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For “One of the Most Genteel Residences in the City”

BERRY B. TRACY *Associate Curator of the American Wing*

The Museum is seldom so fortunate as to acquire a masterpiece of American furniture with a history distinguished in both origin and ownership. The American Wing’s recently purchased card table (Frontispiece and Figure 4), made in Federal New York for the famous diarist and mayor, Philip Hone, by the Paris-trained *ébéniste* Charles-Honoré Lannuier, is a perfect example of decorative art as the ornament of history.

Philip Hone’s life itself epitomizes the emergence of the rich mercantile class and cosmopolitan society that required such furniture. He was born in New York during the last days of the Revolution, on October 25, 1780. His father, also named Philip, was of German-French ancestry and a joiner by trade. He had become a freeman of the city of New York in 1765, and he lived in a modest frame house at the corner of Dutch and John streets. The elder Philip Hone and his wife both died in the yellow-fever epidemic of 1798.

The education of young Philip resembled that of many New Yorkers of the period: “All their studies are reduced to learning to read, write, and count,” observed Perrin du Lac, the French author and local administrator. “Primarily these people are commercially minded; all their thoughts are directed toward making a fortune.” On the first day of the new century, Philip’s elder brother, John, took him into partnership at his auction and commission warerooms. Here they sold a variety of fashionable goods and everyday commodities, including Chinese paintings on glass, French paintings, Manchester woolens, India tea, and New Jersey corn meal. Philip proved to be an energetic businessman, and by September 1801 he was able to buy from his brother an interest in the business. This was probably in readiness for the new responsibilities of family, for on October 1 he married Catharine Dunscomb.

Philip Hone’s little city of New York had never before witnessed such rapid economic growth as it did in the first years of the nineteenth century. Perrin du Lac, writing in 1801, found that “everything in the city is in motion, everywhere the shops resound with the noise of workers. . . . One sees vessels arriving from every part of the world, or ready to depart, and . . . one cannot better describe the opulence of this still new city than to compare it to ancient Tyre, which contemporary authors called the queen of commerce and the sovereign of the seas.” Seven hundred new buildings

Contents

<i>For “One of the Most Genteel Residences in the City”</i>	
BERRY B. TRACY	283
<i>“In the Midst of ‘High Vintage’ ”</i>	
STUART P. FELD	292
<i>A Piece of Great Utility</i>	
JAMES BIDDLE	308

FRONTISPIECE:

Card table owned by Philip Hone, by Charles-Honoré Lannuier (1774-1819). About 1813. Rosewood, bird’s-eye maple, and satinwood, with brass and carved gesso ornament, both gilded; height 31 inches. Funds from various donors, 66.170

ON THE COVER:

A detail of the caryatid on the Lannuier card table illustrated in the Frontispiece and Figure 4



1. *Philip Hone (1780-1851) as a young man. From The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851 (New York, 1927)*

appeared within the year 1804, and in 1805 William Johnson of Newton, New Jersey, looking for a business location, concluded that New York was “the London of America” and would undoubtedly “take the lead of business to any other place in the United States.” From 1800 to 1810 the population increased by 36,000 to a total of 96,400, exceeding that of any other city in America.

The auction and commission sales rooms of Hone, Smith, & Hone, flourishing in this climate, were “the first in the business, uniformly prosperous, and in the enjoyment of unbounded credit.” In 1815 the firm’s net profits were \$159,007, of which Philip’s share was \$55,652.

He had, in the first twenty years of his good fortune, begun his family of three sons and three daughters, accumulated one of the most important private libraries and art collections in New York, become known as a preceptor of fashion and the intellectual life of the city, and built the first of his new houses, at 44 Cortland Street. The house, completed in 1813, was, in his words, “one of the most genteel residences in the city.” Doubtless it was, considering the fashionable elegance and richness of the Lannuier card table. In 1820, realizing that he had amassed a generous competence from his business and numerous investments, he initiated his liberation from continued business by sailing to Europe on a belated cultural tour. On May 10, 1821, he formally withdrew from the auction house to enjoy himself and complete his education.

From 1813 on, the commercial heart of New York had expanded so rapidly that Cortland Street lost its desirability as a residential location. After his return from Europe, Hone purchased an unusually wide lot, thirty-seven by 120 feet, well north of Cortland Street, at 235 Broadway, across from City Hall Park. Here, where the Woolworth Building now stands, he finished in 1822 his second—and largest—new house. It was noted by the young draughtsman and architect-to-be, Alexander Jackson Davis, on his watercolor view of 1826 (Figure 2) as “the best house in New York.” Selling the residence during the real-estate boom of 1836, Hone lamented in his diary, “The splendid rooms, the fine situation, my snug library, well arranged books, handsome pictures, what will become of them?” The answer in part was that the house was converted to shops below, and the chambers above were taken over by the adjacent American Hotel. Promptly buying a lot, twenty-nine feet wide and 130 feet deep, still further north, Hone began the construction of his third and last residence. In November

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of the same year he noted that “my new house, corner of Broadway and Jones Street, is under cover. The work has gone on well . . . and I think I shall have one of the best and most commodious houses in the city.”

Unfortunately for the antiquarian of today, Hone, like most journalists of his time, made little or no specific mention of the furniture and decoration in his own houses or the scores of others to which he was frequently invited. He was, before and long after his term as mayor in 1825-1826, a leader of the richest and most distinguished New York society. His “handsome” collection of pictures was listed as early as 1834 by Dunlap in his *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*. But regarding the character of what Hone referred to as his “goods and chattels,” which he moved from one “genteel” house to another, we now have only the evidence of the Lannuier card table.

Hone’s diary, which covers the years 1828 to 1851, is an unrivaled record of the social, artistic, literary, and political life of early nineteenth-century New York, and it makes clear that Hone’s own life was one of affluence, leisure, and elegance. It was natural, therefore, that he should have patronized one of the city’s leading cabinet-makers, Charles-Honoré Lannuier, who numbered among his clients many of New York’s most prominent citizens. One of Hone’s most intimate friends, Daniel Webster, owned a Lannuier writing- and worktable, now in the Winterthur collection, and Stephen Van Rensselaer IV, of whom Hone wrote much, had a splendid ensemble of Lannuier drawing-room furniture (still intact in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art). Peter G. Stuyvesant, from whom the American Wing’s monumental Lannuier pier table (Figure 10) descended, was an old friend of Hone’s and was president of the Historical Society at the time Hone was the first vice-president.



2. *View across City Hall Park, 1826, showing Hone's house between the trees at the right, by Alexander Jackson Davis (1803-1892), American. Ink and watercolor, 13⁵/₈ x 20⁵/₈ inches. Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 54.90.172*



3. *Mixing table owned by Rufus King (1755-1827), bearing a label like Figure 8. 1810-1815. Mahogany and marble, height 28¼ inches. Private collection, New York. Photograph: Taylor & Dull*

Honoré Lannuier's cabinetwork is that of a master craftsman, yet, as is the case with most of our native artisans, very little is known of his personal life. Born on June 27, 1779, in the town of Chantilly, forty miles north of Paris, he was one of nine children, the youngest son of Michel-Cyrille and Marie-Geneviève Lannuier. It is possible that Honoré received his training from his oldest brother, Nicolas, who was admitted to the Paris guild of master cabinetmakers on July 23, 1783; four pieces signed by Nicolas are known, one of which is a handsome commode in the Louis XVI style, exhibited at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. Two other brothers, Maximilien-

Auguste and Jean-Stanislas, came to New York, probably in 1799; at any rate, they were here and working as confectioners when Honoré arrived in 1803. Jean-Stanislas died of yellow fever in 1805; Maximilien-Auguste, who was active in New York's Tammany Society and was a Mason in the French Lodge, died in 1811. Maximilien's son John was a carver, listed at 69 Eldridge in *Longworth's Directory* of 1820-1821. Honoré had one daughter and two sons, but neither son followed the father's trade. Lannuier died young, from tuberculosis, on October 16, 1819.

Lannuier had come to New York at exactly the right moment. On July 15, 1803, he advertised in the *New-York Evening Post*:

Honoré Lannuier, Cabinet Maker, just arrived from France, and who has worked at his trade with the most celebrated Cabinet Makers of Europe, takes the liberty of informing the public, that he makes all kinds of Furniture, Beds, Chairs, &c., in the newest and latest French fashion; and that he has brought for that purpose gilt and brass frames, borders of ornaments, and handsome safe locks, as well as new patterns. He also repairs all kinds of old furniture. He wishes to settle himself in this city, and only wants a little encouragement. Those who choose to favor him with their custom, may apply to Mr. Augustine Lannuier, Confectioner and Distiller, No 100 Broadway. N.B. A good smart Young Man is wanted as an Apprentice.

From 1804 to 1819 he appeared in the New York city directories as "Lannuier, Henry, cabinetmaker, 60 Broad." In 1805-1806 the editors of the New York directory listed the city's cabinetmakers in a separate body for the first time. By way of introduction they remarked: "This curious and useful mechanical art is brought to a very great perfection in this city. The furniture daily offered for sale equals in point of elegance any ever imported from Europe and is scarce equalled in any other city in America."

Because of the extraordinary number of their labeled and documented pieces of exceptional quality that survive today, we know that Lannuier, Duncan Phyfe, and Phyfe's neighbor, Michael Allison, were by 1808 first among those whose work was thus praised.

One of their many contemporaries in the trade, John Hewitt, noted in his ledger in 1811 the comparative measurements of Lannuier's and Phyfe's ornamental wood columns, indicating that these two cabinetmakers were the leading executors of the new classical style. Phyfe's work was exemplary of the familiar Anglo-American versions of this style, which were outlined in the New York cabinet- and chairmaker's books published in New York in 1796, 1802, 1810, 1817, and 1834. The patterns of furniture and piecework described and illustrated in these price books were decided upon by committees of master and journeyman cab-

inetmakers. Their innovations were derived largely from their own English and American training and experience, the London price books, and the individual English design books drawn by Hepplewhite, Shearer, Sheraton, Hope, and Smith.

Lannuier did not ignore the style of his competitors: eleven pieces in the Anglo-American fashion of Phyfe and the price books bear his label. If it were not for the label, in fact, they would be readily attributed to Phyfe or Allison not only because of their excellent quality but also because of their typical "New York style" (Figure 3).

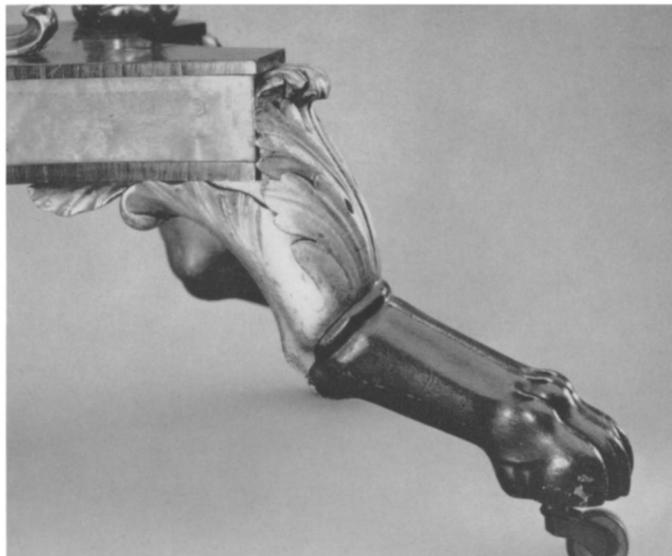
4. Card table owned by Philip Hone





5. Design for a bed. Detail of Plate 128 of *Meubles et Objets de Goût* (Paris, 1802), published by Pierre la Mésangère. Hand-colored engraving, 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 30.80

6. A foot of the card table owned by Philip Hone



All seventy of Lannuier's other labeled and documented works, however, are in a distinctly French taste. Most of the rich French elements of decoration that he was the first to use in New York fell into the footnotes of the early price books: "any different patterns . . . to be paid for in proportion to the above." The "above," being invariably simpler, took less time and less special material to execute. This automatically made his furniture "in the newest and latest French fashion" more costly.

Although in the French fashion, Lannuier's furniture is not simply French. From the styles of the Directoire, Consulat, and early Empire he created a New York Empire style, exceedingly light and delicate compared to French examples, and far closer in spirit to the fashionable furniture of his Anglo-American contemporaries. Philip Hone's card table is a case in point. Its principal decoration—the gilt, winged caryatid (see Figure 4) and the hocked animal leg with *verd antique* finish (Figure 6)—had been illustrated in 1802 in the modish design plates of the French fashion periodical *Meubles et Objets de Goût* (Figure 5). But the table as a whole is testimony to his genius for transmuting the faddish exaggerations of the Paris design books into chaste and handsome forms.

Aside from the predilections of the craftsman, this restraint may also be explained by the fact that folding card tables were not popular in France, as they were in England (where they originated) and in America: thus, precedents for their design would have been English or American. It is also important to note

that the tables were used only secondarily for the popular card games of the time, loo and whist; their primary function was as ornament in the symmetrical room arrangements of the classical era, and for that reason were always made in pairs. Underneath our table are two chalk marks: one, a vendor's, reads "MS/RS each." The second is "136 B," probably leading to a reference in a catalogue or list. Both indicate our table is no exception to the rule and originally had a mate, now lost.

The Hone table is not signed, but there are three pairs of figural tables very similar to ours in form, and differing only in details of finishing and ornament, that are labeled or documented as Lannuier's work. The tables made for Stephen Van Rensselaer (Figure 7), for instance, bear Lannuier's ornate engraved label (Figure 11). The outline of an Empire cheval glass encloses the bilingual message: H^{re} Lannuier, / Cabinet Maker from Paris / Kips is Whare house / of new fashion furniture / Broad Street, N^o 60 / New - York / H^{re} Lannuier, / Ebéniste de Paris, / Tient Fabrique & / Magasin de Meubles / les plus à la Mode, / New-York.

The American Wing's table is embellished with one ormolu mount, whereas the Van Rensselaer tables each display four. But the Van Rensselaer tables are veneered entirely of mahogany, while the Hone table exhibits a rich contrast of woods. On the top of the closed leaf (Figure 4) a dark rosewood frame surrounds a panel of bird's-eye maple, and the same golden wood is repeated on the sides of the platform. When the leaf is opened, a unique touch of richness is revealed: the playing surface is covered with a circle of crimson baize, framed in satinwood. No other of the similar tables shares this decoration; they all have interior surfaces of plain mahogany.

The most significant of the differences between the Hone table and the others are the inlaid brass stars around the outer edge of its folding leaf. They appear on the crest rails of chairs in the Anglo-American style that Lannuier made in 1812 for the new City Hall. They appear again on the aprons of three other pairs of his card tables, also in the Anglo-



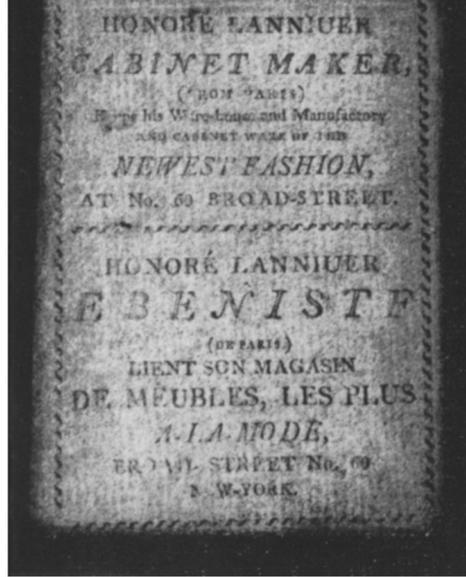
American style. Several of these tables bear a plain, printed label that Lannuier used early in his career, and they are thought to predate by a few years the Empire figural tables with his elaborate engraved label. The stars on the Hone table make it seem probable that the table is earlier than the Van Rensselaer ones, which are known to have been made in 1817. It seems likely that Hone bought it during or shortly after the building of his Cortland Street house in 1813.

The American Wing has two other Lannuier pieces, one earlier than the Hone table, one later, that demonstrate both the development of his style and the consistency of his approach.

The first is a mahogany card table (Figure 9), one of the earliest Lannuier pieces known. It is in the style of the Directoire and Consulat periods, which was essentially a simplification of the Louis XVI style, retaining the tapering, fluted leg but employing gilt-brass feet, molding, and appliqué in preference to carved detail. This was the fashion in Paris just at the time Lannuier came to New York, and had been illustrated in 1799 and 1802 in *Meubles*

7. Card table owned by Stephen Van Rensselaer IV, bearing a label like Figure 11. 1817. Mahogany, with brass and carved gesso ornament, both gilded; height 29¾ inches. Albany Institute of History and Art. Photograph: Robert H. Glenn, Albany

8. One of Lannuier's early printed labels, inside the drawer of the card table illustrated below



9. Card table, by Lannuier. 1805-1810. Mahogany, height 30 inches. Rogers Fund, 46.24



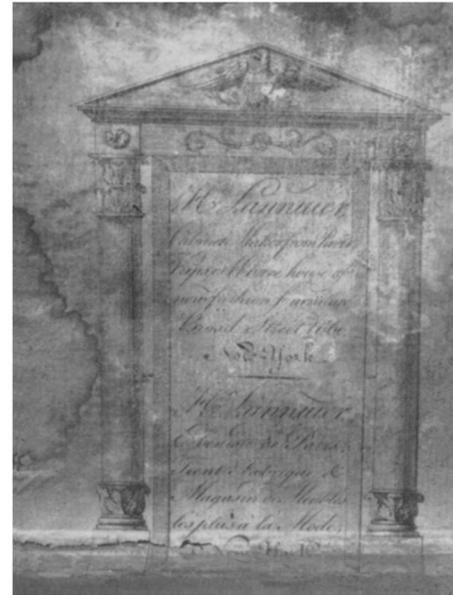
et Objets de Goût. But these designs, like those used in the Hone table, have been refined and lightened: the subtle proportions of the finely turned legs and their relation to the skirt give the table the poised yet stable appearance of the delicate Sheraton reeded-leg card tables made in New York at the same time. The round depressions for candleholders, however, are unique among American classical card tables by Lannuier's contemporaries, and are typical of the refinements that characterize his work. The ormolu wreaths and plaque mounted on the skirt are of the best French *ciselé* quality. The leaf opens on concealed hinges, and is supported by both back legs, which slide out on an inner frame that encases a drawer. In the center of the drawer is pasted one of the two types of his early, printed labels (Figure 8); the misspellings of "Lannuier" and "Tient" are probably printer's errors. This table is exactly like one in the Winterthur collection, which has a history of belonging to Dolly Madison. No other card tables like these by Lannuier are known, and ours may have originally been the mate to the one at Winterthur.

While the design of this table and of the Hone table harks back to the first stage of the archaeological style, or "*le style antique*," in France, and might be considered *retardataire* in relation to the heavier French work of the second decade of the nineteenth century, the third of the Lannuier tables in the Museum (Figure 10) is composed of more familiar Empire motifs. It is the most monumental and elaborate of the eight pier tables known by him, and bears his engraved label (Figure 11) as well as the stamp of his name and adopted city. The hollow gilt-metal caryatids, the ormolu mounts, the die-cut brass banding, and the lion's-paw feet were characteristic of Parisian fashion of 1810 to 1820. Lannuier's integration of these imported elements, and his combination of the rich materials—rosewood, white marble, mirror, and ormolu—are so skillful that no details of manufacture intrude upon the enjoyment of the form. Like other work by Honoré Lannuier, it is the epitome of what is fine and beautiful in the Empire style in America.



10. Pier table, by Lannuier. About 1815. Mahogany, marble, and mirror, with brass and molded gesso ornament, both gilded; height 36 inches. Rogers Fund, 53.181

11. Lannuier's engraved label, on the inside frame above the mirror of the pier table



12. Gilded brass ornament from the pier table

NOTES

The Hone table was purchased in the late nineteenth century by the father of its recent owner, Edith Wetmore, Senator George Peabody Wetmore of Newport and New York, whose father, William Shepard Wetmore (1801-1862) was a New York shipping merchant and friend of Philip Hone.

The Museum's other Lannuier card table retains no early history of ownership. It was sold or

restored by Sypher and Company of New York in the late nineteenth century; it was in the collection of Benjamin Flayderman of Boston and was purchased by the Museum in the sale of W. C. Leigh.

The biographical facts about Lannuier are from "The Work of Charles-Honoré Lannuier, French Cabinetmaker in New York" by Lorraine W. Pearce, in *Maryland Historical Magazine* 55 (March 1960). The facts about Philip Hone are from Allan Nevins, *The Diary of Philip Hone* (New York, 1927).



“In the Midst of ‘High Vintage’”

STUART P. FELD *Associate Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture*

On January 17, 1841, Robert Nelson Mount wrote from Monticello, Georgia, to his brother the painter William Sidney Mount in Stony Brook, Long Island: “I think your last picture ‘Cider Making’ should have been painted large and placed in one of the vacant Squares at the Government House in Washington City.” The painting that Robert Mount thought would be suitable company to the four large canvases by John Trumbull depicting scenes from American history in the Rotunda of the Capitol has recently been purchased by the Metropolitan Museum. After being “lost” for many years, *Cider Making* (Figure 7) has once again come to public attention, and has emerged from layers of varnish and dirt that had gradually darkened it over the past 125 years as one of Mount’s most brilliant and beautiful paintings. At the Metropolitan it happily joins a small but representative group of Mount’s works, including two of his most famous paintings, *Long Island Farmhouses* (Figure 2) and *Raffling for the Goose* (Figure 3), as well as two pencil drawings (see Figure 1) and three outstanding examples of his work as a portrait painter.

William Sidney Mount was born at Setauket, Long Island, on November 26, 1807, one of the five children of Thomas Shepard Mount, an innkeeper and farmer. Shortly after the death of his father in 1814, young Mount moved with his family to the neighboring village of Stony Brook, which was to remain his home for the rest of his life. In his *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1834), William Dunlap quotes Mount as saying that “to the age of seventeen” he was “a hard working farmer’s boy.” Dunlap also records that in 1824 Mount’s older brother, Henry Smith Mount, a sign and ornamental painter in New York, “sent for him . . . and took him as an apprentice to sign painting.” According to Mount’s own testimony, recorded in a “Catalogue of portraits and pictures” that he began to compile in 1839, in the year 1825 he “commenced drawing with lead pencil and sometimes with white chalk, on a black-board” in his brother’s paint shop, at 104 Cherry Street, New York. Mount remained with his brother for several years, but when the National Academy of Design was organized in 1826, he determined to broaden his experience and enrolled as one of its first students. In 1827 Mount returned to Stony Brook – “for the improvement of his health,” Dunlap tells us – and in the following year he painted portraits of himself and of several members of his family and his first “design,” *Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus* (Suffolk Museum, Stony Brook), a curious and stiff neoclassical composition that is remarkably close to the print-inspired watercolors produced in quantity by seminary schoolgirls of the period.

Perhaps it was encouragement that Mount received when this picture was exhibited at the National Academy later that year that prompted him to return to New York, where he opened a studio at 154 Nassau Street early in 1829. He sent three more rather clumsy “history” paintings to the 1829 exhibition at the Academy – Crazy Kate, from Cowper; Celadon and Amelia, from Thomson’s *Seasons*; and Saul and the Witch of Endor – but about this time he seems to have abandoned such noble themes, which he had derived from engravings, in favor of portraits and representations of the country life he knew so well. “I yearned to be a painter,” he wrote in one of his notebooks at a later date, and “asked God in my humble way to strengthen my love for art; and in his goodness he directed me to a closer observation of nature, and I gained strength in art.”

By 1830 Mount was turning out portraits that compare very favorably with the work of his most gifted contemporaries in New York, including Samuel F. B. Morse, Samuel Waldo, John Wesley Jarvis, and Henry Inman. The three portraits in the Museum’s collection are of prominent New Yorkers of the period, Gideon Tucker, a member of the New York State Legislature; his second wife, Jemima Brevoort Tucker; and Martin Euclid Thompson, who is of special interest to the Metropolitan as the architect of the Second Bank of the United States, the façade of which was acquired by the Museum in 1914 and installed as the garden entrance to the new American Wing in 1924. All three portraits are listed in Mount’s Catalogue among the pictures painted in 1830. Although Mount is generally thought to have painted portraits largely in his earliest years as a professional painter in New York, his journal indicates that he continued to do likenesses until the end of his life. Unlike most painters of the period, who regretted that they had to depend on portrait commissions for a livelihood,



1. *Artist Sketching at Stony Brook, 1840*, by William Sidney Mount (1807-1868). Pencil, 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 9 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Gift of James C. McGuire, 26.216.5

Mount considered portraiture “a noble art” and devoted a great deal of time to it. His journal lists a large number of New York and Long Island patrons, for whom he painted everything from miniatures to group portraits. He also painted enough portraits after death, from daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and “from description” to have noted in 1852, “Death encourages the fine arts.”

It was at a relatively early date, however, that Mount’s ability in other areas of painting was recognized. On May 30, 1835, a critic for the *New-York Mirror* wrote: “Most of our artists are obliged to paint portraits that they may live; not so Mount. His pictures will, even in a pecuniary point of view, reward him better if confined to domestick, comick, or rural scenes, than if his time and talents were thrown away on muffin-faces, or even in portraying *gentlemen* and *ladies*. We do not mean by this, any disrespect to the human face divine, or to the art of portrait painting . . . but Mr. Mount has talents if not of a higher order than the portrait painter, at least of a very different description.” By the time this was written Mount had already painted a few

of the genre pictures that have always been the basis of his acclaim as one of America’s greatest painters. In 1833 he sent two genre scenes to Boston for the seventh exhibition at the Athenaeum Gallery – Interior of a Barn, and Boys out of School (both unlocated) – which the patriarch of American painters, Washington Allston, praised in a letter to Dunlap in August 1834: “I saw some pictures in the Athenaeum . . . last year, by a young man of your city – Mount – which showed great power of expression. He has, too, a firm, decided pencil, and seems to have a good notion of the figure. If he would study Ostade and Jan Steen, especially the latter, and master their colour and *chiaro oscuro* [sic], there is nothing, as I see, to prevent his becoming a great artist in the line he has chosen.”

As important for Mount’s reputation as Dunlap’s immediate publication of Allston’s “spontaneous eulogium” in his two-volume history of American art was Mount’s encounter in the same year with the New York collector Luman Reed. Having accumulated a substantial fortune from the increased mercantile activity resulting from the opening of

2. *Long Island Farmhouses*, about 1860, by Mount. Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Gift of Louise F. Wickham, in memory of her father, William H. Wickham, 28.104





3. *Raffling for the Goose*, 1837,
by Mount. Oil on wood,
17 x 23 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Gift of John D.
Crimmins, 97.36

the Erie Canal, Reed determined to fill his new mansion in lower Manhattan with art, and proceeded to assemble a collection of doubtfully attributed “old masters.” When he realized that these yellowed “masterpieces” were grossly overrated, however, he quickly disposed of them and turned to contemporary American painting, making his first purchases at the 1834 exhibition of the National Academy of Design. He embarked on a career of artistic patronage unprecedented in New York, showing particular interest in the work of Thomas Cole, George Flagg, Asher B. Durand, and Mount. In 1835 he commissioned Mount to paint two genre subjects, *Bargaining for a Horse* and *The Truant Gamblers* (both New-York Historical Society), which are among the finest pictures Mount ever produced. As ornaments of Reed’s personal picture gallery, which was open to the public one day a week, they did much to establish Mount’s reputation in this line, and from then on Mount painted most of his scenes of everyday life on commission.

For Robert Gilmor, the most important collector in Baltimore at the time, he painted

The Long Story (Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.); for Edward L. Carey of Philadelphia, publisher of an annual called *The Gift*, *The Painter’s Triumph* (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia); and for Jonathan Sturges of New York, formerly the business partner of Luman Reed, and one of those who had been infected by Reed’s enthusiasm for modern American art, *Farmers Nooning* (Suffolk Museum, Stony Brook).

Another of his patrons was Henry Brevoort, a wealthy New Yorker who spent a considerable part of his time pursuing his literary and artistic interests. Brevoort was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Fine Arts from 1821 to 1825, and from the catalogues of the Academy’s exhibitions one gathers that his tastes ran in the direction of the “old masters.” Among the few American pictures we know Brevoort owned was “Pyne’s [probably Robert Edge Pine] original portrait of Washington,” which he lent to decorate the hall of the City Hotel for the celebration of the semicentennial of Washington’s inauguration, in 1839, and Mount’s

Raffling for the Goose (Figure 3), which he commissioned in 1837, and which came to the Metropolitan in 1897. Although, as a contemporary American painting, *Raffling for the Goose* appears to have been something of an anomaly in his collection, Brevoort must have been delighted with it. Mount recorded in his journal that the price of “The Raffle” was \$250, but later he inserted a note saying, “Brevoort kindly gave me 50 dollars extra . . . said I did not charge enough.” It is not surprising that Brevoort was pleased, for from April 1837, when he lent the painting to the twelfth annual exhibition of the National Academy, until the present, the picture has been considered one of Mount’s most successful efforts. In a review of the 1837 exhibition a critic wrote: “Mount is the master spirit of the exhibition, who, as he stands alone and unrivaled in his department of the comic, has been with one acclaim pronounced decidedly the greatest artist this country has ever produced in that line of historic painting.”

In *Raffling for the Goose*, Mount demonstrated an acute sense of observation that

shows he was no outsider to scenes of this sort, but rather that he himself had participated in many such rural pastimes. Each of the figures has an extraordinary presence, and although their names have not been preserved, they were probably all individuals with whom Mount had grown up.

Another of Mount’s satisfied patrons in these years was Charles Augustus Davis (Figure 5). One of the most important New York merchants of the day, he was a partner in the firm of Davis and Brooks, a commission house that for many years was engaged in the Mediterranean trade. It was for him that Mount painted *Cider Making*. Like Henry Brevoort and Philip Hone, another prominent New Yorker, who chronicled the life of the city in an illuminating diary that is one of the most readable works of the period (and who is discussed at length in the preceding article), Davis moved in an elite social circle that included the most distinguished businessmen and literary figures of the day. When visiting dignitaries reached the city, Davis was sure to be on hand. At the time Charles Dickens came to New York in February 1842, for example, Davis invited a number of his friends to meet him at a dinner at his home on Broadway. Hone recorded that Dickens was prevented from attending by a sore throat, but nevertheless, the next day the *Aurora* described the party as “a very quiet and excellent affair, and one calculated to give Mr. Dickens a very favourable idea of our society.” And when Daniel Webster visited New York some months later, Davis was chosen to sit at the foot of the table at an exclusive dinner given at the Astor House by “a select knot of four and twenty Whigs.”

Davis is not remembered today, however, for his business acumen, or for his charm and wit, but rather for the series of letters that he wrote under the pseudonym of “J. Downing, Major,” to the editor of the *New York Daily Advertiser*. Davis’s letters were actually inspired by a series written by Seba Smith to the *Portland (Maine) Courier* under the name of Major Jack Downing. The “J. Downing” letters, which took a satirical view of public characters and public events, proved extremely

4. *Boys Trapping*, 1839, by Mount.
Oil on wood, 18 x 21 inches.
The Suffolk Museum, Stony
Brook, Long Island



popular, and before long many other imitators were turning out “Downing” letters for newspapers all over the country. Eventually Davis’s letters were gathered together in book form, and innumerable editions of the *Letters of J. Downing, Major, Downingville Militia, Second Brigade, to His Old Friend, Mr. Dwight of the New York ‘Daily Advertiser’* appeared in the following years. Because of his one literary effort, which was a phenomenal success, Davis won a firm position in the history of American letters.

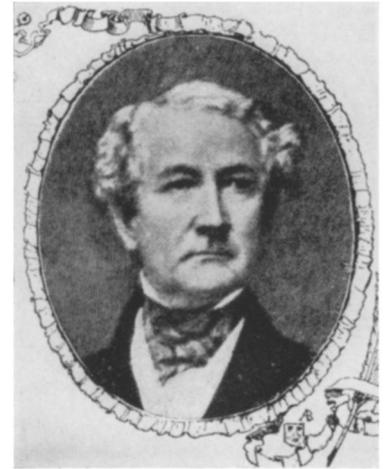
Of Davis’s activities in the art life of New York we know considerably less. Like many Americans of the period, he joined the American Art-Union, which annually distributed by lot hundreds of paintings that had been purchased from the leading American artists. Davis seems to have been a collector of paintings, but we know very little about what he owned. Interestingly, Adolph Ulrich Wertmüller’s curious portrait of George Washington, now in the Metropolitan, was formerly in his collection. In addition, we know that Davis commissioned Mount to paint two genre compositions, *Boys Trapping* (also called *Catching Rabbits*; Suffolk Museum, Stony Brook), and *Cider Making*. Painted in 1839, *Boys Trapping* (Figure 4) depicts two young lads, one proudly displaying a rabbit just taken from the trap while the other is kneeling before the trap to ready it for the next victim. Like the figures in *Raffling for the Goose*—and for that matter in all of Mount’s genre scenes of this period—the boys have an extremely realistic appearance, suggesting that Mount had not painted a “fancy subject, from imagination,” as many of his contemporaries were doing, but rather was working from specific models. Indeed, Edward P. Buffet, Mount’s nephew and his most comprehensive biographer to date, recorded that the standing boy was Oliver Rowland and the other was Lewis Davis, both residents of Stony Brook.

Repeatedly Mount was praised for the sense of life and well-being that he captured in his rural and “comick” scenes, and when *Boys Trapping* was exhibited at the National Academy in April 1839, the critics were unanimous in acclaiming Mount’s success. The *New-York*

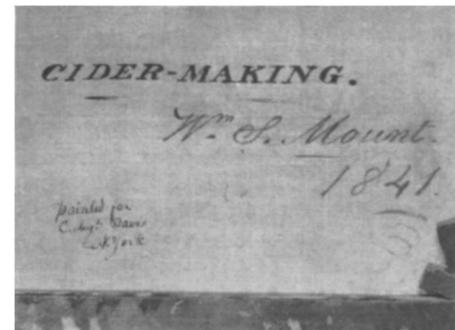
Evening Post reported: “A good critic told us that the sky was harsh. So it is—but it is Winter—and a winter day is harsh. Mount is truer than criticism.” Another critic admired Mount’s rare sense of observation: “We like the idea of the dry, crisp leaves and twigs, which threaten to fall with the first rush of wind. The attitude of the boy, and the grin of satisfaction, are capital.” Yet another critic recognized the importance of Mount’s approach to his subject: “We heard it remarked the other day that he ought to have scattered some of his snow upon the trees, but in our judgment the character of the footprints shows it to be ‘an old snow.’ Mr. Mount has the honor of having founded a truly American school of painting.”

Reviews of this kind helped enormously to forward Mount’s reputation, and it was undoubtedly the phenomenal popular success of *Boys Trapping* that prompted Davis to order another and larger picture from Mount in the following year. The painting that resulted was *Cider Making*. Although we know a good deal about its history, its ownership following Davis’s death in 1867 is somewhat obscure. In 1897 it appeared as a loan from the collection of William J. Smith of Brooklyn in the inaugural exhibition at The Brooklyn Museum. Family tradition records that it was given to Smith in payment of a debt. The picture remained at The Brooklyn Museum until 1922, when it was collected by Smith’s niece, who had inherited it. From 1931 to 1937 the picture was on loan to the Portchester (New York) Library, but for the last thirty years it hung unnoticed in the parlors of Smith’s heirs. All during this time it was referred to in articles and books on Mount, but its aspect remained unknown, since it had apparently never been reproduced. The rediscovery of the original canvas is therefore of the utmost importance, for it brings to public view for the first time in many years a picture that has long enjoyed a reputation as one of Mount’s major works.

As was frequently his custom, Mount carefully inscribed the painting on the back: CIDER-MAKING./ W^m S. Mount./ 1841./ Painted for / C. Aug^t Davis / N. York (Fig-



5. Charles Augustus Davis, from an illustration in *The Century Magazine* (November 1901).
The New York Society Library



6. Title, signature, date, and inscription on the back of *Cider Making*





7. *Cider Making*, by Mount. Oil
on canvas, 27 x 34 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches.
Purchase, Charles Allen Munn
Bequest, 66.126

8. *Study for Cider Making. Pencil, 6¾ x 13⅝ inches. The Suffolk Museum, Stony Brook, Long Island. Photograph: The Brooklyn Museum*

ure 6). He recorded the same information in his journal under the year 1841 and noted further that he had “received two hundred and fifty dollars, for the picture.” The inclusion of the date 1840 on one of the cider barrels in the foreground suggests that the painting was based on sketches made during the cider-making season of the previous fall. The picture is referred to as being in progress in a letter dated December 5, 1840, from Mount to the historian Benjamin Thompson: “I have a pict on the esel [sic] I think you would be pleased to see—the subject is Cider Making in the old way.” And mention of the painting in Robert Nelson Mount’s letter of January 17, 1841, implies that it had been completed sometime before that.

Mount was a prolific draughtsman, and he made a great many sketches from nature, many of which eventually served as studies for his genre compositions. Although it is likely that he would have done a number of preparatory drawings for a picture of the size and complexity of Cider Making, only two have been recorded. One is a study for the entire composition without the figures (Figure 8). The other (Figure 11) contains studies for two of the men in the painting. Faintly drawn at the left is a man with outstretched arms, who reappears in the painting turning the screw of the cider press. The next figure is a quick study for the man pouring cider into a barrel, and the third is a more fully developed study of the same man. The sketch at the right is not specifically related to any of the figures as they were finally to appear in the painting.

9. *Detail of Cider Making*

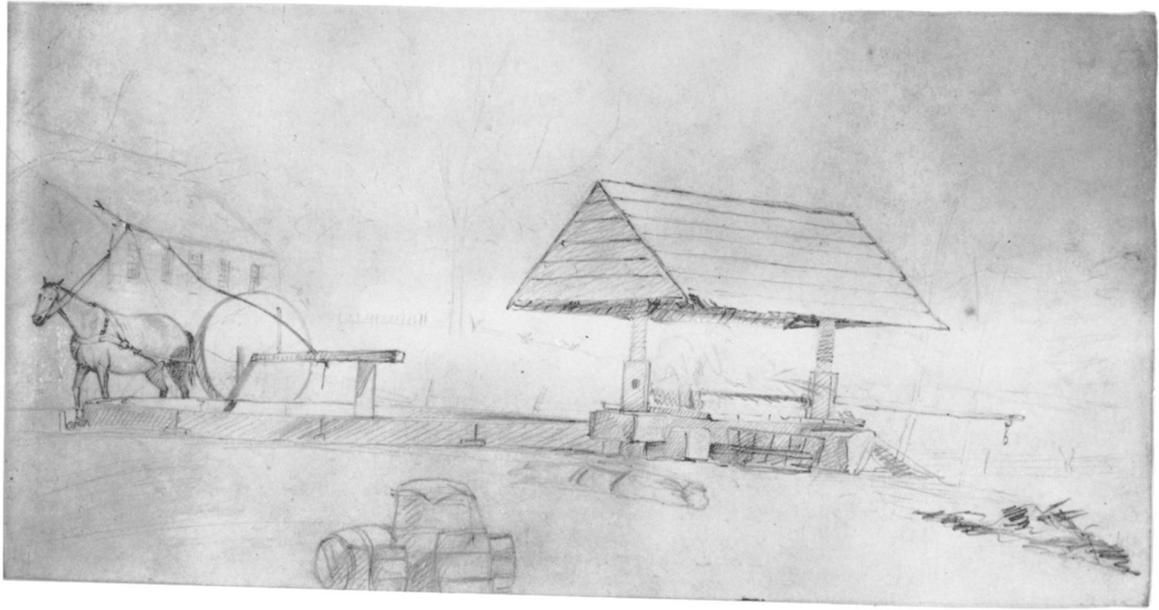
Davis may have had an opportunity to enjoy the painting briefly in his own home until the beginning of April when it was delivered to the National Academy of Design for its sixteenth annual exhibition. Mount was one of the most popular of the artists who showed at the Academy, and before the exhibitions opened, there was often speculation about what he would send. On April 14, 1841, the *New York American* anticipated the first public showing of Cider Making by publishing, in a column headed “The Fine Arts,” a “Letter from A ‘Jaunting Gentleman’ enjoy-

ing rural life, to his Friend on the Pavement,” which is a veritable guide to Mount’s painting. “If our readers should recognize in the collection of pictures to be exhibited shortly in the Academy of Arts, any thing like the scene described in the following letter,” the *American* wrote, “they will, perhaps, like both the better”:

I thought my last letter had embraced all that was left me to describe to you of the charms of “*rural life*,” and that between the period of “Harvest Home,” and the frosts and snows of *Winter*, little intervened of interest in the country, save preparations to meet the severity of that dreary season, “chopping and drawing wood,” “stuffing windows,” “repairing the thatch of sheds and hovels,” and other similar unsentimental occupations; but, imagine my agreeable surprise, on returning to the “Farm,” after a short absence, I found myself in the midst of “*high vintage*,”—and a more joyous and hilarious occupation, it has seldom fallen to my lot to witness.

On calling at the house, I found no one at home save old Mrs. Josslin, who informed me that “all the folks” were “down to the Cider Mill.” And then she detailed to me all the incidents of the apple-gathering, and the bright prospects of a *good cider* year. I regretted to hear, however, that my young and roving companion *Amos Josslin* had met with a serious accident, by having, in the occupation of shaking the trees, shaken himself off a limb with the apples, and sprained his wrist, and otherwise injured himself, but had so far recovered as to be able that morning for the first time to stroll out; and he too, though only as a looker-on, had also gone down to the “cider mill.” It was Saturday, and all the children who were not old enough to work had been permitted a respite from school, and of course were all “down to the cider mill;” and even “Trim,” the favorite companion of Amos, and who generally welcomed me at the bottom of the lane, he too, I suppose, was also at the mill, as I missed his frisking and fawning of welcome.

The day was bright and beautiful: one of those rich and mellow days of early autumn, when the temperature is just such as to puzzle a dog in selecting sun or shade for most comfort in taking his nap. I scarcely think there had been a frost yet, though some of the timid branches of the great family of trees and



OPPOSITE:

10. *Detail of Cider Making*

bushes had been alarmed into a "hectic blush," whilst the more robust and courageous still maintained their "brazen front."

On approaching the mill, my ear was gladdened by the joyous shouts of the younger ones, who I found had been permitted, as a reward for past services, to ride on "the cross beam," and there was old "Bonny," the grey mare, tugging at the wheel, and going her rounds – urged less in her efforts by the impotent threats of childhood, than by the conviction that a slack pace would only the sooner bring back *the whip*, which at that period had gone to the "settling tub" for a taste of the "pure juice."

The process of "cider making" was in full progress. The old Squire, in his white linen frock, was dipping with a piggin from the settling tub, and pouring the juice in a barrel, through clean straw, which served the purpose of a strainer, in a pail which had a leaden pipe, or funnel, at its bottom. His eldest son, "the young and gallant captain of the *Light Horse*," (whose promotion had been celebrated but a few weeks previous), was measuring his manly form against the screw bar of the press, and causing the juice to flow freely from the "cheese" – whilst the sturdy *Colonel Billings*, the bachelor brother of old Mrs. Josslin, and bearer of *the whip* already mentioned, was lending his aid in *dipping*, but not *barreling*.

Near this group I found my disabled young

friend *Amos*, with his arm in a sling, seated on the ground and resting himself against the sunny side of the empty barrel. Poor fellow! he could take no share in the work, nor was he permitted to indulge the luxury of a *straw* in the juice – he was a mere "looker-on." "Trim," too, the terror of stray hogs, and the best *rabbit chaser* in the county, was at his young master's feet, and though he had not sprained his wrist, nor [been] forbidden to use the *straw* if he desired to do so, was ready to perform any duty within the range of his profession.

A full barrel of cider stood near, just rolled from the press, to undergo the process of fermentation, or in other words, to pass from the condition of sweet to "*hard cider*"; as it was of choice quality, the old squire had marked it "1840" – a year ever famous, he said, for "hard cider," and he intended it as a present to "*Old Tip*."

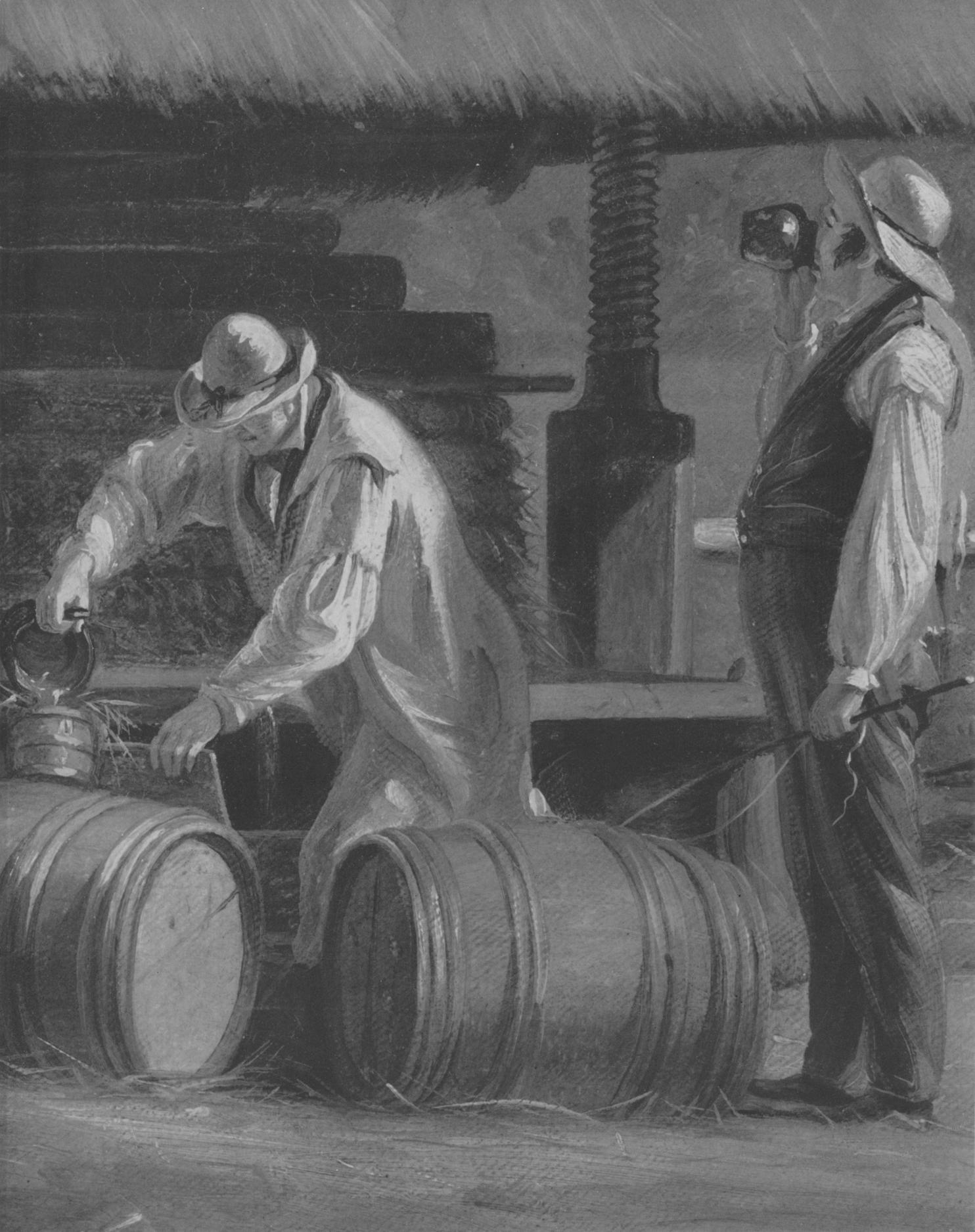
Caleb Josslin, the Squire's 2d son, and who gained the prize by his activity and industry in the festival of "Harvest Home," which I described to you in my last letter, had thrown himself on one side of "1840," and with his straw in the bung hole, was describing to his sister Fanny "how delicious" it was; and there on the other side, was Fanny herself, with *her straw* too, expostulating with Caleb for a chance to use it, and he, the wag, telling her ironically she was too ugly to suck cider – and at any rate, as she would in good time be called on to exercise the virtue of patience in *waiting* – as all *ugly faced girls* would, – she had better begin early to practise it.

"Now, Caleb," says Fanny, "if I dont tell Mr. *Mount* as soon as he comes back what you say; and if he puts you in his next picture, he will make you as ugly as you say I am."

"That for Mr. *Mount*!" said Caleb, snapping his finger; "you think because he has been sketching you that you are handsome – he sketches every thing just as it is – that barrel – that old cider mill – those hogs sleeping on the press'd pummice – that old hen and chickens – 'Trim' – 'Amos' – 'old Bonney' – the goose-pond – uncle Billings – Daddy, and brother John – and there he sits now on the fence, hearing Jabez Seers the school master read the newspaper to old Deacon Doolittle – he will sketch them too; and do you think it is because they are all handsome? No, no, Miss Fanny cover up your bare foot if you

11. *Study for Cider Making. Pencil, 5 x 7¼ inches. Location unknown. Photograph: The Brooklyn Museum*







12. Detail of *Cider Making*

think Mr. Mount is going to paint you *for a beauty*: but if he paints me, you will see a picture a real beauty in Sunday clothes.”

Overhearing this dialogue, and seeing in the distance my friend Mount seated like a good *Conservative* on the fence, and having informed myself that he had his “Sketch Book” with him – I wipe my pen – it were useless in me to enlarge – this picture of “*cider-making*,” as presented to my mind’s eye, to be faithfully delineated, needs the aid of the painter’s faithful pencil, – that magic power!! which, next to the faith and hopes of Christianity, is capable of snatching from the *grave* that portion of its terrors which it derives from oblivion.

Although the “Jaunting Gentleman” provided a delightful tour through Mount’s *Cider Making*, his identification of the individuals as members of a family named Josslin must be questioned, since the name is unknown in the annals of Setauket and Stony Brook. A clue to the identity of at least one of the figures is provided by Buffet, who wrote that Julia Smith, an antiquarian of Setauket, said that the girl in the foreground was Hannah Howell, the daughter of Youngs Howell of South Setauket. A few of the other figures, especially the young boy with the sprained wrist, are

very close to individuals who appear in some of Mount’s other paintings, and the dog is the same one that is seen in *Eel Spearing at Setauket* (New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown).

Among the many critics who reviewed the National Academy exhibition, one voiced a technical objection to *Cider Making*: “He has left the roof of the building in which the process of cider making is going on, in a position somewhat analogous to that which the coffin of Mahomet is reputed to sustain—it has no visible means of support, but remains mysteriously suspended between heaven and earth.” But the *New-York Evening Post* quickly answered this attack and explained that the roof is one of the principal parts of the cider press: “It is moveable and by its weight assists as the screws are turned in pressing out the juice.” Most of the critics concentrated on the artistic aspects of the picture. The *Knickerbocker Magazine* admired Mount’s “peculiar graphic talent” and thought that “the groups are felicitously chosen and well depicted,” but complained that the color was “rather harsh and disagreeable.” The *New-York Mirror* admired the group of figures seated on the cross-

beam, but thought that “the *tout ensemble* is wooden.”

The critics agreed in general, however, on the realistic aspect of the scene. The *American Repertory of Arts, Science, and Literature* wrote that “every figure gives evidence of its intention,” and noted that the “composition [was] so closely painted to nature that its location is readily discovered to be Suffolk county.” This was quite correct, for relics of the cider mill still remained along Pond Path, near Upper Sheep Pasture Road, Setauket, until fifteen or twenty years ago. A photograph of the mill, probably taken in the early 1920s (Figure 14), already shows it in a state of decay, and today the mill has disappeared and the site is almost completely overgrown. A comparison of the photograph and Mount’s

painting suggests that he recorded very accurately not only the press itself, but the whole scene. He did not, however, hesitate to exert artistic license when the occasion demanded, and for some reason he changed the horizontal shingles in the gable end of the press – faithfully recorded in the compositional study (Figure 8) – to vertical boarding in the painting. A few other changes were probably dictated by purely artistic considerations. The large five-bay house at the left of the drawing has been replaced in the painting by the end of a barn, allowing for a more ample treatment of space in the foreground, and a smaller house, probably the Macy homestead, has been introduced as a focal point in the middle distance. The large tree that occupied the space between the house and the cider press has been

13. *Detail of Cider Making*



14. *Cider mill at Setauket, Long Island, probably in the early 1920s. From a scrapbook about Mount prepared by Edward P. Buffet*



eliminated in favor of rolling hills of a type that do not exist in the neighborhood of Setauket.

After quitting New York for Stony Brook in 1836, Mount spent most of his time there, except for occasional visits to New York, and painting trips to New Jersey or up the Hudson to visit his friend Thomas Cole at Catskill. He was in love with the countryside of his youth and painted it with an understanding and respect for his subject rare in the history of genre painting in America. His feeling about the country is engagingly revealed in an entry in his journal for May 4, 1848:

Painting from nature in the open air will learn the artist at once the beauty of the air tints from the horizon to the foreground, see how the dew on the foliage & grass sparkled in the sunbeams early in the morning. How glorious it is to paint in the open fields – to hear the birds singing around you – to draw in the fresh air, how thankful it makes one. Painting out of doors will make at once an old painter out of a young beginner. Will learn him how to manage the grey tints – which are so valuable in a picture. . . . It requires courage to go right to nature. Five years from nature is better than twenty five spent in fancy.

Mount did not, however, always speak so enthusiastically about life in the country, and in his journal he often expressed the notion that he might work better in the city. On August 15, 1842, he wrote: “This is the first day I have used my paint brush since the

middle of April. . . . I have no commissions for pictures. For eight or nine years since I have been on the Island I have been two or three months without painting – The Country for repose and health, but, the City to stimulate an Artist to work.” He repeatedly lamented the difficulty of obtaining models in the country and expressed regret in missing the opportunity to see the work of other artists. “I am not in the way of improving myself in painting in the country as quickly as if I lived in the City,” he wrote in 1848. “More pictures, & character to be seen there. My feeling for painting would burn with a brighter flame by living in New York.” And to Charles Lanman, who was preparing a book on American art, he wrote: “I often ask myself this question, Am I to stay in old Suffolk County as long as the children of Israel did in the wilderness? I hope not, without visiting the city occasionally. . . . After all, the city is the place for an artist to live in. Reynolds considered that the three years he spent in the country were so much time lost.”

For years Mount thought of moving to New York, for years he contemplated a trip to Europe, which he was never to make, but he was not a man of action and ultimately preferred to remain close to Stony Brook. Although he often complained that his genre compositions took too much time and kept him secluded – “portraits make the painter more active,” he wrote – he must certainly have realized that his talent lay in the depic-

tion of the bucolic scenes of everyday life that surrounded him. Stony Brook rather than the faces of New York was his métier.

As early as the 1830s Mount was referred to as "the Wilkie of America," in recognition of the vague similarity of his subjects to those depicted by the English artist, Sir David Wilkie. His paintings of life on Long Island have also often been compared with the work of one or another of the Dutch seventeenth-century genre painters. But Mount was in fact less indebted to any of them than he was to a careful observation of life as it existed around him. He was part of a broad movement that enveloped America at the time, that sent Thomas Cole and Asher Durand and all of their many followers to the hills and vales of New England and New York State to paint the real American landscape, and that prompted Mark Twain, Nathaniel Haw-

thorne, and Oliver Wendell Holmes to write of the real life that surrounded them. Mount was the democratic painter par excellence, the artist who painted the real life as he lived it, and as he saw others live it. Therein lay his success.

NOTE

No major monograph has yet appeared on William Sidney Mount. The standard reference works are B. Cowdrey and H. W. Williams, Jr., *William Sidney Mount* (New York, 1944), and a series of articles by Edward P. Buffet in the *Port Jefferson* (Long Island) *Times* between December 1, 1923, and June 12, 1924. I am deeply indebted to the Suffolk Museum, Stony Brook, for making available to me photocopies of several of the Mount journals in its collection, and I owe special thanks to Jane des Grange of that museum, who brought to my attention the letter of Robert Nelson Mount quoted at the beginning of the article.

15. *The studio of William Sidney Mount at Stony Brook*, by Shepard Alonzo Mount (1804-1868). Pencil, 9 x 7¼ inches. Gift of James C. McGuire, 26.216.34



1. Sideboard table flanked with urns on pedestals. In the Adam style. English, second half of the XVIII century. Mahogany. Morris Loeb Gift Fund, 55.187.1a-c, 2a-c, 3



A Piece of Great Utility

JAMES BIDDLE *Curator of the American Wing*

The American Wing in 1963 was planning an exhibition entitled “*American Art from American Collections*,” which was to include paintings, drawings, prints, furniture, silver, and glass. Objects were to be selected for their quality, beauty, rarity, and charm. When I called one winter’s afternoon on Mrs. Andrew Varick Stout, I had thoughts of borrowing several of her extremely fine objects, in particular one of the handsomest sideboards in America. She sensed my intent immediately. Her first words were, “You can have anything but the sideboard. I promised Mr. Stout never to let it leave the apartment.” Coaxing was to no avail. Some fine furniture and silver were generously lent, but the sideboard was destined to remain at home until 1965. In that year, knowing of the Museum’s long association with their parents, the children of Mr. and Mrs. Stout presented the sideboard (Figure 4) to the American Wing in their memory.

It is a cherished addition to the collections.

The sideboard form as we know it today did not appear until late in the eighteenth century. Side tables had been used for hundreds of years in connection with meals, but it was not until the advent of Robert and James Adam and their school of design in the 1770s that the sideboard table appeared in combination with a pair of urn-topped pedestals (Figure 1), designed to hold knives, bottles, a plate warmer, water for drinking or washing glasses, and at times even a chamber pot. The presence of this last item is explained by Louis Simond, a French-American, in his 1809-1810 *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain*:

Drinking much and long leads to unavoidable consequences. Will it be credited, that, in a corner of the very dining room, there is a certain convenient piece of furniture, to be used by anybody who wants it. The opera-

tion is performed very deliberately and undisguisedly, as a matter of course, and occasions no interruption of the conversation. I once took the liberty to ask why this convenient article was not placed out of the room in some adjoining closet; and was answered, that in former times, when good fellowship was more strictly enforced than in these degenerate days, it had been found that men of weak heads or stomachs took advantage of the opportunity to make their escape shamefully, before they were quite drunk; and that it was to guard against such an enormity that this nice expedient had been invented.

From the side table with flanking pedestals developed the sideboard table with drawers, which gathered all the necessities together into one piece of furniture. In 1779 Gillow, a Lancaster cabinetmaking firm with a London outlet, informed a client, "We make a new sort of sideboard table now with drawers, etc., in a genteel style to hold bottles." The Prince of Wales in 1782 was supplied by a London cabinetmaker, William Gates, with "a very large mahogany sideboard table, made to fit

a recess, with a shaped front, three drawers made to the shape of the front, two of do. [ditto] very deep, with six divisions in each drawer lined with lead to hold wine-bottles, and six turned legs."

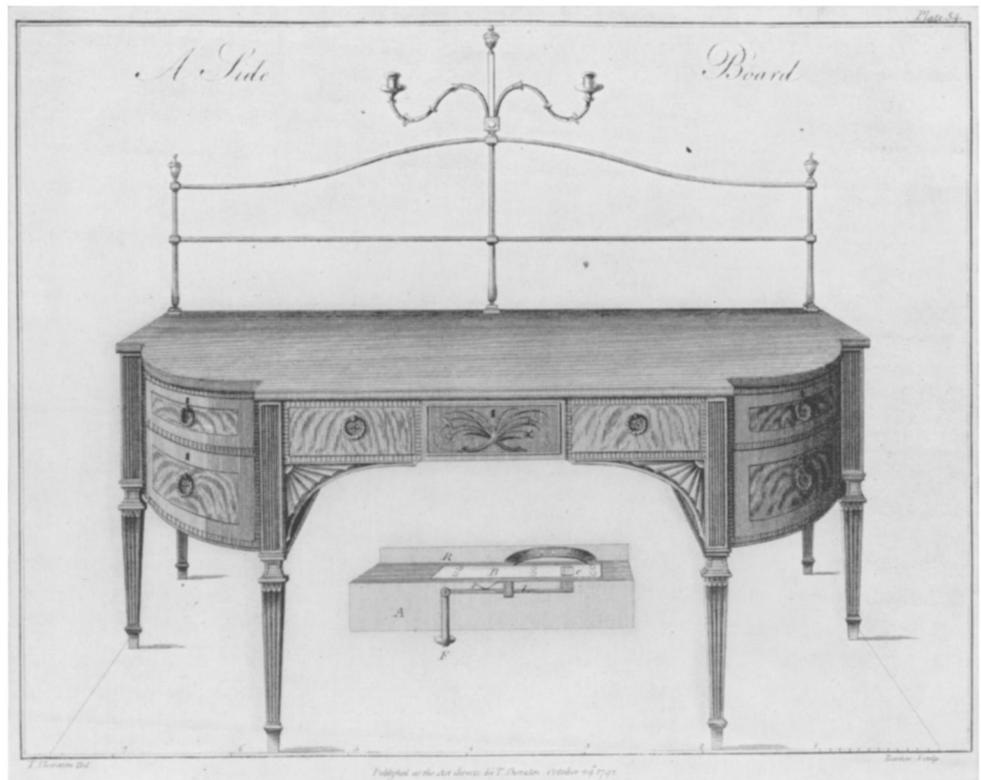
In 1788 A. Hepplewhite and Co. first published its *Cabinetmaker and Upholsterer's Guide or Repository of Designs for Every Article of Household Furniture in the Newest and Most Approved Taste* and offered the following comment: "The great utility of this piece of furniture has procured it a very general reception; and the conveniences it affords renders a dining room incomplete without a sideboard." Hepplewhite offered designs for sideboards with drawers and without. To accompany the latter, he suggested pedestals and vases "much used in spacious dining rooms."

The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices, published also in 1788, contains Thomas Shearer's designs for a "round-front" cellaret sideboard with straight ends, a "serpentine-front" cellaret sideboard, a "circular" cellaret sideboard, a cellaret sideboard with an "elliptic



2. "A sideboard, with pedestals and vases to join," from *The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices* (London, 1788), Plate 6

3. "A Side Board," from Thomas Sheraton, *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book* (London, 1794), page 366



middle, and finally a "sideboard, with pedestals and vases to join" (Figure 2). This is thought to be the first such published design. The 1793 edition of the same book lists an even greater variety of cellaret sideboards and sideboard tables.

Thomas Sheraton in his 1794 edition of *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book* writes at some length "Of the Sideboard Tables . . . and of Tables of this kind in general":

The sideboard in Plate XXVI [Figure 3], has brass rods to it, which is used to set large dishes against, and to support a couple of candle or lamp branches in the middle, which, when lighted, give a very brilliant effect to the silver ware. . . . The right-hand drawer, as is often made to draw out separate from the rest. It is partitioned and lined with lead, to hold nine or ten wine bottles. . . . The drawer on the left is generally plain, but sometimes divided into two; the back division being lined with baize to hold plates. . . . The front division is lined with lead, so that it may hold

water to wash glasses. . . . This left-hand drawer is, however, sometimes made very short, to give place to a pot-cupboard behind, which opens by a door at the end of the sideboard. . . . In spacious dining-rooms the sideboards are often made without drawers of any sort, having simply a rail a little ornamented, and pedestals with vases at each end, which produce a grand effect.

This emphasis on spaciousness, both here and in Hepplewhite, may account for the lack of surviving American sideboard tables with flanking pedestals. English design and price books entering the country after the Revolution showed both types of boards, but the small scale of most American rooms may well have been the determining factor.

The boxlike, straight-fronted form of the Museum's sideboard does not follow exactly any published design by Shearer, Hepplewhite, or Sheraton, but the general shape has many English precedents. The sideboard has a solid mahogany top; the case is of white pine. The upper portion contains three drawers with

cherry sides and pine bottoms; the lower portion is divided into three compartments, whose interiors are painted light blue. The central section has tambour doors, which slide back into the case. There is no built-in celaret. The right-hand cupboard contains a single sliding shelf.

A variety of techniques is used to make a decorative impact. The Sheraton-style mahogany legs are finely turned, reeded, and carved. Foliated rosettes decorate the tops of the posts (Figure 5), while reeding, leaf carving, and ring turnings ornament the lower portions and slightly concave feet. The fronts of the drawers and doors are veneered, as are the board's sides, with boldly figured crotched mahogany. Three sides of the top are veneered with a satinwood banding composed of inlaid lunettes shaded by burning, a checkerboard stringing, and five additional units of stringing. The lunette banding is repeated along the gracefully arched skirt and bottom edge.

The central compartment shows intricate detailing. To simulate reeding, the doors are veneered with flat strips of dark-stained wood, possibly beech, alternating with lighter strips of birch, divided by cherry stringing. The simulated pilasters at the sides and center are composed of seven separate stringings of inlay shaded by burning. The spiral ribbon effect is an inlay of seven additional stringings.

Other decorative details are the neoclassical ivory urn-shaped key escutcheons, the one in the arched skirt surrounded by crisply carved wheat sheaves, and brass lion-headed drawer pulls. The side brasses, griffins with squirrel-like faces (Figure 6), are probably American castings of European imports. It is likely that these were originally on the doors of the side cupboards, since they fit exactly into drilled holes, now plugged. The color of the veneer beneath the brasses on the sides is the same as that of the exposed surface, further indicating the probability of this later change.

4. *Sideboard, attributed to the workshop of John and Thomas Seymour, Boston, Massachusetts. 1800-1810. Mahogany and inlays, height 41 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Gift of the family of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Varick Stout, in their memory, 65.188.1*



The change may have been made when the cupboard doors were extensively repaired because of the badly split veneer. The presence of the gilded brasses on the front would also explain the lack of ivory key escutcheons on the cupboard doors.

The sideboard was made in or around Boston, probably during the first decade of the nineteenth century. It has traditionally been assigned to the cabinet workshop of John and Thomas Seymour. The Seymours, father and son, came to Boston from Portland, Maine, in 1794 and were listed in the Boston directories from 1796 until 1843. They worked both together and separately; John died in 1818 and Thomas in 1848. During their span of years they produced a variety of furnishings, as witnessed by the many sideboards, lady's work-

tables, secretary bookcases, tambour desks, card tables, bureaus, and seat furniture that have been attributed to them.

The attribution of furniture to a particular cabinetmaker's shop, such as the Seymours', on stylistic grounds alone can be hazardous. The Museum's sideboard has many of the features usually associated with the Seymours' furniture: lunette inlays, drawer bandings of gold-colored wood, tambour shutters with simulated pilasters, vase-shaped ivory key escutcheons, lion-head pulls, and painted blue interiors. However, some of these characteristics appear also on furniture from other shops. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, cabinetmaking in this country had become a diversified business. A piece of furniture was not necessarily fabricated solely in one shop. Outside craftsmen specializing in carving, painting, and inlaying were called upon for their particular skills, as surviving records indicate. A bill from Thomas Seymour to Mrs. Elizabeth Derby in 1809 shows that John Peniman was paid for painting shells on the top of a "large mahogany commode" (now in the Karolik collection, Boston Museum of Fine Arts), and Thomas Whitman was paid for carving the legs and ornamenting the top of an "elegant dressing table." Whitman's name has been linked with the Museum's sideboard, as has that of Stephen Badlam, another carver of exceptional merit, who also is thought to have done work for the Seymours. As the sideboard does not bear the Seymours' label, and no bill of sale is known, it is possible only to attribute it to their workshop. With or without attribution the sideboard stands as a brilliant example of American cabinetmaking.

Of its original owner we know nothing. The sideboard appeared at a New York auction early in this century, was purchased by a dealer, and sold to Robert W. Chambers. In 1934 Mr. Stout purchased it from Mr. Chambers's estate after it was brought to his attention by Louis G. Myers, a well-known collector and authority on American furniture. There is an almost identical sideboard in the Schuyler Mansion, Albany. (Its pulls are of wood instead of brass, but this is perhaps a later change.) It is interesting to note that the

5. *The right-hand section of the sideboard*



Museum's sideboard and its Albany mate have long had New York connections. Indeed, our sideboard was once attributed to Duncan Phyfe!

The New York reference brings to mind a description by James Fenimore Cooper of a Manhattan residence around 1828:

In one of the rooms . . . is a spacious, heavy, ill-looking side-board, in mahogany, groaning with plate, knife and spoon cases, all handsome enough, I allow, but sadly out of place where they are seen. Here is the first great defect that I find in the ordering of American domestic economy. The eating, or dining-room, is almost invariably one of the best in the house. The custom is certainly of English origin, and takes its rise in the habit of sitting an hour or two after the cloth is removed, picking nuts, drinking wine, chatting, yawning, and gazing about the apartment.

To this can only be added Robert Adam's rather more cheerful comment on his native customs:

. . . as soon as the entertainment is over they [the French] immediately retire to the

rooms of company. It is not so with us. Accustomed by habit, or induced by the nature of our climate, we indulge more largely in the enjoyment of the bottle. Every person of rank here is either a member of the legislation or entitled by his condition to take part in the political arrangements of his country and to enter with ardour into those discussions to which they give rise. These circumstances lead men to live more with one another and more detached from the society of ladies. The eating rooms are considered as the apartments of conversation . . . and it is desirable to have them fitted up with elegance and splendour. . . .

Could one ask for a more elegant and splendid companion in an "eating room" than the sideboard new to the American Wing?

NOTES

The passage by James Fenimore Cooper is from *Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor* (London, 1828), pp. 196-197. Adam's comment is from Robert and James Adam, *The Works and Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (London, 1773), pp. 10-11.

6. *One of the two side brasses of the sideboard*



Notes

WILLIAM BLAKE'S ILLUMINATED BOOKS

A rare opportunity to study the work of William Blake, with its complex interplay of words and images, will be offered from April 4 to May 28 in an exhibition, in the Print and Drawings Galleries, of a selection of Blake's illuminated books. The show is made possible by the generous loans of Paul Mellon, Lessing J. Rosenwald, and the Library of Congress. It was arranged by the Blake Trust in conjunction with Trianon Press, the publisher of facsimiles of the illuminated books. Among the books on view will be *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, the *Book of Thel*, *Milton*, and the unique colored copy of *Jerusalem*.

J. J. M.

Detail: Louis XV as a Child, by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743), French. 1715?. Oil on canvas, 77 x 55½ inches. Purchase, bequest of Mary Wetmore Shively, in memory of her husband, Henry L. Shively, M.D., 60.6



COLLECTING AMERICAN ART FOR THE METROPOLITAN: RECENT ACCESSIONS, 1961-1967

The Museum will exhibit from April 13 through the summer months a selection from its American accessions of the last six years. The extent of our collecting is mirrored in figures: 347 paintings, watercolors, drawings, and sculptures, and 371 objects of decorative art. The quality you may see for yourselves in three rooms of the American Wing and adjacent galleries.

The exhibition, and this *Bulletin* devoted to American works, are intended to dramatize the Museum's intent to build additional galleries for display of its American collections, the most comprehensive ever gathered beneath one roof. Within less than a decade a new American Wing will rise to join with the old in presenting a panorama of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century American art.

J. B., A. T. G.

IN THE PRESENCE OF KINGS

Royal treasures from the collections of the Museum, representing nearly all civilizations of the West and the Orient and covering a span of five thousand years, will be on view in the Harry Payne Bingham Special Exhibition Galleries from April 18 through June 11.

As would be expected, the objects will be of superb artistic quality, but we will also show—as the title implies—that they reflect the human aspect of those personalities who were the great of this world, who gave their names to art styles, who put their mark on whole periods of history. Royal treasures by their nature are not easily obtainable—most of them are still in their own national collections—but nonetheless the exhibition lists the names of well over one hundred rulers.

Brought together in this illustrious array, these works—the delicate tracery on the silver shrine of a medieval queen, the flashing jewels on the gold-encrusted scimitar of an Oriental despot, the flowery calligraphy of a Sung emperor, the granite face of a pharaoh—will speak to our visitors of the presence of kings.

H. N.

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