



THE MUSE

SURPRISES AND MYSTERIES OF THE SLATER MEMORIAL MUSEUM COLLECTION

by Vivian F. Zoë

Since 2009 Slater Museum staff, volunteers and interns have been moving objects in collections, typically from one poor storage area to another. The construction of the new Atrium in 2010/2011 spurred a major moving project, but one of the most ambitious moves was in the summer of 2009 when the entire William Ashby McCloy collection was moved from a damp and crumbling room in Slater basement to the top floor of 90 Sachem Street. The contents included not only most of the thousands of artworks, equipment and notebooks of the McCloy bequest, but odds and ends of mostly material that had accumulated in the basement over decades. Sadly these were un-accessioned and unrecorded.

An accessioned object is one that has been officially entered into the collection. This requires a process that now includes the museum's collections committee, comprising in our case, local experts and an NFA board member. Recording, at a minimum, includes some form of documentation on what the object is, from what source, created by whom, of what materials, when and its significance.

When objects are separated from or arrive with no documentation, it can have monumental, sometimes tragic consequences, you will read. Included in the group of objects "found in collection" are a bible owned by Hannah Lathrop with a 1773 family history on the fly leaf (1773-1838); several scrapbooks and photo albums representing the Dodge Family's summer vacations and trips abroad and Mrs. Dodge's youth.

THE QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER OF THE
SLATER MEMORIAL MUSEUM



SUMMER, 2013



Detail of an etching of Squam Lake, by Ozias Dodge. Collection of the Slater Museum. Squam Lake was a favorite vacation destination of the Dodes.

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The Muse is published up to four times yearly for the members of The Friends of the Slater Memorial Museum. The museum is located at 108 Crescent Street, Norwich, CT 06360. It is part of The Norwich Free Academy, 305 Broadway, Norwich, CT 06360. Museum main telephone number: (860) 887-2506. Visit us on the web at www.slatermuseum.org.

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A Message from the Director



We thought the cold would never end, but finally, spring is here along with a new crop of interns as anticipated. Our spring semester intern, Megan Sherrick of Jewett City, an NFA alumna and a student at Eastern CT. State University, will be continuing her work through the summer. Beginning in January, she has been working diligently from to migrate objects from the attic into the new storage facility and in the process discovering many long lost or never recorded objects. Much of her focus is on the thousands of Native American objects in our collection.

As a history major, Megan is doing a super job and learning much from the experience, including meeting with the archaeologists from both the Mohegan and Pequot Tribes. Our summer interns, one of whom is also an NFA alumna and another from URI, will be working on the museum's extensive archives. Their work will match paper documentation to electronic object records, making it possible to better interpret and tell the stories of our collections. With our small staff, these energetic young people are fun to have around and accomplish so much in a short time! We say thank you to them and to their colleges and universities for partnering with us.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Sunday, June 16
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

OPENING RECEPTION: *Journey: Processes in Print: Recent Work of the Stonington Printmakers Society*. Free and open to the public. Exhibition on view through August 18, 2013.

Sunday, July 7
1:00 to 3:00 pm

PRINTING DEMONSTRATIONS:

- Margo Rocklen: Japanese print making- Eastern style block prints
- Shirley Bernstein: Western style block prints

Sunday, July 14
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

PRINTING DEMONSTRATIONS:

- Vivian Zoë, Slater Museum Director, to present and discuss selections from the collection of the Slater Museum, 1:00 - 2:00
- Stonington Printmakers' Society members share and demo their work, 2:00 - 3:00

Saturday, Sept. 7
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

OPENING RECEPTION: *Connecticut Women Artists National Juried Exhibition*. Free and open to the public. Exhibition on view August 31 through September 27, 2013.

NEW MICRO-EXHIBITION IN THE “BUBBLE”



The Atrium area on the third floor landing of the elevator, which leads to the Slater mezzanine has been converted into an area appropriate for exhibitions of closely related three dimensional objects. The perfect first offering is an exhibition of sculpture from the museum’s collection of work by Peter Pellettieri.

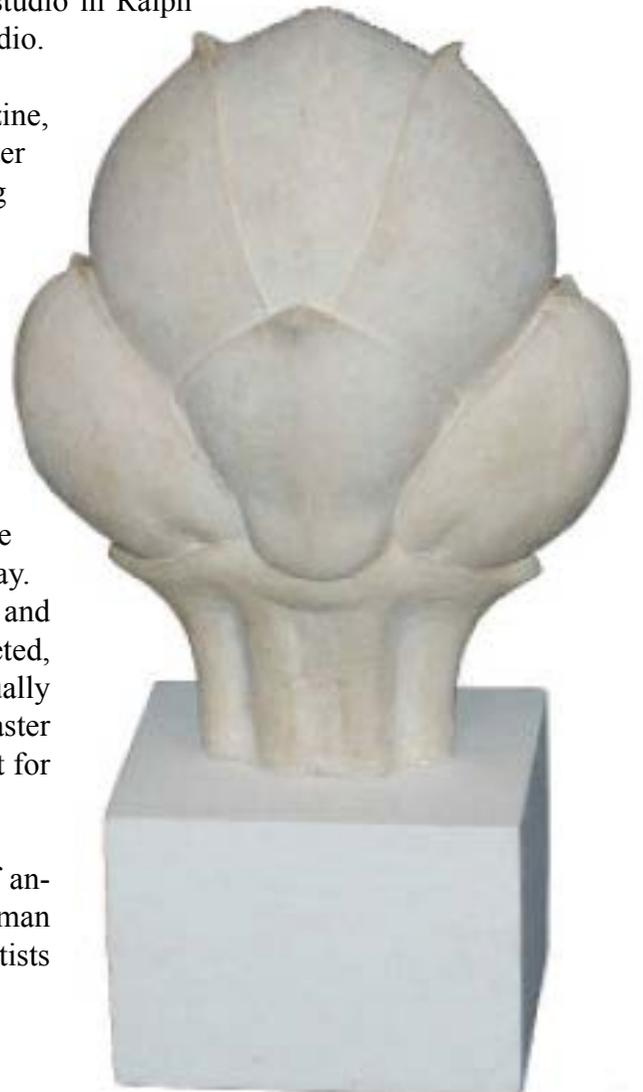
A Connecticut native, Peter Pellettieri received both BFA and MFA from the Hartford Art School and studied glass blowing. As a Fulbright scholar and recipient of a grant from the Italian government, Mr. Pellettieri’s influences extended on a national and international scale. Peter was considered the father of artglass in Connecticut. From 1970 until he retired, he taught sculpture and glass blowing at Southern

Connecticut State University. Shortly before his death, his art studio in Ralph Earl Hall (SCSU), was named The Peter Pellettieri Sculpture Studio.

Featured in the September 1984 issue of American Artist Magazine, Mr. Pellettieri engaged in creating a series of floraform plaster sculptures based upon his precept that all sculpture should bring together form and human concern; that it should thoughtfully convey the human condition. In this series, he sought to investigate the constant metamorphosis of natural forms and questions of perfection. The bud leads to the bloom, then to dissolution and finally, decay. The emerging flower at its budding occupied him for nearly two years in the early 1980’s.

About his work, Peter “Accurate measurements are taken from each natural bud form, and the bud is then scaled up in size.... I use the time-honored technique of direct modeling in water-based clay. My equipment is simple: Clay is built up over a wire armature and formed with clay modeling tools. Once the clay model is completed, a plaster piece mold is taken from it. The casting material eventually poured into the mold is Hydrocal, a very dense, hard type of plaster (light grey in color). I find Hydrocal gives me a color that is best for a clear reading of the forms I have modeled.”

Peter’s work fits closely with the Slater Museum’s collection of antique plaster casts of ancient sculpture for many reasons. The human form is not only an organic form, ever metamorphosing, but to artists and scholars for millennia, the essence of ideal beauty.



(Continued from page 1)

Some of you will recall that Hannah Dodge was director of the museum from 1925 to 1963. Among dozens of unaccessioned museum objects, we also found an antique mimeograph machine, no doubt from the Slater Building's period of hosting either the head of School's office or the registrar's office. An early typewriter and odds and ends of machinery and technology that are still under investigation.

When we moved objects from the basement of the Slater Building to the Sachem Street facility, a small but very heavy box of glass slides was found. These are not glass plate negatives, which are typically 8" X 10" and obviously, negative, but "magic lantern" slides, 3" X 3", positive transparencies used as an early form of entertainment or educational visual aid. Pulling a few out of the slotted box, despite very poor light and no work surface, it was noticed that the images of many of the slides had a maritime theme; specifically, they depicted whales, whaleships and whaling.

Half of the glass slides in the box represent images from *The Pageant of America: A Pictorial History of the United States*, published by Yale University Press from 1925-1929. Under the general editorship of Professor Ralph Henry Gabriel, fifteen thematic volumes addressed exploration, settlement, industry, commerce, politics, and arts and leisure from the 11th to the early 20th century with illustrations and narrative captions. Ralph Henry Gabriel (1890-1988), a Yale University history professor and founder of the American Studies Association, was one of the first academic historians to recognize and promote the research value of documentary pictorial materials. In addition to creating *The Pageant of America*, he was the author of several high school and college history texts.



Magic lantern slides. Gift of Helen Marshall.

For each thematic Pageant series volume, Gabriel and his authors gathered potentially suitable photographs, grouped them topically, selected them and, chapter by chapter, researched them for publication. Gabriel carried out exhaustive research, acquiring historical prints as well as contemporary photographs. The original photographic prints consist of original albumen, platinum, and silver gelatin prints ranging from mid-19th century cartes-de-visite portraits and Civil War views to 1920s news agency coverage of post-World War I economic summits and college football. They include work by such major photographers as Alexander Gardner, William Henry Jackson, Timothy O'Sullivan, Rudolph Eichmeyer, Edward S. Curtis, and Man Ray. Although the small Slater collection does not have the narrative accompaniment to the slides, it is available online through several libraries. Gabriel's recognition of images as critical to understanding history and culture is near and dear to this researcher's heart. Today, his ideas are considered *de rigueur*, especially in an environment laden with visual material.



Magic lantern slides (left to right): *The Niger*, a whaling ship out of New Bedford, MA, the crew aboard an unidentified whaling ship and a depiction of a whaling scene. Gift of Helen Marshall.



Magic lantern slide donor Helen Marshall as a teenager.

captain's daughter, Nantucket, Mass. and

Bill Peterson, Senior Curator Emeritus from the Seaport, and a member of Slater's Collections Committee was alerted to the discovery of the slides. Naturally, because of the maritime theme of many of them, he became intrigued and asked to see them. Sadly, when an attempt was made to retrieve them, they had disappeared. Later, during migration of objects from Sachem Street into the new Collections storage facility in the basement of the Atrium, they reappeared. Again, here was the small but heavy and mysterious box of slides. This time, the box was opened set on a chin-high shelf in the much better-lighted new collections storage area. Discovered inside the box was the inscription, written in pencil "from Helen Marshall, sea NFA teacher."

Some years prior, we had received an unannounced visit by a scholar researching Helen Marshall. Unfortunately, she arrived with no warning and because our archives are not indexed, we were unable to assist her. Her card was kept and she was told that she would be contacted were something on Ms. Marshall found. About a year later, while researching something completely unrelated, an annual report that Ms. Marshall had submitted to the NFA Trustees on behalf of the museum was discovered, proving that she had at some point had responsibility for it. We tried to reach the person who left her card, to no avail. The archive box was marked with a hangtag indicating that Helen Marshall's report was held within.

Finding the box of slides with its inscription was more than we had when Ms. Marshall's name first arose. A Google search for "Marshall, Sea Captain" presented a listing for Joseph Marshall, out of Nantucket, arriving on his whaling ship into New Bedford Harbor.

Joseph Marshall (1811-1879) was Captain of the ship "President" in 1847, the bark "Sea Queen" in 1851 and the bark "Aurora" in 1856. He was a member of the Wellfleet School Committee and Malvina Fitzalan Plaskett Pinkham (1820-1885) was Helen's mother and Joseph's second wife. All three were born on Nantucket and all three are buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery, Nantucket. The family had deep roots in the seagoing trades and Malvina herself went to sea, so there should be little surprise to learn that at the age of 25 Helen Marshall (1851-1939) was off on her third Grand Tour.

In NFA's archives room in the Land Library, a treasure trove of jumbled publications and primary sources, we found *The Tirrell Years, 1903-1939*. In this historical publication, a quote from the NFA Annual Report of 1906-1907 solves one mystery.

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

After weeks of hard work, our newest Slater Museum Interpreters have completed their training and are now leading free tours of the museum for our guests!

Our Interpreters know their subject! All volunteers, they are required to complete a 20-week training course, in which they learn not only the content of the Slater's galleries, but also history of NFA and Norwich, as well as about the seminal figures and events that helped to shape our collection.

We are grateful to our dedicated group of Interpreters who help tell the story of the Slater Museum and its collections, and further enhance the visitor's experience here. The schedule of guided tours can be found on the museum's website at www.slater-museum.org/tours.

Anyone who is interested in joining our adult corps of volunteers, either as an Interpreter or as a Visitor Services Host, is encouraged to call Assistant Director Leigh Thomas at (860) 425-5561, or email thomasl@nfaschool.org.

SCANNER NEEDED!

The museum is in need of another scanner to facilitate the digitization of our archival collection. If you have a scanner you would be willing to donate, please call us at (860) 425-5561.

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Friends of the Slater Museum help to support and keep alive one of the most valuable and rare treasures in the region.

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends, the Slater can continue to produce exciting new exhibits, conserve and protect the objects entrusted to its care and work to acquire art and artifacts that promote its core mission.

Please note: We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this list. If we inadvertently omitted your name, we apologize. Please let us know by calling 860-425-5563.

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❖ Notice our new look? Stop by the museum and let us know what you think of our redesigned newsletter!

(Continued from page 5)

“Miss Marshall, whose experience in teaching and in discipline has given her unusual qualifications for the work, will take charge of the Peck Library and Slater Museum. Miss Pond, who was admirably trained for library work, finds herself unable to resume her place in the Library. Miss Marshall however will bring to her new duties knowledge and power of another sort that will bring our library into closer touch with the school...Miss Eunice Gulliver will take Miss Marshall’s work in English.”

There is a further reference to Helen in the Annual Report of 1918. Mr. Tirrell discusses austerity measures during the war and then prefaces the usual data with “The following statistics have been given me by Miss Marshall, Librarian and Acting Director of Slater Museum.” So she was still in place at that time. 1919 contains a similar mention of Miss Marshall. In 1922, “Miss Helen Marshall retired from Peck Library...”

So Ms. Marshall, originally from Nantucket and clearly independent and well-travelled, was an English teacher cum museum director. In letters home from her 1877 European sojourn, Helen mentions visiting the Pitti Palace which leads us to our next “find.”

The Michelangelo Pitti Tondo is a “round” that dates to the years when Michelangelo was sculpting his signature David. He would have carved out some time to dedicate himself to a profitable private commission. This Tondo was made for Bartolomeo Pitti, whose son Miniato, gave it to a member of the Guiccardini Family, a powerful oligarchic family associated with both Machiavelli and the Medicis. In 1823, the Tondo was bought by the Florentine Galleries for two hundred crowns. It was installed in the newly established Museum of the Bargello in 1873. The Bargello, also known as the Bargello Palace, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, or Palazzo del Popolo (Palace of the People) is a former barracks and prison, now an art museum, in Florence.

The marble bas-relief of the Virgin and Child, the Michelangelo Pitti Tondo was created between 1503 and 1504. It depicts the infant St. John in the

background and appears unfinished. Some art historians claim that Michelangelo’s attention to the massive, David drew his attention away from the Tondo, others say that he rarely finished anything, so fertile was his mind that whatever was his current project, it stimulated new ideas for the next.

But what is so intriguing about this, the second cast of the Pitti Tondo in the Slater’s Collection? We can safely assume that the Pitti Tondo on display in our collection was acquired by Edward Robinson in 1888 during his sojourn as the Slater’s agent in Europe. Alas, we have no definitive record. The second, found in the attic without provenance, is clearly labeled as the work of Caproni Brothers Studio in Boston. The Slater’s collection includes only a few full casts from Caproni.

The most respected 19th c. American casting studio, Caproni Brothers Studio has been resurrected and preserved, by sculptor Robert Shure, who also serves as the Slater’s cast conservator. His Giust Caproni Studio incorporates the remains of the original, plus that of its immediate successor. Bob’s studio retains today many

of the 19th century piece molds original to Caproni Brothers. These are not only works of great



Cast of the Michelangelo Pitti Tondo, from the collection of the Slater Museum. Original in the Museo Nazionale, del Bargello, Florence

craftsmanship, but feats of amazing engineering. A bas- or even heavy-relief mold would be less complex than one in the round, but the accuracy of these two when set side by side is remarkable. The older relief is patinaed and the Caproni is still unpainted, raw plaster. Remarkably, despite years in the attic, the Caproni version is fairly clean and in good condition.

New research suggests that the Caproni Tondo came into the Slater's collection in the 1970's, but the Pitti Tondo is listed in the Caproni catalogue of 1901 for \$5.00, (the equivalent of \$147 today). While the Caproni Brothers' cast would have been made using the same old-world method as a European cast, where the mold was also plaster, today, flexible latex rubber is used to create molds in one piece with the ability to capture minute detail. Our plan is to loan the Caproni version to the Yale Center for British Art for its 2015 exhibition on Victorian attitudes toward sculpture.

And perhaps most remarkable of all, the Alexander Hamilton Emmons' Russell Hubbard, 1858.

In addition to being commissioned by the Johnson brothers (mostly Charles) to paint portraits of designated Norwich "Worthies," he became the "go-to" portrait painter for NFA and Norwich. A donor recently gave us the 1850 bill the artist presented to Charles Johnson, showing the amount he traded for rent. Alexander Hamilton Emmons, born in East



Haddam in 1816, painted in oil and also executed miniatures, usually watercolor on ivory. After an extended trip through Europe to study the work of the old masters, in 1843 he opened a studio in Hartford. He finally settled in Norwich, where he died in 1884. Emmons maintained a studio on Shetucket Street, at the time both the financial district of the city and the arts district. Charles and Frank Johnson, founders of the Norwich Savings Bank, included a studio for Emmons in their new bank building and commissioned him to paint portraits of "Norwich Worthies" for display at the 1850 opening of the Otis Library. Decades later, the stewards of the library concluded that its mission did not include preserving and presenting paintings, so they were donated to the Slater Memorial.

Emmons assayed landscape and still life somewhat less successfully than his Norwich near-contemporary John Denison Crocker. On a regional level, however, Emmons' work follows a tradition of documentation like that of John Singleton Copley, Ralph Earl, and the painters of the Peale Family. His portraits, included in private collections throughout the city, open a window into the world of wealth and influence fueled by industry. From an 1872 issue of the Norwich Aurora, we read that "At the studio of our Norwich artist, A. H. Emmons, can be seen one of the finest and most life-like portraits ever placed upon canvass (sic). The painting is a side view of a photograph of the late William T. Norton, whose sad fate at the time of the burning of the steamer City of New London was so deeply lamented by the whole community." We also have in our collection a very large and ornate portrait of Bela Peck (for whom the Peck Library - now Sears Gallery - was named).

Perhaps most exciting is the portrait of a seated gentleman, found in the attic hiding in plain sight. The very large (5' X 7') canvas has been determined beyond a shadow of a doubt to be Alexander Hamilton Emmons' 1858 posthumous portrait of Russell Hubbard. Hubbard, heir to the Norwich Courier, apparently preferred manufacturing to journalism. He sold the business his father Thomas had started and instead acquired the paper mill originally established by Christopher Leffingwell at the Falls Industrial complex.

HAPPY 128TH ANNIVERSARY!!!

William and Ellen Slater were married on June 11, 1885 at Park Congregational Church in Norwich - three years before the Slater Museum opened just across the street! Stephen C. Earle of Worcester, MA designed the church in 1874, and would later be tapped by William to design the Slater building in the same Romanesque Revival style.

SELL OUT CROWD AT NORWICH SILHOUETTES HISTORICAL FASHION SHOW



Treats abounded at the March 16 Historical Fashion Show chaired by Tricia Staley and sponsored by the Friends of Slater Museum, with a special guaranteeing gift made by Friends Board member and NFA alumna Carol Amedeo. Costume Historian and creator Joan De-Gusto of Charlemont, Massachusetts knocked the stockings off the 125% sell-out crowd, some actually in costume! Models of all age groups from the community looked about as sharp as ever they had and an authentic and marvelous tea was prepared by NFA's Brickview Inn, served by NFA's Etiquette Club. A booklet of the Norwich Silhouettes and Women of Norwich was designed by NFA's Community design class members. The event was so well-subscribed that it was moved to Alumni Gym, but the surroundings mattered not when the models entered the room. Bigelow Tea presented a pre-game show on the history of tea and a goody bag loaded with samples to each attendee.

The Russell Hubbard House at 161 Broadway in Norwich, was built in 1826. Its second-story glassed-in porch and front entry-porch are later additions. Russell, on attaining his majority, became a partner with his father in the publication of the *Courier*, and in 1808, on his father's death, became its sole proprietor, which he continued to publish until April, 1822. In addition to manufacturing paper, he operated a bookselling and publishing business. In 1837, he entered into a partnership with his brother, Amos Hallam Hubbard, created the firm of R. & A. H. Hubbard, which continued, until it was terminated by the death of the senior partner.

Hubbard's grandfather, Thomas, was a descendant of Capt. Russell Hubbard, a shipping merchant of New London, who moved to Norwich during the Revolutionary war, and died at his residence near the town green in 1785, leaving two sons, Thomas, the proprietor of the *Norwich Courier*, and Russell, a ship-master, who died at sea in 1800, unmarried. Thomas Hubbard, the son, married Mary, daughter of Amos Hallam of New London. They resided in the town-plot (aka Norwichtown), in the Whiting house, (later owned by William Fitch, Esq.,) where his three sons, Thomas, Russell, and Amos H., were born.

As Russell became more wealthy and influential, he began to use these attributes to benefit his community. When approached by John Putnam Gulliver with a grand idea, Russell Hubbard was the first contributor of the ten men who were to be solicited each to give \$7,500 (\$188,820.75) toward the establishment of the Free Academy. He then solicited, on behalf of the Reverend Gulliver, other people of similar wealth to do the same. But when the effort seemed to be floundering, to make the dream a reality, Hubbard contributed another \$3,500 (\$88,116.35) toward its establishment. He also managed the funds and acted as a clerk of the works to erect the first building, Old Main, now demolished. He was the first president of the NFA board, established the Hubbard Rhetorical Society, and purchased all of the books and shelving for a library in the new school building.

Marianna Hubbard, William Slater's mother is the daughter of Russell's brother Amos and Eliza (Lanman) Hubbard, so William, born the year Russell died, was his nephew. A second Marianna Hubbard is William's considerably older sister.



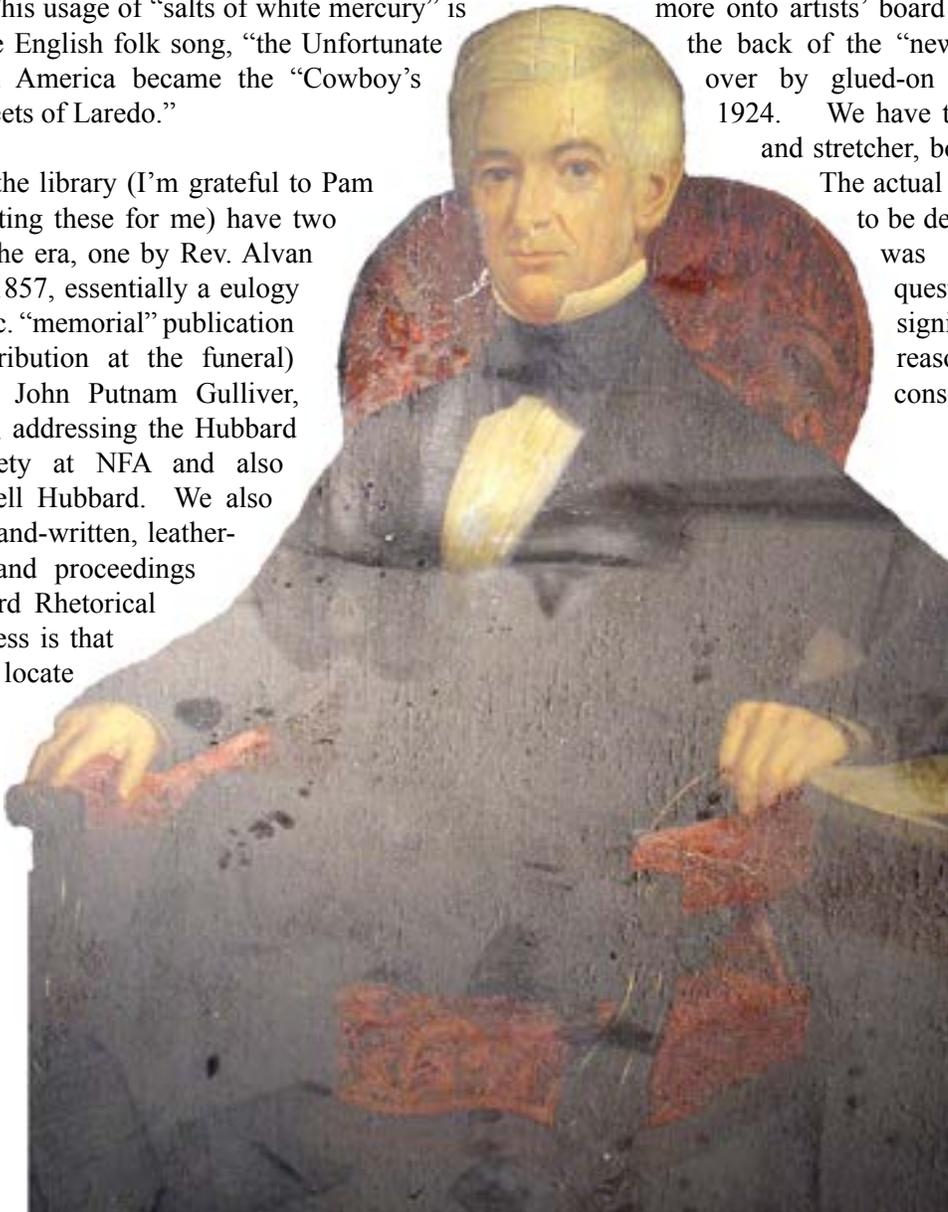
Russell Hubbard died unexpectedly and suddenly after Old Main was built and the first class entered, but before the first class (of two! George Coit Ripley and Nathaniel Hosea Whittemore) graduated. Feeling ill on June 7, 1857, Hubbard went to a cupboard and from it, ingested a substance called corrosive sublimate. Corrosive Sublimate is Mercury(II) chloride or mercuric chloride, the chemical compound of mercury and chlorine. Its formula is $HgCl_2$.

The white crystalline solid is a compound used by Arab physicians in the Middle Ages to treat syphilis and disinfect wounds. It was inhaled, ingested, injected, and applied topically. It is no longer used for medicinal purposes because of its poisonous quality. In fact, poisoning was so common that its symptoms were confused with those of syphilis, so as you can see, there is the potential for a vicious circle! This usage of “salts of white mercury” is referred to in the English folk song, “the Unfortunate Rake” which in America became the “Cowboy’s Lament” or “Streets of Laredo.”

Our archives at the library (I’m grateful to Pam Gagnon for locating these for me) have two publications of the era, one by Rev. Alvan Bond, June 14, 1857, essentially a eulogy (a common 19th c. “memorial” publication printed for distribution at the funeral) and another by John Putnam Gulliver, September 1857, addressing the Hubbard Rhetorical Society at NFA and also eulogizing Russell Hubbard. We also have all of the hand-written, leather-bound records and proceedings from the Hubbard Rhetorical Society. My guess is that were we able to locate the minutes of the NFA Trustees for June/July 1857, we would find their resolution to commission the portrait. Norwich was clearly shocked by his death.

Another interesting fact is that since Emmons died in 1884 at the age of 68, the slightly younger, and longer-lived John Denison Crocker seems to have received the laurel wreath as official NFA portrait painter. The large portrait of Charles Augustus Converse, now hanging in the Crocker exhibition, was painted to honor the man who left the funds to build the Converse Art Building upon his death in 1901, by Crocker. Emmons had, at that time, been dead for 15 years. Crocker would live to the age of 85 in 1907.

Sadly, after its decades-long caché, (quite possibly a century) the paint is crenellated, cupped, craquelured and heavily abraded, especially along the edge of the stretcher. Immensely dusty, it has been poorly in-painted and finally, glued to a new substrate (perhaps twice) consisting of perhaps an early plywood and then once more onto artists’ board or vice-versa. Finally, the back of the “new” substrate is covered over by glued-on New York Times of 1924. We have the original Frame liner and stretcher, both detached but extant. The actual frame was probably left to be destroyed when Old Main was demolished. Without question, a work of such significance for so many reasons, deserves immediate conservation attention.



Russell Hubbard (1785-1857) by Alexander Hamilton Emmons, oil on canvas, 1858. Details from painting: this page, Hubbard seated; opposite page, Old Main.



**STONINGTON PRINTMAKERS' SOCIETY
JOURNEY: PROCESSES IN PRINT
On view June 16 through August 18, 2013**

Printing demonstrations, Sunday July 7th, 1:00 - 3:00

- Margo Rocklen: Eastern-style block prints: Japanese printmaking
- Shirley Bernstein: Western-style block prints

Printing demonstrations, Sunday July 14th, 1:00 - 3:00

- Vivian Zoë, Museum Director, to present and discuss selections from the Slater's collection, 1:00 - 2:00
- Stonington Printmakers' Society members share and demonstrate their work, 2:00 - 3:00

Connecticut Women Artists, Inc.

2013 *84th Annual*
NATIONAL OPEN JURIED EXHIBITION

2013 Juror: Douglas Hyland, Director,
New Britain Museum of American Art

**AUGUST 31 THROUGH
SEPTEMBER 27, 2013**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

2:00 - 4:00 PM: Opening reception for the
artists, friends and the public. The reception
is free and all are welcome to attend.



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

