

Lydia Stiles (1806-1887), c. 1825

Eliza Goodridge (1798-1882)  
watercolor on ivory  
3 3/4 x 2 3/4 (9.5250 x 6.9850)  
Bequest of Harriet E. Clarke, 1944  
Weis 56  
Hewes Number: 109

Ex. Coll.: possibly owned by the sitter's parents John and Mary Stiles (cat. #107, 108), to the sitter, to her daughter Rebecca Faulkner Foster Clarke (cat. #52), to her daughter the donor.

Lydia Stiles was the eldest daughter of John and Mary Stiles (cats. #107, 108) and was born in Templeton, Massachusetts. This miniature depicts her at around age eighteen as she was completing her education at Miss Fiske's Young Ladies Seminary, a boarding school in Keene, New Hampshire. Lydia's father, who had family in Keene, corresponded with his daughter, reassuring her in 1820: "[T]he same continued round of events which has marked this place hitherto will probably continue and I can only tell you that the sun rises and sets, the neighbours go to the Tavern, the old women and Girls go to the Store with their Butter, and sometimes to the Tea Table to retail Slander and learn the Fashion as they used to when you was here. I hope you are better employed in the improvement of your time." He explained his decision to send her to New Hampshire, saying, "Although we have a tolerable school in this place...I prefer'd, painful as your long absence is to us, and I trust, no less so on some accounts, to yourself - to have you reside there and pursue your studies - the expense indeed is somewhat more, but I hope this will be more than compensated by your superior advantages in acquiring knowledge of the world by mixing in some degree with persons with whom you otherwise would not be acquainted."<sup>1</sup>

This miniature of Lydia Stiles was painted by her friend and neighbor in Templeton, Eliza Goodridge. Stiles wears a red dress and elaborate hair comb, similar to one shown in the miniature of her younger sister Mary of the same date (cat. #111). Around 1828, at age twenty-two, Goodridge painted a second miniature of Lydia Stiles (cat. #110), probably at the time of the sitter's engagement to Alfred Dwight Foster (1800-1852). A third portrait of Lydia Stiles

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<sup>1</sup> John William Stiles to Lydia Stiles, June 1, 1820, John William Stiles Papers 1792-1838, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection; for more on Miss Fiske's school, see Laurence Thompson, "Schools," in Upper Ashuelot: A History of Keene, New Hampshire, ed. Keene History Committee (Keene: City of Keene, 1986): 446.

Foster (cat. #49), also by Goodridge, was painted after her marriage and depicts her at around thirty-two years of age. These three images of the same woman by the same artist are not only documents of the development of the artist's skill as a painter but are also visual records of the maturation of a woman whose foresight and interest in genealogy resulted in the preservation of the Foster family archives.