

ELIJAH BRIGHAM (1751-1816), 1808  
SARAH WARD BRIGHAM (1756-1838), 1808  
Ethan Allen Greenwood (1779-1856)  
oil on canvas  
28 1/4 x 24 1/4 (71.75 x 61.60) (framed)  
both signed, l.l.: 'Greenwood/Pinxt/1808'  
Gift of Henry A. Phillips, 1925  
Weis 14, 15  
Hewes Numbers: 12 & 13

Ex. Coll.: Sitter; to his daughter Anna Maria Brigham Phillips (1794-1880); to her son Elijah Brigham Phillips (b. 1819); to his son, the donor.

Exhibitions:

1971, Chestnut Street Congregational Church, Worcester.

Publications:

Georgia Brady Bumgardner, 'The Early Career of Ethan Allen Greenwood,' in Peter Benes, ed., Itinerancy in New England and New York: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife (Boston: Boston University, 1984), 223-24.

Elijah Brigham and his third wife, Sarah Ward Brigham, were prominent residents of Westborough, Massachusetts, a prosperous farming community between Boston and Worcester. Brigham was a respected judge in the Worcester County courts and served several terms in both the state legislature and United States Congress. He became a member of the American Antiquarian Society in 1813. His personal papers, housed at the Society, contain summaries of his judicial decisions and material relating to his business activities and family history.<sup>1</sup>

In 1808, when these portraits were painted, Brigham was serving as a Massachusetts state senator and was a sitting justice of the Court of Common Pleas in Worcester County. The artist Ethan Allen Greenwood, who started painting portraits in 1801, spent most of 1808 travelling around Massachusetts in search of portrait commissions. He painted in Boston during the early portion of the year and that summer travelled to Shrewsbury and Westborough, where he completed thirteen portraits, including those of the Brighams.<sup>2</sup> Between 1801 and 1825, Greenwood painted more than 800 portraits.<sup>3</sup>

The sittings for the portraits are documented in Ethan Allen Greenwood's diary. The painter's first contact with the Brighams came on August 20, 1808, when he was commissioned to copy a portrait of Sarah Brigham's father, General Artemas Ward (1762-1847). Five days later

the copy was completed, and Greenwood, who was boarding with the Brigham family, noted: 'Began to be more acquainted with the people.' The copy of the Ward portrait must have been well-received, as the next day Greenwood wrote in his journal: 'Judge Brigham having concluded that I should take a likeness of himself and Lady, I began his and sketched and dead colored it.' When the Judge left to attend commencement exercises in Cambridge, Greenwood worked on Sarah Brigham's portrait, went to Sunday meeting with the couple's daughter Sophia, and took tea at the nearby home of their son Elijah, Jr. On September 3, 1808, the painter noted in his journal: 'Finished Judge Brigham and Mrs. Brigham likenesses which were much approved and thot [sic] to be very striking resemblances.' The painter was paid \$25.00 for his work.<sup>4</sup> The canvases remained in the family until they were given to the American Antiquarian Society by a great-grandson of the sitters in 1925.

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<sup>1</sup> Elijah Brigham Papers, 1754-1880, AAS Manuscript Collection.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Brady Bumgardner, 'The Early Career of Ethan Allen Greenwood,' in Peter Benes, ed., Itinerancy in New England and New York: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife (Boston: Boston University, 1984), 219-20.

<sup>3</sup> Georgia Brady Barnhill, 'Journals of Ethan A. Greenwood,' Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 103 (April 1993): 95.

<sup>4</sup> Ethan Allen Greenwood Diary, August 20-31, September 1, 3, 23-24, 1808, Ethan Allen Greenwood Papers, 1779-1856, AAS Manuscript Collection.