

Isaiah Thomas (1749-1831), 1804

Attributed to Gerrit Schipper (1775-c. 1830)

pastel on paper

8 11/16 x 7 7/8 (22.3 x 20)

inscribed on verso of frame by sitter: "Isaiah Thomas, 1804,
aged 55 when this picture was taken."

Partial gift of Leonard C. Couch, partial purchase of Charles L. Nichols, 1920.

Weis 118

Hewes Number: 126

Ex. Coll.: sitter, in 1831 willed to his granddaughter Hannah Weld Thomas Crocker (1803-1827) who was already deceased, possibly owned by her husband Samuel Leonard Crocker, owned by his daughter Mary Caroline Crocker Couch in the 1840s, to her son, one of the donors.

Publications:

Charles L. Nichols, "The Portraits of Isaiah Thomas," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 30(October 1920): opp. 251, as by James Sharples.

Charles L. Nichols, The Portraits of Isaiah Thomas (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1921): frontispiece, as by Sharples.

Annie R. Marble, From 'Prentice to Patron (New York: D. Appleton Press, 1935): opp. 264, as by Sharples.

Although this pastel was once considered to be the work of James Sharples (c. 1751-1811), this attribution was changed when research revealed that Sharples was in England during 1804 when the image was drawn.¹ Later it was thought to be the work of William Doyle (1769-1828) because of an 1805 receipt among the Thomas papers documenting the fact that Doyle was paid for the completion of several miniatures.² In 1990, similarities were noted between this image and the pastel of Isaiah Thomas attributed to Gerrit Schipper (cat. #124). This observation has led to the possibility that this profile was also drawn by that artist or copied after Schipper's work.³

¹ John Hill Morgan to Clarence Brigham, July 2, 1937, American Antiquarian Society Archives.

² Frederick Weis, "Portraits in the American Antiquarian Society," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 56 (April 1946): 118-9. See cat. #127 for the watercolor on ivory miniature of Thomas by Doyle.

³ See the 1951-52 correspondence between Hannah Johnson Howell of the Frick Art Reference Library and Clarence Brigham, American Antiquarian Society Archives, and Jeanne Riger, "New Light on Gerrit Schipper, the Painter," The Clarion 15(Winter 1990): 66.

This pastel was part of a group of five images of members of the Thomas family. A second portrait of Thomas's wife Mary Thomas Fowle Thomas, which served as a pendant for this image and was inscribed by Isaiah Thomas "Mary Thomas, wife of Isaiah Thomas, Esq. of Worcester. Taken 1804," was owned by the Boston dealer Maurice Rubin of Columbia House Antiques in 1951.⁴ Portraits of Thomas's son Isaiah Thomas, Jr. and his wife Mary Weld Thomas (cat. #132), and a profile of her sister, Hannah Weld (cat. #143) completed the group.

⁴ A photograph of this second portrait of Mary Thomas Fowle Thomas is on file at the American Antiquarian Society and the Frick Art Reference Library (FARL # 50672).