

HORACE GREELEY (1811-72), 1870  
Philip Spooner Harris (1824-84)  
30 x 25 (76.20 x 63.50)  
oil on canvas  
signed, at left: 'P. S. Harris/1870'  
Gift of Samuel E. Winslow, 1935  
Weis 64  
Hewes Number: 62

Ex. Coll.: Commissioned by John Winslow (1825-98) for the Long Island Historical Society but refused by them; to his nephew, the donor.

Horace Greeley, who was born in Amherst, New Hampshire, at age fourteen was apprenticed to a Vermont newspaper printer. In 1831, at age twenty, he moved to New York City to look for work in the newspaper business. He worked as a typesetter, set up his own printing business, and submitted articles on politics and international events to several city papers. In 1841 he founded the New York Tribune and served as its editor. 'The Tribune set a new standard in American journalism by its combination of energy in news gathering with good taste, high moral standards and intellectual appeal.... The editorials were vigorous but usually temperate; the political news was the most exact in the city; book reviews and book extracts were numerous.'<sup>1</sup> The Tribune eventually became one of the largest newspapers in the city, with a circulation of over 250,000. Many of Greeley's writings, including his editorials for the Tribune, are preserved in the American Antiquarian Society's book and newspaper collections.

Greeley had strong political opinions, which he aired regularly in his editorials. He opposed slavery and the Mexican War, fought for the prohibition of liquor, and was a strong supporter of labor unions. During the Civil War, he stood firm in his belief that slavery should be entirely eliminated and corresponded frequently with President Abraham Lincoln about the purpose and future implications of the war.

By 1870, when this portrait was painted, the Tribune had become less Greeley's personal platform and more a national paper. Greeley, who had served briefly in Congress in 1848, turned his attention to politics again about 1871. In 1872 he was chosen as the Democratic candidate for president but was defeated by the Republican Ulysses S. Grant by a wide margin.

This portrait was commissioned by New York attorney John Winslow (1825-98) and was originally intended for the Long Island Historical Society, of which Winslow was a member. Winslow had previously hired Philip Spooner Harris to paint portraits of himself and his law partner, Joshua M. VanCott, and was impressed with the artist's work. In his letter of introduction to Greeley, Winslow wrote: 'Let this introduce Mr. Harris whom we know to be an excellent Artist and a very worthy gentleman.... Mr. Harris has had the honor to paint the portraits of Ex. Judge Selah B. Strong, Judge Greenwood, A. A. Low...and others. His success in these gives us abundant reason to believe that he will secure for us a most excellent portrait of yourself.'<sup>2</sup> The portrait was completed but for unknown reasons was refused by the Long Island Historical Society. In 1898 it passed to a nephew of Winslow, who donated it to the American Antiquarian Society.

Little is known about Philip Spooner Harris. He was born in Heath, Massachusetts, and lived for a time in the 1850s in Bath, Maine, before moving to Long Island about 1860. He exhibited two portraits of children at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1865 and listed his address as the 'Rutgers Female Institute,'<sup>3</sup> indicating that he may have worked as an art instructor there. Harris died at the age of sixty in Flatbush, Long Island.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, s.v. 'Greeley, Horace.' For additional biographical information on Greeley, see his autobiography, Recollections of a Busy Life, Including Reminiscences of American Politics and Politicians (New York: J. B. Ford & Co., 1868), and Don C. Seitz, Horace Greeley, Founder of the New York Tribune (Indianapolis: 1926).

<sup>2</sup> John Winslow to Horace Greeley, November 5, 1869, John Winslow Papers, 1730-1905, AAS Manuscript Collection. There are additional engravings and photographs of Greeley in the AAS Graphic Arts Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Maria Naylor, The National Academy of Design Exhibition Records, 1861-1900, 2 vols. (New York: Kennedy Galleries, Inc., 1973), 1: 396.

<sup>4</sup> New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860, s.v. 'Harris, Philip Spooner.'