

Frederick William Thomas (1806-1866), c. 1850

Anonymous
oil on canvas
24 x 19 (60.96 x 48.26)
Gift of Martha Thomas Corwine Pelton, 1933
Weis 114
Hewes Number: 121

Ex. Coll: sitter, possibly to his sister Belle Thomas Corwine (1822-88), owned by her daughter, the donor.

This portrait of the author was thought by the family to be the work of Thomas D. Jones (1811-81), a sculptor and medallianist who moved to Ohio from upstate New York in the 1830s.¹ However, as no other paintings by Jones have ever been identified, and the fact that the portrait reflects an academic understanding of the oil medium which, according to current scholarship, Jones did not possess, this attribution has been rejected. The portrait was owned by the family until 1933, when it was offered to the American Antiquarian Society along with several books by Thomas and other members of his family. The Society's director wrote to the donor, "It is needless to say that we are exceedingly pleased and much impressed with this gift. Interested as we have always been in the Thomas family, and particularly anxious during the last few years to obtain books of F. W. Thomas and L. F. Thomas, we are delighted to have so wonderful an accession come to us at one time."²

¹ Martha Thomas Corwine Pelton to Clarence Brigham, September 3, 1933, American Antiquarian Society Archives. Pelton wrote that the two portraits of Frederick William Thomas (cats. #120, 121) were "by an artist named Jones, well known here in Cincinnati in those olden days. Mr. Jones also modeled a bust of my grandfather now upon his grave in Spring Grove." In fact, although Jones did do a bust of Ebenezer Smith Thomas in 1845, the cemetery bust of Frederick William Thomas was done by Shobal Vail Clevenger (1812-43), see Edna Maria Clark, Ohio Art and Artists (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1932), 138.

² Clarence S. Brigham to Martha Thomas Corwine Pelton, October 10, 1933, American Antiquarian Society Archives.