

WILLIAM PAINE (1750-1833), c. 1830

Chester Harding (1792-1866)

oil on canvas

33 1/4 x 27 1/4 (84.46 x 69.22)

Bequest of Russell Sturgis Paine, 1959

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Ex. Coll.: sitter to his son Frederick William Paine, possibly to his son George S. Paine, through the family to the donor who, in 1911, placed the canvas on loan to the American Antiquarian Society.

Exhibitions:

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

Publications:

Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates 17 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1975): 359.

Leah Lipton, A Truthful Likeness: Chester Harding and His Portraits (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1985): 173.

William Paine, a physician and prominent citizen of Worcester, Massachusetts, was one of the eleven 1812 incorporators of the American Antiquarian Society. He served as the Society's vice president from 1813 to 1816 and later sat on the committee for publications. He bequeathed the Society his professional library which consisted of many early medical texts.¹ His personal and business papers, including documents relative to his activities during the Revolutionary War, are preserved in the Society's manuscript collection.²

Paine was born in Worcester and graduated from Harvard College in 1768. He studied medicine with several Worcester county physicians and was a partner in an apothecary business in town. During the Revolutionary War he supported the Loyalists and left Worcester for England in 1774. He received his medical degree from Aberdeen and enlisted in the British Army as a

¹ George E. Francis, "William Paine," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 13(April 1900): 404.

² Paine Family Papers c. 1721-c. 1918, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection.

surgeon. In this capacity Paine was sent to New Jersey, New York and Nova Scotia.³ After the war was over, Paine was given land in Canada as a reward for his loyalty to the crown, but instead chose to live in Salem, Massachusetts near his wife's family. In 1793, Paine's father died and left the family mansion in Worcester to his son, who soon returned to the city of his youth and re-established his medical practice. During the hostilities with England in 1812, Paine gave up his British military pension and was naturalized as a United States citizen. In Worcester he quickly regained his social prominence, not only as a physician, but as a supporter of education and an active member of the Second Parish Church.

Around 1830, Paine had his portrait painted by Chester Harding who was then the most fashionable painter in Boston. Although Harding's sitters included patriots such as James Madison and John Quincy Adams, he agreed to paint the former Loyalist.⁴ The artist captured Paine as an elderly man, almost eighty years of age, long after he had retired from medicine. A contemporary recalled that Paine "was of medium height and of slight figure; his white hair was brushed back from his head, made into a cue and bound with black ribbon, with a bow at the end. Even at the age of eighty his complexion remained clear and delicate."⁵

³ For more on Paine's activities during the war see Francis, 398.

⁴ A miniature after this portrait by an unknown artist is owned by the Worcester Art Museum and is illustrated in Susan Strickler, American Portrait Miniatures (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1989): 134. According to Strickler, the miniature was later copied in the 1870s by the artist James Sullivan Lincoln. In addition, there is a profile silhouette of William Paine in the Society's Graphic Arts Collection.

⁵ Francis, 405-6.