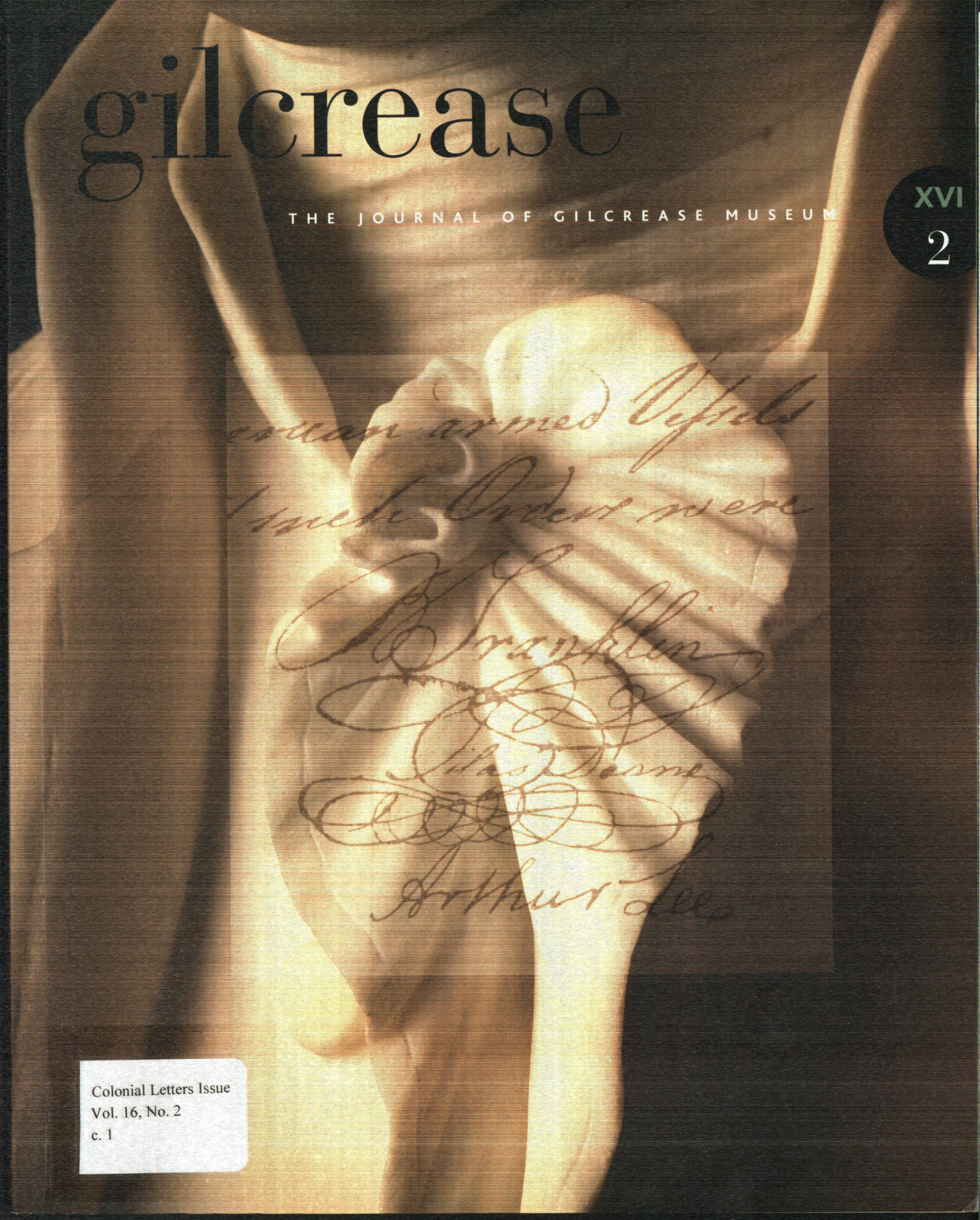
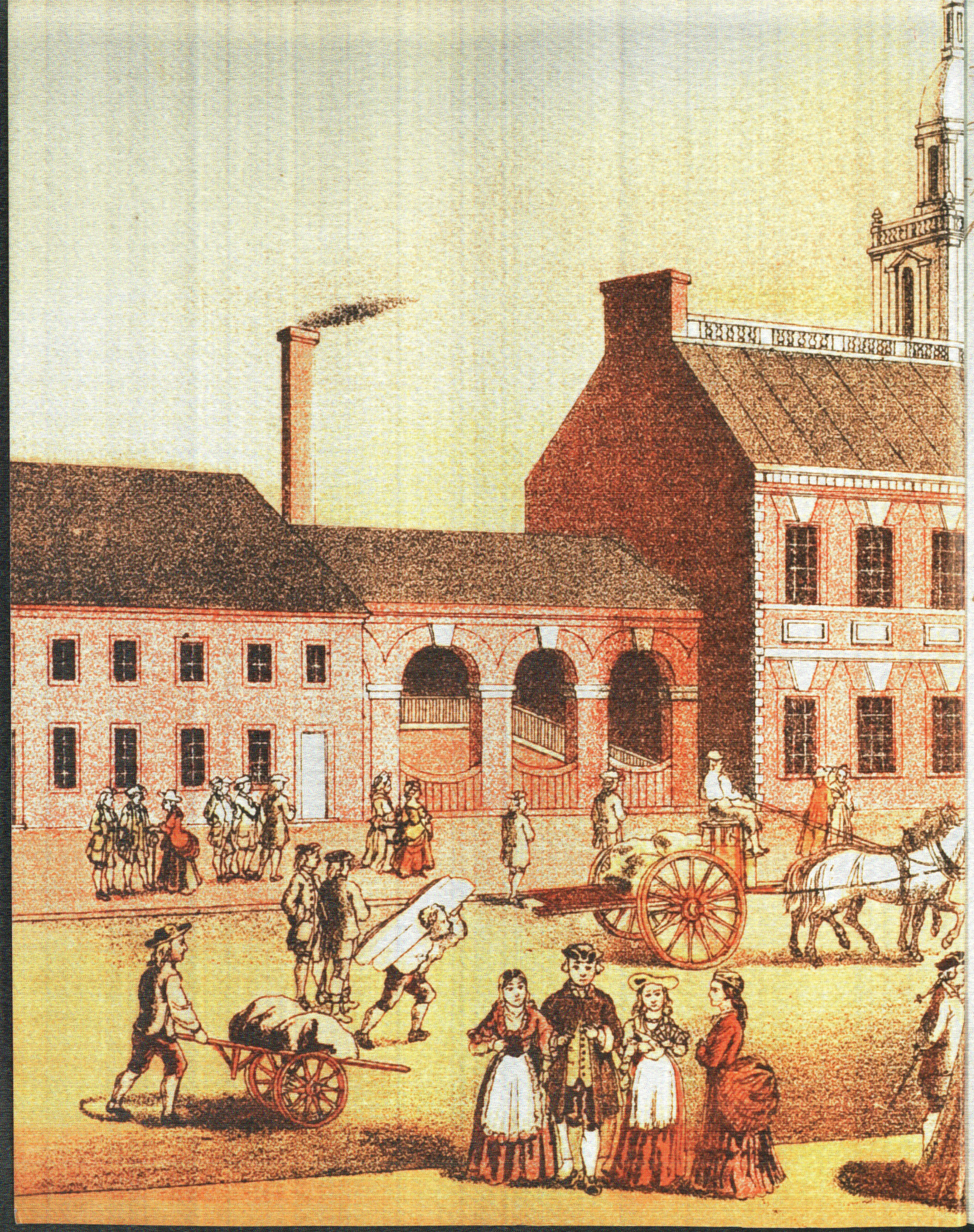
gilcrease

THE JOURNAL OF GILCREASE MUSEUM

XVI
2



Colonial Letters Issue
Vol. 16, No. 2
c. 1



conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts & things which Independant States may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor

Signed by Order and on Behalf of the Congress,

John Hancock President.

Colonial Letters

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COLONIAL LETTERS

GILCREASE JOURNAL

WINNER OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2006, AND 2008

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Front cover: Detail, *General Lafayette.* Jean-Antoine Houdon. 1789. GM 0976.3.
Front cover, inset: Deane, Franklin, and Lee signatures from *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America 1776-1783.* Manuscript #1745. Dated 23 Nov 1777.
Back cover: Detail, Franklin's Reception at the Court of France. W.O. Geller. GM 1526.111.
Endsheets: Independence Hall, Phila. Pa. 1776. Artist unknown. 1876. GM 1526.1017.
Page one: Detail, certified copy of the Declaration of Independence. GM 4026.901.
Right: Signature of Thomas Jefferson from a letter to William Fleming. GM 3826.71.
Facing: Detail, *General Lafayette.* Jean-Antoine Houdon. 1789. GM 0976.3.

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WENDY KATZ

. . . visual art—no matter how seemingly spontaneous or contrived—

is essentially *a language of signs* that transmits **ideas.**

These are ideas about reality held concurrently in the larger social realm.

Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution 1750–1800*

The *Shape* of *Character*

The Portraiture of Jean-Antoine Houdon

There are times in history when circumstances and conditions provide fertile ground for change, when new concepts formed in great minds give rise to fresh visions of the future. Artists who live in such times and who have honed their creative abilities occasionally ride a wave of serendipitous events to produce art that speaks to the ages. The portrait sculpture of Jean Antoine-Houdon exemplifies the artistic achievements that can result when genius meets historic opportunity. Houdon gave visible form to character and left to posterity three-dimensional visages of the most famous figures of the 18th century. He ultimately became known as the "sculptor of the Enlightenment."

CAROLE KLEIN Associate Curator of Art

The French artist Jean Antoine-Houdon lived and worked during an intellectual movement that advocated reason as the primary basis of authority. Replacing the superstition and persecution of the past with a spirit of inquiry, this developing philosophy began in France, Britain, and Germany before sweeping across Europe. The movement influenced the founding fathers of America as well, particularly with regard to ideas about religion, rights of the common people, and the diminished control and power of the nobility. A belief in freedom, democracy, and reason as primary values of society encouraged individuals to think outside the confines of established ideas—to challenge, without fear, former concepts of conduct and thought. With the changing of traditional beliefs about the world, art became transformed as well, mirroring the intellectual concepts that emerged in political, religious, and social affairs.

Great sculptors have always been able to see beyond sham and pretense and into the heart of things because they look for the movements of form that cannot be hidden. Sculptor Auguste Rodin

Art of this era, known as Neoclassicism, tended to uphold virtue, seek truth, teach and inspire. It was thought that art should be good for the people and the nation, just as it had been for the Greeks and Romans. Houdon's style embodied moderation and order typical of the times. The sculpture's clean, crisp contours were carved in chaste white marble, in contrast to the excesses of Baroque and Rococo sculpture, with its twisting poses and colored marble. Houdon's elegant sculptures are simple, direct, and realistic. They represent a balance between the idealism of the Greeks and the realism of the Romans, yet are infused with originality, feeling, and spontaneity—so much a part of Houdon's artistic philosophy. While representational, his portraits are exquisitely abstracted to pure form. They reveal not only his respect for nature and his belief in careful observation of the natural world, but also his selectivity in responding to what he saw. In a recently discovered letter to Duke Ernst II of Saxe-Gotha, Germany, the thirty-one-year-old Houdon wrote about his aesthetic theories:

> *In my view the skilled surgeon must study after nature, as defective as one might find it to be, in order to treat every infirmity. But we (artists) must study it differently. It is nature in all her nobility, her perfect state of health, that we are looking for, or if not, we are nothing but wretched imitators. He who imitates nature as she is found on a daily basis I compare to a well-organized monkey. But who knows how to be selective, and who succeeds in doing it, approaches, in my view, what is most perfect, and raises up his soul. That is my ambition and to what I aspire.*

Though Houdon aspired to the ideal, he did not embellish. He disdained artificiality in dress and pose, regarding anything that inhibited or constrained the body as unnatural. He brought great psychological insight to sculpting portraits, cutting to the core of his sitters' personalities, portraying individual character with remarkable truth and physical accuracy. He portrayed individuals within the larger context of history, recording their social rank, condition, and place in time. In this framework, Houdon had a remarkable ability to reveal his sitter's response to his world. Nathan Cabot Hale author of *On the Perception of Human Form in Sculpture*, comments on this crucial aspect of portraiture:

The nuances of the way the head is held in relation to the nuances of life that are countered by the pull of gravity are important. . . . The combinations of tensions and relaxation in all these segments of the head structure define much of the sitter's state of being in space and time. A portrait is, in the best sense, a description of how a specific person has adapted to the pressures and conflicts exerted on that person's life energy.

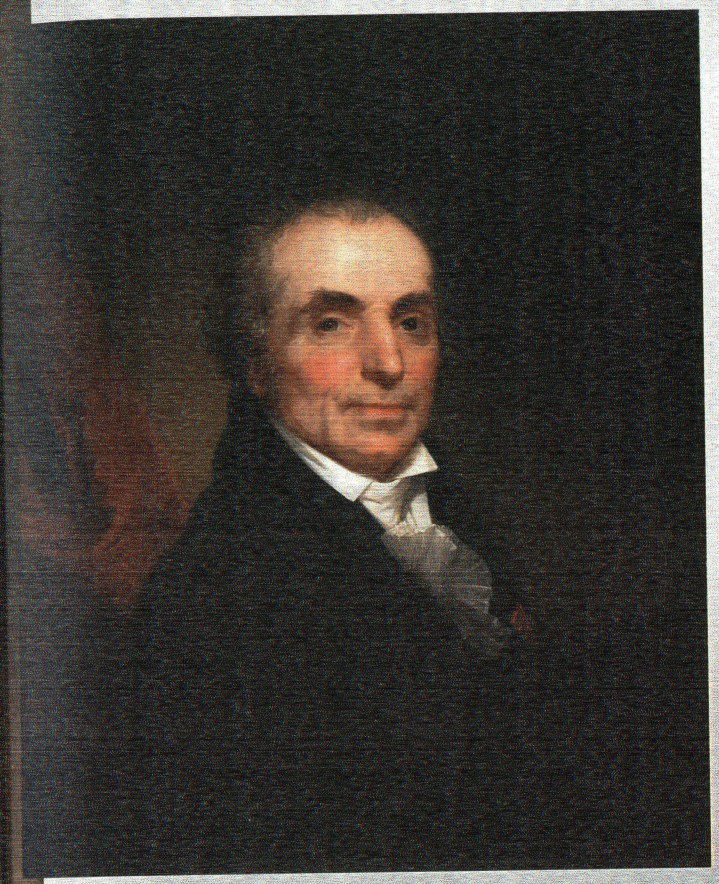
The Life of Houdon

Houdon was born in Versailles in 1741 of humble peasants. However, he grew up around some of the best artists in France, as his father was a concierge in the Paris Ecole Royale des Elèves Protégé, the school where winners of the Grand Prix of the Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture were trained before being sent to the Academie de France in Rome. Houdon was thus exposed to art early. He began sculpting at nine, at fifteen won a school award in drawing, and at twenty received the coveted Prix de Rome, enabling him to study at the Academie de France in Rome. He worked there from 1764 to 1768, absorbing anatomy, classical antiquity, architecture, and the statuary of the Renaissance, including the work of Michaelangelo. Unlike most of the other students at the academy, Houdon also took courses with a surgeon in order to learn about the bones and muscles of the human body through the dissection of corpses. This additional study of underlying structure no doubt contributed to the artist's abilities in portraiture; but few, if any, sculptors have had the astounding spiritual and psychological perception Houdon contributes to his work.

Houdon returned to Paris in 1768. As a member of the Academie des Beaux-Arts he began exhibiting his work in the Salons of Paris, the official art exhibitions of the Academie, and in 1771 first showed his portraits of identified sitters. In later Salons he exhibited some of his most successful portraits of famous men, a theme he would pursue until his last Salon in 1814. Well respected as an instructor, Houdon set the same high standards for his students as he did for his own work. He opened his own studio in the Bibliotheque du Roi to the public, a departure from the common practices of most artists of the time, and he enjoyed widespread popularity and patronage, receiving international commissions from Germany, Russia, and eventually America.

At the age of forty-five, Houdon married Marie-Ange-Cecille Langlois. It is believed that the artist waited this long to marry because he took responsibility for supporting many of his relatives who were poor. The couple had three daughters who gave Houdon great pride, Sabine, Anne-Ange, and Antoinette-Claude, called Claudine. He sculpted their features many times with a great sensibility for capturing the beauty and innocence of children.

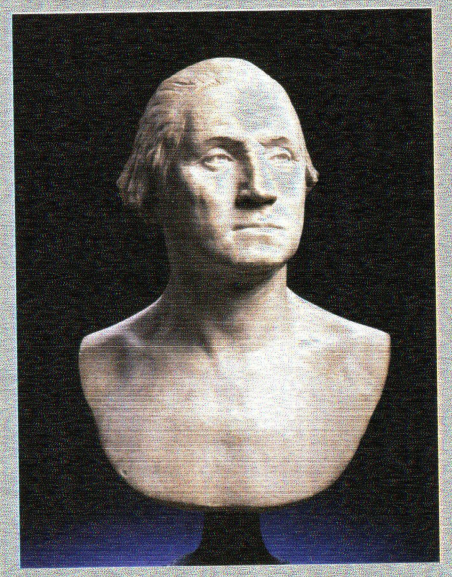
A work of art, like the unfoldment of a single day or the life of an individual, includes the history of the world and of civilization. Albert Boime



Jean Antoine Houdon. Rembrandt Peale. 1808. Oil on canvas, 72.2 x 58.4 cm. Acc. no. 1854.1.3. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. General Fund.

Genius Meets Opportunity

Soon after Houdon returned to Paris, his destiny was apparent. He was developing as a figurative sculptor at a time when important men were emerging in art, politics, and science, and he was surrounded by these remarkable individuals whose ideas were shaping a new world. Though he came from a simple background, he availed himself of friendship or association with princes, statesmen, men of letters, philosophers, inventors, artists, and military figures. Encountering a veritable gold mine of subjects in the age of Enlightenment, he left a large body of work. His career spanned the French and American revolutions, the Directoire, and the French empire under Napoleon. Through his insightful portrayal of characters such as Diderot, Voltaire, Rousseau, Louis XVI, Napoleon, and American historical figures such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington as well as the French hero of the American Revolution, Lafayette, Houdon documented an age, providing fascinating insights into art and world history.



George Washington. Jean-Antoine Houdon. Clay. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

The Artist at Work

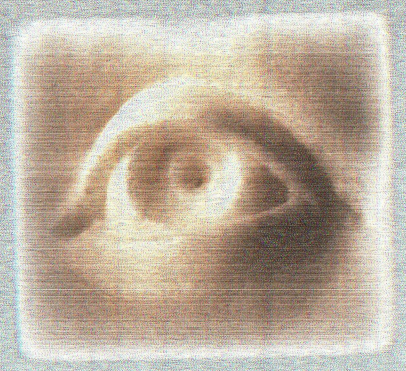
Upon obtaining a commission, Houdon was always determined to find new and innovative ways to treat a subject that would give form to character. He always worked from life, taking careful measurements of his sitter's face with calipers. He would model his subject first in terracotta, a soft malleable unfired clay. Later versions might be of plaster, bronze, or marble, all mediums in which he was skilled. The artist took life masks from his sitters and sometimes death masks for posthumous portraits. These masks served as guides, enabling him to create better likenesses while modeling the clay. From the clay model, he would sometimes make a more durable plaster cast after which he would then carve a marble sculpture—the culmination of almost all his portraits. His approach to both style and format was revolutionary and his techniques peculiar to the subject he was portraying. With simple directness he shaped the realism of musculature and demeanor, presenting the essence of his subject with a characteristic trait, gesture, or expression, revealing inner life as well as outward shape.



The facial features of Houdon's portraits are astonishingly likelike, particularly the eyes. He carved a deep bowl for the iris of the eye, and then bored a deeper pupil in the base of the iris. In comparing this technique with Giuseppe Ceracchi's treatment of the eyes in his bust *Alexander Hamilton*, one can see how animated the eyes appear in Houdon's work. The physical depth of the carved eyes conveys more substance and expression in contrast to the blank uncarved eyes reminiscent of early Roman techniques. Houdon not only gave more life to a mere gaze, but with his tools he could direct that gaze in relation to the pose of head and body, thereby evoking the energy of a living being. In some cases Houdon left a small piece of marble in relief overhanging the edge of the iris that when lit created a glint in the eye. When carving hair, Houdon sculpted the mass, abstracting large shapes for the general direction or movement within the whole, and then added details that were measured and not superfluous. Sometimes he parted the lips, making his subjects seem about to speak. In all, his portraits present a vital presence and breathe personality.

An astute businessman as well as a fine artist, Houdon marketed and promoted his own work and was the first modern artist to mass produce his sculpture and to delegate production to his workshops. He had his own foundry and was the only French sculptor of his generation with the ability to cast his own bronzes. With versatility and originality he created different bust types of his subjects, always realizing the commercial possibilities of his works. After his marbles were completed, he often produced high quality studio plasters, made on demand and finished by hand to various degrees. Usually he created only one marble, but in some instances the likenesses of popular individuals were produced in multiple marble versions by his studio. Often these were specifically requested by a patron.





Top: *Alexander Hamilton*. Giuseppe Ceracchi. Marble, GM 0976.5. In a comparison of the carved eyes of Ceracchi's Alexander Hamilton with the eyes of Houdon's Washington and Lafayette, one can see the lifelike results evoked by deep carving of the irises and pupils. Houdon could even imply the lightness or darkness of the eyes by how deep or shallow he carved them.

IMMEDIATELY ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT: Details, *Alexander Hamilton*. GM 0976.5; *George Washington*. GM 0976.4.

Houdon at Gilcrease

Two works by Houdon reside among the treasures of Gilcrease Museum—*George Washington* and *General Lafayette*. Both busts are sculpted of Seravezza marble, a precious material known since ancient times as an excellent medium for statuary and architecture. The marble comes from the Apuan Alps, specifically from the Northwest section of Tuscany, where the town of Seravezza, near the confluence of the Sera and Vezza rivers, is located in Versilia. The area is approximately 21.7 miles north of Pisa and 12.5 miles southwest of Carrara (also in the string of townships extracting marble in the Apuan Alps.) Michaelangelo searched for Seravezza marble for some of his most important works. In the region for three years, he constructed a marble road to the sea which aided the movement of the marble blocks on ox carts for export. Marbles from the Apuan Alps are still considered among the best today. The pure white color and its ability to be carved with fine detail make it a most desirable material to sculptors.

Gilcrease's marble bust of George Washington resulted indirectly from a resolution passed by the Virginia Legislature in 1784 to commission a full-size standing figure of Washington. The work was ultimately placed in the rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol at Richmond. Originally the statue was to be created in Houdon's studio from a portrait painted by Charles Willson Peale. However, Houdon rejected the idea of working from a painting,



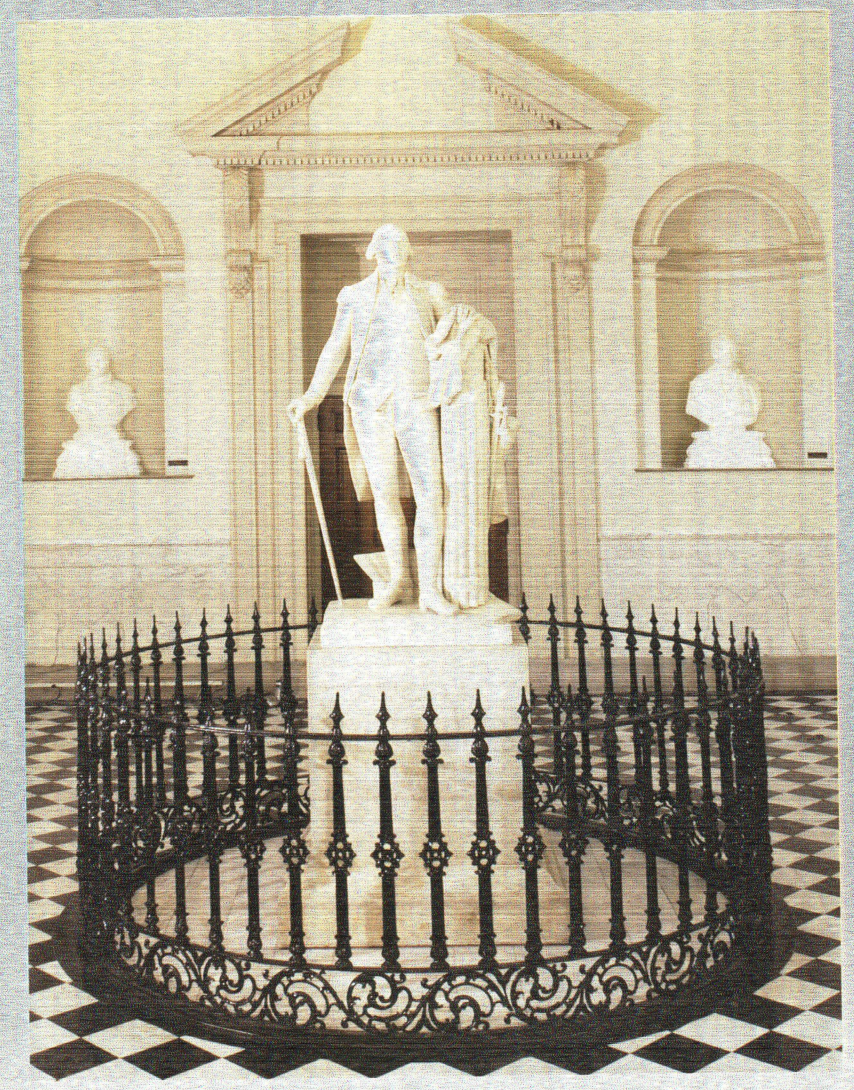
George Washington. Jean-Antoine Houdon. Seravezza marble. 1785-1788. GM 0974.4.

BELOW: Detail, *George Washington*. GM 0976.4.

preferring to work from life, so he sought permission from the French government to travel to Mount Vernon to study his subject in person. During the weeks spent at Mount Vernon, he took measurements and made sketches, studies, and a life mask of Washington. He modeled a clay bust that is considered one of the best likenesses of the important political figure and which Washington is said to have kept among his possessions. It is thought to have been sculpted of Mt. Vernon's clay and fired on the estate. It still resides there.

Houdon made seven busts of Washington, all different. One of these, which the artist carefully preserved until his death, has a place of honor in the Louvre. The Gilcrease work was made after Washington's death and is closest in likeness to the Mount Vernon original clay bust. It is one of only two Washington busts that are signed, the other being in the Palace of Versailles. Endorsed by Georges Giacometti, past authority on Houdon for the French government, Gilcrease's *Washington* is certified to have been created in the workshop of Houdon, as was common at that time, with finishing done by the master.

Statue of George Washington in the Virginia State Capitol Rotunda. Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828). Marbles. Collection of the Commonwealth of Virginia, courtesy of the Library of Virginia.



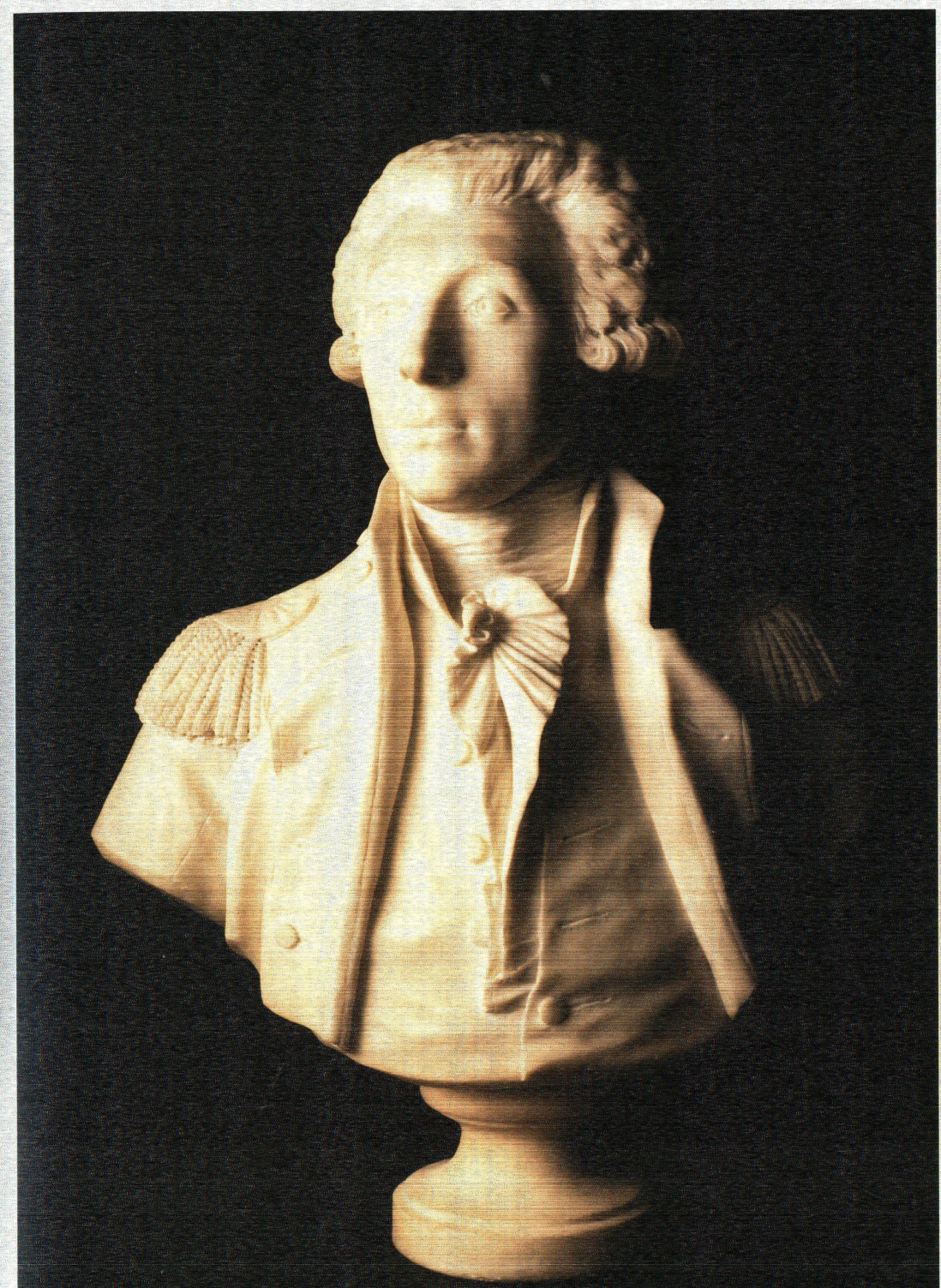
One finds himself in the presence of the bust of Washington made out of marble, very carefully sculptured in the work shop of Houdon. The quality of the marble is of Seravazza, which had the preference of Houdon—which already influences favorably any opinion to recognize such origin. Furthermore, the appearance under which this marble is offered sustains this opinion, proving that the old age of the bust should be classified reasonably as originated at the 8th work era in the workshop of the great sculptor…The exécution of the hair is beautiful and perfect to that point that certain accents which I note on certain locks make me think of certain retouching brought about in the movement of the hair by Houdon's hand. — Georges Giacometti

Houdon reveals Washington's ordinary humanity, a quality that allied him with the people and made him a great leader. Washington knew the needs of the people because he was one of them. Nathan Cabot Hale, sculptor, writer, and art educator comments on Houdon's penetrating perception into Washington's character:

As a portrait of a man, this work of Houdon is exceptional because the sculptor has seen beyond the fraudulent attitudes of the falsely mighty, of European kings, or royal personages of all kinds, and of inflated generals…to know the kind of man Washington really was. This was the remarkable gift of Houdon, himself a common man, to see into the heart of the truth of Washington.

The sculpture of General Lafayette, commissioned by the National Guard in Paris, shows the figure in his Commander of the Guard uniform. It is one of two in existence; the other is in the Palace of Versailles. The Gilcrease work came down directly through the Lafayette family, having been owned by Baron Perrin de Brichambaut, a direct descendant of Lafayette. A photograph in the provenance files shows the bust resting on the mantelpiece in a room in the Baron's 15th-century castle "Chateau Nandy" on the Seine, approximately 15.5 miles from Paris. A note in the Baron's handwriting gives the history of the sculpture, indicating that the work had never been out of the Lafayette family.

General Lafayette. Jean-Antoine Houdon. Seravezza marble, 1789. GM 0976.3.





Gilcrease Museum's bust of General Lafayette is seen above on the mantelpiece in the castle of Baron Perrin de Brichambaut, a direct descendant of Lafayette. Provenance file, GM. The note below right in the Baron's handwriting says that the bust of Lafayette came down to him by heritage.

> Sculpture is an inherent aspect of the living process; it is the way we humans extend images of form into the group memory.
>
> Nathan Cabot Hale

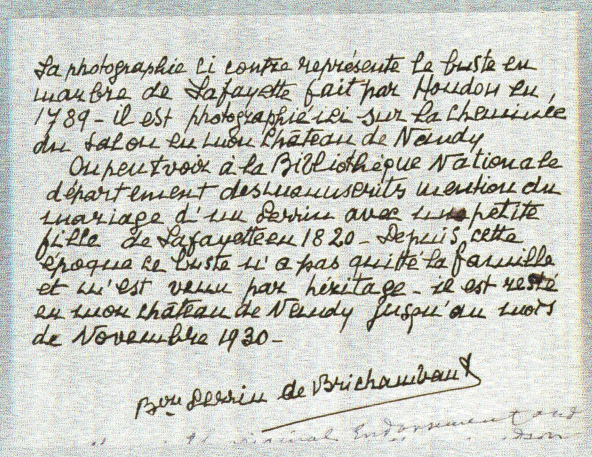
Lafayette, the champion of freedom, equality, and the rights of man, is portrayed with the aristocratic air of his heritage. He exudes the strength and confidence of a man pursuing a deeply felt belief. French art historians consider this bust to be Houdon's masterpiece.

Houdon's portraits of the Americans became the defining iconography for these individuals in Europe and America, influencing the modern view of them. Images inspired by his sculptures were used on stamps, coins, and banknotes. His bust of Jefferson, for example, served as a model for the images of the president on the Indian Peace Medal of 1801 by John Reich, on the Jefferson dollar of 1903, and on the nickel first issued in 1938 and still in circulation today. Houdon's bust of Benjamin Franklin was the inspiration for images that appeared on stamps and banknotes.

After the downfall of the French Empire in 1815, Houdon produced little work. In the last thirteen years of his life, his work lost popularity, but he continued teaching until the age of eighty-one. Though he produced other works—outdoor sculpture, large-scale works in classical themes, and decorative low-relief works—Houdon's renown rests on the powerful portraits of his famous contemporaries. In shaping their physiognomy he shaped their inner life—their character—for successive generations to see.

One of the most beautiful attributes of the difficult art of statuary is that it preserves forms in all their truth and renders almost imperishable the images of men who have brought their nation glory or happiness. That idea has followed me constantly and encouraged me in my long labors. —Jean-Antoine Houdon

The photograph representing the bust in marble of Lafayette done by HOUDON, fecit 1789—photographed in the Castle Chateau de Nandy. In the Vol. Bibliotheque National department of records is mentioned the marriage of one Perrin to Lafayette's granddaughter in 1820. Since that epoch the bust has been in the family, and has become mine by heritage and now rests in the Castle "Chateau Nandy". . . Baron Perrin De Brichambaut


La photographie ci contre représente le buste en marbre de Lafayette fait par Houdon en 1789 - Il est photographié ici sur la cheminée du salon du mon Château de Nandy
On peut voir à la Bibliothèque Nationale département des manuscrits mention du mariage d'un Perrin avec une petite fille de Lafayette en 1820 - Depuis cette époque le buste n'a pas quitté la famille et m'est venu par héritage - il est resté en mon château de Nandy jusqu'au mort de Novembre 1930 -
Bon dessin de Brichambaut







Thomas Jefferson, Jean-Antoine Houdon. Marble, 1789. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. George Nixon Black Fund, 34.129.

Jefferson peace medal, silver, ca. 1801, GM 65.17, and Jefferson nickel. Houdon's bust of Jefferson was the model for the president on the Indian Peace Medal of 1801 by John Reich, and for Jefferson's profile on the nickel, first issued in 1938, and still in circulation today.

Houdon died in Paris in 1828 and was buried at the Cimetière du Montparnasse. He is considered the greatest portrait sculptor of the 18th century. The astute perception and innovative approach he brought to his work is unparalleled in the history of the sculpted portrait.

Poulet, Anne L. *Jean-Antoine Houdon, Sculptor of the Enlightenment*. Washington: National Gallery of Art. In association with the University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2003.

Boime, Albert. *Art in an Age of Revolution, 1750-1800*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Hale, Nathan Cabot. *On the Perception of Human Form in Sculpture, A History of Figurative Understanding*. New York: White Whale Press, 2000.

Bust of Benjamin Franklin, Jean-Antoine Houdon, 1779. Marble. Philadelphia Museum of Art: 1996-162-1.

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ORIGINAL AIR BALLOON Pub^d as y^e act directs Dec^r 29. 1783 by G. Humphrey. N° 48 Long Acre.



Silas Deane

AND THE FIRST DIPLOMATIC MISSION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

APRIL MILLER Curator of Archives

In 1776–1777, the United States sent its first diplomatic mission to Europe, to engage support in the campaign for independence from Great Britain. Silas Deane, Benjamin Franklin, and Arthur Lee were the three ministers plenipotentiary dispatched to negotiate alliances and trade agreements with various European powers, including France, Prussia, and Spain. Deane was particularly crucial in procuring supplies and munitions for the pivotal early battles of the war. Unfortunately, due largely to later controversies regarding his business dealings while abroad, his contributions to the war effort are often overlooked, and his role in the genesis of a new nation given a lower profile than those of his fellow statesmen.



Silas Deane was born on December 24, 1737, the son of a Groton, Connecticut, blacksmith. He led a relatively unremarkable early life, but pursued his education vigorously, graduating from Yale in 1758. In 1761 he passed the bar and established a law practice in the town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, a community that flourished on farming, manufacturing, and a vigorous shipping trade.

On October 8, 1763, Deane married Mehitabel Webb, a wealthy widow five years his senior. Mehitabel had five children from her previous marriage and owned a general store. Silas joined her in running the family business and soon gained a reputation as a man of enterprise, energy, and sound judgment. The couple had one son before Mehitabel's death in 1767, leaving Deane responsible for six children. Deane was remarried within two years to another affluent widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Saltonstall Evards from New London. She was the granddaughter of a former Connecticut governor and a member of a socially prominent family.

By this time, Deane had established himself in both law and business and was poised to enter local politics. He became active in the town's civic life and was elected Wethersfield's representative to the Colonial Assembly of Connecticut. His star continued to rise as he was selected to join Judge Roger Sherman and Colonel Eliphalet Dyer in representing the colony in the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

TOP: Deane, Franklin, and Lee signatures from *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America 1776-1783*, Manuscript #1745. Dated 23 Nov 1777. ISSUE, TOP: Silas Deane. The Granger Collection, New York. FACING: Original Air Balloon. Political cartoon, 1783. Courtesy of The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

LEFT: View of Second Street, north from Market Street with Christ Church from *The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country* by Charles William Janson, 1807. GM 2576.2412. INSET: Colonial Seal of Connecticut from *Colonial Records of Connecticut* edited by Charles J. Hoadly, 1879. GM 2526.4046.

To make this first historic meeting, Deane and his fellow representatives traveled by carriage through Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and into Pennsylvania. In letters to his wife, Deane described other delegates met along the way and towns the men passed through, commenting on a brief illness, his exhaustion, and the misery caused by the summer heat. An excerpt from a letter to Elizabeth dated September 6, 1774 described the group's stay in Trent Town (Trenton), New Jersey:

> *Here a Connecticut clergyman, brother to Col. Spencer, is settled, who waited on us with the Delegates of the Province. For my part, I never underwent more to keep up my part of the conversation, when I wanted to be in bed, sick, worn out with heat and dust, headache, and anxiety of mind; but so it was, I could not retire until past eleven, when, as fond as I am of sleep, the night and bed were worse to me than to have proceeded on my journey. I turn'd, and turn'd, and groan'd, while Judge Sherman, who lodged in the same chamber, snored in concert' [when morning came] I got up, wash'd my feet in hot water, and without eating a mouthful set out on my journey.*

Finally arriving in Philadelphia, the delegates convened for the First Continental Congress on September 7, 1774. Deane wrote to his wife of the lumbering progress of the assembly, "Business is slow from the vast extent and lasting importance of the questions."



Within the eight-month interval between the first and second meetings of Congress, however, events moved along rapidly. During this time, Deane added to his growing reputation as a revolutionist by signing a promissory note to help pay for the expedition against Ticonderoga and by assisting with strategic planning for the undertaking. The cannon captured from Ticonderoga later forced the British to evacuate Boston. For sharing in this success, Silas Deane was nicknamed "Ticonderoga" by his compatriots.

In the Second Continental Congress, Deane engaged in extensive committee work. Together with George Washington, among others, he considered means for procuring military supplies. He helped form the rules of the infant navy, and, on October 15, 1775, selected and purchased the first naval vessel. He also served on a committee to draft rules for the American army. His mercantile experience gave him the background for discussing the commercial policies debated by Congress. When the course regarding colonial trade was discussed, he declared, "I think all Colonies ought to have free and equal footing; we have much trade. I think we ought to apply abroad, we must have powder and goods; we can't keep our people easy without it." He argued for opening Colonial ports to foreign ships, which was not allowed under English Navigation Acts at that time.

Although held in high esteem in Philadelphia, Deane was not on good terms with his fellow representatives. During his service he had objected to several items in the Accounts of Connecticut against Congress and was perceived as having neglected local issues for national politics. Consequently, the Connecticut state assembly did not elect him for a third year.

He was, however, soon to take on a new role with the burgeoning American government. In December of 1775, Robert Morris, a member of the Committee for Secret Correspondence (which was in practice the Department of State of Congress), informed Deane that he had been recommended to voyage to France as a representative of the colonies on a commercial as well as diplomatic errand. His duties were to purchase commercial supplies, predominantly for the Indian trade, to obtain arms and clothing for 25,000 troops, and to gauge the disposition of French ministers on the issue of American independence. He set sail on March 5, 1776, arrived at France on May 4, and reached Paris in early July.



First American Naval Victory from *Our First Century* by R.M. Devens, 1879. GM 2526.2958.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Charles Gravier, comte de Vergenne, was born in Dijon, France. He was introduced to the profession of diplomacy by his uncle, under whom he obtained his first appointment, to Portugal. He later served as minister plenipotentiary, then as ambassador to Turkey. With the accession of King Louis XVI, Vergennes became foreign minister to France. His policy was guided by the conviction that the power of countries such as Great Britain and Russia was increasing and should be diminished.

Arthur Lee, American revolutionary diplomat, was the brother of Francis L. Lee, Richard H. Lee, and William Lee, also revolutionary era diplomats. Educated in Great Britain, he returned to his native Virginia to practice medicine, but soon decided to study law and went to London in 1768. After the outbreak of the American Revolution, he was made a commissioner for the Continental Congress to seek foreign aid. Later in Paris, after helping negotiate the 1778 treaties with France, he quarreled with Franklin and Deane, and his unfavorable reports to Congress resulted in the recall of Deane and a halt on payments to Beaumarchais. In 1779 he was recalled himself, although he later served in the Continental Congress..

The French playwright and fortune-hunter Caron de Beaumarchais wrote *The Barber of Seville* (1775) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (1784), plays that inspired two famous operas, the first composed by Rossini, the second by Mozart. Beaumarchais is most remembered for his essential support for the American Revolution. Louis XVI, who did not want to break openly with England, allowed Beaumarchais to found a commercial enterprise, Roderigue Hortalez and Company, supported by the French and Spanish crowns, whose real purpose was to supply the American rebels with weapons, munitions, clothes, and provisions.

The European Stage

The Seven Years War that raged from 1756-1763 arrayed France, Austria, Sweden, and Russia against Prussia and Great Britain. The first global conflict, it also involved colonies of the leading European powers, colonies located in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The French and Indian War was the North American chapter of the war, the name referring to the two main enemies of the British, the French forces and the various Native American forces allied with them. The war had a number of very significant consequences, one of which was the near total loss of French colonial possessions in North America to Britain and France's elimination as the leading power of Europe. By terms of the Treaty of Paris, signed on February 10, 1763, Britain won North America and India and became the undisputed leader in overseas colonization.

North America had increasingly become a high-profile presence in the European contest for global domination. France was cognizant of the rumblings of protest and revolt coming from Britain's American colonies, induced largely by the new burdens of unconstitutional taxation levied by the British crown in an attempt to pay off debts incurred during the war. It was determined that an alliance with the colonies would be useful to France as a means of re-establishing her position in Europe after the degradation of 1763.



Louis XVI from *The French Revolution: Volume II* by John S.C. Abbott, 1887. GM 2526.3707.

Fearing that America might be subdued before the difficulty of procuring supplies was resolved, the French court sent Caron de Beaumarchais as an observer to London, where he met Arthur Lee, agent of the Continental Congress. During the early months of 1776, Beaumarchais and Lee devised an agreement by which military supplies were to be sent clandestinely to America by the French government. All of this occurred before Silas Deane set sail for France.

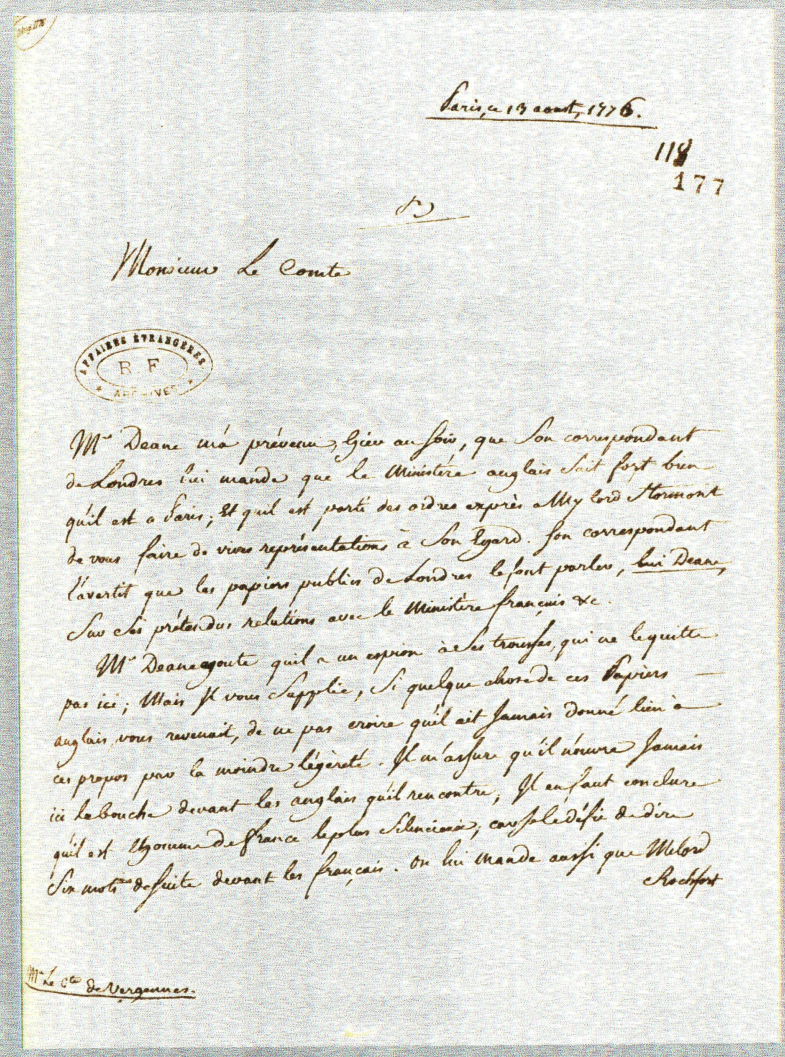
Thus was the scene when Deane arrived in the Paris of Louis XVI. Here, Deane was tasked with learning a new language, becoming familiar with the customs and ways of court life and European diplomacy, and attempting to secure goods necessary to the cause of the Americans.

A letter from the Committee of Secret Correspondence dated March 3, 1776, instructed Deane:

> *On your arrival in France, you will for some time be engaged in the business of providing goods for the Indian trade. This will give you good countenance to your appearing in the character of a merchant, which we wish you to retain among the French in general, it being probable that the Court of France may not like it known publicly that any agent of the colonies is in that country. When you come to Paris, by delivering Dr. Franklin's letters…you will be introduced to a set of acquaintances, all friends to America. By conversing with them you will have a good opportunity of acquiring Parisian French…*

On July 17, Deane was presented to the Minister of French Affairs, Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes. The French were eager to know more about the colonies and Deane was anxious to learn how the anticipated Declaration of Independence would be received in Europe. Beaumarchais was to be the intermediary between Deane and Vergennes, and it was through this channel that the supplies promised to Arthur Lee would be furnished. Besides Beaumarchais, other agents served Vergennes in his relations with Deane, the most notable being his secretary, Conrad Gerard, who later became the first French minister to America.

Caron de Beaumarchais eagerly supported the American cause, but was often not sufficiently discreet. Using a false name while supervising cargo shipments intended for the colonies, he neglected to discontinue coaching actors for one of his comedies playing the city. His presence became known to British agents and the British government protested. The evidence was irrefutable that Beaumarchais was working to aid the British colonies in rebellion and Vergennes was forced to issue a restraining order. Fortunately for the Americans, the French government eventually lifted the ban and in early 1777, the cargo headed for America. Eight shiploads of supplies successfully reached the revolutionists, which made possible the fateful American campaign that resulted in Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.



Beaumarchais to Vergennes, dated August 13, 1776. *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America 1776-1783: Volume IX* by B. F. Stevens, 1891. Manuscript #889. GM 4076.2113. Beaumarchais wrote of Deane, "M. Deane does not open his mouth before the English-speaking people he meets. He must be the most silent man in France, for I defy him to say six consecutive words in French."

Franklin's Reception at the Court of France. W.O. Geller. Chromolithograph. GM 1526.111.

Meanwhile, the Declaration of Independence had been proclaimed and Congress determined to send a more formidable mission to France to negotiate treaties of amity and commerce. Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee, and Silas Deane were designated as the official commissioners. On December 12, 1776, Deane was notified of Franklin's arrival in France, and Lee, still in London, was instructed to join them.

Attempts to acquire partners in the war against Britain intensified. France was not the Americans' only target for a European alliance. The three commissioners undertook negotiations with Prussia on February 14, 1777. They transmitted copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation to the Prussian court, and sent a letter expressing a desire to obtain King Frederick's friendship and put before him a plan for commercial agreements. Frederick's policy, however, was to remain neutral until the conflict took a turn for one side or the other. The American diplomats resolved to send Arthur Lee as representative of their cause. Frederick, however, was not willing to give a final answer before ascertaining the positions of France and Spain.

The British ambassador, Lord Stormont, referred to Benjamin Franklin as the "chief of the rebels" and in a letter to Lord Weymouth, described his reception in Paris, "Social France received him as an idol; philosophical France received him as a co-worker in a great work; military France greeted him as an ally against an old foe; commercial France at once set him down as a means of netting considerable sums and all alike welcomed him warmly."



Frederick II, King of Prussia. Library of Congress.

Paris Feby 14th 1777

May it please your Excellency

We have the honor of inclosing the Declaration of the Indepen-
dancy of the United States of North America, with the
Articles of their Confederation, which we desire you to
take the earliest Opportunity, of laying before his
Majesty, the King of Prussia; At the same time we
wish he may be assured, of the earnest desire, of the
United States, to obtain his Friendship; & by a free
Commerce, to establish an intercourse between their
distant Countries, which they are Confident must
be mutually beneficial. The state of the Commerce
of the United States, and the Advantages which must
result to both Countries, from the Establishment of
a Commercial intercourse; We shall if agreeable
to his Majesty, lay before him. Meantime We
take the Liberty of assuring your Excellency that
the Reports of the Advantages gained by this
Brittannic

Letter from Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane to Baron Schulenburg, Prussian Minister of State for Frederick the Great, dated February 14, 1777. GM 4076.3914.

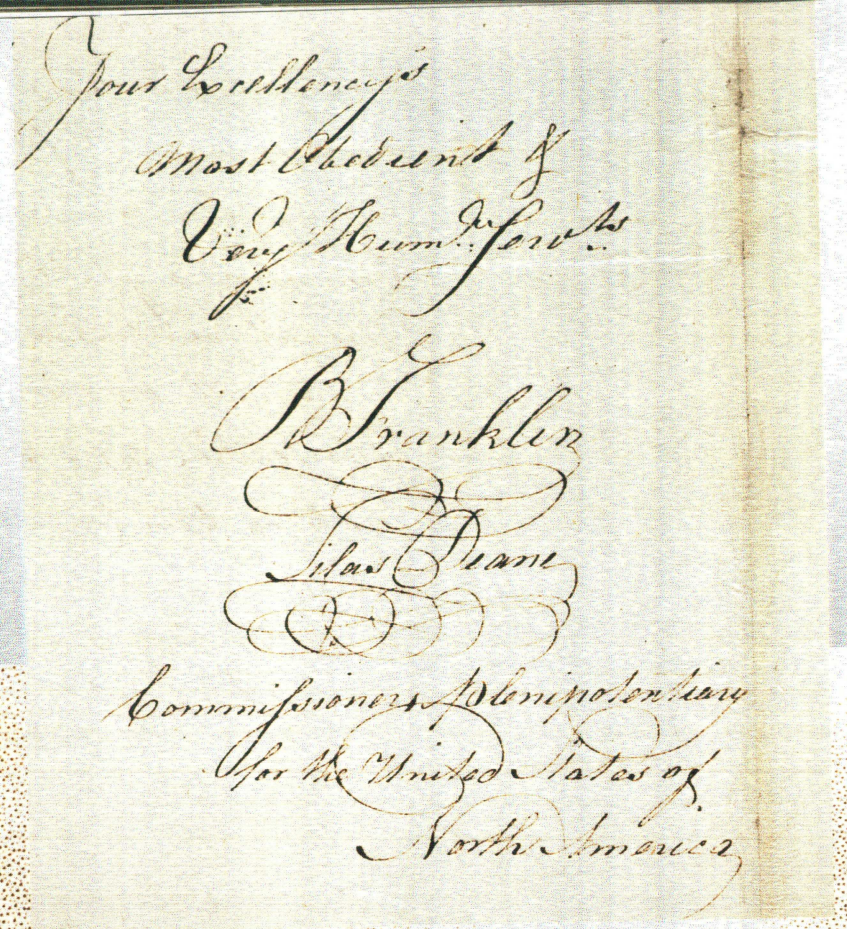
He was, in fact, playing a waiting game and said as much in a letter to his brother King Henry, "I purpose to draw out this negotiation in order to fall in with the side for which Fortune shall declare herself." Never granted an audience with the king, Lee left Berlin shortly after his lodgings were broken into by an employee of the English minister at the Prussian court and his papers stolen for the British government. Despite Frederick's assurances that Prussia would follow France's lead in declaring for the colonies, the independence of the colonies was not recognized by Prussia until after it had been recognized by England itself.

In Paris, after news of the smashing defeat of Burgoyne at Saratoga was made known, the British attempted peace negotiations with the American representatives. On December 17, 1777, British agent Paul Wentworth managed a secret meeting with Silas Deane where he proposed a reversion to the colonial status of 1763 with a repeal of the disagreeable acts passed since that date. Deane stood firm on absolute independence as necessary for any possible negotiations. Wentworth then proposed an armistice with cessation of hostilities by sea and land, with British troops to be withdrawn from everywhere except Long Island, which would continue permanently in the possession of the King's forces. He then proceeded to expound on the benefits and honors that would be given to the man who might be successful in effecting such a reconciliation. The meeting adjourned and Deane left to consult his fellow commissioners.

Two weeks passed before the British agent could arrange another interview. In the meantime, rumors spread that the French court had openly declared itself in favor of recognition of the United States—a development that had indeed taken place on December 6 of that year. On January 6, 1778, an interview was finally arranged between Wentworth and Benjamin Franklin. The meeting resulted in Franklin stating that if British Commissioners were sent to meet the American diplomats, a peace treaty could be discussed.



Burgoyne's Surrender at Saratoga. Percy Morgan. Library of Congress.


Your Excellency's
Most Obedient &
Very Humble Servts

B Franklin

Silas Deane

Commissioners Plenipotentiary
for the United States of
North America

Franklin and Deane signatures, letter from Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane to Baron Schulenburg, Prussian Minister of State for Frederick the Great, dated February 14, 1777. GM 4076.3914.

The most significant result of these discussions came from the use the American commissioners made of them. Surrounded by spies and provided with no secret service other than those furnished by the British agents posing as American patriots, the Americans made no effort to conceal from Vergennes that they had received peace offerings from the British. A treaty with the French was already underway, but was hinged on the decision of Spain. It was the offers of peace made by the British that drove the French into immediate action. On January 7, 1778, the French council voted unanimously to negotiate a treaty of commerce and amity with the American colonies and on the sixth of February the alliance was signed.

While the fate of a new nation was being debated in the courts of Europe, a controversy of a more personal kind had been brewing among the American commissioners. Arthur Lee, the most contentious member of the trio, was continually at odds with his fellow representatives, and had taken a personal dislike to Silas Deane. Lee accused Deane of making personal financial gains while assigned to work on behalf of the colonies. Deane was called back to Congress after two years of service in Europe. In a secret memorandum dated March 13, 1778, just days after learning of the recall, Beaumarchais traced the blame to Arthur Lee. He noted that,

> *Mr. Arthur Lee, from his character and his ambition, at first was jealous of Mr. Deane. He had ended by becoming his enemy, as always happens in little minds more concerned to supplant their rivals than to surpass them in merit.*

Deane had enemies in Congress as well, many of whom were against an alliance with France. Lee had written to his brothers that the supplies from Beaumarchais were intended as a gift from the French government, contradicting Deane and Beaumarchais' claim that payment was expected. Deane returned to America as ordered, accompanying the new minister plenipotenitiary, Conrad Gerard, on the flagship of a French squadron making its way to America. In his dispatch case, Deane carried a portrait of Louis XVI set in diamonds, a letter from Franklin praising him as a faithful servant of the American cause, and letters of commendation from the French court.

The accusations of Arthur Lee and recall of Silas Deane led to a break in the uneasy cooperation between Franklin and Lee. The latter protested the concealment of Deane's departure date—done at the request of Vergennes who had discovered that Lee's private secretary had been using official information for speculative exchange dealings—and expressed indignation that Gerard had been appointed minister without consulting him. Franklin later wrote of his animosity for Lee:

> *At present I do not know of more than two enemies that I enjoy, Viz., Lee and Izard. I deserve the enmity of the latter because I might have avoided it by paying him a compliment, which I neglected. That of the former I owe to the people of France, who happened to respect me too much and him too little—which I could bear, and he could not.*

Surrender of Cornwallis. Trumbull notebook. GM 2116.23.



Gallery of Mirrors, Versailles, France. Library of Congress.

FACING, BELOW: Arthur Lee. Library of Congress.



In an excerpt from a letter to the President of Congress dated October 12, 1778, Deane expressed his own feelings on the enmity of Arthur Lee:

> *What I have already observed upon Mr. Lee's letter, and what I purpose to notice, confirms me in the opinion which Dr. Franklin and some others have for some time had of him, that, from a long indulgence of his jealous and suspicious disposition and habits of mind, he is at last arrived on the very borders of insanity, and that at times he even passes the line; and it gives me pleasure, though it is but a melancholy one, that I can attribute to the misfortunes of his head what I must otherwise place to a depravity of the heart.*

Deane arrived in Philadelphia ready to report on his dealings in France, but was repeatedly forestalled. His efforts to settle his accounts and attempts at exoneration were later foiled when his records in Paris were seized by the French government because they revealed France's involvement in the war prior to their official alliance with the colonists. In the end, Deane was never given a proper hearing before Congress; the case languished for years.

Information has since come to light proving that Deane, among others, launched various trading schemes and was engaged in purchasing supplies, fitting out of privateers, and buying and selling prizes, as well as other activities in which he possessed unrivaled advantages by reason of his strategic political position. In the end, however, the alleged personal financial gains were not at all lucrative, as Deane found himself bankrupt during the last twelve years of his life. Impoverished and living in exile in Europe, Deane's reputation at home was further tarnished when several letters he had written to friends and family advising reconciliation with the British were published in a New York newspaper. His relationship with his stepchildren and even his own son soured, largely due to financial issues.

Deane eventually made plans to recoup his fortunes and in 1789 he booked passage from England back to his home in America. Before his ship set sail, however, he took ill and died. Rumors spread that Deane committed suicide, while historians have conjectured that his death can be connected back to the British double-agent, Edward Bancroft, who sold information to Deane and later on to John Adams. It is plausible to believe that Bancroft would have been exposed by Deane's potential testimony to the United States government. Modern medical testimony, however, argues that it is most likely that Deane died of a stroke or aneurism. Silas Deane was never found guilty of Arthur Lee's accusations and years later his granddaughter pressed his case before Congress. His family eventually received a posthumous lump sum apology payment, fifty years after his death. Despite his role in early American diplomacy and the quest for colonial independence, Deane's contributions have been largely overshadowed by the controversy of his political quarrels and suspicious business dealings. One can only wonder how history would have remembered him if not for this scandal. Not even granted a traitor's notoriety, Silas Deane remains unknown to most Americans today.

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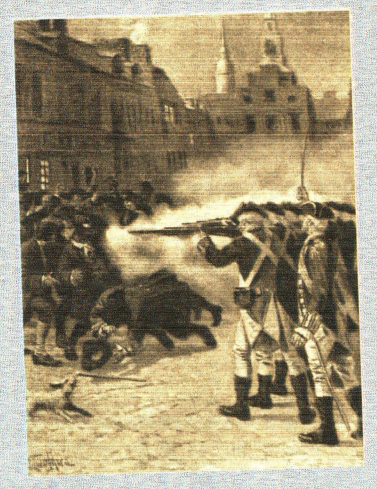
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George the Third, King of Great-Britain. . . is endeavoring to destroy the good people of the United Colonies, by sending fleets and armies to America. . . in order to compel us to submit to the most debasing and detestable tyranny. . . it becomes our highest duty, to use every means with which God and nature has furnished us, in support of our invaluable rights and privileges to oppose that power. . . The Pennsylvania Evening Post, Philadelphia, Saturday, May 18, 1776

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Thomas Jefferson

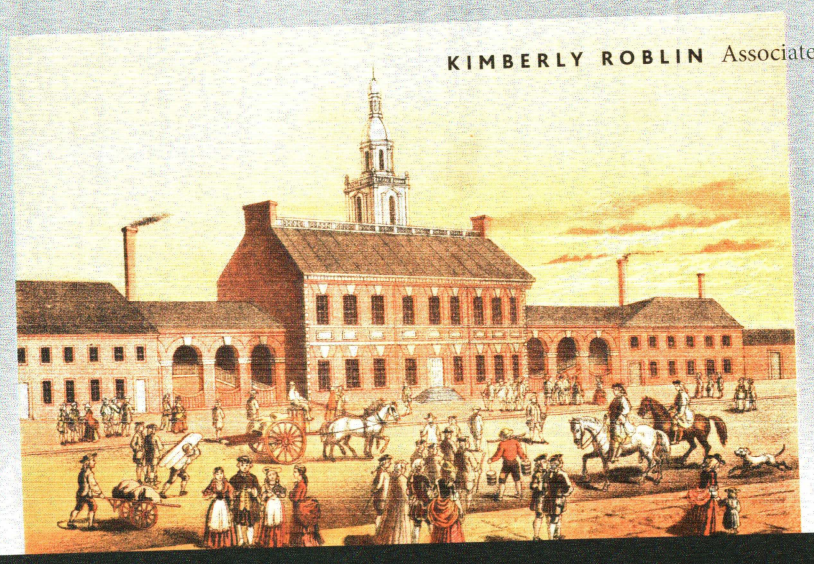
The Correspondence of William Fleming and Thomas Jefferson

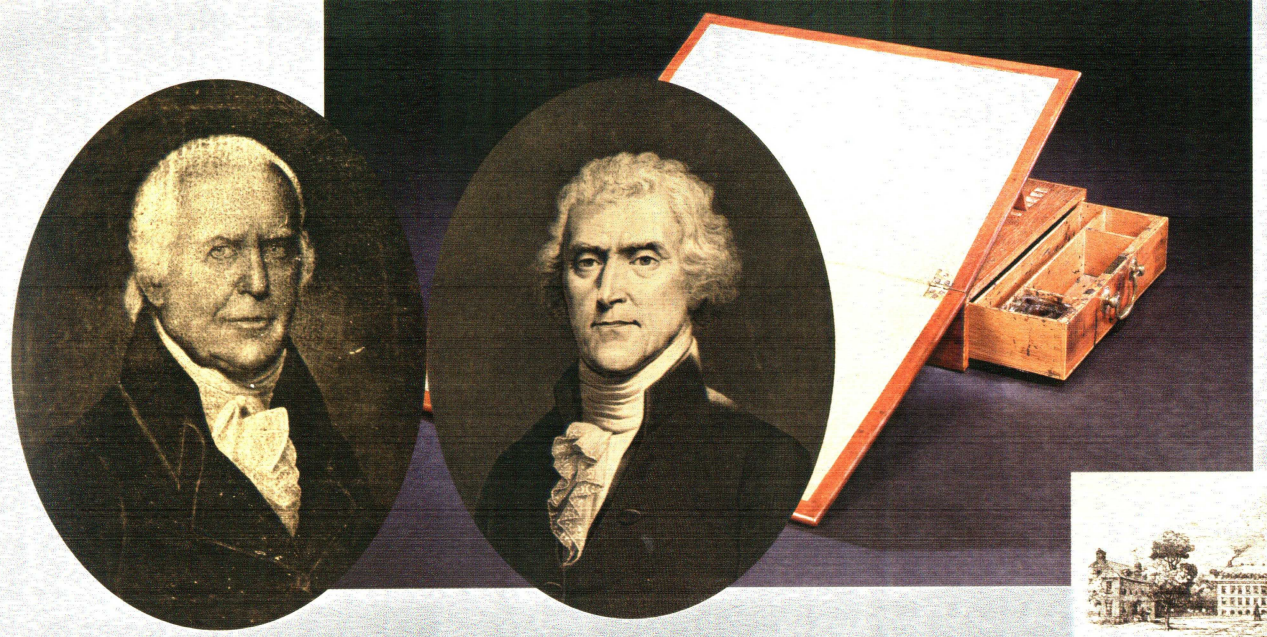


ABOVE: The Boston Massacre from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~ On March 7, 1770, British soldiers outside the Customs House in Boston fired into a large crowd, killing five colonists. It was the culmination of increasing hostilities between Britain and her colonies. The redcoats stood trial and were defended by John Adams. Most were acquitted, but patriot propaganda succeeded in portraying the event as The Boston Massacre. ~ RIGHT: Independence Hall, Phila. Pa. 1776. Artist unknown. Chromolithograph, 1876. GM 1526.1017. ~ The Pennsylvania State House, also known as Independence Hall, was located on Chestnut Street between Fifth and Sixth Streets in Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA, SUMMER, 1776—The American Revolution is in its infancy, gaining momentum as opposition to the Crown increasingly replaces the loyalty once pledged to it. King George III has long since abandoned attempts *to quiet the minds of his subjects in America*, and has turned instead to an oppressive militant policy. The language of local newspapers reveals the charged and unstable atmosphere: destroy, confiscate, fire, sword, desolation, debasing, detestable. Tyranny. Although unthinkable less than a decade before, many colonists have begun to embrace independence from Great Britain, and at the Pennsylvania State Hall, this historic decision falls to the Second Continental Congress—among its members a young Virginian, Thomas Jefferson.

KIMBERLY ROBLIN Associate Curator





LEFT TO RIGHT: Portrait of Judge William Fleming by an unknown artist. Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. ~ Thomas Jefferson. De Quevanillier. Etching. GM 15.1122. ~ William and Mary College from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. Jefferson attended the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg from 1760 to1762. He shared a dorm-room in Wren Hall with William Fleming. He once called Williamsburg "the finest school of manners and morals that ever existed in America." In the background is Thomas Jefferson's writing desk. 1776. Smithsonian Institution; Washington, D.C. This mahogany lap desk was designed by Jefferson and built by Benjamin Randolph, a Philadelphia cabinetmaker. Jefferson used this desk when he wrote the Declaration of Independence and quite probably the Gilcrease letter to William Fleming.

Only thirty-three, he is the youngest Virginia delegate at the Congress but already possesses a reputation for both his quick mind and his able pen. He has recently been appointed to draft a declaration for independence, and he completes it in only a few days at his apartment on Market Street. On Friday, June 28 he submits it to Congress, and on the following Monday morning he receives a letter postmarked from Williamsburg, where his old friend William Fleming is serving on the Fifth Virginia Convention.

The two first met as roommates in 1760 at the College of William and Mary while teenagers. Both were born to prominent Virginia families, Jefferson tracing his lineage to the Randolph family, one of the most powerful and influential of the colony, and Fleming tracing his to John Rolfe and Matoaka, commonly known as Pocahontas. Jefferson had quickly made friends with Fleming and also another young Virginian, John Page.

Jefferson reminisces on his adolescent correspondence with the two friends—how they inquired after young ladies in whose presence they felt self-conscious and foolish. How they felt *overwhelmed with more and greater misfortunes than have befallen a descendant of Adam for these thousand years…excepting Job.*

Gone now is his penchant for melodrama, yet other aspects of his character have remained the same—the constant worry over others' opinions of him, a fervent idealism, and hope for the future. These he carries still, along with a desire, common in the 18th century, to work diligently at the cultivation and preservation of his reputation.

It has been fourteen years since Jefferson and Fleming completed their studies. Both pursued a law career. Both married. Jefferson has begun a family. Much has changed since their university days, but their correspondence has continued. Particularly at the present, it acts as a constant and a comfort in a time of great uncertainty.

As Jefferson opens the letter from his friend, he is reassured by the cramped penmanship, as familiar to him as Fleming's own voice or face…



Pocahontas from *The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* by John Smith, 1624. GM 2576.2014. ~ Daughter of Powhatan, Matoaka was a girl of around ten when she first met John Smith and his fellow Englishmen. She was a frequent visitor to their camp, bringing food and other items to trade. In 1615 she met and married John Rolfe, a Jamestown colonist. They had a son together, Thomas. She died in 1617.



George Mason from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~ Mason strongly protested the Stamp Act, writing a letter in 1766 to the *London Public Ledger* and signing it "A Virginia Planter."

Wmsburg, 22d. June, 1776. 3 o'clock, P.M.

Dear Sir [Fleming writes to Jefferson],

I, being informd that the post is to set out in an hour, have just left the committee appointed to prepare a form of government to give you a summary of their proceeding. The inclosed printed plan was drawn by Colo. G. Mason and by him laid before the committee. They proceeded to examine it clause by clause, and have made such alterations as you will observe by examining the printed copy and the manuscript together; tho' I am fearful you will not readily understand them, having made my notes in a hurry at the table, as the alterations were made. I left the committee debating on some amendments proposed to the last clause, which they have probably finished, as the bell, for the meeting of the house, is now ringing. This business has already taken up about a fortnights time, I mean in committee. As some of your friends have, no doubt, given you a history of our late election of delegates to serve in congress, and of the spirit (evil spirit I had almost said) and general proceedings of our convention, I shall, for the present, forbear any animadversions thereon: indeed, were I ever so much inclined to it the time would not allow me.

There was found on board the transport brought up by the two Barons, 200 matrasses, 100 tents, 3 hhds. Rum, and 2 barrels of Gun Powder.

{This first piece of news particularly interests Jefferson as it concerns Colonel George Mason and his latest plan for government. Colonel Mason had written the Virginia Declarations of Rights the month prior and many believe Jefferson modeled much of his declaration after Masons. The form of government Fleming mentions was the Virginia Constitution, unanimously adopted June 29, 1776. Jefferson had also drafted a version and had hoped to help with the process, but his obligation towards finishing another historic document has kept him in Philadelphia.}

Lord Dunmore from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1914. Volume 5. GM 2527.4863. ~ The 4th Earl of Dunmore was a colonial governor of Virginia. He remained a Loyalist during the Revolution and fled to England, eventually becoming governor of the Bahamas from 1787 to 1796.

{By late spring of 1776 Great Britain's concern over the colonial rebellion was sharply rising. In response they sent 217 of the fiercest soldiers – the Scottish Highlanders. With wives and children they sailed from Glasgow and had nearly reached Boston when the Andrea Doria, a small brig under command of Captain Biddle, captured both ships. The captain loaded the prisoners onto a transport, the Oxford, and left a small crew of his men in charge. Unfortunately for Biddle, as he and his prize ships sailed to Boston, they encountered a British blockade and were forced to disperse. The Highlanders recognized the opportunity and quickly overtook the small colonial crew. They started a course for Virginia waters hoping to find Lord Dunmore, but on June 20 they found instead Commodore Barron and his armed vessel of the Virginia Navy. Barron took the Oxford after a short skirmish and marched the prisoners to Williamsburg on June 22. Despite all efforts to persuade the Highlanders to join the patriot cause, they desisted and were held as prisoners of war until 1778.}

Purdie has promised to pack up your books, and Colo. Tom to carry them to Tuckahoe. He this day told me you desired him to enquire, of me, something about Vatels law of nations. You did not mention it in your letter to me. I can lend you a copy for a few months which you return to Virginia.

I am Dr. Sr. yr. friend & serv.,

William Fleming

N.B. Mr. Wythe was at Port royal Thursday night, and will be in town tomorrow.

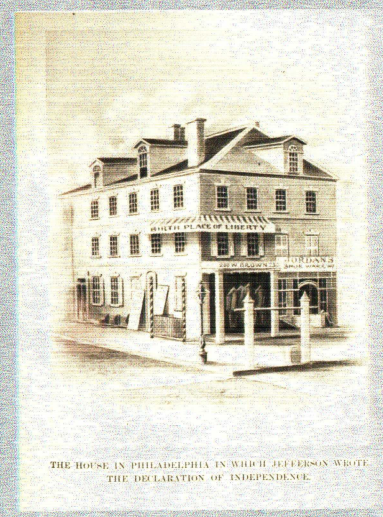
{Jefferson once commented that he could not live without his books. A man of tremendous curiosity, he was known to study up to sixteen hours a day while in college. This letter reveals that Jefferson has previously requested some of his books be sent to Philadelphia, where he was staying while attending the Continental Congress. Vattel's *Law of Nations*, mentioned in particular, was one of the day's most popular political treatises. The "Colonel Tom" mentioned is Thomas Mann Randolph Sr. (1741-1793), the future father-in-law of Jefferson's daughter Martha, called Patsy.}

Philadelphia. July 1. 1776.

Dear Fleming

Your's of 22d June came to hand this morning and gratified me much as this with your former contains interesting intelligence. Our affairs in Canada go still retrograde, but I hope they are now nearly at their worst. The fatal sources of these misfortunes have been want of hard money with which to procure provisions, the ravages of the small pox with which one half of our army is still down, and an unlucky choice of some officers. By our last letters, Genl. Sullivan was retired as far as Isle au noix with his dispirited army and Burgoyne pursuing him with one of double or treble his numbers. It gives much concern that he had determined to make a stand there as it exposes to great danger of losing him and his army; and it was the universal sense of his officers that he ought to retire. Genl. Schuyler has sent him positive orders to retire to Crown point but whether they will reach him [in]time enough to withdraw him from danger is questionable. Here it seems to be the opinion of all the General officers than an effectual stand may be made and the enemy not only prevented access into New York, but *by*

{Only three days before the Second Continental Congress approves his revised *Declaration &c etc*, Jefferson responds to Fleming's letter. He makes little mention of the document and discusses the two greatest threats to the Revolution's cause—smallpox and the campaigns in Canada and New York.}



THE HOUSE IN PHILADELPHIA IN WHICH JEFFERSON WROTE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Market Street Apartment in Philadelphia from *Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson* by Thomas E. Watson, 1903. GM 2317.891a. ~ While staying in Philadelphia during the Second Continental Congress, Jefferson rented the second floor of this building. It was here that he wrote the Declaration and also the letter to William Fleming.

preserving a superiority on the lakes we may renew our attacks on them to advantage as soon as

{Though worried, Jefferson maintains his characteristic

our army is recovered from the small pox and recruited. But recruits, tho long ordered, are very

optimism, hoping affairs are at their worst. In truth they were

difficult to be procured on account of that dreadful disorder.

far from it. Sullivan had indeed retreated to Crown Point but

The Conspiracy at New York is not yet thoroughly developed, nor has any thing transpired,

could not save his men from smallpox; within two months

the whole being kept secret till the whole is got through. One fact is known of necessity, that one of

of this letter, over half of his 10,000 soldiers are dead. The

the General's lifeguard being thoroughly convicted was to be shot last Saturday.

approaching months only bring defeat and loss of morale.}

{This Conspiracy at New York is also known as the Hickey Plot. Although relatively unknown to the modern American public, in July of 1776 it is symptomatic of the uncertain and perilous environment of the Revolution. Under the leadership of John Jay, the Committee for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies holds hearings from June 19 to June 21 to investigate charges brought against a number of men, including the current governor of New York, Roger Matthews. John Forbes funded the treacherous plan to turn cannon fire against the unsuspecting Continental Army. If successful, it would have devastated the colonial cause and perhaps caused Washington's death. One of the General's guards is implemented in the scheme, but Thomas Hickey is the only man found guilty of treason. Matthews is imprisoned but escapes weeks later. Despite Jefferson's claim that Hickey was shot, he instead faced the gallows on June 28. the Howe Jefferson speaks of is General William Howe, commander of the British land forces. What Jefferson does not know, however, is that British reinforcements under the command of General Howe's brother, Admiral Lord Richard Howe, have also arrived. Together, their forces are formidable—30 battleships, 1,200 cannon, 300 supply ships, 30,000 soldiers, and 10,000 sailors.}

General Howe with some ships (we know not how many) is arrived at the Hook, and, as is

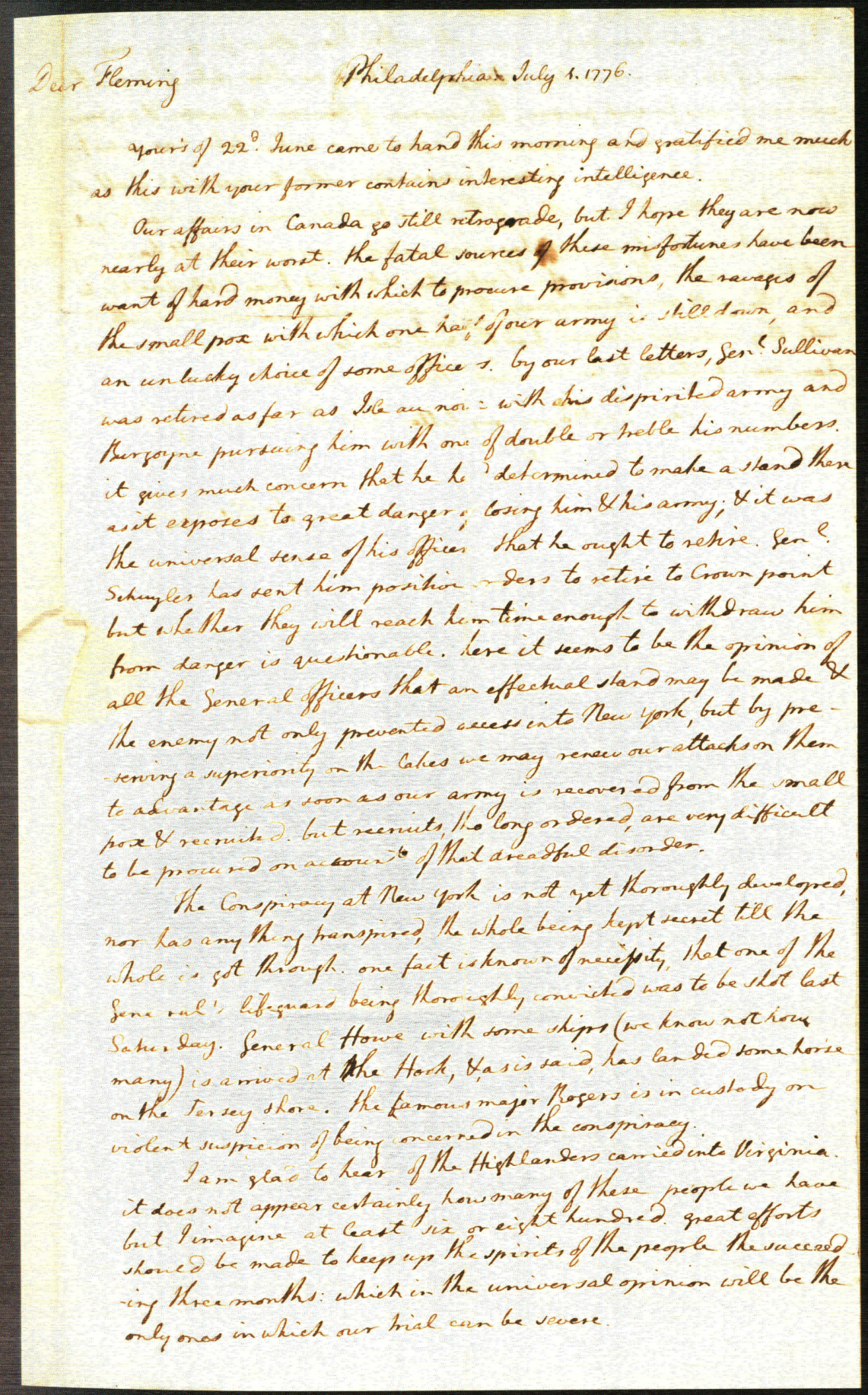
said, has landed some horse on the Jersey shore. . .







LEFT: John Sullivan from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~ A son of Irish immigrants, John Sullivan was born in New Hampshire in 1740. As a young man he became a major in the New Hampshire militia and served as a delegate to the First Continental Congress. In 1775 he was promoted to brigadier general and sent to Canada in May of 1776 to take control of the weakened colonial forces already present along the northern frontier. ~ CENTER: Sir William Howe from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1914. Volume 5. GM 2527.4863. ~ The younger brother of Richard Howe, William Howe was born in 1729. The Howe brothers quickly rose through the military ranks, possibly aided by their lineage—their grandmother was Sophia von Kielmansegg, half-sister to King George I. ~ RIGHT: Admiral Lord Howe from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1913. Volume 6. GM 2527.4864. ~ Born Richard Howe in 1726, Admiral Lord Howe, as he would later be known, was praised for tactical mastery and bravery by Admiral Lord Nelson.



Dear Fleming Philadelphia July 1. 1776.

yours of 22d. June came to hand this morning and gratified me much as this with your former contains interesting intelligence.

Our affairs in Canada go still retrogade, but I hope they are now nearly at their worst. the fatal sources of these misfortunes have been want of hard money with which to procure provisions, the ravages of the small pox with which one half of our army is still down, and an unlucky choice of some officers. by our last letters, Genl. Sullivan was retired as far as Isle au noix with his dispirited army and Burgoyne pursuing him with one of double or treble his numbers. it gives much concern that he has determined to make a stand there as it exposes to great danger of losing him & his army, & it was the universal sense of his officers that he ought to retire. Genl. Schuyler has sent him positive orders to retire to Crown point but whether they will reach him time enough to withdraw him from danger is questionable. here it seems to be the opinion of all the General officers that an effectual stand may be made & the enemy not only prevented access into New York, but by preserving a superiority on the Lakes we may renew our attacks on them to advantage as soon as our army is recovered from the small pox & recruited. but recruits, tho long ordered, are very difficult to be procured on account of that dreadful disorder.

The Conspiracy at New York is not yet thoroughly developed, nor has any thing transpired, the whole being kept secret till the whole is got through. one fact is known of necessity, that one of the General's lifeguard being thoroughly convicted was to be shot last Saturday. General Howe with some ships (we know not how many) is arrived at the Hook, & as is said, has landed some horse on the Jersey shore. the famous major Rogers is in custody on violent suspicion of being concerned in the conspiracy.

I am glad to hear of the Highlanders carried into Virginia. it does not appear certainly how many of these people we have but I imagine at least six or eight hundred. great efforts should be made to keep up the spirits of the people the succeeding three months: which in the universal opinion will be the only ones in which our trial can be severe.

Letter from Thomas Jefferson to William Fleming, dated July 1st, 1776. GM 3826.71.

{And indeed, once landed, the vast army wastes little time engaging the Continental Army. It celebrates its first victory in late August with General Howe's defeat over General Washington at the Battle of Long Island. Unfortunately for the Continental cause it signals the beginning of a series of defeats. In October, the British forces won at Valcour Bay, Canada and by November have captured Fort Washington and Fort Lee, forcing General Washington to abandon New York. As a final blow to morale, on December 12 the threat of attack forces Congress to abandon Philadelphia. Jefferson writes that *The famous Major Rogers is in custody on the violent suspicion of being concerned in the conspiracy.*

This famous Major Rogers is Robert Rogers, a frontier hero of the French and Indian War known for his brutal tactics and determination. He offered his services to General Washington at the start of the Revolution, but Washington suspected Rogers' Loyalist ties and refused the offer. His instincts are validated when Rogers joins the British army and fights against the colonies he has helped protect for the past thirty years.

Jefferson continues:}



Signature of Thomas Jefferson from a letter to William Fleming. GM 3826.71.

I am glad to hear of the Highlanders carried into Virginia. It does not appear certainly how many of these people we have but I imagine at least six or eight hundred. Great efforts should be made to keep up the spirits of the people the succeeding three months: which in the universal opinion will be the only ones in which our trial can be severe.

{He is correct that the next three months will be difficult, but the Revolution is far from over and will last for the next seven years.}

I wish you had depended on yourself rather than others for giving me an account of the late nomination of delegates. I have no other state of it but the number of votes for each person.

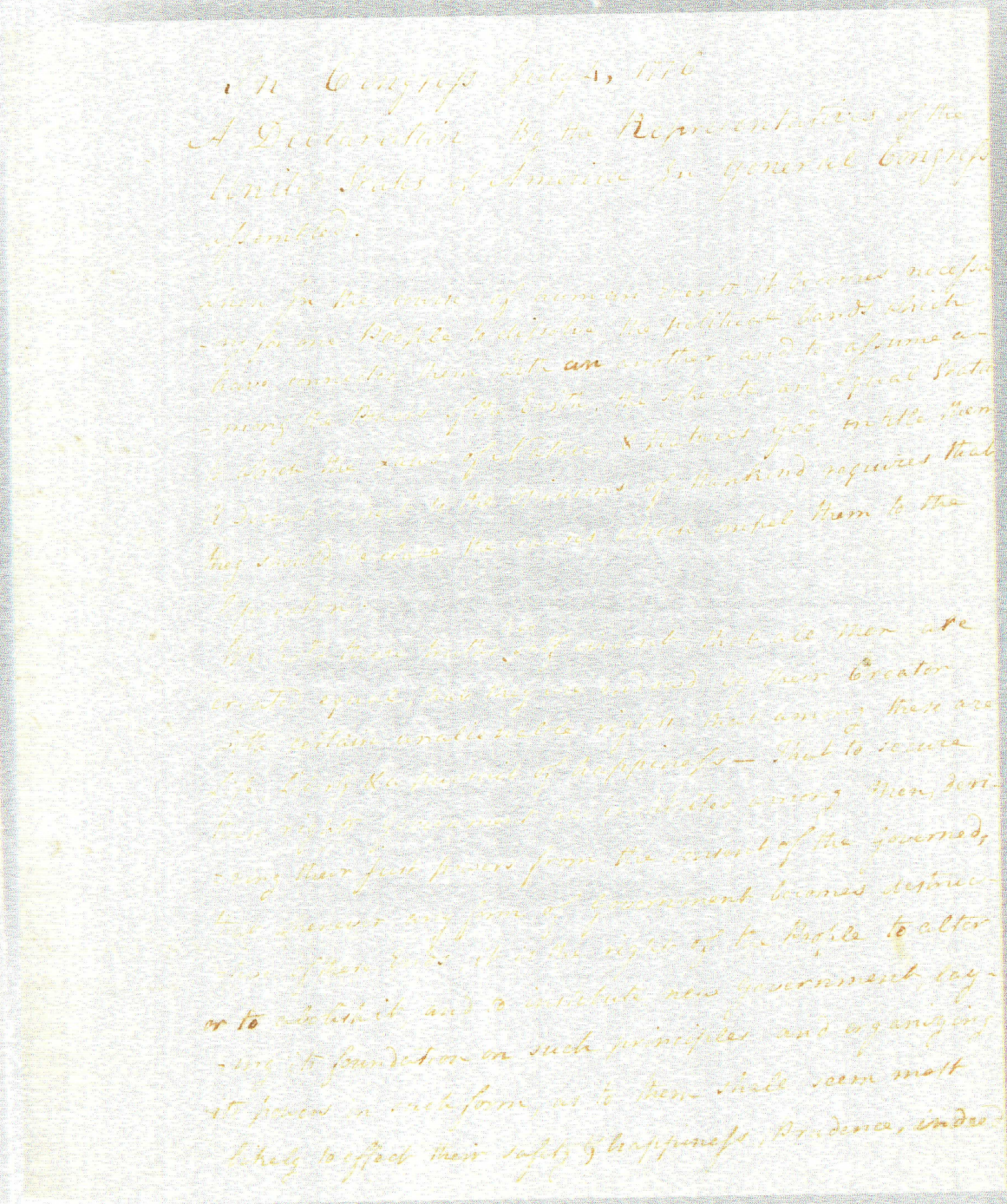
The omission of Harrison and Braxton and my being next to the lag give me some alarm. It is a painful situation to be 300 miles from one's country, and thereby open to secret assassination with out a possibility of self-defence.

{This portion of the letter discloses some of the clearest insights into Jefferson's mind at this time. Clearly troubled by election results in Virginia, he inquires after the reasons for it. The reasons are discussed in Fleming's next letter. Also note Jefferson's use of the word *country* to describe his home colony. Though united against a common enemy, loyalty lay with one's colony in this era. Jefferson's worry underscores a tense and distrustful atmosphere.}

I am willing to hope nothing of this kind has been done in my case, and yet I cannot be easy. If any doubt has arisen as to me, my country will have my political creed in the form of a 'Declaration &c.' which I was lately directed to draw. This will give decisive proof that my own sentiment concurred with the vote they instructed us to give. Had the post been to go a day later we might have been at liberty to communicate this whole matter.

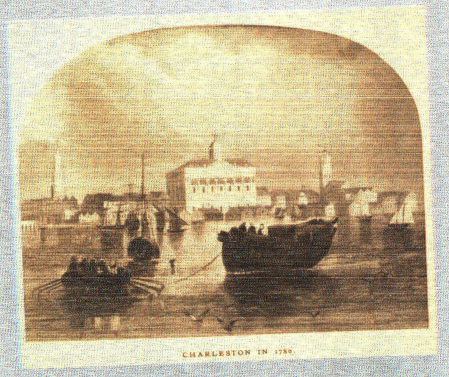
July, 2. I have kept open my letter till this morning but nothing more new. Adieu.

{In the most fascinating aspect of Jefferson's letter of July 1 and 2, 1776, he assures Fleming that Virginians will soon know his political creed in the form of a "Declaration &c." that he was lately directed to draw. A Declaration &c. The Declaration of Independence. The historic and intrinsic importance of this mention cannot be overestimated. As Americans, we know he is referring to the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of our country. However, as Jefferson sits in his Philadelphia apartment writing this letter, he is three days from seeing it approved by the Continental Congress—three days from July 4, 1776. The Declaration as we know it today did not yet exist. It is remarkable and telling that the most significant aspect of this letter is mentioned only in passing. Even Jefferson could not surmise the legacy of this document. For Jefferson, the Declaration represents only a fraction of the Revolution and its events. For modern Americans, the Declaration essentially is the Revolution.}



Certified Copy of the Declaration of Independence. GM 4026.901. ~ This is the only known certified copy of the Declaration of Independence. It was given to Frederick the Great of Prussia in 1777 by American diplomats overseas, including Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane.

Charleston in 1780 from *The New Complete History of the United States of America* by John Clark Ridpath, 1913. Volume 6. GM 2527.4864. ~ The attack on Charleston commenced June 28 at 11 a.m. With several gun-ships, the British focused their assault on Fort Moultrie. Twelve hours later, however, the British ships, battered and defeated were forced to retreat. They lost roughly five times as many men as the Americans.



Mt. Pleasant 27th. July, 1776.

Dear Sir [Fleming writes to Jefferson]

Our convention having, the 12th. instant, adjourned to the first monday in October, I did not receive yours of the 1st. July 'til I had been a fortnight at home.

I am much concerned at the situation of our affairs in Canada, but am not without hope they may yet be retrieved. A thorough knowledge of the sources of human evils, is, generally speaking a good step towards pointing out effectual remedies; but I am fearful the procuring hard money, in our present circumstances, will be attended with great difficulty, and it must be very discouraging to young soldiers to meet a formidable enemy in the jaws of a malignant distemper.

The horrid conspiracy at New York affects me exceedingly, and when I reflect that every engine of ministerial tyranny is in motion to effect their diabolical purposes, I cannot suppress my anxiety, lest the seeds of that infernal plot be not totally eradicated. God grant that the authors with all their coadjutors may meet with the justice due to their horrid crime.

{Ever the optimist, Fleming reminds Jefferson that public morale is strong after victories at Gwinn's Island and Charles Town. On June 28, a large British naval contingent attacked the city. Although heavily outnumbered, the colonists won when three British ships ran aground on a hidden shoal. A week and a half later the British suffered another humiliating defeat at Gwinn's Island, the stronghold retreat of Lord Dunmore, former royal Governor of Virginia. The battle lasted only a few hours but gave tremendous hope to colonists. These would be their last victories for some time.}

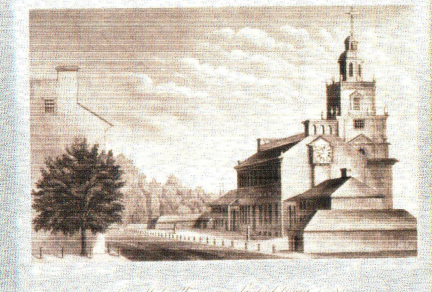
I perfectly agree with you in opinion that the severity of our trial is near at hand and perhaps a few weeks will determine the fate of New York, as the enemy in that quarter, if we may believe the public papers, are very formidable; tho' I doubt not they will meet with a very warm reception.

The spirits of our people are, and for some time have been, higher than at any period since the commencement of hostilities; and they are not a little elevated by our late successes at Charles Town, and Gwinn's Island. How a severe reverse of fortune might affect them, I cannot pretend to determine; but those who are much elated with a little success, are generally most dejected in misfortune: however, since the Rubicon is passed, I believe there are few among us, even of the lower class, who have an idea of giving up the cause, happen what will.

{Fleming's reference to the Rubicon points interestingly to the education men like Fleming and Jefferson received in as youths—lessons that placed great emphasis on Greek and Roman history. The founding fathers commonly alluded to classical names and events. The reference is to an event that occurred in 49 B.C., when the infamous Roman general Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River dividing Gaul from Italy. Upon crossing he is quoted as having said *Let the die be cast*, and so it was. By leading his army into Italy and marching against the Senate he openly declared civil war. The Rubicon thus became a metaphor for a point of no return. Fleming means there can be no retreat from the cause—they must press forward or all will be lost.}

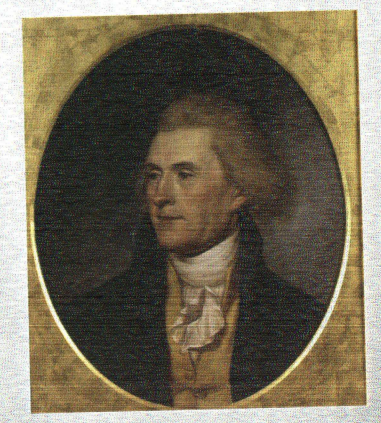
With respect to the late nomination of delegates, the reduction of the number to five was on motion of the governor, "first to save expense, and secondly that we might have the assistance of the two supernumeraries in our own government, where gentlemen of abilities are much wanting." It met with little or no opposition. The appointment of Dr. Rickman physician and director general to the continental hospital, when McClurg, a native and regular bred physician had been recommended by the committee of safety, and by Genl. Lee, gave very great offence, and was undoubtedly the cause of Colo. Harrison's being left out, as it was generally supposed Rickmans appointment was through his influence. Mr. Braxton's address on government made him no friends in convention; and many reports were propagated in Winsburg, (upon what grounds I know not) respecting the extreme imprudent, and inimical conduct of his lady, which, with many people, affected his political character exceedingly, of which Fitzhugh and some other of his friends informed him by letter, before we left town. As to your own case, you may take yourself perfectly easie, for you are as high in the estimation of your countrymen as ever, and the reason you were so late in the nomination was the mention of a letter you had written to Dr. Gilmer, signifying your inclination to resign. He was out of town at the time of the nomination, but desired another gentleman, if the matter came on in his absence, to inform the house he had received such a letter, which he accordingly did, and







Top: King George III from *A History of the American People* by Woodrow Wilson, 1902. Volume 2. GM 2527.4879. ~ George III came to the throne in 1760 following the death of his grandfather. He was the third monarch of the Hanoverian dynasty and the first born in England. ~ CENTER: *The State House in Phila. 1778 (Independence Hall)*. Charles Willson Peale. GM 1526.1024. ~ BOTTOM: High Street from from the Country Market Place, Philadelphia, with the Commemoration of the Death of General Washington from *The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country*, by Charles William Janson. 1807. GM 2576.2412.



Thomas Jefferson by Charles Willson Peale, from life, 1791-1792. Courtesy, Independence National Historical Park.

thereupon arose a debate whether or not your excuse should be admitted. Some were of opinion you were jesting, and some that you were in earnest, and after near half an hours debate, they proceeded to ballot without a question being put, and many of your warmest friends (myself among the rest) erased your name out of their ballots, taking it for granted that your services in congress were to be dispensed with, as the opposition grew faint towards the latter end of the debate. Had it not been for these circumstances, I much doubt whether there would have been three votes against you. Your letter to the president on the same subject appeared the next day, which would have been effectual, had it arrived in time; but as the nomination was over, the house did not seem inclined to a new election; tho' I imagine if your affairs are such as to make your longer stay in congress still inconvenient, you will be indulged in October with a recess for the remainder of the year.

{In his letter of July 1 and 2, Jefferson made clear he hoped his friends and countrymen did not think poorly of him, and wonders over their reasons for nearly not reelecting him. In this letter, Fleming states that Jefferson had sent an earlier letter to Dr. Gilmer requesting not to be reelected as he was weary and wished to be at home with his ailing wife.

This is a classic example of Jefferson's contradictory nature and his preoccupation with reputation. He had indeed sent such a letter, which was discussed at the Convention. Yet he still was perplexed as to why the electors had considered allowing them to resign. This is one of many instances in the life of Jefferson when his words and his actions seem to be in conflict.}

Our elections of senators, of whom you have already been informed we are to have twenty four, come on early next month. The districts in our neighbourhood are 1st. Chesterfield, Amelia and Cumberland, 2d. Henrico Goochland and Louisa. 3d. Amherst, Albemarle, and Buckingham. The Candidates are Messrs. Cary and Mayo for the first, (Tabb having lately declined, it is said, in favor of Mayo!), Messrs. T. Mann Randolph and Adams for the second, and Dr. Walker and W. Cabell for the third.

We have a prospect of a fine crop, tho' we begin to suffer with a drought. I was at Old Con's last monday, and observed the corn in the Island to be very fine. Our latter wheat is much injured by the rust, and the weavel alredy begin to appear.

I am with great esteem, dear sir, Yr. friend & obed. Servt.,

Wm. Fleming

The correspondence between William Fleming and Thomas Jefferson continued for over fifty years, until Fleming's death in 1824. Since their first meeting at William and Mary, the two had grown up and grown old together, seen the birth of a nation and the death of imperialism. They had witnessed history and become part of it. But unlike today's friendships, theirs was based not on telephone calls or text messages, but on letters. For half a century they had sat at desks and tables, paper and ink at hand, and written one another.

Jefferson had always preferred the written word to the spoken, being notoriously disinclined to public speaking. As a man so preoccupied with his reputation, perhaps he felt the written word better suited to his purpose. For through his correspondence it appears not a word was written without the consideration of its full meaning and measure. Public speaking could not afford this luxury, so it is not surprising that we know Jefferson not by the words he spoke, but those he committed to paper. Because of those words, he has been mythologized in American history. Immortality is not without consequence, however, and over time he has become little more than a one-dimensional figure of the flesh and blood man he once was.

Today, the man who loved books and words has inspired what he so valued as historians humanize him with works of observation and explanation, hoping to reveal the mild-mannered member of the Virginia planting class. Letters, by Jefferson's own admittance, perhaps provide the greatest clues as they *form the only full and genuine journal of a life*. They make it possible to know what he thought on a single day rather than speculate on what he thought over a lifetime, to gain insight not into the icon, but the everyday Jefferson—the man and not the myth.

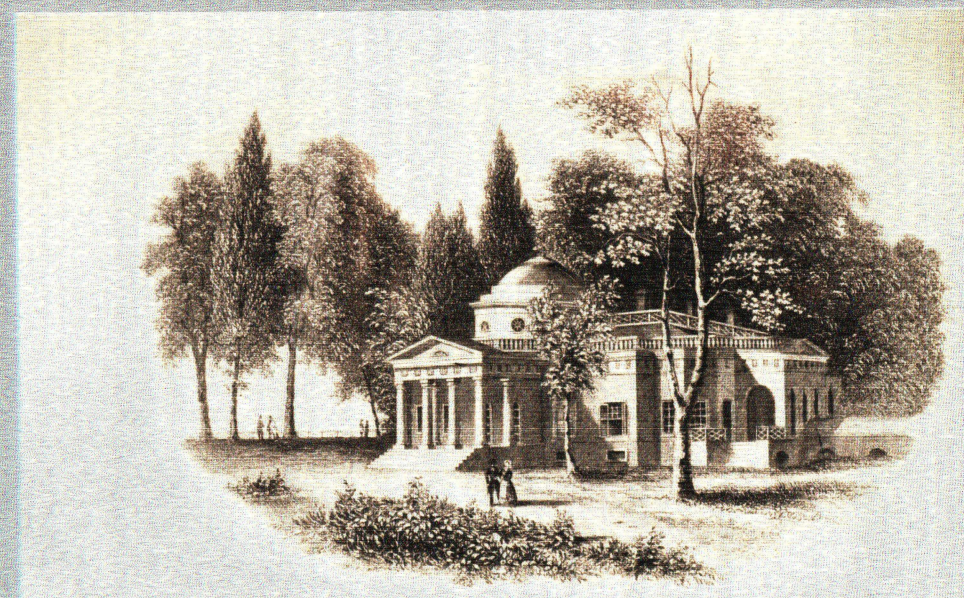
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Wood, Gordon S. *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. New York: Penguin, 2006.



MONTICELLO, JEFFERSON'S HOME NEAR CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.

Monticello from *Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson* by Thomas E. Watson, 1903. GM 2317.891a.
In 1769 construction began on the house Jefferson designed in a Roman Neoclassical style. Work on the estate continued off and on for the next thirty years as Jefferson made changes and improvements to his original design.

Early American Portraits

PRIVATE TO PUBLIC, COLONIAL TO REPUBLIC

WENDY KATZ

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ART AND ART HISTORY,

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A portrait seems to represent a universal impulse, the desire to memorialize loved ones for posterity. Yet the oil portrait has been an elite preoccupation since it reemerged as an independent genre in the Renaissance. Even by the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though portraits were not necessarily too expensive in themselves for the middling classes to afford, when they bought a modern luxury good, it was more often a clock or a fiddle. So while some portraits might be seen by a wider audience, as with prints of celebrities hung in shop windows, most painted portraits circulated within the context of the family, and those families tended to be ones that had considerable personalty (movable assets, like jewelry, furniture, silver, books) and realty (land) to be inherited.[1]

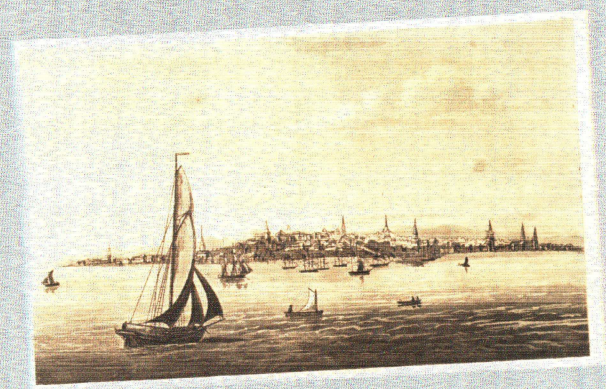
Despite this stability in the class of patrons, portrait painting in America was characterized by two great changes. The portrait had always asserted the continuity of the family, its unchanging and orderly descent through time, but now it began increasingly to assert the family's right to membership in a national or international class as well. This set of peers was largely constituted by possession of manners, style, and taste (the product of education rather than lineal descent), and portraits began to show people as if they were performing—demonstrating—these qualities. Although most portraits were still commissioned to mark a change in family status (a marriage, birth of an heir, receipt of an inheritance, a separation), this emphasis on an illusion of individual interaction, necessarily in more specific social and historical circumstances, stimulated a second transformation.

1 On portrait painting in this period, see especially Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (New haven: Yale University Press, 1993), David Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) and Margaretta Lovell, "Painters and Their Customers: Aspects of Art and Money in Eighteenth-Century America," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson et al (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994) 284-306.

Portrait of John Rowe. Robert Feke. Oil on canvas.1748.GM.0126.1003.

2 *Letters and Diary of John Rowe, Boston Merchant*, ed. Anne Rowe Cunningham, and an Introduction by Edward Lillie Pierce (Boston: W.B. Clarke Company, 1903).

3 On the Rowe family, their kin, and their portraits, see Jeannine Falino, *Lives Shaped by the Revolution: Portraits of a Boston Family: Speakman, Rowe, Inman, Linzee, Coffin & Amory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2005).



Boston Harbor from the book *The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country* by Charles William Janson,1807. GM 2576.2412.

Portraits began to move from a private to a public sphere, and, in particular after the Revolution, invaded history painting, the art that commemorates public (disinterested pursuit of the common good) rather than private virtues. Arguably, portraits even became the American mode of history painting. The colonial portraits at the Gilcrease, representing some of the most noted painters of the period, exemplify this transition.

The earliest portrait in the collection is by Robert Feke, but because of the sitter's diary, more is known about John Rowe than about his portraitist.[2] Rowe came to Boston from England with some family money in hand and at twenty-one bought a warehouse on Boston's Long Wharf. He was perhaps typical of his generation of patrons: a successful importer of salt, silk, wine, and smuggled sugar, he owned land in and outside of Boston, was moderate politically, holding office in both government (in one election, John Adams threw his support to Rowe's rival, John Hancock, and Rowe lost the election) and in his church, belonged to various clubs including the Masons, and led an active social life. Rowe had an interest in family lineage, perhaps accentuated by being childless himself; he owned a massive silver cup engraved with the family arms (later, in 1791, his wife Hannah Speakman Rowe bought more classically styled silver, including a teapot, from Paul Revere).[3] Like Hannah's own portrait by Feke, the family silver would be willed to a female heir; if men inherited land, personal or movable property like portraits often followed the female line.

Feke, who lived in Newport, Rhode Island, painted John and Hannah Rowe during a 1748 trip to Boston. Born on Long Island to a minister's family, Robert Feke is the first documented native artist. As for John Singleton Copley, who was born in Boston, this raises the question of where he learned art. Probably both gathered some education from John Smibert's studio in Boston, which contained the British artist's copies of Renaissance masterpieces. Feke's most famous painting, *The Isaac Royall Family* (1741), is based on the composition of Smibert's *Bermuda Group*, painted in Newport in 1728. Feke's group portrait was painted just after Royall became head of the family and took up residence in a mansion in Medford, Massachusetts. Probably not coincidentally, since much of a portraitist's custom depended on referrals, Rowe often attended parties there.[4] Feke also read some contemporary art theory and copied prints, from which he presumably derived some of the standard poses typical of his portraits. His skill at reproducing the tactile quality of fabrics—his wife was from a family of tailors—may have attracted merchants whose very business depended on a sharp eye for such distinctions.[5] It's characteristic of both Feke and Copley that the brushwork on fabrics is often more lively and interesting than on flesh, which remains comparatively dull (lacking in highlights) and unvaried in modeling.

Of the twenty or so portraits Feke painted in Boston on his 1748 trip, most were of families related by kin or politics (Feke, like Copley later, did not usually advertise), including the Apthorps, Trecothicks, Rowes, and Inmans, most in a standard three-quarter length. Pendants painted some five years into their marriage, Hannah Rowe's portrait is oriented in the same direction as her husband's: their bodies angle left, faces turned to look directly at the viewer. Behind Hannah is a rather flat park-like backdrop that associates her with cultivated nature; John Rowe's background is plain. In both, Feke's distinctively linear style, which would influence eighteenth-century art in both Philadelphia and Boston, calls attention to the composition's decorative pattern, keeping figures on the surface of the painting, rather than establishing them in convincing spatial depth. The pastel colors (blues, pinks, whites, golden browns), the position of the heads near the top of the canvas, and the way the bodies do not quite fill the bottom of the canvas all add to the rococo qualities of lightness and elegance.

4 On Feke, see *Robert Feke* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1946), R. Peter Mooz, "Robert Feke: The Philadelphia Story," in *American Painting to 1776: A Reappraisal*, ed. Ian Quimby (Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1971) 181-216, Henry Wilder Foote, *Robert Feke, Colonial Portrait Painter* (New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc. and Da Capo Press, reprint of 1930 ed., 1969).

John Rowe rests a relaxed hand—showing off the width of his coat sleeve—on a table; Hannah's rests on a stone column, reinforcing her pillar-like neck; she is cushioned from the cold stone by a rich rosy shawl that picks up the warm tints in her skin. She has a breathtaking décolletage in an otherwise simple satiny blue dress; John is more conservatively buttoned up, though the white linen ruffles at his wrists emphasize his gentlemanly hands. He has the more amiable smile and certainly a stronger sense of individual characterization (accentuated by the very lack of background), as was thought appropriate for men; masculinity demanded some departures from conventional idealization. The parallels between the two portraits are meant to play off each other: his simplicity, her nature, her richness, his ease. Her dress is also a reminder that the ideal for marriages in the eighteenth century included romance as well as property. Another of Feke's Boston sitters wrote a poem about his wife's portrait that praised her comely (and column-like) neck, her eyes, cheek, and lips, and "Her tempting breasts in whiteness far outgo/The op'ning lilly, and the new faln snow."[6]

The Rowe portraits closely resemble those of Ralph and Susannah Speakman Inman, their relatives. Hannah's blue gown is also worn by her sister, Susannah, whose nearly identical pose reverses the direction of Hannah's. It may have been a real dress, exchanged between the sisters, or it may have been a dress in a print that both sisters selected, or one of Feke's stock costumes, but in any of these instances, the decision to share it points to the function of these portraits: to solidify bonds between families. Indeed, after Susannah's death, Hannah and John pretty much adopted the Inmans' daughter. John Rowe and Ralph Inman too hold the same pose and are similarly dressed in brown coats and modest, informal bob wigs, but Ralph's portrait conveys more grandeur. His coat is not wool but silk velvet, opened to reveal a gold silk lining, his hand rests on a stone plinth rather than a table, and he stands against a landscape whose stack of puffy clouds echoes his more substantial girth. This seems to match the scale of the Inmans' entertainments. Rowe wrote of a Harvard graduation party for Inman's son attended by 347 guests, including the governor, that was unprecedented and apparently a great success. Rowe described the whole company as "very happy and Cheerful."[8]



High Street, Philadelphia, with an American Stage waggon from *The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country* by Charles William Janson,1807. GM 2576.2412.

5 Today's consumer may have even more variety of fabrics to choose from, but has lost a certain awareness (at least linguistically) of their differences, as T.H. Breen points out in one 1753 merchant's advertisement which listed "Broad-cloths, german serges, sagathees, duroys, penstons, shalloons, tamies, stuff, durants, bearskins, cambletees, broad cambets, ever-lasting callimmancos, stamp'd camplets, ozenbrigs…linen and cotton checks, cotton hollands…A choice assortment of cambricks, flowe'd, strip'd and check'd lawns cear and pistol, do. tandems, silesias, bron, do. brittannias, diaper and damask clouting, table cloths…packit cambricks, satin, damask, black, yellow, and light colored china and Persian taffeties, strip'd Persians, tandem, dowlas, a choice assortment calicoes, buckram, allapeens, silk crapes, cotton romale, turkey tobines, turkey and highland plad…." Quoted in T.H. Breen, "The Meaning of 'Likeness': Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth Century Consumer Society," in *The Portrait in Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Ellen Miles, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993) 37-60; 45.

6 James Bowdoin II, quoted in Jessie Poesch, "'In just Lines to trace': The Colonial Artist, 1700-1776," in *The Portrait in Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Ellen Miles, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993) 61-83; 76.

7 On the repetition of elements like women's dresses, see particularly Margaretta Lovell, *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) 49-93, and also the discussion in Breen, op cit, and Theodore Stebbins Jr., "An American Despite Himself," in Carrie Rebora et al, *John Singleton Copley in America* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995) 79-115, and Leslie Reinhardt, "'The Work of Fancy and Taste': Copley's Invented Dress and the Case of Rebecca Boylston," *Dress* 29 (2002) 4-18.

8 Rowe, quoted in Falino, *Lives Shaped by the Revolution*, 23.

The Feke portraits thus emphasize sociability. This is a familiar concept today, in an age that requires snapshots show individuals surrounded by smiling friends in a demonstration of one's popularity (and so one's good character). But in the eighteenth century, it is a reminder that money, land, and public honors (such as office in church or government) were no longer sufficient to establish a good person. One had to be likable, well-mannered, charming and cheerful as well as worthy; like Rowe, a clubman, which was not a position that could necessarily be inherited, but that instead depended on social acceptance by one's peers. Portraits, like the correct manipulation of other fashionable domestic goods (teapots, wigs, cushioned chairs, mirrors, books, forks) in social rituals, marked this modern agreeable social self and its claim to equality. One of Feke's biographers calls Rowe's portrait a "badge of belonging."[9]

Copley's *Portrait of Mrs. John Apthorp* has been identified as typical of the artist's style in the mid 1760's and, by extension, perhaps typical of this new ideal of sociability. Jules Prown observes that during this period, just after Copley's British rival Joseph Blackburn had quietly exited Boston, Copley monopolized the social portrait. Whereas before female portraits composed only a third of his production, during these years women were the subjects of two-thirds of his portraits, and they were women from wealthy merchant or landed gentry families, often painted in larger sizes than his previous images of professional men.[10] Copley himself had married in 1765 into a prominent Boston merchant family, the Clarkes, which may be one reason why he was suddenly in demand by Boston's high society. The portrait of Hannah Greenleaf Apthorp in some ways resembles that of the Rowes with its rococo palette of cool pinks and blues, the sitter's faint smile, and its sleek linear design, but it also showcases Copley's unequalled skill at conveying vivid material textures—not just satin, but transparent lace over shining satin, pearls strung against white skin, soft flowers, all as a foil for an intent if indirect gaze that evokes a quality of thought or interiority. The effect is indisputably less conventional than Feke's earlier construction of gentility.

However, this portrait also suggests that there was more to portrait painting, even such seemingly straightforward images of fashionable society women, than assertions of economic and social status. These portraits were often conceived not only in relation to companion portraits of husbands, but as signs of new family and political alliances. In this instance, John Apthorp, Hannah Greenleaf's husband, had in 1765 just returned to Boston. Apthorp had been working in the Trecothick trading house (the Trecothicks were kin) in London for the previous ten years; while there, he married Alicia Mann, daughter of the British minister to the Court of Tuscany, and they had two daughters. His wife died shortly after the family embarked for Italy on a Grand Tour of cities and sites hallowed by classical and Renaissance art. The bereaved Apthorp stayed with his in-laws in Florence.

While there and in Rome, Apthorp, like other wealthy American tourists,

9 R. Peter Mooz., "The Art of Robert Feke," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1970) 125. It was a badge of belonging not just to a family, in Mooz's account, but to a group of men associated with then Massachusetts Governor William Shirley, though Mooz notes that the Rowes and Inmans were on a lesser degree of intimacy with the governor and their portraits are also slightly smaller than the rest of the Boston commissions.

10 Jules Prown, *John Singleton Copley in America 1738-1774* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1966) 40.



Portrait of Mrs. John Apthorp, nee Hannah Greenleaf. John Singleton Copley. Oil on canvas. 1765. GM 0126.1012.

Self Portrait. John Singleton Copley. Oil on canvas. c.1780-1784. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

drawn into Neoclassical circles. He had his portrait painted by Swiss artist Angelica Kauffman, who was noted for her acuity, her fascination with languages, and later artistic style was praised by the noted Neoclassical theorist Johann Winkelmann and American artist Benjamin West, whose portrait she also painted about this time. Her relationship between the Brownes and Hamiltons—the pair had painted other Cruikshanks just once, as he also painted John Thornton, founder of the Augustan Society—served as a bridge between the Irish and business interests on both sides of the Atlantic.

Despite Cather's extensive professional career in the colonies the approval by Reynolds, the London art establishment, and Kauffman's portraits of Rome most of whom would later have work hung in Cooper's emphasize their knowledge of good design one finds a floor plan of a building suggesting his interest in bringing Neoclassical models to America. Knowledge gained of Alphorp and his contemporaries is somewhat different although Jocelyn Beecher is not usually considered a portrait painter, she has to integrate the three of them as a group form, she has to integrate the three of them as a group form, she has to integrate the three of them as a group form

Following Cornwallis's surrender in 1781, informal peace talks had begun in Paris in 1782. Thanks to Benjamin Franklin's influence, Temple was secretary for the American side. The treaty was recognized as a great event, of interest throughout Europe and America. West almost immediately began to conceive of a painting of the signing, probably as part of a series of history paintings on the American Revolution. West, from a Quaker family, envisioned the series as a form of congratulations to his countrymen on their success, as a way to transmit their "wisdom and unshaken perseverance" to posterity, and also as a didactic statement of the benefits of peace. Benjamin Franklin, West's friend (West named his first son Raphael, but his second son Benjamin) and fellow Philadelphian, would have been central to the composition.[19]

Like West, Brown must have recognized the value, both pecuniary and national, in securing portraits of these men. When William Temple Franklin came to London in 1784, he sat for West, who still had hopes (never realized) of completing his painting of the Treaty. He also sat, perhaps at the same time, for portraits by two of West's students, Gilbert Stuart and Mather Brown. The Stuart portrait (lost) was a commission from Temple's father, who was aware of Stuart's artistic reputation and in this period just after the peace was somewhat reconciled with the politics of his father and son, but Brown's may have been uncommissioned. He often requested sittings with well-known men as a form of advertising. However, Brown did do portraits of both William Franklin and his wife in the late 1780s, which were bequeathed to Temple Franklin's illegitimate daughter.[20]

Mather Brown's style in this portrait is very close to Gilbert Stuart's, and their work has at times been confused. The portrait is a half-length, a format Brown used for ministers and professional men, for whom books were a natural prop as well. A ruby-colored background, sometimes readable as a curtain, is also standard in Brown's work at this time, and plays up the brilliant coloring of pink and white flesh and navy coat and buff vest, helping Temple Franklin's body to emerge strongly and fully. Paint is applied with a relatively loose brushwork that was quite different from the American portraits of Copley or Feke, with their high degree of finish and smooth surfaces. It evoked a more romantic quality of spontaneity and freshness, and was in the most modish style of the day. Brown did depend more on drawing than Stuart, who often eliminated that step in a portrait, so the stronger contour line (often drawn with brown on the canvas itself) more sharply separates the sitter from the atmosphere around him. The effect is often one of stronger individual characterization, as in the portrait of Temple, who seems more than just a fashionable youth.

Franklin's portrait is in fact similar in conception to his images of Jefferson (1786) and Adams (1788). Like them, Temple wears a frock coat, which because of its origins as a more artisanal form of dress, evoked a republican attitude.[21] The coat's sobriety, and the simplicity of powdered hair rather than a wig, is set off by the fancy tie of the cravat and bright silk vest. The effect is nevertheless one of relative plainness. Temple's grasp of the roll of parchment—a pen's feather follows the angle of his arm—suggests his application to the national good, and not coincidentally is much the pose that West chose for his sketch for the historical painting of the signing of the treaty. Brown's portrait of Jefferson had instead a sculpture of an allegorical figure of Liberty, with the same implication of devotion to a greater cause, while Adams was shown reading Jefferson's *History of Virginia*.[22] The books and list of names on the treaty in Temple's portrait is both a sign of his dedication to the cause of peace (and anti-monarchy) and a reminder of his ideological kinship with the great diplomats of the day.

Like Brown, Ralph Earl came from an old New England family, but Earl's farmer ancestors, despite owning substantial property near Worcester, Massachusetts, were not able to give him the same type of liberal education as was available in Boston. As the oldest son,

19 West's letter to Charles Willson Peale quoted in Arthur S. Marks, "Benjamin West and the American Revolution," *American Art Journal*, 6:2 (Nov. 1974) 15-35.

20 See Evans, *Mather Brown*, 206. Evans dates the portrait of Temple to the 1790s based on the sitter's London location and his involvement in publishing Franklin's memoirs.

21 Gaye Wilson and Elizabeth V. Chew, "Fashioning an American Diplomat: The Mather Brown Portrait of Thomas Jefferson," *Dress* 29 (2002) 19-26.

22 Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* were first published in 1782, but also again in 1788, the date of Adams' portrait, which was owned by Jefferson.

The books and list of names on the treaty in Temple's portrait is both a sign of his dedication to the cause of peace (and anti-monarchy) and a reminder of his ideological kinship with the great diplomats of the day.

William Temple Franklin, Mather Brown. Oil on canvas, 1782. GM 0176.1016.

23 *Reclining Hunter*, (1783-4). On Earl's biography and career, see especially Elizabeth Kornhauser et al, *Ralph Earl: The Face of the Young Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Pres, 1991), and also Judith Maxwell, "'Though inanimate they speak': A Cultural Studies Approach to Ralph Earl's Eighteenth-Century American Portraiture," PhD diss., Stanford University, 1997), and William Sawitzky, *Ralph Earl 1751-1801*, (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1945).

24 Ellen Miles, "'Memorials of great & good men who were my friends': Portraits in the Life of Oliver Wolcott, Jr.," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 107: Pt. 1 (1997) 105-159.

25 Clarkson was a member of the Society of Cincinnati, an organization for officers of the Revolutionary War and their male heirs that lobbied for state pensions, and so in its conception, if not its actual practice, was an aristocratic organization, including the wearing of a medal with ribbons. Washington and many of Earl's patrons were members as well; portraits of Society members helped confer the legitimacy of republican virtue on them. Kornhauser, *Ralph Earl*, 37-38; and on Clarkson, Laurence Goodrich, *Ralph Earl: Recorder for an Era* (State University of New York, 1967) 50-1.

his decision to reject farming seems to have caused problems; after Earl set up as an artist in New Haven, he started to spell his last name differently than his father and refused to join his father's patriot militia company. He left Connecticut and his then wife for England under threat of prison for treason, in disguise as the servant of the British army's quartermaster. His father disinherited him.

In England, circumstantial evidence—including Earl's own later publicity statements—suggests he studied with West in the early 1780s. During that period, he too learned to adopt the hallmarks of the British style: freer brushwork, more relaxed poses, more modeling (less harsh or solid black shadows), and generally a less individualized portrayal. But his espousal of a style that resembled Gilbert Stuart's or Thomas Gainsborough's was not wholehearted. His style retained strongly illusionist elements and details of costume close to Copley's work in the colonies. Tellingly, during his stay in England, Earl did one of the few painted satires known by an eighteenth-century American artist. It critiqued the lifestyle of the gentry and their "illiberal" pursuit of blood sports.[23] Perhaps, unlike West and his other students, Earl never truly identified with the aristocracy he painted. Yet he won friends easily, which undoubtedly smoothed his way later as an itinerant painter who often stayed with sitters in their houses.

Earl exhibited a few portraits at the Royal Academy, but does not seem to have considered staying in the crowded London market for portraits. In 1785 he sailed for New York City (via Boston), presumably attracted by the prospect of painting portraits of not just the men there for the New York State legislature, but also those attending sessions of Congress, which convened there until moving to Philadelphia in 1790. There was a growing market for portraits of politicians. One noted Connecticut legislator, Oliver Wolcott, Junior (his father would be painted by Earl), had at least a dozen portraits painted of himself, by the best artists of the day—none of which he himself owned. They were given to or commissioned by his political friends and allies, just as he in turn owned the "heads" of numerous fellow Federalists.[24]

Earl brought his English wife with him (mother of the artist Ralph Eleazer Whiteside Earl, who became President Andrew Jackson's court painter), presumably believing that his first wife had died or divorced him. Almost immediately, however, he was thrown into jail at city hall, not for bigamy but for debts owed to two merchants, one of whom had likely subsidized his passage to the U.S. The ineffectiveness of imprisoning small-time debtors was highlighted by Earl's case. How could debtors earn the money to repay creditors from jail? Most went further into debt as their families were left unsupported. Earl became something of a *cause célèbre* for the Society for Relief of Distressed Debtors, which included George Washington as a member. The prominent political figures in the Society worked to liberalize debt laws and their success eventually helped Earl—who still owed twenty-five pounds—be released from prison early in 1788. But before then, the members of the Society, their wives and friends, visited Earl in jail to sit for their portraits, to help him earn money. This was perhaps no sacrifice on their part since at the time he was the most talented among the small group of portraitists in the city.

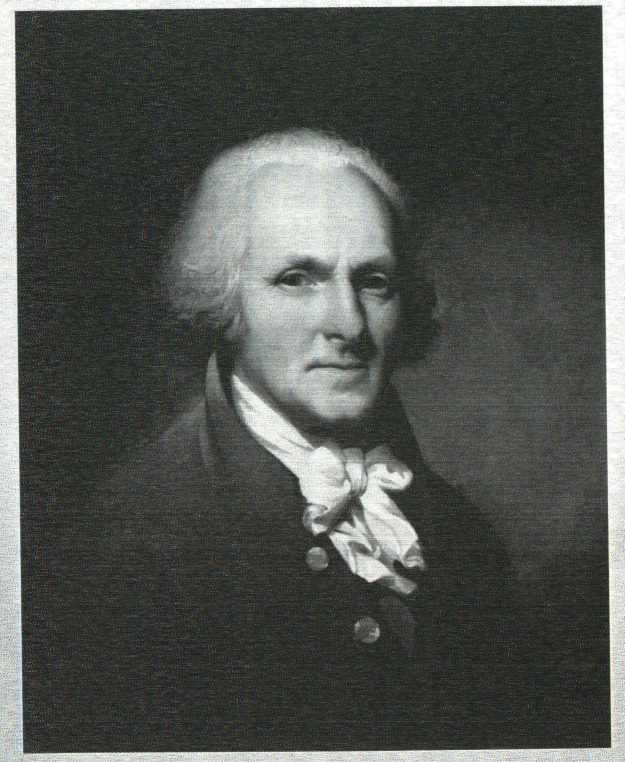
Mathew Clarkson was one of these visitors. Like the other twenty known portraits by Earl from this New York period, Clarkson descended from a family that had held high positions in New York for generations. He served as an officer in the Revolutionary War, including witnessing the surrender of Cornwallis. He was also cosmopolitan. In 1787, the date of his portrait, he had just returned from a mission to France on behalf of the University of the State of New York, where he was presented at court. As a friend of Alexander Hamilton, at the time a New York lawyer, Clarkson himself was becoming increasingly politically active, and was elected to the New York Assembly in 1789, where he introduced a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in the state. By 1802 he was a banker and an unsuccessful Federalist candidate for the U.S. Senate. He was urbane, well-educated, fashionable, and aristocratic, even to his sense of *noblesse oblige*.[25] His half-length portrait—for which he probably paid about ten pounds—is typical of Earl's style, which at this point closely resembles that of Gilbert Stuart's or Mather Brown's.

Clarkson wears a sober dark blue coat paired with a striped buff vest and white stock, whose edges are somewhat flamboyantly delineated, a style of dress that nearly duplicates Thomas Jefferson's in Brown's portrait. He rests one arm firmly on a table, establishing a solid presence close to the viewer (he fills the canvas), but relaxes back into the curved shape of a standard English-style upholstered chair (with a gilt edge), against a plain dark background. His hair is powdered and tied in a queue and he looks directly at the viewer with a pleasant expression. But the restrained attire is paired with a painterly technique—subtle modeling, quick short brushstrokes, and layers of warm glazing—that evokes the romantic ideal of the gentleman rather than the solid merchant.



Matthew Clarkson. Ralph Earl. Oil on canvas, 1787. GM 0126.1010.

[Clarkson] rests one arm firmly on a table, establishing a solid presence close to the viewer (he fills the canvas), but relaxes back into the curved shape of a standard English-style upholstered chair...



Self Portrait. Charles Willson Peale. Oil on canvas, c.1791. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

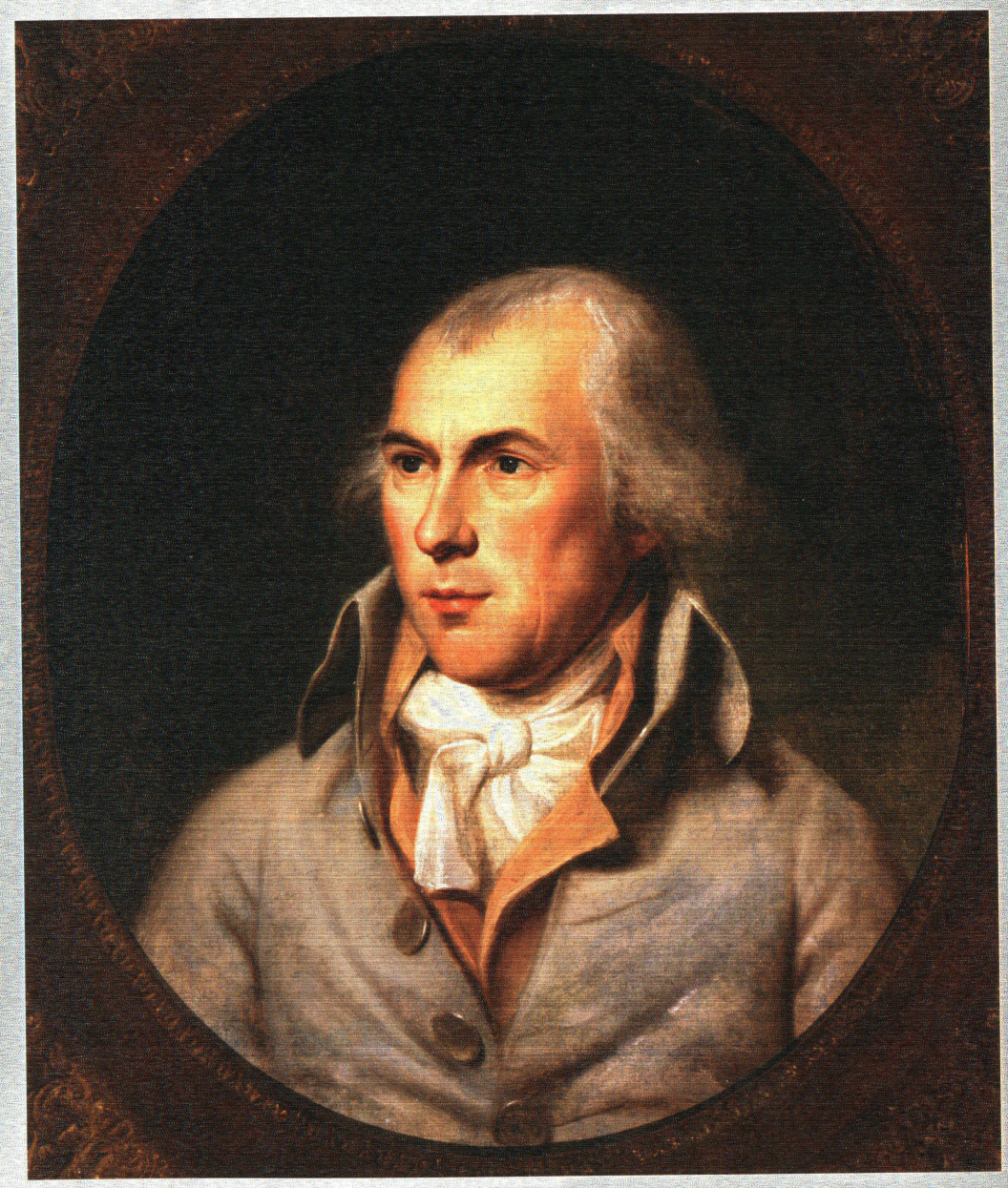
After his tribulations in New York, Earl left for the river valleys of Connecticut and western Massachusetts, where he painted in the style he is best known for today. In these smaller communities, which may have had less tolerance for aristocratic airs, he adopted a harder, more linear and more literal style. It was perhaps preferred by the wealthy men and women who posed for portraits that depicted them in their shops or with the Old Testament open on their laps.

By contrast, Charles Willson Peale realized the potential profit in a collection of portraits of the "great and good" if exhibited outside the private or domestic sphere. Peale believed that the new nation should have a public art that would foster a new republican culture. As a successful portraitist (from 1769 to1791 he did 686 portraits) who had imbibed West's ideals about art, he understood that history painting stood a slim chance of success in a society so dedicated to portraits.[26] Accordingly, around 1779, he initiated his assemblage of painted busts of revolutionary heroes—his Gallery of Great Men or Principal Characters, displayed in a long skylit room in his house in Philadelphia, charging twenty-five cents for admission. By 1827, when he died, his museum had over 200 likenesses of Americans and Europeans sympathetic to the new republic and its principles.[27]

Peale's goal was to make portrait painting a form of history painting, designed to teach the public virtue. For Peale, that meant that he would never "paint the Portrait of a bad man," and it's clear that women, people of color, and members of the working class also lacked sufficient virtue to be included in his pantheon.[28] There was one African-American in the museum. Peale's slave, Moses Williams, cut profile portraits for visitors with a machine called the physiognotrace; he made over 8,000 silhouettes (at one cent each, frames extra) in one year. This feature of the museum, where individual visitors could witness the production of a minutely accurate representation of their own profile, was undoubtedly far more popular than Peale's painted portraits, especially as he began to include relatively obscure (at least to a general population) heads of European scientists.[29]

The format for these portraits of republican (dedicated to the public interest) virtue was uniform—reflecting the fact that Peale chose it, rather than the sitter. Each showed the man's head and shoulders projecting toward the viewer, with the implication that his body was in the foreground, close to the picture plane. The men were usually in civilian dress, with a strong light emphasizing their forehead and intellect against a simple background. Through such a self-effacing presentation, Peale suggested that these leaders of the republic were self-effacing themselves, that they represented the people or a principle rather than their own interests as private individuals. Peale's direct, naturalistic style of crisply delineated and detailed faces, stood in contrast to the idealizing and aggrandizing techniques he learned in England with West, and was meant to create a distinctly American kind of state portrait, one that didn't rely on worldly symbols of rank and power.[30] Like the plain style of dress adopted by Temple Franklin and Clarkson, he deliberately chose a mode of painting whose illusionism had associations with the low, with still-life's literal reproduction of nature, to suggest that he (and the men shown) were artlessly natural and truthful. For if great men were fictionalized, as English modes of idealized portraits recommended, how would one know how to emulate their character? Peale would show them plainly, as they were. As he wrote to an early patron, "nature is the best Picture to Coppy, and I do not regret the Loss of the Anticks [antiques], or the works of a Raphael and Corregea, since I am obliged dayly to portray the finest forms."[31] Peale's "one rude line from nature" implicitly rejected a European (and colonial) past or tradition in favor of an American present.

Peale arguably did compromise his truthfulness to nature. In order to make moral virtues evident in men's features without classicizing them, he relied on a system of physiognomy in which external appearances were understood to be produced by an inner principle. A firm mouth reflected firmness in character. A faint smile indicated the benevolent attitude of a man who acted for the general good. A clear distinct arch for the eyebrows signaled greatness. Even the composition, a pyramidal form created by shoulders and head, evoked stability and composure.[32] By 1786, Peale had begun adding natural specimens to his portrait gallery, in an effort to make his museum "a world in miniature." A watercolor of his gallery shows the portraits of Jefferson, Washington, Adams, and many others, ranked in uniform hierarchical rows above literal still-lifes of stuffed birds and cases of minerals. Nature was exhibited here—its chaos eliminated by a rational system of classification—for study of its underlying eternal principles, which no artist or "copier can corrupt."[33] Biographical labels in turn chronicled the men's achievements, which were the result of their own (here revealed) nature. The effect, overall, was of a national and natural unity that rose above politics; a visual equivalent to James Madison's argument in the Federalist papers



James Madison. Charles Willson Peale. Oil on canvas, 1792. GM 0126.1006.

26 David Ward, *Charles Willson Peale: Art and Selfhood in the Early Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) 48. See also Evans, *Benjamin West and his American Students*, 37-47. There are numerous biographies and studies of Peale, who left extensive papers. On the struggles of history painters from West's studio, including John Vanderlyn, see also Wayne Craven, "The Grand Manner in Early Nineteenth-Century American Painting: Borrowings from Antiquity, the Renaissance, and the Baroque," *American Art Journal*, 11: 2 (Apr. 1979) 4-43.

27 Edgar Richardson et al, *Charles Willson Peale and His World*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1982) 60-87.

28 Peale quoted in Brandon Brame Fortune, "Charles Willson Peale's Portrait Gallery: Persuasion and the Plain Style," *Word & Image* 6:4 (Oct.-Dec. 1990) 308-324; 309. On the relatively restricted audience for Peale's Museum, despite its democratic openness to anyone with 25 cents for admission, see David Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

29 Wendy Bellion, "The Mechanization of Likeness in Jeffersonian America," web.mit.edu/comm-forum/papers/bellion.html. Posted December 19, 1999.

30 See Brame Fortune, "Charles Willson Peale's Portrait Gallery," especially.

31 Peale quoted in Ward, *Charles Willson Peale*, 39.

32 Brame Fortune, "Charles Willson Peale's Portrait Gallery."

33 Peale quoted in Laura Rigal, *The American Manufactory: Art, Labor and the World of Things in the Early Republic*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998) 96. See also Roger Stein, "Charles Willson Peale's Expressive Design: *The Artist in his Museum*," *Prospects* VI (1981) 139-185. Ward, *Charles Willson Peale*, 108.

34 Quoted in Brame Fortune, "Charles Willson Peale's Portrait Gallery," 317.

35 Quoted in Harold Holzer, *Washington and Lincoln Portrayed: National Icons in Popular Prints* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1993) 6.

36 The Stuart portrait was the Vaughan portrait, named after its patron. Charles Willson Peale named all his children, girls and boys, after artists or scientists.

37 Ward, *Charles Willson Peale*, 46.

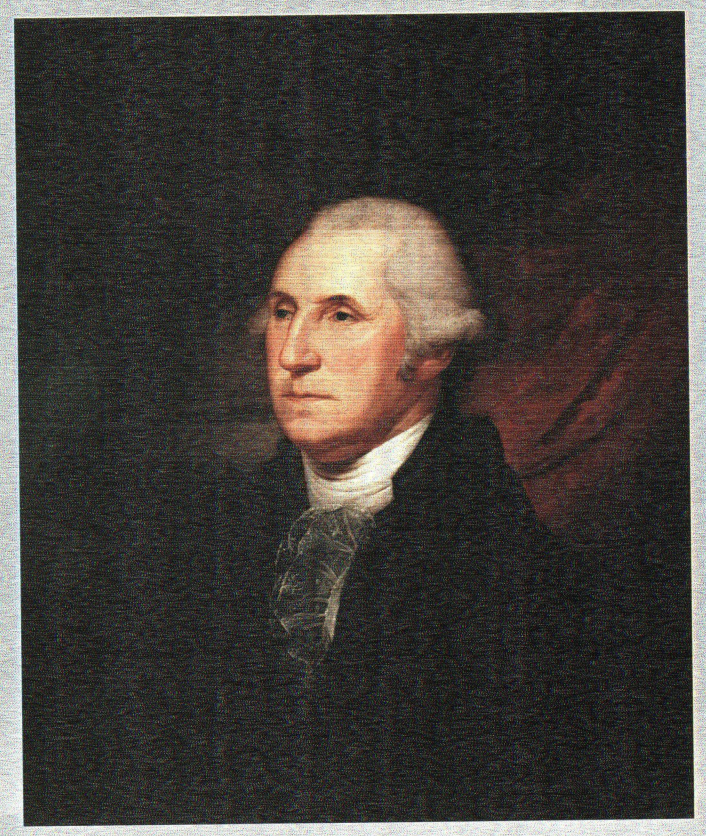
38 Lillian Miller and Carol Eaton Hevner, *In Pursuit of Fame: Rembrandt Peale, 1778-1860* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992) 31-33, 142-152, 248-251. Peale in the 18th century advertised about seven guineas for a bust, twenty for a half length, and forty for a full length.

that the competition between men and factions in the republic would preclude development of dominance by any one.

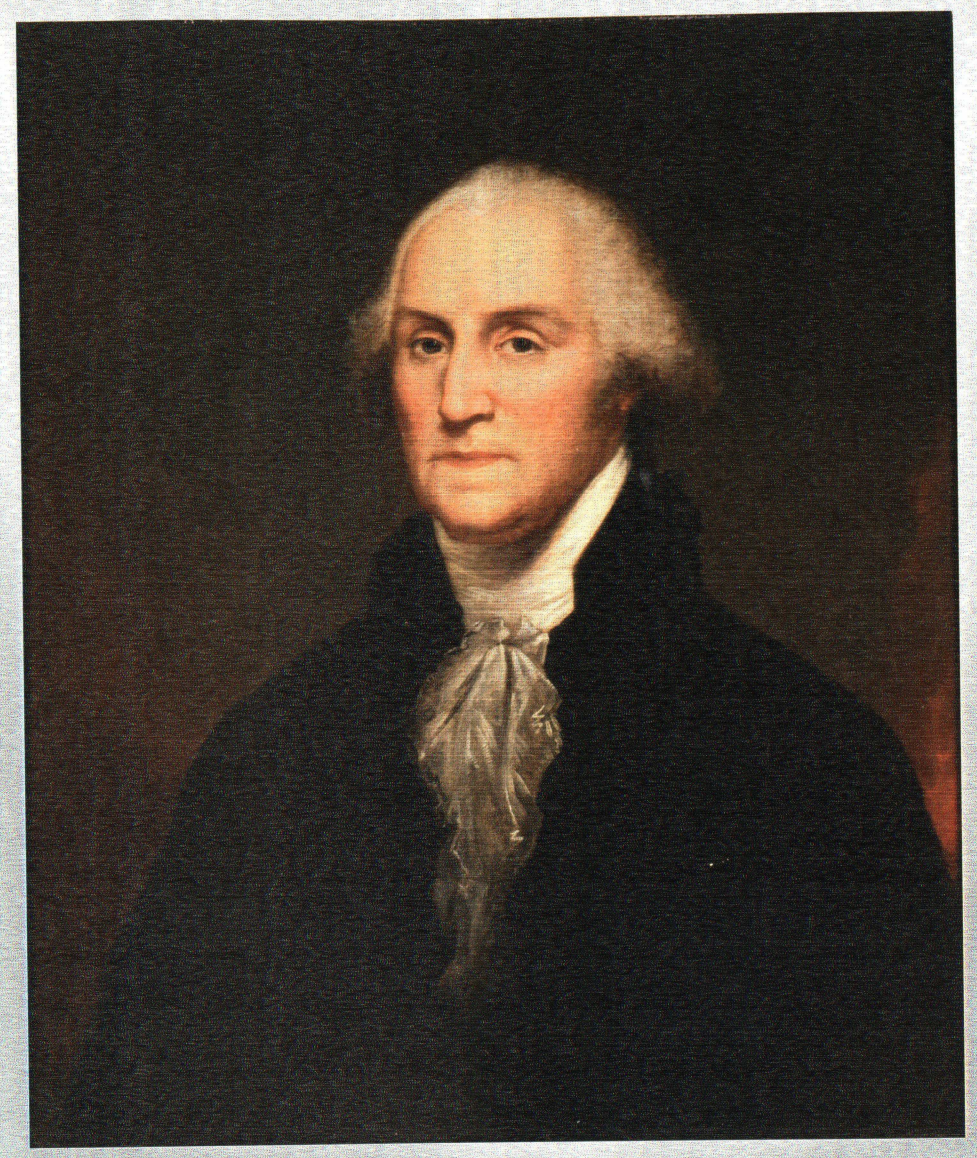
The format of Madison's portrait at the Gilcrease, including its painted inset oval frame, identifies it as painted for Peale's Museum in Philadelphia. Madison was a member of Peale's Board of Visitors (Trustees). In 1792 he was in the audience with Jefferson and Hamilton when Peale delivered a lecture on his "design" for the museum: to preserve likenesses with a fidelity akin to taxidermy. Portraits, for him, were akin to actual relics.[34] In Madison's, he evokes a sense of a focused intellect and an air of refinement in accord with the Madison White House's elegant and luxurious Neoclassicism.

Peale's at least seventy portraits of George Washington were also part of his project to use art to create a democratic republican culture. More than anyone else, even in an age growing rapidly more partisan, Washington embodied the shared principles of the new republic. As one European diplomat observed with a touch of disdain, "Every American considers it his sacred duty to have a likeness of Washington in his home, just as we have images of God's saints."[35] Peale, who had more life sittings with the first President than any other artist, created portraits of him for both private and public collections. The Gilcrease likeness appears to be based on the last time Washington posed for Peale, in 1795, a sitting from which the artist did at least eight replicas. Washington had, earlier in that year, sat for Gilbert Stuart, who had just arrived in Philadelphia from Dublin, specifically to paint Washington. The praise for Stuart and his resulting portrait—as well as his success getting commissions from the Philadelphia elite—influenced how both Charles and his seventeen year old son Rembrandt, the latter doing his first life portrait, would perceive Washington at their own sitting.[36]

The initial portrait from this 1795 session was akin to the plain style of Peale's museum specimens, though Washington's turned head, indirect gaze and position farther back in pictorial space made him a less forceful presence than in earlier depictions. Peale's



Portrait of George Washington.
Charles Willson Peale. Oil on canvas, c.1795.
GM 0126.1013.



George Washington. Rembrandt Peale.
Oil on canvas, c.1795. GM 0126.1005.

Rembrandt Peale's portrait at this 1795 sitting was more veristic and forceful than either his father's or Stuart's, articulating Washington's irregular features and signs of aging.

simplification of forms in the portrait, to eliminate bumps and wrinkles and other such signs of aging, creates a more lofty portrait. This is akin to Stuart's reserved image of Washington, where the brushwork creates a palpable effect of soft flesh but nevertheless erases detail. In the Gilcrease version, Peale added a hint of blue sky, a stone column (classical emblem of order and fortitude), and red curtain, as Stuart occasionally did, which creates an even greater sense of spatial atmosphere around the hero. This softened Peale's linear style, but also distanced Washington from the viewer. Nevertheless, as is true for almost all of the elder Peale's pictures of Washington, the effect of the pyramidal composition—the placement of the body—is still that of a physically powerful man. One of Charles Willson Peale's anecdotes of a visit to Mount Vernon recalls Washington's feat of strength: he threw an iron bar farther than any of his guests, without even removing his coat.[37] The sheer physical stamina necessary for success in the eighteenth century generally—not just in the military—was one of the features of Washington that attracted Peale, who himself remained vigorous and energetic until his death in 1827.[38]

Rembrandt Peale's portrait at this 1795 sitting was more veristic and forceful than either his father's or Stuart's, articulating Washington's irregular features and signs of



General George Washington and His Family. George E. Perine. Engraving. GM 1526.949.



Mt. Vernon from the book *The Stranger in America: Containing Observations Made During a Long Residence in that Country* by Charles William Janson, 1807. GM 2576.2412.

aging. Like Stuart, he played up some of the tactile quality of the pouching of flesh around ruddy cheeks, but his expression is more determined and direct. Rembrandt made ten to twelve copies of this portrait, and throughout his subsequent career experimented with various combinations of his and his father's versions of the sitting.[39] The Gilcrease *Portrait of Washington* by Rembrandt Peale is an example of this. It combines the direct gaze of Rembrandt's original, with the spatial distancing of his father's; the downward curve of the nose of his rendition, the muted double chin of his father's. Overall, it suggests a more active, commanding figure.

Rembrandt's most famous version of Washington's portrait was the irreverently named "Porthole Portrait" of 1824, which turned the oval framing device visible in Madison's portrait into a *trompe l'oeil* illusion of an actual stone frame standing between the viewer and Washington. Washington, captured by the frame, appears in the ancient Roman role of *patriae pater*, father of his country, suited for display in public buildings. Rembrandt hoped that Congress would buy it, and they did, though not until 1832. Rembrandt himself called it a Standard Likeness. Developing the technique of earlier images like the Gilcrease portrait, it is a composite formed from elements of all the best portraits, busts, medallions and prints. This method was criticized as resulting in an invented portrait and a certain resulting blandness of character, rather than one faithful to nature. Rembrandt tried to counter this by soliciting testimony to his accuracy from men who had known Washington. He in part succeeded, as he went on to create seventy-nine versions of this portrait, including a lithograph, and toured the country lecturing on his portrait, with the visual aid of his copies of other artists' versions of Washington.[40]

Rembrandt Peale was competing with Stuart's already ubiquitous Athenaeum portrait of 1796—as Peale said in his lecture, "time had almost consecrated the very faults of Stuart's Portrait . . if Washington were to rise from the dead and not to resemble this Portrait, he would be received as an impostor."[41] But Peale's effort to create an authoritative portrayal through standardization and repetition, however popular it was with the public, did not win him accolades among the artistic elite. Politics played a role in this. In the 1820s, the cult of Washington was stimulated both by Lafayette's triumphal tour of America in 1824, and by Andrew Jackson's ascent to power. Jackson, the leader of the Democrats, tried to claim the founder's mantle—the new war hero and the old. Rembrandt Peale was probably sympathetic to Jackson, as his father had been a Jeffersonian Democrat in his own day—though Charles Willson Peale had been savvy enough to include Federalists like Madison and Hamilton on his Board. Yet many artists and art patrons were Federalists (and later Whigs) who despised Jackson's willingness to cater to an expanded electorate and saw Peale's promotional efforts as equally indecorous. The Federalists helped preserve Stuart's vision of a more aged, sage-like character, rather than the vigorously commanding general.[42]

John Vanderlyn also painted portraits of Washington—and several of Andrew Jackson—during this period. A native New Yorker (born in Kingston) and the protegé of Jefferson's Vice-President, Aaron Burr, he was a conservative Democrat like Rembrandt Peale. Vanderlyn was the first American painter to study in Paris, rather than with West in London. There he imbibed a version of French political liberalism and Neoclassicism that explicitly rejected the British tradition of painterly surfaces and aristocratic elegance epitomized by Gilbert Stuart. His early and most famous paintings of Roman heroes and Greek or American heroines have enamel-smooth surfaces, sharp contours, and hard sculptural bodies.[43]

When Vanderlyn returned to New York City in 1815, he seemed poised for success. His only real competition in the field of history painting—aimed at creating a monumental American art, a national mythology—was an aging Federalist painter, John Trumbull, who

39. Miller and Hevner, *In Pursuit of Fame*, 248-251. See also John A. Mahey, "The Studio of Rembrandt Peale," *American Art Journal*, 1: 2 (Autumn 1969) 20-40. In Stuart's and both Peale's portraits from the 1795 sitting, Washington wears the simple black frock coat and jabot (neckcloth) of the republican statesman.

40. See Miller and Hevner, *In Pursuit of Fame*, 142-152, 279-282. See also David C. Ward, "Celebration of Self: The Portraiture of Charles Willson Peale and Rembrandt Peale, 1822-27," *American Art*, 7:1 (Winter 1993) 8-27.

41. Rembrandt Peale, *Portrait of Washington*, (Philadelphia, 1824?) 7-8.

42. See especially Carol Eaton Soltis, "'In Sympathy with the Heart': Rembrandt Peale, an American Artist and the Traditions of European Art," PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2000, vol. 1: 29-62, vol 2: 431-480.

43. William Oedel, "John Vanderlyn: French Neoclassicism and the Search for an American Art," PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1981. Rembrandt Peale also studied in France and met Vanderlyn there.

44 On Trumbull, see Helen Cooper, *The Hand and Spirit of a Painter*, (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1982), and Patricia Burnham, "John Trumbull, Historian: The Case of the Battle of Bunker's Hill," in Patricia Burnham and Lucretia Giese, eds., *Redefining American History Painting*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 37-53.

45 Oedel, "John Vanderlyn," 433.

46 Salvatore Mondello, *The Private Papers of John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), American Portrait Painter*, (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) 66-95.

47 Quoted in Marc Miller, "Lafayette's Farewell Tour and American Art," in *Lafayette: Hero of Two Worlds: The Art and Pageantry of His Farewell Tour of America, 1824-1825*, (New York: Queens Museum, 1989) 91-194; 145.

had been called to Washington D.C. to fulfill a prestigious commission for paintings of the Revolutionary War for the new Capitol Building Rotunda. Trumbull had studied with West and inherited the older artist's concept of a series of historical pictures of the War for Independence. Though today his *Signing of the Declaration of Independence* is famous, others in his series, such as the *Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill* or the *Death of General Montgomery at the Battle of Quebec*, have not become national icons and were not included in the Capitol Rotunda. This is partly due to Trumbull's pre-nationalist concept of historical art. That is, he chose battles that were American defeats, and his heroes—including British officers—displayed universal qualities of valor, possessed by all officers and gentlemen, not any recognizably specific national character.[44]

But by the time Vanderlyn embarked on historical paintings in the U.S., taste for idealistic and allegorical Neoclassical French art had begun to wane. No longer a sister republic, France had restored both its monarchy and state-sponsored Catholicism. When Vanderlyn exhibited a panorama of Versailles, its vision of French clarity, regularity, and state-supported art didn't bring in the money he expected. Reviewers suggested that he might have more luck with views of American Revolutionary era battles, including likenesses of the officers involved, which would be a more national and profitable subject.[45] Vanderlyn tried in 1819 to get a commission for a painting of the Battle of New Orleans, but ended up mostly doing portraits of Democrats like James Monroe and Andrew Jackson.[46] Monroe's 1824 invitation to the Marquis de Lafayette, the human symbol of America's alliance with France, to visit all twenty-four states in the Union he had helped create, must have seemed like an ideal opportunity for Vanderlyn (and for his colleagues) to create historical pictures.

Like Washington, Lafayette was a hero to both the Democrats and the Whigs (the former Federalists). Festivities to honor him during his visit included pageants, banquets, parades, balls, receptions and portraits. As one state commission for a portrait of Lafayette put it, "in viewing him, the glory of our country, the principles of the revolution…the precious value of liberty, are kindred ideas." Portraits of the man should heighten the conviction of those principles in the viewer. Accordingly, close to twenty original life portraits were painted during Lafayette's thirteen month tour; to put that in perspective, Jefferson was only portrayed from life twenty-six times in his whole career.[47] Vanderlyn competed unsuccessfully for some of these commissions in his home state, New York, but did not get a coveted life sitting. Still, his *Washington and Lafayette at the Battle of Brandywine* was probably stimulated by the General's visit and the attendant celebrations, which were often marked by a display of war relics and tours of battle sites. His choice of a subject, though, is in the Trumbull tradition of choosing noted American defeats.



Washington and Lafayette at the Battle of Brandywine. John Vanderlyn. Oil on canvas, ca.1777. GM 0126.1018.

Monroe's 1824 invitation to the Marquis de Lafayette, the human symbol of America's alliance with France, to visit all twenty-four states in the Union he had helped create, must have seemed like an ideal opportunity for Vanderlyn (and for his colleagues) to create historical pictures.

48 Quoted in Thomas McGuire, "British Images of War at Brandywine and the Tredyffrin Encampment," *Pennsylvania Heritage*, 28:4 (2002) 24-31; 27.

49 Quoted in James Gaines, *For Liberty and Glory: Washington, Lafayette and Their Revolutions* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007) 71.

50 Christine Messing and John Rudder, "The Marquis de Lafayette and George Washington," *Antiques & Fine Art*, (Oct.-Nov. 2006) 204-209. Charles Willson Peale, in 1784—the occasion of Lafayette's visit to Mount Vernon—did a portrait of the two men at the battle of Yorktown for the Maryland Statehouse. Houdon sculpted Lafayette's bust for the Virginia state legislature's new rotunda, built according to Jefferson's Neoclassical design, to accompany Houdon's statue of Washington.

The Battle of Brandywine was fought when British General Howe sailed from New York to march on the rebels' capital, Philadelphia. His army met Washington's on opposing banks of Brandywine creek. Poor intelligence reports meant that Washington was unaware that the greater portion of Howe's troops, under Lord Cornwallis, had moved to the north and were planning to attack his flank. Washington had arranged his troops to cover the fords on the Brandywine; he was wrongly told that the river was not crossable upstream. By the time he heard the sound of Cornwallis's guns on the afternoon of September 11, 1777, it was too late to send effective reinforcements. He sent the nineteen-year-old Lafayette to join the defenders under General John Sullivan, but Washington's men—though they fought valiantly, often to the death where it meant losing precious cannons—were overpowered and made a chaotic nighttime retreat. Three hundred American soldiers deserted; four hundred were captured as prisoners; twice as many Americans as British died. Even worse, eight days later Philadelphia was taken, with Congress fleeing just ahead of the British forces. Lafayette, who was wounded, was for the first time mentioned in Washington's dispatches on the battle, but Washington himself was widely criticized for having been out-generaled.

Vanderlyn's painting does not show much of the battle itself (the front was a mile wide), only suggesting in the background some soldiers on foot and on horse, and some buildings on fire. The Brandywine seems to flow through the center of the painting, with the officers' horses springing across the ford, reins loose. Instead, as in a portrait, the focus is on Washington, in the very center, framed by trees and the horses' heads, gazing at the viewer as he calmly and impassively rides forward. There is perhaps a deliberate contrast with the famous portrayal of *Napoleon Crossing the St. Bernard Pass*, by French Neoclassicist Jacques Louis David, which was undoubtedly known to Vanderlyn. It hung in the foyer of the estate of Napoleon's older brother, Joseph, who lived outside Philadelphia. David exaggerates Napoleon's prowess, balanced on a rearing horse amid the Alps, into near caricature; by contrast, Vanderlyn's image of a general in command of himself and others seems that of a realist. Lafayette, in profile, follows Washington's lead, and his forward-looking gaze directs the viewer back to the general, but Lafayette is closer to the viewer and rides a white horse, which helps him compete visually. The two men's blue and buff uniforms, like those of the soldiers behind them, are crisp and neat, though Vanderlyn does not emphasize the glorious pageantry of the charge.

The crimson-coated British grenadiers, by contrast, wore fifteen-inch-tall bearskin caps, ornamented with black and silver plates, and on their charge into battle were accompanied by flags and nearly one hundred musicians. One grenadier wrote of the experience of riding into battle at Brandywine that "I would not exchange those three minutes of rapture to avoid ten thousand times the danger." [48] By contrast, when Washington rather grimly paraded his troops through the streets of Philadelphia before the battle, John Adams observed that the men did not yet have "quite the air of soldiers." [49] Washington rode first in this parade, with Lafayette by his side, followed by other officers. In lieu of a common uniform the men put green springs in their hats and according to Adams, did not have the knack of stepping in time with the drums. Perhaps it is this parade scene that Vanderlyn conflates with the battle itself, where Washington and Lafayette did not fight side by side, as they would in later battles.

The choice to pair the two men, however, emphasized their closeness and friendship, which was indeed almost that of father and son. [50] Politically, it tied Washington to the radical tradition of French republican liberalism rather than to the British aristocratic ethos favored by the Federalists who were also trying to claim Washington's heritage. When President Jackson in 1828-1832 was facing the nullification crisis, brought on by southern states' unhappiness with high tariffs and thus their effort to nullify the federal law, images of



Lafayette from the book *The Marquis de La Fayette in the American Revolution* by Charlemagne Tower Jr., 1895. GM 2516.584.



the militant, youthful Washington and Lafayette symbolized the original fight for the Union, to which Jackson too gave first allegiance. Vanderlyn was in D.C. by 1831 and looking for commissions; it was at this time that he was selected to paint a full-length portrait of George Washington (the head to be taken from Stuart's portrait at the Boston Athaeneum) to be paired with French artist Ary Scheffer's portrait of Lafayette in the Capitol. In 1839, he finally received a coveted commission for a Capitol Rotunda painting, and he returned to Paris to paint his *Landing of Columbus*, whose composition glorifying the conquest is marred by a different aspect of Jacksonian politics—the policy of Indian Removal. Though likely not for that reason, Vanderlyn's effort was not well-received, and his reputation declined.

By contrast, Thomas Sully continued the eighteenth-century British portrait tradition into the nineteenth century with such success—he did more than 2000 portraits—that he was commissioned to do a portrait of Queen Victoria in 1837. Sully was born in England (unlike all of the other colonial-era artists represented in the Gilcrease collection) and as a child emigrated to Charleston with his family, most of them actors. His miniature paintings caught the attention of the manager of the Park Theatre in New York City, who urged him to come to that city. There he met influential artists (John Trumbull) and writers (Washington Irving) who wrote him introductions to families in Philadelphia. They included founders of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, like the Gratz and Levy families, who in turn helped introduce the charming and amiable Sully not just to other wealthy merchants, but to fellow supporters of the arts, like Joseph Hopkinson, first president of the Academy. Sully later rented Charles Willson Peale's old rooms adjoining Independence Hall and eventually became a partner in a long-lived commercial art gallery in Philadelphia.

The Hopkinson family had a long history of both ardent patriotism and interest in education and the arts. Joseph Hopkinson's grandfather, Thomas (who was painted by Feke) was a lawyer, merchant, and scientist; he was a friend of Benjamin Franklin and a founder of the University of Pennsylvania. His son Francis (Joseph's father) was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a poet with a flair for satire. Joseph continued the family tradition, becoming a judge and in 1814, a Federalist congressman. He was a poet and musician too, like his father. His best known composition is the lyrics to "Hail, Columbia," written in 1798, whose chorus runs: "Firm—United let us be/Rallying round our Liberty,/ As a Band of Brothers join'd,/Peace and Safety we shall find."[51] He married the daughter of the first governor of Pennsylvania, Emily Mifflin. Emily's father Thomas had similarly been active during the Revolution (an aide to George Washington and president of Congress); his portrait was painted by West, Peale, Stuart, and Trumbull.

Hopkinson's "Hail, Columbia" celebrated Washington. In one of his pamphlets from the same year, however, he declared, "France is our enemy."[52] The novelist James Fenimore Cooper helps explain why Sully's style, so far from French Neoclassicism, appealed to staunch Federalists. Famously, Cooper hated Jefferson and Jefferson's concept of democracy. But when he saw Sully's 1823 portrait of Jefferson, he was stunned. Here was Jefferson as "a gentleman" with "grace and ease," and not a trace of repulsive democratic radicalism—often indicated in portraits by flyaway hair or loosened coat.[53] Sully's gift was the graceful, or in the words of a contemporary critic: "He has an extremely dexterous way of flattering, without seeming to do so; of crystallizing better moments, and fixing…an air of breeding, a high tone, and a genteel carriage."[54] It was a style and effect close to Stuart's, and before settling in Philadelphia, he had spent about three weeks in Stuart's studio in Boston. The basic technique he developed there was not subsequently much altered by his stay in England in 1809–10.

Emily Hopkinson's portrait is typical of Sully's style and his portraits of women in particular. In this half-length portrait, Hopkinson rests her arm on a draped pedestal, in

Mrs. Joseph Hopkinson. Thomas Sully. Oil on canvas, 1808. GM 0126.2107.

51 Joseph Hopkinson, *Song Adapted to the President's March* (Philadelphia, J. Ormrod, 1798).

52 Joseph Hopkinson, *What is our situation? And What Our Prospects?* (Philadelphia, 1798), 8. But he didn't hate imperial Frenchmen; like Sully, he was affected by the cult of Napoleon and they became good friends with Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother and the former emperor of Italy and Spain. Joseph Bonaparte, who owned David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, was in residence in an estate outside Philadelphia (open to the public on Sundays) from 1815-1831. On their interaction, see John Clubbe, *Byron, Sully, and the Power of Portraiture* (London: Ashgate, 2005) 161-181.

53 Cooper quoted in Clubbe, *Byron*, 7.

54 Henry T. Tuckerman quoted in Alan Fern, "Foreword," in Monroe Fabian, *Mr. Sully, Portrait Painter* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983) 6.

front of a romantic, swirling, cloudy background; the brilliant colors of Sully's palette (reds, yellows, warm ambers, and greens) and his loose brushwork convey dramatic flair and spontaneity. The drapery on her head and the thin glove she holds (she wears the other) may suggest she has just come in or is going out on a social visit. As a married woman whose portrait would stay in the home, her sheer and low-cut white dress, in an up-to-date Grecian style, announces that she has merged luxurious sensuality and individual freedom with classical restraint. Another of Sully's Federalist sitters, the wealthy banker (and Jackson foe) Nicholas Biddle was so strongly associated with this revival of "refined simplicity" that he was sometimes called Nick the Greek.[55] Contemporaries agreed that Sully's weakness was anatomical structure and conveying a strong sense of actual physical presence, but felt that his "freedom of touch and airiness of outline" were particularly appropriate for women, with their natural delicacy and loveliness. Critic John Neal called Sully's portraits of women "oftentimes poems,—full of grace and tenderness."[56]

The Hopkinsons must have been pleased, as Joseph was painted by Sully twice (once for Dartmouth College, which he had defended before the Supreme Court), at more than twice the cost of the thirty dollars paid for Emily's smaller painting.[57] At Hopkinson's death in 1842, Sully was invited—and declined—to replace him as president of the Pennsylvania Academy of Art. In Hopkinson's 1810 address to the Academy, he had encouraged his fellow patrons to buy art because it offered more lasting fame than a fast carriage, new curtains, or a lavish party. In a society without a peerage, he noted, the arts were the route to public honor. Hopkinson, undoubtedly an amiable husband, also acknowledged women's role as patrons and as artists, arguing that their intellect and superior nature qualified them to become artists in a republic.[58] His comments help explain why women artists, relatively rare in the colonial era, went on to have successful careers as professional artists in the nineteenth century, including the daughters, nieces, and granddaughters of Charles Willson Peale, Rembrandt Peale, and Thomas Sully. Indeed the great change in nineteenth-century portraiture is its expansion. Not only was the honorific stature of a portrait bestowed on new classes of sitters, in particular African-Americans, but thanks to art schools like those founded by the Peales, Sully, and Hopkinson, the power of representation itself was made increasingly available to the increasingly diverse citizens of the nation.

55 Clubbe, *Byron*, 153-154. On women's role in classicism, see Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

56 Tuckerman quoted in Fern, "Foreword," 6, John Neal quoted in Clubbe, *Byron*, 107.

57 Francis Hopkinson and Mrs. Francis (Ann Biddle) Hopkinson were also painted in 1834. The price of $30 was a temporary measure that Sully instituted in that first year in Philadelphia. Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully* (New York: Kennedy Graphics, Inc., Da Capo Press Reprint, 1970; 1921) 177-178.

58 Joseph Hopkinson, *Annual Discourse to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts* (Philadelphia, 1810). See also William H. Gerdts, "The American 'Discourses': A Survey of Lectures and Writings on American Art, 1770-1858," *American Art Journal*, 15: 3 (Summer 1983) 61-79, and Lee Schreiber, "The Changing Social Climate, 1790-1810 and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," *The Journal of American Culture* 2:3 (1979), 361–375. On the conflicts between the gentlemen directors of the Academy and artists like Sully and Peale, who founded the breakaway Society of Artists, see Ellen Hickey Grayson, "Art, Audiences and the Aesthetics of Social Order in Antebellum America: Rembrandt Peale's *Court of Death*," (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1995) 27-60.

