

THE ANN AND JOEL FINN COLLECTION



*This catalog was created by Jeffrey Tillou
and made possible by Ann Finn.*



THE
ANN AND JOEL FINN
COLLECTION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Exhibitions

"The Winter Antiques Show," January 19-28th, 2018

Park Avenue Armory, New York

Selected pieces

Jeffrey Tillou Antiques, Spring 2018

39 West Street, Litchfield, Connecticut 06759

Special thanks

Edward S. Cooke, Jr., Yale University

Laura Beach, *Antiques and The Arts Weekly*

Robert Lionetti, Consultant and Restorer, Jewett City, Connecticut

Tom Yost, Yost Conservation LLC, Oxford, Connecticut

Jeffrey Cooley, The Cooley Gallery, Old Lyme, Connecticut

Ellen McDermott, Interior Photography, New York, New York

Louise Johnson, KatArt Graphics, New Milford, Connecticut

Pressroom Printer & Designer LTD, Hong Kong

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THE COLLECTORS' VISION

Northwestern Connecticut has always been home to a certain type of individual: strong-willed, independent, focused, and purposeful. One has to be hearty to make a living in the rocky forested hills, far from bountiful agricultural areas, busy ports, or vibrant metropolitan centers. It makes total sense that Joel Finn found fulfillment and happiness in the hills of Litchfield County.

An engineer with insatiable curiosity and a penchant for research and organization, Joel balanced his career as a forward-looking engineer with a commitment to historical understanding. As a driver, collector, and historian of race cars, Joel appreciated looking at historical works from the inside out, appreciating more than the exterior aesthetics of the car. He was interested in the engine, mechanical systems, performance variabilities, refinements to specific types over time and the context of development and history of racing.

Such skills provided the foundation for Joel's engagement with Litchfield County. When he designed and built a house in Roxbury several decades ago, he established personal roots with the tangible history

of the region. Eschewing better-known high-style furniture made in the urban settlements of colonial New England, he instead fixed his sights upon the originality and dynamic quality of furniture produced in his adopted home region during the 18th and early 19th centuries. He was deterred neither by many collectors' dismissal of Connecticut furniture as odd and made of cherry nor by the paucity of documented example or famous cabinetmaker, pursuing his vision quietly but with great purpose. He frequented local auctions, developed good relationships with local dealers, and befriended old local families. He turned objects upside down and inside out in an attempt to understand the craftsmen's logic and habit. As a result of his homework, analytical mind, and perseverance, he acquired some of the seminal examples of the region's case furniture and tables, often in excellent condition in terms of old finishes, and championed the creativity developed in the hills of northwest Connecticut. History and innovation thus linked Joel to his collection of cherry furniture.

Edward S. Cooke, Jr., Yale University

Photo: Joel and Ann Finn





LITCHFIELD

Litchfield

Gr Pond

HARTFORD

Hartford

Wethersfield

Middletown

NEW HAVEN

Danbury

Newhaven

FAIRFIELD

Fairfield

Stratford

Norwalk

Stamford

LONG ISLAND

Stamford

Stamford

Stamford

Stamford

Stamford

Scale of Miles



Collecting from the Inside Out

Some things are hard to square about Joel E. Finn. He loved speed, but collected with infinite patience. Solitary by nature, he was inseparable from his wife and soulmate, Ann Y. Smith. A visionary who excelled in the technology sector, Finn was as canny about the future as he was fascinated by the past.

Finn's habit of looking at things from the inside out, of understanding beauty as an expression of design, construction and inner belief, calls to mind another former resident of Connecticut's northwest hills, sculptor Alexander Calder (1898-1976). Art critic Holland Carter recently characterized Calder's genius as "a marriage of poetry and physics," something that could be said of Finn's instinctive approach, as well.

Finn worked with purpose and industry to assemble several notable collections. His initial love was the dominant cultural icon of the twentieth century, the automobile. He acquired his first car when he was ten and later distinguished himself as a driver, competing in the United States and Europe, and as a historian of vintage race cars and racing. Portions of his formidable holdings of automotive memorabilia will be preserved in the Revs Institute at the Collier Museum in Florida.

Finn's early work for IBM brought him from upstate New York to suburban Connecticut. After moving to rural Litchfield County in the 1980s, he began assembling parcels of land, much of it now conserved by the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust. Acquiring land was another way of understanding beauty from the inside out, of experiencing landscape by placing himself in it, by shaping its

contours and knowing intimately its ridges and declivities, its movement and solitude. If the landscape paintings Finn and Smith lived with seem to echo the views from their hillside perch, it was because Finn designed the house, collection and contoured setting as a synergistic whole.

Finn's desire to furnish with locally-made pieces prompted him to seek case furniture by eighteenth-century craftsmen from the then largely agrarian communities of Woodbury, Southbury and Newtown, Connecticut. A less resourceful collector might have abandoned his search for these scarce, quirky, little understood specimens.

Finn's hunt instead led him to Waterbury's Mattatuck Museum, and to its curator at the time, Ann Smith. As she later recalled, "He liked to tell people we were introduced by someone who had been dead for 200 years: the maker of the furniture he collected from Litchfield County. He was fascinated with trees and lumber and the local pull of the places he lived. He was a brilliant man with wide-ranging interests." On her first visit, she climbed a ladder to the door of the still unfinished house, passing from one life into another.

Their interests were soon intertwined. Collector and curator, impulse and insight, their fascination with Connecticut furniture

leading to exhibitions, accompanied by catalogues, at the Mattatuck Museum and Litchfield Historical Society.

The couple's deeply knowledgeable approach to collecting nineteenth century New England landscape paintings originated with Smith's training at the University of Michigan, where she studied with David Carew Huntington (1922-1990), the Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) scholar credited with helping save the painter's home, Olana, in the 1960s. Hudson River School paintings appealed to Finn, always drawn, as his wife recalls, to the great sweep of unpopulated landscapes.

Working in tandem, the couple acquired "View from Narragansett" by John Kensett (1816-1872) around the time Smith produced *Images of Contentment: John Frederick Kensett and The Connecticut Shore*, a catalogue and exhibition at the Mattatuck Museum in 2001. Meticulous in their approach, they drove to New York's Catskill Mountains to study Kaaterskill Clove, a touchstone for nineteenth-century artists, and the subject of one of two paintings by Sanford Gifford (1823-1880) in Smith and Finn's collection.

Also in their collection, "Sunset" by William Sonntag (1822-1900) and "The Grey Month" by Bruce Crane (1857-1937) are superlative examples by much praised artists, the latter

associated with the art colony at Old Lyme. Closer to home are Litchfield County views by John Casilear (1811-1893) and Edward Nichols (1819-1871). The couple's gathering of paintings by Alexander Theobald Van Laer (1857-1920), whose house still stands on West Street in Litchfield, is unsurpassed.

Finn's fascination with the little-known Van Laer, whose sketchbooks he pursued and ultimately acquired, ran parallel to his love for the sometimes-overlooked furniture of northwestern Connecticut. Undeterred by the furniture's scarcity, the obscurity of its makers or the complexity of its stylistic origins, Finn was instead challenged to know more.

Collecting casepiece furniture seriatim is no longer common in an era more characterized by its eclectic, if not random, approach to objects. But in Joel Finn and Ann Smith's perfectly designed living room, one welcomes as stately physical presences the chests-on-chests and high chests of drawers that circle the space. Even as they did for Finn and Smith, these august relics prompt lively conversation in a setting of thoughtful repose.

Laura Beach
Antiques and The Arts Weekly



The Finn home in Connecticut.



THE FURNITURE COLLECTION

The Finn collection of Western Connecticut furniture, primarily from the Woodbury and Newtown areas, embodies the unique characteristics in styles and cabinetry found in this region. Two joiners from Stratford, Connecticut, Ebenezer Hubbell (active 1770-1790) and Brewster Dayton (active 1770-1790) had large shops with many apprentices, some of whom migrated north up the Housatonic River Valley into Litchfield County. They took with them a specific set of features and styles, such as, deeply carved lobed shells, C-scroll knee returns, and in some cases, curved bandy legs and unusual forms of carved feet, to mention a few. However, it is evident that each shop is distinguished by some variation of form or cabinetry. For most collectors of rural and vernacular furniture the attraction is the unusual carvings, embellishments, inlays and variations of cabinetry found on these pieces. They tend to represent an individual's unique creation, unlike the more traditional styles and forms coming from joiners in urban areas. Ann and Joel were extremely intrigued and interested in this group of furniture and in the environment in which these pieces were created.

The furniture has been examined by specialist Robert Lionetti and is accompanied by individual reports regarding the original condition of each piece.

CHIPPENDALE CHEST OF DRAWERS

Litchfield, Connecticut

c. 1770-1790

Cherry, yellow poplar and white pine secondary woods

This chest exhibits the salient aesthetic and construction features associated with Litchfield case work. The joiners from this area are known for using extensive diagonal braces supporting the feet and dovetailed cleats to attach the top to the case. The top has a slight over-hang with a thumb-molded edge above four graduated drawers flanked by carved quarter columns. The case is supported by carved ball and claw feet with shaped knee brackets, all executed in the same manner of other known pieces with Litchfield area history. This particular example has great form and is desirable for its diminutive proportions.

Measurements:

32" h.

36 1/4" w. (case)

21" d.

38" x 20" (top)

As discussed in Ann Y. Smith, "Litchfield County Cross-Braced Furniture," *The Magazine Antiques*, Brant Publications, New York, New York, May 2008, pgs. 130-135.





CHIPPENDALE BONNET-TOP HIGHBOY

Woodbury, Connecticut
c. 1770–1780

Cherry, poplar secondary wood

The upper case has a closed bonnet with arched moldings highlighted with a molded edge and a scrolled central plinth above a deeply carved shell drawer flanked by two short drawers above four graduated drawers with thumb-molded edge lips. The drawers are flanked by carved reeded pilasters. The lower case is fitted with a projecting applied waist molding to accommodate the upper case (which is also fitted with applied moldings) above one long drawer and three short drawers, the central with a carved lobed shell. The piece is supported by cabriole legs joined by a shaped skirt in front, with cupids-bow designs on the sides, terminating on carved ball and claw feet in the front, pad feet in the back.

Measurements:

94½" h. (top of finial)
38⅞" w. (upper case)
41½" w. (lower case)
22" d. (furthest point)

Provenance:

Descended in the Stiles family, Woodbury, Connecticut. Acquired in the 1980s from Avis Hicock, who was living in the Main Street home that had belonged to her great-grandfather David J. Stiles. The highboy was descended from his father, David Stiles, or his grandfather Benjamin Stiles, who lived across the street at Ragland Farm.

Illustrated in Edward S. Cooke, Jr., *Making Furniture in Preindustrial America, The Social Economy of Newtown and Woodbury, Connecticut*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1996, pg. 139, fig. 24.





Detail of a painting by William Mason Brown. See page 34.

QUEEN ANNE SLANT-TOP DESK

Probably by Ebenezer Hubbell, Stratford, Connecticut
c. 1760-1775

Cherry, white pine and white oak secondary woods

This rare Queen Anne desk has several distinct features supporting its attribution to Ebenezer Hubbell, the most notable being the concave carved shell in the bottom drawer. The lid opens to a fitted amphitheater interior having a pull-out center section with a shell carved prospect door flanked by pilaster-column document drawers. The interior compartments are fitted with small valance drawers above pigeon holes and banks of drawers. The lower section of the desk has four graduated drawers, the lower drawer having an interior applied block providing greater depth necessary for the carved concave shell, supported by characteristic bandy legs terminating on carved Spanish feet.

Measurements:

45 1/4" h.

41 1/2" w.

21 1/2" d. (furthest points)

Provenance:

Walton Antiques, Inc., Jewett City, Connecticut, 1988

Christies, New York, June 4, 1988, Lot 165

A similar example is illustrated in Edward S. Cooke, Jr., "The Pre-Industrial Joiner in Western Connecticut, 1750-1800," *American Furniture*, The Chipstone Foundation, 1995, pg. 130.





CHIPPENDALE BONNET-TOP CHEST ON CHEST

Woodbury, Connecticut
c. 1770-1780

*Cherry, yellow poplar, white pine, butternut
secondary woods*

The upper case has a closed bonnet with arched moldings highlighted by a molded edge and a scrolled central plinth with flame finials above a central drawer with a deeply carved lobed shell radiating from a carved central circle, flanked by two short drawers above four graduated drawers with thumb-molded edge lips. The drawers are flanked by reeded pilasters. The lower case has an applied, projecting waist molding to accommodate the upper case which is also fitted with applied moldings, above two large deep drawers. The skirt of the case is shaped forming a central cupid's-bow with the motif repeating on the sides while supported by rounded knee cabriole legs with C-scroll returns, terminating on carved ball and claw feet. Two distinct features of this piece are the square pad feet beneath the carved ball and claw feet, and the unusual construction of the rear edge of the bonnet being cantilevered.

Measurements:

94 ½" h. (top finial)

37 ¾" w. (upper case)

41 ½" w. (lower case)

42 ½" w. (waist molding)

22" d. (furthest points)

Provenance:

Descended in the Stiles family of Woodbury, Connecticut, through Benjamin Stiles to his granddaughter Alice, to her cousin's son, a descendant of Abel Stiles, in 1920. Purchased at the Winter Associates auction of the Stiles Burpee home in Southbury in 1992.

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, *To Please Any Taste, Litchfield County Furniture And Furniture Makers, 1780-1830*, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, Connecticut 2008, pg. 38, fig. 5.



CHIPPENDALE BONNET-TOP CHEST ON CHEST

Woodbury, Connecticut
c. 1770-1780

*Cherry, yellow poplar and white pine
secondary woods*

The upper case has a closed bonnet with arched moldings highlighted with a molded edge and a scrolled central plinth above fluting surmounted by flame finials above a central drawer with a deeply carved lobed shell radiating from a carved central circle, flanked by two short drawers above four graduated drawers with thumb-molded lips. The drawers are flanked by carved reeded pilasters. The lower case has an applied projecting waist molding to accommodate the upper case, also fitted with applied moldings above two large deep drawers, the lower with a matching deeply carved lobed shell. The skirt of the case has a straight front with two lobes and shaped sides supported by rounded knee cabriole legs with C-scroll returns, terminating on carved ball and claw feet.

Measurements:

85" h. (top finial)
37 1/4" w. (upper case)
41" w. (lower case)
42" w. (waist molding)
22" d. (furthest points)

Provenance:

Bruce LaConte Estate, Carl Nordblom
Auction, 1989

Previously in the collection of
John Gunther, 1960



Snow Scene Along a Still Stream, Bruce Crane. See details on page 44.

DIMINUTIVE SIZE QUEEN ANNE LOWBOY

Litchfield County, possibly New Milford, Connecticut
c. 1750-1770

Cherry, white pine and white oak secondary woods

This rare, diminutive size lowboy or dressing table has an impressive one board cherry top with an under-molding above one long drawer and three short drawers, the central having a deeply carved, concave lobed shell drawer conforming to the skirt. The piece is supported by cabriole legs with the faint impression of carved C-scrolls terminating on pad feet.

Measurements:

33 $\frac{1}{4}$ " h.

31 $\frac{7}{8}$ " w. (top)

28 $\frac{1}{4}$ " w. (case)

19 $\frac{3}{8}$ " d.

Provenance:

Descended in the Camp family of New Milford, Connecticut

Purchased locally, 2000

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, *To Please Any Taste, Litchfield County Furniture And Furniture Makers, 1780-1830*, Litchfield Historical Society, Litchfield, Connecticut 2008, pg. 38, fig. 6.





The Grey Month, Bruce Crane. See details on page 45.

SHERATON SETTEE

Probably New York State
c. 1830-1840

Tiger maple, cane seat

The settee has exceptional form and proportions with a turned spool-back crest above three stages of carved, pierced splats flanked by scrolled arms. The seat frame, fitted with caning, is supported by delicate, turned legs and stretchers terminating on diminutive ball feet.

Measurements:

34 1/4" h. (crest)
18 3/4 h. (with seat)
76 1/4" w.
24" d.



QUEEN ANNE FLAT-TOP HIGHBOY

Woodbury, Connecticut
c. 1760-1770

Cherry, poplar secondary wood

The upper case has a well-defined, projecting cove molded cornice above a central deeply carved, lobed shell drawer flanked by two short drawers above four graduated drawers with thumb-molded lips. The lower edge of the case is fitted with a molding which rests inside the waist molding of the lower case, all above one long drawer and three short drawers, the central with a carved shell. The piece is supported by C-scrolled cabriole legs joined by a shaped front skirt fitted with drop pendants terminating on pad feet.

Measurements:

79 $\frac{3}{8}$ " h.
36 $\frac{1}{8}$ " w (upper case)
39 $\frac{3}{8}$ " w. (lower case)
21" d. (furthest points)

Provenance:

Descended in the Hurlbut family of
Woodbury, Connecticut
Walton Antiques, Inc., Jewett City,
Connecticut, 1988

Illustrated in Edward S. Cooke, Jr., *Making Furniture in Preindustrial America, The Social Economy of Newtown and Woodbury, Connecticut*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1996, pg. 172, fig. 42.

QUEEN ANNE FLAT-TOP HIGHBOY

Woodbury, Connecticut
c. 1760-1775

Cherry, pine and white oak secondary woods

Similar enough to seem a pair, the slight differences in carving and dimensions between these two highboys reminds us that all of these pieces were crafted one at a time for customers with varying tastes. The upper case has a well-defined, projecting cove molded cornice above a central, deeply carved, lobed shell drawer flanked by two short drawers above four graduated drawers with thumb-molded lips. The lower edge of the case is fitted with a molding which corresponds to the waist molding of the lower case, all above one long drawer and three short drawers, the central with a carved shell. The piece is supported by C-scrolled cabriole legs joined by a shaped front skirt fitted with drop pendants terminating on pad feet.

Measurements:

80 $\frac{1}{2}$ " h.
35 $\frac{7}{8}$ " w (upper case)
39 $\frac{1}{8}$ " w. (lower case)
21" d.

Provenance:

C.L. Prickett Antiques, Yardley,
Pennsylvania, 1989





RARE QUEEN ANNE HIGHBOY

Probably Woodbury, Connecticut
c. 1760-1780

Cherry, yellow poplar and white pine secondary woods

The most notable feature of this rare Queen Anne highboy is the stepped cornice. Typical of other pieces from this area, the highboy has contrasting shell or fan-carved drawers. Clearly, the joiner was trying to give the highboy a more "architectonic" vertical lift by using a stepped cornice. The upper case has an elongated carved drawer flanked by two short drawers above four graduated long drawers with thumb-molded lips. The lower case is fitted with a waist molding above one long drawer and three short drawers, the central having a deeply carved, lobed shell. The case is supported by rounded knee cabriole legs, joined by a shaped skirt fitted with drop pendants, terminating on pad feet.

Measurements:

81 ¾" h. (top molding)
36" w. (upper case)
40" w. (lower case)
21" d. (furthest point)

Provenance:

This piece descended in the Sherman family of Woodbury

Illustrated in Edward S. Cooke, Jr., *Making Furniture in Preindustrial America, The Social Economy of Newtown and Woodbury, Connecticut*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1996, pg. 156, fig. 31.





RARE AND POSSIBLY UNIQUE CHIPPENDALE OX-BOW FAUX-DRAWER CABINET

Probably Litchfield, Connecticut

Cherry, pine and poplar secondary woods

This rare, perhaps made-to-order cabinet has a carved astragal edge top with under moldings above a case with two panel doors with applied drawer facings, opening to a cabinet shelf flanked by fluted quarter columns. The case is supported by carved ball and claw feet with carved shaped knee returns and is further highlighted with applied moldings to the back edge of the case. The piece has diagonal corner braces supporting the feet and cleats holding the top to the case which are typical construction features found in Litchfield County.

Measurements:

35½" h.

41" w.

21½" d.

43" x 22" (top)

Provenance:

Bernard and S. Dean Levy, New York, 1995

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, "Litchfield County Cross-Braced Furniture," *The Magazine Antiques*, Brant Publications, New York, New York, May 2008, pg. 134, fig. 6, 6A.





QUEEN ANNE LOWBOY

Newtown – Woodbury, Connecticut area
c. 1770

Cherry, red oak and poplar secondary woods

The lowboy or dressing table has a wonderful over-hanging top with a thumb-molded edge above one long drawer and three short drawers, the center having a carved, concave shell above a central-concave shaped apron. The case is supported by C-scrolled cabriole legs, joined by a shaped skirt fitted with drop pendants, terminating on pad feet.

Measurements:

31" h.

30½" w. (case)

19" d.

35" x 22" (top)

Provenance:

Walton Antiques, Inc., Jewett City, Connecticut, 1987





RARE AND UNUSUAL CHIPPENDALE CHEST OF DRAWERS

Northwestern Connecticut, probably Litchfield
c. 1770

Cherry, yellow poplar and white pine secondary woods

The chest exhibits many rare and unusual distinct cabinet-making features. The top has an over-hanging, blocked corner molded edge above four graduated drawers with thumb-nail molded lips, flanked by carved lambs-tongue fluted corners, supported by unique laminated ogee bracket feet.

Measurements:

33" h.
32 $\frac{5}{8}$ " w. (case)
21 $\frac{3}{4}$ " d. (top)
38 $\frac{1}{4}$ " w. (top)



WILLIAM SONNTAG, SR.

Sunset

Signed lower left "Sonntag", c. 1860

Oil on canvas

32" x 50"

Source: Michael A. Latragna Fine Art, Rochester, New York

Published in Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, *William Louis Sonntag, Artist of the Ideal, 1822-1900*, Goldfield Galleries, 1980, pg. 118, illustration #73. Private collection, Birmingham, Alabama.

THE PAINTING COLLECTION

Ann and Joel collected paintings with the same passion and precision that they brought to their Litchfield County furniture collection. The Finn Collection of paintings was focused on 19th century landscapes, a special interest of Ann's since college, and the tour-de-force still lifes that were among the highpoints of 19th century American painting.

Together, the Finns selected paintings that echoed the environment of the Litchfield Hills, in some cases mirroring the landscape where the furniture was created. Some of the paintings were created in the meticulous manner that appealed to Joel, the engineer. Others, painted in a Tonalist or Impressionist style, reflected the emotional resonance that the land held for the couple, whose expansive rural property in Litchfield County was a source of inspiration and great pleasure. As they had with the furniture collection, the Finns collected paintings by artists who were widely recognized as well as artists that were undeservedly forgotten. As with the furniture craftsmen, the Finns brought several neglected artists to public recognition through careful research and by diligently seeking the very best examples of their work. At their best, these artists, highly regarded by their contemporaries, were remarkable.

Many of the frames in the collection are original to the paintings. Others were matched to the period and style of the paintings from the exemplary inventory of Eli Wilner and Company, Master Framers, New York City, New York.

Tom Yost, painting conservator, has examined the collection and his detailed condition reports are available for each painting.



WILLIAM LOUIS SONNTAG, SR. *1822-1900*

William Louis Sonntag, Sr., is best known for his romantic landscapes of the American wilderness, just on the verge of settlement. As a young artist, he studied at the Cincinnati Academy of Fine Arts and traveled through the Ohio River Valley, West Virginia and Kentucky. He traveled to Italy for the first time in 1853 and moved to New York three years later. His “classic” style pictures, large panoramas with a luminescent river framed by forested hills and distant mountains, were created from the late 1850s to the early 1870s in a rich, opalescent palette.

The two paintings in the Finn collection, on pages 31 and 33, are among the finest examples from this high point in Sonntag’s career.

His paintings are included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.



WILLIAM SONNTAG, SR.

A Placid Afternoon

Signed lower left "Sonntag", c. 1860

Oil on canvas

36" x 50"



WILLIAM MASON BROWN

Autumn Landscape with Figures on the River

Signed lower left, dated 1859

Oil on canvas

18" x 24"

Source: William Vareika Fine Arts, Newport, Rhode Island, 1989

WILLIAM MASON BROWN

1828-1898

Brown is a Hudson River School painter, capturing American scenes with great attention to detail, illuminated by radiant light reflecting the presence of the Divine in American nature. He later turned his attention to painting still lifes. His works are included in the collections of The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art and the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.



WILLIAM MASON BROWN
Autumn Landscape
Signed lower left, c. 1855
Oil on canvas
12" x 18"



WILLIAM MASON BROWN

Early Autumn on the Susquehanna

Signed with monogram, lower right

Oil on canvas

12" x 18"

Source: Gerold Wunderlich & Co., New York City, New York, 1989



THOMAS DOUGHTY

Carolina Swamp

Signed lower right "Doughty 1832"

Oil on wood panel

14" x 20"

Source: Harold Cole Antiques, Woodbury, Connecticut

THOMAS DOUGHTY

1793-1856

Thomas Doughty was born in Philadelphia. He worked for a leather manufacturer as a young man but, encouraged by the city's leading artist Thomas Sully, he turned to painting in 1820. He exhibited and taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and was elected an Honorary Member of the National Academy of Design in New York. He is considered an early leader in the first internationally recognized American style of painting, The Hudson River School. Doughty lived in Philadelphia, Boston and New York. He also studied European master landscape paintings in the Baltimore collection of Robert Gilmour and visited other landscape painting collections in London and Paris.

While he is not known to have visited "romantic" natural sites in the Carolinas, his mentor Thomas Sully did. Doughty painted a similar composition of an idealized Carolina landscape in 1825.

SANFORD ROBINSON GIFFORD

1823-1880

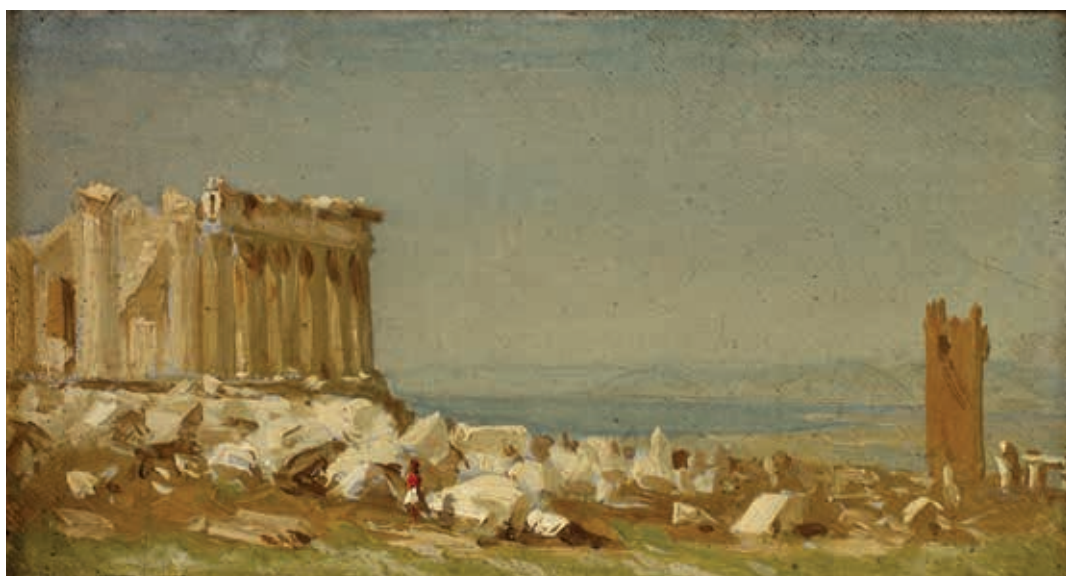
Sanford Robinson Gifford was an American landscape painter who transformed the detailed landscapes of The Hudson River School into luminous studies of light. Born near Saratoga, New York, Gifford was active in the New York City art world in the 1840s, exhibiting landscapes at the National Academy of Design and the American Art-Union and sketching with fellow artists around Kauterskill Creek in the Catskills along the Hudson River. From 1855 to 1857, Gifford traveled in Europe, visiting Rome for the first time. He traveled again to Europe and Rome for an extended tour beginning in 1868. He continued to play a leading role in America's cultural life, participating in prominent New York exhibitions and serving on the committee to establish the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which presented a large exhibition of the artist's work in 1881.

Study, *The Ruins of the Parthanon*, Gifford's last, great painting, now in the collection of The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The studies for the painting were done during Gifford's trip to the Acropolis in 1869.



SANFORD ROBINSON GIFFORD
Study for The Ruins of the Parthanon
 Estate stamp on verso, 1869
 Oil on artist board
 3½" x 6¼"

Source: Godel & Co., New York City, New York, 1994





SANFORD ROBINSON GIFFORD

Kauterskill Clove

Estate stamp on verso, c. 1860-1863

Oil on artist board

7½" x 5¾"

Source: Godel & Co., New York City, New York, 1994





JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT

View from Narragansett

Estate stamp on verso

Oil on canvas laid on board

12" x 20"

Source: Christie's Auction, New York City, New York, May 25, 1898, Lot 48

JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT

1816-1872

John Kensett, the son of an English engraver, was born in Cheshire, Connecticut. He was an admired leader among the artists of the Hudson River School and active in New York's artist circles, including the National Academy and The Century Association. He was a founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Like his fellow painters, he traveled widely in search of inspirational natural settings. He began painting scenes of the shore at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1854 and returned to the subject repeatedly over the rest of his life. His late work, sometimes called "The Last Summer's Work," framed nature with a new simplicity, filled with light and air.

His paintings are in major museum collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Smithsonian Institution and the White House.



JOHN CASILEAR

Housatonic River Scene, Cornwall, Connecticut

Signed with monogram, dated lower right, 1860

Oil on canvas

8" x 16"

Source: Litchfield Auction Gallery, Litchfield, Connecticut, 1989

JOHN WILLIAM CASILEAR

1811-1893

Born in New York City, the artist trained with master engraver Peter Maverick before turning to landscape painting as a student and assistant to Asher Durand, one of the founders of the Hudson River School.

Casilear, highly regarded among his fellow painters including John Kensett and Sanford Gifford, joined his delicate draughtsmanship with his painterly skills in capturing the effects of air, light and mood in the landscape.

He was elected a member of the National Academy of Design in 1851.

His paintings are included in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.



BRUCE CRANE

Snow Scene Along a Still Stream

Signed lower center "Bruce Crane, NY", c. 1920

Oil on canvas

16" x 24"

Source: Michelman Fine Art, New York City, New York, 1990

Descended in the Sears family, Boston, Massachusetts

(ROBERT) BRUCE CRANE

1857-1937

Bruce Crane studied with the Tonalist painter Alexander Wyant and at the Arts Student League in New York before traveling to France where he continued to work in the low-key palette and fluid brushwork of the Tonalists.

Returning to the United States, Crane found success, winning medals at major international exhibitions in Pittsburg, St. Louis, and San Francisco. He was elected to the National Academy of Design and also voted president of the Salmagundi Club in New York.

While he maintained his studio in Bronxville, New York, he was a frequent visitor at the artists' colony in Old Lyme, Connecticut.



BRUCE CRANE

The Grey Month

Signed and dated "Bruce Crane 1921"

Oil on canvas

28" x 36"

Source: David Findlay Jr. Gallery, New York City, New York, 1989



EDWARD NICHOLS

View of Lake Waramaug

Signed, inscribed on verso, c. 1855

Oil on canvas

12" x 18½"

Source: Spanierman Gallery, New York City, New York, 1994

EDWARD NICHOLS

1819-1871

Edward W. Nichols, born in Orford, New Hampshire, studied the law and taught sacred music before dedicating his energy to landscape painting in 1851. He trained at the National Academy in New York and was a founding member of the Tenth Street Studio building, the headquarters of the Hudson River School artists. Nearly one hundred of his paintings were exhibited in juried shows in New York, Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia. His paintings were acquired by prominent collectors, including Llewellyn Haskell who commissioned Nichols to create promotional illustrations of the utopian community he developed in New Jersey before the Civil War.

Lake Waramaug, located in northwest Connecticut, was a popular destination for New Yorkers after the rail lines made travel into the Litchfield Hills easier in the mid-19th century.

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, "Edward W. Nichols and the Image of an Ideal America", *Fine Art Connoisseur*, Streamline Publishing, Inc., West Palm Beach, Florida, pg. 32, fig. 5.



LEVI WELLS PRENTICE
Still Life with Pears and Grapes
 Signed lower right "L W Prentice"
 Oil on canvas, in original shadow box
 19³/₄" x 25¹/₂"

LEVI WELLS PRENTICE

1851-1935

Levi Wells Prentice became a painter in Syracuse, New York but became a painter of still lifes after he moved to Brooklyn, New York, a center of still life painting, in 1883. He later lived in Philadelphia. His precise jewel-toned fruits dazzle against a dark background, creating an unsurpassed quality of illusion, according to art historian William H. Gerdt.

Prentice also made his own frames, including this original frame and shadow box that protect and present this painting. The artist was a member of the Brooklyn Art Association. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Yale University Art Gallery.

Illustrated in Barbara Jones, *Nature Staged: The Landscapes and Still Life Paintings of Levi Wells Prentice*, The Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, New York, 1993, plate #48.

Exhibited at the Prentice retrospective exhibit at The Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, New York, 1993.



PAUL LACROIX

Still Life with Mums

Signed and dated "Lacroix, N.Y. 65.", 1865

Oil on board

10½" x 13½"

Source: Godel & Co., New York City, New York

PAUL LACROIX

1827-1869

Paul LaCroix came to New York City from his native France as a young man. He was listed as an artist in city directories in 1857 and began exhibiting his still lifes at the National Academy of Design in 1863. He continued to send pictures to the National Academy of Design exhibitions for the rest of his life, as well as exhibiting at the Brooklyn Art Museum. He moved to Hoboken, New Jersey, a community of artists, in 1867. His work is often compared favorably to the work of Severin Rosen, a successful German painter who arrived in the United States a decade earlier.

LaCroix excelled at depicting the complex geometry of foreshortened stems and blossoms. At the same time, he observed the principles of English critic John Ruskin, painting in truth to nature, with common flowers simply laid on a bare table.



GURDON TRUMBULL

Still Life of Daisies

Label of verso, Gurdon Trumbull, c. 1865

Oil on academy board

9½" x 7⅜"

GURDON TRUMBULL

1841-1903

Gurdon Trumbull, born in Stonington, Connecticut, was trained by landscape painters in Hartford and New York but became best known for his still life paintings of fish. Henry W. French, who chronicled the accomplishments of 19th century artists in Connecticut, described Trumbull as "the finest fish-painter of America"; Trumbull's fish paintings were exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. Two of Trumbull's paintings of fish swimming under water were distributed as chromolithographs much admired by sportsmen. During his transition from landscape painting to fish painting, Trumbull painted flowers. His flower paintings are rare but striking with crisp bright light and exceptional detail.

Exhibited at the National Academy of Design.

MORSTON CONSTANTINE REAM

1840-1898

The younger brother of Cadurcis Plantagenet Ream, Morston specialized in still life paintings that featured edibles: fruit, wine, cake...and nuts. Like other still life artists at mid-century, these objects were depicted with a focus on the truth of the thing shown, reflecting the contemporary interest in the scientific classification of the natural world. While sharing an interest with his brother in still lifes, Morston's work is generally more painterly.

Morston was born in Lancaster, Ohio, and served an apprenticeship in Cleveland before moving to New York in 1868. He exhibited at the National Academy of Design, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art and the Brooklyn Art Association.



MORSTON C. REAM
Still Life with Walnuts and Grapes
 Signed lower left "M Ream", c. 1870
 Oil on academy board



CADURCIS PLANTAGENET REAM

1838-1917

Cadurcis Plantagenet Ream established his reputation as a painter of “dessert pictures,” paintings that were reproduced by Louis Prang & Company as chromolithographs intended to hang in dining rooms. Cadurcis, a native of Ohio, may have studied abroad, according to art historian William Gerdts, and his work was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. Moving to Chicago, Ream was the first resident artist to have a picture included in the permanent collection of the city’s Art Institute.

Like his brother, he exhibited at the National Academy of Design and the Brooklyn Art Association. The Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, has a large collection of the work of C.P. Ream.



CADURCIS P. REAM
Still Life with Wine Glass
Signed lower right "C.P. REAM", c. 1870

Source: Altman/Burke Fine Art, New York City, New York, 1989

UNCOVERING THE BEST KEPT SECRET

Ann Smith, then curator of The Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, Connecticut, wrote in her acknowledgments in the catalogue for the A.T. Van Laer exhibition in 1999, "My husband, Joel Finn, was the force propelling the project. Without his support and interest, the story of A. T. Van Laer would have remained lost."

Joel was a force, indeed. When he discovered an interest he would explore it, master it, or collect it. I had worked with Joel and Ann for a while when the Van Laer bug bit and, leave it to Joel to inspire all of us to find the very best paintings by the artist for him.

Van Laer captured the peace, beauty, and serenity of the Litchfield hills better than anyone before or since. These works included capture the artist's passion for his home and reflect Joels' passion for both fine art and his and Ann's home in Northwest Connecticut.

Jeffrey Cooley, The Cooley Gallery, Old Lyme, Connecticut.

ALEXANDER THEOBALD VAN LAER 1857-1920

Alexander Van Laer was an artist of influence in New York in the early decades of the 20th century. In addition to a prolific exhibition schedule, he was president of the prestigious Salmagundi Club, president of the American Watercolor Society and a member of the National Academy of Design. He was a popular speaker, attracting standing-room-only audiences when he presented illustrated lectures on cultural topics at the American Museum of Natural History. He was a popular teacher in studio arts, as well, with students coming to his classes from across the United States.

When he began painting in Litchfield, Connecticut, at the end of the 19th century, his vision brightened. Leaving behind the darker, Dutch-inspired landscapes of his earlier work, he wrote to his dealer at the MacBeth Gallery in 1903 that his paintings now had "a light sky and some good color." The Litchfield compositions reflect the flattened perspective of Japanese prints popular at the end of the 19th century and the interlocking landscape elements in Cezanne's compositions introduced to cultural sophisticates at the beginning of the 20th century. Van Laer moved to Litchfield full time in 1911 and continued to paint the countryside in all seasons, emulating Monet's studies of the changing effects of light on the landscape at different cycles of the seasons and the day.

Van Laer's paintings were exhibited at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Union League Club in New York City and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, *Alexander Theobald Van Laer: The Lost Landscapes*, published by The Mattatuck Museum of the Mattatuck Historical Society, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1998, pg. 15, plate #8.



ALEXANDER T. VAN LAER

The Frozen Brook

Signed lower right, "A.T. Van Laer", 1912

Source: Thomas Colville Fine Art, New York City, New York, 1990

Exhibited at the National Academy of Art, 1913, #301.



ALEXANDER T. VAN LAER

Early Snow, Near Litchfield

Signed lower right "A.T. Van Laer", c. 1890

Oil on canvas

22" x 36"

Source: A. J. Kollar Fine Paintings, Seattle, Washington

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, *Alexander Theobald Van Laer: The Lost Landscapes*, published by The Mattatuck Museum of the Mattatuck Historical Society, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1998, pg. 12, plate #4.



ALEXANDER T. VAN LAER

Autumn in Litchfield

Signed lower right "A.T. Van Laer", c. 1890-1900

Oil on canvas

28" x 32"



ALEXANDER T. VAN LAER

Landscape

Signed lower right "A.T. Van Laer", c. 1890-1900

Oil on canvas

32" x 48"

Source: The Cooley Gallery, Old Lyme, Connecticut

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, *Alexander Theobald Van Laer: The Lost Landscapes*, published by The Mattatuck Museum of the Mattatuck Historical Society, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1998, pg. 13, plate #6.



ALEXANDER T. VAN LAER

Autumn Landscape

Signed lower right "A.T. Van Laer", c. 1890-1900

Oil on canvas

32" x 48"

Source: The Cooley Gallery, Old Lyme, Connecticut

Illustrated in Ann Y. Smith, *Alexander Theobald Van Laer: The Lost Landscapes*, published by The Mattatuck Museum of the Mattatuck Historical Society, Waterbury, Connecticut, 1998, pg. 14, plate #7.

GEORGE II SCROLLED ARCH PARCEL-GILT MIRROR
ENGLISH PARCEL
1730-1750

Mahogany veneer on pine, giltwood and gesso, looking glass

This stately mirror is one of the finer examples that would have been offered in England during the Colonial period. They were imported to America and adorned some of the wealthiest homes and institutions in the mid-18th century through the early 19th century. The graceful yet boldly scrolled arch pediment surmounted with a carved spread-wing eagle is well proportioned and executed with finely carved details such as the incised gesso and wood decoration along the moldings. The looking glass is surrounded by a mahogany veneered frame with a carved gilt beveled liner outlined with an applied, carved giltwood and gesso molded edge conforming to the frame. The looking glass is flanked by carved foliage.

Measurements:

60" h.

30¹/₄" w. (furthest points)





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