

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BALDWIN (1800-1835), 1836

Chester Harding (1792-1866)

after a miniature by Sarah Goodridge (1788-1853)

oil on canvas

36 x 27 7/8 (91.4 x 70)

Commissioned by the American Antiquarian Society, 1836

Weis #3

Hewes Number: 3

Exhibited:

1952, "Chester Harding 1792-1886," Connecticut Valley Historical Museum, Springfield, Massachusetts, no. 2.

Publications:

Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin, 1829-1835 (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1901): frontispiece.

Leah Lipton, A Truthful Likeness, Chester Harding and his Portraits (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1985): 135.

Two months after Christopher Columbus Baldwin's unexpected death, the Society commissioned a full-scale portrait of the former librarian.¹ Chester Harding, the most sought-after portrait painter in Boston, was hired to copy the miniature by Sarah Goodridge taken of Baldwin shortly before his death (cat#2). Harding and Baldwin had been acquainted for several years having met at a dinner party in 1829. Harding is mentioned in the young librarian's diaries several times after their initial meeting.² In 1832 Baldwin recorded, 'It was no small gratification to me to have today Chester Harding, Alvan Fisher and Jonathan Mason all with me at once. They are all painters, and they possess such fervent zeal for their profession and everything connected with it, that I have great pleasure to be with them.'³ In this posthumous portrait, Harding softened the sitter's expression and added a bookcase and hands to his composition.⁴

William Lincoln described the satisfaction of the Council of the American Antiquarian Society with the results of the commission. 'The Council...[has] procured a portrait by the celebrated painter Harding, from an exact miniature of Mr. Baldwin; that the living image of an associate so valued and a friend so loved may remain in our halls, as his memory will continue in the hearts of those who knew his worth and the ardor of his enthusiasm in those pursuits to which our institution has been dedicated.'⁵

¹ October 23, 1835, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 299.

² Diary of Christopher Columbus Baldwin, August 23, 1829, Christopher Columbus Baldwin Papers 1817-1835, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection.

³ Baldwin Diary, August 1, 1832.

⁴ The September 14, 1836, receipt for the painting, which includes \$150.00 for Harding and \$17.00 for a frame, is in the archives of the American Antiquarian Society. For more information on Harding, see Leah Lipton, A Truthful Likeness, Chester Harding and his Portraits (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1985).

⁵ May 25, 1836, Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society , 329.