

John William Stiles (1777-1836), c. 1825
Mary Maccarty Stiles (1775-1838), c. 1825

Eliza Goodridge (1798-1882)
watercolor on ivory
John William Stiles: 3 5/8 x 2 3/4 (9.2075 x 6.9850)
Mary MacCarty Stiles: 3 5/8 x 2 5/8 (9.2075 x 6.6675)
Bequest of Dwight Foster Dunn, 1937
Weis 107, 108
Hewes Numbers: 107 & 108

Ex. Coll.: sitters, possibly owned by their daughter Lydia Stiles Foster (1806-87), owned by her grandson, the donor.

John Stiles was born in Keene, New Hampshire, and lived in Templeton, Massachusetts after his marriage to Mary Maccarty in 1801. There, he became a successful merchant and served as the town clerk and a selectman. From 1810 to 1813, Stiles was the town's representative at the Massachusetts General Court. His personal and business correspondence, including letters to his political colleagues and his wife, are preserved in the American Antiquarian Society's manuscript collection.¹ Stiles maintained a library which included printed ephemera relating to American history: In 1822 he donated two early broadsides to the American Antiquarian Society, including a 1766 sheet denouncing the Stamp Act and an announcement for a 1779 political convention.² In the twentieth century, a descendent donated several volumes from John Stiles's personal library, including Salma Hale's Annals of the Town of Keene (1826) and Aaron Hall's A Sermon Against Profane Swearing (1790).

¹ John William Stiles Papers 1792-1838, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection.

² See BDSDS 1766 "Countryman" and BDSDS 1779F "Proceedings," American Antiquarian Society Broadside Collection.

In 1821, John and Mary Stiles and their two daughters Lydia (cat. #109) and Mary (cat. #111) moved to Worcester, Massachusetts where Mrs. Stiles's parents lived. Mary Maccarty Stiles was the granddaughter of the Reverend Thaddeus Maccarty (cat. #75) and her family was part of the social elite in the city. The couple probably commissioned these miniatures around 1825 from Eliza Goodridge who had known the family in Templeton and remained friendly with Lydia Stiles (Foster) for most of her adult life. The artist was just beginning her career and the corrections to Mr. Stiles's shoulder and alterations in the position of his arm reveal her early struggles with human anatomy. The portrait of Mary Maccarty Stiles depicts her at around fifty years of age wearing a sheer bonnet and patterned shawl. Her death, which occurred about ten years later, was caused by a runaway horse and was detailed in the Worcester papers: "[T]he horse rushed furiously from the stable and up the avenue into the main street, crossed over from the east side to the west side-walk, turned down the side street amidst the people walking there.... [H]is breast came in contact with an aged lady, Mrs. Mary Stiles, who was dashed upon the brick pavement, the horse falling upon her."³ Both miniatures remained in the family until they were presented to the American Antiquarian Society in 1937.

³ Massachusetts Spy, August 8, 1838, p. 3.