

WALDO LINCOLN (1849-1933), 1929
Frank O. Salisbury (1874-1962)
oil on canvas
50 1/8 x 40 1/8 (127.3175 x 101.9175)
signed l.r.: 'Frank O. Salisbury/19[29]
Members of the American Antiquarian Society, 1929
Weis 73
Hewes Number: 74

Ex. Coll.: commissioned by fifteen members of the American Antiquarian Society, December 1929.

Exhibitions:

1929, 'Recent Works by Frank O. Salisbury,' Duveen Gallery, New York.

Prominent Worcester, Massachusetts, resident Waldo Lincoln was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society in 1898 and became vice president in 1906. The leadership of the Society passed to Lincoln with his election as president in 1907 and he played a pivotal role in the hiring of a new librarian, Clarence Saunders Brigham (cat. #11) the following year. Together, they implemented the bequest of Stephen Salisbury III (cat. #102) for a new building with a reading room and expanded space for the collection, arranging for the acquisition of land at the southwest corner of Salisbury Street and Park Avenue and supervising the design and construction of Antiquarian Hall 1909-10. Hiring Brigham enabled Lincoln, with his Council colleagues J. Franklin Jameson and William McDonald, to lead the movement to adopt the stance of a research library and to abandon the museum. During his twenty years as the Society's president, the library's income doubled, in part through the establishment of the endowment. The new building was emblematic of the transformation of the Society, as noted years later in Lincoln's obituary. 'Under Mr. Lincoln's capable administration of the Society's affairs, its finances were sufficiently strengthened to permit removal of its valuable collection, books, and papers from the crowded quarters of the old brick structure north of the Courthouse at Lincoln Square to the present exceptionally fine home of the organization, built under his direction.'¹ Lincoln took an intense interest in the Society until he retired in 1927, coming in almost daily to attend to its business affairs.

With Lincoln's election to membership, he became the fourth generation of his family to join the Society. Both his great-grandfather Levi Lincoln, Sr. (1749-1820) and his grandfather Levi Lincoln, Jr. (1782-1868) were charter members of the institution. Like his forbears, Waldo Lincoln was generous to the Society. In the 1920s he built up the Society's holdings of material from the West Indies by traveling to Jamaica and Bermuda to purchase early newspapers, prints, and books.² An accomplished book collector, he left over eight hundred American cookbooks to the Society upon his death in 1933 over eight hundred. He entertained regularly on behalf of the Society. '[The] October luncheons at the Lincoln mansion will always stand out because of his cultivation, courtesy and cheer. He was a vital cog of the Society. And he continued faithful unto the end.'³ After his death, the family donated his personal papers to the Society.⁴

Lincoln, who was born and raised in Worcester, graduated from Harvard College in 1870. His interest in chemistry led him to establish several firms, including the Ferric Chemical & Color Company, devoted to the development of paints and dyes. He retired from business in 1893, at the age of forty-four, and devoted the rest of his life to philanthropic activities in Worcester. On the boards of several, he was also the treasurer and a trustee of the Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a director of the Worcester Public Library.⁵

Lincoln's avid interest in Massachusetts history and genealogy resulted in several publications. His Genealogy of the Waldo Family (1902) was followed by The History of the Lincoln Family in 1923. He contributed often to the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, writing dozens of obituaries of former members as well as publishing his historical research in essays such as 'The Province Snow Prince of Orange' (1901) and 'History of Bermuda Newspapers' (1925). In 1923 Lincoln compiled the checklist of 'Portraits in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society,' one of the Society's earliest records of the contents of the painting collection.⁶ After completing his terms as president, Lincoln published his 'Bibliography of American Cookery Books 1742-1860' in the Proceedings in 1929. This portrait was painted in the same year.

In November 1929, American Antiquarian Society member Clarence W. Bowen (cat. #10) organized a group of fifteen subscribers to fund the acquisition of a portrait of the eighty-year-old Lincoln. Bowen recommended that Brigham engage the artist Frank O. Salisbury, who had

completed Bowen's portrait the previous year. He noted, '[Salisbury] will return to New York after December 1st, and has a number of orders on hand to keep him busy.... Mr. Lincoln will have to go to New York.... [T]here is nothing to be gained by delay, and there is no time like the present.' Lincoln sat for his portrait on December 12 and 13, 1929. The portrait was completed three days later, giving credence to Bowen's promise that Salisbury was 'a very rapid worker.'⁷

Shortly afterwards, Bowen reported to Brigham, 'I am pleased to write . . . that Waldo Lincoln has been in New York and the English artist, Frank O. Salisbury, has painted a portrait of him which Mr. Lincoln's daughter, Mrs. [Josephine] Dresser, thinks is a perfect likeness.'⁸ The portrait was presented to the full membership at the end of December and was later declared '...one of the best portraits ever painted by that capable artist [Salisbury].'⁹ A local newspaper article announcing the donation of the portrait stated, 'Those who have seen it rate it very highly not only as the work of a master but as a striking likeness of Mr. Lincoln, as his friends know his face, in its familiar kindly expression.'¹⁰

¹ 'Waldo Lincoln Succumbs at His Home Here,' Worcester Gazette April 3, 1933.

² 'Let us Assist,' Kingston Gleaner (Jamaica), January 22, 1921, American Antiquarian Society Newsclipping File. Lincoln travelled to Bermuda in 1924.

³ Robert Washburn, 'Waldo Lincoln,' Worcester Gazette, April 10, 1933.

⁴ Lincoln Family Papers 1879-1930, American Antiquarian Society Manuscript Collection.

⁵ For more on Lincoln's accomplishments, see his obituary in Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 43 (April 1933): 25-32.

⁶ Waldo Lincoln, 'Portraits in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society,' Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 33 (October 1923): 235-47.

⁷ For a list of the subscribers, see Clarence W. Bowen to Clarence S. Brigham, November 2, 1929, American Antiquarian Society Archives. The subscribers, including Bowen, Brigham, Arthur Prentice Rugg (cat. #100), and Henry W. Cunningham (cat. #36), each contributed \$100.

⁸ Clarence W. Bowen to Clarence S. Brigham, December 16, 1929, American Antiquarian Society Archives. According to Salisbury's bill, dated December 18, 1929, the artist was paid \$1,250.00 for the portrait and was reimbursed \$95.00 for the frame. The remainder of the subscription money was used to pay Lincoln's expenses for the trip to New York. In a December 18, 1929 letter to Brigham, Lincoln noted, 'I am exceedingly pleased to have my portrait in the library.'

⁹ Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society 43 (April 1933): 31.

¹⁰ 'Waldo Lincoln is 80 Today,' Worcester Telegram, December 31, 1929, American Antiquarian Society Newsclipping File.