

DAVID HALL (1704-89), c. 1800

ELIZABETH PRESCOTT HALL (1713-1803), c. 1800

Anonymous

pastel on paper board lined with canvas

David Hall: 24 1/8 x 20 1/8 (61.28 x 51.12) (framed)

Elizabeth Hall: 21 3/8 x 20 1/8 (51.75 x 48.26) (framed)

Gift of Richard Morey, 1941

Hewes Numbers: 63 & 64

Ex. Coll.: Morey family.

Exhibitions:

1941-80, stored at the Worcester Art Museum and exhibited occasionally.

David Hall, son of Joseph and Hannah Hall, graduated from Harvard College in 1724 and was granted the M.A. in 1727. He was ordained in 1729 as the second minister of the Congregational Church in Sutton, Massachusetts, serving there for the rest of his life. On June 24, 1731, he married Elizabeth Prescott, daughter of Dr. Jonathan and Rebecka Buckley Prescott of Concord, Massachusetts. They settled in Sutton and raised thirteen children. He was made an honorary Doctor of Divinity by Dartmouth College in 1777.¹

Although Hall was accused of delivering only ‘dull discourses’ in the pulpit, the Sutton congregation grew during his long ministry, which included the tumultuous years of the American Revolution. Once, in 1775, he paid a visit to Sutton Minutemen stationed outside Boston. There, he ‘Pray’d with the Regiment and lodged at night with the field officers in a good Chamber but had poor Beds.... On fryday [sic] Evening as attending Prayers, a 24 Pounder was fired at us, and fell about a Stones thro [sic] from us.’²

The identity of the artist who created these pastels is unknown. The poor condition of the surfaces, which had been extensively repaired, and a loss of pigment, have added to the difficulty of an attribution. In 1780 the sitters’ son Jonathan (b. 1754) sent an unnamed painter from Pomfret, Connecticut, to paint oil portraits of his parents, and the pastels may have been copied from them.³

After 1940, the pastels came to the attention of Clifford K. Shipton, librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, as he was preparing an entry on David Hall for publication in the sixth volume of Sibley’s Harvard Graduates. The two pastels were eventually offered to the

Society by the family. Accepting them, Shipton wrote, 'The American Antiquarian Society would be more than just delighted to have the David Hall portraits.... We regard Colonial portraits as documents, and do our best to encourage the preservation of them.'⁴

¹ William Prescott, The Prescott Memorial (Boston: Henry W. Dutton & Son, 1870), 51, 64.

² David Hall Diary, April 19, 1775, quoted in Sibley's Harvard Graduates, s.v. 'Hall, David.' Hall's diaries are at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

³ Sibley's Harvard Graduates, s.v. 'Hall, David.' In 1945 the two oils were still hanging in the Congregational Church in Sutton. They are illustrated in William A. Benedict and Hiram A. Tracy, History of the Town of Sutton, Massachusetts (Worcester: Sanford & Co., 1878), 309. Shipton illustrates another portrait of Hall that was in Claremont, New Hampshire, in 1900, but by 1945 was lost.

⁴ Clifford K. Shipton to Jane Morey, July 3, 1941, AAS Archives.