

Unknown woman, c. 1850

Anonymous

marble

24 1/4 (h) (61.60)

Gift of Stephen Salisbury III, 1881

Weis 103

Hewes Number: 162

Ex. Coll.: Early ownership unknown; found in New York City by a friend of the donor.

Publications:

Boston Globe, September 10, 1911.

The identity of the subject of this bust has been in doubt from the time it was acquired on behalf of the American Antiquarian Society in 1881. In that year's Proceedings, Librarian Edmund T. Barton requested assistance from the members to help identify the subject: 'Attention is called to a marble bust lately received by Mr. Salisbury Jr., from New York, and your judgment requested both as to the sculptor and subject. It was found in a Spanish drugstore, which had previously been used by a marble worker, and represents a lady, probably of the early part of the nineteenth century. Nothing more is known of its history.'<sup>1</sup> In 1884 the possibility that the bust depicted the writer Lydia Huntley Sigourney (1791-1865) was put forward but was disputed by friends who had known the author in Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> The following year a photograph of the bust was sent to Sigourney's daughter, Mrs. Francis T. Russell, whose husband responded: 'The bust is not of Mrs. Sigourney, we are sure of that.'<sup>3</sup> The elegant sitter, with her carefully coiffed hair and fashionable gown, remains unidentified.

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<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 1 (October 1881): 342. In 1911 Barton recorded his memory of the arrival of the gift, noting: 'The gift of Stephen Salisbury 3d. Sent to him by a Spanish friend in New York who found it boxed in his store there. This friend learned that a worker in marble once occupied the room in which the box was discovered, but could gather no facts about the interesting subject.' (See Edmund T. Barton, January 10, 1911, typed note, George F. Hoar Correspondence, AAS Archives.)

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 3 (April 1884): 142.

<sup>3</sup> Francis T. Russell to Barton, November 24, 1885, AAS Archives. (See also Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 6 (April 1890): 258-59.)