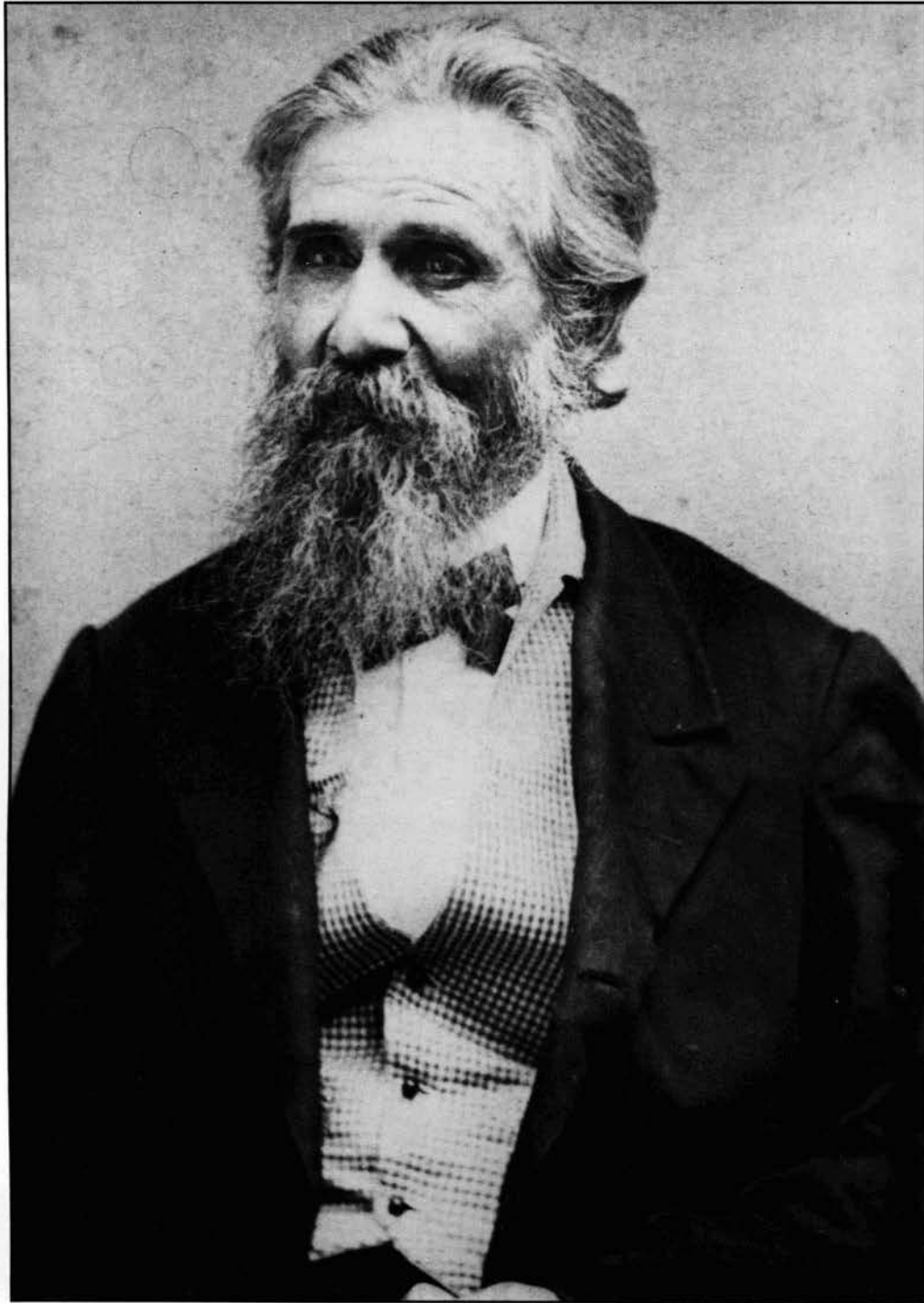


The St. Lawrence County Historical Association
QUARTERLY

Volume XL - Number 3 - Summer, 1995



The St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright Museum

The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is a private, not-for-profit membership organization based at the Silas Wright Museum in Canton, New York. Founded in 1947, the Association is governed by a constitution, by-laws, and Board of Trustees. The Historical Association's membership meets annually to elect its officers and trustees.

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The St. Lawrence County Historical Association is an educational resource center and museum that researches, collects, preserves, and interprets St. Lawrence County history through collections development, publication, exhibition, and programming; whose purpose is to help establish the intellectual and cultural connections that expand awareness and place St. Lawrence County in its state and national context, while revealing its unique identity. The Association examines different aspects of life in St. Lawrence County from multiple and diverse resources through community partnerships and collaboration. SLCHA values quality, integrity, and accessibility and operates within established museum standards befitting its American Association of Museums (AAM) accredited status.

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Cover Illustration:

Photograph of artist and medalist, Salathiel Ellis, probably dating from c. 1860.

(From the SLCHA Collections)

An Introduction to Prucha's "The Indian Peace Medals of Willson and Ellis"

by Stewart J. Wilson

Two St. Lawrence County artists and the role they played in the federal government's relationship with native Americans are the focus of the following article by Francis Paul Prucha. Joseph Willson and Salathiel Ellis contracted with the government to design and create four Indian peace medals bearing Presidential likenesses. Instrumental in their receiving the contracts was another local figure, Ransom H. Gillet. All three men had moved away from the county by the time Willson and Ellis designed the Indian peace medals. However, all three men developed their skills in our county, and maintained connections to the region later in life.

Salathiel Ellis was born either in Massachusetts or Vermont in 1803. Ellis moved to the Town of Potsdam with his family in 1809. Little is known about Salathiel Ellis's early life. In 1828, at the age of 25, he purchased land in the Village of Canton, and he appears to have been involved in a number of different endeavors. Local records listed him as a chair shop owner, sign and house painter, cameo-cutter, and artist. Today, he is probably best remembered in the county for his set of nine prints of various scenes, executed circa

1838. (For more information on Ellis's sprints, see Wendy Shadwell's article, "St. Lawrence County, 1838, As Seen through the Eyes of Salathiel Ellis," *The SLCHA Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 1, Winter, 1994, pp. 1-14.)

Ellis left the county in 1842 and moved to New York City. He was based in New York into the 1860s, and made his living as a sculptor, cameo-cutter, and artist. It was during this period that Ellis executed the Indian peace medals. He also created other significant works while in New York, including medallions or portraits of Cornelius Vanderbilt, Horace Greeley, and Gilbert Stuart.

In the early 1860s Ellis moved to Minnesota where five of his children had settled. He moved yet again in the early 1870s to San Jose, California, where two sons had made their homes. Ellis's last major work was a large bronze statue of Elias Howe for the Howe Sewing Machine Company, created in the mid-1870s. Ellis died in California in 1879.

The careers of Joseph Willson and Salathiel Ellis are closely linked. Considerably younger than Ellis, Willson was born in 1825, and resided in Canton in his youth. Georgia Chamberlain, in her brief article on Willson in *American Medals and Medalists*, states that

he studied portrait painting with Ellis. In 1842, at the age of seventeen, Willson accompanied Ellis to New York City where they formed a partnership, and at least initially, focused on work as cameo cutters. Yet, it seems Willson had further aspirations as a sculptor. In the early 1850s, he studied art in Italy for three years. Willson's life was cut short at the age of thirty-two. He died on September 8, 1857.

Ransom Gillet played a crucial role in securing the peace medal commissions with the federal government for Willson and Ellis. Gillet settled in Canton in 1823 at about the age of 23. He studied law with Silas Wright, and was admitted to the bar in 1824. Gillet was postmaster of Ogdensburg from 1829 to 1833, and then was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served from 1833 to 1837. In the 1840s, Gillet moved away from the county and settled in Washington, D. C. In 1867, he moved back to Columbia County, New York. Gillet died in Washington, D.C., in 1877. Although a prominent lawyer and politician, Gillet is perhaps best remembered in the area today for his two volume biography of Governor Wright (*The Life and Times of Silas Wright*, Albany, NY: The Argus Company, 1874).

The Indian Peace Medals of Willson and Ellis*

by Francis Paul Prucha

Silver medals, designed for presentation to Indian chiefs and warriors, played a prominent part in American Indian policy. Known as Indian peace medals, these tokens of friendship and symbols of allegiance belong not only to the history of Indian white relations in the United States but to our artistic heritage as well, for the government took great pains to see that the medals were of high merit. Among the Indians the medals were cherished possessions, to be buried with the chiefs or passed down from generation to generation.

The practice of honoring Indian leaders in such a fashion did not originate with the United States. Though the ultimate origin of the usage is obscure, the French, Spanish, and British had distributed medals for many decades. Thomas Jefferson spoke of the use of medals among the Indians as "an ancient custom from time im-

memorial" which had its beginning in the European practice of giving medals to "the negotiators of treaties and other diplomatic characters, or visitors of distinction."¹

Whatever the source, the practice took firm hold in the United States. Medals were given to Indian chiefs on important occasions, such as the signing of a treaty, a visit of important Indians to the national capital, or a tour of Indian country by some federal official. They were distributed, too, by Indian agents on the frontier at their own discretion but according to established norms. The proposed "Regulations for the Government of the Indian Department," drawn up in 1829 by Lewis Cass and William Clark, set forth a simple outline of rules to govern the distribution of medals:

In the distribution of medals and flags, the following rules will be observed:

1. They will be given to influential persons only.

2. The largest medals will be given to the principal village chiefs, those of the second size will be given to the principal war chiefs, and those of the third size to the less distinguished chiefs and warriors.

3. They will be presented with proper formalities, and with an

appropriate speech, so as to produce a proper impression upon the Indians.

4. It is not intended that chiefs should be appointed by any officer of the department, but that they should confer these badges of authority upon such as are selected or recognized by the tribe, and as are worthy of them, in the manner heretofore practised.

5. Whenever a foreign medal is worn, it will be replaced by an American medal, if the Agent should consider the person entitled to a medal.²

Although these regulations were never formally adopted, they represented the generally accepted practice on the frontier.

The practice became so firmly established, indeed, that it was impossible to conduct satisfactory relations with the Indians without medals. The head of the Indian Office, Thomas L. McKenney, made this clear to the Secretary of War at the end of 1829. "So important is its continuance esteemed to be," he wrote, "that without medals, any plan of operations among the Indians, be it what it may, is essentially enfeebled. This comes of the high value which the Indians set upon these tokens of Friendship. They are, besides this indication of the Government Friend-

**This article originally appeared as sections of Prucha's definitive work, Indian Peace Medals in American History, and is reprinted with the gracious permission of the author and the publisher, Rivolo Books of Bluffton, South Carolina (published in 1994; originally published by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1971).*



Millard Fillmore Medals. Only the two larger sizes were produced for the Fillmore medals. The dies were engraved by die sinkers, not by the mechanical lathe, and the medals had completely new reverses. [Sizes: 76 mm and 63 mm.]

ship, badges of power to them, and trophies of renown. They will not consent to part from this ancient *right*, as they esteem it; and according to the value they set upon medals is the importance to the Government in having them to bestow.”³

The use of medals reflected American relations with the Indians, and the history of American Indian policy is written in the history of the medals. When the United States was in competition with the British for the friendship of the tribes, the medals were of

supreme importance, for the chiefs signified their switch from adherence to the British to loyalty to the United States by formally turning in their British medals and accepting in their place those bearing the likeness of the American President. The medals, perhaps even

more than flags, carried the full weight of national allegiance. They were personal marks, worn with pride upon the breasts of the chiefs, and unlike flags were nearly indestructible. Within the tribes, too, possession of a medal gave rank and distinction, and despite protestations of government officials to the contrary, by awarding medals the United States designated or "made" the chiefs with whom it dealt.

As the relations between the American government and the Indian tribes changed during the nineteenth century, the significance of the medals suffered gradual attrition. Less and less symbols of national allegiance and friendship, the medals became mere rewards for good behavior or for services performed. Unofficial medals flooded the Indian reservations, and the authentic official medals that survived passed in large numbers into the hands of private collectors and numismatic museums. But the present state should not obscure the grand tradition that once obtained.

Millard Fillmore Medals

The production of the Indian peace medals bearing the likeness of President Millard Fillmore was put in the hands of Joseph Willson. Willson, a young artist of New York state, was called to the attention of the new President by his friend and patron, Ransom H. Gillet, a staunch Democratic politician from New York.¹ On August 8, 1850, just a month after Fillmore took office, Gillet wrote

to the President: "Permit me to introduce Mr. Joseph Wilson [*sic*], the Artist, whom I named to you yesterday. He is a most worthy young man in whom I take great interest. Be so good as to give him time to model your bust, at such hours as you can spare."² The President, apparently satisfied with the young man's work, directed the Indian Office to employ Willson "to design and execute the Medal for presentation by your Office to the Indians." The artist was to be paid at the usual rate of compensation, and the design was to be approved by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and by the Interior Department.³

The engraving of the obverses of the medals was not done by Willson himself but by a close associate, Salathiel Ellis, who came from the same community in upstate New York and who worked with Willson in New York city.⁴ The reverses, however, were engraved and signed by Willson. The design for them was a completely new one. Gone were the traditional clasped hands and the peace and friendship inscription. In their place Willson presented a figure of an Indian in feathered head-dress and blanket, facing a white man in civilian clothes. An American flag formed a backdrop for the two figures. The civilized pursuits of the white man were symbolized by a plow and an ax between the two figures and a peaceful background scene of hills, lake, trees, cattle, and farmhouse. At the top were three links of a chain, enclosing the words LABOR, VIRTUE, HONOR.

The number of medals struck for the new President was determined by the supply of Taylor medals left on hand at Taylor's death. There were of these 112 large medals, 162 medium medals, and thirty-two small ones, and the silver from them was used for the new medals. The Fillmore medals were made in two sizes only, for the Indian Office had decided to discontinue the use of the smallest size.⁵ The total number struck was 281. Twenty-four of these (a dozen of each size) were delivered to Luke Lea, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in New York on June 8, 1851. The remaining 257 were sent by express from New York to Washington on the same day.⁶ The number of each size is not indicated in the accounts, but it was the intention of the Indian Office that the 162 middle-size Taylor medals be used to make approximately the same number of Fillmore medals of that size, and that the remaining medals be made into large medals.

The New York artists were paid \$980 for engraving the four dies and \$520 for striking and ringing the medals, a total of \$1500. This sum had been provided by Congress in the Indian appropriation act of September 30, 1850.⁷ Most of the medals were distributed, for when the next medals were to be made, the Indian Office sent only twenty-five large, forty medium, and five small medals to supply silver for the new medals. It is likely, aside from the small medals, that these were Fillmore medals.⁸

Franklin Pierce Medals

The Indian peace medals of Franklin Pierce were the work of Salathiel Ellis, who had worked with Joseph Willson on the Fillmore medals. Ellis cut the obverse dies for the two sizes of the medal, making use of Willson's reverses from the Fillmore medal. He had the medals struck in New York.

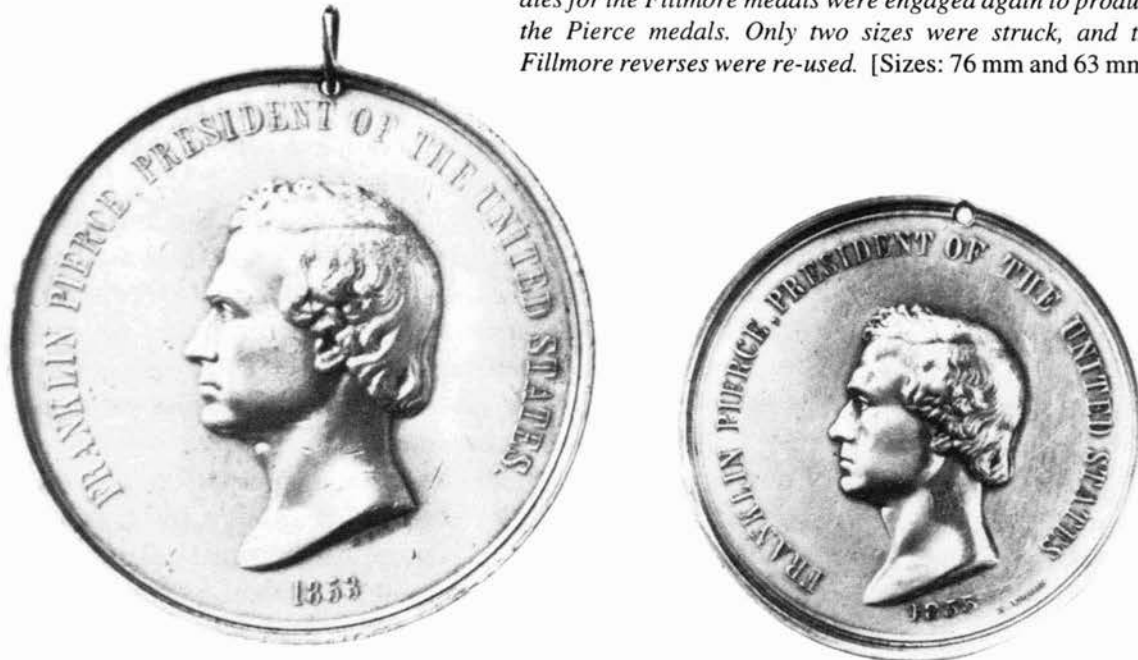
The matter was begun within a week of Pierce's inauguration by the patron of Ellis and Willson, Ransom H. Gillet, who wrote to Robert McClellan, the new Secretary of the Interior: "Under an ancient usage a medalion likeness of the President is to be struck for his Indian children, as the chiefs call themselves. To a poor artist, this is a job of some importance. Permit

me to ask the employment of Mr. Salathiel Ellis of St. Lawrence County, N. Y. . . . He & Joseph Wilson [*sic*], now of Rome, made that of President Fillmore, which gave great satisfaction. If Mr. Ellis gets this work, he will share the profits with Wilson, to help him along in Italy, where he is making the statue of an Indian youth, to send home in marble." Gillet hastened to add that both Ellis and Willson voted the Democratic ticket and that "worthier men cannot be found, & none more deserve the patronage of our friends."¹ McClellan directed that the work be done on the usual terms, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, George W. Manypenny, made the necessary arrangements. He invited Ellis to come to Washington to confer about

the medal, and Gillet arranged for President Pierce to sit for the artist.²

Adopting a new procedure, Manypenny drew up a formal contract with Ellis for the medals. Ellis was to be paid \$2479.64 and was to receive from the Indian Office in addition twenty-five large medals, forty medium medals, and five small medals, altogether containing about 264 ounces of silver to be applied toward the silver needed for the Pierce medals. For this consideration Ellis agreed to cut the obverse dies bearing the head of the President and (using the previous reverses) to strike 120 large medals weighing not less than five ounces each and 150 small medals weighing not less than three and one-quarter ounces each, with the usual ring attachments. The contract specified that payment

Franklin Pierce Medals. The New York artists who cut the dies for the Fillmore medals were engaged again to produce the Pierce medals. Only two sizes were struck, and the Fillmore reverses were re-used. [Sizes: 76 mm and 63 mm.]



should be made only as the work progressed.³

On September 7, 1853, Ellis reported to Manypenny that he had the dies nearly completed and asked for the old medals and for \$1500 to buy other silver for the medals. He asserted, too, that he had miscalculated on the price of silver when he had drawn up the terms of the contract, thinking he could buy it for \$1.21 an ounce instead of the \$1.40 that he actually had to pay. In order not to lose out, he asked permission to reduce the weight of the medals — to four and one-half ounces for the large and to three ounces for the small.⁴ The Indian Office sent on the old medals but refused to make any advance in money, promising, however, to pay for the finished medals as fast as they were delivered. No consent was given to make the medals of “a light weight, or inferior quality, than the contract specifies,” but the Acting Commissioner promised to give consideration to Ellis’s financial problem when the time came to settle the account.⁵

Ellis continued to have minor troubles with the weight of the medals, and it is likely that the facilities for striking the medals in New York were not quite adequate. The first medals he forwarded to Washington (forty of the large size) were slightly over the five ounces each that was specified. On November 7 Ellis shipped the rest of the large medals, which were again just slightly over weight, and he reported that one cause of the delay had been the difficulty encountered by the man who was striking them on account

of their large size. He was held up on the small medals until he received more money from the government with which to buy silver.⁶

The 150 small medals were shipped by Ellis on December 6. They too were not quite the right weight, for the total fell almost thirty ounces short of the specified amount of silver. Ellis’s explanation was as follows: “The reason of their being lighter is this — the large medals overran weight 7 ozs 10 dwts — and I sent word to the man who cast the blanks to make them enough lighter to bring the weight of the whole to something like 1087 ozs which is near what the whole should have weighed. It makes no difference in their appearance, but I should much rather have gone strictly by the contract — You can deduct the amount from what is coming to me at \$1.40 per oz, the price I have paid for silver.”⁷ Manypenny solved the problem by agreeing to accept the lighter medals in return for Ellis’s loss, due to his miscalculation about the cost of silver. Ellis directed that \$200 of the payment due him should be sent to Gillet, to be forwarded to Joseph Willson in Rome as his share for the use of the reverses.⁸

On December 22 Ellis sent to the Indian Office the six dies in his possession, that is, the obverses for the Fillmore and the Pierce medals and the reverses used for these two medals.

The Pierce medals fared somewhat better than their recent predecessors. Only twenty-three of the large and twenty-two of the smaller ones were melted down to provide silver for the next medals.¹⁰

James Buchanan Medals

The production of the Indian peace medals for President James Buchanan’s administration followed much the same pattern as that for the Pierce medals. As soon as the new administration was inaugurated Ransom H. Gillet again began to write in behalf of his artist friends. On March 9, 1857, he addressed a letter to the new Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson, introducing Joseph Willson. “He is a most worthy young man in whose welfare I take a very deep interest,” he wrote. “He is an artist of high merit. At my suggestion he came to this city [Washington] to ask for the job of making the Indian medal, which he is perfectly competent to do in the best style. To him, this small favor is important, & I shall consider myself much your debtor, if you will direct the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to award it to him.” Thompson quietly referred the matter to the Indian Office, and when Gillet heard that the Commissioner would consult the President himself on the matter, he wrote directly to Buchanan, repeating his plea for the young artist.¹

Willson was not the only artist interested in the commission for the Buchanan medal. Anthony C. Paquet of Philadelphia was also in Washington seeking the job, and with Congressman Thomas B. Florence of Pennsylvania as intermediary, he sought to get the appointment. He sent samples of his work to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, but without avail.² He would have to wait for a later commis-



James Buchanan Medals. The high relief of the President's bust on these medals made them heavier than previous ones. The new reverses with symbolic designs showed the advantages of civilized over savage customs. [Sizes: 76 mm and 63 mm.]

sion. In the meantime the Indian Office awarded the work again to Willson and his friend Salathiel Ellis, who dealt with the Commissioner as a partnership.³

Toward the end of August the artists reported the dies "well advanced," and they asked for whatever old medals were available

and for money to purchase additional silver. Charles E. Mix, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, however, refused to make an advance without a formal contract for the work, covered by a bond backed by one or more sureties.⁴

The contract drawn up made detailed provisions for the medals.

Ellis and Willson were to receive \$2400 for making the dies — with the bust of Buchanan on one side and "the new devise adopted by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs" on the other — and for striking fifty-two large medals weighing not less than five ounces each and seventy smaller medals weigh-

ing not less than three and one-half ounces each. The Commissioner agreed, moreover, to turn over to the partners twenty-three large medals and twenty-two small ones for restriking (containing about 186 1/2 ounces of silver) and to pay for any additional silver needed, up to a total payment to the artists of \$3000, the amount appropriated by Congress for the medals. When the bond and contract were received, Mix sent the unused medals and an advance of \$800 so that production of the medals could begin.⁵

Then, to the great sorrow of all concerned, young Joseph Willson died suddenly on September 8, 1857, leaving Ellis to carry on alone. Gillet relayed the sad news to Mix and passed on a message from Ellis: "Tell Mr. Mix that I am progressing very well with the job (medals) but shall of necessity take more time in finishing them than if he [Willson] had lived to help me — his designs will be fully carried out."⁶ This note seems to refer to the finishing work on the dies, of which Ellis was doing the obverses and Willson the new reverses, since no medals were immediately forthcoming.

Ellis on Mix's suggestion had sent an impression from the dies to Washington, and on December 30 he complained to Mix that he was still awaiting directions about the actual striking of the medals. He had heard through Gillet that Mix was waiting to see the President and the Secretary of the Interior for advice and apparently for approval of the designs. Early in February, 1858, he wrote again,

this time with considerable irritation: "I beg of you to enable me to go on with the medals, if you were aware of the inconvenience I suffer in the delay I am sure you would attend to it. I am well aware of the press of business you must have at your office — but don't let me wait much longer."⁷

On February 20 Mix sent back the sample medal. The President and the Secretary of the Interior had examined it and had only one suggestion to make about the design for the reverse. Willson had executed an elaborate design, with a round medallion in the center about three-fifths the size of the medal, showing a house and church with children at play in the background and an Indian plowing in the foreground. Between this medallion and the outer edge of the medal there appeared at the top an Indian in the act of scalping another Indian. At the bottom was the head of an Indian woman, a quiver of arrows, and a bow and peacepipe. The intention, clearly, was to depict the advantages of civilization over savagery. The design with its symbolism was approved, but objection was made to the figure of the Indian plowing. The President and the Secretary decided that the design would be more acceptable if the feathered headdress on the Indian could be removed, and they asked the artist to take it out if he could do so without injury to the die. No doubt it seemed incongruous to have the Indian, who had adopted the white man's ways of agriculture, appear in his warrior's head-

dress. But once the design had been cut into the die, there was no way to remove the feathers, and they appear on the medals. Mix also directed that more silver than the contract called for should be put into the medals because of the high relief in Buchanan's face, and that the number of medals be reduced proportionately.⁸

Ellis reported on March 4 that the dies were "all hardened and past all risk," and that he expected to have twenty-five or thirty of the large medals finished shortly.⁹ It took considerably more correspondence, however, before the final arrangements were made, for the number of medals specified in the contract had to be re-negotiated because of a change in the weight of the medals. Ellis noted that the 189 ounces of silver the old medals supplied plus the silver he could buy for the \$600 authorized in the contract would total 617 ounces, and he wanted to know what percentage of it should be devoted to large medals, which were averaging about five and one-half ounces each. Mix directed that the small medals should be kept at three and one-quarter ounces and that the large medals be increased to about six ounces, but the quality control appears not to have been very exact.¹⁰ On the 1st of April Ellis sent to Mix fifty-four large medals and seventy-four small medals. They, together with seven large medals previously delivered to an Indian agent, contained 569 ounces 13 dwts of silver. The artist had a balance of 45 ounces of silver on hand — enough, he said to



Abraham Lincoln Medals. The reverses from the Buchanan medals were used for the Lincoln medals. After eight large medals were struck, however, the large die broke, and a new one with minor variations was prepared. The medal pictured here shows this new reverse. Unlike earlier medals, these carry the date 1862 rather than the date of the President's inauguration. [Sizes: 76 mm and 63 mm.]

make eight large or twelve small medals. Mix directed him to make the large medals and to send them with the dies to the Indian Office. This Ellis did on April 10.¹¹ The total number of medals thus exceeded the number specified in the contract. There is no indication that any of them were melted down to make other medals.

Abraham Lincoln Medals

When President Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated, Salathiel Ellis at once offered his services for the Indian medals. On March 20, 1861, he made the following proposal to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: "Do all the work on the medal from the modelling to the striking, using the reverse

used in the last medal, & furnish 100 copies of the large & the like number of the small, of silver, to contain as nearly as practicable \$1250 worth of silver. The medals to be the same size as the last made of President Buchanan, & to be of superior workmanship. I will do the whole for \$3,250." Ellis offered to start engraving the dies even before Congress made any

appropriation, although he intended to wait for the appropriation before he purchased any silver or struck off any medals.¹ This arrangement was acceptable to the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, William P. Dole, who agreed to request the money from Congress, but with the understanding that if no appropriation was forthcoming, Ellis would make no claim for any work done.²

Dole wrote to Ellis in January, 1862, to inquire what progress had been made on the dies, but Ellis made no move until he was sure of the appropriation for the medals.³ When Congress on July 5 included in the Indian appropriation act the sum of \$5000 for "medallions of the President of the United States for distribution to Indian tribes," Ellis took up the matter of the medals again. On July 14, 1862, he reported to Dole that his work on the medals was three-fourths done, and he asked for an advance of \$1000.⁴ Dole required Ellis to sign a bond before he would advance any money. This Ellis did, with Ransom H. Gillet as co-signer.⁵

Because of the immediate need for the medals and the difficulty of finding proper facilities in New York for striking them, Ellis requested permission to use the facilities of the Mint to fulfill his agreement with the Indian Office, and the Secretary of the Interior arranged with the Director of the Mint for him to do so.⁶ Ellis then went to Philadelphia to further the work, and he reported at the end of July that the Mint had given him all the aid he had asked and that

some medals would be ready "in the course of a week if no accident occurs."⁷ Having finished the dies and seen the work started at the Mint, Ellis turned over the responsibility for striking the medals to James Pollock, the Director of the Mint, and left Philadelphia for a visit to the West. He issued an order for the payment to Pollock of \$1800 (\$1200 in coin and the rest in United States notes), to cover the expense to the Mint for silver and for the labor employed in the manufacture of the medals.⁸ Ellis received three large medals and three small medals before he left (for what purpose is not clear, perhaps to deliver to some agent in the West), and on September 24, by direction of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, five large medals were delivered to the Pawnee agent, Benjamin F. Lushbaugh, for Indians under his charge.⁹

The striking of the small medals went forward without difficulty, and on December 3, 1862, Pollock reported that they were all ready and could be sent whenever needed. The production of the large medal, however, was interrupted after the striking of the eight medals already noted, because of the breaking of the reverse die and the necessity of making a new one at the Mint.¹⁰ The new reverse did not carry Willson's name, no doubt because he was then deceased, although it followed his design with very minor changes. The earlier recommendation that the Indian lose his headdress was forgotten, and the Indian again appeared at his plowing in full regalia.

The complete order of small medals was sent to Washington on December 6, but no word was received about the progress on the large ones, and the Indian Office again became anxious. On March 2 Dole authorized another medal for the Pawnee agent, and a month later asked for some large medals at once, to be given to Indians visiting the capital.¹¹ On March 16 Pollock was able to deliver a large medal to Agent Lushbaugh and in the first two weeks of April he forwarded the remainder of the large medals in installments to Washington.¹²

Notes

Records in the National Archives used in the following notes are listed by Record Group number. If the records have been microfilmed, the microcopy number is indicated in parentheses.

Introduction

¹Jefferson to William Carmichael and William Short June 30, 1793, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert E. Bergh (20 vols., Washington, 1903-1904), IX, 157-158.

²Report of Cass and Clark, February 10, 1829, *Senate Document No. 72*, 20 Congress, 2 session, serial 181, pp. 77-78.

³McKenney to John H. Eaton, December 21, 1829, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 6, p. 199 (M21, Roll 6).

Millard Fillmore Medals

¹Many details about the designing and striking of these medals are missing, for the medals were made in New York rather than at the United States Mint in Philadelphia, and thus there are no files of correspondence between the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Director of the Mint about the manufacture of the medals. For information on the engraver, see Georgia S. Chamberlain,

"Joseph Willson, American Medalist," *Numismatist*, LXVIII (November, 1955), 1185-1187, reprinted in *American Medals and Medalists*, 64-66.

²Gillet to Fillmore, August 8, 1850, Millard Fillmore Papers, Letter Book 7, Letter 34, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

³D. C. Goddard, Acting Secretary of the Interior, to A. L. Loughery, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 12, 1850, Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Letters Sent by the Indian Division, in National Archives, Record Group 48, vol. 1, p. 69 (M606, Roll 1).

⁴For data on Ellis, see Georgia S. Chamberlain. "Salathiel Ellis: Cameo-Cutter, Sculptor. Artist of Nineteenth Century America," *Antiques Journal*, IX (February, 1954), 36-37, reprinted in *American Medals and Medalists*, 20-22.

⁵The Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs sought an estimate from the Chief Coiner at the Mint as to how many new medals could be made for the silver in the old ones. See Franklin Peale to A. L. Loughery, October 10 and October 17, 1850, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M2.34, Roll 447); Loughery to Peale, October 16, 1850, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 43, p. 459 (M12, Roll 43).

⁶Receipt of Lea, June 8, 1851, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 448); Willson to Charles Mix, June 8, 1851, Account No. 12,000, Records in the Indian Tribal Claims Branch, Federal Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

⁷*Ibid.*; Mix to Willson, June 14, 1851, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 44, p. 448 (M21, Roll 44); *United States Statutes at Large*, IX, 556.

⁸Contract, April 26, 1853, Contract Books, vol. 6, pp. 405-406, in National Archives, Record Group 75.

Franklin Pierce Medals

¹Gillet to McClellan, March 10, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 450).

²Manypenny to Gillet, April 8, 1853,

Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 47, p. 115 (M21, Roll 47); Gillet to Manypenny, April 9, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 450).

³Contract, April 26, 1853, in Contract Books, vol. 6, pp. 405-406, in National Archives, Record Group 75. Congress had appropriated \$2500 for the medals. *United States Statutes at Large*, X, 238.

⁴Ellis to Manypenny, September 7, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 450).

⁵Charles E. Mix to Ellis, September 13, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 48, p. 46 (M21, Roll 48).

⁶Ellis to Manypenny, October 12, November 7, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 450); Mix to Ellis, October 13, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 48, p. 114 (M21, Roll 48).

⁷Ellis to Manypenny, December 6, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 450). Ellis sent along his receipts for the silver he had purchased at \$1.40 an ounce.

⁸Manypenny to Ellis, December 20, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 48, pp. 252-253 (M21, Roll 48); Manypenny to Gillet, December 27, 1853, *ibid.*, 269-270; Ellis to Manypenny, December 6, 1853, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 450).

⁹Endorsement on Ellis to Manypenny, December 22, 1853, *ibid.*

¹⁰Contract, August 27, 1857, Contract Books, vol. 7, pp. 279-280, in National Archives, Record Group 75.

James Buchanan Medals

¹Gillet to Thompson, March 9, 1857, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 454); Gillet to Buchanan, March 28, 1857, *ibid.*

²Paquet to Florence, March 26, 1857, *ibid.*; John J. Schell to Florence, March 28, 1857, *ibid.*

³Charles E. Mix announced to Florence on June 3, 1857, that "Messrs Ellis & Willson of New York, have some time since, been selected to execute the medal for the use of the Indian service usual upon the incoming of an administration." Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 57, p. 19 (M21, Roll 57).

⁴Ellis & Willson to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July [August] 18, 1857, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 454); Mix to Ellis & Willson, August 25, 1857, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 57, pp. 320-321 (M21, Roll 57).

⁵Bond and contract, August 27, 1857, Contract Books, vol. 7, pp. 278-280, in National Archives, Record Group 75; *United States Statutes at Large*, XI, 183; Mix to Ellis & Willson, September 1, 1857, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 57, pp. 336-337 (M21, Roll 57).

⁶Gillet to Mix, September 17, 1857, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 454).

⁷Ellis to Mix, December 30, 1857, *ibid.* (M234, Roll 455); Ellis to Mix, n. d., endorsed "rec'd Feb 10 '58," *ibid.*

⁸Mix to Ellis, February 20, 1858, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 58, pp. 331-332 (M21, Roll 58). Bronze restrikes of the large Buchanan medal were made at the Mint with the reverse of the Fillmore and Pierce medals. It is such a medal, not an original silver medal for presentation to the Indians, that is illustrated in J. F. Loubat, *The Medallic History of the United States of America, 1776-1876* (2 vols., New York, 1878), II, Plate LXIX.

⁹Ellis to Mix, March 4, 1858, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 455).

¹⁰Ellis to Mix, March 11, March 18, 1858, *ibid.*; Mix to Ellis, March 22, 1858, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 58, p. 410 (M21, Roll 58).

¹Ellis to Mix, April 1, April 10, 1858, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 455); Mix to Ellis, April 3, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 58, p. 435 (M21, Roll 58). Ellis' account was settled a month later. Mix to Ellis, May 17, 1858, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 59, p. 41 (M21, Roll 59).

Abraham Lincoln Medals

¹Ellis to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, March 20, 1861, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 456).

²Dole to Ellis, April 16, 1861, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 65, p. 352 (M21, Roll 65).

³Dole to Ellis, January 8, 1862, *ibid.*, vol. 67, p. 225 (M21, Roll 67).

⁴*United States Statutes at Large*, XII, 528; Ellis to Dole, July 14, 1862, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 457).

⁵See Contract Books, vol. 8, p. 364, in National Archives, Record Group 75.

⁶Caleb B. Smith to James Pollock, July 15, 1862, Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Letters Sent by the Indian Division, in National Archives, Record Group 48, vol. 4, p. 103 (M606, Roll 4); Pollock to Smith, July 16, 1862, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 457); Dole to Ellis, July 17, 1862, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 68, p. 443 (M21 Roll 68).

⁷Ellis to Dole, July 30, 1862, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 457). See also Ellis to Charles E. Mix, August 5, 1862, *ibid.*

⁸Pollock to Dole, August 11, 1862, *ibid.*

⁹Mix to Pollock, September 15, 1862, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 69, p. 114 (M21, Roll 69); Mix to Lushbaugh, September 15, 1862, *ibid.*, pp. 115-116; Pollock to Dole, April 14, 1863, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 457).

¹⁰Pollock to Dole, December 3, December 6, 1862, *ibid.*

¹¹Dole to Pollock, March 2, April 2, 1863, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Sent, in National Archives, Record Group 75, vol. 70, pp. 125, 234 (M21, Roll 70).

¹¹Pollock's report on the medals — 100 of each size — is in Pollock to Dole, April 14, 1863, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, in National Archives, Record Group 75, Miscellaneous (M234, Roll 457).

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The illustrations, with one exception, are courtesy of the American Numismatic Society. The illustration of the large Lincoln medal on page 9 is courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

Bibliographic Note

For additional references and sources, please consult Prucha's comprehensive bibliography in *Indian Peace Medals in American History* (Bluffton, SC: Rivolo Books, 1994; originally published in 1971 by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison).

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When the Picture is a Puzzle: An Investigation of the “Clarissa” Portrait

by JeanMarie Martello

In 1988 a gala celebration was held by the St. Lawrence County Historical Association at the Silas Wright Museum to welcome the “homecoming” of a portrait of Clarissa Wright. A fund-raising campaign had been organized both to purchase the portrait at auction and to provide for the subsequent restoration of the 150 year old painting. Newspaper articles followed the progress of the fund-raising efforts and the exciting return of this portrait of the enigmatic Mrs. Silas Wright.

The painting was purchased by the Historical Association in January 1988 from Sotheby’s Auction House in New York City. It had come to Sotheby’s identified as *Mrs. Silas Wright in Her Wedding Bonnet* and was attributed to a little known itinerant artist of the mid-nineteenth century, Horace Bundy.

A previous owner of the painting, Donald M. Paterson, wrote to an Historical Association board member in 1988 and supplied what he knew of the painting’s provenance. He stated that he had purchased the painting from Peter Morford of Fonda-Fultonville, New York around 1955. Mr. Morford had purchased the portrait, along with a few other Wright pieces, at the death of Roscoe C.



From the SLCHA collections

Portrait of “Clarissa Wright.” Previously, the painting has been identified as “Mrs. Wright in Her Wedding Bonnet” and attributed to Horace Bundy.

Sanford, who was the successful bidder at an auction of the Brown estate in Canton years earlier. A local newspaper report of this auction in May 1922 contains a detailed description of the portrait now hanging in the Wright House and identifies it as an oil painting

of a relative of Mrs. Silas Wright, said to be Mrs. Cassie Moody.

When the painting was purchased, in 1988, local historians did not have a clear idea of what Mrs. Wright looked like. The Historical Association had in its possession only one photograph of

Clarissa Moody Wright. It was taken when she was older and the face is blurred enough to make it difficult to see details of her features. The evidence suggests she was a private person who did not enjoy the limelight and travelling to Washington and Albany with her husband, who was a U.S. Senator when they married in 1833, and later became Governor of New York State. This lack of information about Clarissa Moody Wright's physical appearance and the 1922 reference to the portrait's subject as "Mrs. Cassie Moody" raise questions about the identity of the painting. Is the woman in the portrait Clarissa Wright and who was the artist, Horace Bundy?

Clarissa Moody, born July 9, 1804 in Weybridge, Vermont, was the wife of Silas Wright. Her father, Medad Moody, ran a boarding house in Canton and young Silas Wright was a boarder there in the 1820s. She had four brothers: Simeon, born in 1802; Lucius, born in 1806; Luman, born in 1808; and Horace, born in 1816. Luman Moody had a daughter, Cassie (Clarissa) Moody, who was born in 1845.

What proof exists that this is not a portrait of Clarissa Moody Wright? At her death, Clarissa had all of her personal letters and diaries destroyed, and she and Silas had no children. There is very little information about the wife of the prominent politician and local celebrated resident. Much of the correspondence that has survived between Silas Wright and his family and friends only mentions Clarissa in pass-

ing. Few details about their private life are known.

Even circumstance has conspired to maintain Clarissa's desire for privacy. Issues of *The St. Lawrence Plaindealer*, the Canton newspaper still published today, and available on microfilm from the 1850s, are missing for the several weeks immediately prior to and after Clarissa Wright's death. The file skips from late July to late September; Mrs. Wright died August 15, 1870. A very brief obituary in an issue of the *Watertown Times* newspaper, dated August 17, 1870, reads:

DEATH OF THE WIDOW OF SILAS WRIGHT

A private letter received last evening from Canton, informs us that Clarissa Moody, widow of the late Gov. Silas Wright took place in that village, at 5 p.m., on Monday last, at the ripe age of 66 years. She was born in 1804. We gather the following from Hammond's *Life of Silas Wright*, giving a pleasant insight into the private and domestic life and relations of Gov. Wright.

The obituary goes on to quote the only reference to Clarissa Moody Wright in Hammond's book. It is a brief description of how Clarissa and Silas met, when and by whom they were married, and how, despite his political success, he still felt this "ardor" for the companion of his youth and returned to Canton to make her (she was then 29) his wife. They were married by Silas Wright's old friend and classmate, Reverend Hiram S. Johnson, who was the minister at the Presbyterian

Church in Canton between 1823 and 1838.

A one sentence announcement of the wedding of the Wrights appeared in *The St. Lawrence Republican* on September 17, 1833. It is clear that the Moody and Wright families had been members of the Presbyterian Church in Canton. Reverend Johnson kept detailed records of his duties as a minister, but did not record weddings or funerals in his diaries. Though his diary notes his church service that week, no mention is made about a wedding performed on September 11, 1833. There were no records of Silas's or Clarissa's deaths or funeral services. The other ministers of the church were as remiss in not recording the passing of these two prominent citizens of Canton.

Even *A History of the Presbyterian Church 1807-1907* makes no specific reference to Clarissa or other church women with whom she might have associated. A Ladies Society was formed in 1829, but the only list of members included in the book were women who participated in the 1890s. If letters from Clarissa to friends have survived, the recipients remain unknown.

There is, however, one interesting clue that offers evidence in identifying the subject of the painting. This is the *Catalogue of American Portraits in The New-York Historical Society, Volume 2* (1974). On pages 913-14 are pictures of two miniature ivory portraits of Silas and Clarissa Wright by Washington Blanchard. These were done in 1842, most



From the SICHA collections

The only known photograph of Clarissa Wright, probably dating from the 1860s.

probably when Silas Wright and his wife were in Washington, D.C. during his tenure in the U.S. Senate. This was an exciting find! Though the inventory of the Wright's house after Governor Wright's death made reference to ivory miniatures, the whereabouts of these miniatures were unknown to the Historical Association until 1995 when research on the painting led to the New-York Historical Society Catalogue. The image of Silas Wright is a finely rendered portrait that has him looking very much as he does in other painted portraits. The miniature of Clarissa Wright has

lovely details of her lace collar and lace bonnet. She looks young, girlish and has soft, round features that do not resemble the sharper more angular features of the woman in the "Clarissa" portrait.

The almost total lack of resemblance between the portrait and the Blanchard miniature leads one to ask, who might be the subject of the portrait, named Mrs. Cassie Moody? One might guess that the subject of the painting is the niece of Clarissa Wright, Cassie, daughter of Luman Moody, since she was known as "Cassie Moody," the name of the person identified as the subject of the painting in the

1922 article. This is improbable, however, unless Cassie Moody had a portrait done of herself as a mature woman (around the late 1860s) wearing a dress that was in a style of the 1830s. She also would never have been Mrs. Cassie Moody.

Another possibility is that the woman in the portrait was the wife of Simeon Moody, Clarissa's older brother. He married Susan Brown in Canton in 1832. They owned a business on Main Street in Canton during the 1830s and 1840s and Simeon was active in the community. This might explain how the portrait was passed down to the Brown sisters, whose estate auctioned the painting in 1922. Based on the genealogy of the Moody and Brown families, it appears Susan Brown Moody was the sister of Walter Brown Jr., the father of the Brown sisters whose estate owned the portrait when it was auctioned. Susan Brown Moody died in 1847 of consumption just two weeks after the death of Silas Wright, and later her husband, Simeon, left St. Lawrence County and settled in Hamilton, Missouri. An issue of *The Saint Lawrence Plaindealer*, July 24, 1873, noted that the body of former resident, Simeon Moody, was returned from Missouri to Canton for burial.

Little is known about the Walter Brown, Jr. family. There is a photograph in the St. Lawrence County Historical Association archives of Walter Brown, Jr., his wife and two daughters, Anna and Emma. Walter Brown, Jr., brother of Susan Brown Moody, had high cheek bones and an angular face, like the woman in the portrait;

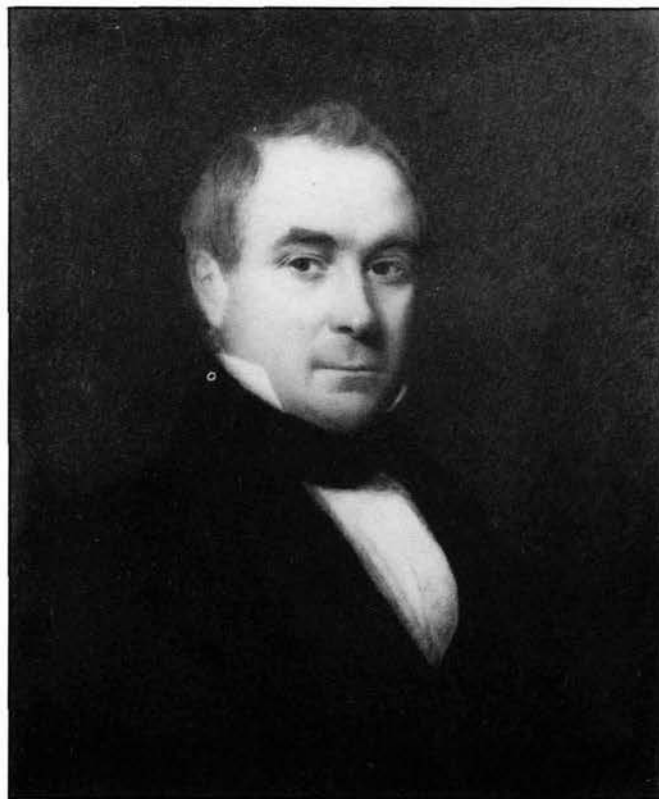
could it be a family resemblance? Anna and Emma Brown owned this puzzling painting we call the “Clarissa” portrait. It is likely that it hung in their house until the auction in 1922. It certainly seems possible that Simeon Moody might have given a portrait of his late wife to her brother and nieces when he left for Missouri. The difficulty here, of course, is Susan Brown Moody being called “Mrs. Cassie Moody” as the painting was identified in 1922.

However, Simeon Moody and his wife, Susan Brown, were exactly the kind of people who would have hired an itinerant artist to paint a portrait. As business owners and members of prominent families in early Canton, they were typical of the migrating New England frontier families settling and creating townships in the North Country.

Jack Larkin, in his essay in *Meet Your Neighbors*, provides a wealth of information about itinerant artists. New England in the early nineteenth century witnessed an increasing demand for portrait artists. A growing, educated, middle class of entrepreneurs, lawyers, manufacturers, shop owners, ministers and trades people aspired to have their images preserved. Itinerant artists, mostly self-taught painters, peddled their talents decorating sleighs, wagons and houses. They would travel from town to town advertising their skills in local newspapers. It was these artists that the middle class commissioned to paint their portraits because they had a reputation for “making an accurate likeness.” This was important to the people



Collection of The New-York Historical Society



Collection of The New-York Historical Society

Miniature paintings on ivory of Clarissa and Silas Wright, Jr. by Washington Blanchard, dated 1842.



From the SICMA collections

Photograph of Walter Brown, Jr. family.

who wanted portraits of family members for posterity.

It would be several years before photography was widely used and a window of opportunity existed for the growth of this popular art form. Itinerant artists worked predominantly in oils on wood panels or stretched canvases. They were paid on average from five to fifteen dollars for a portrait, a sum equal to or exceeding a week's earnings. Some artists would be called to a family's home to take a

likeness from the body of a deceased child and create a memorial portrait. These portraits frequently contain pets or favorite toys of the dead child, and occasionally, symbols of the child's place in the afterlife or heaven.

Larkin points out that many clues to the work and roles of people are evident in the early portraits. Tools of their trades for men, and domestic symbols of their roles as homemakers and mothers for women, are often included in

the work of itinerant portraitists. These paintings have become important historical documents and provide invaluable information about the lives, values and social roles of a growing middle class in nineteenth century New England.

Horace Bundy was well employed as an itinerant artist in the 1830s and 1840s, though he is not as well known as some of his contemporaries. Bundy was a fairly active itinerant artist who was from Vermont and lived and worked in Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. There are similarities between the "Clarissa" portrait and others that are signed and dated by Bundy. Bundy's work has been well documented in recent years because he signed and dated canvases including the name of the town where the portrait was made and the name of the subject. Between 1964 and 1994 the catalogue of confirmed Bundy works grew from seventeen to over one hundred in Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and possibly New York State.

Whether or not Bundy painted in New York has been a subject of speculation. An article in the October 1964 issue of *ANTIQUES*, by Hortense O. Shepard, mentions works in New York State, while an article appearing in *ANTIQUES* in October 1994, by Lauren B. Hewes, is more careful about committing to this possibility. An article from *American Naive Paintings*, published by the National Gallery of Art (1992), included a footnote referring to a portrait of Noble Strong Elderkin, attributed

to Horace Bundy and presently at the Potsdam Public Museum (Elderkin was a high sheriff of the county and member of the New York State Assembly in the mid-nineteenth century). Who attributed the work to Bundy is unknown. Information provided by the Potsdam Public Museum indicates the painting was compared to the Horace Bundy work, *The Vermont Lawyer*, as it appears in the book *American Folk Paintings*, by Jean Lipman and Mary Black (1987).

A comparison of the *Elderkin* painting to Bundy's *Vermont Lawyer*, executed in 1841, suggest some points in common. The *Vermont Lawyer* contains elements considered signatures of Bundy's developing style, with a column, drapery, law books, an inkwell and pen, among other objects associated with the lawyer's profession. The *Elderkin* painting contains similar elements, but has a new backing on it, so no signature on the canvas can be confirmed. The *Elderkin* painting, however, resembles the "*Clarissa*" portrait more than the Bundy work.

The most striking similarity between these two local portraits attributed to Bundy is the use of small, delicate and exact dots of gold paint that decorate objects in both paintings. The *Elderkin* painting has these gold dots on the edges of the books on a shelf, and the "*Clarissa*" portrait has these same gold dots around the pocket watch tucked in a front pocket of her black dress. What do the gold key and pocket watch in this painting symbolize? Some believe a

watch and key are symbols of death and the afterlife. Maybe they were symbols of the profession of shopkeeper. If the subject of the painting is really Susan Brown Moody, might these symbols have been included to indicate her connection to the family business, since she and her husband Simeon owned a shop in downtown Canton?

Other similarities between the *Elderkin* and "*Clarissa*" portraits include the treatment of fabric and the colors used in flesh tones and backgrounds. The fabrics are flat and stiff looking. The flesh tones are smooth, creamy pinks, pale yellow-beige and ruddy, rose tones. While the linear quality of

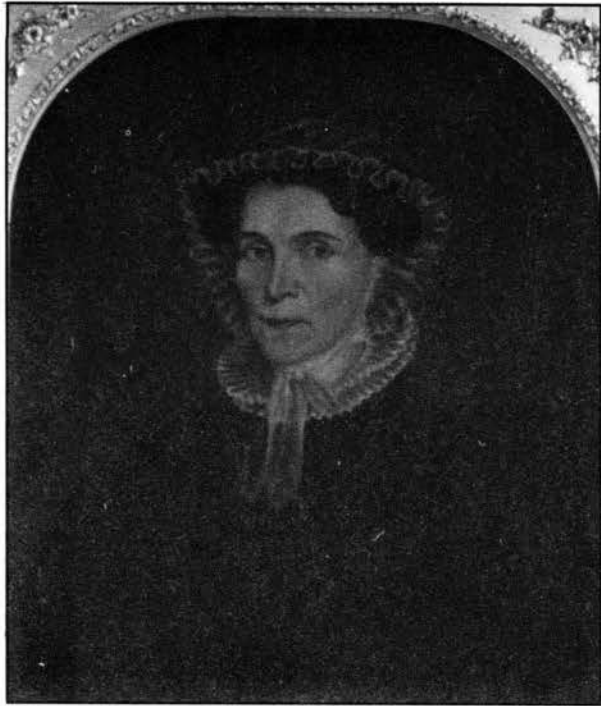
the facial features in both portraits is clear and carefully portrayed, the ear of Noble Strong Elderkin looks unfinished. The ear is stuck on the side of his head as if it were an afterthought. The lines are blurred and the ear looks like it is made of clay. This seems to be an odd anomaly in an otherwise successful portrait. Some areas of the painting have been more thoroughly executed than others. Just inches above this unfinished ear is a sword handle rendered in grey and silver tones that is more graceful, complete and refined than any other element of the painting.

The Potsdam Public Museum has several other nineteenth cen-



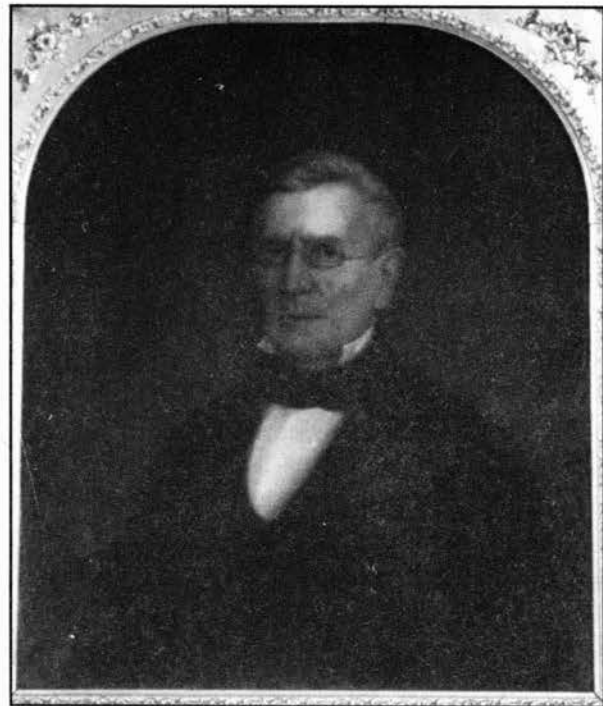
Courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum

Portrait of Noble Strong Elderkin, circa 1841, attributed to Horace Bundy.



Courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum

*Portrait of Sally Raymond,
artist and date unknown.*



Courtesy of the Potsdam Public Museum

*Portrait of Sewall Raymond,
artist and date unknown.*

ture portraits. Aside from the *Elderkin* painting, there is one other with similarities that invite comparison to the “*Clarissa*” portrait. This is a portrait of Sally Raymond, the wife of Sewall Raymond. Sewall came to Potsdam to help his more famous cousin, Benjamin, survey the town.

The *Sally Raymond* portrait closely resembles the portrait thought to be *Clarissa Wright*. Her pose, the length of the figure posed (both above the waist), and the black dresses are all similar. The most obvious parallel, though, are the sheer bonnets both subjects were wearing for their sittings. These and the dark, olive green background color, as well as the flat technique and careful linear quality, indicate that it is likely both of these portraits were done

by the same person. The Potsdam Public Museum also has a portrait of Sewall Raymond. They have no information, however, about the artist of either the *Sally Raymond* or *Sewall Raymond* portraits. The *Sewall Raymond* painting is quite different from that of *Sally Raymond* and obviously was not painted by the same person. In fact, it is this writer’s guess, the portrait of Sewall was made after the portrait of Sally, maybe even after her death. She died in 1842, while her husband lived for another twenty-four years, until 1866. Both portraits are framed in matching, ornate gold frames, but no other information about the origins of these paintings exists.

Lauren Hewes, formerly of the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, and author of the recent article on

Horace Bundy (referred to above) made an analysis from a photograph of the “*Clarissa*” painting. She noted that the flat background would indicate that if painted by Bundy it would have to be an early Bundy, as his backgrounds became more elaborate and ornate as time went on. Since Horace Bundy did not begin painting portraits until 1837, and he could not paint this well until the 1840s when he was putting props and architectural features in his portraits, Hewes had doubts about concluding definitively that the “*Clarissa*” portrait is by Bundy.

She suggested consideration of another itinerant artist of the period, Noah North, who definitely did work in New York State. North lived and worked around the southern tier of New York State, and

later in northern Ohio. However, a portrait painted by him in 1834, and reproduced in Black and Lipman's *American Folk Paintings*, suggests that any similarity between his work and the St. Lawrence County portraits attributed to Bundy is doubtful. While North did portray women wearing sheer bonnets, there is little in this 1834 work to suggest he could have painted the portraits of "Clarissa Wright," Noble Strong Elderkin, or Sally Raymond. Since Hewes could not be sure the "Clarissa" painting was not a Bundy, she suggested the attribution to Horace Bundy be maintained.

It is safe to conclude that at least several itinerant artists travelled through St. Lawrence County during the first half of the nineteenth century. They served a thriving community of local land developers, statesmen, shop keepers, etc. and their families. Some of these portraits have survived and been passed down through generations. Most, however, have been lost to strangers in auctions, house fires, forgotten in attics or barns. The people portrayed in these paintings can no longer be identified, and the artists who did not sign their work are even less remembered.

Where did the confusion about the subject of the "Clarissa" portrait begin? Information provided by Sotheby's to the Historical Association in 1988 said there was a card on the back of the frame when they received the painting. The card specifically identified the subject of the painting as "Mrs. Silas Wright in Her Wedding Bonnet." It also said that the painting was

"purchased by R. C. Sanford at the auction of the Brown Estate in Canton, NY, former home of Governor and Mrs. Wright." Perhaps the misidentification of the painting's subject goes all the way back to Mr. Sanford. He bought several paintings at the Brown estate auction and may have thought he was buying a painting of Mrs. Wright rather than one of a "relative of Mrs. Wright" as stated in the newspaper article of 1922.

Sotheby's documentation stated the painting was "probably by Horace Bundy." How this conclusion was arrived at is not clear. Bundy's work was being recognized and documented at the time. Both the speculation that Bundy may have painted in New York and the similarities between known Bundy works and the "Clarissa" portrait provide some basis for the attribution to Bundy. This recent investigation, however, has brought this attribution into question. Though it is this writer's belief that the painting is probably not by Bundy, until more research is conducted into local portraits and itinerant artists that travelled through the area, the painting of Elderkin and the "Clarissa" portrait will maintain their Horace Bundy attributions. Exactly who the woman in the painting is remains a mystery.

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The author would like to thank Lauren Hewes for help with this research, and Betsy Travis of the Potsdam Public Museum for making portraits in their collection available for comparative study.

About the Author

A resident of Canton, JeanMarie Martello recently graduated from SUNY-Potsdam with a degree in Anthropology. She conducted her research on the "Clarissa" painting in 1995 while serving as an intern at the Historical Association.

Can You Help?

The author and editors are interested in locating other portraits that may have been painted by itinerant or local artists in St. Lawrence County prior to 1850. If you know of such portraits, we would be pleased if you would contact the Historical Association and tell us of their whereabouts.

Quarterly Update: Salathiel Ellis

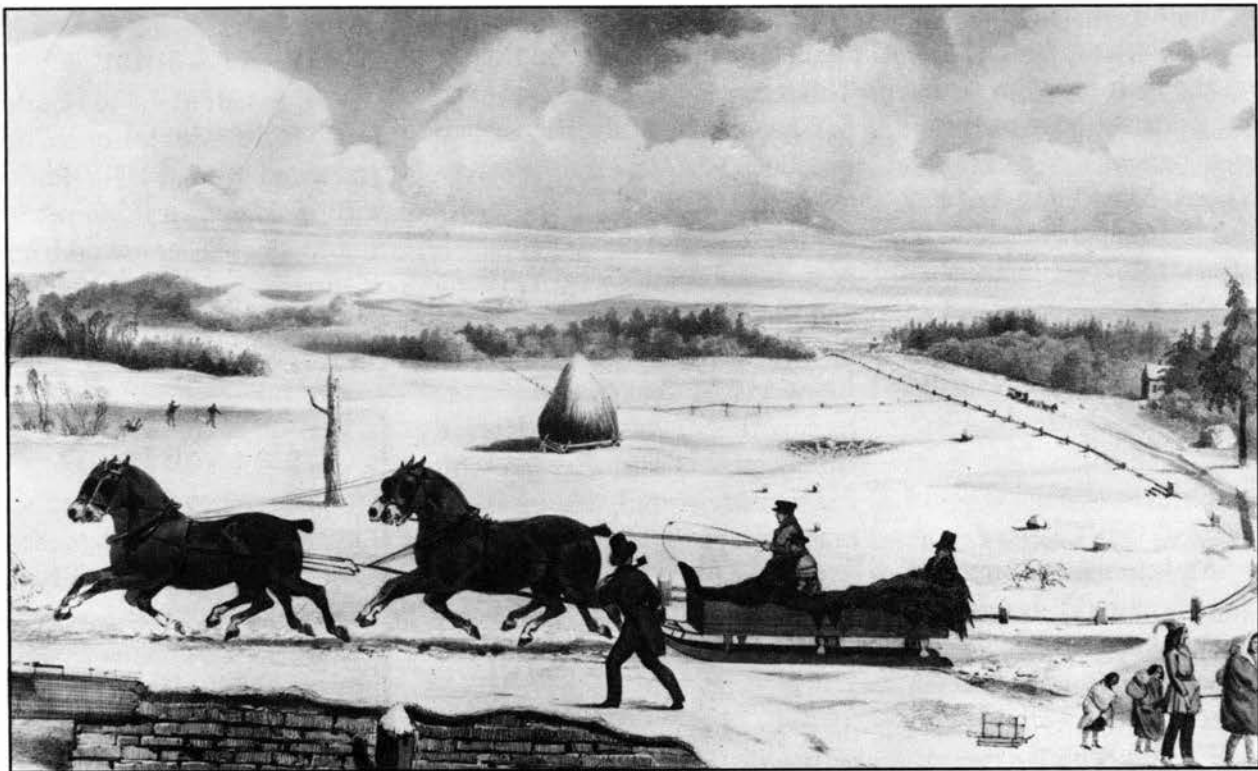
Following the publication of Wendy Shadwell's article, "St. Lawrence County, 1838, As Seen through the Eyes of Salathiel Ellis" (*The SLCHA Quarterly*, volume 39, number 1, Winter, 1994, pages 1-14), some additional interesting information has come to light about the work of this prominent local artist.

Details of Ellis's *A Winter Scene*

Harry and Alice Moore, members of the Historical Association, wrote to say that their family owns another original of Ellis's print, *A Winter Scene*. As only three other originals of this print are currently known, the existence of this print is significant in itself. However, the print was passed down through

the Hutchinson and Moore families, and Alice Moore was able to relate many family traditions about this Ellis print.

According to Alice Moore, the print came into the family's possession through her great-great-grandfather, John Hutchinson, who was a servant of George Parish (most likely George Parish I, rather than his nephew, George Parish II). Ellis's drawings of the



Salathiel Ellis' lithograph, *A Winter Scene*, circa 1838.

From a reproduction in the SLCHA collections

county were commissioned by one of the Parishes in 1837 or 1838. The drawings were taken back to Europe and made into eight lithographs in Hamburg and Paris.

John Hutchinson was born in Yorkshire, England in 1811, and immigrated to Ogdensburg in 1830. Although the precise date is not known, John Hutchinson entered Parish's employ as a "body" servant and served in that capacity until 1837, when he married Elizabeth Falkingham. As a wedding present, Parish gave the couple a pair of silver candlesticks and fifty silver dollars. The newlyweds settled on a farm near Heuvelton. The house on the farm was built by John Hutchinson and is still occupied today by a descendent.

According to family tradition, the top-hatted gentleman sitting at the back of the sleigh in the lithograph is in fact George Parish, and the man next to the driver is John Hutchinson. The family has also recorded that the driver was Tom Wheater, the horses of the lead team were named "Tom" and "Jerry," and the wheel team consisted of "Thunder" and "Reindeer." The stage coach visible in the background of the print ran between Rossie and Antwerp, and the stage driver was Boney Gates.

Silas Wright Bust by Salathiel Ellis

JeanMarie Martello, the author of the "Clarissa" portrait article in this issue, ran across a reference to

another of Salathiel Ellis's works while conducting her research. According to an article published in Ogdensburg's *St. Lawrence Republican* in September 1847 (it originally appeared in the *New York Post*), Salathiel Ellis executed a bust of Governor Silas Wright of Canton. The article stated that it was the finest likeness of Wright known. Modeled the year before Wright's death, the bust was displayed in Fowler's Phrenological rooms in New York City. Casts of the bust were also made and offered for sale for five dollars each. Ellis's brother, Z. N. Ellis, was the contact for ordering the busts locally.

It is not surprising that Salathiel Ellis created a bust of Silas Wright, especially since Ellis was closely associated with at least two of Wright's followers, Preston King and Ransom Gillet. (One of Salathiel Ellis's sons was named "Preston King Ellis," and a medallion of Preston King by Ellis is in the collections of the Frederic Remington Art Museum in Ogdensburg.)

Nonetheless, this reference to a Wright bust by Ellis is somewhat of a revelation in that the existence of the work was previously unknown, and indeed, no other fully three-dimensional depiction of Wright is currently documented. Some initial inquiries have been made by SLCHA staff to other museums to see if the bust, or one of the copies, still exists. To date, no information has turned up. Any members or friends who think they

may know of the existence of Ellis's Wright bust are encouraged to contact the Historical Association.

Ellis Prints Donated to Association

As previously announced in *The Wright House* newsletter, two Ellis prints have also changed hands since the publication of Shadwell's article. Thanks to a generous donation by Alice Bagley in memory of Canton historian, Harriet Armstrong, the Historical Association was able to purchase the two Ellis prints owned by the Benton Board of the Canton Free Library. The two Ellis prints now owned by the Historical Association are *Rossie* and *Parishville*.

Thank You

The Historical Association thanks Harry and Alice Moore, and JeanMarie Martello for information they provided on Salathiel Ellis. Special thanks go to Alice Bagley for her generous contribution to the SLCHA.

-sjw



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Crow delegation. Delegates, left to right: Old Crow, Medicine Crow, Two Belly, Long Elk, Plenty Coups, and Pretty Eagle. The three white men are, left to right: A. M. Quivly, interpreter; Augustus R. Keller, Crow agent; and Tom Stewart, interpreter. Photograph taken April or May 1880 by C. M. Bell.

THE OLD WEST LIVES!

In February, 1882 *Harper's Weekly* magazine published an illustration of a twenty-one year old New Yorker, Frederic Remington. And so began the career of an artist who would be celebrated for generations as an artist who captured the Old West. Remington would go on to create hundreds of images as diverse as the exciting *Charge of the Rough Riders Up San Juan Hill* to the serene *End of the Day*. During his career, cut short at the age of forty-eight, he would become a painter, sculptor and writer.

Although Remington was drawn to the West by the excitement of conflict, he always returned to the land he loved—Northern New York. He produced many paintings of the St. Lawrence River and the Adirondack Mountains. Make plans to visit the Frederic Remington Art Museum and see the Old West come to life. The works are so realistic you may think you hear the thundering of hooves.

Tuesday, July 30, 1907
 "Blowing like hell-and quite tiresome. I to day [sic] finished *Indian Raid* and the work I had laid out for summer. Intend to sketch for study now and loaf-a sort of vacation. Mrs. picking her last peas. Our garden is so poor it hardly repays our pains but could be enriched. Ebbie H. posed for little indian and wounded buck picture. I have good drawing for it. Island is dry as a desert. They're afraid there will be a fire on Chippewa Point."

Frederic Remington

from Remington's personal journal

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