

Stephen Salisbury III (1835-1905), 1908

Frederic P. Vinton (1846-1911)

after his own composition painted in 1891

oil on canvas

framed: 50 x 40 (according to Weis) (127.00 x 101.60)

signed along top edge: "Frederic P. Vinton/1908"

Commissioned by the American Antiquarian Society, purchased with funds provided by Andrew McFarland Davis, 1908

Weis 101

Hewes Number: 102

Like his father before him, Stephen Salisbury III became a member of the American Antiquarian Society as a young man, joining the institution in 1863, at the age of twenty-eight. He became a councilor in 1874 and, after the death of his father in 1884, was made Vice President. Three years later, Salisbury became President of the Society. His interest in South American archaeology shaped the direction of the institution's collecting during his tenure. Early imprints from Mexico and Central America were added to the Society's holdings and papers on archaeological digs in the Yucatan, many sponsored by Salisbury, were published in the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society.<sup>1</sup> According to his obituary Salisbury, "always manifested a most practical interest in [the Society's] welfare; in season and out of season he always had its interests at heart and was always ready to give up other business and cares to consult and advise with those associated with him in its management.... Very few of our members knew of the great amount of time and thought that he gave the American Antiquarian Society..."<sup>2</sup> In his will, Salisbury left the Society \$200,000, the largest single financial bequest it had ever received up to that time. These funds were used in 1909-10 to build the Society's current building at the corner of Park Avenue and Salisbury Street in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Stephen Salisbury III was born in Worcester and was the only son of the wealthy businessman Stephen Salisbury II (cat. #101). The younger Stephen graduated from Harvard College in 1856 and spent several years traveling in Europe and Asia before returning to complete his law degree

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the Society's Latin American collection see Under its Generous Dome, The Collections and Programs of the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1992): 89-91.

<sup>2</sup> Nathaniel Paine, "Memorial," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 18(October 1907): xxx.

in 1861. Salisbury's interest in archeology was sparked during his first visit to the Yucatan peninsula in 1862. He wrote several essays on South American archeology for the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, including "Dr. LePlongeon in Yucatan," (1877) and "Terra Cotta Figure from Isla Mujeres," (1878).<sup>3</sup> Salisbury's personal papers, which include his notes for various essays and speeches, as well as personal and business correspondence, are preserved in the American Antiquarian Society's manuscript collection.<sup>4</sup>

At his father's insistence, Salisbury purchased a substitute during the Civil War and assisted his parent with the management of the family's extensive holdings of property and businesses in Worcester County. Like his father, Stephen Salisbury III served one term in the State Senate, was president of the Worcester National Bank and directed the Worcester & Nashua Railroad. He was a trustee of the Worcester City Hospital and the Worcester Polytechnic Institute.<sup>5</sup> Salisbury's greatest achievement was his establishment in 1896 of the Worcester Art Museum. His financial generosity, as well as gifts of paintings and objects from his personal collection, helped the Museum rise in prominence among art institutions in the region.<sup>6</sup>

This portrait of Salisbury was commissioned by the American Antiquarian Society after the sitter's death. It was copied by Frederic P. Vinton from a portrait he had painted during sittings with Salisbury in 1891. Vinton, who was born in Bangor, Maine, studied painting with the artist William Morris Hunt (1824-1879) in Boston before traveling to Europe to continue his education. He took classes at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and worked with the American painter Frank Duveneck (1848-1919) in Munich, Germany. Although Vinton maintained a studio in Boston, he made regular trips to Europe to study art.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Salisbury further developed this research in three books on the Mayan culture, The Mayas and the Source of their History (1877), Maya Archaeology and Notes on Yucatan (1879) and Maya History and Mexican Copper Tools (1880).

<sup>4</sup> Salisbury Family Papers 1674-1908, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Salisbury's achievements see Waldo Lincoln, "Stephen Salisbury," @ New England Historical and Genealogical Register 60(October 1906): 326-329.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the Worcester Art Museum see Selected Works (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> American Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 1 (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1969): 277-78.

In 1908, Vinton's original portrait of Stephen Salisbury III was, as it is today, part of the collection of the Worcester Art Museum.<sup>8</sup> Arrangements were made for the original to be sent to Vinton's Boston studio where the artist copied the canvas for the American Antiquarian Society, making several minor changes. Society member Andrew McFarland Davis (1833-1920), who provided the funds to purchase the copy, noted in a letter to the Society's President Waldo Lincoln (cat. #74), "I regard the removal of details in the background and the substitution of a cane for the hat in the right hand as an essential improvement. The reproduction of the features seems to me to be almost perfect.... I think the Society will be glad to hang the picture on its walls and I should not wonder if after a little it were considered the better picture of the two."<sup>9</sup> Vinton delivered the painting, although it was unfinished, in time for the Society's spring meeting in April of 1908. He wrote to Lincoln, "The 'Salisbury' is on the easel in the room where you are to meet tomorrow. I was unable to get down to his honorable legs, but I will do so at once when the portrait is returned to me."<sup>10</sup> Vinton finally completed the canvas in June of 1908.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Vinton's 1891 portrait of Salisbury is illustrated in Selected Works, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew McFarland Davis to Waldo Lincoln, May 3, 1908, American Antiquarian Society Archives. Specific changes include the removal of a bookcase in the background at left, the substitution of a cane for a top hat held in the sitter's right hand, the inclusion of a table at right and the reduction of the number of papers and books on the desk at left.

<sup>10</sup> Frederic P. Vinton to Waldo Lincoln, April 14, 1908, American Antiquarian Society Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Vinton's June 12, 1908 receipt for payment of \$1,800 is preserved in the American Antiquarian Society's Archives.