

Ancient Rome via the Erie Canal: The De Witt Clinton Vases

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THEY CALLED IT “CLINTON’S FOLLY”—De Witt Clinton’s dream of a canal joining the Great Lakes with the Hudson River, traversing 363 miles of dense rock and deep forest and entailing an extraordinary feat of engineering. Although the idea for the canal was first proposed in the early eighteenth century, actual construction did not begin until 1817.¹ Delays notwithstanding, on October 26, 1825, the Erie Canal was at last opened. On that day, the canal boat *Seneca Chief* embarked from Buffalo, on the northeastern shore of Lake Erie, carrying Clinton, then New York’s governor, and his party to the port city of New York. Upon their arrival nine days later, the governor hoisted aloft a keg filled with Lake Erie water and poured it into New York Harbor, where the mouth of the Hudson meets the Atlantic Ocean. With this ceremonial “meeting of the waters” the merchants and citizens of New York gained ready access to the country’s vast interior, and the city’s commercial hegemony was secured.²

De Witt Clinton (1769–1828; Figure 1) was a tireless advocate for the Erie Canal, first as mayor of New York City and later as the state’s governor. He assumed the governorship in 1817 and was reelected in 1820, but he declined to run again in 1822 in the face of intense political opposition from Martin van Buren’s Bucktails. He was returned to office in the 1824 election on a wave of popular support for his championing of the nearly completed Erie Canal, a symbol of the nation’s limitless potential.³ Addressing those assembled in New York City on November 4, 1825, for the celebration of the canal’s opening, Governor Clinton saluted the corporation of the city with predictions of abiding good fortune:

Standing near the confines of the ocean, and now connected by navigable communications with the great lakes of the north and the west, there will be no limits to your lucrative extensions of trade and commerce. The valley of the Mississippi will soon

pour its treasures into this great emporium, through the channels now formed and forming, and, whatever wealth is to be acquired or enterprise attempted, the power and capacity of your city will be felt, and its propitious influence on human happiness will be acknowledged.⁴

Clinton’s role in advancing the canal project had already earned him the gratitude of New York’s mercantile community. Two years earlier, in December 1823, a group of Pearl Street merchants had voted to present awards of silver to the governor and announced a competition “for the best design for two vases . . . of the same outline, but differing in ornament.”⁵ When the winner of the \$100 prize was named some six weeks later, it was not one of New



Figure 1. Samuel F. B. Morse (American, 1791–1872). *De Witt Clinton*, 1826. Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.18)



Figure 2. Fletcher & Gardiner (1808–27). Urn, 1813. Silver, 74.9 x 55.9 x 30.5 cm. Private collection (photo: by László Bodó, courtesy of Winterthur Museum)

Figure 3. Young and Delleker (active 1817–24). Trade card for Thomas Fletcher, ca. 1827–42. Engraving, 17.5 x 11.1 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1953 (53.652.1)



York City's one hundred or so silversmiths but, rather, the firm of "Messrs Fletcher & Gardiner, of Philadelphia."⁶ This selection was hardly surprising, given that the firm's reputation as a supplier of outstanding presentation plate was already well established.⁷

A New Hampshire native, Thomas Fletcher (1787–1866) had trained in Boston as a merchant. In 1808 he and the Long Island-born silversmith Sidney Gardiner (1787–1827) announced the opening of a shop at 43 Marlboro Street, Boston, "where they intend keeping a general assortment of Gold Jewelry, Silver, Plated and Japanned Ware, Watches, Military Goods, &c. &c."⁸ Their earliest advertisement listed a wide range of imported offerings and declared that "[t]heir principal attention will be directed to the manufacturing of GOLD and SILVER WORK of every description, and particularly elastic HAIR WORK" for various types of jewelry.⁹ Few objects survive from their early years in

business, but a wealth of extant correspondence chronicles the young entrepreneurs' struggle to establish themselves financially and personally.¹⁰ Three years later they relocated to Philadelphia, a more populous city with a thriving market for precious metalwares.¹¹ On December 19, 1811, Philadelphia's *Aurora General Advertiser* reported their arrival: "Fletcher & Gardiner, Inform their friends that they have taken the Stand, No. 24, South Second Street . . . [w]here they intend carrying on extensively the Manufactory of Silver Plate And Jewellery, of every kind."¹² This they did, but more significant than their sales of domestic silver and jewelry were the commissions for presentation plate they began to receive. Their timing was fortuitous, for the practice of commemorating important occasions with gifts of silver, which dates from antiquity, began to flourish in nineteenth-century America with the onset of war in 1812.¹³



Figure 4. Warwick Vase, ca. A.D. 118–133. Marble, 294 x 195 cm. The Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries (photo: Glasgow City Council)

In early September 1812, just weeks after the frigate USS *Constitution* defeated Britain's HMS *Guerrière* in America's first decisive naval victory of the war, a group of Philadelphia citizens voted to present a piece of plate to Isaac Hull (1773–1843), captain of the *Constitution*. The order was entrusted to Fletcher & Gardiner, which supplied a covered silver urn of sophisticated design and heroic proportion, standing nearly 75 centimeters high (Figure 2). Its ornament includes classically inspired rams' heads, anthemias, and entwined dolphins, and the vessel's contemporary significance is conveyed by the naval battle chased in low relief, on one side, and the engraved inscription to Captain Hull, on the other. With a nod to Zeus, Napoléon, and the young Republic, an eagle grasping a thunderbolt is positioned atop the cover.¹⁴ So proud were the partners of this vase that its image was engraved on the trade card that the firm used—and

reused—for the next twenty-five years (Figure 3).¹⁵ Commissions for other silver vases began to come their way, celebrating such naval heroes as Lieutenant James Biddle, Captain Jacob Jones, and Commodore Oliver H. Perry, as well as Major General Andrew Jackson. For his defense of Fort McHenry in September 1814, the citizens of Baltimore honored Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead with an unusual spherical punch bowl, accompanied by a tray, twelve beakers, and a ladle.¹⁶ Three years later Commodore John Rodgers was similarly recognized, for his role in the Battle of Baltimore, with a fifty-two-piece silver table service costing \$4,000.¹⁷

The presentation plate manufactured by New York silversmiths at this time was overshadowed in grandeur and refinement by Fletcher & Gardiner's work.¹⁸ For the Clinton Vase competition, the Philadelphia firm proposed two monumental covered vessels modeled



Figure 5. Paul Storr (British, 1771–1844). Wine cooler, 1812. Silver gilt, 26.4 x 43.4 x 30 cm. Royal Collection (photo: © 2006 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)

after the Warwick Vase, a massive white marble urn excavated in 1770 at Hadrian's Villa, in Tivoli (Figure 4).¹⁹ Rather than adhering to the vase's bacchanalian theme, however, the firm advanced a decorative program that associated explicit references to American industry and geography with classical imagery in order to evoke parallels between America and ancient Rome. The resulting designs were bold and confident expressions of rising national pride. Although Thomas Fletcher is cited in 1825 as the designer of the Clinton Vases, his precise role in the process is unspecified.²⁰ Prominent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and Continental silver manufacturers routinely employed artists, architects, or sculptors to provide preparatory drawings for their silver, under the supervision of the firm's principals.²¹ There is no evidence that Thomas Fletcher had been trained as a draftsman; however, his surviving journals and letters include a number of competent sketches made during his travels.²² His keen interest in the Warwick Vase and its copies is clearly expressed in his letter book, where he documents his visit in 1815 to the workshop of one of the leading London goldsmiths Rundell, Bridge & Rundell. There he saw "a fine vase copied from one in the possession of the Earl of Warwick . . . which was dug from the ruins of Herculaneum. [It] is beautifully made—it is oval, about $\frac{2}{3}$ d the size of that made for Hull, the handles are grape stalks and a vine runs all around covered with leaves & clusters of grapes—below are the heads of Bacchus &c. finely chased—some wine coolers in the same style."²³ Fletcher's account describes vessels modeled after the Warwick Vase, which Rundell's first began to retail about 1812 and continued to manufacture in varying forms into the 1830s (Figure 5).²⁴

It was during excavations in 1769 and 1770 at Pantanello, a stagnant lake adjacent to Hadrian's Villa, that the British painter, archaeologist, and art dealer Gavin Hamilton (1723–1798) discovered fragments of the Warwick Vase, which he sold to Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778). Piranesi, best known for his architectural views of Rome, was also engaged in the fabrication of "antique" vases and candelabra from excavated fragments.²⁵ Many of these reconstructed vessels were illustrated in his *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, lucerne, ed ornamenti antichi*, first issued as separate prints and later, in 1778, as a two-volume publication.²⁶ Piranesi apparently sold the fragments of what would become the Warwick Vase to Sir William Hamilton (1730–1803), British ambassador to the Court of Naples.²⁷ A letter to Sir William from his agent, the Scottish architect James Byres (1734–1817), written in Rome on February 26, 1772, describes the stucco model made following Piranesi's design. Piranesi also arranged for its reconstruction by the French sculptor Antoine Guillaume Grandjacquet (1731–1801). The accounts of three Dutch travelers who visited Grandjacquet's workshop in Rome explain how the vase was fashioned from twenty-four antique fragments at extravagant cost.²⁸ Since much of the vase's body was missing, the existing fragments were set into a bowl newly carved from Carrara marble, as described in a letter of 1774 from Sir William to his nephew Charles Greville (1749–1809): "I was obliged to cut a block of marble at Carrara to repair it, which has been hollowed out and the fragments fixed on it."²⁹ Sir William expected to sell the restored vase to the British Museum, envisioning it as the centerpiece of his collection.³⁰ The museum's trustees, however, declined to pay the asking price of £500. He ultimately offered the vase to his nephew George Greville, second Earl of Warwick (1746–1816), who installed it at Warwick Castle.³¹ The December 1800 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* reported:

In a green-house, built on purpose for its reception, is the beautiful and magnificent marble vase . . . found in the ruins of Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, and brought over by Sir William Hamilton, who presented it to the present noble possessor. It holds 163 gallons, and rests on a foot. The handles are interwoven. The upper margin is adorned with a border of vine-branches and grapes. Under this is a lion's skin with the feet between three masks, the uppermost of which is between a crooked stick, lituus & thyrsas. On the other side one new mask has been added, which is the only reparation this *morceau* of ancient art has undergone.³²



Figure 6. Handle of the Warwick Vase shown in Figure 4



Figure 7. Bowl of the Warwick Vase shown in Figure 4

Despite its overly optimistic assessment of the degree of restoration, this account provides a fairly accurate description of the reconstructed Warwick Vase.³³ More than 9 feet tall and weighing 8 tons, it is composed of six sections: bowl, stem, base, and three-part pedestal. Its handles are fashioned as two intertwined vine stalks whose tendrils and pendant bunches of grapes work their way around the upper body (Figure 6). A panther skin with pendant head and paws is positioned horizontally on each side, creating a shelf onto which are applied the carved heads of Bacchus and Silenus and associated emblems: the *thyrsus* (a pine cone-tipped staff), on one side, and the *pedum* (a wood sheepcrook), on the other (Figure 7).³⁴ In both its shape and its Bacchic decorative program the vase resembles a type of two-handled silver drinking cup dating from the reign of the emperor Augustus (31 B.C.–A.D. 14), discovered in the Hildesheim Treasure (Figure 8).³⁵



Figure 8. Cup, from the Hildesheim Treasure, 31 B.C.–A.D. 14. Silver, Diam. 14.7 cm. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, New York)



Figure 9. Giovanni Battista Piranesi (Italian, 1720–1778). Etching, 55.8 x 43 x 4.7 cm. From *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, lucerne, ed ornamenti antichi*, part 1 (Rome, 1778). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, transferred from the Library (41.71.1.12[2])

Although Piranesi published three etchings of the Warwick Vase in 1778 (Figures 9–11), more than thirty years elapsed before it became a popular model for designers.³⁶ A major deterrent was the Earl of Warwick himself, who refused to authorize replicas. He finally acquiesced in 1813 at the urging of William Lowther, second Earl of Lonsdale (1787–1872), who planned to have a full-size copy made in silver at an estimated cost of £30,000. The project ultimately fell through, although two full-size facsimiles were cast in bronze several years later by the Parisian bronze founder Charles Crozatier.³⁷ One of these was purchased in 1829 by George IV for Windsor Castle, the other by Hugh Percy, third Duke of Northumberland (1785–1847), who presented it to Cambridge University in 1842.³⁸ Beginning about 1812, smaller copies were manufactured in silver. Best known of the silver reductions are those marked by the London silversmith Paul Storr (1771–1844), who was employed from 1807 to 1819 as a partner in Rundell, Bridge & Rundell.³⁹ Storr owned a set of the Piranesi etchings, which must have been his design source. During a visit in 1938–39 to the silversmith’s workshop (now destroyed) on Harrison Street, Gray’s Inn Road, the silver specialist



Figure 10. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Etching, 50.5 x 73.5 cm. From *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, lucerne, ed ornamenti antichi*, part 2 (Rome, 1778). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, transferred from the Library (41.71.1.13[2])



Figure 11. Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Etching, 51 x 73.5 cm. From *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcofagi, tripodi, lucerne, ed ornamenti antichi*, part 2 (Rome, 1778). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, transferred from the Library (41.71.1.13[3])

Arthur G. Grimwade inspected the Piranesi etchings and noted that many of them were “signed in the corner ‘P. Storr,’ which one assumes to have been a mark of his approval as a possible source of design in plate production.”⁴⁰ Among the earliest of the Storr copies is an impressive set of eight silver-gilt wine coolers in two sizes, dating from 1812 and purchased by the prince regent (later George IV; see Figure 5); a third set of four, purchased in 1816, dates from 1814–15.⁴¹ Other silver reductions were supplied with covers for use as soup tureens or covered urns.⁴²



Figure 12. Rockingham (1745–1842). Warwick Vase, ca. 1820. Porcelain. 24.1 x 34.3 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, C.757&A-1935

In time, the colossal vase design was adapted for domestic tea wares, saltcellars, and sporting trophies, such as the 1827 Ascot Cup, on which horses' heads replace the masks of Bacchus and Silenus.⁴³ Other London silversmiths adopted the model as well, and, beginning about 1820, it was produced in fused silver plate as both a wine cooler and a covered hot-water urn.⁴⁴ Ceramic adaptations were manufactured by Worcester, Spode, Derby, Ridgway, and Swinton's Rockingham (Figure 12). J. and M. P. Bell's Glasgow Pottery created a Parian porcelain vase in 1850, and Minton produced a majolica-glazed model in 1855. So familiar did the Warwick Vase become that its image even appeared on inexpensive transfer-printed ceramic wares produced in quantity throughout the nineteenth century, for instance as the focal point of an Italianate landscape pattern.⁴⁵

With a few notable exceptions, most of the English silver reductions remained true to the original vase in design and ornament.⁴⁶ This practice accords, as David Udy has noted, with Piranesi's own early archaeological ideals but not with his later theories, "which accepted the value of Classical models as little more than useful points of departure, from which the inventive power of the individual might range at will."⁴⁷ Enter the American firm of Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, whose Clinton Vases do precisely that (Figures 13, 14). Fletcher's admiration for the copy of the Warwick Vase he had seen in 1815 in the workshop of Rundell, Bridge & Rundell is implicit in his letter quoted above. We do not know whether he or his designer owned copies of the Piranesi etchings, but the 1778 *Vasi, candelabri* was available, by that time, at the Library Company of Philadelphia, as was Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, published in 1807, with its many illustrations

of classical vessels.⁴⁸ Yet despite their formal debt to the "Classical models," the Clinton Vases depart significantly from their source by altering the ornamental scheme to reflect contemporary themes, namely, the opening of the Erie Canal and its significance to the future of American transport and industry.⁴⁹

Fletcher recognized this distinction between classical and contemporary, and he took pride in the symbolism inherent in the vases. (The firm's pride in these vases may have prompted the creation of a special Z-shaped banner mark, unique to the Clinton Vases, for stamping their names on the underside of each plinth; see Figure 15).⁵⁰ In a letter to his wife, Melina, written from New York on March 12, 1825, he explained, "There is to be a meeting of the subscribers this evening at the City Hotel where the vases will be exhibited. It will then be determined how much I am to get for them. . . . The vases are to be exhibited to the public on Monday and Tuesday, and I shall have to attend and explain the work. . . . I shall dine with Mr. Hone tomorrow and after dinner he and I shall draw up the description for publication."⁵¹ The lengthy explanation that he and Isaac Hone crafted appeared, soon thereafter, in the press. It began:

The form of these vases is copied from the celebrated antique vase, found among the ruins of the Villa of Adrian, and now in the possession of the Earl of Warwick. The handles and some of the ornaments are also similar to those upon that beautiful specimen of ancient art; but all the tablets and figures in *bas relief* are different, and exhibit scenes upon the Grand [Erie] Canal, or allegorical illustrations of the progress of arts and sciences.⁵²

Several weeks later Fletcher discussed the vases with Governor Clinton. "This morning," he recounted in a letter to Melina, "I have had the honour of being introduced to Governor Clinton,—He was alone, and I had an opportunity of talking with him about the vases—He says they have been much admired, and good judges have pronounced them superior to any they had seen in Europe."⁵³

Where they differ most from those "seen in Europe" is in the iconographical program and in the intensely patriotic spirit of the enterprise. The Clinton Vases are monumental in scale, measuring nearly twenty-four inches in height and weighing close to four hundred troy ounces each.⁵⁴ The shapes of their bodies, handles, and pedestal feet follow closely the designs of the Warwick Vase and its English silver copies, yet nearly every surface resonates with American associations. Each cover, for instance, is "surmounted by an



Figure 13. Fletcher & Gardiner. Vase, 1824. Silver, 59.5 x 51.1 x 38.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Louis V. Bell and Rogers Funds; Anonymous and Robert G. Goelet Gifts; and Gifts of Fenton L. B. Brown and of the grandchildren of Mrs. Ranson Spaford Hooker, in her memory, by exchange, 1982 (1982.4a, b)



Figure 14. Fletcher & Gardiner. Vase, 1825. Silver, 60.3 x 52.7 x 37.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Erving and Joyce Wolf Foundation, 1988 (1988.199). See also cover illustration



Figure 15. Fletcher & Gardiner Z-shaped banner mark on underside of vase in Figure 14



Figure 16. Detail of cover on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

Figure 17. Scrollwork and river god on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13



Eagle standing upon a section of the Globe, upon which is traced part of the outline of the State of New York; he bears in one talon the arms of the State, and in the other a laurel wreath” (Figure 16).⁵⁵ The paw-footed plinth of each vase is ornamented with four plaques bolted to the pedestal, a construction technique used for much of the vases’ ornament, including the cast anthemias at each corner of the plinth. The technique of attaching decorative elements to a silver vessel by means of bolting—rather than by soldering—was practiced in France during the early nineteenth century but is rarely encountered on American silver.⁵⁶ A plaque on each vase is engraved with a dedicatory inscription to De Witt Clinton signed “Fletcher & Gardiner Makers”; one is dated “Philad^a December 1824” and the other “Philad^a February 1825.”⁵⁷ Two sides of each plinth display identical cast foliate scrollwork and a central oval medallion depicting a river god (Figure 17). The fourth side is ornamented with a frieze—different on each vase—chased in low relief.

Taken together, the two friezes (Figures 18, 19) were “intended to represent the progress of the arts and sciences from their rude origin to their present

improvement.”⁵⁸ These classically inspired figural friezes were explained in detail in the contemporary press, following the description composed by Thomas Fletcher and Isaac Hone. From right to left on the 1824 vase (Figure 18) is

Architecture leaning upon a column, with a level at its base. Then a youth holding a drawing-board with a diagram of one of the first problems in mathematics, and an old man directing his attention to the figures beyond, which denote the sciences still unexplored, and encouraging him to persevere. The next group is composed of two aged persons, contemplating a globe held by a female, who points to some lines upon its surface; next is a figure, with a torch in the right hand, and a star on the head, and holding in the left hand a tablet with a diagram; by his side is a sun-dial; an athletic figure beyond, holds a pair of dividers, and gazes attentively upon the female with the globe. This group is intended to indicate the study of the sciences.⁵⁹

The frieze on the 1825 vase (Figure 19) focuses on the arts: “On the right of the spectator appears a pastoral group, listening to the pipe of Mercury; next to



Figure 18. Frieze on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13

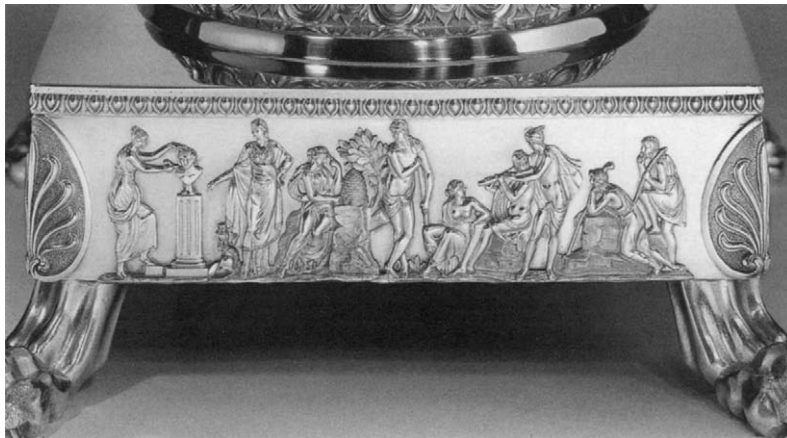


Figure 19. Frieze on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

these is a husbandman leaning upon his spade, and gazing upon a hive, while a female figure points to the labors of the industrious bee; then appears Minerva, without her helmet and shield, directing the attention of the spectators to a bust, which Sculpture is chiselling.”

Both friezes bear a noticeable resemblance to the bas-relief figures that appear on ceramic objects manufactured by Josiah Wedgwood and Sons of Staffordshire, England, specifically its line of fine-grained white stoneware called Jasper. Neither grouping is a recognizable Wedgwood design; however, the figure to the far right in Figure 18, identified as “Architecture leaning upon a column,” appears to have been adapted from one of the six figures of the Muses designed for Wedgwood by the sculptor John Flaxman (1755–1826).⁶⁰ The Wedgwood figure (Figure 20), which represents Urania, the Muse of astronomy, is shown facing to the right (that is, the reverse of the present figure) and leaning on a column, the staff in her hand pointing down toward a sphere to indicate the courses of the stars.⁶¹ Several of the other figures are familiar classical types; for instance, the central male figure with crossed ankles in Figure 19, whose



Figure 20. Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, John Flaxman (1755–1826), designer. Vase, late 18th century. Jasperware, 16.5 x 13 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1909 (09.194.7)



Figure 21. Bison pelt on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 22. Knotted paw and hoof on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

pose is sometimes associated with the Trojan shepherd-prince Paris.⁶² The overall modeling of the reliefs indicates a certain competence and suggests an artist conversant with contemporary Neoclassical fashions.

The panthers whose pelt, head, and paws encircle the body of the Warwick Vase are replaced on the Clinton Vases with North American species: a mountain lion or panther on one side (see Figure 13) and a bison on the other (Figure 21). The head of each animal hangs from the center of the pelt, flanked by pendant legs that meet and tie beneath the handles, so that a panther's paw and a bison's hoof hang alongside each knot (Figure 22). Overlapping acanthus leaves, resembling those on the Warwick Vase, are chased on the lower body, and native animals inhabit shrubbery tucked into the larger leaves. On the 1824 vase, a squirrel (Figure 23) is positioned to the left



Figure 23. Squirrel on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13



Figure 24. Beaver on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13



Figure 25. Fox on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13

and a beaver (Figure 24) to the right of the panther, above the engraved inscription, with a fox on each side of the bison's head on the back (Figure 25). On the 1825 vase, the heads of a fox and a bear are chased on the bison side (Figures 26, 27), with stag and panther heads on the back (Figures 28, 29).



Figure 26. Fox on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

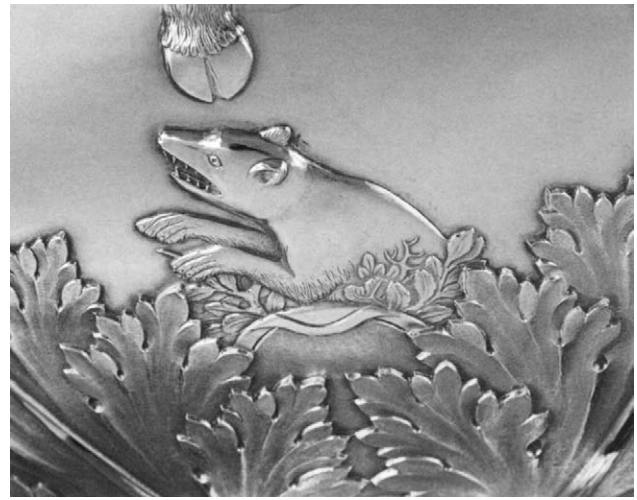


Figure 27. Bear on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 28. Stag on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 29. Panther on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

These animals, which extend the American theme, were described at the time as “the wild animals which haunted our western region, before the industry and enterprise of our brethren made ‘the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose.’”⁶³ Conservationists would recoil today, but, as Ann Wagner has noted, the destructive development of our rich natural habitats for the sake of industrial growth “had not yet been tempered by the writings of William Wordsworth or Henry Thoreau.”⁶⁴

Most of the ornamental borders on these silver vessels, such as the egg-and-dart bands that encircle the rims and pedestals, reflect the classicism of the original Warwick Vase and its copies. The delicate vine border at the top of the Warwick Vase meanders organically,

whereas its counterparts on the Clinton Vases exhibit the bold formality of English Regency silver, seen, for example, in the work of Digby Scott and Benjamin Smith II (Figure 30), who operated Rundell’s workshop from 1802 to 1807.⁶⁵ The vine borders, like the immense twisted handles, were cast in sections, soldered together, and extensively chased. Diverging most noticeably from the original model are the broad concave midsections of the Clinton Vases, each of which is ornamented with six decorative panels chased in low relief and bolted to the body. The two larger panels on each vase depict contemporary scenes along the Erie Canal, and the four smaller ones represent mythological or allegorical figures, reinforcing the symbolic union of ancient and modern worlds.



Figure 30. Digby Scott (active 1802–after 1811) and Benjamin Smith II (active 1802–24). Tray, 1806–7. Silver gilt, L. 81.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Audrey Love, in memory of C. Ruxton Love Jr., 1977 (1977.436.3)



Figure 31. Head of Neptune on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 32. Mercury on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13



Figure 33. Ceres on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13



Figure 34. Hercules on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13



Figure 35. Minerva on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13

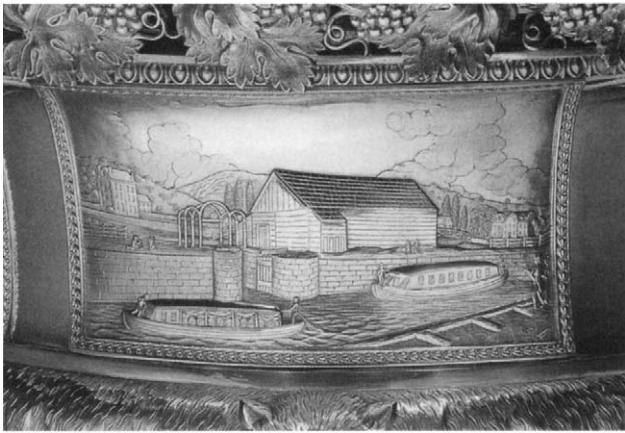


Figure 36. Guard lock and basin on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13

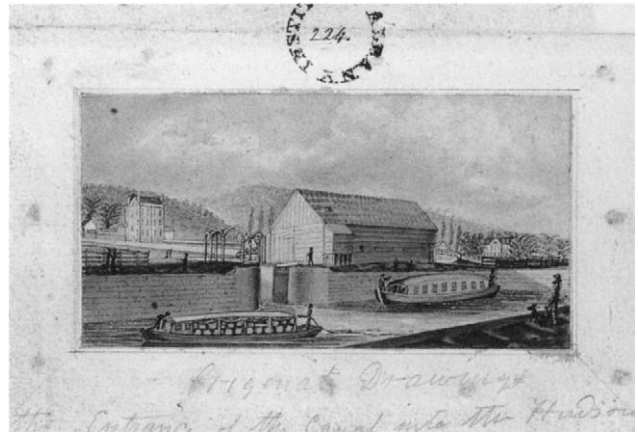


Figure 37. James Eights (American, 1798–1882). *Entrance of the Canal into the Hudson at Albany*, 1823. Ink, wash, and pencil, 7.8 x 15.2 cm. Albany Institute of History and Art, 1836.1.5

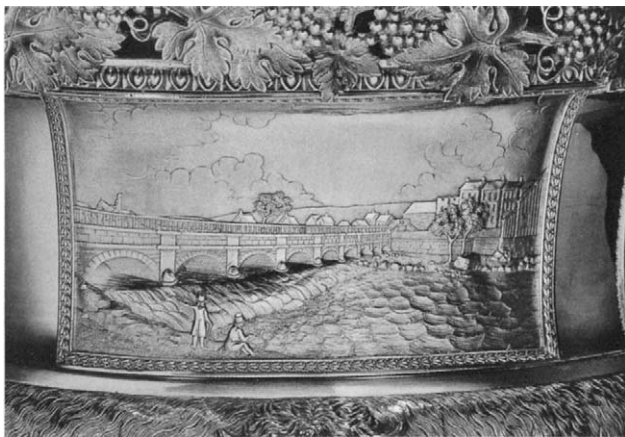


Figure 38. Aqueduct at Rochester on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1824) shown in Figure 13

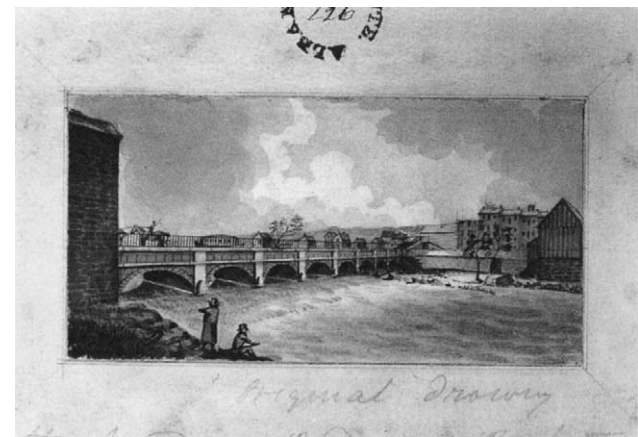


Figure 39. James Eights. *View of the Aqueduct Bridge at Rochester*, 1823. Ink, wash, and pencil, 7.8 x 15.2 cm. Albany Institute of History and Art, 1836.1.3

The panels are enclosed in delicate laurel-leaf borders, those around the figures differing slightly from those on the canal scenes. The cast head of a river god, identified, at the time, as Neptune and accompanied by two dolphins, three shells, a trident, and a spear, is attached beneath each handle (Figure 31).⁶⁶

The smaller vertical panels were intended to relate iconographically to the larger scenic views. On the 1824 vase, for instance, Mercury is depicted with his winged hat and sandals, holding a caduceus in his right hand (Figure 32).⁶⁷ As the messenger of the gods, Mercury would be identified with travel and commerce, an association reinforced in this image by the sailing ship and crates that would presumably journey on the newly opened Erie Canal. A female figure representing Ceres (Figure 33) holds a sickle in her right hand and three stalks of wheat in her left, embodying the abundant agricultural resources avail-

able nationwide thanks to the inland waterways. The hulking figure of Hercules, with his lion skin and club (Figure 34), is modeled after the famous Farnese Hercules and signifies prodigious strength.⁶⁸ He is paired with the wise Minerva (Figure 35), dressed in armor and holding her spear and shield with its image of the Gorgon's head. Her traditional symbol, the owl, perches to the left of the shield, below which are positioned a palette, calipers, and a mallet representing the arts of painting, architecture, and sculpture.

The evocation of these gods and goddesses and their traditional significance underscores the contemporary importance of the achievements depicted in the canal views. Those scenes (on the 1824 vase) were described, at the time, as follows:

The front view [Figure 36] is the guard lock and part of the basin at Albany, where the canal is connected



Figure 40. Victory (Fame) on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 41. History on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 42. Plenty on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14



Figure 43. American Indian on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

with the Hudson, together with the mansion of Mr. Van Rensselaer, and the adjacent scenery, and canal boats passing. The plate on the right of this tablet exhibits Ceres, with the emblems of agriculture; that on the left, Mercury, with the emblems of commerce. The reverse centre tablet [Figure 38] contains a view of the aqueduct at Rochester, and a boat passing, drawn by horses; below are seen the falls of the Genessee, and a number of unfinished buildings. This view is supported on the right and left by Minerva and Hercules, indicating wisdom and strength.⁶⁹

Rather than mythological figures, the vertical panels on the 1825 vase represent allegories of progress and were designated at the time as Fame, History, an American Indian, and Plenty.⁷⁰ The winged victory



Figure 44. Cohoes Falls on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

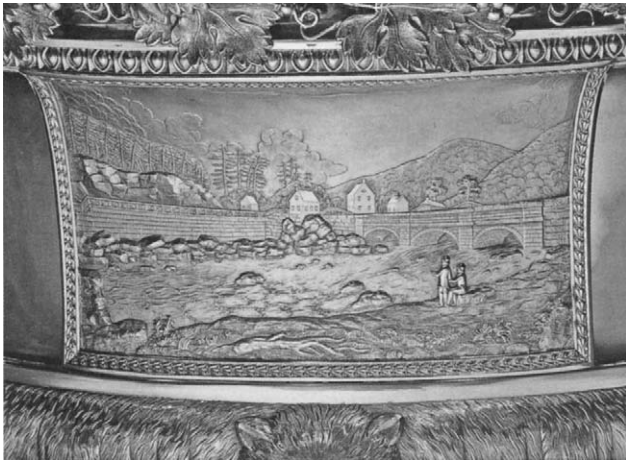


Figure 45. Little Falls on Fletcher & Gardiner vase (1825) shown in Figure 14

(Figure 40), holding her victor's wreath and the trumpet that traditionally associates her with Fame, stands before a classical temple in the right distance. The winged figure representing History (Figure 41) leans against a fluted column and writes on her tablet. Plenty (Figure 42) holds a large bunch of grapes in one hand and a cornucopia, or horn of plenty, in the other. The fourth figure (Figure 43) is "an Indian, contemplating the stump of a tree, recently felled." The man's lowered head and bow, as well as the tender saplings emerging from an old stump, allude to the conquest of native culture by the new champions of progress.⁷¹ These allegorical figures reinforce the intentions of the canal scenes as described in 1825:

The two centre tablets [Figures 44, 45] exhibit views of the Cohoos Falls, and of the Little Falls of the Mohawk, with the stone aqueduct and bridge, and parts of the canal. The figures on each side of the former are Fame and History; on one side of the latter is an Indian, contemplating the stump of a tree, recently felled, and the axe lying at its root; and on the other, Plenty, with her cornucopia—a head of Neptune, with his trident, dolphins and shells, is placed at each extremity of this belt, under the grape vine handles.⁷²

The canal scenes were based on views (Figures 37, 39, 46) by James Eights (1798–1882), the official geological surveyor for the Erie Canal. Eights was a highly regarded engineer, naturalist, explorer, and historical artist, whose views of Albany capture and record that city as it appeared in the early nineteenth century.⁷³ It was thanks to his neighbor Stephen Van Rensselaer III, whose family home appears in the view of the guard

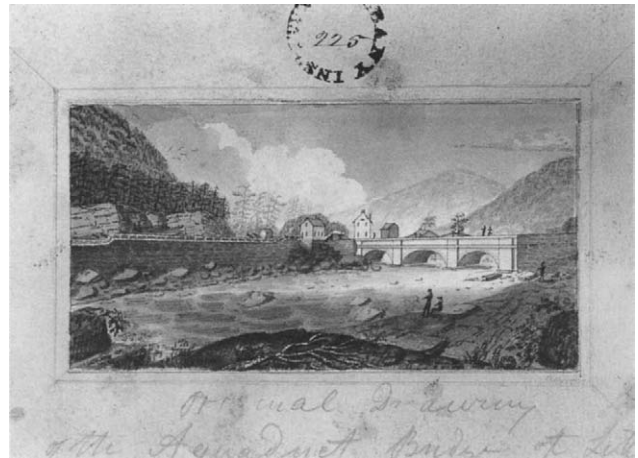


Figure 46. James Eights. *View of the Aqueduct Bridge at Little Falls*, 1823. Ink, wash, and pencil, 7.9 x 15.2 cm. Albany Institute of History and Art, 1836.1.4

lock and basin at Albany, that Eights was appointed draftsman to the canal's geological survey.⁷⁴

Both vases were completed by January 1825, less than a year after Fletcher & Gardiner had received the commission. In March, Thomas Fletcher undertook "a fatiguing journey through the mud" to New York City, where the vases were exhibited at a meeting for the subscribers at the City Hotel.⁷⁵ They then traveled by steamboat to Albany for presentation to Governor Clinton. The official event took place on Saturday, March 19, 1825, at the governor's mansion in Albany, which was "crowded with citizens and strangers." Isaac Hone spoke on behalf of the committee:

Governor Clinton—In Behalf of the merchants of Pearl Street, in the city of New York, who are deeply impressed with a sense of the benefits which you have conferred upon this state, we have the honor to present to you these vases, as a testimony of their gratitude and respect.

At an early period, your sagacity appreciated the importance of uniting the waters of Lake Erie with those of the Hudson, and your devotion to the public interest induced you to urge it upon our legislature, with all the weight of your influence: What was then theory, has now become a splendid reality, and at every new development of our resources, and every new display of the power and grandeur of our state, its citizens feel additional inducements to admire and honor your character.

Among the interesting considerations which your name involves, it is not the least important, that your fellow-citizens have recently recalled you to the office which gives such ample scope to your talents, and that



Figure 47. John W. Forbes (American, 1781–1864). Plateau, ca. 1825. Silver, glass, walnut, 21.3 x 161.3 x 58.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The AE Fund, Annette de la Renta, The Annenberg Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Robert G. Goelet, John J. Weber, Dr. and Mrs. Burton P. Fabricand, The Hascoe Family Foundation, Peter G. Terian, and Erving and Joyce Wolf Gifts, and Friends of the American Wing Fund, 1993 (1993.167)

you have preferred the discharge of its duties to the honors of a foreign embassy. We sincerely hope that your administration will be as gratifying to yourself, as it will be beneficial to your constituents.⁷⁶

The governor's reply was gracious, visionary, and patently political:

Gentlemen: I receive these splendid fabrics with the highest gratification. In the design and in the execution, they reflect honor on the taste, skill and ingenuity of our artists, and in that light they are acceptable: but they come to me with superior recommendations, as the offering of regard from the hands of gentlemen whose good opinion I greatly value, and whose friendship I sincerely reciprocate.

On this occasion, I cannot but felicitate you (as the representatives of a most important section of the most commercial city in the western world), not only on the flourishing condition of our great emporium, but on the still more exalted destinies that await it. . . . In one year, more houses have been added to New York, than at present compose the ancient and prosperous city in which I now address you. . . . And we may certainly cherish these expectations without the just imputation of arrogance or ostentation. We ought to know our power with a view to its judicious application; and we should form a just estimate of our faculties and capabilities, in order to promote, in the most effectual manner, the welfare of our country and the happiness of mankind.

The favorable views which my fellow citizens, generally, have taken of my agency in developing the resources and advancing the prosperity of the commonwealth, are the greatest reward, next to the

approbation of my own conscience, which I can enjoy in this world. If I have been hitherto an humble instrument in the hands of Providence, of dispensing some benefits to my fellow-citizens, I have every inducement from their kindness, so often, so striking, and I may say, so uniformly manifested, for devoting my best and my future exertions in the same career.

I pray you, gentlemen, to present my grateful and respectful acknowledgements to your constituents for these flattering testimonials of their esteem: And permit me to express to you the high sense which I entertain of the honor you have conferred on me by your personal attendance on this occasion.⁷⁷

Following this ceremony, the vases were exhibited in Knickerbocker's Hall "for the gratification of the citizens of the place."⁷⁸ Their outstanding artistry and rich symbolism suited the mood of national pride and stood the governor in very good stead.

This tide of high spirits, however, could not carry Clinton successfully into the presidential arena in 1827, as he had hoped, and they took a decidedly woeful and penurious turn at his sudden death on February 11, 1828. "De Witt Clinton's fame," pronounced *Niles' Weekly Register*, "is no guarantee for the violation of private right; neither is the pension system in accordance with the spirit of our government. . . . Truly, the applause of this world is an unsubstantial heritage, seeing that the family of Clinton has been expelled from the paternal roof by the mandate of the law, and that the sound of the sheriff's hammer is mingled with the loudest expressions of gratitude for services rendered." The "wreck of his fortunes" forced the seizure and sale of his personal property, "at public vendue, on Wednesday, the 28th day of May inst. At

10 o'clock in the forenoon, at the dwelling house late of the said De Witt Clinton, deceased, situate at the corner of North Pearl and Steuben streets, in the city of Albany."⁷⁹ The monumental silver vases were spared the auction block, with the intention that they would be returned to his family. "A lodge of masons at Troy," the press reported, "has subscribed \$25 for the purpose."⁸⁰ By mid-June the vases, along with a silver-and-glass plateau (Figure 47) the governor had also received in commemoration of the opening of the Erie Canal, had been secured:

It is with great pleasure we state that the Clinton vases, which had been struck off at a sale of the deceased's effects for 600 dollars, have been purchased by the grand lodge of the state, and voted to be presented to the family. The worth of the articles, with the plateau on which they stand, is said to be \$1,200 in bullion, and the exquisite workmanship on them enhanced their value to \$4,000.⁸¹

The vases were retained by the Clinton family until 1906, when they were purchased by Maria Van Antwerp De Witt (1834–1914) and her husband, Morris K. Jesup (1830–1908), a retired banker and philanthropist.⁸² Mrs. Jesup, who was later described as "one of the patronesses of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," placed the vases on loan to the Museum in 1906.⁸³ Shortly after her husband's death, however, she fulfilled his wish by presenting them to the New York Chamber of Commerce, where he had been an active member since 1863 and president for eight years.⁸⁴ Mrs. Jesup explained in her letter to the chamber that the vases had been inherited by De Witt Clinton's family after his death "and were purchased by my husband from Governor Clinton's last heir in the year 1906. Mr. Jesup's interest in the vases was inspired by the fact that my father (the late Rev. Dr. Thomas De Witt, a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in this City) was a cousin of Governor Clinton."⁸⁵ In a fitting address to the chamber, the Honorable Joseph H. Choate drew parallels between the 1820s and the early twentieth century:

You see, gentlemen, how the great achievement of Governor Clinton was then regarded by the people of the State and the whole United States. It was regarded as almost the ultimatum of internal improvement—at any rate the greatest that had then been conceived as possible. But vast changes have come over us since. That was in 1825, before railroads were hardly thought of and, as I believe, before a mile of railroad was built. . . . There is certainly as much difference between the Chamber of Commerce as now devel-

oped, representing all the great commercial interests of the nation, and the little band of merchants trading in Pearl Street in 1823, who conceived the presentation of the vases, as between the Erie Canal as the solution of the transportation problem of 1825 and our present colossal system of railroads of to-day spanning the continent in every direction, and reaching almost every hamlet in the land.⁸⁶

Choate encouraged the chamber to accept the generous offer of the vases "in the spirit in which Mr. Jesup himself had intended to present them at the last annual meeting; that they will be cherished as most valuable historical articles, as they certainly are—which could find no more appropriate place than in this Chamber, and no more appropriate guardian than in the successors of the very merchants who conceived the idea of originally presenting them to Governor Clinton."⁸⁷ The vases were accepted by the Chamber of Commerce "with profound appreciation and sincere thanks,"⁸⁸ and there they remained for more than seventy years, on public display but with little fanfare.

Writing for the *American Collector* in 1937, Thomas H. Ormsbee reminded readers of the vases' importance:

Unique examples of early 19th Century American silver craftsmanship in its most elaborate and ambitious form, they have remained generally unknown despite the fact that for nearly 30 years they have been on display in an important meeting place in New York City. They have stood in glass cases flanking the rostrum in the great hall of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York since May 7, 1908, when with Joseph H. Choate as orator of the occasion, they were formally presented to the Chamber by Mrs. Morris K. Jesup as a memorial to her husband and to her kinsman Governor DeWitt Clinton.⁸⁹

Twentieth-century silver historians held the Clinton Vases in high esteem, and the vessels appeared in the standard volumes published on American silver.⁹⁰ When, in 1981, the Chamber of Commerce offered to sell the vases to the Metropolitan Museum, there was considerable enthusiasm for the purchase, though funds were available for only one vase.⁹¹ The second was purchased by Erving and Joyce Wolf, generous supporters of the Metropolitan's American Wing, who later presented it as a gift to the Museum.

An intriguing addendum to this account is a rare surviving watercolor drawing of the 1824 vase (Figure 48), signed by the London-born artist Hugh Bridport (1794–1870). Bridport had trained at the Royal



Figure 48. Hugh Bridport (British, 1794–1870). *Clinton Vase*, 1825. Pen, ink, and wash, 21.3 x 16.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Elisha Whittelsey Collection, The Elisha Whittelsey Fund, 1953 (53.652.2)

Academy of Art, in London, before moving in 1816 to Philadelphia, where his brother George (1783–1819) already resided. Best known as a portraitist and miniaturist, Hugh Bridport also worked as an engraver, and he and his brother established a drawing academy in 1816.⁹² George Bridport figures in the history of Fletcher & Gardiner as the designer of the spherical punch bowl presented in 1816 to Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead (1780–1818) by the citizens of Baltimore, as recorded in a letter written in 1815 by Charles Fletcher to his brother Thomas, who was then traveling in England.⁹³ The small-scale watercolor of the 1824 Clinton Vase—akin to a miniature portrait—measures just 21.3 by 16.4 centimeters. It depicts the vase elevated on a dark blue velvet-covered plinth fringed in gold, looking stately and magnificent. Given its great detail, the painting is certainly an

image made after the completion of the vase, rather than a preliminary drawing; one wonders, nevertheless, whether the same artist might have been involved in the design phase as well. The watercolor, now owned by the Metropolitan Museum, was acquired in 1953 with a group of drawings associated with Fletcher & Gardiner, thereby suggesting a close connection between the painting and the manufactory. Absent documentary evidence, however, the individual or individuals who worked with Thomas Fletcher to conceive the design of the vases cannot be identified.

The Clinton Vases embody a moment in time as few objects are able to do. They were commissioned by a group of New York City merchants to celebrate the completion of the Erie Canal, a marvel of engineering that connected the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, opened new avenues of trade between the eastern United States and the Midwest, and fostered westward migration—before railroads facilitated and accelerated national expansion. The vases' recipient, New York's governor De Witt Clinton, was a lifelong public servant whose perseverance in establishing the canal was magnanimous, far-sighted, and politically astute. The firm of Fletcher & Gardiner, which was chosen to manufacture the vases, was, at that moment, riding its own wave of popular success, having been commissioned to supply most of the silver tributes presented to heroes of the War of 1812 as well as to civic leaders. The American silversmiths' achievements placed them at the forefront of an industry that would, in the next half century, grow to equal if not surpass its European counterparts. Perhaps most significantly, the designers of the Clinton Vases freely reinterpreted a venerated (albeit reconstructed) Roman vessel with confidence and creativity. By incorporating contemporary American imagery into a classical form with time-honored ornamental motifs, the designers and manufacturers of these "splendid fabrics"⁹⁴ encouraged associations with ancient Rome, basking in its reflected glory while affording us, still, the pleasure of admiring their craftsmanship and interpreting their meaning.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Cornog 1998

Evan Cornog. *The Birth of Empire: DeWitt Clinton and the American Experience, 1769–1828*. New York, 1998.

Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007

Donald L. Fennimore, Ann K. Wagner, with contributions by Cathy Mason, Deborah Dependahl Waters, and Beth Wees. *Silversmiths to the Nation: Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, 1808–1842*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2007.

Hartop 2005

Christopher Hartop. *Royal Goldsmiths: The Art of Rundell & Bridge, 1797–1843*. Cambridge, 2005.

Jenkins and Sloan 1996

Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan. *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and His Collection*. London, 1996.

Marks and Blench 1979

Richard Marks and Brian J. R. Blench. *The Warwick Vase*. Glasgow, 1979.

Opper 2005

Thorsten Opper. "Glory of Rome Restored." *British Museum Magazine*, Spring 2005, pp. 38–40.

Ormsbee 1937

Thomas H. Ormsbee. "Gratitude in Silver for Prosperity." *American Collector* 6, no. 3 (April 1937), pp. 3, 10–11.

Sørensen 2003

Bent Sørensen. "Piranesi, Grandjacquet and the Warwick Vase." *Burlington Magazine* 145, no. 1208 (November 2003), pp. 792–95.

Udy 1978

David Udy. "Piranesi's 'Vasi,' the English Silversmith and His Patrons." *Burlington Magazine* 120, no. 909 (December 1978), pp. 820, 822–35, 837.

Wagner 2004

Ann K. Wagner. "Fletcher and Gardiner: Presentation Silver for the Nation." Master's thesis, University of Delaware, Newark, May 2004.

NOTES

1. Cadwallader Colden, surveyor general of New York, wrote the first public document on the subject in 1724, and George Washington was an advocate as early as 1783. Others were more skeptical. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, approved of the concept but thought it "little short of madness . . . at this day"; see Cornog 1998, pp. 104–6, 113.
2. See Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825–1861*, ed. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, exh. cat., MMA (New York, 2000), pp. 3–4; Cornog 1998, pp. 155–57; and Patricia Anderson, *The Course of Empire: The Erie Canal and the New York Landscape, 1825–1875*, exh. cat., Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester (Rochester, N.Y., 1984). "The Meeting of the Waters of Hudson & Erie," written in 1825 by Samuel Woodworth, was sung at the Grand Canal Celebration in New York City on November 4.
3. Clinton was first appointed mayor in 1803 and served until 1815, with the exception of the years 1807–8 and 1810–11. He became governor in 1817, filling the vacancy created when Governor Daniel D. Tompkins resigned to become vice president in the Monroe administration. In 1810, he became a canal commissioner, and his name was closely identified henceforth with that cause; see *American National Biography*, vol. 5 (New York and Oxford, 1999), pp. 77–80. Clinton's political ambitions played a distinct role in his involvement with the canal; see Cornog 1998, pp. 109–85.
4. *Niles' Weekly Register*, November 12, 1825, p. 174.
5. See New York City Chamber of Commerce, *Proceedings of the Chamber of Commerce*, Fifty-first Annual Report, part 1, May 7, 1908, p. 5. Quoted in Ormsbee 1937, p. 3.
6. *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot* 59, no. 4459 (January 21, 1824), p. 1. See also Deborah Dependahl Waters, "'Silver Ware in Great Perfection': The Precious-Metals Trades in New York City," in *Art and the Empire City*, p. 355, and Ormsbee 1937, p. 3.
7. "Plate" is the generic term for wrought silver, not to be confused with silver-plated wares. The selection of a winner was made so rapidly that Thomas Ormsbee suggests the committee already had a design in mind when they announced the competition; see Ormsbee 1937, p. 3.
8. *Boston Gazette* 25 (November 7, 1808), p. [3]. For an in-depth study of the firm, see Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007.
9. *Boston Gazette* 25 (November 7, 1808), p. [3].
10. Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, pp. 33–38. The Thomas Fletcher Papers are housed at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia and in the Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library, Delaware.
11. Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, pp. 21–31, 38–39. Regarding the silversmiths' trade in Philadelphia, see Deborah Dependahl Waters, "'The Workmanship of an American Artist': Philadelphia's Precious Metals Trades and Craftsmen, 1788–1832" (Ph.D., University of Delaware, Newark, 1981).
12. *Aurora General Advertiser*, December 19, 1811, unpagged.
13. See David B. Warren et al., *Marks of Achievement: Four Centuries of American Presentation Silver*, exh. cat., Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Minneapolis Institute of Arts; MMA (Houston, 1987), p. 15.
14. See Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, no. 10.
15. See *ibid.*, p. 42, figs. 3.5–3.7.
16. The cups and ladle bear the mark of Andrew Ellicott Warner and the Baltimore assay marks for 1816; the tray is unmarked.

- The entire set now belongs to the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. See Elizabeth Ingerman Wood, "Thomas Fletcher, A Philadelphia Entrepreneur of Presentation Silver," *Winterthur Portfolio* 3 (Winterthur, Del., 1967), pp. 151–52. See also Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, no. 20.
17. See Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, no. 24.
 18. Waters, "Silver Ware in Great Perfection," p. 355.
 19. Original portions of the Warwick Vase probably date from the second century A.D. For more on the vase, see Sørensen 2003; Jenkins and Sloan 1996, pp. 59, 220–22; Jonathan Scott, "Some Sculpture from Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli," in *Piranesi e la cultura antiquaria: Gli antecedenti e il contesto. Atti del convegno, 14–17 novembre 1979* (Rome, 1983), pp. 343–44; and N. M. Penzer, "The Warwick Vase," part 1, *Apollo* 62, no. 370 (December 1955), pp. 183–88.
 20. "These vases were made by Messrs. Fletcher & Gardiner of Philadelphia, and designed by their Mr. Fletcher"; see "Description of the Vases," Thomas Fletcher Papers, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Library. This information was republished in a number of contemporary newspapers, for example, in *The New-York Mirror, and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, March 26, 1825, p. 275, and *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 23, 1825, p. 120. See also Wood, "Thomas Fletcher," p. 164.
 21. The fashionable London firm of Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, for instance, relied on an extensive network of silversmiths and allied craftsmen; see Charles Oman, "A Problem of Artistic Responsibility: The Firm of Rundell, Bridge & Rundell," *Apollo* 83 (March 1966), pp. 174–83, and Michael Snodin, "J. J. Boileau, a Forgotten Designer of Silver," *Connoisseur* 198, no. 196 (June 1978), pp. 124–33.
 22. See Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, pp. 60, 81.
 23. Letter book, June 14, 1815, p. 144; Thomas Fletcher Papers, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The phrase "of that made for Hull" refers to Fletcher & Gardiner's silver urn presented in 1813 to Isaac Hull, captain of the USS *Constitution*; see Figure 2.
 24. See Hartop 2005, p. 117.
 25. Opper 2005, pp. 38–40; Jenkins and Sloan 1996, p. 220; Sørensen 2003, p. 792.
 26. Opper 2005, p. 39.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 39; Sørensen 2003, p. 793. See also Nancy H. Ramage, "Sir William Hamilton as Collector, Exporter, and Dealer: The Acquisition and Dispersal of His Collections," *American Journal of Archaeology* 94, no. 3 (July 1990), p. 475.
 28. Sørensen 2003, pp. 792–93. A drawing of the stucco model for the restored vase appears in a letter dated August 3, 1772, sent by Piranesi to the antiquities collector Charles Townley; see *ibid.*, p. 793, fig. 35. Restoration costs reportedly totaled some 4,000 Roman *scudi*; Opper 2005, p. 39.
 29. Letter dated June 5, 1774, quoted in Jenkins and Sloan 1996, pp. 220–22, and Sørensen 2003, p. 794. For diagrams of the reconstruction, see Marks and Blench 1979, pp. 14–15. In the 1950s Cornelius Vermeule and Dietrich von Bothmer assessed the full extent of the vase's restoration, describing the vase as "excellent Neo-Classic work"; see C. Vermeule and D. von Bothmer, "Notes on a New Edition of Michaelis: Ancient Marbles in Great Britain," part 2, *American Journal of Archaeology* 60, no. 4 (October 1956), p. 345. See also note 33 below.
 30. Hamilton had sold his extensive collection of vases to the British Museum in 1772 for the sum of £8,410; Marks and Blench 1979, p. 7.
 31. George Greville was the older brother of Charles. See Jenkins and Sloan 1996, p. 222; Marks and Blench 1979, pp. 7–8; and Scott, "Some Sculpture from Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli," pp. 343–44.
 32. *The Gentleman's Magazine: and Historical Chronicle. For the Year MDCC 70*, part 2 (London, 1800), p. 1144.
 33. Vermeule and von Bothmer examined the vase at Warwick Castle in 1955 and reported on its state of restoration: "The ancient portions include: patches in the sides (including the grape vine), the majority of both acanthus-stem handles, the two Bacchic heads in the centre of the side facing the Conservatory doors . . . , part of one head in the corresponding place on the opposite side, parts of the panther skins on either side, and the silen head on the left of the side away from the entrance. The patently non-antique faun head (with the supposed features of Lady Hamilton) has the same discolouration in the surface as the bottom of the bowl. The surface of the lower part of the bowl has the chisel marks of 'ageing' characteristic of Piranesi forgeries. . . . We may also credit his workshop with production of the majority of the bowl as it is to-day"; Vermeule and von Bothmer, "Notes on a New Edition of Michaelis," p. 345.
 34. Marks and Blench 1979, p. 9, and Penzer, "The Warwick Vase," part 1, pp. 186–87.
 35. Marks and Blench 1979, p. 16.
 36. The etchings are illustrated in John Wilton-Ely, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: The Complete Etchings* (San Francisco, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 964–66. The Warwick Vase was one of numerous antique vessels that became popular models for Neoclassical designers. Likewise emulated were the Medici and Borghese kraters, which were also published by Piranesi, and the cameo-glass Portland Vase, now at the British Museum, which was copied by Josiah Wedgwood. See Udy 1978, pp. 820, 822–35, 837.
 37. See Hartop 2005, pp. 117–18, and N. M. Penzer, "Copies of the Warwick Vase," part 3, *Apollo* 63, no. 373 (March 1956), p. 72.
 38. Udy 1978, p. 830; Hartop 2005, pp. 117–18; and Marks and Blench 1979, pp. 20–21. N. M. Penzer ("Copies of the Warwick Vase," part 3, p. 72) suggests that the bronze vase was purchased in 1822, but a surviving invoice (Royal Archives GEO/26251) indicates that the purchase was made in 1829. I am grateful to Kathryn Jones, assistant curator, Works of Art, Royal Collection, for confirming the date of acquisition.
 39. See John Culme, *Nineteenth-Century Silver* (London, 1977), p. 65, and Udy 1978, pp. 827–28, n. 19. For more on Rundell, Bridge & Rundell, see Hartop 2005.
 40. A. G. Grimwade, "Silver at Althorp IV: The Rococo and Regency Periods," *Connoisseur* 154, no. 622 (December 1963), p. 231, n. 3. See also Udy 1978, p. 824.
 41. One of the 1812 wine coolers is illustrated in Udy 1978, fig. 37, where comparison can be made with Piranesi's frontal view. My thanks to Kathryn Jones for information on the Storr wine coolers belonging to the Royal Collection.
 42. The sculptor William Theed (1764–1817), who like Storr was a partner in the Rundell firm, is believed to have modeled a putto-and-panther finial to surmount the covered vases; see Hartop 2005, p. 116, fig. 114. It appears that Theed also supervised production of the full-size wax models for the ill-fated silver facsimile; *ibid.*, pp. 116–17.
 43. See *ibid.*, p. 117; Marks and Blench 1979, p. 25; Wood, "Thomas Fletcher," p. 164; and Penzer, "Copies of the Warwick Vase," part 3, p. 73. This tradition survives today in the Norman Brookes Challenge Cup, modeled after the Warwick Vase, which

- is presented to the annual winner of the Australian Open tennis tournament.
44. The London silversmiths include Edward, Edward Jr., John, and William Barnard; Messrs. Carrington and Company; and Edward Barnard and Son. See Marks and Blench 1979, p. 22, and Penzer, "Copies of the Warwick Vase," part 3, p. 73. For the silver-plate versions, see Frederick Bradbury, *History of Old Sheffield Plate: Being an Account of the Origin, Growth, and Decay of the Industry . . . with Chronological Lists of Makers' Marks and Numerous Illustrations of Specimens* (London, 1912), pp. 377–79.
 45. Marks and Blench 1979, pp. 25–26, and Michael Berthoud, "The Warwick Vase and Its Influence on the Design of English Ceramics," *Antique Collecting* 28, no. 9 (1994), pp. 25–29.
 46. Penzer, "Copies of the Warwick Vase," part 3, p. 73. Exceptions include a vase of 1820 marked by Philip Rundell and belonging to the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, where oak leaves and branches replace the antique heads and vine handles. The vase sits on a stand of 1838 maker-marked *IT*; see John Bodman Carrington and George Ravensworth Hughes, *The Plate of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths* (Oxford, 1926), pp. 116–17. Another exception is the Ascot Cup for 1827, mentioned above.
 47. Udy 1978, p. 823.
 48. Piranesi's *Vasi, candelabri* was acquired by the Library Company in 1803 as part of a bequest from the Reverend Dr. Samuel Preston. Hope's *Household Furniture* seems to have been acquired shortly after its publication in 1807. The Warwick Vase was also illustrated in Henry Moses' 1811 London publication, *A Collection of Antique Vases, Altars, Paterae, Tripods, Candelabra, Sarcophagi, &c. . . .*, a copy of which was owned by the prominent Philadelphian James Rush (1786–1869), who later donated it to the Library. I am grateful to Cornelia S. King, reference librarian at the Library Company of Philadelphia, for confirming the acquisition dates of these volumes.
 49. A silver copy of the Warwick Vase, supplied by the Boston silversmiths Obadiah Rich and Samuel L. Ward of Boston and presented to Daniel Webster in 1835, more closely resembles the original in its ornamental program, although it, too, omits the heads of Bacchus and Silenus. The Webster Vase now belongs to the Boston Public Library; see Penzer, "Copies of the Warwick Vase," part 3, p. 74, and Martha Gandy Fales, *Early American Silver for the Cautious Collector* (New York, 1970), p. 119, fig. 116.
 50. See Fennimore, Wagner et al. 2007, pp. 172, 267.
 51. Letter of March 12, 1825, from Thomas Fletcher in New York to Melina Fletcher in Philadelphia; Thomas Fletcher Papers, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Isaac Hone was secretary of the Pearl Street merchants' association that commissioned the vases.
 52. *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 23, 1825, p. 120. According to this published account, the vases cost \$3,500.
 53. Letter of May 7, 1825, from Thomas Fletcher in New York to Melina Fletcher in Philadelphia; Thomas Fletcher Papers, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
 54. Troy weight is the customary system used for weighing precious metals.
 55. *New-York Mirror, and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, March 26, 1825, p. 275. In fact, the names of several states are engraved along the eastern seaboard: on the 1824 vase we find "N.YORK / N. Jer. / Md"; on the 1825 vase, "N.YORK / N. Jer. / Md. / Va." Ann Wagner has noted that the eagle finial is a modified version of the model used for the Andrew Jackson urn of 1816; see Wagner 2004, p. 67.
 56. On the use of bolting, which was practiced more extensively by makers of bronze furniture mounts, see Clare Le Corbeiller, "The Construction of Some Empire Silver," *MMJ* 16 (1981), pp. 195–98. The technique was also used, to a lesser degree, by English silversmiths, among them Rundell, Bridge & Rundell.
 57. The text of the 1824 vase reads: "The Merchants of Pearl Street, New York, / TO THE HON. DEWITT CLINTON / Whose claim to the proud Title of 'Public Benefactor,' / is founded on those magnificent works, / The Northern and Western CANALS." The text of the 1825 reads: "TO THE HON. DEWITT CLINTON, / Who has developed the resources of the State of New York, / AND ENNOBLED HER CHARACTER, / The Merchants of Pearl Street offer this testimony of their / GRATITUDE AND RESPECT."
 58. *New-York Mirror, and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, March 26, 1825, p. 275.
 59. *Ibid.*, and *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 23, 1825, p. 120.
 60. In 1776 Flaxman was commissioned to model six of the nine Muses associated with Apollo. The order was later rescinded, but not before he had completed the commission; see Carol Machi, *Classical Wedgwood Designs: The Sources and Their Use and the Relationship of Wedgwood Jasper Ware to the Classical Revival of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1957), pp. 86–87.
 61. *Ibid.*, p. 86. My thanks to Lynn Miller, information officer, Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Limited, Barlaston, England, for this suggestion.
 62. I am grateful to James David Draper for this observation.
 63. *New-York Mirror*, March 26, 1825, p. 275.
 64. Wagner 2004, p. 71.
 65. Arthur Grimwade, *London Goldsmiths 1697–1837: Their Marks and Lives . . .*, 3rd rev. ed. (London, 1990), pp. 161–62. Scott and Smith preceded Storr in this role.
 66. *New-York Mirror*, March 26, 1825, p. 275. The intertwined-dolphin motif appears as well on several naval awards produced by the firm; see Wagner 2004, p. 67.
 67. This figure is inspired by Giovanni Bologna's much-copied bronze sculpture, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.
 68. The Farnese Hercules is a third-century Roman copy of a Greek sculpture carved by Lysippus or one of his followers, discovered at the Baths of Caracalla in 1546.
 69. *New-York Mirror*, March 26, 1825, p. 275.
 70. *Ibid.*
 71. This is suggested in Wagner 2004, p. 70.
 72. *New-York Mirror*, March 26, 1825, p. 275.
 73. Eights's original drawings are in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art. They were published in Amos Eaton, *A Geological and Agricultural Survey of the District Adjoining the Erie Canal in the State of New York* (Albany, 1824). See also Tamms K. Groft and Mary Alice Mackay, eds., *Albany Institute of History and Art: 200 Years of Collecting* (New York, 1998), pp. 58–59, 260–61. For Eights as an explorer, see John M. Clarke, "The Reincarnation of James Eights, Antarctic Explorer," *Scientific Monthly* 2, no. 4 (February 1916), pp. 189–202. For a useful biography, see Stefan Bielinski, "James Eights," in *The People of Colonial Albany Live Here*, <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/e/jaeights2036.html>.
 74. Bielinski, "James Eights."
 75. Letter of March 12, 1825, from Thomas Fletcher in New York to Melina Fletcher in Philadelphia; Thomas Fletcher Papers, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
 76. Clinton had declined an offer from President John Quincy Adams to become minister to England; *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 2 (New York, 1929), p. 224. The names of the committee members were listed in the published account: Peter

- Crary, James Heard, Nathaniel Richards, John Haggerty, Arthur Tappan, Edward M. Greenway, Amos Palmer, Ralph Olmsted, Frederick Sheldon, and Isaac S. Hone; *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 23, 1825, p. 120.
77. *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 23, 1825, p. 120.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1828, p. 233.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
81. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1828, p. 252. The plateau, marked by John W. Forbes, is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (1993.167a-c).
82. For their obituaries, see *New York Times*, January 23, 1908, p. 6, and June 18, 1914, p. 11.
83. *New York Times*, June 18, 1914, p. 11, and *MMAB* 1, no. 4 (March 1906), p. 67.
84. Morris Jesup's wide-ranging philanthropy extended, as well, to the American Museum of Natural History, the New York Chamber of Commerce, Princeton and Yale universities, Williams College, the Children's Aid Society, Sailor's Snug Harbor, the Woman's Hospital of New York, and the Union Theological Seminary; *New York Times*, January 23, 1908, p. 6.
85. Quoted in "Presentation of the Clinton Vases and Stuart's Portrait of Washington to the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York by Mrs. Maria De Witt Jesup, Address by the Hon. Joseph H. Choate, May 7th, 1908," p. 7; curatorial files, American Wing, Metropolitan Museum.
86. "Presentation of the Clinton Vases," p. 15.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
89. Thomas H. Ornsbee, "Gratitude in Silver for Prosperity," *American Collector* 6 (April 1937), p. 3.
90. See, for instance, Fales, *Early American Silver*, p. 117; Katharine Morrison McClinton, *Collecting American 19th Century Silver* (New York, 1968), frontis.; and Graham Hood, *American Silver: A History of Style, 1650-1900* (New York, 1971), pp. 193-94, 196. The 1824 vase was exhibited at the Newark Museum in 1963 and published in the catalogue *Classical America, 1815-1845* (Newark, N.J., 1963), no. 104. The vases were noted in Donald L. Fennimore, "Elegant Patterns of Uncommon Good Taste: Domestic Silver by Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner" (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, Newark, 1972), p. 89, and discussed in Wood, "Thomas Fletcher," pp. 159-63.
91. The vase purchased by the Museum was the one dated 1824 (Figure 13).
92. See Wayne Craven, "Hugh Bridport, Philadelphia Miniaturist, Engraver, and Lithographer," *The Magazine Antiques* 89, no. 4 (April 1966), pp. 548-52; Alexandra Alevizatos Kirtley, "George Bridport," in "Collectors' Notes," *The Magazine Antiques*, 169, no. 5 (May 2006), p. 76; *American Daily Advertiser* 46, January 29, 1817, p. 4, and February 27, 1817, p. 4. Advertisements for the Bridports' "Academy for Drawing" appeared in the contemporary press, e.g., *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* 46 (January 29, 1817), p. 4, and (February 27, 1817), p. 4. He and John Haviland (1792-1852) later founded an architectural drawing academy in Philadelphia; see Jeffrey A. Cohen, "Building a Discipline: Early Institutional Settings for Architectural Education in Philadelphia, 1804-1890," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53, no. 2 (June 1994), p. 145, and an advertisement in *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* 47, December 1, 1818, p. 1. Hugh Bridport and Thomas Fletcher were both involved in the founding of the Franklin Institute; see Bruce Sinclair, *Philadelphia's Philosopher Mechanics: A History of the Franklin Institute, 1824-1865* (Baltimore, 1974) and Henry Butler Allen, "The Franklin Institute of the State of Pennsylvania," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*.
93. "Mr Bridport has just completed the drawing for Col. Armisted's [*sic*] Urn—in the form of an [*sic*] Shell supported by 4 Eagles standing upon a round foot: the Body without any chasing"; Charles Fletcher to Thomas Fletcher, July 2, 1815, Thomas Fletcher Papers, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The punch bowl, tray, beakers, and a ladle were presented to Armistead for his defense of Fort McHenry in 1814; see note 16.
94. *Niles' Weekly Register*, April 23, 1825, p. 120, quoting Governor Clinton in accepting the vases.