

COTTON MATHER (1663-1728), c. 1750

Anonymous

after Peter Pelham (1697-1751)

oil on canvas

32 x 27 1/4 (81.2800 x 69.2150)

Gift of Hannah Mather Crocker, 1815

Weis 78

Hewes Number: 79

Ex. Coll.: the Mather family, owned in 1814 by the donor, the sitter's great-granddaughter.

Exhibitions:

1864, "National Sailors' Fair," Boston Athenaeum, no. 211 as by Peter Pelham.

1891, "Portraits by American Artists," Worcester Public Library.

1911, "Exhibition of Colonial Portraits," Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 25.

1921-22, "Loan Exhibition of English and American Paintings of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Worcester Art Museum.

1939, "Life in America for Three Hundred Years," Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 8.

1943, "New England Painting 1770-1775," Worcester Art Museum.

1950, "Life in America," Denver Art Museum.

Publications:

Exhibition of Colonial Portraits, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1911), 58-59.

Life in America for Three Hundred Years, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1938), 4-5.

Frederick Weis, The Colonial Clergy and the Colonial Churches of New England (Lancaster, Massachusetts: Society of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy, 1938), 48.

This painting was once believed to be the original portrait by Peter Pelham on which the artist based his famous 1727 mezzotint of Cotton Mather. In 1943 this portrait was carefully examined and compared to the portrait of Mather (cat. #78) given to the American Antiquarian Society in 1923 by Josephine Gay and to the Pelham mezzotint. At that time it was determined based on brushwork and x-ray examination that the Gay portrait was the original and this image given by Crocker was probably an eighteenth-century copy.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Louisa Dresser, 'Paintings Owned by the American Antiquarian Society,' The Magazine Antiques 95 (November 1969): 719. The study, organized by Anne Allison, was conducted at the Worcester Art Museum. See also, Anne Allison, 'Peter Pelham, Engraver in Mezzotinto,' The Magazine Antiques 53 (December 1947): 442.