull, was to monopolize the other.

Chapter Four

John Trumbull and the English Aesthetic:

Portraiture of the New York Federalists

John Trumbull was born a little more than six months after Gilbert Stuart, but their early lives took different directions. Whereas Stuart was born into a working-class family in Rhode Island, Trumbull was born into an aristocratic family from Connecticut, and his father was later to become the only colonial governor to support the colonials in their bid for independence from Great Britain. Like his father, John Trumbull attended and graduated from Harvard College. Afterwards, Trumbull served in the Continental Army and achieved the rank of Colonel while under the command of Horatio Gates.

Despite his father's wishes to the contrary, Trumbull wished to pursue a career in the arts. An opportunity allowed a visit to Europe in 1780. Trumbull first traveled to Paris, and afterwards proceeded to London, where he began to study with Benjamin West. This period of study was short-lived, however, for Trumbull was arrested for treason in November 1780 and was imprisoned in a London jail. Trumbull was finally released in June of 1781 and returned home to Lebanon, Connecticut. He remained in the United States until December of 1783, when he packed his trunks and returned to London and again studied in West's studio. This stay abroad lasted approximately five years, and Trumbull made his greatest strides as a portraitist during this time. He began to emulate the painterly style then fashionable in England. He also began to turn his mind away from portraiture and began to conceptualize more prestigious historical compositions.

Trumbull was filled with aspirations for painting historical compositions when he returned to New York City in 1789. However, he found there a public relatively

indifferent to his historical compositions. As the most accomplished portraitist in New York City—Stuart was still in Ireland—Trumbull settled into painting the leadership of the Federalist Party and began to complete large, full-length portraits for the New York City Hall. Stuart's arrival in New York City in 1793, however, likely encouraged Trumbull to accept a diplomatic position, and he returned to England as the personal secretary to John Jay. Although he was abroad for nearly ten years, he seldom painted and became more disillusioned in regards to the arts. Indeed, Trumbull so despised portraiture that he advised aspiring painters to avoid an artistic career. John Blake White, a young American from Charleston, South Carolina, visited Trumbull in London during 1800 and expected to hear words of encouragement. Instead, Trumbull told him to give up his profession. Trumbull told White,

Were I twenty years younger than I am, I would this moment commence the study of Law. Be advised by me, and return to that study (the Law) [in] which you say you have been engaged. By all means relinquish that of painting. It will never repay you for your pains...You have left the study of Law for Painting, a certainty, for an uncertainty...I would sooner make a son of mine a Butcher or a Shoemaker, than a Painter. Take my advice as a Friend, return & prosecute the study of the Law.¹

The next words from White's journal make it clear that the aspiring artist would not heed Trumbull's advice: "All of this only made me smile."²

Trumbull returned to New York City in 1804 and found a much different political landscape than when he had departed. His Federalist friends had been politically displaced by the meteoric rise of the Democratic-Republicans. As a result, Trumbull

¹ "The Journal of John Blake White," Paul R. Weidner, ed. *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* XLII, no. 2 (April 1941), 63. The continuation of this Blake's journal appeared in successive editions of *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*. See: "The Journal of John Blake White," Paul R. Weidner, ed. *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* XLII, no. 3 (July 1941), 99-117; "The Journal of John Blake White," Paul R. Weidner, ed. *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* XLII, no. 4 (October 1941), 169-186.

² "The Journal of John Blake White," 63.

began to temper his English style for one that was more neutral in nature. Trumbull accomplished this ‘neutralization’ through the restraint of his once vibrant palette, eliminating ancillary elements, and through an increased compositional linearity. Despite his desire to avoid portraiture, the Common Council of the city of New York awarded Trumbull the most prestigious commission for portraits they had yet given to an artist. The portraits Trumbull painted for this commission indicates that sitters from opposing political parties were simply painted in different ways, even when the artistic decisions were left to the artist and commissioning committee. Trumbull painted ten portraits for City Hall, yet found his professional predicament increasingly bleak. This was only made worse by the arrival from Philadelphia of John Wesley Jarvis who *wanted* to paint portraits. Although Trumbull hoped to avoid portraiture, he was aware that this genre would comprise a dominant part of his artistic output. The arrival of a younger and more talented competitor helped urge Trumbull to return to London. He stayed for eight years. When he finally did return, he placed the majority of his effort in the completion of his historical compositions that commemorated the events surrounding the American Revolutionary War.

* * *

Youth, Harvard, and the Continental Army

John Trumbull was born on 6 June 1756 in Lebanon, Connecticut, and was the youngest of six children parented by Jonathan Trumbull and Faith Robinson Trumbull. Unlike most artists of his day who were often the sons of shopkeepers or fellow artisans, John Trumbull was born into a wealthy and prestigious family and was nothing short of a New England aristocrat. Trumbull’s father, a 1727 graduate of Harvard College, was a

wealthy merchant who financially prospered by providing provisions to British troops during the French and Indian War. The elder Trumbull was a representative to the Connecticut General Assembly and came to political prominence following the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765. The artist's father was appointed deputy governor in the spring of 1766 and succeeded William Pitkin as governor in the fall of 1769. He held this post until his retirement from public life in 1784. He was the only colonial governor to support the American Revolutionary War.

Governor Trumbull's youngest child was bright, energetic, and exceedingly precocious. In his autobiography, the artist wrote of an accident that occurred at the age of four or five that caused irreparable damage to his left eye: "The optic nerve must have been severely injured, for although the eye recovered entirely its external appearance, yet vision was so nearly destroyed that, to this day, I have never been able to read a single word with the left eye alone."³ Yet such an injury did not prevent Trumbull from reading Greek at the age of six, or Virgil, Cicero, and Horace in the original Latin by the age of twelve.⁴ Trumbull studied with Nathan Tisdale, the headmaster of the most prestigious preparatory school in New England. Despite Trumbull's admitted problems with mathematics, Tisdale thought his student ready to enroll at Harvard College late in 1771. However, Trumbull did not wish to embark upon a collegiate career, and instead pleaded with his father to allow the pursuit of the arts:

The tranquility of the arts seemed better suited to me than the more bustling scenes of life, and I ventured to remonstrate with my father, stating to him that the expense of a college education would be inconvenient to him, and after it was finished I should still have to study some profession by which to procure a living; whereas, if he would place me under the instruction of Mr. Copley, (then living in

³ Theodore Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 6.

⁴ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 5,9.

Boston, and whose reputation as an artist was deservedly high,) the expense would probably not exceed that of a college education, and that at the end of my time I should possess a profession, and the means of supporting myself—perhaps of assisting the family, at least my sisters.⁵

This argument failed to move Trumbull's father, however, who wished for his youngest son to study law, or, preferably, divinity. Trumbull's father was determined that his son attend college, and so the future artist traveled to Cambridge with his older brother Jonathan for the purpose of taking entrance exams in January 1772. Trumbull performed well on these examinations and was formally admitted to the college with a junior-class standing on 7 February.⁶

It was during this trip to Cambridge in January 1772 that Trumbull first met John Singleton Copley, an artist Trumbull would see again in London. In his autobiography, he recalled:

A mutual friend of Mr. Copley and my brother, Mr. James Lovell, went with us to introduce us. We found Mr. Copley dressed to receive a part of friends at dinner. I remember his dress and appearance—an elegant looking man, dressed in a fine maroon cloth, with gilt buttons—this was dazzling to my unpracticed eye!—but his paintings, the first I had ever seen deserving the name, riveted, absorbed my attention, and renewed all my desire to enter upon such a pursuit.⁷

Despite being dazzled by Copley's appearance—and one can almost hear Trumbull's plead to his father to allow a pursuit of an artistic career—the young artist-to-be instead focused his scholastic efforts on what he called “moral and natural philosophy.”⁸

Although the newly discovered principle of electricity particularly enraptured Trumbull, art was clearly never far from his mind. Trumbull read various treatises on painting and

⁵ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 10.

⁶ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 11. Also: Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 11.

⁷ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 11.

⁸ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 13.

began to study perspective while a student.⁹ He also painted now-lost portraits after engravings of Isaac Newton and John Locke.¹⁰

Trumbull graduated from Harvard College in July 1773 at the tender age of sixteen. However, his time in Cambridge was not happy. Reflecting in his autobiography, Trumbull wrote:

I graduated without applause, for I was not a speaker...Several circumstances prevented my forming intimate connections while in college; I was the youngest boy in my class; I had entered in any unusual way, (a sailor would say that I got in at the cabin windows;) and I had too little pocket money to partake in any expensive gaieties, if my timidity and awkwardness had not also prevented me from doing so.¹¹

Words occasionally slipped from Trumbull's pen that make it clear how he viewed his colleagues at Harvard. For example, he bragged that "I had no superior in Latin" shortly after beginning his studies, and he referred to his classmates as "competitors." In addition, he wrote, "This advanced state of my acquirements rendered unnecessary any exertion of study to maintain my footing with my class."¹² Indeed, Trumbull carried an arrogant air with him, and this feeling of superiority did not dissipate with old age. In fact, in a graduating class of 36 students, Trumbull's closest friends were underclassmen: Christopher Gore (class of 1776), and Rufus King (class of 1777).

Trumbull returned to Lebanon after his commencement from Harvard. This was a tumultuous time in the American colonies. Initially unemployed, Trumbull drew in his

⁹ Trumbull's 1772-73 charge-out record from Harvard indicates that he borrowed *Dr. Brook Taylor's Method of Perspective Made Easy*, the John Dryden English translation of Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy's *The Art of Painting*, William Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty*, Horace Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, and Roger de Piles's *Cours de Peinture par Principes*. This charge-out record is reproduced in Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 14. In addition, like Vanderlyn two decades later, Trumbull drew from Charles Le Brun's *Expression des Passions de l'Âme*; a drawing of *Attention* is held at Yale University.

¹⁰ These works remain lost. See: Theodore Sizer. *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull: Artist of the American Revolution*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 51, 56.

¹¹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 14.

¹² Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 11, 12.

spare time and began to teach at his former school after Nathan Tisdale suffered a stroke in the autumn of 1773. Several months later, on 16 December 1773, a group of patriots dressed as Mohawk Indians boarded three ships—the *Dartmouth*, the *Eleanor*, and the *Beaver*—and threw more than 300 crates of tea into Boston harbor. This event proved to be a unifying catalyst for the American colonies against Great Britain. Tisdale had recovered enough to resume his duties by the spring of 1774, and Trumbull began to think of the inevitable conflict that could bring military glory shortly thereafter: “I sought for military information; acquired what knowledge I could, soon formed a small company from among the young men of the school and the village, taught them, or more properly we taught each other, to use the musket and to march, and military exercises and studies became the favorite occupation of the day.”¹³ The American Revolutionary War officially began at Lexington, Massachusetts, on 19 April 1775. Trumbull wrote a letter to his brother on 23 May and announced that he had been appointed an adjutant in the First Regiment of Connecticut Troops under the command of General Joseph Spencer.¹⁴ Trumbull was set to return to Boston.

Considering the political and social turmoil in the British colonies at this time, Trumbull’s mind was not surprisingly far from art during this moment in life. However, the years surrounding the American Revolutionary War—that is, from 1775 until Trumbull’s departure for London in 1780—are important in several regards to Trumbull’s later artistic life. First, Trumbull met many influential men who would later determine the direction of the artist’s career. In addition, Trumbull’s time in the military also indicates several personality traits that would become evident in the years to follow.

¹³ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 16.

¹⁴ John Trumbull to Joseph Trumbull, 23 May 1775, Connecticut State Library, Governor Joseph Trumbull Collection.

First, he was a man with intense personal convictions, even when those beliefs were more extreme than the situation required. Secondly, and perhaps more important for the sake of Trumbull's entrance into the art world, was his ability to resist authority. At the age of 21, Trumbull had—in his own mind at least—a successful military career under his belt and was now qualified to decide which career path was best for him. In addition, the letters he wrote to his superiors—in the government if not in the military—clearly demonstrate that Trumbull was then comfortable disagreeing with figures of authority.

Although the title of his memoir would indicate otherwise—it is, after all, *The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull*—the artist's military career was brief and relatively undistinguished.¹⁵ His time in the Continental Army did, however, introduce Trumbull to many of the individuals who would influence his patronage and also provided him with the subject matter—the Revolutionary War—for his most famous cycle of history paintings. Trumbull observed (from a great distance and with the aid of a field glass) the Battle of Bunker Hill on 17 June 1775; the painting that commemorates this important event has become one of Trumbull's most enduring images. General Washington arrived in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in early July, and Trumbull certainly desired an introduction. His chance arrived:

A few days after his [Washington's] arrival, I was told by my eldest brother, the commissary general, that the commander in chief was very desirous of obtaining a correct plan of the enemy's works, in front of our position on Boston neck; and he advised me (as I could draw) to attempt to execute a view and plan, as a means of introducing myself (probably) to the favorable notice of the general. I took his advice and began the attempt...My drawing was also shown to the general...This (probably) led to my future promotion.¹⁶

¹⁵ Emphasis added.

¹⁶ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 21-22.

Trumbull was appointed an aid-de-camp to General Washington on 27 July 1775, less than three weeks after Washington's arrival. Trumbull began his next position as a major of the Roxbury brigade under the command of General Horatio Gates on 15 August 1775. Thus, Trumbull's tenure as a member of Washington's staff lasted less than three weeks.¹⁷

Trumbull's time as a member of Horatio Gates's staff was considerably longer. Gates promoted the aspiring artist to the rank of colonel in June 1776, and Trumbull was responsible for such lofty duties as painting identifying numbers on cartridge boxes and cannon carriages. At Crowne Point, Trumbull inventoried the disordered troops and found that more than half of the 5,200 soldiers and officers were in need of hospitalization. Because of the unprepared state of the troops, Trumbull's commanding officers—Generals Gates, Schuyler, and Sullivan—thought the fort indefensible, and, as a result, they ordered a retreat to Ticonderoga. At Ticonderoga, Trumbull partnered with Colonel Thaddeus Kosciuzko, a Polish military engineer, to strengthen the defenses of the fort. This endeavor has been called Trumbull's "most significant military contribution to the American Revolution."¹⁸

However, happy military times were not on the horizon for Colonel Trumbull. He had not received his formal commission as a colonel as of July 1776, and he began to fear that this was because the Continental Congress had not yet formally confirmed the appointment of Horatio Gates as a major general. Trumbull penned numerous letters to friends and family expressing suspicion as to the situation. Trumbull most succinctly expressed this frustration to his brother Joseph at the end of August 1776:

¹⁷ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 23.

¹⁸ Irma B. Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution*. (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975), 27.

The Congress has been Informed, by Genl Gates, of his Design in bringing me here with him & of the Character in which I now act—if they want a more Ceremonious Application, I must say I wish to receive nothing from them—Ceremony *I hate*. I have made it a rule never to ask Promotion in any other way than by doing my Duty with all the Attention & punctuality in Pow'r—I shall wait a little longer at the service of my country—but not *much* longer, By God!¹⁹

Despite these stern words, Trumbull patiently waited for his official commission.

Autumn and winter passed, and the calendar turned to 1777. Although Trumbull's commission as a colonel finally arrived on 22 February 1777, he was not pleased with the document before him.

This dissatisfaction is quite clear, for Trumbull composed a letter the same day from Providence, Rhode Island, to John Hancock, the president of Congress. "Sir,"

Trumbull began:

Lieut. Col. Meigs has this day delivered to me a commission from the most honorable continental Congress, appointing me deputy adjutant general in the northern department—an honor I had long desired of.

I find the commission is dated the 12th of September, 1776, which, sir, is an insuperable bar to my accepting it.

I have served in that office since the 28th of June, by the appointment of the honorable Major General Gates, who was authorized to make the appointment, by particular instructions of Congress.

I expect, sir, to be commissioned from that date, if at all. A Soldier's honor forbids the idea of giving up the least pretension to rank. I am, sir, &c. &c.²⁰

Clearly not yet satisfied, Trumbull then wrote a curt letter to James Lovell, a member of Congress from the state of Massachusetts. After explaining the discrepancy of dates, Trumbull concluded the letter with his flair for the overdramatic:

¹⁹ John Trumbull to Joseph Trumbull, 25 August 1776, Connecticut State Library, Governor Joseph Trumbull Collection. Emphasis in original.

²⁰ Trumbull reproduces the letters pertaining to Trumbull's commission as a colonel and his subsequent resignation in his autobiography. See: Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 36.

I should have less reason to complain, did I not know that officers of the northern army, inferior in rank to myself, have been advanced and commissioned without the least difficulty. This prevents the hurry of business being alleged as an excuse for such treatment.

If I should have committed any crime, or neglected any duty, since I engaged in the service of my country; if I have performed any action, or spoken a word in my public character, unworthy of my rank, let me be tried by my comrades and broke; but I must not be thought so destitute of feeling as to bear degradation tamely.

From this day, therefore, I lay aside my cockade and sword, with the fixed determination never to resume them until I can do so with honor.²¹

Letters were written back and forth between Trumbull, Hancock, and Lowell during the months that followed. In addition, it is clear through a letter Elbridge Gerry wrote to Joseph Trumbull on 26 March 1777 that Congress would reconsider John Trumbull's appointment date if he was willing to formally apologize for the indignant tone of his previous correspondence:

I am informed that upon a report of the Board of War upon your Brother's Letter, Congress discovered Resentment at the disrespectful Freedom expressed therein, and would not consent to give him a Comm. of an earlier Date. I think he had a right to his Claim, but cannot altogether approve of the Stile in which he addressed the Legislative authority of the Continent.²²

Trumbull clearly believed he was in the right, and wrote to Lowell from his home in Lebanon, "I can see nothing in my former letters at which the honorable Congress can, with propriety, take umbrage. There is not in either a sentiment or a word of disrespect to them; there is not a sentiment or word which I wish altered."²³

Others were diligently working on Trumbull's behalf. General Gates, Trumbull's superior officer, wrote to Governor Trumbull asking for the return of the young colonel

²¹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 38-39.

²² Letter from Elbridge Gerry to Joseph Trumbull on 26 March 1777 in: Edmund Cody Burnett, ed, *Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress*, 8 vols (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1963), 2:123

²³ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 42. (30 March 1777)

to his “Olde Station, but with this provisio...that he had made his peace with Congress.” Despite such maneuvers, Congress was clearly opposed to the idea of Trumbull’s returning to active duty. Hancock wrote to Gates on 29 April 1777 to inform the general that, “it is not the intention of Congress that Mr. Trumbull should be reappointed.”²⁴ In the eyes of the government, at least, Trumbull was a colonel in the Continental Army from 12 September 1776 until his resignation on 22 February of the following year, a period of less than half a year.²⁵ Despite this fact, John Trumbull retained the honorary title of “Colonel” for the remaining sixty-six years of his life.

Notwithstanding the protestations of his father, Trumbull wrote that, “I returned to Lebanon, resumed my pencil, and after some time went to Boston, where I thought I could pursue my studies to more advantage.”²⁶ As a Harvard alum, Trumbull must have been pleased with his return to Boston. However, there was not an artist of note with whom he could study. Although Copley had departed Boston for London two years hence, Trumbull was able to rent John Smibert’s Queen Street painting room.²⁷ Despite the lack of formal instruction available to aspiring artists in the Boston area, Trumbull laboriously studied and copied the paintings Smibert completed during his Italian sojourn before coming to the American colonies with Bishop Berkley and settling in Boston in 1730. Indeed, Trumbull first came to know Van Dyck, Poussin, and Raphael—artists

²⁴ Letter from Hancock to Gates, 29 April 1777 in: Burnett, ed, *Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress*, 2:151

²⁵ Trumbull, of course, believed that his time as a colonel was closer to two-thirds of a year. Trumbull wrote years later, “...my mind was at this time full of lofty military aspirations...A deep and settled regret of the military career from which I had been driven, and which there appeared to be no possibility of an honorable return preyed upon my spirits” See: Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 44, 46. Nonetheless, Sizer suggests that Trumbull’s behavior can be interpreted as a way for him to ‘honorably’ resign from the army. See footnote #41: Sizer, ed, *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 41. Jaffe agrees, writing, “One must wonder, of course, if he really wanted to remain in the army.” See Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 30.

²⁶ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 44.

²⁷ Richard H. Saunders, *John Smibert: Colonial America’s First Portrait Painter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 125.

whom the American would later attempted to emulate—through Smibert’s copies. In addition to progressing as an artist, Trumbull also began to secure social contacts while in Boston. He hosted a social group in his painting room that consisted of young Harvard graduates. Members included Rufus King, Christopher Gore, Thomas Dawes, and Royal Tyler, all of whom Trumbull painted at one point or another during his career. Trumbull also met John Temple, the British consul general. A friend of Benjamin West, Temple advised Trumbull to cross the Atlantic and continue his artistic pursuits in London. Interestingly, Trumbull received an invitation during the spring of 1789 to become Benjamin Franklin’s secretary, a post that would have taken the aspiring artist to Paris.²⁸

Trumbull had other more immediate affairs, however. He returned to Lebanon in the autumn of 1779 and prepared for his first trip to Europe, a voyage in which he was to manage a financial project on behalf of family and friends. According to Trumbull, this speculation “promised (upon paper) great results.”²⁹ One Trumbull scholar has suggested that Congress sent Trumbull on a secret mission to Franklin—the United States plenipotentiary to France from 1778 to 1785—that involved the French, English, and Dutch conflict in the West Indies.³⁰ Although little evidence exists to support such a suggestion, Trumbull clearly traveled to Paris with two objectives in mind. The first was the financial project for which he was responsible. A second goal, without doubt, was the

²⁸ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 42-43.

²⁹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 52.

³⁰ This suggestion is first made in Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 44-46. Although Trumbull did not remark on a secret mission to France in his *Autobiography*, Francois Jean Landolphe—the captain of the ship that carried Trumbull across the Atlantic—chronicled Trumbull’s passage across the Atlantic and their eventual arrival in Paris. See: Francois Jean Landolphe. *Memoires du capitaine Landolphe: contenant l’histoire de ses voyages pendant trente-six ans, aux cotes d’Afrique et aux deux Ameriques*. 2 vols. (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1823), 1:232-254. Jules Prown offers a different interpretation on Trumbull’s ‘secret’ activities and writes that Trumbull may have been a part of an American conspiracy to establish the eldest son of James III (“The Old Pretender”) on the English throne. This son, Charles Edward Stuart is commonly referred to as Bonnie Prince Charlie. See: Jules Prown, “John Trumbull as History Painter” in *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of A Painter*, ed. Helen Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982), 26.

progression and advancement of his artistic career. Trumbull painted small historical compositions and portraits of family and friends during the time after his resignation from the Continental Army. He also faithfully studied the portraits Smibert and Copley painted while living in the Boston area. It was now time for Trumbull to study the Old Masters directly, rather than through copies of their works.

European Adventures

Trumbull departed for Europe during May of 1780 aboard *La Nègresse*, a twenty-eight-gun French merchantman. Trumbull described his passage across the Atlantic as pleasant, and he wrote to his father on 15 June to describe his future plans: “I shall go on to Paris in two days; that is, when I am become a Frenchman, and dressed *à-la-mode*.”³¹ Trumbull arrived in Paris in late June, and he shortly thereafter learned of the crushing defeat the Continental Army suffered at Charleston on 12 May 1780. “This news was a *coup de grâce* to my commercial project, for my funds consisted in public securities of Congress, the value of which was annihilated by adversity.”³² With his primary objective in shambles, Trumbull undoubtedly began to consider furthering his artistic studies. While in Paris, however, he met and socialized with the American diplomatic team in France. Its members included Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Adams’s precociously intelligent son of fourteen years, John Quincy.

Despite a firm grasp of the French language—Trumbull had, after all, lived with a displaced French family while a student at Harvard—the young artist decided instead to

³¹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 59.

³² Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 60.

cross the English Channel and study painting with Benjamin West.³³ In hindsight, such a decision is not surprising, but it was a choice that affected Trumbull's career in several ways. Rather than be swept up in the rising neoclassicism that was then beginning to take hold in France, Trumbull instead traveled to London and developed a more English aesthetic. As important for Trumbull's career, however, was his enduring fascination with history paintings, then thought the most elevated form of painting. While some artists were content to paint portraits—Gilbert Stuart, John Wesley Jarvis, and Thomas Sully immediately come to mind—Trumbull had far greater artistic aspirations. He considered himself a history painter who only occasionally painted portraits.

Trumbull arrived in London in July 1780 and wasted little time in visiting Benjamin West. Upon arriving at West's studio, Trumbull presented a letter of introduction from Benjamin Franklin. In addition to Franklin's letter, Trumbull also brought the copy of Raphael's *Madonna della sedia* he made while studying in Smibert's Boston studio. Clearly pleased, West admitted Trumbull into the studio and introduced him to Gilbert Stuart, another young American who was then studying in London. This was the beginning of an enduring friendship between Trumbull and Stuart, and Trumbull often showed his artistic efforts to his more artistically advanced companion for critique.³⁴ By Trumbull's own account, the time that Stuart and Trumbull studied together in West's studio was a happy one.

³³ Trumbull wrote, "...I fortunately learned that a French family, who had been removed with the other inhabitants of Acadie, by the political prudence of England, poor but respectable, were living in Cambridge, and had in some instances taught the French language. I went immediately to Père Robichaud, as the worthy man was called, and was admitted as a scholar. This family, besides the parents, comprised several children of both sexes, some about my own age; in such society I made good progress, and there laid the foundation of a knowledge of the French language which in later life was of eminent utility. Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 12.

³⁴ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 1:212-213.

Unfortunately, this time studying together was short-lived, for Trumbull was arrested under suspicion of high treason in November of 1780.³⁵ Although he was treated with civility while in prison, Trumbull remained incarcerated for more than eight months. As historical painter to the crown, West was on intimate terms with the royal family and visited King George III in an attempt to secure his colleague's freedom:

Mr. West began with stating what had induced him to take the liberty of this intrusion,--his anxiety lest the affair of my arrest might involve his own character, and diminish his majesty's kindness,--spoke of my conduct during the time he had known me, as having been so entirely devoted to the study of my profession as to have left no time for political intrigue, &c &c.³⁶

Shortly thereafter, King George told West that Trumbull's life was in no danger, but that he was unable to assist in Trumbull's release from prison. Even still, Trumbull did not sit in idleness. For example, Horace Walpole wrote:

Mr. Trumbull...during his confinement, amused himself with painting in which he had been regularly educated. Some beautiful strokes of the above gentleman's pencil were admired in the royal academy, without an idea that they came from the gloom of prison. Ingenuity and fine taste, combined with judgment and accuracy procured him no inconsiderable share of credit in his profession.³⁷

Indeed, the portrait Gilbert Stuart painted of Trumbull in prison shows a well-dressed young man, with a serious countenance and holding a paintbrush in his right hand.

As Walpole suggests, Trumbull was not idle during his imprisonment. Indeed, Trumbull wrote to Edmund Burke on 10 May 1781 and asked for assistance. Burke visited the artist in the Bridewell Prison shortly thereafter and was instrumental in

³⁵ See Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 48. This arrested has been interpreted as a British retaliation for the hanging of Major Andre who had plotted to surrender West Point to the British. News of this event arrived in London during early November.

³⁶ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 69.

³⁷ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1760-95), 5 vols (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1937), 5:112.

securing Trumbull's release on bail on 12 June 1781.³⁸ A condition of this release was that Trumbull was ordered to depart Great Britain in not more than thirty days. As such, Trumbull immediately settled his affairs in London, departed for Dover on 26 June, and arrived in Amsterdam on 6 July. Although Mather Brown—another American-born artist studying in West's studio—believed that Trumbull was planning a visit to Italy after a brief stay in Amsterdam, Trumbull instead boarded a frigate, the *Carolina*, and departed for the United States. This was a rough voyage that took more than six months, including a six-week layover in Bilbao, Spain.³⁹ Trumbull finally arrived in New York during late January 1782. He wasted little time in returning home to Connecticut, and a passage in his *Autobiography* suggests that he was suffering through a mild bout of depression:

I returned to Lebanon, as soon as possible, and occupied myself with closing all accounts respecting my unfortunate mercantile experiment. My reflections were painful—I had thrown away two of the most precious years of my life—had encountered many dangers, and suffered many inconveniences, to no purpose. I was seized with a serious illness, which confined me to my bed, and endangered my life; and it was autumn before I had recovered strength sufficient to attempt any occupation.⁴⁰

In the months that followed, Trumbull worked with his brother in providing supplies to the army. This duty occupied Trumbull from the autumn of 1782 until the preliminary signing of peace in September 1783.

With the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, Trumbull's thoughts bent again towards art, even though his father strongly urged that he take up study of the law. Recalling the conversation decades later, Trumbull explained, "I pined for the arts, [and] again entered into an elaborate defense of my predilection, and again dwelt upon

³⁸ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*. Bail was set at £400, £100 was paid by both West and Copley. See: Trumbull, 71-72, Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 51-52.

³⁹ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 53-54.

⁴⁰ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 81.

the honors paid to artists in the glorious days of Greece and Athens.”⁴¹ Trumbull’s father responded that with further study his son might become a successful attorney. Summing up his argument, Jonathan Trumbull said to his son, “You appear to forget sir, that *Connecticut is not Athens*.”⁴² Although such words clearly stung the young man, Trumbull again departed for Great Britain in December 1783. His career as a professional artist was about to commence.

Trumbull returned to West’s studio in January of 1784 and he remained in Europe—both in London and on the Continent—until 1789. Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque describes this period as a time of “quick progress and great achievement.”⁴³ Likewise, Sizer states that Trumbull’s “most spirited and aesthetically satisfactory work” came from this extended stay in Europe and the years that immediately followed his return to the United States.⁴⁴ Without doubt, Trumbull followed a strict artistic regiment while in West’s studio: Trumbull woke at five in order to study anatomy, had breakfast three hours later, and then painted for the remainder of the day, taking a lunch break at two in the afternoon. He studied drawing at the Royal Academy during the evenings and often sat next to Thomas Lawrence, an artist who would become the most celebrated British portraitist of his day. Trumbull’s early artistic efforts in London make it clear, as Jules Prown has written, that “although he [Trumbull] painted some portraits, his primary aspiration was to paint history like West.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 82.

⁴² Italics in original. Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 82-83. As Sizer notes, Trumbull writes only two pages on the 23 months he spent in America between 1782 and 1783.

⁴³ Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque. “Trumbull’s Portraits” in Helen A. Cooper, ed. *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 97.

⁴⁴ Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 84

⁴⁵ Prown, “John Trumbull as History Painter,” 27.

Indeed, Trumbull began to conceptualize the cycle of paintings that commemorate the American Revolutionary War during 1784. In addition, he completed one of his earliest commissioned portraits, a painting of Jeremiah Wadsworth and his son, Daniel during that same year (**figure 99**).⁴⁶ Trumbull painted this portrait in the months that immediately followed his return to London, and this work serves as an interesting visual link to his Copley-inspired American paintings and his more lively later compositions. Wadsworth was an old friend of the Trumbull family, and had voyaged to Europe as the Commissary General to the French troops who were active in American colonies during the American Revolutionary War. The portrait Trumbull painted of the Wadsworths is a small composition that is the approximate size of a British conversation piece. Wadsworth faces to his left and rests his right arm on a table covered with a light green cloth. He holds a sheet of paper, and appears ready to speak to Daniel, his son of about thirteen years, who leans over his father's left shoulder as if to inspect the document his father holds.

Despite the informality of the composition, there is an overall stiff, forced feeling to the painting, a notion not helped by Trumbull's lack of skill in manipulating color. This is most noticeable in Jeremiah Wadsworth's light grey clothing. Trumbull's attempt at painting Wadsworth's coat, for example, is seen in simple horizontal dashes of lighter and darker grey that do not convey a real sense of volume. In all, this double portrait is clearly an early attempt by a novice. Trumbull knew as much, as his recollections in his autobiography make clear:

⁴⁶ Trumbull wrote on 18 July 1784, "I have receiv'd from Wadsworth & Church—the first fruits of my profession.—W gave me for the little picture you will see. fifteen Guineas & C. for two smaller ones, the same sum." See: John Trumbull to Jonathan Trumbull, 18 July 1784, John Trumbull Papers, Yale University Library.

I had the vanity, however, to take it [the portrait of Jeremiah and Daniel Wadsworth] to show to Sir Joshua Reynolds; the moment he saw it, he said, in a quick sharp tone, “that coat is bad, sir, very bad; it is not cloth—it is tin, bent tin.” The criticism was but too true, but its severity wounded my pride, and I answered, (taking up the picture,) “I did not bring this thing to you, Sir Joshua, merely to be told that it is bad; I was conscious of that, and how could it be otherwise, considering the short time I have studied; I had a hope, sir, that you would kindly have pointed out to me, how to correct my errors.” I bowed and withdrew, and was cautious not again to expose my imperfect works to the criticism of Sir Joshua.⁴⁷

Trumbull does not record any immediate thoughts from his teacher, Benjamin West.

However, West’s reaction can be reasonably surmised from previous correspondence.

He wrote a letter to Copley on 4 August 1766 to comment on the public exhibition of Copley’s portrait of his half-brother, Henry Pelham. Commonly known today as *Boy With a Squirrel*, West wrote (with his penchant for bad spelling), “that at first Sight the Picture struck the Eye as being to liney, which was judgd to have arose from their being so much neetness in the lines.”⁴⁸ Without doubt, such an adjective—liney—aptly describes Trumbull’s early portrait of the Wadsworths.

This was a mistake Trumbull was not eager to duplicate. His next portrait commission of consequence, a small conversation piece of Sir John Temple and his family, shows Trumbull’s deliberate attempts at painting a more British, *à la* Reynolds, portrait (**figure 100**).⁴⁹ Despite a vibrant use of color and a more convincing sense of modeling and volume, “the looser execution in these works, however, is not that of a

⁴⁷ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 86-87.

⁴⁸ *Letters & Papers of John Singleton Copley, 1739-1776* (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1914), 44.

⁴⁹ Trumbull had painted a portrait of Temple earlier in 1784. On 10 March of that year, Trumbull wrote to his father, “I have made a portrait of Mr. Temple, which meets with Mr. West’s approbation.” John Trumbull to Jonathan Trumbull Sr., Connecticut Historical Society. The smaller group portrait was begun by 18 July 1784, when Trumbull mentioned it to his father: “I am painting Mr. Temple and his family—which is to be a present to Mr. Bowdoin.” John Trumbull to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Connecticut Historical Society.

painter familiar with handling a loaded brush and controlling its action on the canvas.”⁵⁰

It is as if Trumbull knew the physical action to take to deliver the painterly effect he wanted, but not how to load paint on the brush so as to deliver it. Nonetheless, this portrait of Temple indicates that Trumbull was making progress as a portraitist, and was becoming more skilled at the painterly English style.

Despite this progression, however, Trumbull was evidently not happy with painting portraits and had his mind set upon higher artistic aspirations. Trumbull wrote a letter to his brother early in 1785 to express this dissatisfaction: “portraits continue to be insupportable to me.—I wish to rise above the necessity of painting them & there is a line, untrodden in any eminent degree but by one man, which offers me a more easy & elegant support if I can acquire the necessary powers of execution.”⁵¹ This “untrodden” line of art was the production of history paintings representing times immediately past. The artist who executed them to an “eminent degree” was John Singleton Copley, Trumbull’s colonial-born counterpart. Indeed, during the preceding year Copley had refused to submit a painting to the annual exhibition at the Royal Academy and instead privately exhibited *The Death of Major Pierson* and *The Death of Chatham*. Beginning on 22 May, Copley’s paintings were on view from eight in the morning until midnight; admission was one shilling.⁵² Copley had previously exhibited *The Death of Chatham* in 1781 in the days that closely followed the opening of the Royal Academy exhibition. More than 20,000 people paid a shilling each to see Copley’s painting during the first six

⁵⁰ Roque, “Trumbull’s Portraits,” 98.

⁵¹ John Trumbull to Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. 18 January 1785, John Trumbull Papers, Yale University Library.

⁵² Jules David Prown. *John Singleton Copley*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 2:306.

weeks of its exhibition; this earned the artist more than £1,600.⁵³ Copley made even more money through the sale of engraved reproductions. This was the brand of moneymaking extravaganza that Trumbull hoped to emulate with scenes from the American Revolutionary War. While Copley painted large and extravagant compositions designed to be theatrical blockbusters, Trumbull's four paintings, *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill*, *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec*, *The Sortie Made by the Garrison of Gibraltar*, and *The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton*, were much smaller and expressly destined from the start to be engraved.⁵⁴

Although Trumbull sporadically painted portraits during the remainder of his stay in Europe, this series of history painting largely occupied him until his return to United States in November 1789. As such, their genesis necessitates a brief discussion, especially considering that Trumbull traveled the eastern seaboard after he returned to the United States to complete portraits for *The Signing of the Declaration of Independence*, perhaps Trumbull's most well known image. The pursuit of these historical compositions required a trip to the continent, and Trumbull accepted an invitation to visit Paris from Thomas Jefferson in July 1786. The artist took along *Bunker's Hill* and *The Death of Montgomery*.⁵⁵ The artist and the politician became fast friends. Indeed, Jefferson first

⁵³ Prown, *John Singleton Copley*, 2:283-284. Also: Emily Ballew Neff, "The History Theater: Production and Spectatorship in Copley's *The Death of Major Pierson*," in *John Singleton Copley in England*, Emily Ballew Neff, ed. (London: Merrell Holberton Publishers, 1995), 74.

⁵⁴ *Bunker's Hill* measures 25"x34" and *The Death of Montgomery* measures 25"x37". *The Garrison of Gibraltar* and *The Death of Mercer* both measure 20"x30". In addition to the smaller composition, Trumbull also painted a large 70"x106" version of *The Sortie Made by the Garrison of Gibraltar*.

⁵⁵ Trumbull wrote to David Humphreys on 14 August 1786 that, "Your friend Mr. Trumbull is here at present. He brought his *Bunker's hill* and *Death of Montgomery* to have them engraved here. He was yesterday to see the king's collection of painting at Versailles, and confessed it surpassed everything of which he even had an idea. I persuade him to stay and study here, and then proceed to Rome." See: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 10:251.

sketched the scene for the *Declaration of Independence*. Jefferson also assisted Trumbull in both social and artistic circles. While in Paris, Trumbull met many of the prominent artists of the day, including Vanderlyn's future teacher, Franoise-Andr  Vincent. In his journal, Trumbull wrote that he thought Vincent "a very elegant gentleman and good artist."⁵⁶ Trumbull also met Jacques Louis David, then approaching the height of his neoclassical powers. Trumbull visited David in his Parisian studio on 9 August, and saw the completed *Oath of the Horatti*. Trumbull wrote in his journal that he thought the "story well told, drawing pretty good, coloring cold." The following evening, David returned the visit to Trumbull's studio and politely complimented Trumbull on his two small historical compositions.⁵⁷

Trumbull traveled through France, Germany, and the Low Countries during August, September, and October of 1786 in order to find an acceptable engraver for the completed *Bunker's Hill* and *Death of Montgomery* compositions. Returning to London in November, Trumbull began work on *The Declaration of Independence* and *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown*, compositions that required many individual portraits.⁵⁸ Such paintings differed from his early historical compositions in which many of the figures were not individualized portraits but rather general types. Given the specificity required for the later paintings, Trumbull made another visit to see Jefferson in the autumn of 1787 to paint his portrait for placement into the *Declaration*. In addition, Trumbull painted the portraits of the French officers who were present of the capitulation

⁵⁶ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 111.

⁵⁷ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 108. In regards to David's visit, Trumbull wrote, "After dinner, the Sieur David, with one of his friends, did me the honor to visit my pictures; his commendation, I fear, was too much dictated by politeness." Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 111.

⁵⁸ Prown writes: "Trumbull returned to London in November 1786. From this point forward, perhaps as a result of this Paris trip and the stay with Jefferson, he placed greater emphasis in the series on the men who made history and on significant events rather than on scenes of action. This meant many more small portraits." See: Prown, "John Trumbull as History Painter," 34.

of the British army for *The Surrender of Cornwallis*.⁵⁹ For Trumbull, painting portraits into an elevated historical composition was a nobler endeavor than portrait painting alone, an enterprise he largely wished to avoid.

Trumbull remained in Paris for only a couple of months and returned to London in mid-February to finish, revise, and copy *The Sortie Made by the Garrison of Gibraltar*. This includes a 70”x106” composition Trumbull painted, like Copley’s earlier historical compositions, for private exhibition. Trumbull displayed *Sortie* to the public at Spring Gardens in April of 1789. Trumbull recollected in his *Autobiography*, “Among those who saw this picture at Mr. West’s, before its public exhibition, was the celebrated connoisseur, Horace Walpole, afterwards Lord Orford, who, on being asked his opinion, declared, ‘that he regarded it as the finest picture he had ever seen, painted on the northern side of the Alps.’”⁶⁰ Although such praise seems exaggerated, Trumbull was offered 1,200 guineas for the painting after the exhibit, but declined the offer, thinking—incorrectly, as time would prove—that he would earn more through future exhibitions and sale of the engravings.⁶¹

With the *Declaration of Independence* begun, Trumbull must have been looking forward to a return to his native soil so that he could progress with the ambitious project. Nonetheless, Jefferson wrote to Trumbull on 21 May 1789 and asked the artist if he was interested in the post of private secretary. Explaining the perks of the position, Jefferson wrote:

⁵⁹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 152. Jaffe writes that Trumbull visited Paris in December 1787 and returned to London in mid-February 1788. Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 139, 140.

⁶⁰ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 151.

⁶¹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 151. For a thorough examination of this painting (and the earlier versions of *The Sortie*, see: Caldwell and Roque, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 205-214.

I think it will not take a moment of your time from your present pursuit. Perhaps it might advantage that, by transferring it for a while to Paris, and perhaps it may even give you an opportunity of going to Italy; as your duties performed by another during your absence would cost a very little part of your salary. Think of this proposition, dear Sir, and give me your answer as soon as you can decide to your satisfaction.”⁶²

Trumbull was clearly flattered by the offer, but was forced to decline. Explaining his goals in returning home to America, Trumbull wrote to Jefferson on 11 June 1789:

I am fully sensible that the profession, as it is generally practiced, is frivolous, little useful to Society, and unworthy the attention of a Man who has talents for more serious occupations—but, to diffuse the knowledge and preserve the Memory of the noblest series of Actions which have dignified the History of Man: to give to the present and the future Sons of Oppression and Misfortune such glorious Lessons of their rights, of their rights and of the Spirit with which they should assert and support them: and even to transmit to their descendants, the personal resemblance of those who have been the great actors in those illustrious scenes, were objects which gave a dignity to the profession, peculiar to my situation.⁶³

Trumbull clearly had set his mind on a return to the United States. He departed Great Britain on 26 October 1789 and arrived in New York on the 23rd of the following month. For the first time in his life, Trumbull was set to be a professional artist in his native land.

New York City, 1789-1794

Trumbull returned to the United States not only to paint portraits, but also to offer his talents and abilities to commemorate the great actions and people who were responsible for the formation of the United States. Although this stay in the United States was brief, it was exceptionally productive, and Trumbull wasted little time in promoting the forthcoming engravings for his series of history paintings. Less than a week after his arrival, Trumbull called upon and dined with George Washington at the president’s New

⁶² *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 15:144.

⁶³ *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Julian P. Boyd, ed., 15:176-177.

York City home. Trumbull wrote to Washington that same evening and enclosed a copy of letters the artist wrote to William Pitt on 24 September 1789 and 10 October 1789 that requested assistance for Thomas Jefferson's baggage on the politician's forthcoming return to the United States.⁶⁴ However, as Washington's diary makes clear, this was not only a social call. During the course of the evening, Trumbull requested the president to write,

a Line to the Marquis de la Fayette: mentioning, that Mr. T. is engag'd in painting a series of Pictures of the most important Events of the Revolution in this Country. from which He proposes to have Plates engrav'd: that a subscription for the purpose of supporting this work has been patroniz'd by the President & the principal People of this Country—that in the hope of meeting the patronage of the French Nation...Mr. T. has ordered a subscription to the protection of the Marquis.⁶⁵

Without doubt, Trumbull was focused on the forthcoming arrival of the engravings for the American history series, and in securing portraits for the *Signing of the Declaration of Independence*, a project that required Trumbull to travel up and down the eastern seaboard to paint the likenesses of those who were present. Trumbull painted more than fifty portrait miniatures during this time that were to serve as models for the larger compositions that were to follow. The Yale University Art Gallery owns these miniatures, and they speak to Trumbull's ability to capture a sitter's likeness on a small-scale format. The engravings from the paintings of the American Revolutionary War series, however, were more problematic. Indeed, it was not until mid-October of 1791 that Trumbull received the proof etchings for the *Battle of Bunker's Hill* and the *Death of Montgomery*. Trumbull wrote to Harriet Wadsworth, the woman he was courting, and

⁶⁴ *The Papers of George Washington*, eds. W.W. Abbot and Dorothy Twohig, vol. 4, Presidential Series, ed. Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 338-339.

⁶⁵ *The Papers of George Washington*, ed. Philander D. Chase, vol. 9, Presidential Series, ed. Mark A. Mastromarino (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 218.

was hardly able to contain his excitement: “In elegance and execution my sanguine expectations were exceeded...I find the people I have employed are not only able but faithful, and as to this subject perfectly at ease.”⁶⁶ Trumbull hoped to have the subscription opened in England for the *Bunker’s Hill* and *Death of Montgomery*.

However, Antonio Poggi, an Italian engraver working on Trumbull’s behalf in England wrote to the artist in February of 1792 to express profound concern:

I fear you will be disappointed when I tell you that I have not open’d the Subscription [for the engravings of the Battle of Bunker’s Hill and the Death of Montgomery]. One principal reason for my not opening it just at this time is the Universal dissatisfaction that Copley has given to his subscribers to The Death of L[or]d Chatham which was pub[lished] last month. He has lost for Ever the confidence of the Publick—he put off the subscribers with bad impressions and has reserved all the good prints, which he now sells at an exorbitant price.⁶⁷

Trumbull remained artistically active despite waiting for the engravings to be sent from Poggi in London. Trumbull continued to paint miniatures for the *Signing of the Declaration of Independence*, and began to seek commissions for larger oil-on-canvas portraits. Although he completed only a handful of portraits during this five-year stay in the United States, the portraits he painted prior to departing for London in 1794 remain some of the most iconic images in the history of American portraiture and are some of the most aesthetically pleasing of Trumbull’s oeuvre. Although the list is small, Trumbull’s sitters came from the top levels of leadership in the Federalist Party: George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and George Clinton. Indeed, Trumbull’s successes in New York during this brief stay forged and solidified friendships, social contacts, and political allegiances that would aid the artist for the remainder of his career.

⁶⁶ John Trumbull to Harriet Wadsworth, 16 October 1791, Yale University Library.

⁶⁷ Antonio Poggi to John Trumbull, 7 (?) February 1792, John Trumbull Papers, Archives of American Art. Emphasis in original.

As a former aide-de-camp to General Washington, Trumbull did not require a letter of introduction to President Washington. Washington was a diligent diary keeper and chronicled his sittings with Trumbull during February and March of 1790.⁶⁸ Trumbull even asked to join the president on his morning equestrian exercises on 1 March 1790 to observe Washington on horseback. Washington noted in his diary on 22 March that Trumbull wanted these sittings to place “my picture in some of his historical pieces.”⁶⁹ Without doubt, one such historical piece was a painting Trumbull had begun in London, *The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton*. During the months that followed, Trumbull was active in painting miniatures and in securing subscriptions for the forthcoming engravings. Trumbull must have returned to New York City from Philadelphia no later than the first week of July 1790, for Washington wrote in his diary that he sat for Trumbull during the morning of 6 July. Washington sat for Trumbull three additional times during the week that followed.⁷⁰

The portrait Trumbull painted as a result of these July sittings is *Washington at Verplanck’s Point New York, 1782, Reviewing the French Troops after the Victory at Yorktown* (**figure 101**). Trumbull presented this portrait as a gift to Martha Washington, and, although a full-length likeness, Trumbull painted it much smaller in scale than the Grand Manner portraits he saw in London. In fact, the canvas measures just 30” x 20”, and thus appears closer in type to an enlarged miniature than a Grand Manner historical portrait. Washington’s head measures just over three inches, making it slightly larger than the heads in the miniatures Trumbull painted while traveling up and down the east

⁶⁸ These sittings occurred on 10, 15, 18, 20, and 27 February, and 1, 4, and 22 March. See: *The Diaries of George Washington*, 6 vols., Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 6:30, 31, 36, 37, 38, 40, 45, 51.

⁶⁹ *The Diaries of George Washington*, 6:51.

⁷⁰ The sitting took place on 6, 8, 12, and 13 July. See: *The Diaries of George Washington*, 6:86, 87, 89, 94.

coast. Indeed, Jaffee suggested that the small scale of *Washington at Verplanck's Point* is one of the reasons behind its aesthetic success.⁷¹

This particular portrait Trumbull painted is monumental in nature despite its diminutive size. General Washington wears his Continental Army uniform; two buttons of his navy blue coat are secured, and this coat opens to reveal the yellow waistcoat underneath. He stands in front of a great steed and he rests his right arm atop the horse's saddle. The future president grasps his hat with his left hand, a gesture that brings attention to the officer's sword that hangs along his left leg. Washington intently gazes to the left side of the painting. Trumbull painted the sitter on a hill, and a vast landscape is seen in the background. The low horizon line and Washington's placement on the canvas enhances the feeling of monumentality. Indeed, the viewer seems to look up at General Washington, who stands in the foreground with a cloud-filled sky behind him.

Washington at Verplanck's Point shows the ways in which Trumbull quickly absorbed the main tenets of British portraiture. Trumbull's 1790 portrait was likely based on two works that he either saw in Europe or was familiar with through engraved reproductions. The first of these is the 1782 portrait Thomas Gainsborough painted of George, the Prince of Wales (**figure 102**). Gainsborough exhibited this at the 1782 Royal Academy, and although Trumbull was in the United States at this time, it is exceptionally likely that he saw the original portrait or an engraving after it following his return to London in 1784.⁷² In Gainsborough's portrait, the future King George IV is shown

⁷¹ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 155. Jaffe writes, "It has been held by every writer about Trumbull that his small works are far superior to his large ones, and it has been uniformly supposed that his monocular vision accounted for the variation in quality. While the first believe is generally true, the second is overly simplistic."

⁷² This work was engraved as a mezzotint by J.R. Smith in 1783. See: Ellis Waterhouse, *Gainsborough* (London: Spring Books, 1958), 95.

facing to his left and rests his left arm on top of his chestnut-colored horse. George has clenched his right hand into a fist and placed it on his hip. George has been described as “leaning against his horse in a grand and supercilious manner.”⁷³ Although compositionally reversed, Gainsborough’s earlier portrait was clearly the inspiration behind Washington’s pose.

A second painting Trumbull visually references in *Washington at Verplanck’s Point* is Anthony Van Dyck’s 1642 of King Charles, the so-called *Charles I at the Hunt* (**figure 103**). Although Flemish by birth, Van Dyck was the founder of the British school of portraiture, was active in London from 1632 until his death in 1641, and exerted a supreme influence on the vast majority of British portraitists throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Charles stands in the typical “Van Dyckian” pose, his left arm is shown extremely foreshortened and jutting out into the viewer’s space. The horse is the most relevant part of the composition in terms of Trumbull’s 1790 portrait of Washington. The horse is on the right side of Van Dyck’s portrait and faces Charles’s back and seems to bow its great head as if in an act of reverence. Trumbull saw this portrait while visiting Versailles on 12 August 1786 and wrote in his journal, “Saw here the whole length portrait of King Charles I, engraved by Strange—the most perfect and loveliest of Vandyck’s portraits that has come to my view.”⁷⁴ Trumbull may have owned a copy of Strange’s engraving and was using the print while painting this portrait of Washington. Clearly, Trumbull believed that the reverence the horse held for the King of England would be an appropriate attitude before the president of the United States of America.

⁷³ William Vaughan, *Gainsborough* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 2002), 156.

⁷⁴ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 112.

Thus, Trumbull borrowed artistic elements from two portraits of British royalty for *Washington at Verplanck's Point*. The result is an energetic and vibrant portrait, one of the most accomplished paintings of Trumbull's oeuvre. Washington's family agreed. Washington's grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, for example, wrote, "The figure of Washington, as delineated by Colonel Trumbull, is the most perfect extant."⁷⁵

Trumbull was clearly exceptionally satisfied with this portrait. The Common Council of the city of New York met on 19 July 1790 and

Resolved that The President of the United States be requested to permit Mr Trumbull to take his Portrait, to be placed in the City Hall as a Monument of the Respect with the Inhabitants of this City bear towards him.

Ordered that Mr. Mayor [Richard Varick] be requested to wait on the President and communicate the foregoing Resolution.⁷⁶

That same day, Richard Varick wrote to Tobias Lear, Washington's personal secretary, to inform the president of the news regarding the portrait commission and to arrange a formal meeting:

The Corporation of this City have this day resolved to request the favor of the Presid[en]t of the United States to permit Mr Trumbull to take his Picture to be placed in the Hall, as a monume[n]t of the Respect of the Inhabitants of this City for him.

I am directed to communicate this request in Person & will be obligid {sic} to You to be informed at what time it will be agreeable to the Presid[en]t to be waited on.⁷⁷

Lear responded to Varick's "polite letter" later on 19 July, writing, "I have the honor to inform you that the President of the United States will have the pleasure to see you

⁷⁵ Quoted in: Wendy A. Cooper, *An American Vision: Henry Francis du Pont's Winterthur Museum* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 166.

⁷⁶ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 1:565.

⁷⁷ Richard Varick to Tobias Lear, 19 July 1790, Richard Varick Papers, New-York Historical Society.

tomorrow at 10 O'clock, if that hour should be convenient & agreeable to you."⁷⁸ The city of New York presented Washington the official portrait request the following morning. This was the first of many portraits Trumbull completed on behalf of the city of New York

The portrait Trumbull painted of Washington for City Hall is a life-sized copy of the smaller work the artist painted earlier in July of 1790 for Martha Washington (**figure 104**). In fact, whereas Washington noted in his diary sitting for Trumbull on 6, 8, 12, and 13 July, the president did not write of a single sitting with Trumbull after the date the Common Council commissioned the life-sized portrait. This indicates that this second portrait was not painted from life, but was instead copied from the previously-completed portrait. In addition, although Theodore Sizer calls this smaller portrait an "original study," for the larger painting that the city of New York commissioned, it is clear that the first painting was not a study in any way, as Trumbull began the smaller portrait before he received the commission for the larger work.⁷⁹ The fact that he decided to simply enlarge the recently finished compositions clearly indicates Trumbull's (and Washington's) satisfaction with the likeness more specifically and the composition as a whole.

Samuel Jones, the recorder for the New York City Common Council, noted that Trumbull received payment for this portrait of George Washington on 30 August 1790.⁸⁰ The minutes from the meeting do not record if the portrait had been completed by that date, but Trumbull wrote to Benjamin West that same day to inform his former teacher

⁷⁸ *The Papers of George Washington*, 6:102.

⁷⁹ See caption on figures 92 and 94 in: Theodore Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, np.

⁸⁰ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 1:591. Trumbull was paid £186.13.4 "for a Portrait of the President of the United States."

that he had been working on “a large Portrait [of Washington] for this City which I am now finishing—the figure is near seven feet high.” Trumbull also boasted that those who had seen the portrait had thought it an excellent likeness.⁸¹ Even before the Washington portrait was completed, however, the Common Council commissioned Trumbull to paint a second portrait, that of Governor George Clinton (**figure 105**).⁸²

In several regards, the portraits of Clinton and Washington work together as pendants. Commissioned within a month of one another, they are nearly identical in size, and show both politicians wearing their navy and buff Continental Army uniforms. Trumbull used a similar color scheme in each; the colors of the uniforms contrasts with the light blue of the sky and the browns of the earth. Like the coat Washington wears, Clinton’s coat has two buttons secured and opens to reveal the lighter waistcoat beneath. However, whereas Washington rested his right arm on the horse behind him, Clinton instead firmly plants the sword he holds with his right hand in the earth. Compared to the Washington, who conveys a thoughtful or contemplative air, Clinton instead appears more forceful and direct. Hung together in the same room within City Hall, these two portraits—one of the head of the Federal government and the other of the leader on the State level—demonstrate Trumbull’s absorption and application of the Grand-Manner style of portraiture.

Although it was briefly hung in the New York City Hall, the portrait of Alexander Hamilton that Trumbull painted during the first half of 1792 was not commissioned by

⁸¹ John Trumbull to Benjamin West, 30 August 1790, John Trumbull Papers, Yale University Library.

⁸² The minutes of the Common Council for 10 August 1790 record: “Resolved that His Excellency the Governor of this State be requested to permit Mr. Trumbull to take his Portrait to be placed in the City Hall as a Testimony of the Respect which this Corporation bear towards him. Ordered that Mr. Mayor be requested to wait on his Excellency and communicate to him the foregoing Resolution.” See: *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 1:573.

the city of New York (**figure 106**).⁸³ Instead, a group of prominent New Yorkers wrote to Hamilton on 29 December 1791 to inform him that, “A number of your fellow Citizens desirous of expressing the sense they entertain of the important Services you have rendered your Country, have raised by Subscription a Sum of money to defray the expence of a Portrait of you, [to] be executed by Mr Trumbull, and placed in one of our buildings.”⁸⁴ However, although the committee wished for this to be a large portrait to be publicly displayed, Hamilton wished for less ostentatious representation. Hamilton replied to the committee’s request, “I shall cheerfully obey their wish as far as respects the taking of my portrait but I ask that they will permit it to appear unconnected with any incident of my political life.”⁸⁵

In many ways, this portrait of Hamilton is very different from the other full-length portraits Trumbull painted in New York City around the same time. Although a former officer in the Continental Army, Hamilton does not wear his military uniform but instead wears subdued civilian attire. As a previous scholar has noted, “Trumbull avoided the elaborate trappings and overtly political symbols suitable for a man who was Washington’s military secretary, a Cabinet officer, and the powerful leader of the Federalist Party.”⁸⁶ Indeed, whereas Hamilton stands in an architectural setting not unlike those painted in the European Grand Manner—complete with a classical column,

⁸³ A notice in the 4 July 1792 issue of the *New York Daily Advertiser* announced that the Hamilton portrait would be on view in City Hall. It reads: “The portrait of Mr. Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, painted for the Citizens of New York by Mr. Trumbull, has been received and for the present placed in the City Hall. It must afford much pleasure to the gentlemen who promoted this undertaking to know that this elegant specimen of Mr. Trumbull’s abilities is reckoned one of the finest productions of his pencil.”

⁸⁴ Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 10:482. Three merchants (Carlile Pollock, Joshua Waddington, and Roger Alden), an attorney (Brockholst Livingston), and a bank president (Gullian Verplanck) composed this letter. Pollock was the younger brother of George Pollock, an Irish merchant who Stuart would paint following year. Trumbull painted Alden’s portrait in 1778 and the two had been close friends since childhood.

⁸⁵ Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 10:487

⁸⁶ Roque, “Trumbull’s Portraits,” 122.

desk, and robe-covered chair—Trumbull avoided including other political props and accouterments that were common in grandiose European works. Hamilton looks slightly to his right, and has placed his right hand on top of a blank sheet of paper that rests upon the desk to his right. The only other objects atop the table are a three-pot inkstand and a single white quill that projects from the middle inkwell. In such a context, Hamilton’s portrait shows him not as a prominent politician, but instead as a private citizen.

Comparing Trumbull’s 1792 full-length portrait of Hamilton with a slightly earlier full-length portrait Stuart painted in Ireland of John Foster is an instructive comparison (**figure 107**). In both portraits, the subject stands with his right hand placed upon a table. In Stuart’s portrait, however, Foster’s hand rests atop a packet of documents with headings such as, “Extending the Linen Manufacture,” and “Plan for Establishing Bank of Ireland & reducing the Interest of Money to 5pr. Cent.” A packet of letters is visible to the left of these documents; “Corn Trade” and “Agric” can be seen written on them, and allude to Foster’s engagement with the 1784 Corn Law. Three leather-bound books, *Trade of Ireland*, *History of Commerce*, and *Irish Statutes*, are on the table, as is a large ceremonial mace. All of these elements allude to Foster’s prominent political position.⁸⁷ Clearly, Trumbull could have painted this kind of portrait of Hamilton; one can imagine a copy of the *Federalist Papers* on the table, combined with his *Report on Public Credit* (published in January 1790), and his proposal for the foundation of a national bank. However, such elements would have politically aligned the sitter, something Hamilton wished to avoid for his particular portrait. As a result, the composition is devoid of any indication of public life and retains a more private air.

⁸⁷ For information on the Foster portrait, see: Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 83-87.

The head and shoulders of this full-length portrait are strikingly similar to a bust-sized portrait at the National Gallery of Art (**figure 108**). The Avalon Foundation purchased this work for the National Gallery of Art in 1952 from William Jay Iselin, a direct descendant of John Jay. Because of this, past Trumbull scholars have assumed that Jay commissioned this portrait, or that Trumbull or Hamilton gave the portrait to Jay.⁸⁸ In fact, Trumbull wrote in 1832 that this bust portrait was painted in 1792 in Washington D.C. and was then in the possession of Oliver Wolcott, the former governor of Connecticut, and Hamilton's successor as the Secretary of the Treasury.⁸⁹ While Trumbull was likely mistaken in the locale—the District of Columbia was not much of a city in 1792, and Hamilton was in Philadelphia at that time—this note establishes that Wolcott owned an early portrait Trumbull painted of Hamilton. This portrait descended through the Wolcott family until 1844, when it was purchased at auction by William Jay, one of John Jay's sons. At this same auction, William Jay also purchased portraits of John Adams, George Washington, and another of John Jay. The Hamilton portrait then descended through the Jay family until it was presented to the National Gallery of Art.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, scholars have not discerned how or when Wolcott acquired the portrait. Given their relationship, Hamilton possibly gave the portrait to Wolcott who was Hamilton's successor as the Secretary of the Treasury.

An important question remains: what has become of the other portraits William Jay purchased in 1844, those of John Adams (**figure 109**), George Washington (**figure**

⁸⁸ See Harry MacNeill Bland and Virginia W. Northcott, "The Life Portraits of Alexander Hamilton," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Volume 12, no. 2 (April 1955), 191. Also: Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 36.

⁸⁹ John Trumbull. *Catalogue of Paintings by Colonel John Trumbull...Now Exhibiting in the Gallery of Yale College....*(New Haven, 1832), 30.

⁹⁰ For information on the provenance, see: Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*, 306.

110), and John Jay (figure 111)? Midway through 1844, William Jay noted that Trumbull was the artist who painted the four portraits that had been purchased earlier that year. A letter Lino S. Lipinsky de Orlov, the curator at the John Jay Homestead, wrote to Robert Stewart of the National Portrait Gallery on 18 August 1971 proves to be an important document. In an earlier and unlocated letter, Stewart presumably requested information on portraits of the signers of the Declaration of Independence that were at the Jay Homestead. In response, Lipinsky wrote that they owned a portrait of Washington by Trumbull, a portrait of Adams by Trumbull, and a portrait of John Jay that Trumbull painted while in London in 1794.⁹¹ The John Jay Homestead did not own any other portraits of Adams or Washington at that time.

Christie's of New York hosted an auction on behalf of the descendants of William Jay Iselin on 25 January 1986. The portrait Trumbull painted of John Adams around 1793 was one of the works they auctioned.⁹² The provenance in the auction catalogue lists only Jay and his descendants, and suggests that "Jay appears to have been assembling a group of patriot portraits painted by his friend Trumbull."⁹³ In fact, the scholarly record on this portrait strongly supports such a statement. In *Portraits of John and Abigail Adams*, Andrew Oliver wrote, "Trumbull painted his last portrait of Adams in 1793 or 1794. Two from this period are known, one undoubtedly a replica of the other. One early belonged to John Jay, perhaps was commissioned by him, and passed

⁹¹ See: Lina S. Lipinsky de Orlov to Robert G. Stewart, 18 August 1971, Curatorial file, Catalog of American Portraiture. Neither Washington nor Jay signed the Declaration of Independence.

⁹² The White House purchased the painting auctioned by Christie's in 1986. Two additional copies of the portrait exist. The first is at the National Portrait Gallery and descended through the sitter's family. Harvard University owns the second, a gift from Andrew Cragie in 1794. See: Helen A. Cooper, ed. *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 124.

⁹³ The Jay Family Collection of Historical American Portraits: The Property of The Descendants of William Jay Iselin. Christie's New York, 25 January 1986.

from his descendants to ‘Bedford House,’ the historic Jay Mansion at Kathonah, New York.”⁹⁴ Similar suggestions have been reiterated throughout the Trumbull scholarship.⁹⁵

However, while John Jay’s son owned this portrait, Jay himself never did. Although twentieth-century scholars have understandably assumed that Jay commissioned this work, a more probable explanation is that Oliver Wolcott commissioned and owned this portrait. Like the previously discussed Hamilton portrait, the Adams likeness descended through the Wolcott family until it was sold in 1844 to William Jay. It remained at the Jay estate until 1986 when it was sold at the Christie’s auction.

In fact, ample visual evidence suggests that the *Hamilton* and *Adams* portraits were painted and conceived as a pendant pair. Adams faces slightly to his left, Hamilton slightly to his right. Both wear similarly-colored light brown jackets—Hamilton’s is buttoned, whereas Adams’s is open and reveals a matching waistcoat. Both wear a white jabot. As striking, perhaps, is the completely black background behind both sitters, an exceptionally rare compositional device within Trumbull’s oeuvre. There is no desk, no faux column, and no chair, only a brightly illuminated sitter in front of a black background. As Wolcott owned both portraits, they were likely commissioned and hung together.

How does the *Washington* portrait fit into this scenario? Like the *Adams* and *Hamilton* portraits, William Jay purchased a *Washington* portrait that Trumbull painted

⁹⁴ Andrew Oliver, *Portraits of John and Abigail Adams* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 66.

⁹⁵ See: Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 18; Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 308; Cooper, *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*, 124. The most recent occurrence of this was in 1992, when William Kloss wrote, “One of the three versions of the portrait, this work was commissioned from Trumbull by John Jay, together with portraits of Washington and Alexander Hamilton.” See: Kloss, *Art in the White House*, 65.

from the Wolcott family in 1844. It passed through the Jay family, and must be the portrait of Washington that Lipinsky refers to in her letter to Stewart in 1971, as there is no mention of another Washington portrait at the Jay Homestead. Like the Adams portrait, the Washington likeness was auctioned at Christie's on January 1986, and the auction catalogue again omits the Wolcott family from the portrait's provenance. It states, "The previous year [1793], Jay had commissioned a portrait of Alexander Hamilton (National Gallery of Art) from Trumbull and it is likely that those of Washington and [the previously discussed] Adams were ordered around the same time."⁹⁶ Likewise, past scholars have taken the painting's location in Jay's home to be ample proof that Jay commissioned the work.⁹⁷ Wolcott, however, likely commissioned this work, as it descended through his family until purchased by William Jay in 1844.

The Washington portrait shares several compositional elements with the Adams and Hamilton likenesses. A bust portrait, there is an overall sparse feeling to the composition, and the portrait is devoid of anything other than the sitter and a classical column barely visible on the right side of the painting. Like Hamilton, a former officer in the Continental Army, Washington is shown in civilian attire rather than in his military uniform. The black background present in the Hamilton and Adams portraits has been replaced with one that is dark gray, and Washington wears a black coat and powdered wig. Washington turns slightly to his left, revealing a slight dusting of powder on his right shoulder.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Trumbull's portraits of Washington, Hamilton, and Adams were joined with the portrait the artist painted of John

⁹⁶ "The Jay Family Collection of Historical American Portraits: The Property of The Descendants of William Jay Iselin." Christie's New York, 25 January 1986.

⁹⁷ Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 83.

Jay at the Jay Homestead. Scholars have believed that this portrait was painted while Trumbull was in London working as Jay's personal secretary during the negotiations of the Jay Treaty. In addition to believing that this portrait was commissioned by Jay—when, in fact, Wolcott owned it—a past Trumbull scholar wrote that, “this is probably the ‘portrait of Jay’ in JT’s packing list of 1803,” when the artist was set to return to the United States from London.⁹⁸

However, it is far more likely that Trumbull referred not to the bust-sized portrait that Wolcott owned in this packing list, but instead to one of the two half-length portraits Stuart began while he and Jay were in London during 1783. One of these portraits was intended as a gift to William Bingham, Jay's host while in London. Stuart sold these portraits in London before he departed for Dublin in 1787. Horace Holley, a Unitarian minister, saw one of these portraits in Trumbull's New York City home in 1818, writing:

The John Jay [portrait], which Mr. Trumbull has, is the painting of himself and of Mr. Stewart. Mr. Trumbull bought it for ten guineas of a broker in London, who had it in pledge among many others. Mr. Stewart painted the head, and Mr. Trumbull the rest. It is nearly the whole length, a sitting figure. The face was painted in 1784. Mr. Jay had paid Mr Stewart for two half lengths, but neither was finished till Mr. Trumbull found them at a broker's & gave twenty guineas for the two. Mr. Jay has the other one himself.⁹⁹

The National Portrait Gallery owns one of these portraits, and it has a long scholarly record of having been begun by Stuart and later completed Trumbull.¹⁰⁰

This evidence suggests that the ‘portrait of Jay’ that Trumbull recorded on his packing list was not a bust-sized portrait of his own invention, but instead a half-length

⁹⁸ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 310. The New York Historical Society owns this document.

⁹⁹ Horace Holley. “A Journey from Boston in Massachusetts to Lexington in Kentucky, commenced February 3rd 1818 by Horace Holley.” Entry for 11 February 1818. Horace Holley Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Quoted in Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 121, 123.

¹⁰⁰ Mount, *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*, 205-207; Park, *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of his Works*, 434-435; Ide, *Portraits of John Jay*, 18; Evans, *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart*, 53.

portrait he found in a London garret that Stuart had begun more than a decade before. The portrait the Jay Homestead owns was likely painted in the United States for Oliver Wolcott prior to Trumbull and Jay departing New York for London to negotiate the Jay Treaty. Compositionally, this Jay portrait at the Jay Homestead strongly resembles the Washington portrait. Like Washington, Jay faces to his right. Jay also wears a black coat and sits before a dark grey background. While facing in opposite directions would enhance the feeling that the paintings were conceived of as a pair, their formal similarities and common ownership suggest that Trumbull painted them at the same time and on the same continent.

European Interlude, 1794-1804

Although Trumbull had been productive during this brief time in New York City, the future was not promising. He had received little encouragement for his American history series, a project the artist abandoned in 1793. Trumbull blamed the public's indifference to his works on the increasing political discord within Washington's cabinet and the nation at large: "In such a state of things, what hope remained for the arts? None,--my great enterprise was blighted."¹⁰¹ Portraiture remained a viable option, but an important event occurred in New York City in May of 1793 that would surely affect Trumbull's patronage: the arrival of Gilbert Stuart from Dublin. Trumbull was certainly aware of this, and although he may not have searched out other opportunities elsewhere, he certainly was receptive to them.

¹⁰¹ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 173.

This fact is made clear through several letters. On 20 April 1794 John Jay wrote a letter to his wife to inform her that he had been appointed as a diplomat to Great Britain:

Yesterday the Senate approved of the nomination by a real majority—Mr. Burr was among the few who opposed it. I have hopes that our friend Mr. Trumbull will consent to go as Sec[re]tary. Mr. Bayard was recommended to me—I think well of him—but Mr. Trumbull’s long Residence and connections in London will enable him to be more useful.¹⁰²

The nomination that Jay wrote about was the one to negotiate a treaty with England. Jay clearly wasted no time in communicating this desire, for Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., sent a letter to his younger, artistically inclined brother on behalf of Jay that same day.

Jonathan Trumbull wrote that Jay requested John Trumbull’s services as personal secretary for the forthcoming diplomatic mission to London, and that “the Idea of having you as a Companion and assistant appears most pleasing to him and he gives you the preference over anyone.”¹⁰³ Trumbull wasted no time in accepting Jay’s offer, and wrote to the Chief Justice the following day to say, “Nothing Sir could be more flattering [?] to me or more agreeable.”¹⁰⁴ Jay and Trumbull wasted little time, and the envoy departed for Great Britain on 12 May 1794.¹⁰⁵

Thus, at the height of his artistic powers, Trumbull laid aside his paintbrush to become Jay’s personal secretary. The reasons for doing so could not be financial, as Trumbull’s salary as secretary was £25 per month, or £300 per annum. In contrast, Trumbull earned more than £187 for the full-length portrait of George Washington, a total that represents more than seven months of pay for Trumbull’s secretarial post.

¹⁰² John Jay to Sara Livingston Jay, 20 April 1794, John Jay Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, no. 8054.

¹⁰³ Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. to John Trumbull, 20 April 1794, Connecticut State Library, Henrietta W. Hubbard Collection of Trumbull Papers.

¹⁰⁴ John Trumbull to John Jay, 21 April 1794, John Jay Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, no. 7200.

¹⁰⁵ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 179.

Gilbert Stuart's arrival in New York from Dublin certainly affected Trumbull's patronage to a great extent, but there is no reason to believe that both artists could not have forged careers in New York City, particularly considering Trumbull's desire to avoid portraiture as much as possible.

Whatever the reason for his departure, Roque and Sizer have noted that Trumbull never painted as well after he went to London with Jay in May of 1794 as he did before this European adventure.¹⁰⁶ A plausible reason for the atrophy of Trumbull's skills could be as simple as lack of practice. Indeed, Trumbull remained in Europe—both in London and on the continent—for more than a decade. Although he lived in London, an artistically rich locale, Trumbull found little time for creative excursions. Instead, Trumbull devoted himself to various diplomatic and economic enterprises that largely took him away from portraiture.¹⁰⁷ Despite neglecting artistic pursuits while in London, Trumbull did, however, paint some portraits while there. The sitters Trumbull painted fall into two broad categories: members of Trumbull's immediately family, and individuals associated with the American diplomatic team in London.

Although Trumbull left New York a bachelor, he returned a married man; he wed Sarah Hope Harvey on 1 October 1800. Trumbull painted several portraits of his new bride in the time between their wedding and their arrival in New York, and it apparently at this time that it seems Trumbull began to put forth extended effort into regaining his

¹⁰⁶ Roque writes, for example, "Nearly all Trumbull scholars are in agreement that his [Trumbull's] greatest works were produced in the years between 1784, when he came to England for the second time, and 1794, when he arrived for his third sojourn." Roque, "Trumbull's Portraits," 102. Sizer believes, "He never painted as well after 1794, or to take a more convenient though less accurate date, 1800, as he did before." See footnote in Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 179.

¹⁰⁷ For information on this decade in Britain and the continent, see: Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 167-205. Trumbull discusses his diplomatic duties at length in his *Autobiography*, 179-235.

artistic abilities.¹⁰⁸ One portrait in particular merits mention. Trumbull painted *Mrs. John Trumbull with a Spaniel* in 1802, and this portrait can be interpreted as a testament to marital fidelity (**figure 112**).¹⁰⁹ Mrs. Trumbull faces to her right and stands before a dark green curtain that hangs behind her. This drapery has been pulled back on the left side of the composition to reveal billowing white clouds in a light blue sky. The dark green and light blue in the background contrast with the white and reds that dominate Mrs. Trumbull's attire and her florid visage. She wears a turban-like wrap on her head and a white, high-waisted gown that is accented with a red sash that rises from the waistline to her shoulders. Mrs. Trumbull crosses her left arm across her body and touches a red necklace with her left hand. She places her right hand on a small spaniel that turns its head upwards towards Mrs. Trumbull's left hand and the wedding band upon her ring finger. This compositional focus on the dog—a long-standing symbol of marital fidelity—and the wedding ring reinforce the nuptial theme of the painting.

Trumbull painted a pendant portrait of his nephew, John M. Trumbull, the same year. Like Mrs. Trumbull, John M. Trumbull interacts with a small spaniel, and this may indicate that the dog was also a family pet (**figure 113**). Trumbull's nephew sits in a chair, faces to his left and holds the spaniel on his lap. While he wears a somber brown coat and a white neck cloth, Trumbull sits before a red drapery that is highlighted with large tassels. Indeed, the artist painted this curtain with an energy and panache that is

¹⁰⁸ Trumbull wrote to his brother on 16 August 1800 to comment on his lack of skill and his commitment on improving as an artist: "I have been suffering server mortifications finding in how great a degree I had lost all the powers I once possessed...I have scarcely thought of anything else [painting] for months." See: John Trumbull to Jonathan Trumbull, Jr. 16 August 1800, Trumbull Papers, Yale University Library.

¹⁰⁹ Trumbull also painted a portrait of Sarah Trumbull in 1800. Currently in a private collection, this work has often been interpreted as a 'wedding' portrait. The sitter wears a white dress and brings her right hand to the necklace and the crucifix that hangs from it. Such a composition suggests a sense of holiness, a feeling Trumbull wished to convey to his family in the United States. See: Cooper, *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*, 156-157.

otherwise absent in the work; Trumbull created highlights on this drapery with broad passes of contrasting color. This curtain has been pulled away on the right side of the painting to reveal another sky-filled background. The skies Trumbull included in the portraits of his wife and nephew are similar to the sky seen behind Washington in the portrait Trumbull painted for Martha Washington and the larger and the later copy for City Hall.

Prior to painting these portraits, however, Trumbull was busy working on diplomatic affairs with several Federalist colleagues. One of these colleagues was Christopher Gore, one of Trumbull's closest acquaintances while a student at Harvard. Commenting on his lack of friends while a student, Trumbull wrote, "I formed therefore one, and only one, intimate acquaintance. It was with Christopher Gore of Boston, an amiable boy, my junior in years, and in college rank. This was the commencement of a friendship which lasted through life."¹¹⁰ Gore graduated from Harvard College in 1776, was later admitted to the bar, and served as a Federalist in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1788 until 1789. Following this term in the state legislature, Gore worked as attorney general for the district of Massachusetts, and relocated to London in 1796 when President Washington offered him a diplomatic position.¹¹¹ It was during this time that Gore reunited with Trumbull, and the two worked together as commissioners with three other members of the diplomatic delegation to finalize the unsettled seventh article of the Jay Treaty.¹¹² Trumbull's commission as agent on behalf of the United

¹¹⁰ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 14.

¹¹¹ For biographical information of Gore, see: Helen R. Pinkney, *Christopher Gore, Federalist of Massachusetts, 1758-1827* (Waltham, Massachusetts: Gore Place Society, 1969).

¹¹² Jay and Lord Grenville, his British diplomatic counterpart, signed the preliminary copy of the Jay Treaty on 19 November 1794 and the United States Senate conditionally ratified it on 24 June 1795. John Nicholl, John Anstey, and William Pinkney joined Trumbull and Gore in the negotiations of the seventh article that primarily involved compensation to American merchants for the loss of ships and cargoes arising from

States was dated 10 June 1796, and although he wrote that he was planning on returning to America “in a few weeks,” he likely changed his mind because of the \$2,500 annual salary.

Gore remained in London long after the primary negotiations for the seventh article of the Jay Treaty had been completed, and he did not return to the United States until 1804. Trumbull painted Gore twice between 1802 and 1804.¹¹³ Trumbull painted one portrait for himself (**figure 114**) and gave the second to the sitter (**figure 115**).

These two portraits are nearly identical in composition, and it is likely that Trumbull painted the Yale version from life and then copied that portrait in order to present it to Gore.¹¹⁴ In both portraits, Gore sits before a desk and turns slightly to face the viewer. He wears a black jacket and a white shirt and jabot. He rests his left hand on a small grouping of papers and grasps a book with his right, using his index finger to mark his place. Trumbull placed a fluted column in the background and painted the dark red drapery with an energy and vitality that the remainder of the composition lacks.

These two portraits of Gore are an interesting—and unsuccessful—mix of French neoclassicism and Trumbull’s more typical English aesthetic. Trumbull painted Gore with a conciseness that his early London and American works lack. This is most evident

violations of neutrality. For information on the seventh article of the Jay Treaty, see: Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy, New Revised Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 463-466. See: Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 192-195.

¹¹³ Past scholars have traditionally dated these two portraits 1800 or 1801. See: Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 34; Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 199. However, conservation on the Yale portrait prior to the 1982 Trumbull exhibition revealed a textile stamp of 1802 on the back of the canvas, thus eliminating an 1800 or 1801 start date. See: Cooper, *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*, 158. Trumbull also painted Mrs. Gore during the same period; the work is in a private collection. See: Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 35.

¹¹⁴ When viewed together, the Yale version seems better placed upon the canvas than the version and has a greater crispness in line than does the portrait that the Massachusetts Historical Society owns. The portrait at the MHS was purchased from descendant in 1845 for the price of \$100. See: *Portraits of Men 1670-1936: A Massachusetts Historical Society Picture Book* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1955), No. 19.

in the sitter's attire and the care with which Trumbull painted Gore's visage. Despite this slight nod to neoclassicism, this work remains distinct from portraits more clearly neoclassical, and this distinction becomes more apparent when the portrait of Gore is compared with the portrait of Aaron Burr that Vanderlyn painted in 1802. The Burr portrait is austere; the sitter is shown before a dark background and without a drapery, column, desk, or book. These elements, all present in the Gore portrait, push Trumbull's painting towards the English end of the aesthetic scheme, one more appropriate for a committed Federalist such as Gore.

Rufus King was another American whom Trumbull painted in London. Like Gore, King was a commissioner in the negotiations for the seventh article of the Jay Treaty and had been in London since 1796, when he was appointed the American minister to the Court of St. James. King was also one of Trumbull's most long-standing friends. Although they both attended Harvard, it is unlikely that the two crossed paths there; Trumbull graduated with the class of 1773 and King graduated first in the class of 1777. However, the two were part of the same social club in Boston between 1777 and 1778.¹¹⁵ Although King was originally from Massachusetts, he married Mary Alsop—the only daughter of a wealthy New York merchant—in 1786, and the couple moved to New York City two years later. King's entrance into national politics occurred in 1789 when he was elected to the United States Senate as a Federalist from New York. King's commitment to the Federalist Party is demonstrated by his collaboration with Alexander

¹¹⁵ Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 45.

Hamilton and John Jay on the “Camillus” papers, a series of essays written in defense of the Jay Treaty.¹¹⁶

Indeed, it was this defense of the Jay Treaty that in part earned King his diplomatic post in London. He, Gore, and Trumbull were clearly intimate friends, for both Gore and King were present at Trumbull’s small wedding that took place in 1800.¹¹⁷ The portraits Trumbull painted of King and his wife date from the following year and speak to the friendship between the Trumbulls and the Kings.

As with the portraits of Christopher Gore, Trumbull painted two portraits of Rufus King; Yale owns the likeness Trumbull painted for himself (**figure 116**), and the second portrait descended through the sitter’s family and remains in a private collection. Although King’s face is identical in each—again, suggesting that one is the copy of the other—the backgrounds and ancillary details differ. In this instance, the portrait that Trumbull gave (or sold) to the sitter appears to be the life portrait. King wears a black, high-collared coat and a white shirt and neck cloth. A slight dusting of powder can be seen on the back of his coat. This white from the powder contrasts with the dark grey drapery that has been pulled back on the left side of the painting to reveal an unfluted column. Two leather-bound books stand on the table to King’s right, and the sitter holds a folded packet of papers to his chest.¹¹⁸ In many ways, this work is similar in composition to the *Gore* portrait: Trumbull painted the sitter’s visage with a slight sense of linearity, and the background appears arranged in a more painterly fashion.

¹¹⁶ For biographical information on King, see: Robert Ernst, *Rufus King: American Federalist* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

¹¹⁷ For information on the presence of Gore and King at Trumbull’s wedding, see: Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 190-191.

¹¹⁸ In the Yale portrait, King places his right hand on the top of an upright book. When compared to the portrait in the private collection, the portrait at Yale seems oddly cut down on the bottom of the composition, for Trumbull painted only enough book to contain King’s right hand. His neck cloth also seems hastily done.

Trumbull also painted a pendant portrait of King's wife, Mary Alsop King in 1801. Whereas Trumbull shows Rufus King in an interior setting, complete with a book and papers befitting his gender and political position, Mary King is instead shown outdoors before a romantically painted landscape. Both portraits contain similar brown draperies and unfluted columns. However, the likeness of Mary King is similar to several earlier portraits Trumbull painted of his wife. King wears a white, high-waist dress trimmed with a red ribbon around her midsection and sleeves. This is similar to the attire Sarah Trumbull wears in *Sarah Trumbull in a White Dress* (**figure 117**). Both sitters wear gold-beaded necklaces and a cross is prominently displayed in both portraits. In addition, King wears the same pearled comb in her hair that Sarah Trumbull wears in the portrait entitled *Mrs. John Trumbull with a Jeweled Comb in Her Hair* (**figure 118**). As Trumbull painted this portrait of his wife in 1805, the comb Mrs. Trumbull wears may have been a gift from Mrs. King.¹¹⁹

Return to the Empire City

Despite an extended sabbatical from the arts that lasted from his arrival in London in 1794 until 1800, Trumbull had seemingly reestablished his abilities by 1804 when he began to long for a return to his native land. Trumbull originally planned to settle in Boston. However, Stuart—who had been in New York when Trumbull departed in 1794, and had since moved on to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C.—was about to move to Boston himself.¹²⁰ Wishing to avoid competition from a more skilled portraitist,

¹¹⁹ Theodore Sizer, "A Portrait of the Mysterious Sarah Trumbull," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 2 (1965): 138-141.

¹²⁰ Trumbull visited Boston after returning to the United States and made a visit to Boston in late summer 1804. He wrote in his Autobiography, "I soon observe that whenever I alluded to the idea of ...pursuing

Trumbull instead returned to New York City, a locale where he had made friends who could become potential patrons. In addition, at the moment of Trumbull's arrival—27 June 1804—New York lacked a portraitist of Trumbull's skill or prestige. Vanderlyn had returned to Paris the year before, and John Wesley Jarvis was just beginning his career as a portraitist. Trumbull eventually settled at 128 Broadway and rented a house from Richard Varick, the mayor of New York City from 1789 until 1801.¹²¹ This residence, on the corner of Broadway and Pine Street, was but a short walk away from City Hall, the building that was to hold the portraits Trumbull painted of New York City's most prominent citizens.

Trumbull remained in the United States for a little under four and a half years, and was active both in New York and in his home state of Connecticut. Trumbull and his wife returned to London in fall 1808. In the time he was in the United States, however, Trumbull became the unofficial portraitist to wealthy Federalists in New York City, and to the New York City Hall more specifically. Although he painted dozens of portraits during this period, the portraits the City of New York commissioned deserve particular attention. These portraits chronicle the ways in which Trumbull's connections within the local government influenced commissions, and also demonstrate the ways that aesthetics had become politicized to a great degree. The sitters Trumbull painted for the New York City Hall were of both local and national prominence. Although never elected to office, Alexander Hamilton had been one of the leaders of the Federalist Party for more than

my profession as a portrait painter, a cold seemed to pass over and to chill the conversation. I could not, for a long time, account for this, but at length I learned that my old friend and fellow student, Steward who having pursued that branch of the profession for more than twenty years...in Washington, had lately received an invitation to come and settle at Boston. Boston...did by no means offer an adequate field of success for two rival artists. I therefore returned to New York." See: Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 239.

¹²¹ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 205.

fifteen years. In addition, Trumbull also painted five mayors—James Duane, Richard Varick, Edward Livingston, Marinus Willett, and De Witt Clinton—and three governors of the state of New York: Morgan Lewis, Daniel Tompkins, and John Jay. These portraits were added to those Trumbull painted for City Hall during of George Washington and George Clinton during 1790 and 1791.

Trumbull wasted little time in positioning himself as the foremost portraitist in New York City. Although Trumbull had returned to New York City only at the end of June 1804, he received the most lucrative portrait commission the city of New York had yet given just five months later. The minutes of the Common Council on 29 November 1804 record that a committee was appointed “to wait on Colonel Trumbull and employ him in behalf of this Board and at their expence to paint a full length likeness of the late General Hamilton and a half length of the Chief Magistrates of this city since the Revolution.”¹²² Trumbull received a payment of \$500 on 28 January 1805, and another \$700 on 22 April 1805, payments that presumably fulfilled Trumbull’s account, as the Common Council does not note any further payments to the artist until 1808 when the artist was awarded a second wave of commissions for the city of New York.¹²³

The Common Council specifically mentioned their desire for a portrait of Alexander Hamilton in the minutes of the 29 November 1804 meeting. This decision is not surprising considering how quickly the politicians of New York wished to commemorate the first Secretary of the Treasury after his fatal duel with Aaron Burr, an event which had occurred less than five months before (**figure 119**). The portrait Trumbull finished in 1805 is vastly different from the portrait Trumbull had painted a

¹²² *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 3:636.

¹²³ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 3:680, 736.

dozen years before (**figure 107**). Hamilton had requested that the artist avoid any reference to public and political life in that first portrait. In contrast, the portrait Trumbull painted of Hamilton after the politician's death is nothing short of a visual display of political might. This portrait is the first of what is called the "Ceracchi Type," so named because Trumbull took the likeness from Giuseppe Ceracchi's 1791 marble bust of Hamilton. Trumbull was clearly inspired by Stuart's *Lansdowne Portrait* (**figure 68**) of George Washington, an image Trumbull certainly knew through James Heath's 1800 engraving. Like Washington, Hamilton gestures with his right arm, a posture that brings particular attention to the table Trumbull placed on the left side of the composition. Like the table in the *Lansdowne Portrait*, the table in the Hamilton portrait contains numerous elements alluding to the politician's prominent position within the Federalist Party. Books, rolled papers, letters, an inkpot, and a quill fill the lower-left quarter of the composition. Trumbull painted the orange curtain behind Hamilton with an energy that the composition in general lacks.¹²⁴ Indeed, with the exception of that drapery, the painting retains a relatively monochromatic feel, and has been described by at least one scholar as dull, boring, and "quickly and somewhat sloppily painted."¹²⁵ Especially when compared to Trumbull's earlier portrait of Hamilton, the 1805 effort

¹²⁴ "Standing in a graceful and dignified attitude with right foot advance, the taper fingers of the left hand resting on his hip, and his right hand, extended a little below the shoulder, palm upward, in gesture is the figure of a gentleman, dressed in black, with knee-breeches, white stock and tie. He is in three-quarters view to the left, with his face and eyes in the same direction. In the right left, with his face and eyes in the same direction. In the right background is a mahogany armchair upholstered in brown, above which hangs a dark red curtain looped in deep folds above the head of the figure. In the left foreground, against the pedestal of two large marble columns, is a mahogany table, upon which are books and documents, and across the corner is spread out a large manuscript. Beneath the table are several large books and a loosely-rolled document." See: Art Commission of the City of New York. *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York*, 5.

¹²⁵ Roque, "Trumbull's Portraits," 104.

appears uninspired. Such an adjective aptly describes the majority of portraits Trumbull painted for New York City Hall between 1804 and his return to London in 1808.

Although Hamilton was the politician with the most prominent position within national politics whom Trumbull painted on behalf of the city, the Common Council also requested the artist to paint “the Chief Magistrates of the city since the Revolution.”¹²⁶ The first of these magistrates was James Duane, mayor of New York City from 1784 until 1789. Although he married into the Livingston family, Duane did not follow Robert R. Livingston to the Democratic-Republican Party, but remained loyal to his Federalists colleagues, both during his tenure as mayor and through the end of his public life, which ended in 1794.¹²⁷ He retired to his estate in Schenectady, New York, and died there in 1797.

As Duane died while Trumbull was still in England, the portrait he completed on behalf of City Hall was clearly not painted from life. Instead, Trumbull based his portrait on an earlier likeness Robert Edge Pine painted in 1784 (**figure 120**).¹²⁸ There are some interesting similarities and differences between these two compositions. In the Pine portrait, Duane is frontal to the picture plane and looks slightly off to his right. A half-length portrait, the sitter’s right hand rests upon a table covered with a green cloth, and a silver inkwell and quill can be seen in the lower left corner. Duane sits on a blue chair and before a red curtain that lacks the dramatic folds often seen in portraits Stuart and Trumbull painted.

¹²⁶ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 3:636.

¹²⁷ Duane’s role as a Federalist is explored in: Young, *The Democratic-Republicans of New York*, 69-71.

¹²⁸ The portrait Robert Edge Pine painted descended through Duane’s family until the New-York Historical Society purchased it in 1948. See: *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 228.

Trumbull clearly borrowed Pine's likeness for the later portrait (**figure 121**); Duane is again shown parallel to the picture plane and looks off to his right. Trumbull has painted the same black coat, but has placed a more elaborate tie around the sitter's neck. Despite the similarities in the figure of the sitter, however, there are some notable differences that indicate the ways Trumbull was toning down the English elements within Pine's composition for a city government that the Democratic-Republicans largely controlled. Although both are half-length portraits, the portrait Pine painted contains the table, the desk, and the inkpot and quill. Rather than paint the same background, Trumbull instead placed the energetically painted drapery behind the left side of the sitter.¹²⁹ Rep

Trumbull used a similar compositional strategy for his first portrait of Richard Varick (**figure 122**). Like Trumbull and Hamilton, Varick was a wartime aide-de-camp to George Washington.¹³⁰ Varick was admitted to the New York bar in 1782, and he moved from Albany to New York City the following year and began his legal practice on Wall Street from a house that was close to both Alexander Hamilton and to City Hall. He rose through the ranks of the New York Federalists with great alacrity; he was elected to the state assembly in 1786, and became the speaker of the assembly the following year. Governor George Clinton appointed Mayor James Duane the first judge of the federal district court of New York in 1789, and Varick took over as mayor that same year. He held this position until 1801, when Edward Livingston replaced him as mayor. Varick

¹²⁹ "The head and shoulders of this gentleman with long powdered hair, curling at the ends, is in front view with his face turned to his left and his keen, dark eyes looking straight ahead. He is dressed in a black suit with white stock and jabot, and above his left shoulder is shown a mass of dark red drapery." See: Art Commission of the City of New York, *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York*, 5.

¹³⁰ Varick's most enduring contribution to American history was his work as secretary to Washington during the early 1780s when he diligently copied Washington's private and public correspondence, an opus that resulted in forty-four bound volumes.

was a resolute supporter of the Jay Treaty during the middle of his tenure as mayor, and it was this treaty that was the beginning of the fall from power for the New York Federalists.¹³¹ Indeed, as Burrows and Wallace have noted, “In the uproar that followed [the Jay Treaty], Jay and his party were very nearly destroyed.”¹³² They would never regain this same sense of political control. Six years later, Livingston was elected mayor, signifying a near permanent shift in New York City politics from Federalist control to a Democratic-Republican leadership.

Trumbull painted Varick at least twice; Trumbull painted one portrait for City Hall, and another descended through a private collection until it was given to the Museum of the City of New York in 1968 (**figure 123**).¹³³ Despite the fact that Trumbull painted Varick’s portrait for City Hall in 1805, the likeness retains a Federalist aesthetic, one distinct from some of the Democratic-Republicans Trumbull painted during the same period. In many ways, this half-length portrait of Varick is similar to those Trumbull painted in London of Christopher Gore and Rufus King. Varick wears a black coat and a white tie, and has placed his left hand upon his right wrist. He turns slightly to his right and sits before a great classical column to his left; the right edge of the composition reveals a cloud-filled background that suggests a sunset.¹³⁴ In contrast to the *Gore* and

¹³¹ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 270, 280-281, 299-300.

¹³² Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 321.

¹³³ The provenance of this portrait is unknown, although it is likely that either the sitter or a political or social associate commissioned it. Maria and Amy Reid Knox of Chappaqua, New York, owned this portrait in 1949. See: Sizer, *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull*, 78. Varick lent a portrait of himself to the American Academy in 1817. It is unlikely that this was the City Hall portrait and may have been the portrait that is now at the Museum of the City of New York.

¹³⁴ *The Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York* describes the painting as follows: “This is the half-length figure of an elderly gentleman of refined and noble mien, dressed in black, with an amble white tie. He sits beside a column in three-quarters view to the right, with his left hand resting on the other wrist, and his face turned toward the front, while his large brown eyes, with a placid expression, look straight before him. Beyond the columns the right background is shown the sky with sunset clouds.”

King portraits, Varick does not sit before a vibrantly painted curtain or in front of a desk that displays quills and inkpots. However, the column and the cloud-filled background harkens back to Trumbull's earlier London portraits. Such an aesthetic compromise was appropriate for a portrait of a Federalist sitter that was commissioned during a Democratic-Republican administration.

In contrast, the portrait Varick likely commissioned appears more English in nature. Varick faces in the opposite direction, and likewise, the column on the right side of the composition in the City Hall portrait has moved to the left side of the painting in this second work. In addition, Trumbull altered the background. The column in the portrait at the Museum of the City of New York is fluted, in contrast to the column in the City Hall portrait, which is not. Furthermore, the blank, neutral background in the City Hall portrait appears austere when compared with the vibrantly painted drapery behind the sitter in the Museum of the City of New York likeness. The dissimilarities do not end there. Varick's upper body is frontal to the picture plane, and the sitter faces to his right, thus making the portrait less direct. Finally, Trumbull introduces compositional elements commonly seen in his portraits: Varick holds a two-paged document in his right hand and rests his left hand upon a chair.

These two portraits provide interesting suggestions about the interactions between politics and aesthetics during the early nineteenth century. The portrait commissioned by the city of New York appears less like the portraits Trumbull painted in London than does the privately-commissioned portrait. The reason for this aesthetic shift between the portrait in City Hall and that which descended through a private collection is likely

See: The Art Commission of the City of New York, *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York*, 6.

because the City Hall portrait was commissioned by a Democratic-Republican administration of a Federalist mayor, and it was thought more appropriate that Varick be shown in less of an “English” representation than one that was commissioned for private use. As a result, the portrait at City Hall appears more politically neutral than does its privately-commissioned counterpart.

Edward Livingston followed Varick as mayor of New York City, and this election of a Democratic-Republican to the mayoral office was a watershed moment in early Federal New York City politics (**figure 124**). Edward was the youngest brother of Robert R. Livingston, the former Federalist who later converted to the Democratic-Republican Party after being overlooked for a federal appointment by President Washington.¹³⁵ Like his older brother, Edward was a strident Federalist who had served in the United States House of Representatives prior to serving as mayor. In fact, Livingston’s defeat of the Federalist John Watts in 1794 for the New York City congressional seat “not only gave local Democratic-Republicans a voice in Congress but demonstrated the party’s increasing strength among the city’s middling and lower classes.”¹³⁶ Livingston was reelected to the same seat in 1796 and again in 1798. Livingston supported Thomas Jefferson rather than Aaron Burr during the 1801 presidential election. As a political thank you, Jefferson appointed Livingston as the United States attorney for the District of New York in March of that same year. Several months later, a council of state officials—led by De Witt Clinton—provided Livingston another political reward: the position of mayor of New York City. Livingston contracted yellow fever during late summer of 1803, and resigned from office during the fall. He

¹³⁵ As previously discussed, Stuart painted Robert R. Livingston about 1794, and Vanderlyn painted the same sitter while both here in Paris in 1804.

¹³⁶ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 320-321.

moved to New Orleans in February of 1804 to settle in the newly acquired Louisiana Territory that his brother, Chancellor Livingston, had recently negotiated the purchase of from France.¹³⁷

The portrait of Edward Livingston that Trumbull painted has traditionally been dated 1805, in large part because the artist did not receive the request from the Common Council until the end of November of 1804. Indeed, Livingston departed for New Orleans about four months before Trumbull returned to New York City. Thus, it does not appear that Trumbull painted Livingston's portrait from life.¹³⁸ The resulting portrait shows how Trumbull was able to replace his English aesthetic for a more Francophile depiction, one more appropriate to a Democratic-Republican sitter. Livingston turns slightly to his left and directly engages the viewer. It is a relatively austere portrait; Livingston wears a black coat, white tie, and sits before a neutral-colored background.¹³⁹ The lack of desk, background column, or hanging drapery makes this portrait more akin to the portrait Vanderlyn had recently painted of Aaron Burr than the portrait Trumbull completed of Richard Varick.

Considering that Livingston was in New Orleans, Trumbull likely decided how to paint the sitter and arrange the composition. The depiction the artist chose is interesting. Clearly, Trumbull painted Livingston in a different way than he did for either Varick or Duane, and this difference was likely due to Livingston's differing political views from those of his predecessors as mayor. Interestingly, this same compositional type is seen in

¹³⁷ For biographical information on Edward Livingston, see: William B. Hatcher, *Edward Livingston: Jeffersonian Republican and Jacksonian Democrat* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1940).

¹³⁸ In addition, there is no evidence that Livingston visited New York City from Louisiana between 1804 and 1808 when Trumbull returned to London.

¹³⁹ "This shows the head and shoulders of a man in three-quarters view to the left, his large eyes looking calmly at the spectator. He wears a plain suit of black, with ample white stock." See: Art Commission of the City of New York. *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York*, 6.

another portrait Trumbull painted of a mayor of New York City, Marinus Willett (**figure 125**). Like Livingston, Willett was a vociferous Democratic-Republican, and served as mayor from 1807 until 1808. The portrait Trumbull painted of Willett for the New York City Hall retains the austerity seen in the portrait of Edward Livingston, and also looks visually akin to the portrait Vanderlyn had previously painted of Willett's wife and son. The composition is a half-length and without hands. Willett wears a black coat and white tie—the attire Trumbull preferred for politicians during the early years of the nineteenth century—and turns to his left and sits before a dark background. No column rises on the side of the composition; no desk occupies a lower quadrant.¹⁴⁰

Like the portrait of Edward Livingston, the portrait Trumbull painted of Marinus Willett appears austere and plain, more like the portraits Vanderlyn painted during his brief stay in New York from 1801-1803 than like the portraits Trumbull painted in London during the same time.¹⁴¹ A comparison between the portraits of Federalist mayors—Duane and Varick—and those mayors who were Democratic-Republicans—Livingston and Willett—is instructive. When viewed side-by-side, the portraits of Federalists appear more “English” in nature; they sit before a column or drapery that visually aligns them with the portraits Trumbull painted in London, such as those of Christopher Gore and Rufus King. Yet, whereas Trumbull's London portraits contained tabletop elements, Trumbull avoided using such compositional elements after his return to the United States for his half-length portraits. In contrast to the portraits of Federalists

¹⁴⁰ “Dressed in a simple suit of black with white stock is the head and shoulders of a gentleman in three quarters view to the left with his face turned toward the front, and his eyes looking directly at the spectator.” See: Art Commission of the City of New York, *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Trumbull completed this painting by 25 April 1808 when he submitted a bill to the Common Council for \$1200; \$600 each for the portraits of Lewis and Tompkins (discussed below) and \$100 each for the portraits of Willett and a copy of a portrait at the New-York Historical Society of Governor Stuyvesant. See: *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 5:102.

mayors, Trumbull painted the two Democratic-Republican mayors before a blank, neutral-colored background. Trumbull also painted their faces with a sense of unsympathetic directness unseen in the portrait of Varick.¹⁴² Painted by the same artist for the same patron—the Common Council of the City of New York, a stronghold for Democratic-Republicans in the early years of the nineteenth century—these portraits indicate that sitters from opposing political parties were simply painted in different ways, even when the artistic decisions were left to the artist and commissioning committee.

The portrait Trumbull painted of De Witt Clinton, however, provides somewhat of an aesthetic conundrum (**figure 126**).¹⁴³ Although a Federalist early in his political career, Clinton changed his political persuasion during the closing years of the eighteenth century and remained a Democratic-Republican in one form or another until his retirement from public life. Although Clinton is most well known today for his key role in the completion of the Erie Canal—the so-called “Clinton’s Ditch”—he did, in fact, have a long and distinguished political career that began at a curiously young age. His entrance into national politics began in 1802 when he was elected to the United States Senate at the age of thirty-three.

Clinton was clearly an artistically minded politician, and he and Trumbull had a relationship since at least July 1805 when the artist was unanimously elected to the board of directors of the American Academy of Arts, a group in which Clinton was

¹⁴² Remembering that Trumbull largely copied the Duane portrait from an earlier work by Robert Edge Pine. The head in particular appears a direct copy.

¹⁴³ The 1 June 1807 minutes of the Common Council meeting report, “Resolved that the Mayor [Clinton] be requested to sit to Col. Trumbull for his portrait, for the use of the Corporation. To this request His Honour politely assented.” See: *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 4:446-447.

exceptionally active.¹⁴⁴ As the foremost painter in the city, Trumbull needed no introduction into this organization, and it was an organization in which he was well connected. Rufus King, for example, was the vice president, and the founding members came more from the upper echelon of the New York elite—merchants, politicians, judges, and the like—than from artists.¹⁴⁵ Clinton and Trumbull remained acquaintances, both throughout Trumbull’s stay in New York and after his final return from London in 1815. Shortly before leaving for London in 1808, for example, Trumbull visited Clinton to request a political favor.¹⁴⁶ Clinton succeeded Robert R. Livingston as president of the American Academy of the Arts in 1813; Trumbull’s return to New York City was the catalyst this organization needed to reassert its prominence within the city. Moreover, Trumbull’s name consistently appears within Clinton’s diary in 1815 and 1816.¹⁴⁷

The portrait the Common Council commissioned in 1807 is the most atypical of all the portraits Trumbull painted on behalf of City Hall.¹⁴⁸ Clinton wears the usual black coat and white neck cloth. He turns to his right and sits in front of a table, both hands holding a leather-bound book. A column and vibrantly painted dark red drapery can be

¹⁴⁴ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 207. This particular organization went through several name changes: It began as the New York Academy of the Fine Arts (1802-04), then was renamed American Academy of the Arts (1804-1816), American Academy of the Arts (1816-17), to American Academy of the Fine Arts (1817-39).

¹⁴⁵ Theodore Sizer, “The American Academy of the Fine Arts,” in Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, ed., *The American Academy of the Fine Arts and the American Art-Union* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953), 1, 66-81. Neil Harris writes, “In New York the founders attracted the state chancellor, the mayor of New York City [De Witt Clinton], Aaron Burr and Rufus King. See: Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 95.

¹⁴⁶ Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 222; Sizer, the editor of Trumbull’s autobiography, writes: “In 1808, while living in New York, Trumbull tried, through his friend, De Witt Clinton, to obtain nationalization papers for his wife, ‘Sarah Trumbull,’ from the State Legislature, saying that she had been a resident of the State for nearly five years.” See: Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 360.

¹⁴⁷ The New-York Historical Society owns this diary, which is not currently available to scholars. For Trumbull’s name within Clinton’s diary, see: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 196-197.

¹⁴⁸ This portrait was at one time thought to be by an artist by the name of Parmecelli, but research has established that no such artist existed. See: Art Commission of the City of New York, *Catalogue of the Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York*, 77, 237. Trumbull painted several replicas of this portrait. The Department of State owns a one copy and the New York City Chamber of Commerce owns another.

seen behind the sitter. Given the aesthetic pattern presented, this portrait is much closer to the portraits Trumbull painted of Federalist friends in London rather than Democratic-Republican politicians in New York City. Clearly, Clinton was not interested in having his portrait do political work on his behalf, and was unconcerned with having his likeness speak to his political allegiances. As an appreciator of the arts—he was, after all, a founding member of the New York Academy of the Fine Arts—Clinton may have simply preferred Trumbull’s more romantic and English representation. It was, after all, the vein in which Trumbull was most comfortable painting, and the City Hall portrait of De Witt Clinton remains one of Trumbull’s most pleasing aesthetic efforts from this stay in New York City.

In addition to painting mayors of the city, Trumbull also painted governors of the state. Trumbull painted two in 1808: the likenesses of Morgan Lewis (**figure 127**) and Daniel Tompkins (**figure 91**). These are among the last portraits Trumbull painted before returning to London, and as a pair they are relatively unpleasing.¹⁴⁹ The figures are exceptionally stiff, and lack the energy and verve seen in Trumbull’s earlier full-length portraits of George Clinton and George Washington. Painted three years before, the full-length portrait of John Jay, which Trumbull painted shortly after arriving in New York, is as boring, and demonstrates the artist’s inability (or unwillingness) to paint compelling images on a large scale.

As discussed in the last chapter on John Vanderlyn and portraiture of the Democratic-Republicans, the Common Council originally offered the commission for the full-length portrait of John Jay to Gilbert Stuart and then passed the commission on to

¹⁴⁹ Trumbull submitted a bill for these two portraits on 25 April 1808. See: *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 5:102. Trumbull returned to London at the end of 1808. See: Jaffe, *John Trumbull*, 222.

John Vanderlyn when Stuart was unable to work with the requisite alacrity. However, Vanderlyn was unable to begin the portrait, as Jay fell ill during the spring of 1803 and refused to travel to New York City. A few months later, Vanderlyn packed his trunks and returned to Paris. Trumbull's arrival in the Empire City opened the door for Jay (the diplomat) and Trumbull (the secretary/artist) to reunite. The Common Council awarded the commission to Trumbull on 4 July 1804, and Trumbull completed it sometime in 1805, when Jay visited New York City from his estate in Bedford (**figure 69**).¹⁵⁰ Despite the affinity they felt for one another—and the two were close friends until the end of Jay's life—the portrait Trumbull completed appears flat and visually inferior to the full-length portraits Trumbull painted in the 1790s.

The artist placed greater effort in the painting of the background than in that of the sitter himself. Wearing all black—with the exception of his white neck cloth—Jay faces to his left and extends his left arm forward so that his hand may grasp the book that is upright on the table. Although slightly turned, Jay's body lacks a sense of depth or volume. Another book and some rolled documents can also be seen on top of this table. The tablecloth has been pulled aside to reveal two additional texts underneath. Jay rests his right elbow on a high-backed upholstered chair on the right side of the composition, and a bright red drapery has been pulled to the left to reveal a cloud-filled sky on the right side of the painting. A trace of the base of the column can be seen just above the back of the chair. In many ways, Trumbull attempted to emulate Stuart's *Lansdowne Portrait*, and when the Jay portrait is compared with the Hamilton portrait—also completed in 1805—it is clear that Trumbull conceived the two portraits as a pendant pair; two greats in the Pantheon of New York Federalists.

¹⁵⁰ Jacob Morton to John Jay, 30 October 1804, John Jay Papers, no. 13019.

Trumbull was elected vice president of the American Academy of the Arts in 1808. Yet despite this prominent professional position, he departed for London in December of that year.¹⁵¹ It has been suggested that one of the reasons Trumbull returned to London was to pursue treatment for his deteriorating vision.¹⁵² While there may be some truth in such a suggestion, Trumbull could undoubtedly see the writing on the wall, for economics, politics, and competition were aligning against him. The economy was in a recession, and the British embargo that had been in place for several years was beginning to cripple American commerce and potential clients. In addition, while Trumbull had been politically connected when he left for London with Jay in 1794, the winds of political change had swept through the United States while the artist was abroad. Indeed, Trumbull returned to the United States expecting to be the most prominent portraitist in New York City, and for a period of time he was. However, a stranger from Philadelphia arrived in New York City during the early years of the nineteenth century. Although this artist initially dedicated his career to miniatures, he eventually diversified his talents and became an exceptionally talented portraitist in larger oil on canvas compositions. His name was John Wesley Jarvis.

¹⁵¹ In his autobiography, the artist reported leaving New York on 15 December. See: Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of John Trumbull*, 247.

¹⁵² Cooper, *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*, 13.

Chapter Five

John Wesley Jarvis and the Middle Ground:

“Moderate” Portraiture Surrounding the War of 1812

Despite his absence from modern survey texts on American art, it would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of John Wesley Jarvis to American portraiture. Indeed, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, only Thomas Sully and Gilbert Stuart surpassed Jarvis in terms of prestige and production. Yet despite this respectable position, his early training was with an engraver, and Jarvis later began to paint miniatures. It was only in his twenty-fourth year that he turned to portraiture full time, and his rapid improvement in composition and technique despite the lack of extended formal training speaks to his natural talent. The portrait-seeking public in New York was quick to recognize this improvement. In a matter of years, Jarvis became the preeminent portraitist in New York City.

Without doubt, Jarvis benefited from some fortuitous circumstances. He truly matured as a portraitist between 1808 and 1812, a period of time when his chief competition—namely John Trumbull and John Vanderlyn—sojourned in Europe. Moreover, while I contend that Trumbull and Vanderlyn both succeeded at portraiture in part due to their extensive social and political networks, Jarvis had no ready-made clientele, and instead flourished because of his abilities rather than through political networking. Indeed, whereas Vanderlyn had Burr and Trumbull had (to start, at least) Revolutionary War officers, Jarvis had only his palette and pencil, and the positive word-of-mouth recommendation that came from satisfied patrons.

The absence of Trumbull and Vanderlyn was not the only reason for Jarvis's success. Whereas Trumbull and Vanderlyn both practiced a portraiture in which an aesthetic became politicized, Jarvis instead managed to navigate a middle course from an aesthetic point of view. As a result, his artistic style was considered neither particularly Federalist nor overtly Republican, but instead appealed to a variety of patrons who did not wish for portraiture to politically align them.

Most notable among Jarvis's patrons during the second decade of the nineteenth century were army and navy officers who earned distinction during the War of 1812. Although a permanent resident of New York, Jarvis visited South Carolina in 1810, and eventually traveled north to settle in Baltimore. Jarvis returned to New York in 1813 after successful exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and found himself the most sought-after portraitist in his adopted hometown. His reputation secured Jarvis a prestigious commission for six full-length portraits of military heroes from the second American conflict with Great Britain. This complicated commission opened additional doors for Jarvis, who, in New York at least, became the most popular portraitist among the military during the second decade of the nineteenth century. Indeed, after this large city-sponsored commission, Jarvis later painted all six sitters for a second (and sometimes a third) time, in addition to painting dozens of portraits of other naval and army officers. Clearly, these men were attracted to Jarvis's aesthetic that did not align them with a particular political party.

As discussed, New York City was a dynamic locale from a political point of view at this time; the Federalists's influence had been waning for more than a decade and the Republican political *wunderkinden* were ascending in power. Although he was stepped

over for the city-sponsored portraits of Andrew Jackson and James Monroe, Jarvis painted many privately commissioned portraits of politicians, both Republican and Federalists. This willingness to paint both sides of the political divide—and the willingness of those on both sides of the political fence to sit for him—was one of the reasons Jarvis was able to operate such a successful portraiture studio. The reason for choosing Jarvis could involve his lack of political involvement, his moderate aesthetic, or a combination of these two reasons. In addition, Jarvis retained flexibility in his style, painting both Vanderlyn-inspired portraits, such as that of Ambrose Spencer, and more moderate depictions of politicians, such as De Witt Clinton.

Although Jarvis lacked the talent of Gilbert Stuart, and the contacts of John Trumbull and John Vanderlyn, Jarvis rose to the head of his profession in a lively and vibrant city and maintained that position for nearly fifteen years. His portraiture and patronage shed important light on the dynamic world of New York City from his artistic rise in 1808 until his extended travels in the South during the 1820s. The present inquiry is not intended to be a complete analysis of Jarvis's New York artistic production. Indeed, a search of the *Catalog of American Portraits* reveals that Jarvis painted almost 400 portraits, the majority of which were completed in New York. Instead, this analysis focuses on the ways in which Jarvis painted sitters who either wished to avoid a particularly political aesthetic, or the ways in which Jarvis's (apparent) political indifference appealed to a variety of potential patrons. For this reason, the subjects discussed center around military heroes from the War of 1812, the New York politicians from the era, and the social elite of the time.

* * *

From England to Philadelphia and New York

In the last decade of his life, the aged John Wesley Jarvis told his life story to William Dunlap, a former artist and theater manager who was preparing to write his *History of the Arts of Design in the United States*. Many of the early “facts” regarding Jarvis’s life thus come from the artist himself, and, as with much of Dunlap’s opus, such information must be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. While Dunlap wrote that Jarvis was born in 1780, his baptism occurred on 1 July 1781 at St. Hilda’s Church in South-Shields-on-Tyne.¹ Notwithstanding such a name, South Shields, a fishing hamlet on the east coast of England, is not in the south at all, but rather approximately 280 miles north-north-east from London. Little is known about what his parents, John and Ann Jarvis, did in South Shields. Henry Tuckerman wrote in *Book of the Artists* that the elder Jarvis, a New Yorker by birth, was a mariner by trade.² Whether or not he was a sailor, he crossed the Atlantic and returned to North America after the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, likely in 1783, and left behind his wife and two young children. It is difficult to follow the elder Jarvis’s footsteps with any certainty during 1783 or 1784, although a letter at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania indicates that he spent some time in New York City. He eventually settled in Philadelphia, and was joined, according to Dunlap, by his wife and children sometime in 1785.³

Philadelphia was a vibrant metropolis at the close of the eighteenth century. With a population of more than 40,000 in 1790, it was the largest city in the United States and the third largest English-speaking city in the world. By 1795, when John Wesley Jarvis

¹ Dunlap. *History and Progress of the Arts*, 2: 208. Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 7.

² Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of the Artists* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Son, 1867), 58.

³ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 11-12.

was in his sixteenth year, Philadelphia was already the home to several talented artists. Gilbert Stuart had recently moved there from New York City, and would be shortly joined by a talented young apprentice by the name of John Vanderlyn. Charles Willson Peale was also active in Philadelphia at this time, producing artistic masterpieces on canvas. His genetic masterpiece, the precocious Rembrandt, had produced faithful portraits of President Washington when only eighteen years old. Like the elder Peale, Matthew Pratt studied in London with Benjamin West and had returned to Philadelphia to paint the sitters not accommodated by Stuart and Peale. Clearly, Philadelphia was an artistic city at this juncture in its history and a locale that would have appealed to the creative leanings of the adolescent Jarvis.

Edward Savage was yet another prominent artist active in Philadelphia during the end of the eighteenth century, and an artist who has a place of importance in Jarvis's career.⁴ A painter and engraver, Savage arrived in the City of Brotherly Love sometime in 1795, after having previously practiced his trade in Boston, New York, and London. Although his reputation today rests on a single work and the engraving that followed—the 1796 life-sized portrait of *The Washington Family*—Savage was a prolific artist who specialized in oil-on-canvas portraits, engravings, and miniatures (**figure 128**). In addition to his creative endeavors, he was also an entrepreneur, managing both his Columbian Gallery and another exhibition space that housed a panorama of London. In February 1796, Savage published the following announcement in numerous Philadelphia publications:

⁴ The best source for information on Savage remains: Louisa Dresser, "Edward Savage, 1761-1817," *Art in America* 40 (Autumn 1952) no. 4, 157-212. Dickson also extensively discusses the artist in the chapter entitled "The Great Savage." See: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 35-57.

Columbian Academy, Chestnut-street, third door West of Tenth-street, Mr. Savage Informs the Ladies and Gentlemen of Philadelphia, that the Columbian Gallery containing a large collection of ancient and modern Paintings and Prints will be opened on Monday, the 22nd instant. This collection consists of the production of the first artists, and will doubtless be pleasing to amateurs and admirers of the fine arts. To this collection Mr. Savage had added several pieces of his own, one of which is the President and Family, the full size of Life. Price of admission to the Gallery, one quarter of a dollar. The Panorama in High Street exhibiting a view of London, continues open for the amusement of those who may be disposed to see that interesting perspective.⁵

With so many irons in the artistic fire, it is not surprising that Savage desired apprentices in order to keep this creative machine whirling. Jarvis, who may have admired the prints displayed in the windows of Philadelphia's art shops, was surely attracted to Savage's flourishing engraving practice; Savage published at least five engravings in 1796 alone.⁶ While it has not been ascertained exactly when Jarvis's apprenticeship with Savage began, it was likely during 1796, around the time that Savage opened his Columbian Gallery.⁷

Despite high expectations, Jarvis's period of apprenticeship was to be a sore disappointment, and he carried a deep rancor towards his former instructor for the remainder of his life. According to Dunlap, Jarvis said, "He [Savage] was not qualified to teach me any art but that of deception. There he was a master—at drawing or painting I was his master."⁸ David Edwin, a British-trained engraver, arrived in Philadelphia in December of 1797 and shortly thereafter joined Jarvis as an apprentice in Savage's studio. When Savage decided to relocate to New York City, his two young apprentices

⁵ Alfred Coxe Prime, *The Arts and Crafts in Philadelphia, Maryland, and South Carolina, 1786-1800* (Topsfield, Mass: The Walpole Society, 1932), 33.

⁶ Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 2: 380-382. Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 41. These prints include three portraits: *William Smith* (after a Gilbert Stuart portrait), *Anthony Wayne*, and *David Rittenhouse* (after a Charles Willson Peale portrait). In addition, Savage also completed, *Muscipula* (after Joshua Reynolds), and *Liberty*, an original patriotic composition.

⁷ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 39.

⁸ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 2: 212

followed. Jarvis must have been thankful for the arrival of the talented Edwin, who was only four years Jarvis's senior. Later, Jarvis said, "from Mr. Edwin I learned to draw and to engrave, and we worked for the fame and profit of the *great Savage*...I made all my master's pictures, engraved them, printed them, and delivered them to customers."⁹ Regardless of from whom Jarvis learned drawing and engraving, two things are apparent. First, Jarvis was clearly a talented student who would later flourish in a variety of mediums. Jarvis's training is as important. While Stuart, Vanderlyn, and Trumbull all journeyed to Europe for extensive artistic educations, Jarvis remained on American soil throughout his artistic life. Such a decision would affect his patronage. Whereas Federalists avoided Vanderlyn due to his Democratic-Republican leanings, and Democratic-Republicans largely shunned Trumbull because of his position as an anglophile, Jarvis remained distinctly neutral in politics. Aided in part by this neutrality, Jarvis was to become the most prolific portraitist in New York City during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Jarvis placed an announcement in the *Weekly Museum* shortly after completing his apprenticeship with "the great Savage" in 1802. Under the heading of "DRAWING," this advertisement states, "THE public are respectfully informed, that JOHN JARVIS has removed his Drawing School to No. 28 Franckfort-street [sic], where he continues to instruct young ladies and gentlemen in that Polite Art."¹⁰ The following year, Jarvis joined his creative talents with Joseph Wood, another young artist. A skilled miniaturist two years Jarvis's junior, Wood began a seven-year apprenticeship with a New York silversmith in 1794. After the completion of this study, Wood set out for business on his

⁹ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 2:212. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰ *Weekly Museum*, 15 May 1802.

own. Wood lived at 91 Pearl Street in 1801-02, and his occupation was listed as “portrait and miniature painter” in the city directory. Two years later, the 1803-04 edition of the city directory gave the business address for both Jarvis and Wood as 31 Park Street. The following year, the city directory indicated that Jarvis and Wood, “portrait and miniature painters,” were conducting business together at 28 Wall Street. This was the second of seven consecutive years that Jarvis and Wood were listed together as artistic partners in New York City.¹¹

If the extant art is any indication, Jarvis mostly completed watercolors and miniatures during the early years of his artistic partnership with Wood. When oil commissions did come to Jarvis, however, he quickly improved as a portraitist in that medium. Unlike those who sat for Vanderlyn or Trumbull, the patrons Jarvis painted during the early part of his portraiture career were generally not engaged with politics at either the state or national level, and seldom were they particularly wealthy. This may explain why they may have chosen Jarvis as their portraitist in the first place. Lacking the prestige and training of Trumbull, who was active in New York City between his

¹¹ A listing of Jarvis’s and Woods addresses can be found in: Theodore Bolton and George C. Groce, Jr. “John Wesley Jarvis: An Account of His Life and the First Catalogue of His Work.” *The Art Quarterly Autumn* 1938, 300. In his 1949 study, Dickson quotes the following advertisement from the 10 June 1803 issue of the *New York Herald*: “PHYSIOGNOTRACE.—JARVIS & WOOD respectfully inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of New-York, that at their Drawing Academy, No. 31 Chatham-Row, two doors east from the Theatre, they execute Likenesses for two shillings each, either on glass or on paper. Hours of attendance from nine o’clock in the morning till four in the afternoon; and from 7 to 9 in the evening. No likeness no pay. N.B. The public may rest assured that this is not the patent machine lately advertised.” See: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 65. However, while Dickson states that this is the earliest announcement of the Jarvis and Wood partnership, the *New York Herald* was not published on 10 June 1803. The *Herald* was published, however, on 8 June (issue 150) and 11 June (issue 151). No such announcement advertising Jarvis and Wood’s services appeared in those editions, or any edition within the months of May or June 1803. If such a notice did appear in a publication other than the *New York Herald*—that is, if Dickson made a mistake in his citation—it provides an indication of the certain confidence of both Jarvis and Wood. The phrasing “no likeness no pay” provided a sort of “money-back guarantee” that the sitter would be satisfied with the likeness. Moreover, the postscript that dismisses “the patent machine lately advertised” was notice against Edward Savage’s new invention. Such a notice indicates that Jarvis and Wood were taking aim at their more established competition.

return in 1804 until his departure for London in 1808, Jarvis was a more affordable portrait option than his more-well established competition.

Although unlikely his first oil composition, Dickson states that Jarvis's first *dated* portrait is that of *Dr. William Linn*, a Presbyterian minister who served at the Collegiate Dutch Church in New York City from 1786 until 1805 (**figure 129**).¹² Dated April 1805, it was perhaps commissioned to commemorate Linn's retirement from the ministry because of poor health. Compositionally, Jarvis's portrait of Linn follows the colonial American tradition of the depiction of the clergy that dates back to the portraits John Smibert completed in Boston; the sitter wears a black coat and a white clerical collar, and is seated before a dark, austere background. The face—which expresses a stern or thoughtful air—is roughly modeled, and Linn's body is poorly rendered under his clerical garb. Whereas Jarvis would quickly improve his ability to paint faces, many of even his most accomplished portraits suffer from deficiently painted bodies. Moreover, as Jarvis's skill as a portraitist increased, so too did the social and economic prestige of his sitters.

A good example of Jarvis's increased skill is a series of portraits he completed for the Dickey and Brown families.¹³ The first two portraits, those of *Anne Brown Dickey* (**figure 131**) and *Robert Dickey* (**figure 132**), were likely painted in 1807 to

¹² Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 89-90. This portrait by Jarvis, currently in a private collection, may be a copy of a portrait Rutgers University owns (**figure 130**). Both are half-length portraits. The Rutgers portrait, however, shows Linn seated before a table and holding a book in both hands.

¹³ These four portraits are *Robert Dickey*, his wife *Anne Brown Dickey*, and her parents, *Dr. George Brown* and *Mrs. George Brown*. The portraits of Dr. George Brown and Mrs. George Brown are in a private collection and have not been examined by the author. The Browns were originally from Baltimore, Maryland, and it is possible that Jarvis painted Anne Brown Dickey's parents while painting in Maryland in 1810-11.

commemorate the couple's wedding of that year.¹⁴ In her portrait, Anne Dickey wears a white gown that is accented by a matching white veil. She has turned to her left and rests her left arm upon the chair in which she sits, bringing compositional attention to the wedding ring on her left hand. The pose and costume both further the supposition that it is a wedding portrait. Robert Dickey faces to the right in his portrait and wears a dark, double-breasted coat and a white, high-collared shirt. Jarvis alludes to Dickey's wealth through the inclusion of a fine bamboo walking stick he holds, the jeweled stickpin in his shirt, and the gold seal that hangs from his waist.

Jarvis painted the faces and costumes of Mr. and Mrs. Dickey with a sense of vitality that his earlier composition of Dr. William Linn lacks. The artist's lack of ability in rendering the body is evident, particularly in the portrait of Robert Dickey. The sitter's elongated neck and his oddly sloping shoulders clearly bespeak Jarvis's lack of academic artistic training and are reminiscent of early portraits by Gilbert Stuart and his Scottish instructor, Cosmo Alexander (**figure 133**). Yet such deficiencies—which consistently appear even in Jarvis's best portraits despite the anatomy lectures he later attended with Dr. John Augustine Smith—seemed to have been of little concern to Jarvis's American clientele.¹⁵ What was most important to Jarvis's patrons was his ability to “nail the head to the canvas” as well as Stuart did. Shoulders were considerably less important than faces.

The years that immediately followed were active ones for Jarvis, both professionally and personally. Trumbull departed for London in late 1808 and

¹⁴ Both portraits are owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and were painted on identically-sized wood panels. See: Caldwell and Roque, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 296-298.

¹⁵ Smith was Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City from 1809 until 1814. The College of Physicians and Surgeons merged with Columbia College in 1813. See: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 174.

unintentionally left the likeness-seeking public with Jarvis as the most distinguished portraitists in the city. Approaching thirty years of age, Jarvis also decided to begin a family; he married Betsy Burtis sometime in 1808 or 1809.¹⁶ With a wife to support and his first child on the way—John Wesley Jarvis, Jr. was born in 1810—the artist was in clear need of additional income. Either as a way to earn extra money to support a growing family or because of patriotic zeal, Jarvis received an ensign’s commission in the New York State militia in the autumn of 1809.¹⁷ The former of these two reasons seems more likely, considering that Jarvis advertised in New York area newspapers to announce both his presence and his prices throughout the spring of 1809. The most complete of these ads appeared in the 8 June 1809 edition of the *Long Island Star*. After stating his name, occupation, and address, Jarvis’s advertisement reads, “Believing many persons are prevented from having Likenesses from not knowing where to apply, or at what price they can have them done, I make this statement of several manners, prices, and sizes, in which I paint them.” A list of prices follows; a full-length portrait, for example, cost \$300, while a half-length likeness with hands cost \$60. A portrait without hands, presumably bust-sized, cost twenty dollars less.¹⁸

¹⁶ The exact date of Jarvis married Burtis remains unclear. Bolton and Groce, and Dickson believe 1809 is likely, whereas John Walker Harrington states 1808. See: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 338 and Bolton and Groce, “John Wesley Jarvis: An Account of His Life and the First Catalogue of His Works,” 303. Also: John Walker Harrington, “John Wesley Jarvis,” *The American Magazine of Art* 18, no. 11 (November 1927): 579,

¹⁷ A General Order from Governor Daniel D. Tompkins appointed Jarvis an ensign of the Third Regiment of the First Brigade on 25 October 1809. See: *Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins Governor of New York 1807-1817 Military-Volume I*. (New York: Published By the State, 1898), 238. Dickson writes that, “as of March 1810 he [Jarvis] became an ensign in the First Brigade of the New York Infantry, Third Regiment.” Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 140. As the General Order makes clear, this commission was given the previous October.

¹⁸ *Long Island Star*, 8 June 1809. See also: William Kelby. *Notes on American Artists, 1754-1820: Copied from advertisements appearing in the newspapers of the day*. (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1922), 48. The prices Jarvis charged were bargains compared with what Stuart charged for a portrait, and were appropriate considering Jarvis’s lack of reputation and experience. For example, Stuart charged William Bingham \$1,000 for the 1796 *Lansdowne Portrait* of George Washington; thirteen years later,

Jarvis completed several portraits immediately after he placed this announcement. One of the most accomplished paintings from this period of his career—and one that illustrates a step forward in terms of Jarvis’s patronage—is the July 1809 portrait of *Philip Hone* (**figure 134**). Hone is most well known today for the diary he kept from 1828 until his death in 1851 in which he mused over the political and social happenings of New York City. In his own day, however, Hone was one of the most successful merchants in New York City. He began working at his older brother’s auction house at the age of sixteen. An indefatigable worker, Philip was made a partner just three years later. The Hones’ business was so profitable during the first two decades of the nineteenth century that Philip retired in 1821 at the age of forty. From that point onward, Hone largely dedicated himself to social and philanthropic activities. He and Jarvis clearly enjoyed one another’s company and would continue to grow as social acquaintances, even if they never became dear friends.¹⁹ For example, both were active in James Fenimore Cooper’s Bread and Cheese Club during the 1820s.²⁰

Although they may have met earlier, the relationship between the painter and prosperous merchant likely began with the 1809 portrait commission.²¹ In this work, Jarvis shows Hone as a refined and educated gentleman, characteristics befitting his rising social position. Shown from the waist up and seated in a chair, Hone confidentially gazes at the viewer and holds a book in his right hand, using his left index

Jarvis charged only \$300. More contemporarily with Jarvis, Stuart routinely charged \$100 for a bust-sized portrait while working in Boston in 1809. See: Barratt and Miles, *Gilbert Stuart*, 170, 220-221.

¹⁹ *American National Biography*, s.v. “Hone, Philip.”

²⁰ For information on this social organization, see: Albert H. Marckwardt. “The Chronology and Personnel of the Bread and Cheese Club.” *American Literature* 6 (1935), 384-99.

²¹ Hone lived at 235 Broadway after 1801. His stately home overlooked City Hall Park. Jarvis’s “drawing school” was located at 28 Frankfort Street from 1802 until sometime in 1806 when he and Wood moved to 40 Nassau. Both of these locations are adjacent to (but on the opposite side of) the park through which Hone must have continually passed.

finger to mark his place. A dark drapery hangs behind his left shoulder and the open window over his right shoulder reveals a Claudian landscape in the distance. The portrait of Philip Hone indicates Jarvis's early compositional indebtedness to the New York portraits completed by John Trumbull between 1804 and 1808. This influence is not surprising, given Trumbull's overwhelming artistic prominence in New York City during this time. The application of the paint, however, reveals a calculated clarity, a smoothness that is vaguely neoclassical in nature.

When considered as a whole, the *Hone* portrait thus appears to be a mixture of romanticism and neoclassicism, part Trumbull and part Vanderlyn, with both English and French elements merged together. Although no contemporary remarks from Hone survive regarding the portrait Jarvis painted, it would not be surprising if the sitter's reaction was lukewarm. Whereas twenty-first-century viewers may miss these nationalistic associations, they would have been clear to those who observed the portrait during the first decade of the nineteenth century. According to the portrait Jarvis painted, Hone was neither fish nor fowl, but aesthetically along the fence between English Romanticism and French Neoclassicism. Jarvis clearly recognized that there was a market for French-inspired art; even the anglophile Trumbull incorporated slight neoclassical elements into his portraits of sitters who were not engaged in politics or for those who were Democratic-Republicans. What Jarvis likely learned from his portrait of Hone was that it was better to stick with one mode of representation for those who wished for a political portrait than to oscillate between the two aesthetics in the same work. Without doubt (and as will be shown), this "middle ground" aesthetic worked best for members of the military.

Such a French influence was a brief phase in Jarvis's New York career, and seems restricted to the portraits completed around 1809. The portrait of Jacob Houseman is another excellent example, and one in which Jarvis committed himself to a neoclassical representation (**figure 135**). An affluent wire manufacturer and merchant, Houseman sits holding his hat in his left hand and playing with his watch fob in his right. Whereas Hone sat before an open window, Houseman sits inside an austere, muted interior. This portrait shows the influence of French artists such as Robert Lefèvre and Jacques-Louis David.²² As important to Jarvis, however, would have been the portraits Vanderlyn completed in New York from 1801-03. Vanderlyn's patronage demonstrated that there was a market for French neoclassicism in the United States. Such a market was only enhanced by the shifting political feelings during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

Adventures to the South

At least in America, a career in portraiture was not well suited for a person who was apprehensive of travel. Be it for training or for patrons, portraitists were often required to travel great distances in order to further their careers. Gilbert Stuart is but one example. During his professional life, he was active in Newport, Rhode Island, London, Dublin, New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and finally Boston. It was only during this final stop in his career that he settled down, living there from 1805 until his death in 1828. Although Jarvis had already relocated once during his professional career—moving from Philadelphia to New York City while an apprentice to Savage—his travels

²² *American Paintings in the Detroit Institute of Arts. Volume I: Artists Born Before 1816.* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1991), 132

along the eastern seaboard were to significantly expand during the second decade of the nineteenth century.

Previous scholars have assumed that Jarvis left New York in search of patronage, and while such a supposition provides a plausible explanation as to why he left for adventures in the south, it neglects one powerful fact: in 1810—with Trumbull in England and Vanderlyn traveling the continent—Jarvis was the most prestigious portraitist active in New York City and likely had enough commissions to remain artistically occupied. With this in mind, there may be another reason for this departure, and this reason need not be complicated. First of all, the artistic partnership Jarvis forged with Joseph Wood in 1803 dissolved in 1810, and although the two artists had been close friends up until that time, Wood and Jarvis had little professional or social contact afterwards. Furthermore, as his later life bears out, Jarvis was particularly fond of travel and may have traveled only for the sake of seeing other areas of the United States. His artistic “baptism-by-fire” must have been a source of confidence to the artist, still just thirty years of age. And so, in search of both adventure and commissions, Jarvis traveled southwards.

Although the present inquiry is largely concerned with the portraits Jarvis completed while living in New York, his travels along the eastern seaboard from 1810 until 1813 were of the highest importance in Jarvis establishing his artistic reputation on the national level and broadening his social contacts. Indeed, long after he returned to Manhattan, Jarvis reaped the benefits of his first itinerant trip south.

Unfortunately, exactly when Jarvis departed New York or precisely where he went is unclear. Dunlap, for example, writes that Jarvis visited Charleston, South

Carolina, in the fall of 1810 and “found no objection to his prices, and a welcome reception give to his inexhaustible fund of table entertainment.”²³ On the other hand, Dickson does not believe that Jarvis traveled farther south than Baltimore. Dickson’s rationale involves some logical deduction that may be flawed. First, Dickson quotes the *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointments of the State of New York*, which states that Jarvis received his ensign’s commission in March 1810.²⁴ Dickson believed this to be enough information to place Jarvis in Manhattan in the spring of 1810. Therefore, Jarvis could not have departed New York until at least the summer, which makes a trip as far south as South Carolina improbable, as a letter from Washington Irving to Henry Brevoort establishes Jarvis in Baltimore no later than early January 1811.²⁵

However, the ensign’s commission Jarvis received came not in March 1810 as Dickson believed, but the previous autumn. The official commission Governor Daniel D. Tompkins wrote in October 1809 establishes this fact.²⁶ The *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointments of the State of New York*, upon which Dickson relied, may prove to be a less than reliable source to determine whether or not Jarvis was in New York in 1810 or 1811. As Dickson notes, the *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointments of the State of New York* states that Jarvis was promoted to lieutenant in February 1811, a time the artist was certainly in Baltimore. Thus, Dickson assumes that Jarvis was in New York because of a military commission that actually occurred five months earlier. Thus,

²³ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 2: 219.

²⁴ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 140. See also: Hugh Hastings, ed., *Military Minutes of the Council of Appointments of the State of New York, 1783-1821*, 2 vols., (Albany, New York: Published by the State, 1901), 2:1158, 1175, 1299.

²⁵ On 12 or 13 January 1811, Irving wrote, “At his [Edward Johnson Coale] I found Jarvis, who is in great vogue in Baltimore—painting all the people of note & fashion, and universally passing for a great wit, a fellow of infinite jest; -in short-‘the agreeable rattle.’” Clearly, Jarvis must have been in Baltimore several months prior to Irving’s visit. See: Washington Irving. *Letters: Volume I, 1802-1823*, edited Ralph M. Aderman, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jennifer S. Banks (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 296.

²⁶ *Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins*, 1: 238.

Jarvis likely left New York earlier than Dickson supposed, and that the artist did, in fact, make it to South Carolina before settling in Baltimore late in 1810.²⁷

Regardless of when Jarvis arrived in Baltimore, his stay there was incredibly productive, and it was during this time in Maryland when Jarvis first began to publicly exhibit his art. Although the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts was organized in 1805, it was not until 1811 that a group of men, calling themselves the Society of Artists of the United States, began to exhibit their talents in the Academy's building on Chestnut Street. Jarvis was elected an Associate member of the Society of Artists in 1811 and submitted a portrait to that year's inaugural exhibition. Although he gave his address as New York, Jarvis painted the *Portrait of a Gentleman* in Baltimore.²⁸ As the October 1811 edition of the *Port Folio* makes clear, this "gentleman" was none other than Washington Irving, a person with whom Jarvis would forge a long-standing friendship (**figure 136**). The reviewer's observations are worth quoting:

In the Midst of these sensations mine eyes alighted on the portrait of Washington Irving, Esq. from (as I understand) the pencil of Mr. Jarvis. Now, sir, wherefore it was, I am unable to say; but so it was, that the portrait delighted me...But sir, if Mr. Jarvis will consider it a compliment to his pencil to be informed that a stranger was delighted with his piece, without being able to tell the reason wherefore, and who fairly avows his incompetence in the analysis of his own feelings, I frankly confess that one.²⁹

This is the first exhibit Jarvis is known to have submitted a portrait to, and the artist must have been pleased with the positive judgment that the art critic for the *Port Folio* provided. Although he did not submit a portrait to the Society of Artists 1812 exhibition,

²⁷ Jarvis painted and dated at least one portrait in Baltimore in 1810, that of Ann Adams Hollingsworth. See: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 353.

²⁸ Anna Wells Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1807-1870* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1955), 109. Peter Hastings Falk, ed. *The Annual exhibition record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 1807-1870* (Madison, Connecticut: Sound View Press, 1988), 109.

²⁹ *Port Folio*, New series, VI (October 1811), 368.

Jarvis returned in 1813, displaying another *Portrait of a Gentleman*.³⁰ Although the sitter's identity remains uncertain, it may have been the same portrait of Irving given the brief comment in the *Port Folio*: "This is a good likeness of a well-known character by a well-known artist."³¹ Obviously, Jarvis's decision to travel from New York had been a wise one. Prior to his departure, he had been little known in his own hometown. Only three years later, he was "a well-known artist" in a city in which he had never even permanently resided. Without doubt, Jarvis expected great things upon his return to New York.

New York City and the Commissions for City Hall

It is impossible to state exactly when Jarvis returned to New York, although it was likely after the 1813 exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, when the exhibition catalogue stated that he lived in Baltimore. His arrival was certainly no later than January 1814, when Jarvis was present at a meeting of the New-York Historical Society.³² In all likelihood, he returned sometime during the summer of 1813. Jarvis's return to New York, which coincided with the War of 1812, was a particularly stressful time for those in the Empire State, as the British Navy placed particular military emphasis on their New York campaign. As previously mentioned during the discussion of Vanderlyn, this military conflict not only helped produce a fresh group of political *wunderkinden*, but also created an entire crop of military heroes. Such up-and-coming celebrities demanded commemoration through portraiture, and with Vanderlyn and

³⁰ Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, 109. Jarvis listed his address as Baltimore in the 1813 exhibition catalog.

³¹ *Port Folio*, Third Series, II (1813), 128.

³² Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 161.

Trumbull still in Europe, Jarvis found himself the most able and popular portraitist in New York City. The great things the artist expected were about to come to fruition.

No commission announces Jarvis's position as the first portraitist of Gotham with more force than does the one he received to complete portraits of military heroes for the Governor's Room in the New York City Hall. This complicated commission provides insight to the interaction between politics and aesthetics during the second decade of the nineteenth century. Past scholars have assumed that Gilbert Stuart was the first choice for this commission; Dickson writes, for example, that, "The New York City Council very properly had turned first to Gilbert Stuart for the execution of the large hero portraits that were to grace the walls of their new municipal building."³³ Dickson's assumption was a logical one for several reasons. First, Stuart was the most prestigious portraitist at work in the United States during the second decade of the nineteenth century. In addition, Stuart completed his first full-length portrait in 1782; Jarvis was then only two years of age. Indeed, in 1812, the younger artist had not yet completed a canvas of such a monumental size. Perhaps the most convincing reason, however, is the fact that Stuart actually began the portrait of Isaac Hull. Such a conglomeration of facts would normally point to Stuart as being the first choice of portraitist.

Unpublished information, however, indicates that Jarvis rather than Stuart was originally offered the commission to paint the first sitter, Isaac Hull. Although John Stevens Cogdell later became a lawyer who served four terms in the South Carolina House of Representatives, in his youth he aspired to be an artist. The second volume of his diary contains some recollections from a period of study spent in Stuart's studio and casts much-needed light upon the genesis of this commission:

³³ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 171.

When he [Stuart] was painting the five first Presidents of the United States for Messers. Doggett & Co the Carver & Guilders [c. 1821], he was requested by Stuart to procure for him a dress sword to insert in Washingtons Portrait, which promised, he was asked where he could procure it. [illegible] from the writer's friend Captain Hull of the Navy. Stuart hesitated awhile, exclaimed, borrow it in your own name and not mention what it is for.

The writer visiting Captain Hull a day or two after and making this request was replied to with great readiness, take any of my swords you may select, a few days later after meeting him again, he was desirous of knowing what he could want of a dress sword, and finally pumped him dry. and being informed he laughed heartily and said I will tell you a story about that old Fox. After the battle of the Constit[ut]ion and Guerriere I was requested by the City Government of New York to sit to Jarvis for a full length portrait for their City Hall, having succeeded Com[m]odore Bainbridge in command of the Charlestown Navy Yard, and having been previously requested by Mr. Isaac P. Davis to sit to Stuart I wrote to the City Govt of New York I would be obliged if it would allow me to sit to Stuart instead of Jarvis it suiting my convenience much more, to which they assented, expressing their fears of having to wait a long time as they understood that Stuart was not punctual in finishing his portraits according to his promises. Accordingly I sat to Stuart who painted a portrait giving perfect satisfaction to my friends as well as myself.³⁴

This passage suggests two important facts. First, it was the sitter, Isaac Hull, who chose Stuart as the portraitist rather than the Common Council, which clearly preferred Jarvis, who was still living in Baltimore. Second, the passage indicates that the Common Council was already apprehensive of Stuart's lack of punctuality and his inability to keep his promises. But the sitter desired to sit for Stuart, so Stuart it was to be.

Captain Hull was first thrust into international fame when the ship under his command, the *U.S.S Constitution*, destroyed the British ship *Guerrière* off the coast of Halifax on 19 August 1812. News of this decisive victory—which included Hull capturing the surviving British officers and sailors—was first reported in New York newspapers less than two weeks later on 2 September. The *New York Evening Post*, for example, believed that Hull's victory “will endear him to his countrymen and will

³⁴ John Stevens Cogdell Papers, “Recollections of an Octogenarian,” Winterthur Museum, University of Delaware.

immortalize his name.”³⁵ Similar praise shortly followed in other New York periodicals, and it would be difficult to overestimate the importance of this early naval victory and those to come.³⁶ The city of New York voted to formally honor Hull on 7 September and commissioned an inscribed gold box that was presented to him on 28 December.³⁷ In order to immortalize his face in addition to his name, the Common Council asked Hull to sit for his portrait on 14 September 1812.³⁸

Although this request did not identify a particular artist, Stuart received the commission at Hull’s suggestion, and Stuart was working on the portrait no later than the following summer. Hull assumed command of the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Navy Yard in 1813; the proximity of Hull’s new port to Stuart’s studio may have played a role in Hull’s decision to sit for the older artist. Dunlap visited Stuart’s Roxbury studio in early September 1813 and reported that the portrait of Hull was underway, and that the portraitist was about to commence a portrait of William Bainbridge.³⁹ A naval victory in

³⁵ *New York Evening Post*, 2 September 1812.

³⁶ “To appreciate rightly the exultation Hull’s victory caused in the United States, and the intense annoyance it created in England, it must be remembered that during the past twenty years the Island Power had been at war with almost every state in Europe, at one time or another, and in the course of about two hundred single conflicts between ships of approximately equally force (that is, where the difference was less than one half), waged against French, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Algerine, Russian, Danish, and Dutch antagonists, her ships has been beaten and capture in but five instances. Then war broke out with America, and in eight months five single-ship actions occurred, in every one of which the British vessel was capture.” See: Theodore Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*. (1882; reprint, New York: Modern Library, 1999), 56.

³⁷ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 7:247-248, 340-341. The notes from the 7 September 1812 meeting of the Common Council read, “Resolve that the freedom of the City be presented to Captain Hull, in a Gold Box with an appropriate inscription.” *Ibid.*, 247.

³⁸ “Resolved that as an additional tribute of respect from this Corporation to Captain Hull he be requested to honor them with a sitting for his portrait to be deposited in the picture Gallery of the City Hall and transmitted to posterity as a memorial of the high sence [sic] entertained by this Corporation of the brilliant victory obtained by the United States Frigate Constitution, under his command over the British Frigate Guerriere Capn Dacres in his action on the 20th August 1812.” *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 7:253-254.

³⁹ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 1: 273. In this passage, Dunlap quotes his journal: “he [Stuart] has begun the full-length of Hull for our corporation, and is to begin Bainbridge soon.”

the War of 1812 thrust national fame upon Bainbridge.⁴⁰ Only one year Hull's junior, Bainbridge assumed command of the *Constitution* in September 1812. A little over four months later, Bainbridge's ship engaged and sank the *Java* off the coast of Brazil on 29 December. News of this victory reached New Yorkers on 18 February when one of Bainbridge's lieutenants passed through the city on his way northwards. Bainbridge himself arrived in Boston on 27 February to supervise the outfitting of his next command, the *Independence*.⁴¹ Like Hull before him, Bainbridge was voted freedom of the city—a type of honorary citizenship—on 1 March 1813, and the Common Council of the city of New York commissioned a gold box and asked him to sit for his portrait.⁴² Thus, the sailor had been in Boston for approximately six months prior to the first week of September 1813, when Stuart was “to begin [the] Bainbridge [portrait] soon.”⁴³

Problems were on the horizon, however. Although Dunlap saw the *Hull* portrait in an early stage and believed Stuart would soon begin the portrait of Bainbridge, the artist never delivered either of these full-length paintings to the Common Council. Dickson relied on Dunlap's diary and wrote that Stuart and Bainbridge had a disagreement that caused the artist to quit both commissions. As 1813 passed and 1814 arrived, the city of New York understandably became anxious for the two portraits. In the meantime, however, the United States Navy was continuing to produce naval heroes quicker than their portraits could be painted. Commodore Stephen Decatur, captain of the *United*, was honored for his 25 October 1812 defeat of the British frigate,

⁴⁰ For a modern biography of Bainbridge, see: David F. Long, *Ready to Hazard: A Biography of Commodore William Bainbridge (1774-1833)* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University of New Hampshire Press, 1981).

⁴¹ Roosevelt, *Naval War of 1812*, 69.

⁴² *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 7:391. As with the Hull portrait, the Common Council did not specify an artist to complete the commission.

⁴³ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 1: 273

Macedonian. Not surprisingly, the Common Council decided on 17 December 1812 to honor Decatur by presenting him a gold box, and asked him to sit for his portrait.⁴⁴

Although there is no evidence that the Common Council offered this commission for the Decatur portrait to Stuart, it would not be surprising if they had, as Stuart had already received the first two commissions for portraits of naval heroes, and he alone surpassed Thomas Sully in experience in full-length compositions. By the end of 1813, however, there was little promise that the *Hull* or *Bainbridge* portraits would be delivered in the immediate future. As a result, the Common Council gave the commission to Sully. A meticulous bookkeeper, Sully wrote in his painting register that he began the portrait in New York on 12 July 1814 (**figure 137**).⁴⁵ Sully received a \$500 payment two months later.⁴⁶ However, despite Sully's abilities, this portrait was not favorably received by the city of New York.

The completion of the *Decatur* portrait in such a short period of time brought into sharp focus the absence of the *Hull* and *Bainbridge* portraits. Given the Council's frustration with Stuart, it is not surprising that they began to pursue other options. Most of what is known about this situation comes from a passage in William Dunlap's diary that is worth quoting in full:

⁴⁴ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 7:333-334.

⁴⁵ Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully [1783-1872]*. (Philadelphia: Wickersham Press, 1921), 137. The city of New York paid Sully \$500 for the portrait.

⁴⁶ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 8:52. It is interesting to note that Sully's portrait of Commodore Decatur was not well received. The Common Council notes from the 7 October 1816 meeting of the Common Council state: "A letter was received from Dr. Hosack enclosing a Letter from Mr. Thomas Sully of Philadelphia, in which he stated that having heard objections had been made by several persons to the Portrait of Comm. Decatur painted by him for the Corporation and being desirous that a more perfect one may be made, requests that the present Portrait may be returned to him, and engaging that he will return to the Common Council free from all expense another portrait which he trusts will be more satisfactory to them." It is uncertain if the Council accepted Sully's offer; the artist never painted an additional full-length of Decatur, nor does his first attempt appear to have been reworked.

Stuart had been requested to paint Bainbridge but had disagreed with Bainbridge & delayed the work. The Corporation applied to Sully to go on & paint the picture in Boston assuring him that portraits of all the Officers to be complimented would follow. S. wrote to Stuart saying that he had heard him express his aversion to painting backgrounds, draperies &c and that now if he would paint this succession of Naval & military men, Sully under his direction [would] do the accessories. Stuart never answer'd the letter. Sully declined going on to paint Bainbridge on the ground of interfering with Stuart. Jarvis was applied to & went on & did it.⁴⁷

As with much of Dunlap's writings, such a suggestion cannot be accepted without an analysis of the circumstances. Previous scholars have given this apocryphal tale a level of credibility because Dunlap described it in his diary. However, Dunlap did not write this passage in his "diary" until 1833, almost twenty years after the fact, and when sixty-seven years of age. Given the situation, Dunlap simply may have been mistaken. Yet what Dunlap fails to account for was Sully's inadequate performance on the *Decatur* portrait. Considering how displeased the Council was with the first portrait, it seems unlikely that they would have commissioned a second.

Aside from Dunlap, there is no evidence to suggest that Sully offered to paint the backgrounds for Stuart, and such a notion is difficult to accept. Sully was not a struggling artist in 1814; he had already spent nine months in London studying with established artists such as Benjamin West and Henry Fuseli, and was favorably compared to Thomas Lawrence, the foremost romantic portraitist in London. Sully returned to Philadelphia in April 1809 and completed forty-one portraits before the end of the year. He submitted thirteen works to the 1811 Society of Artists exhibition in Philadelphia, and the following year, when elected an Academician of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine

⁴⁷ William Dunlap, *The Diary of William Dunlap (1766-1839): The Memoirs of a Dramatist, Theatrical Manager, Painter, Critic, Novelist, and Historian* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1930), 3:702. Clearly relying on his "diary," A similar account appears in: *Dunlap, History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 2:271.

Arts, he showed eleven more. One of these portraits, listed as *Whole Length of a U.S. Naval Officer*, was a likeness of Captain Charles Stewart, and aptly demonstrated Sully's ability to capture the bravura of a decorated sailor. In terms of full-length compositions, the 1814 Society of Artists exhibition was Sully's coming out party. It was then that he showed his monumental portraits of *George Frederick Cooke* (first exhibited in 1811), *Doctor Benjamin Rush*, and *Samuel Coates*.⁴⁸ Even if he was willing, painting costumes and backgrounds was clearly beneath an artist of Sully's talents and rank.

The suggestion made by Dunlap and perpetuated by Harold Dickson that Sully would have turned down the commission so as not to annoy Stuart seems equally unlikely.⁴⁹ As Stuart was obviously indifferent to the commission—he had, after all, quit working on it—he would not likely have cared who completed the portraits, or if they were completed at all. The economic environment of the times was equally as important. Although Sully had prospered since his return in 1809 from London, there was a war in progress, complete with all the economic hardships that accompany such events. Not surprisingly, the biggest market for portraits during the War of 1812 was for government-sponsored commissions for military heroes. With three children under the age of seven by the end of 1814, Sully would have likely taken any commission he was offered, especially one that would surely provide such prestige and income.⁵⁰

In 1814, Sully was undeniably considered Stuart's heir in the realm of American portraiture, a fact made clear by the commission the younger artist received for the

⁴⁸ Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, 219-220.

⁴⁹ See Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 173.

⁵⁰ Sully's family tree can be found in: Carrie Reborá Barratt, *Queen Victoria and Thomas Sully*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 74. These children are Jane Cooper Sully (1807-1877), Thomas Wilcocks Sully (1811-1847), and Blanch Sully (1814-1898).

Decatur portrait. Considering this, there must be a compelling reason why the Common Council of New York City did not offer Sully the commissions for the paintings Stuart refused to complete and instead employed Jarvis, an artist who had not yet painted a full-length portrait. That reason resides in Sully's *Decatur* portrait. Since the members of the Common Council were unhappy with the portrait in 1816—as the minutes from their meeting on 7 October make clear—the portrait was likely unacceptable when the city of New York was in search of a portraitist to finish the commission Stuart had begun in 1813.⁵¹ Given the *Decatur* composition, Sully's painting was possibly not heroic enough for a portrait intended to glorify a victorious American naval officer who was at war with the British. Decatur stands almost in profile with his left foot forward and his right hand resting upon the hilt of his sword. Rather than look directly at the viewer, Decatur instead romantically gazes into the distance. With Stuart out of the picture, the Common Council may have thought an American-trained artist such as Jarvis more appropriate for the project than an English-trained artist. Sully, after all, was known as the “American [Thomas] Lawrence.”

A brief comparison between the *Decatur* portrait and contemporary portraits Sully and Jarvis painted in 1814 proves enlightening. Jarvis painted Commodore John Rodgers sometime after the city of New York honored him with a lavish dinner for his military service (**figure 138**). Jarvis displayed the portrait at the Society of Artists exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Arts in May of the same year to great acclaim.⁵² The *Port Folio* heaped praise for the half-length portrait: “This picture is a work of great merit, has

⁵¹ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 8:52.

⁵² Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, 109.

great expression of character, and is an excellent likeness.”⁵³ Rodgers “expression of character” is, in fact, of particular note. Rather than aloofly gaze into the distance as Decatur did, Rodgers instead directly stares at the viewer. The postures of the sitters are also noteworthy. Whereas Decatur rests his right hand upon his sword—as if to steady himself—Rodger’s places his right hand inside his tunic and stands with the bolt upright posture befitting a parade soldier. Clearly, when compared with Decatur, Rodgers is a determined and formidable military officer.

Sully completed the portrait of *Robert Walsh* (**figure 139**) just prior to visiting New York to paint the *Decatur* portrait for the City Hall.⁵⁴ The contrasts between Sully’s and Jarvis’s works become apparent when the portrait of Walsh is compared with that of Rodgers. Walsh, a prominent Philadelphian journalist who edited the *American Review of History and Politics* during its brief publication from 1811-1812, is shown surrounded by accessories of his trade: an inkpot and quill, a pamphlet, and an open book. Compositionally, Walsh’s pose of the left hand supporting the head is borrowed from an earlier portrait Thomas Lawrence painted in 1811 of Henry and John Labouchère, a work Sully likely knew through an engraving (**figure 140**).⁵⁵ Indeed, such a pose enhances Walsh’s romantic air, as he wistfully gazes to the viewer’s left. Although these portraits were completed only months apart, Jarvis depicted Commodore Rodgers as man of action, whereas Sully painted Walsh as a man of thought.

⁵³ “Review of the Fourth Annual Exhibition of the Columbian Society of Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy,” *Port Folio* 4, July 1814, 98.

⁵⁴ Biddle and Fielding, *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully*, 308.

⁵⁵ Richard Torchia noted this compositional similarity. See: Torchia, *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century*, 146. A reproduction of the Labouchère portrait can be found in: Kenneth Garlick, *Sir Thomas Lawrence: A Complete Catalogue of the Oil Paintings* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 218.

The argument can be made that comparing portraits of a naval officer and an essayist is akin to comparing apples and oranges; a sailor would logically be shown with an air of gravity and purpose, while a writer be depicted in a moment of repose and thought. Therein lies the point. Regardless of the sitter, Sully was unable to escape his romantic tendencies after his return from London in 1809. While such a feeling of sentimentality was acceptable in the portrait of Robert Walsh, it was thought inappropriate—by the city of New York, at least—for the portrait of Stephen Decatur. Completed just months prior to the *Decatur* portrait, Jarvis’s likeness of Commodore Rodgers was already considered “great” and “excellent.” Additional adjectives I would use to describe this portrait include “direct,” “forceful,” and “strong.” Considering Jarvis’s success with Rodgers and Sully’s relative failings with Decatur, Jarvis was unsurprisingly given this prestigious commission over his English-trained counterpart.

Exactly when Jarvis received the commission to take over the *Hull* and *Bainbridge* portraits is uncertain, but Dickson points out that circumstantial evidence suggests Jarvis made a visit to Boston during the fall of 1814 to call upon Stuart. On 25 March 1815, Jarvis wrote to Rachel Etting, one his Maryland patrons, that he had acquired some seeds for giant squash while in Boston. “Without quibbling over the point,” Dickson writes, “it seems most likely that he would have obtained these seeds in the preceding autumn,” and once in Boston, Jarvis would have “lost little time in proceeding straight to the doorstep of Gilbert Stuart.”⁵⁶ Regardless of when Jarvis went to Boston, several important questions remain. First, what were Jarvis’s reasons for visiting Stuart (if such a meeting occurred, as Dickson believes)? Second, what

⁵⁶ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 175.

happened to the full-length portrait of Hull that Dickson says Stuart had “begun” in September of 1813?

The answers to these inquiries are likely related. An analysis of the portraits Jarvis painted for the New York City Hall provides strong suggestions—if not concrete proof—for the answers to these questions. The first portrait Jarvis submitted to the city of New York was that of *Commodore William Bainbridge* (**figure 141**); the artist received his first \$250 payment on 26 December 1814, and the second on 9 January 1815.⁵⁷ Jarvis painted Bainbridge standing upon the deck of a ship—presumably the *Constitution*—surrounded by the smoke indicative of firing canons. Indeed, a recently-fired canon can be seen to the left of the sitter. Bainbridge places his left boot on a stack of cannonballs and holds his left hand upon his hip. His right hand grasps his sword. Glancing slightly to the viewer’s right, Bainbridge’s gaze is determined and forceful.

Two portraits clearly related to Jarvis’s full-length portrait in the New York City Hall survive: a smaller bust-size portrait at the United States Naval Academy that was once attributed to Stuart but is now thought to be by Jarvis (**figure 142**), and a second bust portrait attributed to Stuart in a private collection (**figure 143**).⁵⁸ Writing for the *Art Quarterly* in 1938, Theodore Bolton and George C. Groce, Jr. stated that Bainbridge’s head in the City Hall full-length portrait “is curl for curl, suspiciously like that of Stuart.”⁵⁹ This led Dickson to believe that Jarvis had access to the portrait of Bainbridge that Stuart was about to begin when Dunlap visited Boston in 1813.⁶⁰ The portraits in the

⁵⁷ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 8:115, 124.

⁵⁸ This image is reproduced in Park (No. 43) and in: *Gilbert Stuart: Portraitist of the Young Republic* (Providence, Rhode Island: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1967), 96-97.

⁵⁹ Bolton and Groce, “John Wesley Jarvis: An Account of His Life and the First Catalogue of His Works,” 305.

⁶⁰ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 174-175.

City Hall and at the Naval Academy are clearly the most related; the hair is identical, the gazes similar, and Bainbridge's face has a sort of fleshiness lacking in the face in the portrait attributed to Stuart. In this instance, there is a reason why the portrait in the City Hall looks "curl for curl" like another portrait of Bainbridge: Jarvis painted both.

A third portrait—the one in a private collection (**figure 143**) that has been attributed to Stuart—remains. Did Jarvis have access to a Stuart portrait of Bainbridge, as Dickson suggests? Although the *Bainbridge* portrait in a private collection has been attributed to Stuart since the 1920s, there is reason to call this attribution into question. The National Gallery of Art and the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design organized a Gilbert Stuart exhibition in 1967. After the conclusion of the exhibit, E.P. Richardson, then director of the National Portrait Gallery, wrote to William Campbell, Assistant Chief Curator at the National Gallery of Art: "There is only one painting in the exhibit that I did not like—as Stuart. Now that the exhibition is over, it can do no harm to anyone to say that I am convinced that No. 43, 'Commodore William Bainbridge,' is by Jarvis. I became convinced of this from the picture itself and checked it the other day upon the engraving by David Edwin in the *Analectic Magazine*, October 1813, done from Stuart's picture."⁶¹ Indeed, the Edwin engraving shows an unbuttoned coat that has been folded back to reveal the embroidered buttonholes on each lapel. Concluding his letter, Richardson wrote:

I am convinced in my own mind, that Mr. Whitney's picture is Jarvis' study after Stuart's original portrait. In this picture he changed the uniform but followed the face and hair very faithfully. In the full length Jarvis changed the direction in which the eyes look, also. But if you compare the Edwin engraving with this

⁶¹ Letter from E.P. Richardson to William B. Campbell, 9 December 1967. Vertical File, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum Library.

picture you will see how differently the uniform is done and how unlike the Epaulets [sic] are to those in Stuart's original.⁶²

Campbell provides several interesting insights in a response to Richardson dated 12 February 1968. First, according to Lawrence Park's entry on Stuart's *Bainbridge* portrait, Edwin did four different states of the Bainbridge engraving with "radical changes in uniform." It is therefore possible that Edwin only had access to the Stuart head, and was forced to invent the sailor's uniform. This possibly explains the similarity between the heads in the Stuart portrait and Edwin engraving, and also accounts for the disparity in the sitter's uniform. Jarvis's visit to Boston is crucial in Campbell's account:

Would it have come about that Jarvis acquired Stuart's study of Bainbridge's head, at the time he (Jarvis) got the commission from the City of New York, and later added the uniform? He used the same uniform as in his full-length portrait, except that he neatened the epaulettes (The epaulettes in disarray would be in order in a portrait showing the hero in the midst of battle, but would seem strange without the explanation of a battle background).⁶³

To explain the differences in the heads, Campbell writes, "Jarvis did not, however, make certain details of the head conform to the head of the full-length portrait because Stuart, according to this theory, had already finished them [in the smaller portrait]."⁶⁴ In the end, Campbell suggests that Edwin made his first engraving from an unfinished, bust-sized Stuart study, and it was this study that Jarvis acquired when visiting Boston in 1814. Jarvis completed the uniform on this portrait, and then used it as model for his full-length portrait and the smaller replica at the United States Naval Academy. In at least one regard, Campbell and Richardson agree: "That Stuart did not paint the Bainbridge

⁶² Letter from E.P. Richardson to William B. Campbell, 9 December 1967. Vertical File, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum Library.

⁶³ Letter from William B. Campbell to E.P. Richardson, 12 February 1968. Vertical File, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum Library.

⁶⁴ Letter from William B. Campbell to E.P. Richardson, 12 February 1968. Vertical File, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum Library.

uniform seems quite evident when one compares it with the uniform of Stuart's portrait of Hull, which couldn't be more Stuartesque throughout."⁶⁵

In Richardson's opinion, however, it was not specifically the uniform that was the problem, but rather the entire composition. In a handwritten rebuttal atop Campbell's letter, Richardson wrote:

No. What started me was the fact that the Bainbridge looked wrong hanging in the Stuart show. The color & touch are different from Stuart's, of this I am certain. This led me first to compare the picture with Edwin's engraving in the *Analectic* then to Dickson's theory in his *Jarvis* book that Jarvis never had a sitting from life and adapted the likeness from Stuart and changed things around enough to make the figure seem his own.⁶⁶

Such an explanation is attractive, for it accounts for the slight facial differences between the portrait once attributed to Stuart, and the portraits Jarvis painted in the New York City Hall and the Naval Academy. Thus, Jarvis painted all three *Bainbridge* portraits in question; the first is an accurate copy Jarvis made of a lost Stuart original. The second and third portraits are derivatives of the first that Jarvis altered enough so as to claim them as original compositions.⁶⁷

Thus, the answer to one of the questions has been satisfactorily found; one of the reasons Jarvis visited Boston was the opportunity to see the progress Stuart had made on the *Bainbridge* portrait. Considering that Jarvis had access to this work, it must be wondered if he was able to see Stuart's portrait of Isaac Hull, a work that Stuart had begun by the first week of September 1813 (**figure 145**). Although at least a year passed

⁶⁵ Letter from William B. Campbell to E.P. Richardson, 12 February 1968. Vertical File, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum Library.

⁶⁶ Letter from William B. Campbell to E.P. Richardson, 12 February 1968. Vertical File, National Portrait Gallery/Smithsonian American Art Museum Library. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ It is worth noting that Dorinda Evans has an additional theory. In a 2001 email to the author, she stated a belief that the *Bainbridge* portrait that has traditionally been attributed to Stuart is, in fact, from his pencil. She believes that the portrait was painted during one of the "depressive" stages, which accounts for the less-than Stuart quality of the work.

between Dunlap's and Jarvis's visits to Boston, scholars have not speculated how much Stuart worked on the *Hull* portrait; Stuart could have either worked on it to a stage nearing completion, or tucked it away in a corner and not touched it in months.

Although Jarvis completed the *Bainbridge* portrait in early January 1815, it was not until 6 November that he received a \$400 payment for the portrait of Isaac Hull (**figure 144**).⁶⁸ Like *Bainbridge*, Hull triumphantly stands on the smoked-filled deck of a ship; his right hand grasps his unsheathed sword, while his left forearm rests on a capstan, an apparatus used for raising and lowering anchors and sails. What appears to be a telescope lies parallel to Hull's left arm on the capstan, while his hat can be seen adjacent to his right foot. Thus, like the *Bainbridge* portrait, the *Hull* likeness contains significant ancillary elements that lend a sense of narrative. In contrast to *Bainbridge*, however, who looks off to his left, Hull visually engages the viewer.

One of the more striking qualities of the *Hull* portrait is how inconsistent it appears when viewed as a whole. The sitter's face and upper body have been painted with a sensitivity and attention to detail lacking in the remainder of the composition. Indeed, whereas the artist poured great creative effort into the depiction of Hull's foreshortened left hand, Hull's boots and pants seem to have been hastily painted. Yet, time was clearly not an issue; more than ten months elapsed between the submission of the *Bainbridge* and *Hull* portraits.⁶⁹ Without doubt, it is difficult to believe when viewing the portrait in person that the artist who demonstrated such skill with Hull's visage and

⁶⁸ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 8:345.

⁶⁹ Jarvis submitted six portraits for the New York City Hall. The four following Hull were all submitted within a matter of months, which indicates that Jarvis may have been working on a number of portraits between January and November 1816.

left hand was incapable of successfully rendering a pair of simple white breeches or black calf-length boots.

Could it be possible, then, that more than one artist worked on the *Hull* portrait?⁷⁰ The answer may be found in a comparison with the full-length *Bainbridge* portrait. A close examination of the heads in each portrait is telling. When compared to the smooth and highly finished visage of Hull, Bainbridge's face appears rough and less skillfully modeled. Indeed, the *Hull* portrait in the City Hall collection looks exceptionally similar to the bust-length portrait of Hull that Stuart painted earlier in 1813. Although Hull faces slightly to his right in the bust-length portrait and to his left in the full-length portrait, there is an undeniable Stuart-like quality to the full-length portrait that is especially evident when it is compared with Jarvis's *Bainbridge* portrait. Indeed, it seems far more likely that the same artist painted the two portraits of Isaac Hull than that the same artist painted the full-length portraits of Hull and Bainbridge.

In the absence of more conclusive scientific evidence, such as the information generally provided by x-rays or radiographs, art historians are forced to rely upon circumstantial evidence. In this case, the available circumstantial evidence suggests that the portrait of Isaac Hull that Jarvis submitted as his own work to the corporation of New York City may have actually been the full-length canvas Dunlap saw when he visited Stuart's Roxbury studio in September 1813. To begin, the similarities between Stuart's smaller portrait of Hull and the head of the full-length are too compelling to deny, as is the disparity between the heads in the full-length portraits of Bainbridge and Hull. The

⁷⁰ This was first suggested in Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 175-177. It is important to note that Henry Inman joined Jarvis as an apprentice in 1814. However, it is difficult to believe that Jarvis would have entrusted the backgrounds or uniforms of the officers to the unskilled pencil of an apprentice who had been in his studio for little more than a year.

sizes of the canvases in question are also important. The *Bainbridge* portrait measures 88" x 60," while the full-length portrait of Hull is 95" x 60," a measurement exceptionally close to Stuart's preferred full-length size of 96" x 60."⁷¹ Interestingly, the subsequent full-length portraits Jarvis painted for the New York City Hall are also approximately 96" x 60."⁷²

In conclusion, the story is as follows: The city of New York turned to Jarvis when Stuart did not deliver the *Hull* and *Bainbridge* portraits in a timely manner. Jarvis traveled to Boston in the fall of 1814 to visit Stuart. Jarvis hoped to secure a sitting from Bainbridge; when unable to do so, he instead copied Stuart's now-lost bust-length portrait and used that copy as the basis for the full-length portrait that was submitted to the City of New York on 9 January 1815. Jarvis then turned his attention to the *Hull* portrait. When unable to secure a sitting from Hull—who had voiced his opposition to sitting for Jarvis in the first place—Jarvis somehow struck a deal with Stuart and acquired the canvas that the older artist had begun. An analysis of this portrait indicates that Stuart completed most of the sitter's upper half prior to Jarvis's acquiring it. This accounts for the overall unevenness in the composition. Realizing that the *Hull* portrait Stuart had begun was slightly longer than the already submitted *Bainbridge* portrait, Jarvis abandoned the 88" x 60" size and decided to complete the remainder of the full-length portraits in a size approximate to the Stuart-begun portrait of Hull.

In comparison, the other full-length portraits Jarvis painted as part of the City Hall commission lack the sense of mystery and intrigue that surround the *Bainbridge* and *Hull*

⁷¹ Stuart painted five full-length portraits of George Washington that measure between 97½" x 62½" and 96" x 60". In addition, the portraits Stuart completed of John, Lord Fitzgibbon (96½" x 60½"), John Gell (94½" x 58½"), and William Grant (96¼" x 58") also fit within this spread.

⁷² These include *Captain Thomas Macdonough* (96" x 60"), *General Jacob Jennings Brown* (94" x 60"), *Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry* (96" x 60"), and *General Joseph Gardner Swift* (94" x 60")

portraits. Moreover, whereas nine months elapsed between the time Jarvis submitted the portrait of Bainbridge and that of Hull, Jarvis completed the next two portraits with great speed. The City of New York paid Jarvis \$400 on 4 December 1815 for the portrait of Commodore Thomas Macdonough (**figure 146**). The artist received an additional \$400 just two weeks later for his portrait of General Jacobs Jennings Brown (**figure 147**).⁷³ Again, this suggests that Jarvis was working on more than just the *Hull* portrait from January to November of 1815. This is an important consideration, for it indicates that Jarvis was likely given the commissions for all the portraits at the same time; it is unlikely that Jarvis received the *MacDonough* commission, for example, because the corporation was happy with the *Brown* portrait. Even the speediest of portraitists could not complete a canvas the size of the *Macdonough* or *Brown* portraits in just over a fortnight.

The *Macdonough* portrait is particularly interesting. Whereas Jarvis placed Hull and Bainbridge on the decks of their ships in their respective portraits, Jarvis instead depicted Commodore Macdonough on the shore, with four ships sailing to his right. Three of these ships fly both the American flag and an incorrectly rendered Union Jack underneath. This narrative element likely indicates Macdonough's decisive naval victory outside Plattsburgh, New York, over the British squadron commanded by Captain George Downie. As a result of this naval victory, a British force of 14,000 troops, headed by General George Prevost, was forced to abandon their invasion of northeastern New York. This significant victory secured Lake Champlain for the American navy, a body of water they controlled throughout the remainder of the war. It also secured Macdonough's fame, both in New York and elsewhere in the United States.

⁷³ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 8:361, 376.

Indeed, such a composition—a portrait of a single sailor standing ashore—was far more common in British art than that of a sailor standing upon his ship.⁷⁴ Although such a tradition is most powerfully embodied in Sir Joshua Reynolds’s 1752-53 portrait of Augustus Keppel (**figure 148**), it also survived into the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ In this regard, the *Macdonough* portrait follows along in the tradition of British naval portraiture, while the portraits of Hull and Bainbridge—and, as will be seen, the portrait of Oliver Hazard Perry—appear to be distinctly American compositions. However, while Macdonough lacks the *Apollo Belvedere* pose Keppel so powerfully employed, the two compositions do have similarities. Both sitters appear to be striding forward on land, although Reynolds more convincingly rendered Keppel’s motion than Jarvis did for Macdonough. Both hold objects in their left hand; Macdonough grasps his right-hand glove, while Keppel grips his sword. Moreover, both “gesture” with their right hand. Macdonough holds his cap as if to point to his right. In contrast, Keppel points forward and slightly down to his right. This gesture, in addition to his striding forward with his left foot, gives Keppel a sense of classical *contraposto* that Jarvis likely had little knowledge of given his lack of European training. Indeed, whereas Keppel is shown in motion, Macdonough appears more stationary.

⁷⁴ There certainly exists a tradition in history painting where a victorious (or dying) sailor is shown upon his boat rather than on the shore. Benjamin West’s *The Death of Lord Nelson* (1806), and John Singleton Copley’s *The Victory of Lord Duncan (Surrender of the Dutch Admiral DeWinter to Admiral Duncan, 11 October 1797)* (1798-99) are but two excellent examples. Yet, I argue that the tradition in portraiture is distinct from that of history paintings. Indeed, such compositions were intended to glorify events as much as people, whereas full-length portraits of an individual were meant to commemorate the sitter more so than his particular achievements. While the protagonist of Copley’s *Watson and the Shark* does survive the attack, Watson is not the hero of the event, but is instead a passive actor who is saved by others.

⁷⁵ James Northcote’s 1801 portrait of Rear-Admiral Sir Thomas Graves and Henry William Pickersgill’s portrait of Rear-Admiral Sir Alexander John Ball, both in the National Maritime Museum in London, are but two excellent examples. Gilbert Stuart also followed Reynolds lead in his 1785 portrait of John Gell.

Although they were in different branches of the service, the careers of Macdonough and General Jacob Jennings Brown were intertwined; while Macdonough was responsible for the naval victory at Lake Champlain, Brown received the laurels for defeating Prevost's force outside Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario during May and June of 1813. In fact, Brown's campaign on the Niagara frontier, which can at best be described as a strategic stalemate, was the army's most impressive performance during the War of 1812, and won Brown significant national acclaim.⁷⁶ Like Macdonough, Jarvis shows Brown on *terra firma* in his portrait. Placed on a battlefield filled with smoke from artillery fire, Brown holds his buff-colored gloves in his left hand and his sword in his right. The two cavalymen to his right further insinuate military conflict. Yet despite the presence of these two men, the sitter whom the painting commemorates remains the compositional focus of the portrait.

The same cannot be said of the portrait Jarvis painted of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry for the New York City Hall (**figure 149**). Perry was catapulted to fame after his stirring victory on Lake Erie on 10 September 1813, and was voted the freedom of the city—as were all six of Jarvis's sitters from this commission—on 4 October. A fortnight after the battle, the *National Intelligencer* declared Perry's victory on Lake Erie the most important of the war and the “most decisive and fortunate victory which ever graced the annals of any nation.”⁷⁷ The portrait Jarvis painted of Commodore Perry to commemorate this “fortunate” victory is unique in the history of American art, and shows Jarvis's greatest departure from the traditional full-length depiction of naval officers.

⁷⁶ *American National Biography*, s.v. “Brown, Jacob Jennings.” Brown has not yet been the subject of a scholarly biography.

⁷⁷ *National Intelligencer*, 20 September 1813.

Whereas Hull and Bainbridge were each shown on the deck of a warship—presumably his own, the *USS Constitution*—Perry instead stands in the middle of a rowboat. His blue naval coat is unbuttoned, and he points with his left hand to an American ship under full sail. This left arm is engulfed by a banner which reads, “Don’t Give up the Ship,” the dying words of Captain James Lawrence, a brave sailor after whom Perry named his ship. This flag was hoisted as a signal to commence the engagement. Three other men join Perry in the dory. On the left is a man wearing a blue and black striped shirt and a short stovepipe hat who attempts to pull Perry downwards. Dickson had identified this as a self-portrait of the artist.⁷⁸ Another man sits with his back to the viewer and holds an oar in his left hand. The final person in the composition wears a white shirt and red waistcoat, and uses an oar to push away from the ship that is on fire in the immediate background. Smoke from this fire fills the upper right corner of the composition.

Without doubt, this painting depicts a specific moment late in the battle of Lake Erie when Perry transferred the remaining nineteen men from his own ship, the disabled *U.S.S. Lawrence*, to the *U.S.S. Niagara*, a brig under the command of Jesse D. Elliot. Such a perilous and heroic tactical decision allowed Perry to assume command of the *Niagara*. He then dispatched Elliot to increase the involvement of the other smaller vessels on the periphery of the engagement. Captain Robert H. Barclay, the commander of the British Lake Erie squadron, surrendered his entire six-ship squadron less than thirty minutes later. Indeed, Barclay was the first commander in the history of the British navy to surrender an entire squadron. Perry famously wrote to General William Henry

⁷⁸ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 189.

Harrison the afternoon of the battle, “We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two Ships, two Brigs one Schooner & one Sloop.”⁷⁹

Although Jarvis’s work in the New York City Hall has traditionally been discussed as a portrait, it is, in fact, nothing short of a contemporary history painting in the same vein as Benjamin West’s *Death of General Wolfe* (**figure 150**) or John Singleton Copley’s *Death of Major Pierson* (**figure 151**). Certainly, each of these works contains portraits of identifiable individuals. Yet despite this fact, West’s masterpiece, for example, is never discussed as a group portrait of James Wolfe and those who (fictitiously) attended him at his death. Instead, it is analyzed as a painting that embodies the heroic virtues of Wolfe during an event that helped to secure Britain’s victory on the Plains of Abraham during the French and Indian War. Moreover, the compositional elements in the work secure the fact that the painting is about the *event* as much as it is about the *person*. The fact that Wolfe actually died during the battle only added to the pathos of the work.

Indeed, it is difficult to think of a composition considered a contemporary “history painting” that commemorates a single military figure who is not dead or in the process of dying. In this regard, Jarvis appears to have broken new artistic ground. While it cannot be denied that portraiture is a major element in the *Perry* composition, it is by no means the only element. The narrative within the painting, which shows Perry engaged in battle, makes the composition an interesting hybrid of both portraiture and history painting. Comparing Jarvis’s *Perry* “portrait” to John Trumbull’s similarly sized *General George Washington at the Battle of Trenton* (**figure 152**) emphatically makes

⁷⁹ Quoted in: Lincoln P. Paine, *Ships of the World: An Historical Encyclopedia* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Company, 1997), 358.

this point. While Washington stands with a Parthenonic pose, almost above the fray of the battle that roars behind him, Perry is in the middle of a heated skirmish; smoke from the battle is not behind him, but rather surrounds him. Indeed, Trumbull's composition is largely a portrait of Washington; the narrative element of the Battle of Trenton plays a minimal role in the composition. Given the near-Baroque theatricality of Jarvis's portrait, the viewer can almost imagine cannonballs whizzing by his dory. Without question, the narrative element takes a larger stage in Jarvis's painting that it does in Trumbull's portrait of Washington. Perry is shown as a part of the action in his portrait, whereas Washington is only an observer of it.

Jarvis returned to a more traditional format for the final portrait of the New York City Hall commission. Like Trumbull's portrait of Washington, Jarvis placed the sitter, General Joseph Gardner Swift, in the immediate foreground with an extensive landscape in the background (**figure 153**). Swift wears a dark blue army uniform with gold epaulettes and slightly turns to his left. While his right arm passively hangs along his side, a gray cloak hangs from his slightly flexed left arm. The hat he holds in his left hand seems to point to the group of laborers who occupy the background on the right side of the composition. Working near a body of water, the activities of these men suggests Swift's position as commander of the Corps of Engineers and his role in the construction of harbor defenses along the Great Lakes during the War of 1812. The city of New York honored Swift for these important duties.

The \$510 payment Jarvis received for the *Swift* portrait on 3 March 1817 brought this prestigious commission to a close.⁸⁰ It would be difficult to overemphasize the impact these portraits and this commission had upon Jarvis's career. Although his

⁸⁰ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 9:37.

reputation had been steadily growing during his time in Maryland—as best embodied by his successful reception at the Society of Artists exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts—his return to New York and the City Hall commission vaulted Jarvis into the upper echelon of American portraitists. Three of the six portraits demonstrate the ways in which Jarvis adapted and modified traditional (European) representations in a uniquely (American) way. Whereas English artists generally showed sailors on land with their ships in the background, the portraits of Hull and Bainbridge Jarvis painted show the naval officers on the deck of their own ship. It is of no great concern that Stuart began the *Hull* portrait that Jarvis eventually submitted as his own work. What is important, however, is that potential patrons *thought* it was Jarvis's composition. As unique is the *Perry* portrait, which amounts to a contemporary history painting of a living person fused with a full-length portrait. Such a composition has no precedent in American art. Clearly, the portraits Jarvis painted for the New York City Hall not only established the artist as one of the most talented portraitists in the United States, but one whose art exhibited a unique, American quality distinct from the art his Europe-trained counterparts painted.

This point is an important one and warrants a brief explanation. In the previous two chapters, I have discussed the French aesthetics of Vanderlyn's portraits and the English touch of those that Trumbull painted. The portrait-seeking public noticed these nationalistic associations, and this, in part, explains why Democratic-Republicans were painted in a different manner than were their Federalist counterparts. What Jarvis was so successfully able to do, however, was to strike an aesthetic middle ground, one that was neither French nor English, but rather uniquely American. For example, Jarvis often

painted with a Trumbull-inspired color scheme, but with a Vanderlyn-like linearity. In particular, members of the military were attracted to this aesthetic compromise.

After City Hall: The Military and Politicians

By 1817, Jarvis's name was mentioned in the same breath as those of Stuart and Sully. Such a position in the pantheon of portraitists was important for Jarvis, who faced the likelihood of increased competition when Vanderlyn and Trumbull returned to New York in 1816 after extended sojourns abroad. Jarvis may have flourished in New York City after 1816 because both Vanderlyn and Trumbull were more interested in completing large history paintings and panoramas. However, such a position implies that these two artists would have rendered Jarvis's abilities as a portraitist obsolete had they wished to focus on portraiture. In contrast, I argue that Jarvis prospered as an artist for several reasons. Certainly, one reason *was* the decision both Vanderlyn and Trumbull made to avoid portraiture as much as was possible. Jarvis's avoidance of politics is another important reason. Federalists preferred Trumbull's English aesthetics and political leanings, and the Democratic-Republicans preferred Vanderlyn's French style. In contrast, Jarvis remained above the political fray from a social point of view, and the New York City Hall commission demonstrated his willingness to create a more "American" style that was distinct from English romanticism or French neoclassicism. As a result, Jarvis appealed to a large part of the portrait-seeking public, who did not require that their portraits do particular political work on their behalf. Additionally, Jarvis remained flexible in regards to his style; he was as adept mimicking Vanderlyn's neoclassicism as he was Stuart's fluid, energetic brushwork.

Interestingly, a large portion of Jarvis's production after he completed the commission for City Hall includes portraits of sailors and soldiers, a group of patrons who largely avoided Vanderlyn and Trumbull after the two artists returned to the United States in 1816. Indeed, Vanderlyn painted only three sitters with active ties to the military at the time of their sitting: Andrew Jackson (on behalf of the city of New York), George Gibbs (a personal friend), and Samuel Ringgold. Similarly, although Trumbull was busy with his history paintings for the Capitol Rotunda, he often turned to portraiture for a quick source of income. However, despite the dozens of portraits he painted while in New York from 1816 until 1825, soldiers and sailors were not among his larger groups of sitters. In New York, Jarvis alone flourished as a painter of the military following the War of 1812. There must be several reasons why sitters selected Jarvis over the other talented portraitists active in New York City at this time, and it certainly involves an explanation other than Jarvis's apparent skill at painting epaulettes.

For those whom Jarvis had already painted, familiarity could be a reason to return to him as a portraitist. One thing can be stated with certainty: the sailors and soldiers Jarvis painted for the New York City Hall must have been happy with their likenesses. Such a conclusion is reached on the basis of the fact that all six sitters later commissioned at least one additional portrait.⁸¹ With the exception of the later Bainbridge portraits—

⁸¹ Jarvis painted three additional portraits of Oliver Hazard Perry: a half-length given to Commodore John Rodgers (now in the Detroit Institute of Arts), a bust-sized work that descended through the Perry family until given to the United States Naval Academy, and a small, knee-length portrait of unknown provenance that is owned by the Brook that shows Perry in civilian attire. Jarvis painted an ambitious full-length but seated portrait of Thomas Macdonough that is now known only through a copy in a private collection. A half-length portrait of Joseph Gardner Swift descended through his family and is now owned by the United States Military Academy. The Denver Art Museum owns a bust portrait of Hull wearing civilian attire that descended through the sitter's family. Likewise, the portrait of Jacob Jennings Brown the Corcoran gallery owns descended through Brown's family. Brown gave another half-length portrait of Brown to De Witt Clinton as a token of friendship. Thus, in each instance, the sitter commissioned at least one portrait from Jarvis.

which are bust-sized compositions based upon the full-length portrait Jarvis painted for the City Hall—Jarvis conceived original compositions for these sitters, often wearing different uniforms (or civilian attire), in different positions, and usually in a different size. The portraits Jarvis painted of these sitters between 1815—when Jarvis began the full-length portraits for the City Hall—and 1820 not only show his growth as a portraitist, but also formally distinguish his portraits from those Vanderlyn (and, to a lesser extent, Trumbull) painted during the same time period. Vanderlyn’s portraits are generally controlled and linear, with a muted and austere palette. In contrast, the portraits Trumbull painted during this period are more romantic in nature and exhibit a more florid use of color and a looser brushwork. In addition, the portraits Trumbull completed often have ancillary elements within the composition that are seldom seen in Vanderlyn’s portraits of politicians. Overall, Jarvis’s portraits are an interesting middle ground between the two extremes set forth by Vanderlyn and Trumbull. Jarvis’s military patrons were clearly attracted to this visual compromise.

One example of a sitter whom Jarvis first painted for the New York City Hall commission will suffice. The full-length portrait of General Joseph Gardner Swift was the last one Jarvis submitted to the City of New York; the bust-sized portrait Jarvis painted of Swift dates from approximately the same time (**figure 154**).⁸² Although now owned by the United States Military Academy at West Point—an institution Swift supervised from 1812 until 1817—the portrait descended through the sitter’s family, and

⁸² This portrait was likely painted during or before 1818, the year Swift resigned his commission from the military. Whereas it was common for officers of the Revolutionary War to be shown wearing their military uniforms in portraits painted decades after military service—Gilbert Stuart’s portrait of Horatio Gates is but one example—this practice was rare following subsequent conflicts. See: Earle Whitmore, *Portraits* (West Point, New York: United States Military Academy, 1974), 49.

Swift likely commissioned the portrait himself.⁸³ This portrait is one of Jarvis's more penetrating efforts. The officer's uniform is similar to the one he wore in the full-length portrait in City Hall, which again supports the conclusion that the two portraits were painted at about the same time. Swift is seated on a chair and gazes intently to his left. His upper body is shown frontally, and his left arm nonchalantly hangs over the back of the chair on which he sits. Indeed, the intensity of Swift's gaze seems to be at odds with his relaxed posture. Yet this slight internal conflict is similar to that of Jarvis's overall composition. As Jarvis was learning, it was often better to walk the middle of the road politically and compositionally than to stray—as did both Vanderlyn and Trumbull—too far to either side. This was particularly true from a compositional point of view regarding portraits of military officers. In this *Swift* portrait—as in others—Jarvis incorporated elements from romanticism and neoclassicism in a way that particularly appealed to those in the military, who, in theory at least, were required to remain politically neutral.

Unfortunately, no correspondence survives from Swift that articulates such an approval of Jarvis's aesthetics over those of his more politically inclined contemporaries. Indeed, it is doubtful Swift ever wrote (or thought), “I believe Vanderlyn's aesthetics too French for my liking,” or, “I feel I should avoid Trumbull, because his portraits look too English.” Such a visual judgment requires exceptionally nuanced observations that are challenging even to a 21st-century art historian, let alone a nineteenth-century soldier. In many instances, it is easy to say *what* we like, but more of a challenge to explain *why* it is we like it. Considering the lack of written evidence, we are forced to rely on what is

⁸³ Portrait file in the Catalog of American portraiture states, “Descended in the family to Mrs. William Patten (Grace Bigelow), Rhinebeck, N.Y. The portrait hangs in the home of Mr. John Bigelow Patten, Rhinebeck, N.Y., who is a great-great-grandson of Mr. Jonathan Swift...acquired from him in Dec. 1950 by the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.”

available. In a city with three prominent portraitists—and a dozen artists of lesser abilities—Swift returned to Jarvis for another portrait. Although Swift’s familiarity with Jarvis may have played a role, it only did so because the sitter was pleased with the first portrait; it is unlikely that Swift would have sought a second portrait if unhappy with the first. If conceding the fact that Jarvis, Vanderlyn, and Trumbull were of near equal skill as portraitists, we are left with a reason of style. Jarvis’s style was clearly in the middle of the two extremes Vanderlyn and Trumbull established.

Whereas Jarvis first painted the six sitters for the New York City Hall because of a government-sponsored commission and was only later chosen as an artist for their additional portraits, many more sailors and soldiers selected Jarvis on the basis of his style rather than a preexisting familiarity. Indeed, this large commission—in addition to the *Rodgers* portrait Jarvis exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1814—aptly advertised Jarvis’s abilities to military officers, a group that constitutes a significant portion of Jarvis’s *oeuvre* after the conclusion of the War of 1812. From an aesthetic point of view, the appeal Jarvis held for those in the military is not surprising. As shown, Federalists preferred Trumbull’s aesthetics and Vanderlyn appealed to those with leanings towards the Democratic-Republican Party. In contrast, officers in the military should—in theory, if entirely not in practice—retain a sense of political neutrality; orders must be followed from the Commander-in-Chief regardless of the president’s political affiliation. Considering that political leadership shifts over time, military officers were wise to choose a portraitist who had not tied his career to one particular political point of view. In such a construction, Jarvis’s aesthetics were neither French (that is, Democratic-Republican) nor English (Federalist) in the eyes of his

military patrons, but rather uniquely American. Moreover, many of these military patrons were socially acquainted or had served together. In this regard, the military became somewhat of a social network through which Jarvis profited.

Jarvis painted at least two portraits of Andrew Jackson during the second decade of the nineteenth century. The first, now a part of the White House Collection (**figure 155**), was completed around 1817 and has traditionally been considered to be a portrait painted from life on the basis of an 1842 engraving by Charles Phillips.⁸⁴ Dickson dates the work 1819 on the assumption that Jarvis completed the portrait from life.⁸⁵ However, as James Barber points out in his excellent study on Jackson portraiture, Jarvis's first portrait was based on an 1816 engraving by David Edwin that appeared as the frontispiece to *The Life of Andrew Jackson*, a biography begun by John Reid and eventually finished by John Henry Eaton, a young lawyer who eventually became Jackson's Secretary of War.⁸⁶ The text underneath Edwin's engraving identifies Nathan W. Wheeler as the portraitist of an unsigned Jackson likeness at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In this portrait, however, Jackson's visage exhibits a wooden quality that borders on caricature.

In his portrait based on the Edwin engraving, Jarvis replaced the caricature quality evident in the Wheeler portrait with a heightened sense of realism, and changed Jackson's uniform to one similar to the uniform that Swift and Gardner wore in their City Hall full-

⁸⁴ The United States Magazine, and Democratic published the Phillips engraving of Andrew Jackson. The text underneath the portrait stated that it was based on an 1815 portrait Jarvis painted from life. However, this text likely misdates the portrait, as Jarvis and Jackson were not in the same geographical area another until 1817. See: Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 47.

⁸⁵ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 354, and illustration 78. Unaware of the Wheeler portrait, Dickson mistakenly writes, "This is probably one of the several Jackson canvases painted by Jarvis in 1819. From this or another identical picture an engraving was made by Charles Phillips (Stauffer, No. 2540) that bears the erroneous inscribed date: "taken from life, 1815." Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 354.

⁸⁶ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 39.

length portraits. As a result, Jarvis's portrait has more of a life-like character than other early portraits of the sitter. Yet despite this fact, there is an uneven quality about the portrait. While Jackson's visage appears finished, his uniform—and in particular, his cravat—and the background display an unfinished quality that indicates that this portrait may have been a training exercise for Henry Inman, a young apprentice who began studying with Jarvis in 1814.⁸⁷

Jarvis's half-length portrait of Andrew Jackson that the Metropolitan Museum of Art owns was in a private collection until 1964, and was unknown to Dickson when he completed his catalogue raisonne on the artist in 1949 (**figure 156**). This portrait was painted after Jackson's triumphal entrance into New York City on 20 February 1819, an event of particular extravagance that was reported in periodicals in both New York City and Baltimore.⁸⁸ Jackson was honored at City Hall on the afternoon of 23 February, and, like Hull, Bainbridge and the others, was presented with the freedom of the city in a ceremony at City Hall. Four days before, the city's Common Council had "respectfully requested [Jackson] to permit a full length portrait painting of him to be taken under the direction of the Corporation to be placed in the Gallery of Paintings in the City Hall."⁸⁹ While Jarvis had every right to feel confident that he would receive this commission for this portrait of Jackson—Jarvis had, after all, already completed six full-length portraits for the Corporation—the commission was offered to John Vanderlyn (**figure 85**), who

⁸⁷ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 41.

⁸⁸ The New York *National Advocate* chronicled his tour of the city on 23-24 February 1819. The Baltimore *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* did likewise between 26 and 27 February. The 23 February edition of the New York *Commercial Advertiser* wrote of the ball held in Jackson's honor: "The diffusion of light upon an assemblage the most brilliant we ever beheld; the taste with which the room was decorated with nearly two hundred flags, including those of almost all the nations of the world, combined with the military glitter of about two hundred gentlemen in full uniforms, interspersed in the dance with the female beauty and elegance of the city, produced an effect of the most pleasing nature." See: Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan*, V:1603.

⁸⁹ *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York*, 10:255.

was already at work on the full-length portrait of President James Monroe (**figure 84**) that was also destined to hang in City Hall.

At least one observer believed that the Corporation erred in choosing Vanderlyn for the *Jackson* portrait. Writing to his daughter on 23 February 1819, John Pintard, a prominent New Yorker and founder of the New-York Historical Society, stated:

I have just returned from seeing Gen. Jackson sworn in as a citizen of this City. I had a short but distinct view of his hard features suff[icien]t to qualify me to judge of the fidelity of the Portraits of two of our artists Vanderlyne & Jarvis, the first appointed to take the picture for the Cor[poration]n the second for himself. V. is not happy. His portraits are too stiff & minutely labored. Jarvis executes with spirit & is very successful in giving character to his performances. *He ought to have been the artist.*⁹⁰

It is impossible to be certain to which portraits Pintard is referring; the full-length portrait Vanderlyn eventually painted was not completed until September 1820, and the surviving Jarvis portrait in the Metropolitan Museum of Art was likely painted in the weeks following Jackson's being honored at City Hall. What Pintard makes clear, however, is that there were some who preferred Jarvis's style to that of Vanderlyn's "stiff & minutely labored" neoclassicism. Pintard was not alone in honoring Jarvis. Joseph Rodman Drake composed a poem that appear in the 11 March 1819 edition of the *New York Evening*

Post:

The board is met—the names are read;
Elate of heart the glad committee
Declare the mighty man has said
He'll "take the freedom of the city."
He thanks the council and the mayor,
Presents 'em all his humble service;
And thinks he's time enough to spare
To sit an hour or so with Jarvis.⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Letters from John Pintard to his Daughter*, 1:168-69. Emphasis added.

⁹¹ *New York Evening Post*, 11 March 1819.

Interesting, Vanderlyn was not mentioned in verse despite receiving the commission for the “official,” city-sponsored portrait. Perhaps Drake had a difficult time working “Vanderlyn” into a couplet. More likely, however, is the fact that the public—and those who sought portraits more specifically—preferred Jarvis’s apolitical aesthetics to that of his competition.

The half-length portrait of Jackson the Metropolitan Museum of Art owns may be the likeness of Jackson that resulted for this “hour or so with Jarvis.” Jackson, wearing the uniform of a major general, directly looks at the viewer. Jarvis placed Jackson’s gloved left hand near his saber, while his right hand holds a field glass. Whereas Jarvis took great care in the depiction of Jackson’s uniform—the epaulettes, embroidery on the collar, and belt buckle deserve particular note—Jarvis completed the foliage-filled background in a loose and painterly manner.

Jarvis painted several interesting details into this landscape. The first, immediately above Jackson’s right hand, is the frenzied head of a white horse whose body is concealed by the thicket in the background. More perplexing, however, is the inclusion in the lower left corner of the canvas of a small figure who wears a plumed hat. In a passage Jarvis may have borrowed from Parmigianino’s *Madonna of the Long Neck* (**figure 157**), this figure, not more than several inches high, is dwarfed by Jackson’s right hand and defies all perspectival logic. Clearly, this figure cannot represent a real person, but may instead be a political symbol meant to link Jackson to a faction of the Democratic-Republican Party in New York City known as the Bucktails, a name given to

members of the Tammany Society who often placed deer tails in the hats they wore at society meetings.⁹²

Barber has noted that, “the introduction of this curious little man well have been suggested by Samuel Swartwout for the sake of associating Jackson with one of New York’s viable political factions.”⁹³ In fact, Swartwout may have commissioned this portrait.⁹⁴ Although its provenance is uncertain prior to 1964, a letter Swartwout wrote to Jackson on 26 April 1819 provides a rare contemporary opinion on Jarvis’s portrait of the future president: “I have just been to see Jarvis’ portrait of you. It is inimitable. He has already made 5 copies for different gentlemen. You perceive that your friends do not forget you. My picture of you, is to be a three quarter full size. Jarvis has a full length for himself.”⁹⁵ Thus, the small figure Jarvis painted into the lower left corner may have been a way for the patron, Swartwout, to tie himself to Jackson, a soldier whose political stock clearly was on the rise. Swartwout financially benefited from this friendship. Once in the White House, Jackson appointed his old political ally the collector of customs for the Port of New York. While in office, Swartwout embezzled almost \$1.5 million before escaping to Europe. Presumably, he left his portrait of Jackson behind.

Without doubt, Jackson’s most celebrated victory during the War of 1812 was the successful defense of New Orleans, a military stand assisted through the bravery of Samuel Chester Reid. The commander of the *General Armstrong*, a privateer brig, Reid entered the Portuguese harbor of Fayal in the Azores on 26 September 1814 seeking

⁹² David M. Ellis, et al., *A History of the State of New York* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957), 144.

⁹³ Barber, *Andrew Jackson*, 63.

⁹⁴ Stuart P. Feld, “Recently acquired American paintings at the Metropolitan.” *Antiques* (April 1965), 441.

⁹⁵ J. S. Bassett, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 7 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930), 6:471. This letter led Dickson to believe that Jarvis painted seven or eight portraits of Jackson. See Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 215. The *Jackson* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is the only surviving likeness that fits the description of “three quarter full size.”

provisions and water. That same afternoon, a British squadron commanded by Robert Lloyd discovered the *General Armstrong*. Rather than proceed as ordered to directly join the massive British flotilla assembling in the Caribbean for the attack on New Orleans, Lloyd instead decided to attack the *Armstrong*. During next two evenings, Reid and his sailors bravely defended the nine-gun *Armstrong* against three ships of the line—the *Plantagenet*, *Rota*, and *Carnation*—which carried 130 guns. Superior armament eventually prevailed after several frustrating attempts. Although Reid scuttled the *Armstrong*, it was a moral victory for the Americans. Reid lost only two sailors, and the remainder of his crew safely retreated to land. Moreover, the crew of the *Armstrong* wounded or killed more than one hundred British sailors.⁹⁶

Displaying the hubris befitting a British naval officer during the early nineteenth century, Lloyd pursued the Americans on land, and eventually wrote a threatening letter to the Governor of Fayal requesting cooperation in recovering two British deserters and expelling or confining the Americans sailors.⁹⁷ Importantly, this letter indicates that Lloyd was in no rush to rendezvous with the remainder of the British flotilla assembling in the Caribbean. In his book *The Naval War of 1812*, a text adapted from his undergraduate thesis at Harvard College, the precociously young Theodore Roosevelt wrote, “The British squadron was bound for New Orleans, and, on account of the delay and loss that it suffered, it was late in arriving, so that this action may be said to have helped in saving the Crescent City. Few regular commanders could have done as well as

⁹⁶ Paine, *Ships of the World*, 200.

⁹⁷ Lloyd wrote, “And in Consequence of the great number of American Seamen now on Shore and from the Knowledge of their general Conduct I have not the least Doubt they will attempt to seize on some British Subject when unprotected by the Presence of His Britannic Majesty’s Ships. I have to be you will either cause them immediately to leave the Island or be put in Confinement that the above Event may be avoided. Otherwise I shall be under the Necessity of leaving one of the Ships under my Orders to cruize [sic] off this port from the Protection of British Property and prevent American Privateers rendezvousing in the Roads.”

Captain Reid.”⁹⁸ Yet despite Reid’s importance during the War of 1812, he was not as honored as were Hull, Decatur, Bainbridge, and the others sitters whose portraits hung in the New York City Hall. Although a civilian, Reid quickly became a popular and decorated hero. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and was given a silver tea service by a group of New York City merchants. Moreover, the state of New York presented him with a golden sword. Despite such accolades, the city of New York did not ask Reid to sit for a portrait to hang along side the other heroes from the War of 1812.

Instead, it fell upon Reid to commemorate his own heroics at sea in an oil-on-canvas composition (**figure 158**). Although only a half-length, the portrait Reid commissioned—which has traditionally been dated 1815 but may be slightly later—is similar to those Jarvis painted for the New York City Hall.⁹⁹ Like Hull, for example, Reid stands on the deck of a ship, presumably the *General Armstrong*; the ship’s rigging can be seen over his right shoulder and an American flag over his left shoulder billows in the strong breeze. The drama of the moment is enhanced by the Reid’s position. His right hand grasps a sword—presumably the sword he was awarded by the state of New

⁹⁸ Roosevelt, *The Naval War of 1812*, 157.

⁹⁹ In addition to the half-length portrait that the Minneapolis Institute of Arts owns, Jarvis also painted a 35” x 27” bust-length portrait of Reid, and a matching pendant portrait of the sailor’s wife and son. Both portraits are owned by the United States Naval Academy. The heads in the two Reid portraits are nearly identical, and there is reason to believe one is a copy of the other. The Mary Jennings Reid and Son portrait can be dated to c. 1815, considering the age of John Chester Reid, who was born in 1814. One of the more important elements in the half-length portrait is the inclusion of an American flag. It is interesting to note that Reid, with the artistic assistance of Jarvis, was responsible for redesigning the American flag between 1817 and 1818. Prior to this change, there was little homogeneity in the American standard. The famous “Star-Spangled Banner” that flew over Fort McHenry, for example, had 15 red and white stripes. Such flags were the norm rather than the exception prior to 1818. The flag in the background of the Reid portrait has white stripes on the borders, whereas the flag Reid designed (and the modern American standard) has red stripes along the borders. See: Boleslaw Mastai and Marie-Louise D’Otrange Mastai, *The Stars and the Stripes: The American Flag as Art and as History from the Birth of the Republic to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 51. For information on the Jarvis/Reid collaboration regarding the United States flag, see: Quick, *American Portraiture in the Grand Manner*, 132.

York—and his left hand, which rests atop a canon, holds a speaking trumpet. Although not an officer in the United States Navy—the *Armstrong*, after all, was a privateer—Reid has attempted, through portraiture, to align himself with the other naval heroes of the time.

George Croghan was another such hero Jarvis painted in the years immediately following the War of 1812 (**figure 159**). Croghan was born into a prestigious family; his father, William, was mayor of Louisville, and his mother, Lucy Clark Croghan, was the sister of George Rogers Clark (an officer on the western frontier during the Revolutionary War) and William Clark (who, with Meriwether Lewis, explored the Louisiana Purchase from 1804 to 1806). After receiving a classical education at home, Croghan matriculated at the College of William and Mary in 1808 and graduated two years later. Croghan returned to his family’s home outside Louisville in 1811, and volunteered as a dragoon to protect the Northwest Territory from Indian attacks. He served as an aide-de-camp to Colonel John R. Boyd at the Battle of Tippecanoe, and was incorporated into the United States Army several months later at the rank of captain. Later promoted to major, Croghan was placed in command of Fort Stephenson and bravely defended it against a superior force of British regulars and Indians during the first week of August 1813. His actions earned him the rank of lieutenant colonel, and the women of Chillicothe—then the capital of Ohio—presented him with a ceremonial sword.¹⁰⁰

Croghan temporarily relocated to New York following the conclusion of the War of 1812. During this time Joseph Delaplaine asked Croghan to sit to Jarvis so that the

¹⁰⁰ George Croghan has not been the subject of an extensive biography. See: *American National Biography*, s.v. “Croghan, George.”

soldier's image could be included in *Delaplaine's Repository of the Lives and Portraits of Distinguished Americans*. The likeness that came of this request is a half-length portrait that shows Croghan in his dress uniform and grasping the ceremonial sword with his left hand. Although Croghan looks off to his left, his facial expression reveals a serious, grave demeanor. Jarvis exhibited this portrait at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1817.¹⁰¹ This was the same year Croghan married Serena Eliza Livingston, the niece of Chancellor Robert R. Livingston.¹⁰² Croghan proved to be an important contact for Jarvis. Although the artist did not financially benefit from this association with the Livingstons—the wife's side of the family clearly preferred Vanderlyn—Jarvis and Croghan became close friends.¹⁰³ Jarvis traveled to Kentucky in 1820 and painted Croghan's wife, both parents, his uncle William Clark, and his wife, Julia Hancock Clark. Add to this a posthumous portrait of the elder uncle, George Rogers Clark, and it is clear that Jarvis was able to work within a family as effectively as was Stuart.¹⁰⁴

The first half of the 1820s was transient for Jarvis, as he was spending more and more time away from his New York home. In 1820, for example, Jarvis traveled to Charleston in March, stayed until June, and afterwards visited George Croghan in Kentucky. Jarvis stayed long enough to paint more than a dozen portraits of Croghan's

¹⁰¹ Rutledge, *Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*, 109.

¹⁰² Serena Livingston was the daughter of John R. Livingston and Eliza Bache McEvers Livingston, two sitters Vanderlyn painted in the first decade of the nineteenth century. John R. Livingston was the younger brother of Robert R. Livingston. See: *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 475.

¹⁰³ Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 224.

¹⁰⁴ *Mr. George Croghan, Mrs. Serena Livingston Croghan, and Mr. William Croghan, and Mrs. Lucy Clark Croghan* are currently in a private collections. The Missouri Historical Society owns the portraits of William Clark and Julian Hancock Clark. The Filson Club in Louisville owns the portrait of George Rogers Clark.

family and other Blue Grass elites. Jarvis's daughter was born in Richmond in June 1821, and John J. Audubon establishes that Jarvis began the year in New Orleans.¹⁰⁵ One of the more remarkable portraits from this stay is that of *Captain Daniel Tod Patterson* (**figure 160**).¹⁰⁶

The attribution of the *Patterson* portrait has been somewhat problematic. Dickson did not include this painting in his study and was likely unaware of its existence; it descended through the Patterson family until 1965, when it was purchased by the Chrysler Museum.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, dating the portrait has been difficult. The Catalog of American Portraits lists the completion date as 1815-1830. However, the portrait likely dates from early 1821. Patterson was commissioned captain on 28 February 1815, and his portrait shows him wearing the full dress uniform from the accepted 1813-1820 standard. The new uniform went into effect in May 1821. Marko Zlatich, a Researcher at the Smithsonian Institution's Armed Forces and Diplomatic Collections, believes that "Since Patterson's commission as captain was dated 28 February 1815, the date of the portrait can be narrowed down to sometime after that date, but not after May 1821, when the 1820 naval uniform regulations went into effect."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ For Jarvis's presence in New Orleans, see: Howard Corning, ed., *Journal of John James Audubon Made During His Trip to New Orleans in 1820-1821* (Cambridge, MA: 1929), 114, 116-118.

¹⁰⁶ For the Jarvis chronology, see Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 338-340. Patterson's name is often spelled Daniel Todd.

¹⁰⁷ Dennis R. Anderson, *Three Hundred Years of American Art in the Chrysler Museum* (Norfolk, Virginia: Chrysler Museum at Norfolk, 1975), 80.

¹⁰⁸ Email to author, 14 June 2005. Interestingly, Patterson's mother Catherine Livingston was a second cousin to Chancellor Robert R. Livingston. See: George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York 1746-1813* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960), opposite 516. In 1807, Patterson married George Ann Pollock, a daughter of George Pollock, the New York merchant Gilbert Stuart painted in 1794. George and Catherine Yates Pollock moved to New Orleans in 1803; George Ann Pollock would have been 16 years of age, and her younger brother Carlile Pollock (1791-1845) would have been approaching 14. See: Miles, *American Paintings of the Eighteenth Century*, 183-184, 186. That George Ann Pollock was the daughter of George and Catherine Yates Pollock is established through an obituary notice for Daniel Tod Patterson: "He [Patterson] was of a most amiable character in private life, and has

Although Jarvis secured his reputation with portraits of military heroes, the artist also painted several prominent politicians in the years that followed the War of 1812. Daniel D. Tompkins was one such politician, and was one of the few sitters who sat to Vanderlyn, Trumbull, and Jarvis. Although Jarvis's most well known portrait of Tompkins was completed in 1820 (**figure 92**), the artist and politician had a relationship that extended back to at least 1807, when the recently elected governor first sat for Jarvis.¹⁰⁹ Although the exact circumstances regarding the commission for this early bust-length portrait are unknown, a slightly later portrait that the New-York Historical Society owns descended through Tompkins's family and was likely commissioned by the politician himself. This 1810 oil-on-wood bust portrait shows the sitter with a full, oval-shaped face. Before a dark background, Tompkins turns slightly to his left and directly looks outwards at the viewer. The lack of accoutrements makes this a personal rather than a political work. Although these portraits were completed early in Jarvis's portrait painting career, they "provide a more intimate view of the sitter's personality than does Trumbull's [1808] official portrait [for the Governor's Room of the New York City Hall]."¹¹⁰

Although the 1820 full-length portrait Jarvis painted of Tompkins looks as if destined for this same room in the New York City Hall, Tompkins commissioned the painting himself while serving his first term as vice president in the James Monroe

left a widow (sister to Carlile Pollock, Esq., of New Orleans)...” See: “The Late Commodore Patterson.” *The National Intelligencer*, 22 September 1839.

¹⁰⁹ This first portrait can be dated c. 1807 on the basis that Thomas Sully received a \$20 payment in December 1807 for completing a copy of this Jarvis original. See Biddle and Fielding, *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully*, 299.

¹¹⁰ Barnett Shepherd, “Daniel D. Tompkins and His Portraits,” *Staten Island Historian* 8 (Winter-Spring 1991), 3.

administration.¹¹¹ Tompkins wears a black military uniform and the gold epaulets that designate him as the commander of the New York state militia, a post he held while governor during the War of 1812. Tompkins stands parallel to the picture plane, with his right leg slightly advanced. His left hand holds a glove, while his right hand grasps the sword he plants in the ground near his right heel. A final interesting element worth noting involves the vantage point for this particular portrait. Whereas the vast majority of full-length portraits utilize a low viewpoint to ennoble the sitter, Jarvis instead placed Tompkins low on the picture and incorporated a more elevated eye level. The horizon line, for example, is immediately underneath Tompkins's epaulets. The extensive background to Tompkins not only assists in identifying the location—the Narrows on Staten Island's eastern shore—but also makes this a more approachable and democratic image.¹¹²

De Witt Clinton was another sitter Jarvis painted both before and after the War of 1812. Despite sitting for Trumbull for city-commissioned portraits during the first decade of the nineteenth century, Clinton clearly preferred Jarvis's style as the second decade progressed. Clinton initially achieved prominence in 1803, when he was first elected mayor of New York City at the precocious age of thirty-four. He held this political post for ten of the twelve years from 1803 until 1815. The first portrait Jarvis painted of the politician, which dates from about 1810, is a bust-length composition that shows Clinton seated on a chair, turned slightly to his left, and before an exterior landscape (**figure 161**). In the vein of Vanderlyn's portraiture, there are no compositional details that would indicate the Clinton's occupation or interests. Although

¹¹¹ *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 802.

¹¹² Shepherd, "Daniel D. Tompkins and His Portraits," 8.

later likenesses would reveal a slightly receding hairline, this earlier portrait shows Clinton with a full head of curly hair. In all, the portrait Jarvis painted in 1810 does not allude to the sitter's political position, and although the provenance remains unclear, it was likely commissioned by the sitter himself for his own use.¹¹³

The half-length portraits Jarvis painted approximately six years later, however, are nothing short of visual declarations of political might. Six half-length portraits of Clinton exist, and although not all can be firmly attributed to Jarvis, they all follow his prototype. While Clinton's pose is similar in each—that is, his left hand holds a collection of papers and usually rests upon a book atop a desk, while he holds his right hand on his hip—the portraits all contain slightly different backgrounds. Jarvis began to employ assistants as the second decade of the nineteenth century progressed, and not all possessed the natural talent of Henry Inman, Jarvis's most accomplished student. Given the nature of the artistic studio in the nineteenth century, Jarvis often had his students complete backgrounds after he had finished the likeness. When viewed as a group, this gives the half-length *De Witt Clinton* portraits a slightly uneven quality, which may be explained by the fact that Jarvis did not paint all the portraits that have been attributed to his pencil. Yet despite such formal inconsistencies by Jarvis and his assistants, the former mayor and future governor often gave these portraits to political allies and friends.

The National Portrait Gallery owns the first half-length portrait of Clinton that Jarvis painted (**figure 162**). A noted diarist, Clinton wrote on 8 February 1816 that he “Called on Genl [Jacob Jennings] Brown and went with him to Col Trumbull's & Mr.

¹¹³ The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston currently owns this 1810 portrait and is part of the Karolik collection. Jared Bradley Flagg, a New-York artist, once owned this portrait; he may have acquired it from his uncle, Washington Allston. See: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings, 1815-1865* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1949), 376.

Jarvis's. Sat for Jarvis." The following day, Clinton recorded, "Called on Jarvis for painting."¹¹⁴ One can only speculate as to why Brown and Clinton first visited Trumbull; it was likely a social call rather than one designed to secure a portraitist, especially considering Trumbull's diligence on his large history paintings for the Capitol Rotunda. Nonetheless, the portrait that resulted from these sittings with Jarvis was the likeness that Clinton gave to Brown in exchange for the half-length portrait of Brown that Jarvis painted in 1815 (**figure 163**). Such a practice of exchanging portraits as a token of friendship was not unique to Jarvis's sitters, as demonstrated by Stephen Van Rensselear and John Jay's exchanging Stuart-painted portraits of one another at the close of the eighteenth century.

The portrait at the National Portrait Gallery that Clinton gave to Brown is one of two versions Jarvis painted (at least in part); another replica firmly attributed to Jarvis survives (**figure 164**).¹¹⁵ Clinton stands in the already-described pose, in front of a red, round-backed chair. The dark drapery in the background contrasts with his head, and a fluted column is behind him to his right side. Clinton wears a white ruffle around his neck and a black, double-breasted coat. The slight turn of his upper body emphasizes the rotundity that increased as he aged. The face is pure Jarvis—forceful and direct—as is the awkwardly completed left hand. The background, however, lacks the boldness to be expected from Jarvis's pencil, and was likely completed by Henry Inman, Jarvis's apprentice.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis, 1766-1829*. This diary is currently undergoing conservation and is unavailable to scholars.

¹¹⁵ In the first version of the half-length portrait, Clinton stands in front of a chair that can be seen on the right side of the composition. In the second version, two copies of which exist, Clinton stands in the same position, but the desk has been moved to the left side of the composition and the chair has been eliminated.

The New-York Historical Society owns a replica of the above portrait. Like the slightly earlier work, it appears that Jarvis was responsible for the painting of the sitter, and then turned the work over to his student for completion.¹¹⁶ Despite the similar pose, this portrait was likely painted in part from life, considering that Clinton has been shown with longer, curlier hair in the second portrait. The background, however, exhibits characteristics of being a replica. For example, despite being roughly the same size (50 ½” x 36” compared with 48 ½ x 36 3/8” for the National Portrait Gallery Version), there is a horizontal compression in the second portrait. This is most evident on the left side of the painting, where the artist who completed the background—probably Inman—did not have the requisite room for the arm of the chair and was forced to eliminate the space between the arm of the chair and the end of the composition that can be seen in the earlier work. The chair has been slightly altered—stars can now be seen along the upper part of the back—and the fluted column has been replaced with one that is more austere. This portrait was given to John Hone, and is yet another example of portraiture being used as a form of political alliance or as a token of deep friendship.¹¹⁷

The second version of the *Clinton* portrait—that with a desk to Clinton’s right and without a chair—is as complicated as the first version, and again involves one portrait that can be firmly attributed to Jarvis and another that was clearly painted by another

¹¹⁶ “The background is much more skillfully painted [than the second half-length portrait the New-York Historical owns], and the work of Henry Inman, then Jarvis’s assistant, is recognizable; it adds significantly to the success of the painting.” See: *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 149.

¹¹⁷ In addition to this Jarvis-painted replica, two copies that were possibly painted by another artist survive. The first is owned by the Museum of the City of New York, and has been attributed at one time or another to both Jarvis and to Samuel Lovett Waldo. Dickson did not list as among Jarvis’s works in his 1949 text. The Hirschl & Adler Galleries owned the second of these works. In this second portrait, the column that was originally to the sitter’s right, is not directly behind him. The provenance remains unclear for both portraits, despite being direct copies of the earlier Jarvis likeness. Thus, they are not considered in this study.

artist. The portrait the Brooklyn Museum of Art owns measures 50 ½” x 40” and may be the first of the two completed because of the comparative spatial cohesion of the composition (**figure 165**).¹¹⁸ In this likeness, Clinton’s left hand is completely visible, as is the spine of the upright book atop the desk on the left side of the painting. Three sheets of paper rest in front of this text and fill the lower left corner of the composition.¹¹⁹ Yet despite this apparent spatial unity, there can be no doubt that Jarvis painted neither the likeness of Clinton, nor the background behind him. The modeling—or lack thereof—in Clinton’s face is reminiscent of Jarvis’s earliest oil-on-canvas portraits and is far inferior to what can be seen in the *Clinton* portraits that can be firmly attributed to him. The wooden face, poorly rendered clothing, and oddly hung drapery in the background all indicate this portrait to be a student’s effort by an artist with far less talent than his teacher.

The figure of Clinton in the second portrait of this version can be attributed to Jarvis’s pencil (**figure 166**). For reasons discussed, the background in the portrait in the New-York Historical Society may have been painted later than its counterpart in the Brooklyn Museum of Art. However, as the heads are direct copies of one another—and we may assume that Jarvis would not copy a head painted by one of his students—we can infer that the first portrait Jarvis began (if not completed) was the likeness the New-York Historical Society owns. Moreover, an entry in Clinton’s diary from October 1816 indicates that this portrait—like the others Jarvis painted—was at least partially

¹¹⁸ As will be shown, this portrait was probably finished before the composition of which it is a copy.

¹¹⁹ The title on the spine of the book reads, “LAWS of the STATE OF N. YORK.” The topmost sheet of paper in the lower left reads, “Pres^t Phil Society.” The bottom sheet speaks to what would become Clinton’s most enduring political achievement, the Erie Canal: “And some who opposed the canal, now they find it will succeed turn about and declare they have always approve of it, and are ready to claim the civic crown but if the state is benefited I am satisfied my object is accomplished.”

completed from life. In the sparse prose typical of his journal, Clinton wrote, “Called at Mercein’s printing office—the Academy—Jarvis the painter.” It was for this Mercein, Thomas R. Mercein—whom this portrait was painted. Mercein and Clinton were close friends, a relationship solidified when Mayor Clinton appointed Mercein the comptroller of New York, and further enhanced when Clinton presented this portrait to his friend.¹²⁰

Although numerous artists painted Clinton—including earlier, city-commissioned portraits by Trumbull—it was Jarvis whom the politician chose to paint the likenesses he gave to friends and political allies. Although Trumbull can be counted among Clinton’s friends, as both were active in various philanthropic organizations in New York City such as the New-York Historical Society, when it came to present portraits to friends, Clinton consistently chose Jarvis. There could be a number of reasons for such a decision. Jarvis first painted Clinton around 1810, and was thus familiar (and pleased) with the artist’s talents. In addition, Trumbull was occupied on his historical compositions for the Capitol Rotunda and was avoiding portraiture as much as possible. Another explanation, however, must have been the middle-of-the-road quality of Jarvis’s aesthetics. Clinton’s political views were as moderate; although once an Antifederalist who stood in strident opposition to the ratification of the Constitution, Clinton was supported by antiwar Federalists during the 1812 presidential election. Indeed, his moderate political position prompted several New York Republican leaders—including his brother-in-law Ambrose

¹²⁰ *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 148. Mercein’s granddaughters, Rosalie Mercein and Emilie Mercein Heiser, presented this portrait to the New-York Historical Society in 1940.

Spencer, Daniel D. Tompkins, and Martin Van Buren—to expel Clinton into political purgatory after this unsuccessful attempt at the presidency.¹²¹

This severe political rift between Spencer and Clinton lasted until November 1816. Spencer began his political career as a strident Federalist and served several terms in the state assembly and senate from 1793 to 1802. Spencer began a lifelong friendship with John Armstrong in 1797 and in time joined him as a Jeffersonian Republican. Spencer faithfully served the Republican Party during his nineteen-year tenure on the New York Supreme Court from 1804 to 1823, and served as chief justice from 1819 until his forced retirement when the Senate decided not to renew his judicial position.

The portrait Jarvis painted of Spencer, which dates from about 1818, is important in several regards (**figure 167**). First, it demonstrates that Jarvis did not carry the political baggage as some of his artistic competition. Second, the *Spencer* portrait shows the ways in which Jarvis was able to deliver a politicized aesthetic for his more politically-inclined clientele. The *Ambrose Spencer* portrait is one such work that contains a highly charged political aesthetic similar to the portraits Vanderlyn completed during the same period. Spencer turns slightly to his right before a red drapery. Like many portraits Vanderlyn painted during the same period, the portrait of Spencer is one completely devoid of compositional elements, and through this aesthetic, Jarvis reinforces his sitter's political commitment to the Republican Party.

Two portraits from approximately the same time demonstrate a stark contrast to the sparse compositional qualities the *Spencer* portrait exhibits. The first is a portrait of William W. Van Ness, a prominent Federalist who joined Spencer on the New York

¹²¹ *American National Biography*, s.v. "Clinton, De Witt." Also: Evan Cornog, *The Birth of Empire: De Witt Clinton and the American Experience, 1769-1828* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 127-128.

Supreme Court from 1807 until 1820 (**figure 168**).¹²² Painted at roughly the same time, Van Ness is shown before a light-colored drapery, holding a sheet of paper with his right hand. This minute compositional detail is a stark divergence from the austerity of the *Spencer* portrait, and is not surprising considering Van Ness's prominent position as a New York Federalist. Likewise, the portrait Jarvis painted the following year of Cadwallader David Colden is as visually interesting when the sitter's politics are considered (**figure 169**). Although described as a "strong advocate of Federalist party principals," Colden was one of the few such-minded politicians who actively opposed the War of 1812.¹²³ He later supported De Witt Clinton, yet maintained his Federalist beliefs and was eventually elected mayor of New York City, serving from 1818-1820. Jarvis painted the mayor sitting before his desk with an inkpot, quill, and papers beside him. Such a depiction is more moderate in tone and looks more similar to Jarvis's contemporary half-length portrait of De Witt Clinton than to Vanderlyn's likeness of Brockholst Livingston.¹²⁴ Indeed, the *Spencer*, *Van Ness*, and *Colden* portraits show the ways in which Jarvis was able to accommodate a variety of political and aesthetic preferences. Without doubt, Vanderlyn and Trumbull had the technical abilities to do so, but their strident political views and backgrounds alienated significant segments of the portrait-seeking public. Jarvis, on the other hand, did not carry the political baggage of his competition.

¹²² William W. Van Ness is not to be confused with his cousin, William Peter Van Ness, a federal judge who served as Aaron Burr's second with his duel with Alexander Hamilton. W.W. Van Ness served two terms in the state assembly, and was often considered a Federalist gubernatorial candidate. See: *American National Biography*, s.v. "Van Ness, William W." Also: *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 826-27.

¹²³ *American National Biography*, s.v. "Colden, Cadwallader David."

¹²⁴ Jarvis showed all three of these works at the Academy of the Fine Arts exhibition in New York City; *Van Ness* in 1818, *Colden* in 1819, and *Spencer* in 1820. See: Dickson, *John Wesley Jarvis*, 209, and *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society*, 154-55, 748, 826-827.

This important point is clearly demonstrated by the fact that both Federalists and Republicans sought out Jarvis for his services. A final analysis of two portraits Jarvis painted before beginning his extended itinerant period in the 1820s—one of *Augustus Jay* (**figure 170**), and another of his grandson, *John Jay* (**figure 171**)—ably demonstrates this point. Both portraits are copies. The copy Jarvis painted after Gerrit Duyckinck’s *Augustus Jay* portrait is particularly interesting. John Jay wrote to his son Peter on 14 February 1815 that, “I have concluded to give a copy of my Grandfather’s Picture to William [Jay’s son]. Let [Samuel Lovett] Waldo Make it for him.”¹²⁵ More than three years later, Jay wrote another letter to Peter regarding a Waldo copy:

The affectionate attentions of Mr. and Mrs. Munro are not to be forgotten. Let Waldo make a *good* copy of my Grandfather’s Picture. Have it handsomely framed and then present it from me to Mr. Munro. Mary and you will see that it be well done before you receive it. An imperfect copy would not be worth having. The one you have is said to be a very good one. The one in question may be made from it.¹²⁶

Waldo clearly complied with this request. On 17 July 1818, Peter Jay Munro wrote to his uncle expressing gratitude for the gift: “Be pleased to accept my thanks for the very handsome portrait of my Great Grandfather Jay, sent me last evening by Cousin Peter in your name. I highly esteem this portrait for the sake of our ancestor and its being your gift enhances its value.”¹²⁷ Jay responded three days later: “I have rec[eive]d your letter of the 17 inst[ant] and am pleased to find from it, that the Portrait of our excellent and common ancestor is so acceptable to you. Peter and William also have copies of it.”¹²⁸ Thus, the extant evidence provides the following scenario: Waldo first copied the *Augustus Jay* portrait in 1815. Although it can only be inferred from Jay’s later words,

¹²⁵ John Jay to Peter Augustus Jay, 14 February 1815, John Jay Papers, no. 11560.

¹²⁶ John Jay to Peter Augustus Jay, 5 May 1818, John Jay Papers, no. 11582. Emphasis in original.

¹²⁷ Peter Jay Munro to John Jay, 17 July 1818, John Jay Papers, no. 9411.

¹²⁸ John Jay to Peter Munro Jay, 20 July 1818, John Jay Papers, no. 561.

this was not a compelling likeness. Jarvis painted the copy of the *Augustus Jay* portrait that Jay gave to his son Peter, and it was, in Jay's words, "a very good" copy. This was the copy that Waldo made for Peter Jay Munro. Unfortunately, the copies Waldo made for William Jay and Peter Jay Munro have been lost, while the copy Jarvis made for Peter A. Jay survived, and was given by a descendant to the John Jay Homestead in 1981.¹²⁹

Clearly impressed with Jarvis's abilities, Jay asked the artist to copy an additional portrait in 1818. This time, the artist copied the 1794 portrait Stuart painted of Jay wearing his judicial robes (**figure 133**). Jay gave this copy to his nephew. Of all the portraits Jay could have commissioned a copy of to present to this nephew, this was a most appropriate choice. It was, after all, Peter Jay Munro who originally wore the robes in Jay's stead so that Stuart could finish the portrait while Jay was in London negotiating the Jay Treaty.

Like Vanderlyn before him, Jarvis had previously copied portraits Stuart painted of New York patrons. However, whereas Vanderlyn's copies retained a linear, student-like quality (and, to be fair, Vanderlyn painted them early in his career), Jarvis was able to adapt his style to suite the tastes of his sitters. Jarvis was the perfect choice for Jay; not only did he have the technical abilities to deliver a faithful reproduction, but the artist had managed to steer clear from the political entanglements that had persuaded Jay to avoid Vanderlyn during the opening years of the nineteenth century. Indeed, only Jarvis could paint portraits for Jay and Ambrose Spencer—political rivals—in the same year but in different styles.

¹²⁹ This portrait is discussed in Ide, *Portraits of John Jay*, 28.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

It is no coincidence that Democratic-Republicans, politicians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who wished to tie America's diplomatic future to France, chose to have their portraits painted in a French mode of representation. Conversely, it was not by accident that their anglophile counterparts, the Federalists, deliberately selected an English portrait style. Without doubt, portraiture went hand-in-hand with politics during this formative period in American history.

I have discussed four artists who were active in New York City for varying amounts of time between 1790 and 1825. The first, Gilbert Stuart, possesses the most prestigious reputation among American portraitists. Stuart's return to the United States was announced in the 6 May 1793 issue of the *New York Daily Advertiser*. The artist not only picked a good moment in which to return home, he also chose a good place to settle. Recently the home of the federal government, New York City was also home to two patrons who were able to assist Stuart as he began to build a portraiture clientele: John Jay, the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, and John Shaw, the owner of the boat that brought Stuart and his wife into New York harbor.

Indeed, the vast majority of Stuart's patrons during his brief stay in New York City between 1793 and 1794 can be traced to one of these two men and the social networks in which they operated. For example, John Shaw was an active member of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick, an organization in which George Pollock was also exceptionally active. Stuart painted both Pollock and his wife Catherine. Later, Stuart

painted Richard Yates and Catherine Brass Yates, Catherine Pollock's parents, and Lawrence Reid Yates, her uncle. The Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick was only one of several organizations through which Stuart prospered. He also made lucrative connections through the Saint George's Society, the Saint Andrew's Society, and most importantly, the Society of Cincinnati.

In particular, the Society of Cincinnati was a profitable organization for Stuart. He painted seven members of this group while in New York and these gentlemen came from a variety of social and political backgrounds. Although most chose to be painted wearing their military uniforms with the Society's medal prominently displayed on their lapels, several members, Aaron Burr among them, decided instead to be shown wearing civilian attire. Burr was unusual in one other regard: he was an active Democratic-Republican during a time when the overwhelming majority of Stuart's patrons were Federalists. The *Aaron Burr* portrait indicates two key facts. First, the sitter clearly did not consider the artist or his style of portraiture to be overly political when he commissioned the work in 1793 or 1794. Second, a comparison of the Aaron Burr portrait with that of a more committed Federalist—John Jay wearing his academic robes, for example—indicates that the aesthetic shift, slight though it might have been, was underway immediately prior to the political brouhaha caused by the Jay Treaty. Although Stuart utilized his typical British energetic brushwork in the modest *Burr* portrait, the composition is more typical of what Vanderlyn would paint in less than a decade. Burr is shown within a blank composition. Careful observation reveals a startling difference when the Burr portrait is compared with the Jay portrait—a likeness Stuart painted at nearly the same time. Whereas the *Burr* portrait contains only the

sitter—a bright light shining upon his balding head—Stuart introduced various other elements into the *Jay* portrait that became visual signifiers of Federalism during the early nineteenth century in both half and bust-length compositions: tables, books, draperies, and columns.

Although Vanderlyn studied with Gilbert Stuart for only a short time, this period of instruction was made possible through the generosity of Aaron Burr, one of the rising stars of the Democratic-Republican Party in 1796. Afterwards, Burr paid for Vanderlyn's passage to Europe so that the aspiring artist could enroll in the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*. Vanderlyn also sought painting instruction from François-André Vincent, a prominent neoclassicist whose career has since been obscured by that of his magnificent contemporary, Jacques-Louis David. Vincent was one of the most prestigious portraitists working in Paris and was thus an ideal choice for Vanderlyn, who was aware that it was within this genre that he would be expected to work when he returned to the United States. This two-pronged instruction shaped Vanderlyn as the artist he became: the *Ecole* advanced the artist's strict linearity and Vincent introduced the subdued use of color and the compositional austerity that would become trademarks of Vanderlyn's nineteenth-century portraits.

Vanderlyn returned to New York City in 1801 and immediately began to paint friends and associates of Burr, people who were exclusively Democratic-Republicans. Federalists shunned Vanderlyn's services during this brief two-year stay despite his reputation as the most skilled portraitist working in the area. The reason for this avoidance involves both Vanderlyn's association with Burr—a well-known fact by this point in the artist's career—and the artist's French style of painting, a mode of

representation that anglophile Federalists did not approve. An excellent example of this rejection of Vanderlyn and his art was the aftermath of a commission the city of New York awarded Vanderlyn for a full-length portrait of John Jay, most recently the governor of the state. Although Vanderlyn attempted to feign indifference in a letter to his brother about the commission, the artist must have been filled with anticipation about the possibility of establishing himself as an artist of the highest rank in the United States. Jay was in no rush, however, to visit New York City from his upstate home and he patiently wanted for Vanderlyn to depart for Paris before making a return to the Empire City. Jay wished to avoid Vanderlyn for a combination of two reasons: an overall aversion to Burr, the artist's benefactor, and a dislike of Vanderlyn's French, neoclassical style of portraiture, a mode of representation that would have shown the Federalist Jay in a politically-disagreeable portrait.

Luckily for Jay and the city of New York that wished to commission a portrait of its most-recent governor, Vanderlyn's departure coincided with the arrival of John Trumbull. By this time Trumbull had thirty years as an active artist to his credit. Whereas Vanderlyn largely worked within the Democratic-Republican Party due to his own political leanings and his friendship with Burr, Trumbull was nothing short of an aristocratic Federalist from Connecticut. While Trumbull took his book education at Harvard, his artistic education unfolded in Benjamin West's London studio. Trumbull largely worked within Federalist circles when he returned to the United States after his second extended stay in Europe between 1784 and 1789. Whenever he painted Federalists, he did so in a style typical of those trained in the English manner of portraiture. At the peak of his powers between 1790 and 1794 (that is from his return to

the United States until his next departure for Europe) Trumbull's most accomplished portraits of Federalist allies rival those Stuart painted at about the same time. Indeed, Trumbull's portraits during this brief period exhibit similar aesthetic characteristics, most notably a lively use of brushwork and a colorful use of pigment. In short, when painting Federalists, Trumbull remained faithful to his English training

However, the portraits Trumbull completed for City Hall of former mayors and governors of the city and state of New York demonstrate the ways in which the artist could alter his style on the basis of the political leanings of the sitter. A comparison of the *Edward Livingston* and *Marinus Willett* portraits—both Democratic-Republican mayors—with the portraits of their Federalist counterparts—James Duane and Richard Varick—indicates that Trumbull would match the appropriate style to the political party of the sitter. An inspection of these four portraits shows that Trumbull painted the Democratic-Republicans in an exceptionally French manner, as demonstrated by the restrained color, increased linearity, and the austere nature of these compositions. Conversely, Trumbull painted the Federalist mayors, Duane and Varick, in a British aesthetic, as indicated by his utilization of dynamic brushstrokes, a more florid use of color, and compositional elements such as columns, drapery, and inkpots that bespeak to the political beliefs of the sitter. These are important examples, for they strongly indicate that the differences observed in aesthetics were not a personal matter of artistic style—that is, Vanderlyn paints one way and Trumbull another—but instead a matter that varied from sitter to sitter rather than from artist to artist.

Trumbull departed New York City for London in 1808, and this year coincides with the mercurial rise of another talented portraitist, John Wesley Jarvis. Although born

in England, Jarvis's family moved to the United State when he was five. While his early training was as an engraver, it was in oil-on-canvas portraiture that Jarvis made his most profound artistic mark on New York City during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. There are several reasons why Jarvis prospered as an artist. First of all, with Vanderlyn and Trumbull abroad and Stuart in Boston, Jarvis was unrivaled as a portraitist in the Empire City for nearly a decade. Also important is the fact that all of his artistic training took place in the United States. Jarvis developed a more moderate style than either of his more politically inclined competitors. As the portraits he painted between 1808 and 1816 show, Jarvis perfected an aesthetic middle ground, one that was neither English nor French, but a unique combination of the two. As his portraits of Phillip Hone and Jacob Houseman demonstrate, Jarvis often painted with a Vanderlyn-inspired linearity, but with a color scheme more typical of Trumbull's portraits. In particular, members of the military were attracted to this aesthetic compromise, as were individuals without profound political allegiances.

This aesthetic compromise was not the only reason why Jarvis prospered as a portraitist. Indeed, several other characteristics also explain his success as a portraitist in New York City during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. One of these was his lack of reliance on European precedents for his portraits. Without doubt, the absence of European training may have been a blessing in disguise, for he did not feel compelled to follow the compositional tradition of the Grand Manner. No commission makes this point more clearly than the one the city of New York awarded Jarvis for six full-length portraits of naval and army heroes from the War of 1812. Upon close examination, several of these compositions are unusual in the history of American art and are distinct

from European antecedents. For example, the full-length portrait of Oliver Hazard Perry is nothing short of a contemporary history painting that commemorates a military hero who had survived the conflict. While contemporary history paintings were a recent development in the history of Western art, Jarvis provided an innovative American spin on a relatively new genre of painting.

Jarvis is distinct from both Vanderlyn and Trumbull in several other ways. First, whereas both Trumbull and Vanderlyn were politically active to one extent or another, Jarvis remained relatively neutral from a political point of view. Indeed, I have demonstrated that Federalists actively avoided Vanderlyn, and Democratic-Republicans remained indifferent towards Trumbull's services. Jarvis, on the other hand, appealed to sitters on both sides of the political divide, and members of the military, gentlemen who (in theory, at least) were politically neutral. In addition and as important, Trumbull and Vanderlyn would have preferred to direct their creative efforts toward history paintings and only resorted to portraiture in times of economic necessity. In contrast, Jarvis—like Stuart—was completely satisfied painting portraits. Potential patrons were likely attracted to the artist's sense of professional contentment and commitment to the practice of portraiture.

Stuart arrived in New York City at a most fortuitous moment in the history of the United States. Without doubt, the time following the debates over the ratification of the Constitution was one of the most amicable periods in American politics. Although he lived in New York for less than two years—he quickly departed for Philadelphia with a letter of introduction from John Jay to George Washington—Stuart rapidly established himself as the most accomplished portraitist in the United States. He painted both

Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, and although their some compositional dissimilarities remain between portraits of sitters on opposite sides of the political fence, Stuart did not alter his exceptionally British style. By the time he departed New York, the political environment there was divided over the ratification of the Jay Treaty. The politicizing of aesthetics was underway.

The magnitude of commissioning a portrait in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is lost on the twenty-first century beholder. When the cost of such undertakings is considered, it is not surprising that even the most wealthy citizens undertook this process only once or twice in a lifetime. With this in mind, politically-minded sitters often wished for their portrait to do political or social work on their behalf. For a Federalist patron, a portrait painted in an English mode of representation visually tied them to other Federalists whose portraits exhibited similar English characteristics. The inclusion of ancillary elements such as lavish draperies, inkpots, quills, and books reinforced the Federalist ideals of education for the most wealthy and aristocrat of gentlemen who were expected to lead the youthful United States. Further, the English aesthetic in which the overwhelming majority of Federalists were painted in New York City during the first two decades of the nineteenth century provide a visual reinforcement to the Federalists who wished to tie the diplomatic future of the United States to Great Britain rather than to France.

Conversely, the opposite is true of likenesses of Democratic-Republicans. Vanderlyn generally placed all compositional focus in his portraits of Democratic-Republicans on the sitter rather than on secondary visual signifiers of the sitter's education or wealth. The followers of Jefferson and Monroe quickly embraced this

visual embodiment of the Republican virtue of meritocracy. Thus, the portraits of Democratic-Republicans depicted individuals who held similar political views and wished to consider France their revolutionary counterparts. It is important to note that artists adapted their style to fit the political persuasion of the sitter. That Vanderlyn painted in a French aesthetic is not a surprising fact considering his training at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* and within the studio of a French neoclassicist. That Trumbull painted in a French aesthetic despite his English training for a depiction of a Democratic-Republican strongly indicates that politicians from opposing parties were painted in different styles and that these differing styles conveyed deeply held political beliefs.

Although Jarvis has slipped into obscurity today, he was the most sought after portraitist in New York City during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The reasons behind his popularity reside in his neutrality: socially, politically, and stylistically. Jarvis was not only an amicable person, he also refrained from mixing politics with business, a restraint that both Vanderlyn and Trumbull lacked. As an artist, Jarvis developed an artistic style that was distinct from the European-trained competition active in New York. Sitters who did not wish for their portraits to align them politically were particularly attracted to Jarvis's aesthetic, which was neither uniquely French nor English. Indeed, although members of active military service largely neglected both Trumbull and Vanderlyn, this same group was attracted to Jarvis's style. The evidence is compelling that portraiture and politics were intertwined in New York City between 1790 and 1825. By and large, the political affiliation of a sitter—or lack thereof—can largely be inferred by the aesthetics of that sitter's portrait. Without question, portraiture not

only visually linked politically like-minded individuals, it also spoke to their deeply held political beliefs.

Appendix

Literature Review

Although New York was undoubtedly a home to dozens of artists between 1790-1825, four in particular warrant further investigation because of the importance of their work: John Trumbull (1756-1843), Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828), John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), and John Wesley Jarvis (1780-1840). All worked in the city, though for varying amounts of time. Stuart's stay in New York, for example, could be characterized as a brief (but productive) layover on his way from Ireland to Philadelphia, where he hoped to paint George Washington. Vanderlyn, Jarvis, and Trumbull, on the other hand, were all New Yorkers for more extended periods of time. Moreover, each of these artists represents a different position within the 21st-century canon of American art, from Stuart's position as one of the foremost portrait painters in American history, to John Wesley Jarvis, who although prominent and prolific in his own time, remains relatively obscure today.

Whereas Trumbull was influenced by the works of Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, and had aspirations to be a painter of historical scenes upon his return to the United States, his contemporary Gilbert Stuart had no such desires. Arriving in New York City in 1793, he completed more than 35 portraits in New York prior to his departure to Philadelphia to paint George Washington in 1795. Because he was content to focus on painting portraits and never fell victim to the draw of history paintings, the literature on Stuart is not marred by the same discrepancy between genres as is the

scholarship on Trumbull. Stuart scholarship, has, however, undergone significant changes since the end of the nineteenth century.

Although Stuart's prominence as an American portraitist was acknowledged during the artist's own lifetime, it was not until about fifty years after his death that a scholar published the first full-length account of the artist's life. This study was George C. Mason's *The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart*. Mason claimed to have written his book "at the request of Miss Jane Stuart."¹ This text is a relatively brief biography of Stuart, complete with reconstructed conversations with the artist. The narrative strongly draws on the three short articles that Jane Stuart wrote regarding her father in *Scribner's Magazine*.² Of most value, however, is the catalogue Mason assembled of Stuart's paintings. This catalogue is far longer in length than the biography section of his book; Mason listed and dated more than 600 Stuart portraits, and provided brief biographical information for most of the sitters. Mason admitted in the preface that, "numerous as are the pictures here mentioned, others equally worthy have probably been overlooked, for this is the first systematic effort...to collect even the names of Stuart's sitters."³ Perusal of the catalogue reveals a considerable emphasis on Stuart's American portraits. This, when considered with the fact that Mason was writing in Newport, Rhode Island (Stuart's birthplace, not coincidentally,) makes it evident that Mason's research did not take him from America's shores.

¹ George C. Mason. *The Life and Works of Gilbert Stuart*. (New York: Burt Franklin Reprints, 1972 reprint of 1879 original), v.

² Jane Stuart. "The Stuart Portraits of Washington." *Scribner's Magazine* 12 (March 1876), 367-374. Jane Stuart. "The Youth of Gilbert Stuart." *Scribner's Magazine* 13 (March 1877), 640-646. Jane Stuart. "Anecdotes of Gilbert Stuart." *Scribner's Magazine* 13 (June 1877), 376-382.

³ *Ibid.*, vii.

Mantle Fielding published a short biography of Stuart's life in *Gilbert Stuart's Portraits of George Washington*, published in 1923.⁴ Whereas Fielding's biography seems to be only a rewording of Mason's previous exploration, the significance of this book resides in the systematic cataloging of a portion of Stuart's oeuvre. Fielding separated Stuart's portraits of Washington by type (Vaughn, Athenaeum, and Lansdowne types). In addition, Fielding chronologically organized this large group of portraits, and provided (when possible) descriptions, painting size, provenances, and current ownership.

It was Lawrence Park, more than forty-five years after Mason, who was the first to publish (although posthumously) a comprehensive study of Stuart's oeuvre.⁵ Four volumes in length and colossal in scope, Park was the first scholar to comprehensively catalog and locate Stuart's work in England, Ireland, and the United States. With only a brief biography written by John Hill Morgan and an appreciation penned by Royal Cortissoz, this work is a study of Stuart's art more than his life, consisting of over 1,000 entries and containing two volumes of full-page photogravures of Stuart's portraits. Park's text provides dimensions, locations, provenances, brief formal descriptions, and biographical information on the sitters. While a number of Stuart portraits have come to light in the past 75 years, the comprehensiveness of Park's study makes it an ideal starting point for any scholar interested in Stuart's body of work.

Following Park's 1926 catalogue, Stuart scholarship returned to the path of biography. The first of these studies, *Gilbert Stuart* by William T. Whitley, was published in 1932 and although biographical in nature, is more scholarly in tone than was

⁴ Mantle Fielding. *Gilbert Stuart's Portraits of George Washington*. (Philadelphia: M. Fielding, 1923).

⁵ Lawrence Park. *Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of his Works*. 4 volumes. (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1926).

Mason's previous account.⁶ A perusal of Whitley's sources, however, yields little new archival work, as he fundamentally relied upon secondary sources with frequent use of contemporary New York and Boston newspaper accounts. Nevertheless, although primarily a discussion of the artist rather than his art, Whitley more fully covers Stuart's life, particularly the artist's time outside the United States, than did Mason.

Charles Merrill Mount wrote the second comprehensive biography written after the publication of Park's catalogue.⁷ Revisionist in nature, Mount's main goal throughout *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography* is to correct the myths that had come to be viewed as facts since the time of Mason's biography in 1879. A straightforward text, *Gilbert Stuart* contains little historical information on England, Ireland or the United States, and the author never attempts to study how Stuart's patrons were related. However, Mount's biography remained the most thorough account of Stuart's life for more than thirty years and depended for evidence upon a great variety of then-recently discovered sources such as J. D. Herbert's *Irish Varieties For the Last Fifty Years: Written from Recollections*.⁸ This gave Mount's work a sense of comprehensiveness regarding Stuart's life that is not to be found in the earlier attempts. Although a useful book, it is by no means without faults. Perhaps the biggest frustration regarding Mount's text is the lack of proper footnoting important to current scholars.

Also of interest in Mount's text is a revised catalogue of Stuart paintings. Divided into three sections, England and Irish works, American works, and portraits of Washington, Mount adds 37 portraits to Park's already lengthy list of Stuart's paintings.

⁶ William T. Whitley. *Gilbert Stuart*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932).

⁷ Charles Merrill Mount. *Gilbert Stuart: A Biography*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964).

⁸ J. D. Herbert. *Irish Varieties For the Last Fifty Years: Written from Recollections*. (London: W. Jay Publishers, 1834).

Mostly from outside the United States, these additions were found by “methodical ransacking searches through English collections and Irish country houses.”⁹ Although not a university-trained art historian, Mount utilized his technical knowledge as a practicing portraitist to attribute paintings to Stuart’s hand. His attributions have generally met with unfavorable reviews by subsequent art historians such as Richard McLanathan, and more particularly Dorinda Evans.

It has been these two authors who have written several of the most comprehensive recent accounts of Stuart’s life and art, although likely for different audiences.

McLanathan’s text, laconically titled *Gilbert Stuart*, is lavishly illustrated (more than 40 full-page color plates), but like with Mount’s earlier biography, it lacks a comprehensive bibliography and footnotes, and the tone indicates that it was intended for a non-specialist audience.¹⁰ In the preface, the author states how dependent his text is upon previous scholarship. This is made even clearer when looking at the limited bibliography, which contains only two works after 1950: Mount’s biography and the 1967 exhibition catalogue *Gilbert Stuart: Portraitist to the Young Republic*.¹¹ Nevertheless, McLanathan discusses Stuart’s life and art in a broad historic and stylistic context, and pays particular attention to the way Stuart’s style changed as he became a more proficient portrait painter.

Dorinda Evans’s 1999 book, *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart*, is unquestionably an academic book intended for an academic audience.¹² Evans’s book is useful in a number of important regards. First of all, Evans attempts to correct past assumptions about

⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰ Richard McLanathan. *Gilbert Stuart*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1986).

¹¹ *Gilbert Stuart: Portraitist to the Young Republic*. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1967).

¹² Dorinda Evans. *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Stuart's life (largely perpetuated, she states, by Mount's biography) and to reattribute a number of works. Evans also excels when discussing eighteenth-century artistic theory within the context of Stuart's art. The final chapter addresses the decline in quality of Stuart's portraits in the 1820s. To explain the dozens of unfinished canvases that Stuart left behind, Evans suggests that the artist was a manic depressive who would begin paintings while on a euphoric high only to abandon them while suffering through an equal low. This remains a claim that requires further investigation and is Dr. Evans's current avenue of inquiry. Nevertheless, two final strengths of *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart* are the extensive footnotes and bibliography that will be of great benefit to every subsequent Gilbert Stuart scholar. Meticulously researched over a period of a decade, Evans has unearthed a number of new sources, such as Stuart's interviews with the poet Henry Pickering, that have, in her eyes, greatly expanded our understanding of the artist.

Although a relatively short book—with images excluded it is less than 100 pages of text—Evans pays particular attention to Stuart's career after his arrival in Philadelphia in 1795. Not surprisingly, she emphasized Stuart's portraits of George Washington and Stuart's late portraits in Boston. However, the discussion of Stuart's twenty years abroad in London and Dublin numbers less than thirty pages, and Evans analyzes Stuart's prolific New York career (1793-95) in less than three pages. As frustrating, Evans neglects to consider Stuart's patronage despite the fact that the artist's sitters were generally from among the social elite in their respective cities. For example, Stuart moved to New York City in 1793 after residing abroad for nearly twenty years. How did the artist commence a portrait practice, an occupation that is inherently social, when he knew only two people in the city? Evans's book provides many answers, but questions

regarding patronage largely go unanswered. Unfortunately, there exist no small, article-length studies on Stuart's patronage while in New York City, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., or in Boston, leaving this avenue of research open for further investigation.

Hugh R. Crean is one scholar who has recently addressed Stuart's patronage. Crean attempted to show in his doctoral dissertation, "Gilbert Stuart and the Politics of Fine Arts Patronage in Ireland, 1787-1793," that Stuart painted only Protestants while in Ireland so as not to go against the social order that kept Catholics in an economic and social position subservient to the Protestant Ascendancy.¹³ Even if this were true—and Crean admits that he does not know the religious affiliation of many of Stuart's Irish sitters—the artist's decision to paint Protestants was primarily an economic decision, as they were the only class of people who were able to pay for his services. Without the opportunity to attend college or hold governmental employment at the end of the eighteenth century in Ireland, it would have been difficult for any Catholic to acquire the significant wealth required to afford the luxury of a portrait. Thus, although an admirable in its attempt to discuss patronage, Crean's main thesis regarding Stuart's patronage inevitably falls short.

Gilbert Stuart's position in the field of American art was further solidified in the fall of 2004 when the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Portrait Gallery highlighted the artist's entire career in an exhibition that took place in both New York City and Washington, D.C. In the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, Ellen G. Miles and Carrie Reborá Barratt explored many avenues of Stuart's career, biography,

¹³ Hugh R. Crean. "Gilbert Stuart and the Politics of Fine Arts Patronage in Ireland, 1787-1793: A Social and Cultural Study." (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, International, 1991). Crean uses the phrase "Protestant Ascendancy" throughout his text to refer to the Anglicans in power in Ireland.

and artistic development. They also made significant contributions in the area of Stuart's patronage.¹⁴

While Stuart was content painting nothing but portraits through his long career, most artists had higher artistic aspirations. The French-trained John Vanderlyn was no exception. "Despite the acknowledged importance of John Vanderlyn in the history of American art, his career begs study. Virtually every textbook of American art mentions at least three of his major works, but few authors make note of his portraits, and only specialists discuss his drawings."¹⁵ So begins William Oedel's 1981 doctoral dissertation, "John Vanderlyn: French Neoclassicism and the Search for an American Art." Indeed, an analysis of the current literature on the career of Vanderlyn remains scant, even twenty-five years after Oedel's dissertation. Moreover, the strong emphasis on Vanderlyn's history paintings to the neglect of his portraiture mimics, in many ways, the available scholarship on John Trumbull.

The scholarship on Vanderlyn prior to Oedel's dissertation is sparse. Thus far, there has been no published biography of the artist, although Vanderlyn's life was the subject of an unpublished 1949 dissertation at Yale University.¹⁶ The figural sources for *The Death of Jane McCrae* were the subject of a short article in *The Art Quarterly*.¹⁷ The following year, the Senate House Museum at Kingston, New York, published a brief

¹⁴ Carrie Rebora Barratt and Ellen G. Miles. *Gilbert Stuart*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ William Townsend Oedel. "John Vanderlyn: French Neoclassicism and the Search for an American Art." (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, International, 1981), iv.

¹⁶ Louise Hunt Averill. "John Vanderlyn, American Painter (1775-1852)." Dissertation, Yale University, 1949. See Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 460.

¹⁷ Kathleen H. Pritchard. "John Vanderlyn and the Massacre of Jane McCrae." *Art Quarterly* 12 (Autumn 1949), 360-66.

biography of the artist that was originally written in 1892 by Marius Schoonmaker.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, this text focuses on Vanderlyn's life and on several of his history paintings. Portraiture, although a prominent component of the artists' oeuvre, was not discussed. Although she focused on Vanderlyn's career after 1815, Lillian B. Miller's 1951 article "John Vanderlyn and the Business of Art" stated that the artist's economic failures were due to his ill business sense rather than from a public that was indifferent towards his art.¹⁹ With the exception of two other short articles dealing with *The Death of Jane McCrae* and a short exhibition catalogue of the Versailles panorama at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this short bibliography was the full extent of scholarship available on Vanderlyn until 1970.²⁰

It was in this year that Vanderlyn received his first comprehensive exhibit in the twentieth century.²¹ Housed at the University Art Gallery at the State University of New York at Binghamton, this exhibition attempted an examination of Vanderlyn's oeuvre, with particular attention given to his portraits. In fact, the twenty-four portraits in the exhibit represent only one-quarter of the total works shown. And although the essay on Vanderlyn's portraits was brief—slightly over three pages—and patronage was not discussed at all, it is significant that these paintings were given (nearly) equal billing to his more well-known historical compositions.

¹⁸ Marius Schoonmaker. *John Vanderlyn, Artist: 1775-1852*. (Kingston, New York: Senate House Association, Inc., 1950).

¹⁹ Lillian B. Miller. "John Vanderlyn and the Business of Art." *New York History* 36 (January 1951), 33-44.

²⁰ Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr. "The Murder of Jane McCrae: The Tragedy of an American *Tableau d'Histoire*." *The Art Bulletin* 47 (December 1965), 481-92. Salvatore Mondello. "John Vanderlyn." *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* 52 (April 1968), 161-83. Also: Salvatore Mondello, ed. *The Private Papers of John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), American Portrait Painter*. (Lewison, New York: 1989).

²¹ Kenneth C. Lindsay. *The Works of John Vanderlyn: From Tammany to the Capitol*. (Binghamton, New York: University Art Gallery at the State University of New York at Binghamton, 1970).

This was the state of Vanderlyn scholarship when William Oedel began his dissertation at the University of Delaware. In the most comprehensive study to date, Oedel discussed Vanderlyn's career from his initial training in the New York studios of Thomas Barrow and Gilbert Stuart during 1793, to the years following his final return from Europe in 1815. Emphasizing Vanderlyn's French training and his later history paintings, Oedel also addressed the artist's portraiture in New York after the turn of the nineteenth century, and paid particular attention to Vanderlyn's patronage. Despite this nearly thirty-page discussion, Oedel's inquiry produced more questions than answers. For example, how did Federalist, Anglophile patrons respond to Vanderlyn's position as a French-trained artist? Moreover, how did Aaron Burr, Vanderlyn's early benefactor, influence Antifederalist patrons? When and under what circumstances did the city of New York commission Vanderlyn? While Oedel's excellent study provides the basis for further exploration, it does not provide the answer to these questions and begs (to use Oedel's word) for further exploration.

Inquiries about Vanderlyn during the past twenty-two years have not attempted to answer these questions. In fact, the artist's history paintings remain by far the most frequent subject of inquiry. Vanderlyn's 1846 mural for the United States Capitol, *Landing of Columbus*, received particular attention in the years surrounding the anniversary of the "discovery" of America.²² A chapter in David Lubin's *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* illustrates this point.²³ Although the author neglects portraits by Vanderlyn (the portrait Vanderlyn painted of

²² Barbara Mitnick and William S. Ayres. "Picturing History," *The Magazine Antiques* 144 (November 1993), 662-71. Also: Ann Uhry Abrams. "Vision of Columbus: The Discovery Legend in Antebellum American Painting and Prints." *The American Art Journal* 25, no. 1/2 (1993), 74-101.

²³ David M. Lubin. *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

Andrew Jackson for the City Hall in New York City is the sole exception), Lubin did introduce valid questions about the reception of *Ariadne* in an early-Federal America politically divided between the English-loving Federalists and the Francophile Republicans. If such inquiries are valid for *Ariadne*, a painting that has largely been interpreted as apolitical, then they are equally valid for portraits of New Yorkers, living and breathing political entities. Thus, although Lubin's interests lie not in portraiture, his questions can be applied to the portraits in Vanderlyn's oeuvre.

John Trumbull's position within the scope of American art is almost as exalted as that of Stuart. Not surprisingly, the literature on Trumbull's life and art is extensive, with modern scholarship indebted to *The Autobiography, Reminiscences and Letters of John Trumbull from 1756 to 1841*.²⁴ Although an autobiography and containing all of the problems that usually accompany such works (especially those written when the author is nearing his 85th birthday), this work, and particularly Theodore Sizer's extensive commentary and footnotes in the 1953 edition, provides the general biographical details of Trumbull's life. Considered by many—Sizer included—to be a reaction to William Dunlap's critical remarks in his *Rise and Progress of the American Arts*, Trumbull's *Autobiography* remains a valuable departure point for scholars on the artist.²⁵

Interest in John Trumbull underwent a renaissance in 1926 with the publication of *Paintings by John Trumbull at Yale University* by John Hill Morgan.²⁶ As the extended title makes clear—the subtitle is *Historic Scenes and Personages Prominent in the*

²⁴ Published in the twentieth century as: Theodore Sizer, ed. *The Autobiography of John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist, 1756-1843*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

²⁵ William Dunlap. *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2 Volumes. (1834; 2 volumes in 3, New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1969).

²⁶ John Hill Morgan. *Paintings by John Trumbull at Yale University of Historic Scenes and Personages Prominent in the American Revolution*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926).

American Revolution—Morgan focused this text on Trumbull's history paintings, particularly those from the Revolutionary War series Trumbull completed in London between 1786-87. Morgan reproduced and discussed Trumbull's eight paintings from the series, as well as the compositional keys that assist in identifying individuals. In contrast to the lengthy treatment of these works, Morgan only reproduced one oil on canvas portrait by Trumbull's hand: the 1793 likeness of George Washington.²⁷ In fact, even in the brief biographical sketch, the author relegated the discussion of Trumbull's portraiture to this composition of Washington and to the individual likenesses in the historical paintings.

Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse continued this trend of focusing on Trumbull's history paintings several years later. In a relatively short article published in the *Antiquarian*, Bolton and Binsse furthered their own inquiries into early American art, having already completed short studies on John Singleton Copley, Joseph Blackburn, and John Wollaston. A brief article on Matthew Pratt followed shortly afterwards.²⁸ Bolton and Binsse reduced Trumbull's career to only the artist's history paintings. In fact, it would be difficult to discern that Trumbull ever worked as a portraitist on the basis of their study.

It was not until the publication of *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull: Artist of the American Revolution* by Theodore Sizer in 1950 that the artist's complete oeuvre

²⁷ Morgan does reproduce and discuss some of Trumbull's portrait miniatures. A series of these were completed in London in preparation for the larger historical compositions. See Morgan, 70-77.

²⁸ See: Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse. "Trumbull, 'Historiographer' of the Revolution." *Antiquarian* 17, no. 1 (July 1931): 13-18. Also: Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse. "John Singleton Copley." *Antiquarian* 15, no. 6 (December 1930): 76-83, 116, 118. Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse. "Pratt, Painter of Colonial Portraits and Signboards." *Antiquarian* 17, no. 3 (September 1931): 20-24. Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse. "An American Artist of Formula: Joseph Blackburn." *Antiquarian* 15, no. 5 (November 1930): 50-53, 88, 90, 92. Theodore Bolton and Harry Lorin Binsse. "Wollaston, An Early American Portrait Manufacturer." *Antiquarian* 16, no. 6 (June 1931): 30-33, 50, 52.

received a rigorous cataloging. Rather than a discussion of Trumbull's life, Sizer's catalogue instead serves as an examination of the painter's artistic production. Revised and expanded seventeen years later, Sizer's text can be broken into three parts: a catalogue of Trumbull's works differentiated by genre (portraits, historical subjects, religious subjects, landscapes, figure studies), an appendix with information on such topics as Trumbull's prices and the use of his images on United States postage stamps, and finally, an extensive collection of illustrations.²⁹ The initial edition of *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull* was the first study to reproduce and catalogue Trumbull's portraits. Although the discussion of the portraits remains just that—a mere listing of sitters—Sizer's revised edition remained the only lengthy discussion of Trumbull's portraiture until 1982.

John Trumbull enjoyed an increase in popularity in the middle of the 1970s. During the celebration of the American bicentennial, his images from the American Revolutionary War found their way onto teapots, ashtrays, postcards, beer steins and pewter plates. It was in this patriotic atmosphere that Irma B. Jaffe published two books in successive years: *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution* (1975) and *Trumbull: The Declaration of Independence* (1976).³⁰ At the time of publication, *Patriot-Artist* was the first comprehensive study of Trumbull's life and art, and attempted to place both within a broad historical and social context (not an easy task considering that Trumbull lived through Colonial, Federal, and Jacksonian America). In many ways, Jaffe's first book is a hybrid of the Sizer-edited *Autobiography* and the revised edition of

²⁹ Theodore Sizer. *The Works of Colonel John Trumbull: Artist of the American Revolution*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

³⁰ Irma B. Jaffe, *John Trumbull: Patriot-Artist of the American Revolution*. (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1975). Also: Irma B. Jaffe. *Trumbull: The Declaration of Independence*. (New York: The Viking Press, 1976).

The Works of Colonel John Trumbull. Strongly dependent on both of these, as well as on various archival sources, Jaffe constructed an engaging narrative of Trumbull's life and illustrated that narrative with examples of his art. The discussion of art, however, retained a strong bias towards Trumbull's history paintings at the neglect of his portraiture.

Jaffe's second book, *Trumbull: The Declaration of Independence*, part of the Art in Context series, was an extensive study of the artist's works located in the Capitol Rotunda. Noting that "*The Declaration of Independence* is one of the most familiar icons of American culture," Jaffe's study embodied a trend observed by Wanda Corn and Elizabeth Johns in methodological essays on American art: the rise in the 1970s and 1980s of lengthy explorations on single works of art.³¹ With large sections taken from her biography of Trumbull, this second book can also be interpreted as responding to the patriotic fervor during the Bicentennial Celebration of 1976.

The most recent comprehensive study of John Trumbull as a history painter and portraitist was the catalogue that accompanied an exhibition honoring the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Yale University Art Gallery. Entitled *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*, this exhibition attempted to bring together examples of Trumbull's famous works (i.e. his history paintings) with those that are lesser known (such as the majority of his non-Alexander Hamilton portraits). As Helen A. Cooper noted in the preface, the scholars who collaborated on this exhibition owed a great debt to

³¹ Jaffe, *The Declaration of Independence*, 17. Wanda Corn. "Coming of Age: Historical Scholarship in American Art." *Art Bulletin*, (June 1988), 188-207. Also: Elizabeth Johns. "Histories of American Art: The Changing Quest." *Art Journal* (Winter 1984), 338-344. In addition to Jaffe's analysis of Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*, an exceptional example of this trend is scholarship pertaining to John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*. Within a span of 12 years, Ann Uhry Abrams, Roger Stein, Irma Jaffe, and Albert Boime all published significant studies on this single painting.

Trumbull's *Autobiography*, Sizer's 1967 catalogue, and Jaffe's more recent biography.³²

A perusal of the footnotes in the essays and the catalogue entries bears out this fact.

Despite what seems to be a lack of investigative research on the artist's life and art,

Cooper's catalogue remains the most well rounded scholarship available on John

Trumbull, with essays by Jules Prown and Bryan Wolf, who respectively discuss

Trumbull's history and landscape paintings.

Following the example set by Sizer in 1967, the exhibition curators divided Trumbull's career into genres rather than arranged his oeuvre chronologically. Although Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque's essay on Trumbull's portraiture was relatively brief (less than ten pages of text), the author did indicate the "nearly constant portrait painting" that the artist engaged in while in America. Despite this, Roque never addressed Trumbull's patronage aside from indicating that Trumbull was "the favored painter of the New York Federalist upper class."³³ Thus, even after the publication of Cooper's catalogue, there remained much work to be done to learn how Trumbull's "constant portrait painting" within the "Federalist upper class" worked.

Recent scholarship on John Trumbull still has not pursued this particular avenue of inquiry. Irma Jaffe has written on two recently-discovered drawings,³⁴ Kara Parmelee has explored Trumbull's use of the male nude in preparation for his historical paintings,³⁵ Erik Vogt has discussed the founding of the Trumbull Gallery at Yale University,³⁶ and Alan Wallach has explored the friendship between Trumbull and Daniel Wadsworth in

³² Helen A. Cooper, ed. *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

³³ Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque. "Trumbull's Portraits" in Helen A. Cooper, ed. *John Trumbull: The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 104.

³⁴ Irma B. Jaffe. "Two Trumbull Drawings," *American Art Journal* 17 (Summer 1985), 77-78.

³⁵ Kara Parmelee. "John Trumbull: Heroic Male Nudity in the Enlightenment," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1993), 64-75.

³⁶ Erik Vogt. "The Trumbull Gallery," *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (2000), 26-45.

relation to latter's country estate, Monte Video.³⁷ Further, Barbara Mitnick and William Ayres investigated the development of American history paintings discussing Trumbull's work, as well as the later history paintings of John Vanderlyn and Emanuel Leutze.³⁸ Despite the varied research scholars have done regarding Trumbull, one aspect remains constant: his patronage and portraiture remains largely unexplored. The allure of Trumbull's historical compositions has remained too strong for scholars to resist.

Only five years Vanderlyn's junior, John Wesley Jarvis's name is not to be found in survey textbooks of American art today. However, there is no denying his prominent position in the New York City art community during the second decade of the nineteenth century. This is demonstrated by a series of commissions Jarvis received in 1813. After the War of 1812, the city of New York created a public commission to commemorate naval and army heroes. The commission for six full-length portraits was originally given to Gilbert Stuart, then living in Boston. After a bristly encounter with one of the sitters, Stuart quit and the commission it was offered to Thomas Sully, freshly returned from an extended stay in London. Wishing to avoid upsetting the irascible Stuart, Sully declined. It was John Wesley Jarvis, who eventually completed this series of portraits. Although the third choice for the commission, ranking behind both Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully was nothing to be ashamed of for a young portraitist. Yet despite Jarvis's prominence in his own day, there is an astonishing absence of scholarship on him today. In fact, this discrepancy is demonstrated by Jarvis's prominence in Dunlap's 1834 *Rise and Progress*, whereas scholarship in the twentieth century has been scant.³⁹ Thus, much work remains

³⁷ Alan Wallach. "Wadsworth's Tower: An Episode in the History of American Landscape Vision," *American Art* 10 (Fall 1996), 8-27.

³⁸ Mitnick and Ayres, "Picturing History," 662-71.

³⁹ Dunlap, *History and Rise and Progress of the Arts*, 2: 202-228.

to be accomplished and much research remains to be completed on how Jarvis fit within the vibrant economic and political environment in New York City from 1805-1825.

The first significant publication on Jarvis in the twentieth century was a nine-page biography and an equally short cataloging of his works in the autumn 1938 edition of *The Art Quarterly* by Theodore Bolton and George Groce.⁴⁰ Although this biography covers the sixty years of Jarvis's life in less than 10 pages, it proved an adequate departure point for Harold Dickson, who, in 1949, published the only monograph on the artist.⁴¹ As the author noted in the preface, "the present volume, based almost entirely on manuscript sources, contemporary printed comments and documents, and the evidence of the pictures, is a contribution of prime importance, not only in belatedly giving his due to a once-eminent American artist, but also in revealing the American art world at large in the social milieu of the early 19th century."⁴² In this, the text is successful. It is also successful in revising the catalogue of Jarvis's portraits, listed at 412 compositions—a great increase from the 140 chronicled more than a decade before by Bolton and Groce.

After Dickson's book, however, Jarvis disappeared from the scholarship of American art until 1981 when Leah Upton published "William Dunlap, Samuel F.B. Morse, John Wesley Jarvis, and Chester Harding: Their Careers as Itinerant Portrait Painters" in *The American Art Journal*.⁴³ The extent to which Jarvis had been neglected can be discerned by a footnote: "All material about Jarvis, unless otherwise noted, is from

⁴⁰ Theodore Bolton and George C. Groce, Jr. "John Wesley Jarvis: An Account of His Life and the First Catalogue of His Works," *The Art Quarterly*, I, 1938, 299-321.

⁴¹ Harold Edward Dickson. *John Wesley Jarvis: American Painter, 1780-1760, with a Checklist of His Works*. (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1949). Interestingly, the book was limited to an edition of only 1000 copies, and has not since been reprinted. Dickson's previous publications on Jarvis are listed on viiii-x.

⁴² *Ibid.*, x.

⁴³ Leah Lipton. "William Dunlap, Samuel F.B. Morse, John Wesley Jarvis, and Chester Harding: Their Careers as Itinerant Portrait Painters," *The American Art Journal* 13 (Summer 1981), 34-50.

this [Dickson's] biography."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, this article focuses on the artist's body of work outside New York City, as Jarvis traveled to Baltimore, South Carolina, and Kentucky in search of commissions.

Nothing of consequence has been published on Jarvis since. This neglect is indicative of an overall indifference towards late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century American portraiture. A perusal of the chapter on portraiture in *Nineteenth-Century American Art* by Barbara Groseclose, for example, reproduces only five portraits completed between 1800 and 1850.⁴⁵ One of these is Stuart's 1800 portrait of Ms. George Plumstead; Trumbull, Vanderlyn and Jarvis are not discussed within the framework of portraiture. Portraits from the 1770s by John Singleton Copley and Charles Willson Peale received more attention than did works by Stuart, Vanderlyn, Trumbull, or Jarvis; this emphasis is somewhat surprising considering the title of the book. This lack of interest in portraiture is not limited to these four painters: Thomas Sully, the most prolific American portraitist of the nineteenth century, is not even mentioned in Frances Pohl's *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*, let alone given one of the 665 illustrations.⁴⁶ Jarvis also goes unmentioned, and the portrait-painting careers of Vanderlyn and Trumbull go unnoticed.

Even in books that focus on portraiture—and these have recently been exhibitions rather than scholarly studies—Jarvis is seldom addressed, and the portraits by Trumbull and Vanderlyn are often neglected.⁴⁷ Even when these four prominent artists are

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁵ Barbara Groseclose. *Nineteenth-Century American Art*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁶ Frances K. Pohl. *Framing America: A Social History of American Art*. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002).

⁴⁷ See: Harold E. Dickson. *Arts of the Young Republic: The Age of William Dunlap*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1968). Charles F. Montgomery and Patricia E. Kane. *American Art: 1750-1800, Towards Independence*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). Harold E.

discussed, scholars have neglected the overall patronage. This neglect is surprising, particularly regarding their respective careers in New York City. Although no longer the capitol of the Federal government, New York City remained one of the social and economic centers of early Federal America, and also contained one of the more vibrant artistic communities. Alive with social organizations, political parasitism, and teeming with governmental commissions, one can learn much about New York City through the study of the portraiture completed there between 1790-1825.

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