

George Washington (1732-99), 1850

H. Micali et fils (at work 1850-60)
after Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828)

marble

25 1/2 (h) (64.77)

Gift of Maria W. Barton, October 1867

Weis 132

Hewes Number: 138

Ex. Coll.: Purchased from the artist by Ira Moore Barton (1796-1867); to his widow, the donor.

This bust is the only representation of George Washington in the American Antiquarian Society's portrait collection. It was one of two gifts presented to the Society in memory of member Ira Moore Barton. The other was the sculpture of Benjamin Franklin (cat. 54). In accepting these items, the Council noted: 'These appropriate subjects of patriotic interest...are severely illustrative ornaments to the library of the highest merit; and together constitute a worthy memorial of the culture, the taste, and the liberality of a distinguished and lamented officer of the Society.'¹

This sculpture is based on a bust of Washington that Jean-Antoine Houdon made from life c. 1786. Houdon's bust was widely copied by American and European artists who were eager to answer the demand for images of the popular leader. By mid-century it was common practice for Italian workshops, such as H. Micali et fils, to produce large numbers of copies for the American tourist market.

Anne Ziegler assisted in the preparation of this entry.

¹ Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society (October 1867): 13-14. For more on Barton, see Franklin (cat. 54).