

CLARENCE WINTHROP BOWEN (1852-1935), 1928

Frank O. Salisbury (1874-1962)

oil on canvas

44 1/8 x 34 (112.08 x 86.40)

signed, u.r.: 'Frank O. Salisbury, 1928'

Bequest of Clarence W. Bowen, 1935; received 1937

Weis 12

Hewes Number: 10

Exhibitions:

1928, 'Portraits and "The Kings Offering" by Frank O. Salisbury,' Anderson Galleries, New York, no. 22.

1929, 'Exhibition of Recent Work by Frank O. Salisbury,' Grafton Galleries, London, no. 32.

After spending his youth travelling and working as a correspondent for several newspapers, Clarence W. Bowen inherited the New York Independent from his father, Henry Chandler Bowen (1813-96), and published that paper from 1896 to 1912. Throughout his life, Bowen avidly pursued his interests in historical research and in 1926 published the first of eight volumes of the history and genealogy of Woodstock, Connecticut.¹ His appreciation for American history led him to found the American Historical Association in 1884 and to rally for the organization of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. A newspaper publisher, historian, and genealogist, he was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society in 1904. He also served as president of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society and as vice president of the American Antiquarian Society from 1920 to 1935.

Bowen's obituary describes a man whose 'optimism was contagious and his faith in the future unchanged.... He had known intimately so many leaders of thought and action for half a century, that his conversation was filled with highly interesting reminiscence.'² Bowen's journals and scrapbooks covering the period 1869 to 1934 are part of the manuscript collection of the American Antiquarian Society and are filled with memorabilia relating to his many social, academic, and charitable activities.³

Bowen met the English portrait painter Frank O. Salisbury at a New York dinner party in January 1928. Salisbury, who had studied at the Royal Academy in London, was highly regarded by members of the upper classes in both England and the United States. He was described by the American press as 'a lean Englishman who wears a purple Ascot tie and a cameo stick pin and is

known as the painter of kings.’⁴ Some of his better-known sitters included King George V, Queen Mary, King George VI, and three archbishops of Canterbury.

The five sessions for Bowen’s portrait documented in the sitter’s journal each lasted an hour and thirty minutes, reflecting the speed with which Salisbury worked to capture a likeness.⁵ His loosely painted, fluid brushwork often caused his American critics to describe his work as ‘Sargentesque.’ One critic commented that the painter’s greatest strengths were his ‘dexterity, forcibility [and] a capacity of depicting externals.’⁶

Bowen was pleased with his portrait and continued to socialize with Salisbury and arrange commissions for him, including several works for the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society in addition to portraits of Calvin Coolidge (cat. 33) and Waldo Lincoln (cat. 74) for the American Antiquarian Society.

¹ Bowen, History of Woodstock, and The Genealogies of Woodstock, Connecticut, 6 vols. (Norwood, Mass.: Plimpton Press, 1926-43). Bowen’s life-long search for portraits of New Englanders, which was stimulated by his work on the history of Woodstock, led to the AAS acquisition of significant works by the Connecticut painter Winthrop Chandler (1747-90), including the artist’s self-portrait and images of his wife, brother, and sister-in-law (cats. 25-28).

² For Bowen’s obituary, see Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 46 (April 1936): 6-10.

³ Bowen Family Papers, c. 1847-c. 1934, AAS Manuscript Collection.

⁴ ‘How It Is Done,’ The Art Digest (October 15, 1932): 26. For more on Salisbury, see Benjamin Aquila Barber, The Art of Frank O. Salisbury (London: F. Lewis Publishers, 1937), and Salisbury, Portrait and Pageant (London: J. Murray, 1944).

⁵ See Bowen’s journal entries for March 22, 26, 27, 29, and April 5, 1928, Bowen Family Papers.

⁶ ‘Reviews,’ Connoisseur 84 (August 1929): 124-25. This article reviews an exhibition of Salisbury’s work that included Bowen’s portrait at the Grafton Galleries in London.