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## Benjamin Trott: Miniature Painter

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<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-c4sw-ny44>

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BENJAMIN TROTT:  
MINIATURE PAINTER

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Program in American Studies  
The College of William and Mary

In partial fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by  
Anne A. Verplanck


1990

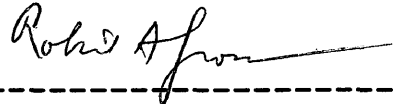
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

  
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Approved, September, 1990

  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous people have helped in the preparation of this thesis. I would like to thank Alan Wallach, College of William and Mary, for his generous advice and careful editing throughout the writing of this thesis. Robert Gross and Graham Hood, of the College and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, respectively, provided helpful criticism in their capacity as readers. Robin Bolton-Smith, National Museum of American Art, shared her extensive research files and knowledge of miniatures. Other miniature scholars were generous with their assistance: Dale Johnson, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Clifford Chieffo, Georgetown University; and Davida Deutsch. I am grateful to Virginius Hall, Virginia Historical Society, and David Meschutt, West Point Museum for sharing their knowledge of Trott's and Lovett's early work. The Commonwealth Center for the Study of American Culture and the American Studies Program of the College of William and Mary generously funded my travel to many collections.

Many others provided assistance for which I am grateful: the manuscript and curatorial staff, Albany Institute of History and Art; Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Biddle, Jr.; Ann Wagner, Linda Thrift, Catalog of American Portraits; Katherine Eirk; William Florkowski, Carnegie

Museum of Art; Sarah Johnson, Cincinnati Art Museum;  
Jennifer Esler, Cliveden; Ron Hurst and the library staff,  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Mary Itsell, Diplomatic  
Reception Rooms, Department of State; Charles Dorman;  
Virginia Rollins, Family Genealogical Library, Newport News,  
VA; staff of Frick Art Reference Library; Patrician Keller-  
Connor, Heritage Center of Lancaster County; Mrs. Jeannette  
Whitebook Lasker; David Cassedy, Elizabeth Jarvis, Louise  
Jones, Linda Stanley, and other members of the staff at the  
Historical Society of Pennsylvania; staff of the Inventory  
of American Paintings; Mr. and Mrs. Jack Levy; Don  
Linebaugh; Susan Mackiewicz; Jane Daniels, The Magazine  
Antiques; Rosemary Connolly and Merrill Lavine, Maryland  
Historical Society; library staff, Massachusetts Historical  
Society; Michael Anderson and Linda Best, Mead Art Gallery,  
Amherst College; curatorial staff, Montclair Art Museum;  
Alice Smith, Montgomery County Historical Society; Nancy  
Emison, Barbara Macmillan, Christine Meadows, and Karen  
Peters, Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union; Whaley  
Batson and Martha Rowe, Museum of Early Southern Decorative  
Arts; registrarial staff, Mystic Seaport Museum; David  
Zipkin and Mrs. Louise Cohen, National Museum of American  
Jewish History and Congregation Mikveh Israel; library  
staff, New England Historical Genealogical Society; Lisa  
Broberg, New Haven Colony Historical Society; Will Herrin,  
New London County Historical Society; Donna Grossman, Reba

Fishman, and the manuscript staff of the New-York Historical Society; manuscript and library staff, New York State Museum and Library; Gary Reynolds, Newark Museum; Rosa Johnston, Northfield Historical Society; Jerry M. Bloomer, R.W. Norton Gallery of Art; Judy Moore, Cheryl Liebold, Gail Rawson, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Barbara B. Buff, Museum of the City of New York; Ann Slimmon, Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design; Raymond V. Shepard, Jr., Old Economy Village; Ellen Doney, Priscilla Grace, Jack Lindsey, Beth Rhoads, and Peg Quigley, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Kathleen Luhrs, Pierpont Morgan Library; Katherine H. Prown; Donald Quinn; Carol Hughes, Frank S. Schwartz and Sons; reference and interlibrary loan staff, Swem Library, College of William and Mary; Elizabeth Burke and Karen Pappaneau, Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield; William Johnson, Walters Art Gallery; Mrs. Jeannette Whitebook Lasker; John Krill, Anne-Marie Schaaf, Karol Schmiegel, and Neville Thompson, Winterthur Museum; Sally Fritag, Worcester Art Museum; Helen Cooper and Paula Friedman, Yale Art Gallery. I would also like to express my thanks to my friends and family for their encouragement.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

### Illustration

1. William Irby by Trott and Lovett. Oil on canvas, 1793. Private collection, by courtesy the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Research Files.
2. Elizabeth Irby by Trott and Lovett. Oil on canvas, 1793. Private collection, by courtesy of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Research Files.
3. Thomas White by Benjamin Trott. Watercolor on ivory, c. 1800-1820. Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.
4. Peregrine Wroth by Trott. Watercolor on ivory, 1806. Location unknown. Reproduced in H. Wehle, American Miniatures, 1730-1850.
5. Nicholas Biddle by Trott. Watercolor on ivory, c. 1811. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Biddle, Jr.
6. Julia Ann McWhorter by Trott. Watercolor on ivory, 1823. Reproduced in Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society.
7. Lewis Adams by Trott. Watercolor on ivory, 1828. Courtesy of Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, bequest of Herbert L. Pratt, Class of 1895.
8. George Washington by Trott. Watercolor on ivory, c. 1836. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union.



## ABSTRACT

Benjamin Trott (c. 1770-1843) was an American-born miniature painter who worked in a number of cities along the eastern seaboard during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Although Trott has traditionally been associated with Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully, an exploration of his patronage suggests that Stuart had a far more important role in shaping Trott's career than has previously been assumed. I propose that Stuart provided Trott with the access to Philadelphia's mercantile elite that enabled him to build an extensive network of patrons. Trott's other sources of commissions--his alliances with other artists and his association with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts--helped him sustain a career in Philadelphia as a miniature artist for almost twenty years.

The position of Trott's sitters in Philadelphia society and culture is significant. Recent research has shown that the established mercantile elite had largely lost political control of the city and state by 1800, and others had eclipsed many of these people economically. Yet this portion of the mercantile elite maintained close relations, including kinship and business ties, that had a profound effect upon Philadelphia's cultural life in the nineteenth century.

One must consider whether Trott's miniatures served as a device of codification of status among Philadelphia's established elite. The audience for a completed Trott miniature was quite small; unlike oil portraits, miniatures were probably only seen by family members or close friends. Most of Trott's miniatures that I have seen do not employ iconography or props that allude to the wealth or status of the patron. Further, most of Trott's male sitters are wearing the standard attire of the period. No ornaments or props provide any hints about the lives of the sitters, and the sitters' status is not differentiated by clothing. Perhaps the rather aristocratic poses of the sitters, which convey a sense of superiority, are the most telling clue. One could interpret the poses, lack of props, and undifferentiated clothing as components of emblems of status among a group of people who would be virtually the only viewers of a miniature portrait.

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PROGRAM IN AMERICAN STUDIES

THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

BENJAMIN TROTT: MINIATURE PAINTER

## INTRODUCTION

Miniatures were one of the many forms of representation of individuals in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America. Like other forms of portraiture, miniatures were interpretive in their depiction of individuals. The interplay between the desire of the sitter or patron and the intention and skill of the artist is one of the factors that shaped a portrait. Scale, medium, cost, availability, and audience also affected the way an image appeared. Evolving ideas about representation and the appropriate medium--oil portraits, miniatures, prints, and silhouettes, for example--affected portraiture. Changing patterns of consumption and varying relations with England and other countries also influenced the appearance of images produced in the colonies and the young republic.

American miniatures were derived primarily from British antecedents. The miniature as a form of portraiture originated in the court of Henry VIII and increased in popularity in England during the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, miniatures were commissioned not only by England's nobility, but by its gentry and others. English artists, English-trained American artists, a few French

artists, and native-born and trained artists produced miniatures used in America. The connections between British and American miniature portraiture, including the manifestations of the two countries' changing political, economic, social, intellectual, and cultural relationships, require further exploration.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the uses and attributes of portrait miniatures in America changed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although the medium and support--usually watercolor on ivory--remained the same, the size of miniatures increased over time. During the mid- to late eighteenth century, miniatures were generally oval in form and less than one and a half inches in height. They were often encased in gold locket and carried or worn as jewelry. Miniatures produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were also usually oval, but larger than their predecessors. Some owners wore or carried their miniatures, while others had them mounted in rectangular frames. By the 1820s and 1830s, many miniatures were rectangular in form and most were housed in rectangular frames; some continued to be housed in leather cases. The size of miniatures (rarely more than four to five inches and often less than two inches in height) suggests that even when they were hung in the more public areas of a home, such

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Strong, Artists of the Tudor Court: The Portrait Miniature Rediscovered, 1520-1620 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), pp. 9, 12.

as a parlor, their small format and subtle medium did not call attention to their presence. The popularity of miniatures declined dramatically with the advent of photography in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Although the use of miniatures and its change over time requires further exploration, some generalizations can be made. It appears that miniatures were a very private form of portraiture. Like other portraits, miniatures were often executed at times of life passage--birth, marriage, death, and journeys. A large number of miniatures produced during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries appear to have been commissioned at the time of engagement or marriage. The audience for a miniature seems to have been far smaller than for a large-scale painting.<sup>3</sup>

Miniatures were often almost as costly as oil portraits. Between 1770 and 1775, Charles Willson Peale charged £5.5.0 for miniatures and from £5.5.0 for a "head-sized" oil portrait to £22.1.0 for a "whole-length" oil portrait. Benjamin Trott raised his price for miniatures from \$30 to \$40 in 1806; he charged \$60 from about 1811 to

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Strickler, American Portrait Miniatures in the Worcester Art Museum Collection (Worcester, Ma.: Worcester Art Museum, 1989), pp. 13-15.

<sup>3</sup> Margaretta Lovell, "The Terre Inconnue of the Colonial Face," (Review of Wayne Craven, Colonial American Portraiture and Richard Saunders and Ellen Miles, American Colonial Portraits), Winterthur Portfolio 24: 1 (Spring, 1989), pp. 72, 74.

1813. Thomas Sully charged \$15 to \$20 for miniatures between 1801 and 1806; after his arrival in Philadelphia he ceased production of miniatures and charged \$40 to \$60 for oil portraits in 1808 and 1809. The relatively high cost of miniatures was probably due to the skill needed to execute a portrait and, perhaps, to the limited number of practitioners. One advantage of miniatures over larger portraits was that miniatures could be produced in a relatively short period of time. Patrons chose to spend a large amount of money on a form of portraiture that few people would see.<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin Trott (c. 1770-1843) was a miniature painter who worked in many cities along the eastern seaboard of the United States during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Although he painted over 150 portraits that to date have been identified, Trott has received only limited

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<sup>4</sup> References to the cost of miniatures can be found in a number of sources. Charles Coleman Sellars, Portraits and Miniatures by Charles Willson Peale (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1952), p. 19. William Dunlap, The Diary of William Dunlap, 1766-1839 (New York: The New York Historical Society, 1931) 2: 365-366. Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Picturesque United States of America 1811, 1812, 1813 being a Memoir of Paul Svinin, Russian diplomatic officer, artist, and author, containing copious excerpts from his account of his travels in America (New York; William Rudge, 1930), p. 351; Anne-Marie Schaaf kindly brought Svinin's comments to my attention. Monroe Fabian, Mr. Sully: Portrait Painter (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), pp. 47-48. Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, The Life and Works of Thomas Sully (1783-1872) (Philadelphia, 1921; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), pp. 83-185, 327-328. For references to the speed of production of miniatures, see Roy Strong, The English Renaissance Miniatures (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983), p. 11.

attention from researchers. I found very little information on Trott when I began to research a signed Trott miniature of Philadelphia merchant Thomas Harrison White that Independence National Historical Park acquired in 1986. My return to graduate school provided an opportunity to conduct the research needed to broaden knowledge of Trott and his work.

Benjamin Trott worked in alliance with a number of artists. He has traditionally been closely associated with Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully in Philadelphia. Trott painted a large number of sitters or immediate relatives of sitters who were also the subject of bust-length oil portraits by Stuart or Sully. Although Trott's relationships with these and other artists are an important element in his career, I believe that Trott's reliance upon some of them for patronage has been over-emphasized. I propose that Trott received commissions in two ways--from other artists and, especially as his career progressed, from networks of sitters.

My inquiry will focus upon Trott's Philadelphia commissions, ca. 1800 to 1820. Trott's relations with his sitters is crucial to an understanding of his career. A large number of his sitters were members of Philadelphia's elite; the nature of this elite will be discussed in chapter four. The strong familial and business ties among many of the sitters suggest Trott obtained commissions based on

recommendations of previous sitters. Late in his career Trott noted, "You can't expect to succeed in a moment in any place without the strong and particular recommendations for the want of which you must exercise patience, perseverance, and Industry . . . ." <sup>5</sup> I will investigate the Philadelphia sitters in detail in order to extrapolate information about Trott's commissions. My research shows that Trott's sitters in other cities appear to have been of similar status as his Philadelphia patrons. Indeed, some of them may have been related to Philadelphia sitters. <sup>6</sup>

Trott's relationship to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts is another important element in his career. He taught and exhibited at the Society of American Artists; the works he showed at the Society's exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts between 1811 and 1814 were critically well-received. He painted a number of Philadelphians who were closely associated with the Academy. Further, Trott painted or corresponded with men involved in similar institutions in Baltimore and New York City.

Trott's involvement in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which I will discuss in greater detail in the later chapters, is crucial to an understanding of his

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<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Trott to A. Wolcott, 2 January 1839, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, HSP).

<sup>6</sup> Members of two extended families (Gratz/Etting and Shippen/Livingston) may have had their portraits painted by Trott in different cities.



career. His teaching appointments and participation in exhibitions provided ample access to other artists and their work. Trott's involvement with the Academy also suggests that he may have been perceived by both artists and patrons as a more prominent figure than scholars have typically portrayed him. Significantly, Trott's participation in the Academy may have facilitated commissions.

Information about Trott is scattered among a range of sources. Although there are few dated Trott miniatures and limited manuscript materials related to him, biographical dictionaries do contain some useful information. William Dunlap's (1766-1839) Diary and History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design of the United States provide much of the information about Trott and his artistic milieu. Although Dunlap's Diary and History are remarkable accounts by a contemporary artist, one must always take into account Dunlap's relationships with the artists he describes. Also, much of the information in Dunlap's work is difficult to verify.<sup>7</sup>

The limited publications on American miniatures and the infrequent references to miniatures in more comprehensive publications on American painting reflect the lack of research on American miniature artists. A number of

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<sup>7</sup> William Dunlap, The Diary of William Dunlap, 1766-1839. William Dunlap, History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States (1834; reprint ed., New York: George Scott, 1918).

articles, books, and exhibition catalogs published during the first three decades of the twentieth century provide much of the information about miniatures. Anne Hollingsworth Wharton's Heirlooms in Miniature (1902) was one of the earliest contributions to miniature scholarship. Jeannette Whitebook conducted extensive research on Trott and wrote the entry in the Dictionary of American Biography. Her work relied heavily on Dunlap's. An exhibition of miniatures at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1927 and a related book summarized much of the documentation on miniaturists, including Trott.

The burst of miniature scholarship in the first decades of the twentieth century appears to have had two sources. The attention paid to miniatures--evinced by books, articles, and exhibitions--parallels the increased interest in American decorative and, to some extent, fine arts generally. The opening of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1924) and the Girl Scout Loan Exhibition in New York City (1929) are two landmark events in the history of American decorative arts that occurred in the 1920s. Numerous other public institutions and private collectors formed or greatly expanded their collections or exhibitions of American decorative arts. Further, a revival in miniature painting occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and miniature painting groups were formed in a number of cities. Interestingly, the 1926

annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters (founded 1901) at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts included both contemporary and historical miniatures.<sup>8</sup>

Interest in the history of American miniature painting continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Exhibitions at the Carolina Art Association (1936 and 1937) and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1941) included primarily regional sitters. Theodore Bolton and Ruel Tolman produced a number of articles on Trott and other miniature artists in the 1940s. Their work on Trott, though described by the authors as "a survey rather than a complete investigation,"<sup>9</sup> remains the backbone of Trott scholarship. Bolton integrated Dunlap's writings with information from period directories and other primary sources; he also noted documented Trott miniatures that he had discovered. Bolton

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<sup>8</sup> The history of American decorative arts collecting is summarized in Wendy Cooper, In Praise of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), pp. 4-13. For a chronology of miniature exhibitions, see Ruel Tolman, The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone (1777-1807) (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1958), p. x. For the revival in miniature painting, see the Catalog of the Third Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Society of Miniature Painters (Philadelphia: McLees Gallery, 1904), n.p. I would like to extend my thanks to Robin Bolton-Smith of the National Museum of American Art for her thoughts on the development of interest in historical miniature painting.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore Bolton, "Benjamin Trott: An Account of His Life and Work," Art Quarterly 7:4 (Autumn, 1944), p. 257. Theodore Bolton and Ruel Pardee Tolman, "A Catalogue of Miniatures by or Attributed to Benjamin Trott," Art Quarterly 7:4 (Autumn, 1944), pp. 278-290.

and Tolman provided a comprehensive list of miniatures which they had located by 1944 and noted their thoughts on the attributions of many works to Trott. Groce and Wallace appear to have relied on Bolton's work for their biographical entry on Trott.

Miniature scholarship has continued to grow during the last three decades. With the exception of the National Museum of American Art (1974), however, there have been few comprehensive loan exhibitions. Monographs have been published on Anson Dickinson (1983) and Charles Fraser (1983). Publications of museums' miniature collections include the Nelson-Atkins Gallery (1971), the Norton Museum (1976), the Gibbes Art Gallery (1984) and the Worcester Art Museum (1989). Catalogues raisonnés and other recent compilations related to more prominent artists, such as Thomas Sully, provide additional data. The scholarship of the last three decades has resulted in the reattribution of many miniatures, more accurate biographies of miniature artists, and a clearer sense of the milieu of miniature painters at the turn of the nineteenth century. Exhibition and publication work in progress suggests that despite the lack of attention previously afforded miniatures, we can look forward to strong miniature scholarship in the 1990s.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mona Dearborn, Anson Dickinson: The Celebrated Miniature Painter, 1779-1852 (Hartford, Ct.: The Connecticut Historical Society, 1983). Martha Severens, Charles Fraser

This thesis will summarize what is known about Trott's life and works, discuss his relationships with other artists, and explore his patronage in Philadelphia. Trott's biography and a brief discussion of his career will comprise the first chapter, while his documented works and a discussion of his oeuvre will be the subject of the second chapter. I will explore Trott's alliances with other artists in the third chapter. Trott's Philadelphia commissions and a discussion of his milieu in Philadelphia in the first decades of the nineteenth century will comprise the fourth chapter. Finally, I will assess Gilbert Stuart's role in Trott's career and its ramifications in the conclusion. Known and attributed Trott works are listed in Appendix A; directory listings and other information documenting Trott's whereabouts are noted in Appendix B.

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(Charleston, S.C.: Gibbes Art Gallery, 1983). Graham Reynolds, The Starr Collection of Miniatures in the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery (Kansas City, Mo.: Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, 1971). R.W. Norton Art Gallery, Portrait Miniatures in Early American History: 1750-1840 (Shreveport, La.: R.W. Norton Art Gallery, 1976). Martha Severens, The Miniature Portrait Collection of the Carolina Art Association (Charleston, SC: Gibbes Art Gallery, 1984). Susan Strickler, American Portrait Miniatures in the Worcester Art Museum Collection. Lawrence Park, Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Work (New York: William E. Rudge, 1926). Monroe Fabian, Mr. Sully: Portrait Painter (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1983).

## CHAPTER I: BENJAMIN TROTT'S BIOGRAPHY

Biographical information on Benjamin Trott must be examined before assessments of his relations with sitters and other artists can be made. Trott lived and painted in many cities along the eastern seaboard between the early 1790s and 1843, yet his working dates in these cities are difficult to discern. Published biographical information on Trott is scanty and, in some cases, difficult to verify with documentary materials.

Trott was born about 1770 in Boston, Massachusetts. Although one source states that he began his career in 1791 in New York City, little is known about his work there.<sup>11</sup> Other evidence suggests that he began his career painting

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<sup>11</sup> Biographical information is provided in George Groce and David Wallace, A Biographical Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 636-637 and Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1964), 9: 648-649. Trott's obituary lists Boston as his place of birth. National Intelligencer, November 27, 1843. A Benjamin Trott appears as the head of a household in the 1790 Massachusetts Census; two free white females are recorded in the Dorchester, Massachusetts household. George Trott's Boston household consisted of a free white male over sixteen (in addition to himself), three free white males over sixteen, and one free white female. The 1789 Boston Directory lists no Trotts. The 1796 and 1798 directories list George Trott, a tobacconist and truss maker, on South Bennet Street. Trott does not appear in New York City directories during this period.

bust-length oil portraits with another artist, William Lovett (1773-1801), in Virginia in 1793. Two portraits are signed "Trott and Lovett" on the reverse; seven others have been attributed to the two artists on the basis of these works. This collaboration produced the only known large-scale oil paintings by Trott. It is possible that Trott worked in New York City before moving to Virginia.<sup>12</sup>

Trott worked in Boston in late 1793. He advertised his drawing school and his miniature painting skills in the November 13, 20, and 27 issues of the Columbian Centinel:

A Drawing School, Will be opened by Mr. Trott, at Mr. Dearborn's Hall, in Milk Street, as soon as a sufficient number of pupils apply; to be attended on Thursdays and Saturdays, in the afternoon, by

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<sup>12</sup> Trott's Virginia work is the subject of research in progress by Virginius Hall and David Meschutt; I would like to thank them for sharing their research on Trott and Lovett. The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts reference files and Catalog of American Portraits record many of these works. I will discuss the oil portraits, which have some elements in common with Trott's miniatures, in more detail in chapter 2.

Chronicler William Dunlap suggested that Trott painted a few oil portraits in New York in the 1820s. William Dunlap, History 2: 101. None of these are known. Trott is listed in the New York City Directories in 1829-1830 and 1830-1831 as a "portrait and miniature painter" and as a "portrait and min. painter" in 1831-1832 and 1832-1833. An 1838 Baltimore newspaper article implied that Trott also worked in oils. The Monument, July 28, 1838.

which opportunity, parents may have their Children instructed in the pleasing and useful accomplishment, without interrupting the exercises of their other schools. From the generous support which such institutions meet in the cities of Philadelphia and New York, it may be presumed this attempt will not be suffered to languish in the centre of the polite town of Boston. For terms apply to the Maker, at the building formerly the Massachusetts Bank, or to Mr. Dearborn, in Milk Street.

Miniature Painting, and Devices in Hair, are done by Mr. Trott, with his best efforts to merit the approbation of his employers, none of whom will be expected to pay for a picture if not drawn to entire satisfaction.<sup>13</sup>

Trott's return from Virginia may have prompted this advertisement. It is not known how long Trott resided in Boston.

Trott painted miniatures in New York City in 1794; he may have worked there late in 1793. His work included miniature watercolor on ivory copies of some of Gilbert Stuart's portraits. Trott's miniatures from this period closely resemble Stuart's portraits. Indeed, some

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<sup>13</sup> Boston Columbian Centinel, November 13, 20, and 27, 1793. Davida Deutsch kindly brought this reference to my attention.



miniatures traditionally attributed to Stuart may be the work of Trott. I will discuss this body of work in greater detail in succeeding chapters. Trott apparently followed or accompanied Stuart to Philadelphia in 1794 and probably worked there from 1794 to 1797. He appears to have returned to New York City late in 1797, but left soon thereafter following an outbreak of yellow fever. He is believed to have painted miniatures with Elkanah Tisdale in Albany in 1798 before returning to New York City in 1798 or 1799.<sup>14</sup>

Trott apparently worked in Philadelphia again from 1802

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<sup>14</sup> Biographical information for this period is noted in Groce and Wallace, Biographical Dictionary, pp. 636-637; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 177; Dunlap, History, 2: 98; and Malone, Dictionary of American Biography, 9: 648-649. Trott's advertisement in a Boston newspaper (see note 8) suggests that he was in that city late in 1793 and may not have arrived in New York City until 1794.

Primary materials do little to clarify Trott's whereabouts in the late 1790s. He is not listed in the 1789-1797 New York City Directories; he is listed as "miniature-painter" at 1 Wall Street in 1798 and at 6 John Street in 1799. He does not appear in the Philadelphia directories until 1804. Trott may have been in Philadelphia in late 1795 or early 1796; see Edward Shippen to Margaret Shippen Arnold, January 20, 1796, cited in Lewis Burd Walker, "Life of Margaret Shippen, Wife of Benedict Arnold," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 26 (1902): 225-226, 255.

William Dunlap states that Trott worked with Elkanah Tisdale in Albany, New York, about 1796. Dunlap, History, 1: 354. Groce and Wallace and Malone suggest 1798 as an Albany working date instead. Neither documentary sources nor miniatures done by Trott or Tisdale in Albany confirm Dunlap's assertions; see chapter 3. Another source places Trott in Baltimore in 1796. Mantle Fielding, Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers, Glenn Opitz, ed. (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Apollo, 1986), p. 949.

to 1804.<sup>15</sup> Although he is listed in the Philadelphia directories for 1805 (see Appendix B), William Dunlap noted that "in 1805 Mr. Trott visited the western world beyond the mountains, travelling generally on horseback, with the implements of his art in his saddle-bags. This was a lucrative journey."<sup>16</sup> Trott worked in Lexington, Kentucky, during this period. Five miniatures associated with this journey are known.<sup>17</sup> It is not known if Trott painted in any other areas during this western trip.

Trott worked in Philadelphia from 1806 to 1819. Dunlap noted that in 1806 Trott "finds sufficient employment here, & has raised his priced from 30 to 40 dolls."<sup>18</sup> In 1807 Trott began his association with Thomas Sully, sharing a

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<sup>15</sup> Dunlap, History, 2: 99. William Dunlap, Diary 2: 527. Groce and Wallace, Biographical Dictionary, pp. 636-637. Dunlap's statements that the engraver David Edwin recalled that he and Trott were neighbors of Gilbert Stuart's near "the falls of the Schuylkill" during Philadelphia's yellow fever outbreak in 1798 has been discounted by Dickson, who suggests 1802 instead. H.E. Dickson, "A Misdated Episode in Dunlap," Art Quarterly 9:1 (Winter, 1946): 33-36. See Appendix B for Philadelphia city directory notations for Trott.

<sup>16</sup> Dunlap, History, 2: 99.

<sup>17</sup> Abner Le Grand, John Hite Morton, Charles Wilkins, William Wilkins, and Henry Clay are sitters associated with this trip. Arthur F. Jones and Bruce Weber, The Kentucky Painter (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky, 1981), pp. 23, 24, 32. Theodore Bolton, "Benjamin Trott: An Account of His Life and Work," p. 263. Lexington's First Directory (1806), which was compiled in 1805, lists Charles Wilkins as a merchant on Main Street. The numerous merchants and scarcity of artists listed in the directory suggests the appeal of this area to artists.

<sup>18</sup> Dunlap, Diary, 2: 365-366.

studio with him at Sixth and Minor Streets shortly after Sully moved to Philadelphia in December, 1807. Trott also shared housing with the Sullys from 1808 to 1810, during Thomas Sully's residence in Philadelphia as well as during his trip to London. Trott continued to be listed in the Philadelphia directory as a "miniature-painter" (see Appendix B), though he probably made at least one trip to Baltimore during this period. His portraits of Baltimoreans Miriam Etting Myers (1787-1808, Maryland Historical Society, National Museum of American Art, American Jewish Historical Society) and Edward Johnson Coale (1776-1832, Maryland Historical Society) compare favorably in terms of style to his Philadelphia work during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

Trott exhibited his work with the Society of American Artists in Philadelphia and taught drawing classes there. His work was exhibited annually at the Society's shows at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1811 to 1814. Trott's involvement in these two closely allied organizations provided him with the opportunity for extensive exposure to fellow artists, their work, and--not insignificantly--to Philadelphia's leading art patrons. He declined the offer of election to the first group of Academicians, the governing organization of artists

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<sup>19</sup> Fabian, Mr. Sully: Portrait Painter, 1983), pp. 11-13, 53. Dunlap, History 2: 100, 252, 266-267, 365-366. See Appendix B.

appointed by the board of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, in 1812. I will examine this decision more closely in a later chapter.<sup>20</sup>

Trott moved to the South, likely in pursuit of commissions, in 1819. William Dunlap's November, 19, 1819, and April 9, 1820, diary entries place Trott in Charleston. Dunlap notes:

In 1819, when passing through Philadelphia, I found Trott preparing to go south, Philadelphia had become too cold for him. . . . He went to Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>21</sup>

Trott also visited Norfolk, Virginia during that year. Although some surviving miniatures can be associated with Trott's trip to the Charleston area, none from Norfolk have

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<sup>20</sup> Edward J. Nygren, "The First Art Schools at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 95: 2 (April, 1971): 232. Bolton, "Benjamin Trott," p. 267. Dunlap, History, 2: 98. Anna Wells Rutledge, Cumulative Record of Exhibition Catalogues of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1955), p. 232. For a review of the 1812 exhibit, see G.M., "Review of the Second Annual Society of Artists and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Exhibition," The Port Folio (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep), 7 (June 15, 1812): 17-31. Trott's allegiance to the Society of American Artists may have led him to refuse the appointment. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art, p. 177. Lillian Miller, Patrons and Patriots: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 107.

<sup>21</sup> Dunlap, Diary, 2: 489, 527. Dunlap, History, 2: 100.

been found.<sup>22</sup>

Trott appears to have returned to Philadelphia once again in 1820. William Dunlap notes:

[Trott] returned to Philadelphia [from Charleston], and was generally found there until he made a mysterious marriage; and not having the effrontery to announce as "Mrs. Trott," a person whose origin he was ashamed of, he, after suffering for some time, took refuge in New Jersey, whose laws offered him a release in consequence of a limited term of residence, and he resided for some years in obscurity at Newark.<sup>23</sup>

The last entry for Benjamin Trott in the Philadelphia city directories is for 1819 (see Appendix B).

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<sup>22</sup> Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art, p. 177. Groce and Wallace, Biographical Dictionary, pp. 636-637.

<sup>23</sup> Dunlap, History, 2: 100-101. Trott's endorsements of Joseph Delaplaine's National Gallery of Portraits, dated May 7 and July 27, 1819, help pinpoint his dates of residence in Philadelphia that year. They are included in Delaplaine's advertisement in the City of Washington [D.C.] Gazette, September 7, 1819; courtesy Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts research files. Groce and Wallace state that Trott did not return to Philadelphia until 1823. Groce and Wallace, Biographical Dictionary, pp. 636-637. Other researchers state that he returned in 1820. Theodore Bolton and Ruel Pardee Tolman, "A Catalogue of Miniatures by or Attributed to Benjamin Trott," Art Quarterly 7:4 (Autumn, 1944): 268. Dunlap infers 1819 or 1820 as a return date. Trott is not listed in the Federal Population Census of 1820 for Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, South Carolina, or New York. If one accepts Dunlap's references to Trott's Charleston dates, 1820 is most likely the date of his return to Philadelphia.

Trott's work in the 1820s and 1830s has received little attention; his activities during this period are documented primarily by William Dunlap. Trott can be placed in Newark, New Jersey, in 1823 through a dated miniature. He appears to have painted in New York City from 1828 to 1833, and to have worked again in Boston in 1834. A number of miniatures painted in New York City during this period have been identified, but no oil portraits have been found. No surviving miniatures have been associated with Trott's Boston stay.<sup>24</sup>

Trott resided in Baltimore from 1838 to 1841. A July 28, 1838, Baltimore newspaper article describes Trott's work in that city. He wrote letters from Baltimore in January and September, 1839, and is listed in the Baltimore directories during 1840 and 1841. He may have lived in Baltimore both before and after these dates. Only one of

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<sup>24</sup> Trott traditionally has been placed in Newark (1823), New York (1829), Boston (1833), and Baltimore (1838-1841). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art, p. 177; Dunlap, History, 2: 101. The dated Newark miniature, Mrs. Alexander Macomb (née Julia Ann McWhorter), is in the collection of the New-York Historical Society. Trott does not appear in the Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., or Charleston directories during the years 1824 to 1829. His signed and dated miniature of New York merchant Lewis Adams (Mead Art Museum, Amherst College) suggests that he was working in New York City in 1828 (see chapter 2). Trott is listed in the 1829-1833 New York City Directories and in the 1834 Stimson's Boston City Directory. John Vanderlyn refers to Trott's presence in New York City in his November 6, 1830, letter to his nephew, John Vanderlyn. Cited in Harold F. Dickson, John Wesley Jarvis, American Painter, 1780-1840 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1949), p. 304.

his works from this period has been identified. Trott died in Washington, D.C., on November 27, 1843.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Trott is not listed in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore (see exception), Washington, D.C., or Charleston directories in the late 1830s and early 1840s. He is mentioned in an article in the Baltimore Monument, July 28, 1838. Trott wrote two letters from Baltimore in 1839. Trott to A. Wolcott, January 2, 1839 and Trott to Robert Gilmor, September 12, 1839, HSP. "B. Trott" is listed as a portrait and miniature painter in the 1840 to 1841 Baltimore Directory. His obituary appeared in the National Intelligencer, 29 November 1843. See Appendix B for complete directory listings.

## CHAPTER II: DOCUMENTED WORKS BY TROTT

Benjamin Trott painted portraits for almost half a century. Although it is not surprising that an artist's style would evolve over such an extended period of time, the range of Trott's styles during his career is extraordinarily large. The influences of specific artists, Trott's desire to experiment with techniques, and the changes in the field of miniature painting as a whole during the period all probably affected Trott's varied styles and techniques. Although I will discuss the possible influences and impetuses for Trott's stylistic development in more detail in later chapters, I will address the sum of these factors here. The small number of documented Trott portraits that have been identified to date provide an adequate basis for a model of Trott's stylistic development.<sup>26</sup>

In this chapter I will describe documented works by Trott and interpret information about their documentation. Documentation ranges from Trott's signature on works to manuscript references to commissions. Documented portraits

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<sup>26</sup> Surviving Trott works show an unevenness in quality over time rather than a progressive development of skills. I therefore use the term "styles" rather than "style" to begin to define Trott's oeuvre.



place Trott perhaps in Virginia (May, 1793), Philadelphia (1796, c. 1804, 1806, c. 1811), Newark (1823), New York (1828), and Baltimore (c. 1840-1841). These portraits provide a foundation for attributing other works to Trott based on style and, to a lesser extent, geographic location. Combined with information about his relationships with other artists, the documented works make it possible to assess Trott's oeuvre.

1. William Irby and Elizabeth Irby.

A pair of oil portraits may be the earliest known works by Trott. Benjamin Trott and William Lovett probably painted William Irby (1752-1811, private collection) and Elizabeth Irby (1771-1820, private collection) in oil on canvas in 1793 (see illustrations 1 and 2). The bust portraits of the Irbys show limited modelling of facial features, relatively planar surfaces, and somewhat unskilled handling of oil paints. The details and coloration of the sitters' clothing are precisely rendered. The nature of the apparent joint commission of Trott and Lovett is unclear. Other than the modelling of facial features, the oil portraits have little in common stylistically with the late 1790 miniatures attributed to Trott.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The following inscriptions in oil were noted on the reverse: "Wm Irby (son of Jno./ Irby of Sussex County) was/ born 29th Octr 1793 by Trott/ & Lovett" and "Elizabeth Irby/ Daughter of Thomas R./ Williams of Nottoway County/was born 25th Septr 1771/Painted by Trott & Lovett 29 May 1793." The

## 2. Edward Shippen

Trott painted Pennsylvania Chief Justice Edward Shippen in miniature in 1796. Shippen wrote his daughter:

I have lately, at the request of your Sister, got my picture taken by one Mr. Stewart [sic], who is said to have been eminent in London; it is thought to be a strong likeness. I have therefore employed a Mr. Trot [sic], a young man of talents in that way, to take a copy of it in miniature. When finished I shall embrace the first good opportunity of transmitting it to you, as I flatter myself it will be an agreeable present.<sup>28</sup>

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portrait of Mrs. Irby is 23 3/8" x 19 1/8"; the portrait of Mr. Irby is 23 3/4" x 19 1/2". "Trott" is written on the reverse of the paintings in a hand not unlike that of the signature "Pinxit B. Trott" on the reverse of the miniature of Thomas H. White (Independence National Historical Park).

Although William Lovett's participation in the work is fairly certain, it is unclear whether the Benjamin Trott was indeed the Trott referred to in the inscription. The portrait of William Irby bears some stylistic similarity to a photograph of Lovett's portrait of John Greenwood (New-York Historical Society). As noted in the first chapter, a Mr. Trott advertised his drawing school, as well as his ability to do miniature painting, in Boston in November, 1793. Further, other Trotts resided in Virginia in the 1790s. Benjamin Trott's ability to paint oil portraits, however, is confirmed by some of his directory listings.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Shippen to Margaret Shippen Arnold, January 20, 1796. Shippen noted later that the miniature "was in the hands of Alexander Foster who was going to London and who had been kind enough to deliver it himself." Edward Shippen to Margaret Shippen Arnold, April 19, 1796. Both letters cited in Lewis Burd Walker, "Life of Margaret Shippen, Wife of Benedict Arnold," pp. 225-226, 255.

Although the miniature has not been located, the documentation helps shed light on Trott's early career.

### 3. George Washington

William Dunlap noted that Trott copied a Stuart painting of George Washington (1732-1799); Dunlap's comments imply a late 1790s date of execution. The miniature is unlocated. The numerous prints of Washington after the Trott miniature may have been taken from this portrait.<sup>29</sup>

### 4. James Williams

Trott probably painted James Williams (Cincinnati Art Museum) relatively early in his career. The particularly large head of Williams, in comparison to the surface area of the ivory, suggests a late 1790s or early 1800s date for this miniature. Trott's portrait of Peregrine Wroth (see #6) shares this feature. Trott probably provided the signature, "B. Trott" in pencil on the backing of the portrait. The tousled hair, undefined rear shoulder, and awkward rendering of the ear are the characteristic Trott features found in this work.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dunlap, History 2: 98. For a compilation of prints of Washington from Trott's miniatures, see Theodore Bolton and Ruel Tolman, "A Catalogue of Miniatures by or Attributed to Benjamin Trott," p. 284.

<sup>30</sup> The miniature is cited in Philadelphia Portraiture, 1740-1810 (Philadelphia: Frank S. Schwartz and Son, 1982), p. 13; Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, Heirlooms in Miniature

##### 5. Thomas Harrison White

Trott signed one of his portraits of Philadelphia merchant Thomas Harrison White (1779-1859, Independence National Historical Park) "pinxit B. Trott" (see illustration 3). The portrait was probably painted c.1800-1820. The oval miniature shows White in a three-quarters view, with his left shoulder carefully delineated in the foreground. White's tousled hair is shown in some detail. His gray-blue eyes are carefully rendered; the brow hairs are precisely drawn and the shading in and around the eyes is produced by varying depths of brown wash. The background is primarily white (uncolored ivory with some blue clouds), mostly at the level of the sitter's neck. Some shading behind White's shoulders is produced by cross-hatching. His right shoulder, in the background, is not carefully drawn and shows an awkward use of perspective. Many characteristics of this portrait--the exaggerated neckline, disheveled hair, arched eyebrows, poorly drawn ears, a mixture of blue wash and bare ivory in the background, and extensive crosshatching--typify Trott's work in Philadelphia during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup>

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(Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1902), p. 169; and Frederic F. Sherman, "Benjamin Trott, An Early American Miniaturist," Art in America 29 (July, 1941): 154. I have not compared the signature to those on other Trott works.

<sup>31</sup> The portrait is in the collection of Independence National Historical Park. A similar portrait of White, which descended in another branch of the White family, is at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (1948.7). White seems

A watercolor over graphite underdrawing was found under the ivory during conservation treatment of Independence National Historical Park's Thomas White. As it was adhered face-up to the reverse of the ivory, the translucency of the underdrawing would have allowed the artist to easily see the underdrawing while painting the miniature. However, the coloration of the underdrawing suggests that the artist may have used it as a device to enhance the work on ivory. The primary features of the portrait--the placement of the eyes and the definition of the cheekbones and chin--are identical in the underdrawing and the miniature. The rendering of most of the facial features is far simpler in the underdrawing and the brush strokes throughout the underdrawing are broader. Unlike the miniature, the drawing was painted on an oval surface that was not cut down at the sides. This first known underdrawing by Trott provides another opportunity to study his techniques.<sup>32</sup>

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younger in the latter version, and "Original" is noted in pencil on the reverse in a hand that appears to be different than the artist's. A missing portrait of Thomas White's wife--Maria Key (Heath) White (?-1814, married 1804)--was probably also painted by Trott, perhaps as a companion portrait to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's miniature of Thomas White. It is pictured in William White, Addenda to the Account of the Meeting of the Descendants of Colonel Thomas White (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1933), n.p. See Independence National Historical Park accession file #3528.

<sup>32</sup> I would like to thank Katherine Eirk, private conservator, for her observations about the underdrawing she discovered. Clifford Chieffo, Curator, Georgetown University Art Gallery, provided information on the multiple purposes of miniature underdrawings.

## 6. Peregrine Wroth

Trott painted Peregrine Wroth (1786-1879, location unknown) in 1806, while Wroth was a medical student at the University of Pennsylvania (see illustration 4). The portrait is inscribed on the reverse in what appears to be the sitter's handwriting: "Peregrine Wroth, painted by Mr. Trott, Sansom St., Philadelphia, Anno Domini 1806."<sup>33</sup> The large size of the sitter's head in proportion to the ivory suggests that this is indeed an early example of Trott's work. The sitter's tousled hair, undefined rear shoulder, and awkwardly placed ear are features the portrait shares with Trott's images of James Williams and Thomas White.

## 7. Nicholas Biddle

Trott painted Nicholas Biddle (1786-1844, collection Nicholas Biddle, Jr.) about 1811 (see illustration 5). Biddle gave the miniature to Jane M. Craig, his fiancée. She noted, "I did not even get a look at the dear little picture yesterday, tho' to tell the truth it gives me little satisfaction for the painter has just taken your features without giving them any of your expression."<sup>34</sup> She seems

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<sup>33</sup> For references to the inscription, see Harry Wehle, American Miniatures, 1730-1850 (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1927), p. 108; Frederick F. Sherman, "Benjamin Trott, An Early American Miniaturist," p. 152.

<sup>34</sup> Jane Craig to Nicholas Biddle, March 6, 1811. Cited in Nicholas Wainwright, "Nicholas Biddle in portraiture," The Magazine Antiques 108: 5 (November, 1975): 957.

to have modified her assessment of the miniature, as Biddle wrote later in the month, "I am glad to learn you are less dissatisfied with Trott's picture than you were at first."<sup>35</sup>

Trott's careful definition Nicholas Biddle's facial features contrasts sharply with his extraordinarily free handling of the brushwork in Biddle's coat. Trott used brown ink to outline the coat and waistcoat and white oil paint to render somewhat precisely Biddle's stock; graphite lines are barely visible beneath some of the brown outline of the coat. Although the lack of color or depth in Biddle's clothing helps draw attention to his face, it also gives the portrait the overall impression of an unfinished work. Biddle's facial features are emphasized with pink washes on his nose and cheeks, grey-blue undertones around his mouth, and well-defined brown hair. The careful rendering of Biddle's facial features, as well as the seriousness of his pose, most likely explains Jane Craig's reaction to the miniature.

8. Julia Ann McWhorter (Mrs. Alexander Macomb)

Trott painted Julia Ann McWhorter (1798-1847, New-York Historical Society) in 1823 (see illustration 6). The portrait is painted in a very different manner than other

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<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Biddle to Jane Craig, March 30, 1811. Cited in Wainwright, "Nicholas Biddle in portraiture," p. 957.

known Trott miniatures. Numerous fine lines were used to render the sitter's face and hair. Her dress, composed of relatively long brush strokes, is subtly shaded. More color is used in this portrait than in most Trott works. Atypically, Trott uses heavy stippling in the background of the rectangular portrait, with virtually no cross-hatching. The unusually tight brushwork and other elements of the portrait suggest a more realistic rendering of the sitter than is found in Trott's earlier works.<sup>36</sup>

#### 9. Lewis Adams

Trott's miniature of Lewis Adams (Mead Art Gallery, Amherst, Massachusetts) has a problematic history. It is inscribed on the reverse "Lewis Adams/Septemr 1828/By B. Trott" (see illustration 7). The signature compares favorably to that on the reverse of Independence National Historical Park's Thomas White and two Trott letters. Although one researcher doubted the date on the Adams miniature on the basis of the style of Adams' clothing, the resemblance of the signature to other Trott signatures and

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<sup>36</sup> The portrait is apparently inscribed "Painted in Newark in 1823;" this is not observable in the miniature's current housing. The sitter married Alexander J. Macomb in Newark, New Jersey in 1826. Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society (New Haven: published for the New-York Historical Society, 1974), p. 511. For the change of miniature formats from ovals to rectangles, see Susan Strickler, American Portrait Miniatures: The Worcester Art Museum Collection (Worcester, MA: Worcester Art Museum, 1989), p. 15.



Adams' presence in New York City in 1828 indicates that the miniature was probably painted by Trott at that time. This documentation suggests that Trott was working in New York City in 1828, a year earlier than researchers have previously believed.<sup>37</sup>

#### 10. George Washington

Trott painted a miniature of George Washington (Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union), signing the portrait "B. Trott" on the lower left (see illustration 8). A note accompanying the portrait states that it was painted about 1836, and the rectangular format of the miniature follows the conventions of that period. Trott provided his patron, John Parker, Sr., with a skillful copy of one of Stuart's likenesses of Washington, probably his Athenaeum bust. The heavy brown and blue cross-hatching in the background and the parallel lines defining the sitter's coat are some of the few clues about Trott's style at the time.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The portrait and signature of Lewis Adams are pictured in Bernard Cone, "Benjamin Trott--Yankee Miniature Painter," American Collector 9 (Oct. 1940): 8. For Trott's signature on manuscripts, see Trott to A. Wolcott, January 2, 1839, and Trott to Robert Gilmer, September 12, 1839, HSP. For reference to Adams' costume, see Theodore Bolton, "Benjamin Trott: An Account of His Life and Work," p. 271. Adams' life dates are not known.

<sup>38</sup> An unsigned document accompanying the miniature reads, "Miniature of Washington/painted by M<sup>r</sup> Trott - /from the original by Stuart/ in the Athenaeum - /copied about 1836. - / This was purchased of Mr. Trott by / Mr. John Parker Sen<sup>r</sup>."

### 11. George Washington

A miniature of Washington (private collection) after the Athenaeum portrait was probably painted during Trott's Baltimore residence, c. 1840-1841. The rectangular miniature shows a somewhat stilted rendering of Washington with heavy cross-hatching in the background. It bears some resemblance in format, style, and size to Trott's miniature of Washington noted above (#10) . The miniature has an incomplete signature on the verso, "Painted by/ B. Trot[t]/North East Corn[er]/Fayette & St. Pa[ul's]" which closely resembles the signatures on the versos of William Irby, Elizabeth Irby, and Thomas White.<sup>39</sup>

### Summary

Benjamin Trott painted in a number of styles throughout his career. If Trott indeed participated in the portrayal of Elizabeth Irby and William Irby in May, 1793, then the limited brushwork skills and relatively planar handling of

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. . ." The miniature is recorded as having passed through the hands of Parker's descendants, at least through 1864. The portrait was given to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union by a descendant of one of Washington's relatives. There is no history of when or where the donor acquired the piece. Mount Vernon has a second miniature of Washington, attributed to Trott, that differs markedly from any Trott works I have seen. Another miniature of Washington attributed to Trott is in a private collection.

<sup>39</sup> Trott is listed in the 1840-1841 Baltimore directory at the "cor. St. Paul and Fayette streets;" see Appendix B. I know this miniature only through a photograph.

features, with some modelling of the chins and eyes of the sitters, arguably serve as prominent stylistic attributes. Seven portraits of Virginians have been attributed to Trott and William Lovett on the basis of these paintings. The artists' modelling of facial features, particularly the eyes, bears some similarity to Trott's other work, such as Thomas White, Peregrine Wroth, and Lewis Adams. Two miniatures attributed to Trott, an unknown man (Manney collection) and Hannah Poland (Northfield Historical Society), perhaps some of his earliest works, also share some of the characteristics with the oil portraits.

The documentation for the portrait of Edward Shippen indicates that Trott copied Gilbert Stuart's portrait of the sitter. Miniatures attributed to Trott from this period, such as Mrs. James Greenleaf (unlocated) and Alexander James Dallas (Norton Art Gallery), support the conclusion that Trott's early miniatures included copies of full-scale portraits painted by Gilbert Stuart in the middle and late 1790s. Trott's renderings of unusually large heads in some of his portraits--James Williams and Peregrine Wroth, for example--suggest a less developed technique than is found in later works. This style may be indicative of Trott's working independent of large-scale portrait painters like Stuart or Thomas Sully.

Many of Trott's portraits of men during the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century have a distinctive

look. Thomas White (Independence National Historical Park) typifies this group. White's head is proportionately smaller than that of Williams or Wroth; this relatively life-like proportion suggests a more skilled hand. The frontal facial pose, wispy hair, insouciant expression, and elongated neck are characteristics these portraits share. Other portraits, such as Benjamin Chew Wilcocks (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Manney collection, and Winterthur Museum) and Benjamin Kintzing (Metropolitan Museum of Art), can be grouped with these miniatures. Trott's treatment of men believed to have been painted during his trip westward in 1805 share many features with the portraits painted in northeastern cities. However, his images of Charles Wilkins (Carnegie Museum of Art), Abner LeGrand (location unknown), and Henry Clay (private collection) do not convey the somewhat haughty air of many of his Philadelphia sitters of the period. Like much of Trott's work in the next decade, this group of portraits, ostensibly from his western trip, is difficult to date.

Many of Trott's works from the first decade of the nineteenth century are similar to the paintings of Thomas Sully in terms of the sitters' poses, expressions, and--to some extent--the artist's painting technique. Some portraits, such as John Jordan (Cincinnati Art Museum) and Charles Wilkins, show a two-dimensional quality and have larger heads in proportion to the rest of the image. Other

works, such as Thomas White and Peregrine Wroth, show the poses and freer quality characteristic of Sully. Yet Sully and Trott did not begin their association until 1808, after these two portraits were most likely commissioned. Sully's stylistic influence is thus difficult to determine.

Sully may have influenced Trott's later use of a looser style; Trott could have embraced Sully's style and technique as early as 1808, when the two artists began their association. Yet only a small number of Trott's portraits from the period show free brushwork and dynamic coloration. Trott's later works, which I will discuss below, have little in common technically or stylistically with Sully's portraits.

Trott's portrait of Nicholas Biddle exemplifies one of his many styles. The portrait, probably painted early in 1811, exhibits far freer brushwork than Trott's earlier portraits do. Biddle's facial features are somewhat tightly modelled and his hair is quite tousled, not unlike such early sitters as Thomas White and Peregrine Wroth. However, Trott's sketchy rendering of Biddle's clothing is a departure from his earlier techniques. Trott's portrait of Edward Johnson Coale (1776-1832, Maryland Historical Society) is painted in a style similar to Nicholas Biddle.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The miniature of Coale is housed in a period leather case with a companion portrait of his wife, Mary Anne Buchanan Coale, which I will discuss in more detail below. The styles

Trott's portraits of Philadelphia women during the first decade of the nineteenth century are quite different from his images of men. Maria K. White (? - 1814, location unknown), and Mary Catherine Sprogell (1777-1860, Philadelphia Museum of Art) are examples from this group of works. Mrs. Fox (Metropolitan Museum of Art), of nearby Swedesboro, New Jersey, serves as another example. The shading around the eyes and the adept modelling of facial features are elements the portraits share with Trott's images of men from the same decade. The female sitters' poses and expressions, however, are meeker and the eyes lack the heavy lids of the men. The backgrounds are heavily cross-hatched, a device which may have been used to offset the filmy white clothing of the sitters. By contrast, Trott's male sitters are depicted in dark coats and crisp white stocks. They stand out against the white and often pale blue backgrounds; cross-hatching is limited primarily to the area near the sitters' shoulders.

Trott painted a number of portraits of women c.1810-1820, utilizing very vibrant colors. Three sitters from this group--Rebecca Biddle (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Elizabeth Brooks (private collection), and Harriet Manigault

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of the portraits and the life dates of the sitters suggest that the portraits were taken c. 1810 to 1820, rather than during Trott's known period of Baltimore residence (1838-1841). The Coales, Baltimore residents, had strong familial ties to Philadelphia. Their portraits could have been painted in either city.

(private collection)--were Philadelphians; Baltimorean Mary Anne Buchanan Coale (1792-1866, Maryland Historical Society) had strong Philadelphia ties. High lace collars, brightly-colored sashes, scarves, or jewelry, and crisp, often white, clothing with a shiny finish are attributes these portraits share. Heavier cross-hatching or darker coloration of the background are other elements common to this group of portraits. Trott's portrayal of men and women differed throughout his career; it is particularly evident during this period.

Trott's portraits from the 1820s differed markedly in terms of style than his earlier likenesses. His portrait of Julia Ann McWhorter (1823) shows a precision of rendering, subtle shading, extensive coloration, and stippling, attributes that are not shared with the other works. Julia Ann McWhorter and Lewis Adams (1828) provide some of the limited documentation of Trott's whereabouts and work during the 1820s. His portraits of Lewis Adams, John Poinier (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design), Mr. Morse (Newark Museum), and Charles Wagner (Manney Collection) share a number of features: the sitters heads take up a relatively small portion of the image, yet they seem disproportionately large. Trott's treatment of the sitters' clothing, aside from some changes in fashion, is quite similar to his work during the first decade of the nineteenth century--the dark colors contrast sharply with

the pale backgrounds which have little cross-hatching. The relatively extensive coloration of Poinier's face, including much shading, is reminiscent of Trott's use of color in portraits such as Nicholas Biddle and Edward Coale. Julia Ann McWhorter, painted in 1823, has some of the same characteristics: pink cheeks and a limited use of cross-hatching on a light background.<sup>41</sup>

Trott's miniatures of George Washington (c. 1836, Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union and c. 1840-1841, private collection) are problematic portraits in terms of style. He apparently painted one for a specific patron after Gilbert Stuart's George Washington. Both portraits are likely deliberate copies of a work rather than interpretations of the sitter or his portrait. Trott's imitative style and technique provide good likenesses of Washington; the tightness of the brushwork is similar to the technique employed in his portraits from the 1820s. Trott's copies of Stuart's Washington exhibit a greater adeptness than his earlier copies, such as Mrs. Greenleaf.

Trott's oeuvre was affected by many factors. Stylistic parallels between Trott's work and that of Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, and a number of miniature artists are identifiable. In the following chapter, I will expand my analysis of the possible roles of specific artists in

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<sup>41</sup> Mr. Morse, whose portrait I know only through a photograph, seems to have the same qualities as the other three portraits.



shaping Trott's styles.

### CHAPTER III: TROTT'S ALLIANCES WITH OTHER ARTISTS

Benjamin Trott worked closely with a number of artists during his career. His relationships with specific artists must be examined in order to determine some of the possible influences upon Trott's various styles described in the previous chapter. I will argue that a number of artists had a demonstrable affect on Trott's styles. But stylistic influence is just a single effect among many that one artist can have on another.

Artists, for example, can provide access to patrons. By analyzing Trott's alliances with specific artists, it becomes possible to draw some conclusions regarding his relationship with artists in general, many of whom he knew through such organizations as the (Philadelphia) Society of American Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Similarly, an analysis of Trott's alliances with individual artists can shed new light on his relationships with specific patrons. I will examine the extent to which Trott's access to patrons was influenced by his relationship with Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully. The evidence suggests that Gilbert Stuart gave Trott initial access to the elite

in New York and Philadelphia, and likely provided him with artistic training. Although Sully appears to have provided some access to patrons in Philadelphia, this was in my view only one factor in Trott's success in that city.

1. William Lovett (1773-1801)

Trott may have worked with William Lovett on such joint commissions as the oil portraits of Mr. and Mrs. William Irby (see chapter 2). Although the possibility of collaboration requires further investigation before any conclusions can be drawn, some stylistic similarities between the later miniatures by William Lovett and Benjamin Trott can be noted. In his portrait of Thomas Hovey (c. 1800, Worcester Art Museum), Lovett employed extensive cross-hatching, particularly at the sitter's shoulders, in a manner not unlike Trott's. The miniatures of both artists suggest that Trott and Lovett each had difficulties in rendering the rear shoulder of sitters with frontal facial poses.

2. Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828)

Trott was allied with Gilbert Stuart in both New York City and Philadelphia. Trott appears to have worked in New York in 1794, preparing miniatures of works painted by Stuart. William Dunlap provides much of the information about Trott's relationship with Stuart. He notes that

Trott's "copies on ivory, with water colors, from Stuart's oil portraits, were good."<sup>42</sup> Dunlap describes their alliance in a comparison of Walter Robertson, who also worked with Stuart:

Robertson's manner was very singular and altogether artificial; all ages and complexions were of the same hue--and yet there was a charm in his coloring that pleased, in despite of taste. Robertson was employed very much in copying Stuart's portraits; and with his coloring, and Stuart's characteristic likenesses, he was at the pinnacle of his fame for a time. Stuart did not like that another, with another set of colors, should be mounted above him, on his shoulders; and for that reason, and the more natural coloring of Trott, preferred the latter, assisted him by advice, and recommended him.<sup>43</sup>

Virtually all the sitters painted by Trott who were also painted by Stuart resided in Philadelphia. William Dunlap's

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<sup>42</sup> Dunlap adds, "In 1793 he [Trott] painted a good miniature head, and practised [sic] successfully in New York when Gilbert Stuart arrived there from Dublin. . . ." and that Trott "followed or accompanied Stuart when he removed from New York to Philadelphia." Stuart moved to Philadelphia in 1794. William Dunlap, History 2: 98. The scarcity of Stuart miniatures suggests that Stuart had the ability but little interest in painting them.

<sup>43</sup> Dunlap, History, 2: 98.

assertions about Trott's work with Stuart in New York City are not substantiated by miniatures that have been found thus far.

Trott appears to have produced direct copies of a number of Stuart's portraits. Pennsylvania Chief Justice Edward Shippen noted in 1796 that he employed Trott to copy his portrait by Stuart. Trott probably executed his first copy of Stuart's Athenaeum portrait of George Washington (see chapter 2) in the late 1790s. Trott's miniature of Mrs. James Greenleaf (née Ann Penn Allen, 1769-1852, location unknown) bears a striking similarity to one of Stuart's portraits of her (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts). The pose, clothing, and setting are virtually identical. Trott's portrait of Alexander J. Dallas (1759-1817, Norton Gallery of Art) appears to be a copy of Stuart's portrait of the sitter (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts). Trott produced equally fluid yet technically different images of the sitters through the media of watercolor.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Trott completed the portrait of Shippen between January and April, 1796. Lewis Bird Walker, "Life of Margaret Shippen, Wife of Benedict Arnold," pp. 225, 226, 255. Mrs. James Greenleaf was painted three times by Stuart; James Greenleaf once. Lawrence Park, Gilbert Stuart: An Illustrated Descriptive List of His Works (New York, 1926), pp. 365-369. As Trott's portrait of Mrs. Greenleaf has not been located, my comments are based upon a photograph of the miniature. Philip Nicklin was painted by Stuart (Springfield Museum of Fine Arts) and Trott (Philadelphia Museum of Art), but the different ages and poses of the sitters in the two portraits of Philip Nicklin suggest that they were painted at different times and may represent different generations.

Trott's portraits of members of the Anthony family may have also been the products of commissions related to Stuart. Stuart's familial connection to the Anthony family likely facilitated the commissions; Joseph Anthony, Sr. (1738-1798), a sea captain and merchant, was an uncle of Gilbert Stuart and his first patron in Philadelphia. Stuart painted him three times in the late 1790s. He also painted Joseph Anthony, Jr. and his wife, Henrietta Hillegas Anthony (both, Metropolitan Museum of Art). Trott painted Joseph Anthony, Jr. or III (Yale University Art Gallery); Joseph Anthony, Sr. (ex. coll: Mead Art Gallery, Amherst College; destroyed by fire, 1947); and Henrietta Hillegas Nichols, Mrs. Joseph Anthony, Jr.'s sister (Yale University Art Gallery).<sup>45</sup>

Stuart appears to have had a strong influence both on Trott's style and on his commissions during the mid- to late 1790s. Trott's dramatic increase in artistic ability could very well have been the result of his work with Stuart. I will discuss Stuart's effect upon Trott's career as a whole in the last section of the thesis. It is possible, however,

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<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Anthony, the sister of Joseph Anthony, Sr., married Gilbert Stuart, Sr., in 1751. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Three Centuries of American Art, pp. 150-151. The lack of resemblance between the portraits of Joseph Anthony, Jr., by Stuart and Trott suggests that one of the sitters is misidentified. The sitter in the Trott miniature at Yale resembles Stuart's Joseph Anthony III (1786-1804), although the sitter appears too old to correspond with these life dates. Stuart painted Joseph Anthony, Jr. three times and Joseph Anthony III once. Park, Gilbert Stuart, pp. 106-109.

that Trott's relationship with Stuart was a symbiotic one. Trott's ability to paint miniatures, like that, apparently, of Walter Robertson, would have freed Stuart to paint more lucrative large-scale paintings, while still meeting his patrons' desires for miniature likenesses.

### 3. Elkanah Tisdale (1768-1835)

Elkanah Tisdale was a New England artist with whom Trott is believed to have been associated in Albany. Dunlap notes, "At the time of yellow fever in New York, two miniature painters, Trott and Tisdale, came to this city [Albany]; they took a room and painted some heads. This was about the year '96."<sup>46</sup> Tisdale worked in New York City during the 1790s, primarily as an engraver; by 1799, the two artists lived next door to one another.

Trott's work with Tisdale is problematic. First, the year 1798 is a more likely date for their Albany trip (see Chapter 1). No documentary sources, such as city directories, confirm the artists' stay in Albany. Further, no Trott or Tisdale miniatures can be clearly identified with their Albany residence. Yet some stylistic similarities between the miniatures of Trott and Tisdale, such as the relative stiffness in the sitters' poses,

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<sup>46</sup> Dunlap, History, 1: 354. Tisdale worked in Boston, Connecticut, and perhaps in New York City between 1800 and between 1800 and 1835. Donald C. O'Brien, "Elkanah Tisdale, Designer, Engraver and Miniature Painter," Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin 49:2 (Spring, 1984): 87-94.

limited employment color, and awkward use of perspective, suggest a connection between the two artists.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4. Thomas Sully (1783-1872)

Trott's patronage in Philadelphia has been traditionally linked to his work with Thomas Sully. Sully's role or roles in obtaining patrons for Trott are difficult to determine, given the lack of documentary evidence. Sully's works, however, are well-documented through his journals and account books. Some of Trott's miniatures of Sully's sitters apparently were painted at the same time as his oil portraits; others were not.

The evidence indicates that Trott painted miniatures successfully in Philadelphia prior to Sully's residence. He advertised in the Philadelphia directories as a "miniature painter" between 1804 and 1819. Dunlap notes that in 1806 "Trot [sic] finds sufficient employment here, & has raised his price from 30 to 40 dols," later adding that Trott "was then in full practice" when Sully arrived.<sup>48</sup> Sully's production of miniatures appears to all but cease after

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<sup>47</sup> The portrait of Isaac Gouveneur (1757-1800, Historical Society of Pennsylvania) may be associated with the Albany trip. The portrait of this New York City merchant, who died in Albany in 1800, does not conform entirely to what is known about Trott's style during the period. The portrait of Gouveneur also could have been painted in New York City in the 1790s. Moreover, the sitter appears to be older than Gouveneur's life dates would suggest.

<sup>48</sup> Dunlap Diary 2: 252, 365-366.



1806; whether this is due to Trott's presence or to Sully's success as a full-scale portrait painter is unclear.<sup>49</sup>

Sully and Stuart shared housing and a studio after Sully's move to Philadelphia in 1807. Dunlap refers to joint social activities between the two artists as well. Sully may have introduced Trott to his first patron in Philadelphia, Benjamin Chew Wilcocks (see chapter 4). Trott painted three miniatures of Wilcocks, and a number of his family as well.<sup>50</sup>

Some of Trott's miniatures from this period reflect attributes typical of Sully's style. The insouciant air and Byronic pose depicted by Trott in his portraits of young men, such as Thomas White and Nicholas Biddle, are characteristics found in Sully's portraits of George Dallas (Princeton University Art Museum) and William Fisher (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); the airy treatment of hair and free quality of brushstrokes are attributes found in both artists' work during the period.

Trott painted miniatures of a number of sitters who had their portraits taken by Sully at approximately the same time. James Abercrombie (1758-1841, location unknown), Benjamin Kintzing (1790-1825, Metropolitan Museum of Art), James Ross (1762-1847, unlocated), Benjamin Chew Wilcocks (1776-1845, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Manney Collection,

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<sup>49</sup> Fabian, Mr. Sully: Portrait Painter, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Dunlap, Diary 2: 431-432.

Winterthur Museum) are some examples of sitters painted by both artists. Sully painted Elizabeth Willing Powell (1742-1830, unlocated) "partly from a miniature by B. Trott" in 1817.<sup>51</sup> The print of Trott's portrait of James Abercrombie does not appear to be a direct copy of Sully's work. As the Trott or Sully portraits of the other sitters have not been located, comparisons between the portraits cannot be made.

Numerous relatives of Trott sitters were painted by Sully. Rebecca Biddle (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Alexander J. Dallas (1759-1817, Norton Gallery of Art), Col. James Gibson (1781-1814, private collection), and Thomas White (1779-1859, Independence National Historical Park and Historical Society of Pennsylvania) are among the Trott sitters who fit into this category. The relatively large number of connections between Trott's and Sully's patrons suggests that Sully also may have assisted Trott in

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<sup>51</sup> Some of the limitations of this method of analysis have been noted previously. The problems of dating Trott miniatures, the relatively large number of surviving Trott miniatures of unidentified sitters, and the lack of detail in some of Sully's entries for families such as Smith and Taylor complicates the evidence of Sully's role in Trott's career. David Edwin's engraving of Trott's portrait of Abercrombie appeared in the November, 1810, issue of Port Folio; Sully painted Abercrombie in 1810. William Dunlap notes Trott's comments to Abercrombie as he sat for Sully's portrait. Dunlap, History 2: 266-267; Bolton, "Benjamin Trott, An Account of His Life and Work," p. 266. Sully painted Kintzing twice, in 1812 and 1815; Ross twice, in 1812 and 1813; and Wilcocks numerous times, including 1807 and 1808. Biddle and Fielding, The Life and Works of Thomas Sully, pp. 93, 199, 253, 263, 319-320.

obtaining commissions. I will discuss the relationship between the two artists in terms of commissions in more detail in Chapter 4.<sup>52</sup>

5. Edward Greene Malbone (1777-1807)

Malbone was widely regarded as the preeminent miniature painter of his time. Dunlap conveys a story about Trott's attempts to learn from Malbone's work:

In 1806 [Trott] justly considered that he had nothing to fear from my rivalry--he would not have been so liberal towards Malbone. The fame of this young painter annoyed Trott, for he had none of that feeling which rejoices at a rival's success, nor that of self-confidence which perhaps causes the generous sensation. Malbone proposed an exchange of specimens with him, probably to show the different manner by which two eminently successful artists arrived at their respective excellence. But Trott considered and denounced it, as an insidious mode of comparison with his own: forgetting, that if such and advantage could be taken by one, it was equally in the power of

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<sup>52</sup> Rebecca Biddle was likely painted by Trott during the first decades of the nineteenth century; her husband, Nathaniel Chapman, was painted by Sully in 1817. Sully painted Alexander J. Dallas, Jr. in 1811; Mrs. James Gibson in 1821-1822; and Bishop William White in 1814. Biddle and Fielding, The Life and Works of Thomas Sully, pp. 120, 133, 159, 318.

the other. Though not acknowledged, this jealousy shows a consciousness of inferiority, or at least of the humiliating truth.<sup>53</sup>

Malbone's work shows the artist's significantly greater adeptness at the modelling of figures and the handling of pigments. Trott, like Malbone, frequently employed the British convention of a background of white and blue wash that created the effect of sky. Interestingly, Malbone and Trott appear to have worked in many of the same cities, but at different times; Malbone's death in 1807 may have opened up a broader miniature market for Trott.

#### 6. Walter Robertson (? - 1802)

According to Dunlap, Trott and Robertson, both worked in New York City and Philadelphia with Gilbert Stuart (see section on Stuart). Trott appreciated Walter Robertson's work enough to want to learn his methods. Dunlap notes: "Trott longed to be able to imitate the coloring of Walter Robertson; and I remember to have seen in his possession one of the Irishman's miniatures, half obliterated by the Yankee's experiments, who, to dive into the secret, made his way beneath the surface like a mole, and in equal darkness."<sup>54</sup> In his portrait of Joseph Anthony, Jr., Trott utilized the dark background frequently employed by

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<sup>53</sup> Dunlap History 2: 99-100.

<sup>54</sup> Dunlap, History 2: 98.

Robertson. Through the use of more precise modelling of features and skill in coloring, Robertson provided the sitter with a more realistic appearance than Trott was able to develop.

#### 7. William Dunlap (1766-1839)

Painting miniatures was one of William Dunlap's many avocations. Despite study with Benjamin West, painting was not Dunlap's strongest talent. Suggesting that his lack of skill was a reason that Trott shared information about miniature painting, he admits "In 1806 he justly considered that he had nothing to fear from my rivalry."<sup>55</sup> After describing Trott's interest in refining pigments, Dunlap notes:

By his distillations and filterings he produced some of the cleanest pigments I have ever used; and he bestowed on me specimens of all the necessary colors for miniature.<sup>56</sup>

Dunlap was one of a group of artists with whom Trott socialized that I will discuss in more detail below.

#### 8. Other Artists

Joseph Wood (c.1778-1830), another miniature artist, is mentioned concurrently with Trott a number of times in

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<sup>55</sup> Dunlap, History 2: 99.

<sup>56</sup> Dunlap, History 2: 99.

Dunlap's Diary. Wood advertised his ability as a miniature and portrait painter in the New York City directories independently in the early 1800s, then in partnership with John Wesley Jarvis from 1804 to 1810. The strong similarities between the Wood and Trott miniatures require further exploration.<sup>57</sup>

John Vanderlyn studied with Archibald Robertson in New York City, copied a number of Gilbert Stuart's portraits there, and lived in Stuart's house in Philadelphia in 1795. Thus both Vanderlyn and Trott were affiliated with Stuart in the mid-1790s. Vanderlyn's relationship with Trott, at least at one point, could hardly be called a collegial one:

P.S. I saw Trott an hour since, arm & arm, with that rascal Jarvis who I am sure [you?] must have seen in Kingston. They are Hail fellows, well met. You, out of regard to me, ought never to be very great with that conceited & ungrateful & envious shackle shin Trott--he is a man of similar principles with Jarvis.<sup>58</sup>

The letter also indicates that John Wesley Jarvis was a

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<sup>57</sup> George C. Groce, Jr. and J.T. Chase Willet, "Joseph Wood: A Brief Account of His Life and the First Catalogue of His Work, Art Quarterly 3: 2 (Spring, 1940): 151.

<sup>58</sup> John Vanderlyn to (nephew) John Vanderlyn, November 6, 1830. Cited in Harold F. Dickson, John Wesley Jarvis, American Painter, 1780-1840 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1949), p. 304. See also Marius Schoonmaker, John Vanderlyn, Artist, 1775-1852 (Kingston, NY: Senate House Association, Inc., 1950), pp. 5-9.

friend of Trott.

Trott interacted with a number of other artists and was a part of a large artistic milieu in both New York and Philadelphia. Dunlap makes a number of references in 1811 to joint social activities, including an evening spent with Trott, Waterman, and Fairman in attendance.<sup>59</sup> Trott's socializing with other artists in New York City during the late 1820s and early 1830s is well-documented. Dunlap mentions a musical club in New York City, probably active during this period, that included artists Trott, Charles Rhind, and John Roberts. Although no connection as far as teaching, style, or patronage with these artists has been found yet, Trott's relations with them are nevertheless worthy of study. Many of the artists whose connections with Trott have been noted were also affiliated with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Gideon Fairman, Thomas Sully, David Edwin, John Wesley Jarvis, Gilbert Stuart, and John Vanderlyn, were elected as Academicians along with Trott in 1812.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dunlap, Diary 2: 434, April 4, 1811. Dunlap noted on April 16, 1811 that he "went with Mr. Trott to Mr. Edwin's, the engraver, for the purpose of viewing Leslie's drawings of Cooke, Jefferson, Bisset, and others." Dunlap, Diary 3: 2. See also Diary 2: 431-2, 436, 442 for other visits between Dunlap and Trott.

<sup>60</sup> Dunlap, History 2: 115. Rhind resided in New York City during Trott's later stay in that city. Rhind, an artist, merchant, and consul to Smyrna, was painted by Trott (private collection). For biographical information on Rhind, see Malone, Dictionary of American Biography 15: 528-530. On

### Summary

Trott's relations with other artists affected both his style of painting and his access to patrons. His copies of Stuart's work suggest an ability to replicate a complex, fluid style in a different medium. He probably executed copies of Stuart's works as a method of learning, an emulation of a successful style, and as an acquiescence to sitters' wishes.

Trott's establishment as an artist in Philadelphia prior to Sully's residence suggests that he already possessed both well-developed skills and access to patrons. Trott's miniatures of Sully's sitters appear to not be copies, but independent work. The portraits executed by Trott and Sully during the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century have some shared stylistic attributes, however. A number of Trott's miniatures of sitters painted by Sully appear to have been painted at different times. I will explore the strong familial connections between Sully's and Trott's sitters in the next chapter. Overall, though, Trott seems to have been less dependent upon Sully for commissions than has traditionally been posited.

Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully probably served as catalysts for some Trott commissions. Trott's connections with other artists, both socially and in relation to their

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Philadelphia artists, see Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Pennsylvania Academicians, n.p.



work, suggest that he had broad access to techniques and information about potential markets. Yet, William Dunlap's and John Vanderlyn's remarks indicate that Trott competed with a number of miniature artists for commissions. Trott's alliances with artists, combined with his relations with patrons, can offer insight to Trott's patronage as a whole.

CHAPTER IV: TROTT'S PHILADELPHIA PATRONAGE: INDIVIDUALS AND  
INSTITUTIONS

Benjamin Trott's success in obtaining commissions was based on steady patronage, particularly during his lengthy residence in Philadelphia. He worked there in the mid-1790s, from 1804 (or before) to 1819, and perhaps at other times during the 1820s and 1830s. The majority of his surviving portraits are miniatures of Philadelphians.

Trott earned numerous commissions in Philadelphia, largely through the connections he established with other artists and patrons in that city. Trott's relations with the Society of American Artists, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and specific artists working in Philadelphia were crucial to his success. Although Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully provided access to many patrons, Trott's position as a teacher and exhibitor gave him exposure to other artists and their work, to critics, to patrons of the arts, and to a wide audience.

Trott appears to have obtained many commissions independent of Stuart and Sully. Trott was listed in the Philadelphia directory as a "miniature painter" for several years before Sully arrived in 1807 (see Appendix B) and

after Stuart had left; a number of documented or strongly attributed miniatures from this period are known. Trott painted numerous Philadelphia sitters who do not appear to have been painted by Sully, or whose portraits by Sully postdate Trott miniatures. The mercantile and familial connections among Trott's Philadelphia patrons suggest that many of his commissions resulted from the recommendations of his sitters.

A large number of Trott's sitters were members of the upper end of Philadelphia's mercantile elite. Although the nature of Philadelphia's elite during this period requires further exploration, some generalizations can be made based on recent scholarship. There appears to be a consensus that neither wealth nor formal political power were the sole indicators of membership in Philadelphia's elite during the period from 1800 to 1830. E. Digby Baltzell and Robert Gough have noted that participation in a number of benevolent, educational, and cultural organizations was one factor of elite membership, as was some degree of past or current wealth. Thomas Doerflinger's research on Philadelphia's merchants suggests that, although the mercantile elite constituted a diverse group ethnically and socially, they were bound together by many familial ties. Gough and Frederic Jaher have argued that the mercantile elite lacked cohesion in the late eighteenth century, and others have suggested a lack of unity among the economic

elite overall in Philadelphia after 1800. Yet most of Trott's Philadelphia patrons were members of the upper end of the city's mercantile elite. This portion of the mercantile elite, which had extensive familial, social, and business ties, appears to have maintained some sense of group cohesion well into the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

The familial, social, philanthropic, and business ties among many of Trott's Philadelphia sitters suggest that the artist obtained commissions based on recommendations of previous patrons. Trott describes his perceptions of relationships with sitters fairly late in his career in a letter to A. Wolcott. The letter suggests that Wolcott was a music instructor, though he may have painted as well.

My young Friend . . . I am glad to hear that you are still in Philadelphia and hope you are doing sufficiently for a Comfortable living which is as much as we can expect now a days--as to Cun

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<sup>61</sup> Philadelphia elites are discussed in Thomas Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Development in Revolutionary America. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 15; Robert Gough, "Towards A Theory of Class and Social Conflict: A Social History of Wealthy Philadelphians, 1775 to 1800," (University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1977), pp. 99, 118, 462, 635; E. Digby Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class (Glencoe, Scotland, 1958), pp. 60, 83, 276-279; and other works noted in the bibliography. Research on elites in other cities, which addresses Philadelphia elites peripherally, is found in Frederic Cople Jaher, The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York City, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles (Urbana, Il.: University of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 7, 714-715.

able[?] I am sorry that you should have put it in his power to annoy [sic] you; you ought to have known him better but you are perfectly justifiable in making the offer you mention besides your having given him some lessons on the Flute. You can't expect to succeed in a moment in any place without the strong and particular recommendations for the want of which you must exercise patience, perseverance, and Industry. I know I must do it at this late period in life. I am at present painting in miniature how long it may last I can't tell so far I have been fortunate in giving satisfaction to the few I have painted who are of the right kind. I have had many difficulties to encounter besides ill health and the want of money before I had anything to do . . . .

I am with friendly feeling

Yours, Benjamin Trott<sup>62</sup>

The extensive ties among Trott's Philadelphia patrons suggest that he indeed developed a network of sitters relatively early in his career. A discussion of Trott's potential sources of patronage follows.

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<sup>62</sup> Trott to A. Wolcott, January 2, 1839, HSP.

### Mercantile Ties Among Patrons

Trott painted the miniatures of a number of young Philadelphians who travelled to China as representatives of that city's mercantile firms. Benjamin Chew Wilcocks (1776-1845) went to China numerous times during the first decade of the nineteenth century and resided there from 1812 to 1827. Trott painted Wilcocks at least three times (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Winterthur Museum, Manney Collection). Thomas Harrison White (1779-1859) travelled to China as a supercargo representing the mercantile firm of Willing and Morris, probably before 1804. Trott painted White twice, apparently at different times (Independence National Historical Park and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania). Edward Milner Donaldson (1778-1853, Historical Society of Montgomery County, Norristown, Pennsylvania) travelled to China in 1800, in 1804 (staying until 1807), and seven times between 1815 and 1823. Wilcocks and Donaldson clearly knew each other; all three sitters probably knew one another. A number of other Trott sitters or close relatives of sitters were involved in the China trade, including members of the Willing and Powell families (Elizabeth Willing Powell, unlocated) and the Waln family (Sally Waln, Norton Gallery of Art). The specific mercantile connections among this group of sitters may have been a source of patronage for Trott. White and Wilcocks are two of three Trott sitters who were painted more than

once; the distance and dangerous nature of their occupations may explain the multiple portraits.<sup>63</sup>

### Familial Ties Among Patrons

I will examine the familial connections among a number of sitters in two case studies in this section. The mercantile connections among these extended family groups and the existence of Stuart and Sully portraits of many of the sitters or their relatives suggests that all three circumstances provided Trott with commissions.

Trott painted miniatures of at least five members of the White-Macpherson-Nicklin family. He painted Thomas Harrison White, the son of Bishop William White, twice (Independence National Historical Park and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania) and his wife, Maria Key White (d. 1814, location unknown). Trott also painted General William

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<sup>63</sup> For a more complete discussion, see Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphians and the China Trade (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984), pp. 11-41. For specific families, see pp. 44-46 (Wilcocks), pp. 79-80 (Willing/Powell), pp. 110-113 (Donnaldson), pp. 122-123 (Waln). For Thomas White, see William White, Addenda to the Account of the Meeting of Descendants of Colonel Thomas White (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1933), n.p. I would like to express my thanks to David Meschutt for identifying Trott as the artist of Donnaldson's miniature. An inscription in a game book at the Montgomery County Historical Society, Norristown, Pennsylvania, connects Donnaldson and Wilcocks. A miniature in the Norton Gallery of Art has been traditionally identified as Sally Waln, and occasionally as Miss Chew. Sherman, "Benjamin Trott, An early American Miniaturist," p. 153; Harry B. Wehle, American Miniatures, 1730-1850, n.p.

Macpherson (d. 1814; Philadelphia Museum of Art), who married Thomas White's sister, Elizabeth, in 1803. In addition, he painted Philip Nicklin and Julia Macpherson Nicklin (Philadelphia Museum of Art).

A second large network of sitters painted by Trott included the Ingersoll-Wilcocks family. He may have painted Benjamin Chew Wilcocks' wife, Sarah Waln. It has, however, been established that he painted Wilcocks' sister, Ann Wilcocks Ingersoll (Historical Society of Pennsylvania), as well as Wilcocks' brother Samuel's wife, Harriet Manigault (Mr. and Mrs. Jack Levy).

A number of factors indicate that Benjamin Chew Wilcocks was a pivotal figure in Trott's career. Wilcocks was an important patron of Thomas Sully; he helped raise money in 1809 to send Sully to London by subscription. Sully also painted Wilcocks a number of times. As Trott worked closely with Sully, it is likely that Sully provided the link between Trott and Wilcocks. As I noted previously, other sitters were allied with Wilcocks through social, familial, and business associations. The multiple connections between Wilcocks and Trott suggest he facilitated some of Trott's other commissions as well.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The subscription was signed by B. Wilcocks, J. McMurtrie, Mr. Redwood, Mr. Brinton, and Mr. Biddle. Fabian, Mr. Sully, Portrait Painter, pp. 12-14. Biddle and Fielding, The Life and Works of Thomas Sully, pp. 146, 319-320.



### Other Relationships Among Patrons

In addition to mercantile and familial ties, many of Trott's patrons were connected socially and through involvement in benevolent associations and other philanthropic groups. Participation in these organizations provided further opportunities, albeit less quantifiable ones, for contact among former and potential Trott patrons.

Trott's sitters practiced a range of religions. A large number were Episcopalians. As the Episcopal church was a stronghold of Philadelphia's elite, it follows that numerous Trott sitters would be affiliated with that faith. His patronage was not linked to a specific congregation. His Episcopalian sitters were members of a number of churches and included men like James Abercrombie and Thomas White. Jewish sitters included Joseph Gratz and Miriam Etting Myers. Sally Waln was a Quaker.

### The Academy

Trott's participation in the Society of American Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts had a profound effect upon his career. These organizations provided him with opportunities to teach, exhibit his works, and establish contacts with other artists and patrons of the arts. Both organizations were dedicated to furthering the arts in Philadelphia.

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts was founded

in 1805, primarily by businessmen, to display works of art and to educate artists. The Society of American Artists was founded in 1810, apparently to address the artistic community's desires for greater opportunities for artists within the Academy. An early attempt to unite the organizations failed, in part because of the Academy's requirement of stockholding for membership. The artists were soon granted many privileges and a larger role, but not membership, in the Academy.

In 1811 the Academy voted to establish a group of artists, called Academicians, to control the Academy's schools, determine the branches of art to be taught there, and administer the annual exhibition. Specifically, the Academicians were "a body of Artists . . . composed of not more than forty, being Painters, Sculptors, Architects, and Engravers of merit." Further, the Academy board decreed "no Sculptor, Painter, Architect, or Engraver, shall be elected an Academician who is not distinguished by the merit of his own original works; and that the number of Architects and Engravers, together shall never exceed one fourth of the whole of the Academicians."<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Trott was elected,

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<sup>65</sup> Edward Nygren, "The First Art Schools at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts," pp. 223-232. John Eckstein, Frederick Eckstein, John Reich, Denis Volozan, Luke Robbins, and Maximilian Godefroy were other artists appointed as Academicians at the same time. Lillian Miller, Patriots and Patronage, pp. 107-108; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Pennsylvania Academicians, n.p.

along with William Rush, Thomas Sully, Rembrandt Peale, Charles Willson Peale, James Peale, Gideon Fairman, Thomas Birch, David Edwin, Benjamin Latrobe, John Wesley Jarvis, Gilbert Stuart, Washington Allston, John Vanderlyn, Charles Bird King, Benjamin West, John S. Copley, John Trumbull, Robert Mills, and six others.

In 1812 Trott became the only artist among the first group elected as Academicians to decline. He noted in a letter to the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Academy:

Whatever may be the motives of the Directors of the Pennsylvania Academy in Conferring on me so distinguished a mark of their favor as to Elect me a Pennsylvania Academician, I am for various reasons that I shall not take up your time to explain under the necessity of declining the Honor of accepting it.<sup>66</sup>

It has been suggested that Trott refused the appointment because of his allegiance to the Society of American Artists. William Dunlap notes that "during the violence of the opposition made by the associated artists to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, led by Murray, Trott spoke harshly of Sully, because, being a director of the academy, he did not join the association in their

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<sup>66</sup> Benjamin Trott to William Smith, April 9, 1812. Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.

opposition."<sup>67</sup>

Trott's appointment suggests that he had attained a high stature among artists and patrons alike. His allegiance to an artists' organization appears to have been strong enough to reject an honor by a group of patrons as a matter of principle. Trott's refusal does not appear to have had a significant effect upon his career. He continued to teach at the Society of American Artists, exhibited at the Academy during those years, and maintained ties with a number of patrons connected with that institution.

Trott exhibited miniatures at the annual Society of American Artists exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy from 1811 to 1814. The inclusion of his work in the first four annual exhibitions is another indication of his stature as an artist. He showed three miniatures there in 1811 and four miniatures in 1812. The latter exhibition included oil portraits by Thomas Sully, Gilbert Stuart, Ezra Ames, James Peale, Raphael Peale, and Bass Otis. A genre scene by Joseph Krimmel and two landscapes by Thomas Birch were also displayed. The 1813 exhibition included four miniatures by Trott, works by many of the same artists who exhibited the year before, as well as works by Charles King, John W. Jarvis, and Jacob Eicholtz. Trott exhibited two miniatures in the 1814 show. The exhibition of Trott's miniatures at a

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<sup>67</sup> Dunlap, History 2:100. See also Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Pennsylvania Academicians, n.p.

prominent artistic institution in the company of artists who were known both locally and nationally suggests that his work was highly regarded at the time.<sup>68</sup>

Exhibitions provided Trott with exposure to a larger audience, as did the favorable exhibition reviews in the literary journal Port Folio. The reviews demonstrate that Trott's work was well-received. The reviewer of the 1812 exhibition, identified as only "G.M.", commented on Trott's four miniatures, which were apparently displayed together in a frame:

although small in size, are notwithstanding large as regards their intrinsic merit. The works of this excellent artist are justly esteemed for truth and elegance of expression. In examining his miniatures, we perceive all the force and effect of the best oil pictures, and it is but fair to remark, that Mr. Trott is purely an American artist--he has never been either in Paris or London; and we venture to say, that his pictures are equal to any, and superior to most, that we have seen in either of those cities; and

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<sup>68</sup> Anna Wells Rutledge, Cumulative Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1807-1970, p. 232. G.M., "Review of the Second Annual Exhibition," pp. 17-28. "Review of the Third Annual Exhibition of the Columbian Society of Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts," The Port Folio (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, August, 1813), pp. 122-141.

we do not hesitate farther to assert . . .<sup>69</sup>  
 Trott's miniatures in the 1813 exhibition were reviewed extensively in the August issue of Port Folio. Six of the twenty pages of the review discuss Trott's works. The Port Folio reviewer noted:

The character of Mr. Trott, as a first-rate miniature painter, has been long established; the two portraits now exhibited by him, have called forth the unqualified approbation of thousands; and artists, as well as amateurs, have willingly joined in the well-deserved praise. These miniatures produce a sort of magical effect: in viewing them we forget that we are looking at small pictures, and believe we really see the living originals. For character, truth of drawing, colouring, and effect, they challenge competition; and we are sincerely of opinion that they are equal (perhaps superior) to the works of the most distinguished artists in Europe.<sup>70</sup>

The reviewer then discusses an earlier newspaper review, noting "Two [miniatures], by Trott, attracted universal

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<sup>69</sup> G.M., "'Review of the Second Annual Exhibition," 24.

<sup>70</sup> "Review of the Third Annual Exhibition of the Columbian Society of Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," p. 132. Much of the review is devoted to defending the art of miniature painting from an earlier, critical newspaper reference. The review also appeared in the Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser, June 18, 1813. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts reference files.

attention and admiration. After all, however, this branch of art is so petty, so like teacup painting, that it is a pity so much talent as Mr. Trott possesses should be wasted upon it."<sup>71</sup> The Port Folio reviewer defended miniature painting, noting the difficult and time-consuming process of producing a likeness in such a small format. Both reviews indicate that Trott's work was well-received by critics and the public alike.

Trott endorsed a number of subscription projects with other artists affiliated with the Society of American Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Trott, Sully, Rembrandt Peale, J[oseph] Wood, and David Edwin were among the members of these organization who endorsed the subscription to an engraving of Thomas Birch's painting of the battle between the Constitution and the Guerrière, which appeared in an advertisement in a Norfolk, Virginia, newspaper in 1813. Trott joined Sully, George Fairman, and George Murray in their promotion of Joseph Delaplaine's National Gallery of Portraits in 1819.<sup>72</sup>

A number of Trott's Philadelphia patrons were involved

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<sup>71</sup> "Review of the Third Annual Exhibition of the Columbian Society of Artists and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," p. 134.

<sup>72</sup> The artists' endorsement of the print of the battle is dated December 4, 1812, Philadelphia; they appeared in the Norfolk Gazette and Public Ledger, January 6, 1813. The endorsements of Delaplaine's portraits to which Trott added his name are dated May 7 and July 27, 1819, Philadelphia; they were printed in the City of Washington (D.C.) Gazette, September 7, 1819.

in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Nicholas Biddle (1786-1844) was an early member of the Academy; he purchased plaster casts of antique sculpture in France in 1805 for use in classes at the Academy. Biddle was also involved in the Port Folio in 1811 and served as its editor in 1812, when it published several reviews of Academy exhibitions. Trott painted George Clymer (1739-1813, location unknown), the Academy's President until 1813. Philadelphia physician Nathaniel Chapman served as the Academy's professor of anatomy after 1812; Trott painted his wife, Rebecca Biddle, probably in the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup>

Trott's involvement with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Society of American Artists appears to have had an enormous effect upon his career. His participation in exhibitions suggests that he had attained high stature among artists and art patrons, independent of

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<sup>73</sup> On Biddle, see Nygren, "The First Fine Arts Schools at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts," p. 224 and Nicholas Wainwright, "Nicholas Biddle in portraiture," pp. 956-957. Nicholas Biddle was probably the "Mr. Biddle" who helped finance Thomas Sully's trip to London (see section on Benjamin Wilcocks above). The Clymer engraving is captioned, "Engraved by J.B. Longacre from an original miniature by Trott." It appeared in John Sanderson, Biographies of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence (Philadelphia: R.W. Pomeroy, 1823), 4: 172. A print of another miniature by Trott, of James Abercrombie, appeared in the November, 1810 Port Folio. Bolton and Tolman, "A Catalogue of Miniatures by or Attributed to Benjamin Trott," pp. 278-279. On Chapman, see Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Pennsylvania Academicians, n.p. Rebecca Biddle, the daughter of Clement Biddle, married Chapman in 1808.



Stuart and Sully. The institutions provided opportunities to see the work of other artists, exchange information, and influence the work of other artists, factors which regretfully remain unquantifiable. The favorable reviews of Trott's miniatures in Port Folio indicate popular and critical acclaim. Most importantly, the Academy made it possible for Trott to maintain ties to Philadelphia's leading art patrons.

#### Summary

Trott obtained commissions in Philadelphia in a number of ways. Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully probably aided Trott in gaining a number of commissions. The extensive mercantile and familial connections among Trott's sitters suggest that patrons' recommendations were a powerful source of commissions for Trott. Trott's ties to other artists and patrons through the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Society of American Artists appear to have had a large effect on his success as a miniature painter, and probably expanded his audience.

## CONCLUSION

Although the longevity of Trott's career as a miniature painter and the diversity of his styles can be attributed to a number of factors, it is clear that Gilbert Stuart had a profound impact upon Trott's career. Stuart provided access to patrons, such as the Anthony family, and may have given Trott formal instruction. His influence on Trott's career lasted well past the 1790s, in fact. Trott's affiliation with Stuart provided him access to Philadelphia's elite which had a marked effect on his ability to earn commissions during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Trott's habit of executing replicas of Stuart's work rather than interpretations of it suggests that sitters desired likenesses that closely approximated Stuart's work. Given Stuart's position as America's premiere portrait painter, it is not surprising that patrons would desire works that approximated Stuart's style. A number of people publicly compared the work of Stuart and Trott during Trott's career. I will explore the possible reasons for these comparisons, as well as their effect, below.

Trott's work was compared favorably with Stuart's about a decade after the artists had ceased working

together. A reviewer of the 1812 Society of American Artists Exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts noted "as far as respects likeness, dignity of character, expressions and harmony of colouring, the pictures of Trott, approach nearer to the exquisite production of Stuart, than those of any other artist in America."<sup>74</sup> The reviewer suggests that Stuart's work was an ideal that Trott or his audience (or both) were trying to achieve. About 1811, a Boston newspaper noted:

Mr. Trott may be called the untutored child of art, having drawn his powers entirely from his own genius. He, indeed, in later life, has had the opportunity of studying under Stuart, and his diploma awarded by that great master is that he is "the best and closest imitator that has ever attempted to copy him."<sup>75</sup>

These comparisons suggest an ongoing perception among critics of similarity between the two artists' work.

Trott's work continued to exhibit characteristics of Stuart's style. His c. 1836 copy of Stuart's Washington (Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union), as well as his c. 1840-1841 copy (private collection), are rendered in

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<sup>74</sup> G.M., "Review of the Second Annual Exhibition," The Port Folio (Philadelphia, Bradford and Inskeep), 8 (June, 1812): 24.

<sup>75</sup> Boston Weekly Messenger, c. 1811 to 1813. Cited in Theodore Bolton, "Benjamin Trott, An Account of His Life and Work," p. 268.

a highly imitative way. Further, Trott's obituary notes:

On Monday afternoon [November 27], after a lingering illness, BENJAMIN TROTT, artist. This gentleman was a native of Boston, and it was his proud boast that he had been the intimate friend of the celebrated GILBERT STUART. Mr. Trott was an enthusiastic follower of his profession. His mind was vigorous, his genius undoubted, and his reputation equal to that of any other engaged in similar pursuits. His style of miniature coloring was rich and decisive, and bore a strong resemblance to the oil paintings of his friend STUART. He has died far from the land of his birth, but has found friends who can mourn over the fate of poor Trott.<sup>76</sup>

The obituary indicates that Trott associated himself with Stuart until the end of his career, and that others recognized a similarity between the work of the two artists. The identification of Trott with Stuart by critics, a contemporary artist, and a reporter suggests that Trott expressed to others, or others inferred, a career-long identification with Stuart. Such forms of recognition probably both resulted from a recognition of his reliance upon Stuart for training and patrons and a desire to be identified with a prominent portrait painter of the nation's

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<sup>76</sup> National Intelligencer, November 29, 1843.

elite.

Trott's alliance with Stuart and his success in obtaining numerous commissions from Philadelphia's elite are undoubtedly related. Stuart's patrons were primarily members of the elite in Philadelphia and other cities. He appears to have assisted Trott in obtaining commissions from this group of patrons, including such prominent figures as the Anthonys and Alexander J. Dallas. Stuart also helped Trott obtain commissions that enabled him to establish a network of sitters who would provide commissions for him for more than two decades.

The position of Trott's sitters in Philadelphia society and culture is significant. Recent research has shown that the mercantile elite had largely lost political control of the city and the state by 1800, and others had eclipsed many of these people economically. Yet this group maintained, well into the nineteenth century, close relations that included familial, business, social, cultural, and philanthropic ties.

A question worth consideration is whether or not the miniature served as a device for codifying status among Philadelphia's mercantile elite. The audience for completed Trott miniatures was small. Unlike oil portraits, miniatures were generally not viewed by visitors to the parlor or dining room of a home; probably only family members or close friends would see a miniature. Further,

many oil portraits painted at the time included iconography and props that alluded to the wealth and status of the patron. Trott's miniatures, as well as most miniatures from the period that I have seen, do not employ props.

Inscriptions and locks of hair on the reverse of some miniatures, which were very personal symbols, are the few elements of these portraits other than the sitters' likenesses. Although miniatures were not inexpensive, their placement, composition, and audience indicates that they did not convey the wealth and status of a sitter in the manner of a full-scale portrait by Stuart or Sully.<sup>77</sup>

The poses of Trott's sitters, particularly of the men who appear to have comprised the bulk of his patrons, also need to be analyzed. Most of the male sitters have elongated necks and are wearing the standard attire of the period. No ornaments or props provide any hints about the lives of the sitters, and their status is not differentiated by clothing. Perhaps the rather aristocratic poses of the sitters, which convey a sense of superiority, provide the most telling clue. The poses, lack of props, and undifferentiated clothing of the sitters served, in my view, as components of emblems of status among a group of people who would be virtually the only viewers of a miniature

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<sup>77</sup> Most of Trott's miniatures were probably intended to be framed, though some could be worn as lockets. The variety of frames suggest that Trott's patrons chose their own frames.

portrait.

The creation of a network of sitters among Philadelphia's elite was an important factor in Trott's ability to obtain commissions not only in that city, but beyond. Some of the mercantile and familial ties between Trott's sitters in Philadelphia and his patrons in other cities have been documented. Many of Trott's patrons elsewhere were members of their cities' mercantile elite. These connections suggest that recommendations from Philadelphia sitters were catalysts for commissions in such cities as Baltimore and New York City. It is not surprising that many of Trott's sitters in other cities came from the same milieu; few others had the inclination or income to purchase portrait miniatures. In Philadelphia and elsewhere, this group had ample opportunity to view Trott's work and to solicit the advice of friends, colleagues, and relatives regarding potential portrait artists.

Trott's oeuvre was thus affected by many factors. Stylistic parallels between his work and that of Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, and a number of miniature artists are identifiable. Trott's ties to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Society of American Artists provided him with access to artists and patrons, and to an expanded audience. Sitters' recommendations and wishes affected the style and number of commissions he received. Trott's styles and his ability to obtain commissions were, in short,

influenced by a number of forces other than his artistic skill.



## APPENDIX A: KNOWN AND ATTRIBUTED WORKS BY TROTT

Documented Works by Trott

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
James Abercrombie**	Location unknown
Lewis Adams*	Mead Art Gallery, Amherst College
Nicholas Biddle*	Nicholas Biddle, Jr.
Julia McWhorter*	
(Mrs. Alexander Macomb)	New-York Historical Society
Elizabeth Willing Powell	Location unknown
Edward Shippen	Location unknown
George Washington	Private collection
George Washington*	Mount Vernon Ladies Association
Thomas H. White*	Independence National Historical Park
James Williams	Cincinnati Art Museum
Peregrine Wroth	Location unknown

Miniatures Attributed to Trott

John Andrews	Location unknown
Joseph Anthony, Jr. or III*	Yale Art Gallery
Joseph Anthony, Sr.	Ex. coll: Mead Art Gallery
Mr. Ashurst	Location unknown
William Bainbridge	Private collection

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
Thaddeus Beecher	Location unknown
Young man of the Biedermann family	Location unknown
Rebecca Biddle*	Metropolitan Museum of Art
Albert Bingaman	Location unknown
James Birney	Private collection
Mrs. Blair	Location unknown
J. Bodine	Location unknown
Ann Bolton	Private collection
Elizabeth Brooks	Private collection
W.C. (a gentleman)	Private collection
Dr. Caldwell	Location unknown
Eliza Caldwell	Location unknown
Henry Clay	Private collection
Mary Anne Buchanan Coale*	Maryland Historical Society
Edward Johnson Coale*	Maryland Historical Society
George Clymer**	Location unknown
Miss Collas*	Private collection
Mr. Cowells	Private collection
William Sitgreaves Cox	Location unknown
Jacob Cummings	Location unknown
Mrs. George Cuthbert	Location unknown
Alexander James Dallas	Norton Art Gallery
Mrs. John Pine Decatur	Location unknown

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
Edward Milner Donaldson*	Montgomery County Historical Society
John Johnston Donaldson	Location unknown
Joshua Dorsey	Location unknown
Alexander Durdin*	Manney collection
Charles Floyd*	Metropolitan Museum of Art
Mrs. Fox*	Metropolitan Museum of Art
William Furman	Location unknown
Col. James Gibson	Private collection
Martin Gillet	Location unknown
Mrs. Martin Gillet (Elizabeth Edwards)	Location unknown
Thomas Goodhue	Location unknown
Mrs. Patrick Grant (Jean Gilmor)	Location unknown
Thomas Osborne Goodwyn	Private collection
Joseph Gratz*	Congregation Mikveh Israel
John Green	Location unknown
Mrs. James Greenleaf (Ann Penn Allen)	Location unknown
Thomas Byron Grundy	Private collection
Mrs. Stephen Guillet (Elizabeth Maltbie Eden)	Location unknown
Robert Goodloe Harper	National Museum of American Art (private collection)

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
Anthony Hoffman	Location unknown
Andrew Hunter Holmes	Private collection
Philip Hone	Norton Gallery of Art
Moses Hook	Private collection
Jane Hunter Hough	Private collection
John Ladd Howell	Location unknown
Enoch Huntington	Museum of the Daughters of the American Revolution
Ann Wilcocks Ingersoll*	Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Charles C. Irwin	Location unknown
Susannah Jackson*	Private collection
John Jay*	Department of State (private collection)
Elizabeth Allston Jervey*	Mead Art Gallery
John Jordan	Cincinnati Art Museum
William King*	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Benjamin Kintzing*	Metropolitan Museum of Art
William Lambeth	Location unknown
George Gray Leiper	Location unknown
Abner Le Grand	Location unknown
William Henry Lippincott	Location unknown
Anna Hume Shippen Livingston*	National Museum of American Art
Cornelius Lowe	Location unknown

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
Fielding Lucas*	Maryland Historical Society
William Lyman	Location unknown
Harriet Manigault*	Mr. and Mrs. Jack Levy
David McClellan*	National Museum of American Art
Mary McIlvaine	Location unknown
William McIlvaine	Location unknown
William Macpherson*	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Charles Peter Mallet	Private collection
Isaiah Mankin	Location unknown
Mrs. Medcef Eden (Rebecca Mason)	Location unknown
Judge John Jones Milligan	Location unknown
Mrs. John Milligan (Martha Levy)	Location unknown
Charles Waln Morgan	Location unknown
Mr. Morse	Newark Museum
John Hite Morton	Location unknown
Miriam Etting Myers	American Jewish Historical Society
Miriam Etting Myers*	Maryland Historical Society
Miriam Etting Myers*	National Museum of American Art
Margaret Hillegas Nichols*	Yale Art Gallery
Julia Macpherson Nicklin*	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Philip Nicklin*	Philadelphia Museum of Art

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
John Poinier*	Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design
Hannah Poland (Mrs. William Hastings)	Northfield Historical Society
Thomas Isham Randolph	Private collection
Charles Rhind*	Private collection
James Richards	Location unknown
Robert Richie	Location unknown
James Ross	Location unknown
Lewis Sanders	Location unknown
Elihu Spencer Sergeant	Princeton Art Museum
John Cleves Short	Location unknown
Mr. Sims	Private collection
George Simson	Location unknown
Charles Smith	Private collection
James Smith	Location unknown
Mrs. James Smith (Lydia Leaming)	Location unknown
Gen. Samuel Smith	Location unknown
Mr. Robert A.B.S. Sparrow*	National Museum of American Art
Mary Catherine Sprogell I*	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Gov. Samuel Stevens	Location unknown
Jane Stone*	National Museum of American Art
Edward Stow*	Yale Art Gallery
Mr. Taylor	Private collection

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
James Vanuxen	Private collection
Charles Wagner*	Manney collection.
Mr. Waller	Location unknown
Sally Waln	Norton Art Gallery
Mr. Warburton	Location unknown
George Washington	Private collection
Thomas White*	Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Mrs. Thomas White (Maria Key Heath)	Location unknown
Benjamin Chew Wilcocks*	Manney collection
Benjamin Chew Wilcocks*	Metropolitan Museum of Art
Benjamin Chew Wilcocks*	Winterthur Museum
Charles Wilkins	Carnegie Museum of Art
Hon. William Wilkins	Location unknown
E.J. Winter	Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
George Wood*	Manney collection
Samuel Woodworth	Private collection
Unidentified man	Private collection
Unidentified man*	Private collection
Unidentified man (formerly W. Allston)	Private collection
Unidentified man	Metropolitan Museum of Art
Unidentified man (formerly David Humphries)*	Metropolitan Museum of Art

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
Unidentified man*	Manney collection
Unidentified man*	Manney collection
Unidentified man*	Manney collection
Unidentified man	Chicago Art Institute
Unidentified man	Private collection
Unidentified man	Private collection
Unidentified man	Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Unidentified woman	
("Lady in Black Lace Veil")	Location unknown
Unidentified woman*	Private collection

Miniatures with Problematic Identifications of Sitter

J.W. Bourne	Ex. coll: Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Ma.
Dr. Robert French	Private collection
Alexander Hamilton	Private collection
Thomas Harrison	Manney collection
Dr. A. Jackson	Private collection
Mrs. Walter Livingston*	Philadelphia Museum of Art
Robert Morris	
(now J. Anthony, Sr.)	Ex coll: Mead Art Gallery
John Parker	Location unknown



SitterLocation

Mary Catherine

Sprogell II\*

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Miniatures with Problematic Attributions to Trott

Solomon Etting

Maryland Historical Society

Isaac Gouveneur\*

Historical Society of  
Pennsylvania

David Kilgour

Cincinnati Art Museum

Mrs. Peter Van Brugh

Livingston

Location unknown

James Gore King

Museum of the City of New York

Sarah Rogers Grace King

Museum of the City of New York

George Washington\*

Mount Vernon Ladies Association

Unidentified man\*

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Miniatures Formerly Attributed to Trott

Gov. William Aiken

Location unknown

J.B.

National Museum of American Art

Elizabeth Brinkerhoff

Museum of the City of New York

Benjamin I. Cohen\*

Maryland Historical Society

James Coit\*

New London County Historical  
Society

John Gadsby\*

National Museum of American Art

<u>Sitter</u>	<u>Location</u>
Gabriel Manigault*	Worcester Art Museum
Mrs. Gabriel Manigault*	Worcester Art Museum
Gen. Anne-Louis de Toussard	Location unknown
Elkanah Watson	New-York Historical Society

Prints of Miniatures by Trott

James Abercrombie (Edwin)	Winterthur Museum
George Clymer (Longacre)	Printed in Sanderson, <u>Biographies of the Signers</u>
Horatio Gates (Heath)	Massachusetts Historical Society
George Washington (Longacre)	Massachusetts Historical Society
George Washington (Longacre)	Massachusetts Historical Society
George Washington (Gobrecht)	Massachusetts Historical Society
George Washington (Roberts)	Location unknown
George Washington (Wright)	Location unknown
George Washington (Fairman)	Location unknown

\* Denotes works seen by author

\*\* Denotes print of miniature survives

N.B. I have not been able to discern the history of a number of miniatures of unidentified sitters by Trott. Therefore, only where the location or a photograph is known of an unidentified sitter has it been listed. The locations of many of the portraits I list as "location unknown" were known in 1944; these are listed in Theodore Bolton and Ruel Tolman, "A Catalogue of Miniatures by or Attributed to Benjamin Trott," Art Quarterly 7:4 (Autumn, 1944): 278-290.

## APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTATION FOR BENJAMIN TROTT'S RESIDENCES

<u>Date</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Listing</u>	<u>Source</u>
May, 1793	Nottoway County, Va.	Trott & Lovett	Portrait signatures (Irby)
November, 1793	Boston	Teacher; miniature painter	<u>Columbian Centinel</u>
1798	1 Wall New York City	miniature painter	NYC directory
1799	6 John New York City	same as above	same as above
1804	231 Mulberry, Philadelphia	miniature painter	J. Robinson directory*
1805	same as above	same as above	same as above
1806	same as above	same as above	same as above
1807	corner 6th & Minor, Phila.	same as above	same as above
1808	same as above	same as above	same as above
1809	same as above	same as above	same as above
1810	same as above	same as above	same as above
1811	not listed		same as above
1811a	28 Sansom, Phila.	miniature painter	same as above
1813	7 Little George, Phila.	miniature painter	J.A. Paxton directory
1814	same as above	same as above	B. & T.Kite directory

1816	same as above	same as above	J. Robinson directory
1817	same as above	same as above	E. Dawes directory
1817a	26 Little George, Phila.	same as above	J. Robinson directory
1818	same as above	same as above	J.A. Paxton directory
1819	165 Chestnut, Philadelphia	same as above	J.A. Paxton directory
1820	not listed	not listed	E. Whitely directory
1829-1830	15 Pine upstairs New York City	portrait & miniature painter	NYC directory
1830-1831	21 Arcade New York City	same as above	same as above
1831-1832	40 Arcade New York City	portrait & min. painter	same as above
1832-1833	same as above	same as above	same as above
1834	3 Scollay's buildings, Boston	miniature painter	Boston directory
1840-1841	office, cor. St. Paul & Fayette Streets, Baltimore	portrait & miniature painter	Baltimore directory

\* Philadelphia directory information provided by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts reference files.

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ILLUSTRATION 1.

William Irby by [Benjamin] Trott and [William] Lovett.

Oil on canvas, 1793. Private collection, by courtesy of the  
Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Research Files.



ILLUSTRATION 2

Elizabeth Irby by [Benjamin] Trott and [William] Lovett.

Oil on canvas, 1793. Private collection, by courtesy of the  
Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Research Files.



ILLUSTRATION 3.

Thomas White by Benjamin Trott.

Watercolor on ivory, c. 1800-1820. Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.





ILLUSTRATION 4.

Peregrine Wroth by Benjamin Trott.

Watercolor on ivory, 1806. Location unknown. Reproduced in  
Wehle, American Miniatures, 1730-1850.



ILLUSTRATION 5.

Nicholas Biddle by Benjamin Trott.

Watercolor on ivory, c. 1811. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs.  
Nicholas Biddle, Jr.



ILLUSTRATION 6

Julia Ann McWhorter by Benjamin Trott.

Watercolor on ivory, 1823. Reproduced in Catalogue of American Portraits in the New-York Historical Society.



ILLUSTRATION 7.

Lewis Adams by Benjamin Trott.

Watercolor on ivory, 1828. Courtesy of Mead Art Museum,  
Amherst College, bequest of Herbert L. Pratt, Class of 1895.

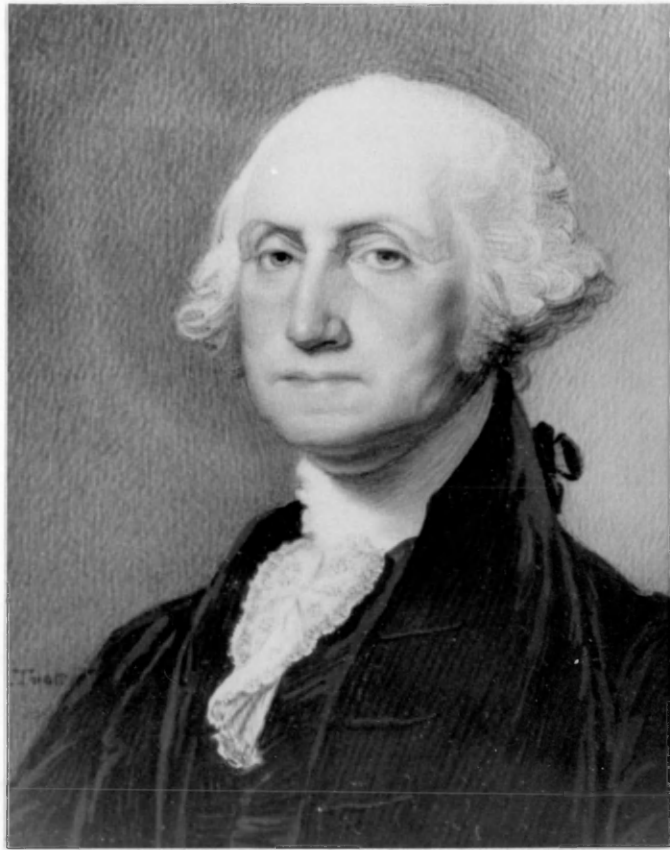




ILLUSTRATION 8.

George Washington by Benjamin Trott.

Watercolor on ivory, c. 1836. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union.



## VITA

Anne Ayer Verplanck

Anne Verplanck was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on October 11, 1958. She graduated from Connecticut College with a B.A. in Botany and History in 1980. She held positions in a number of museums between 1980 and 1989; she was most recently employed as the Assistant Curator at Independence National Historical Park from 1985 to 1989. In August, 1989, she entered the College of William and Mary's program in American Studies. She has completed the requirements for her Master's Degree in American Studies and is currently working towards a doctorate in that field at the College of William and Mary.