

The Codman Collection of Pictures

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That the Codman legacy is a rich one is evidenced by the articles here dealing with important aspects of the collections. An extremely important feature of the Codman estate in Lincoln is the collection of some ninety paintings housed there. The Codman House is a treasure trove of well-documented old master and American paintings, some of them particularly fine. The pictures, which have been unstudied as yet, as a collection or individually, represent a continuum of collecting begun in the last years of the eighteenth century. While the paintings have not hung continuously in the house in Lincoln, some of those which returned to the house after Ogden Codman, Sr.'s purchase of it in 1862 must have first hung there during the lifetime of their original owner, John Codman III.

The first paintings to enter the collection were purchased in Paris between 1794 and 1797 by Richard Codman (fig. 69), and sent home to his brother John.¹ A number of the paintings, the purchases of which are recorded, remained in John's possession; when he died in 1803, there were forty-two paintings in his Hanover Street, Boston, home and twenty-two in the house in Lincoln.² John's paintings were divided among his sons, the Reverend John, Charles Russell, George, William, and Francis. Charles Russell Codman notably added to his inherited paintings, forming a collection which was one of his primary interests and of some repute in his day. Charles Russell was the inheritor of the Lincoln estate but sold it in 1807. His entire collection was displayed at his home at 29 Chestnut Street, Boston (fig. 70). Charles Russell died in 1852, and his pictures were, in turn, divided among his children Charles Russell, Jr., James McMaster, Frances, Ogden, and

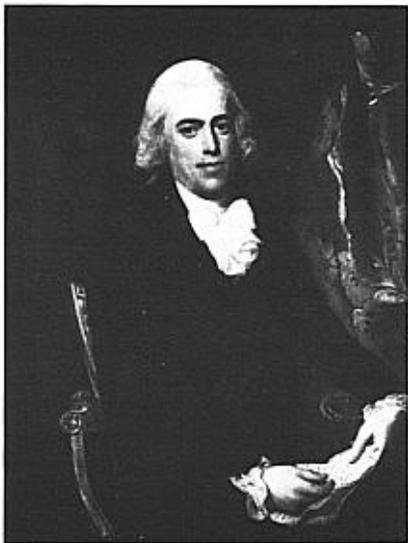


FIG. 69. RICHARD CODMAN, BY JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY. Codman sat to Copley in England, probably in 1794, on his way to Paris where he would buy the first pictures to enter the family collection. (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

Richard. The paintings inherited by Ogden came to rest at "The Grange." Ogden had married Sarah Fletcher Bradlee in 1861; years later her family's own sizable collection of paintings would come to Lincoln, including those of her brother-in-law Theodore Chase. This article will examine the major family figures associated with the paintings to provide an outline of the history of the collection and an introduction to the paintings themselves.

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Ironically, the man traditionally credited by the family with having founded the paintings collection seems to have done so unintentionally. Richard Codman was a partner with his brother John in a shipping business, and in 1793 went abroad as a representative of the firm, traveling first to England where his portrait was painted by John Singleton Copley (1737-1815).³ Richard soon moved to France where he adopted a high style of living, entertaining lavishly in two châteaux and a house in Paris, all richly furnished.⁴ The partnership of John and Richard Codman was dissolved by the always more prudent John in 1798 "for fear of war."⁵ Meanwhile, Richard had become embroiled in new financial schemes, speculating in currency, real estate and other commodities in revolutionary France's chaotic economy. By 1799 Richard was ruined financially, necessitating John's going to Europe to extricate



FIG. 71. NYMPHS BATHING, ATTRIBUTED TO CORNELIUS VAN POELENBURGH. Charles Russell Codman wrote of this painting, "it has that polished and seductive brilliancy for which the artist was so distinguished." It is probably by a follower of this seventeenth-century Dutch artist who worked in Italy. (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)



FIG. 70. 29 CHESTNUT STREET, BOSTON. Josiah J. Hawes, photographer, ca. 1865. The home of Charles Russell Codman from 1817 to 1852, it housed his renowned paintings collection. (SPNEA Archives.)



FIG. 72. CATTLE FAIR, BY JEAN-LOUIS DEMARNE, French, second half of eighteenth century. Purchased by Richard Codman from J.-B. P. LeBrun in 1796, this painting is signed at the lower right, "DeMARNE." (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

him from his debts; in 1802 Richard left France for South America, returning later to the United States.

Richard made three known purchases of paintings in Paris, amounting to more than one hundred pictures, and sent them home to John; a number of the works itemized in these purchases can be identified in the family collection. Richard's first-known purchase was made at a time when he was regularly buying up various goods and consigning them to John in America in the course of business. In 1794 Richard wrote to John,

I have bought in Paris some 80 odd pictures which I have ordered packed and shipped to Havre. Some of them are very pretty and done by the finest Masters, they cost me about £270 sterling.⁶

Individual works in this shipment were not enumerated, but it has traditionally

been assumed that family paintings known to have belonged to John Codman (but not part of the two itemized purchases discussed below) originated with this group. At least seven paintings now in Lincoln are included in this group. Most are now in the paneled room at the Codman House: *Coast Scene*, attributed to Willem van de Velde the Younger (1633-1707);⁷ *Nymphs Bathing*, attributed to Cornelis van Poelenburgh (ca. 1586-1667) (fig. 71); *Silenus, Pan and Venus*, a small gouache on parchment attributed to Willem van Mieris (1662-1747); *An Old Woman at a Table* by Jacques Albert Senave (1758-1829);⁸ and two pendant panels with scenes of gypsies camping, thought by the family to be of English origin. *The Colosseum*, now in the drawing room, is one of a set of four large architectural views attributed to Ferdinando DeGalli da Bibiena (1657-1743)

which belonged to John Codman. The set was inherited by Charles Russell Codman, and hung in the dining room at 29 Chestnut Street.⁹ It was divided four ways at his death.

If in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century Richard Codman was speculating in old master paintings, he was not alone. The American painter John Trumbull wrote of the opportunities of the time in his autobiography,

in the confusion of the time, and the consequent ruin of ancient and opulent families, paintings by old masters might be advantageously purchased. . . .¹⁰

In 1795 Trumbull purchased about 100 paintings in Paris, to sell in England on the advice of his friend Jean-Baptiste Pierre LeBrun, art dealer and husband of the artist Madame Vigée-LeBrun. J-B. P. LeBrun, whom Trumbull called "the most experienced judge [of old master paintings] then in Europe,"¹¹ figures largely in the family tradition associated with Richard Codman's pictures. Among the family papers are photographs of LeBrun's bill, dated December 1796, for objects "achette pour Mr. Codman."¹² The "LeBrun certificate," so-called because it attests to the authenticity of the listed works, describes

two sculptures and twenty-four paintings by artists including Greuze, Teniers, Paterre and Schalken, and details their true value (as opposed to the lower price on the bill), and in some cases, their provenance. The LeBrun pictures were shipped to John by Richard in April 1797; John later noted in his account book that he paid Richard for them in June of 1802.¹³ Most of these pictures did stay in the family and in later years became the focus of family interest in the picture collection, evidently because of the fame of LeBrun, "the great Paris dealer," as Ogden, Jr. called him.¹⁴ Only one of the "LeBruns," as the family called them, actually descended to Ogden Codman, Sr., the fine *Cattle Fair* by Jean-Louis Demarne (1744-1820) (fig. 72). Of this painting, number eighteen on LeBrun's bill, Charles Russell Codman wrote, "this picture is very beautifully painted and bears the closest examination. . . . The grouping is admirable and each figure is exquisitely finished, as to give the whole [the] appearance of enamel."¹⁵

Richard Codman made one more recorded purchase in Paris, acquiring ten paintings from a Mr. Brunot, "Marchand de tableaux," in September 1797. The receipt lists works by Vernet, Senave, Bruandet, Duval, Desir and Droling.¹⁶ Only three of these pictures can be traced within the family. Two are in the Codman House: a tiny peasant scene, one of the "2 interieures de Senave" (fig. 73), and a moonlit harbor scene by Joseph Vernet (1712-89).



FIG. 73. COTTAGE INTERIOR, BY JACQUES ALBERT SENAIVE, Dutch, second half of eighteenth century. One of two such scenes bought by Richard Codman in 1797. (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

Charles Russell Codman was probably the most seriously interested in art of any of the Codmans discussed here. As a young man he traveled in Europe from 1808 to 1812; a journal kept of his trip through England and Scotland records his impressions of visits to museums and royal collections and the London studios of Copley and West.¹⁷ After returning from Europe, in 1817 Charles Russell bought the house at 29 Chestnut Street in Boston which was

fondly remembered by his son Richard as something of a showplace for his father's art collection. Richard Codman wrote that the drawing room was

only used when there was company, or to show the pictures of which the room was full. Though the room was not much used the door was always left open. The window opening onto the yard had been closed and plastered over so as to have the whole wall for pictures. . . .¹⁸

The circular stairway too was a gallery,

being lighted all the way up from windows opening on the yard, it had a fine light for pictures, and some of the best were hung there on that account, even to the top of the house.¹⁹

The marble sculpture of Cupid with a harp, now in the hall at Lincoln, stood in this hallway at 29 Chestnut Street.

In 1823 Charles Russell Codman was one of the subscribers for an addition of a lecture room, to be used for art exhibitions when not in use for lectures, to the Pearl Street home of the Boston Athenaeum (Josiah Bradlee, whose granddaughter would marry Codman's son, was also among the subscribers).²⁰ The addition was a three-story building, the top floor of which was a "Gallery of Paintings." The first exhibition was planned for 1827, and Charles Russell was one of five members of "a committee for the purpose of procuring an exhibition of Pictures for the encouragement of the Fine Arts, to open at the Athenaeum Gallery, on 10th May"²¹ Codman himself was one of the major lenders to the Athenaeum, and had fifteen of his pictures in this first exhibition, some of which he had inherited, and others, such as a Washington Allston,



FIG. 74. STILL LIFE, BY WILLEM CLAESZ. HEDA. This painting, purchased by Charles Russell Codman, is signed and dated on the blade of the knife, "HEDA 16[30?]." (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

which he had purchased.²² Four pictures presently in the Lincoln house were exhibited, including the Demarne and the Poelenburgh which Codman had inherited from his father. The other two pictures, which he had purchased, were a landscape by Jacob van Ruisdael (1628/9-1682) and a still life by Willem Claesz. Heda (1599-1680/2) (fig. 74). In that first year, nine pictures were also exhibited by a Mrs. Codman, presumably Catherine Amory Codman, John Codman's second wife, and two paintings by Charles Russell's older brother, the Reverend John Codman, so the collection formed by Richard Codman was well represented. The following year Charles Russell lent fourteen different paintings to the Athenaeum, as a rule had been made barring repeat showings of paintings in these early years.²³

In 1829 Codman again went abroad, with his wife Anne. Her diary of their 1830 summer travels in France, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands again reflects Charles Russell's avid interest in looking at pictures in museums and private collections.²⁴ Whether any purchases resulted from this or the previous European trip is not certain; Codman probably acquired paintings both in Europe and Boston. In any case, Charles Russell Codman added more than forty pictures to the collection he inherited from his father, at least six of which are now in Lincoln. The magnificent *Still Life* by Heda is certainly one of the highlights of the entire collection. The Jacob van Ruisdael landscape was one of several paintings by that artist owned by various family members. A painting of Adam and Eve in the Garden was purchased by Charles Russell, who described it as "a picture of rich tone and coloring, and has by some connoisseurs been supposed to be painted by Dominichino [*sic*], by others to be the work of Julio Romano."²⁵ *Piazza San Marco*, attributed to Francesco Guardi (1712-1793) and *Shepherdess*, attributed to François

Boucher (1703-1770), as well as a small landscape attributed to Duval, were Charles Russell Codman acquisitions.

Ogden Codman, Sr. comes into the story principally because it is his portion of the family collection that is at the Codman House today. He does not stand out as a figure actively interested in the paintings collection, although he did from time to time add to it. A small head of the Madonna, attributed to Luini, was purchased by him in Venice in the 1860s, Ogden, Jr. recalled being told.²⁶ Ogden, Sr. also acquired two paintings, the large battle scene in the hall and a small landscape, which are inscribed "Mrs. Swan" on the back, and were probably purchased at the 1868 auction sale of items belonging to Mrs. John T. Sargent, daughter of Colonel James Swan.²⁷ A scene of peasants fiddling and dancing in an inn, attributed to Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1685), was traded to Ogden by his brother James McMaster Codman. It had been bought from Henry Greenough. Greenough, brother of the sculptor Horatio Greenough, had been called upon by the family after Charles Russell Codman's death to assist in dividing Codman's paintings equitably among his children.²⁸

Ogden also acquired a few paintings by expatriate American artists. An 1874 Leonard and Company bill records his purchase of the two J. Foxcroft Cole (1837-1892) scenes of sheep from a sale at this Boston auction house.²⁹ Both are still in the Codman House. Illustrated here is *Spring Afternoon, Stoneham, Mass.* of 1872 (fig. 75). Two paintings in the library date from Ogden's sojourn in Dinard, France, where he lived off and on beginning in 1874. *Harbor Scene, St. Servan* by Edward Darley Boit (1840-1915) (fig. 76) was a present from the artist and can be seen in photographs of Ogden's Dinard home dating from the 1880s. Also painted in this resort was *Seaweed Gatherers* of 1876 by William P. W. Dana (1833-1927).



FIG. 75. SPRING AFTERNOON, STONEHAM, MASS., BY J. FOXCROFT COLE (1872). This is one of two paintings by Cole bought by Ogden Codman, Sr. in 1874. (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)



FIG. 76. HARBOR SCENE, ST. SERVAN, BY EDWARD DARLEY BOIT (1882). Boit gave this painting to Ogden Codman, Sr. when both were living in Dinard, France. (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)



FIG. 77. SCENE IN NORTH CONWAY, NEW HAMPSHIRE, BY BENJAMIN CHAMPNEY. This painting belonged to James and Mary Bradlee, who summered in this White Mountain resort. Scratched into the painting at the lower right is "B. Champney, N. Conway, /186[9?]." (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

Ogden Codman, Jr.'s dealings with the family paintings were primarily in his role as family historian. In letters from France to his siblings in the 1920s he expressed great interest in establishing authorship and provenance of the paintings, particularly of those thought to have been purchased by his great-great-uncle Richard Codman. At this time the only one of the family pictures which Ogden had with him was the Copley portrait of Richard Codman, which Ogden hung in his *château* at Grégy, musing that "Uncle Richard" would be "not 100 kils. from his own *chateau de la Tuilerie*, at Dammartin."³⁰

Ogden had spent some of his childhood years at the 34 Beacon Street home of the Bradlees, his mother's family, and was as interested in the things in that household as in those in Lincoln. After 1877, when Ogden's grandmother Mary May Bradlee



FIG. 78. NIAGARA FALLS, ARTIST UNIDENTIFIED (c. 1820). Although inscribed "T Chase" on the back of the frame, this painting belonged to Chase's wife's family, the Bradlees. The canvas is stamped "S.[-?]. SCARLET. / 1[8--?]," possibly for Samuel Scarlett, a British born painter who worked in Philadelphia. (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

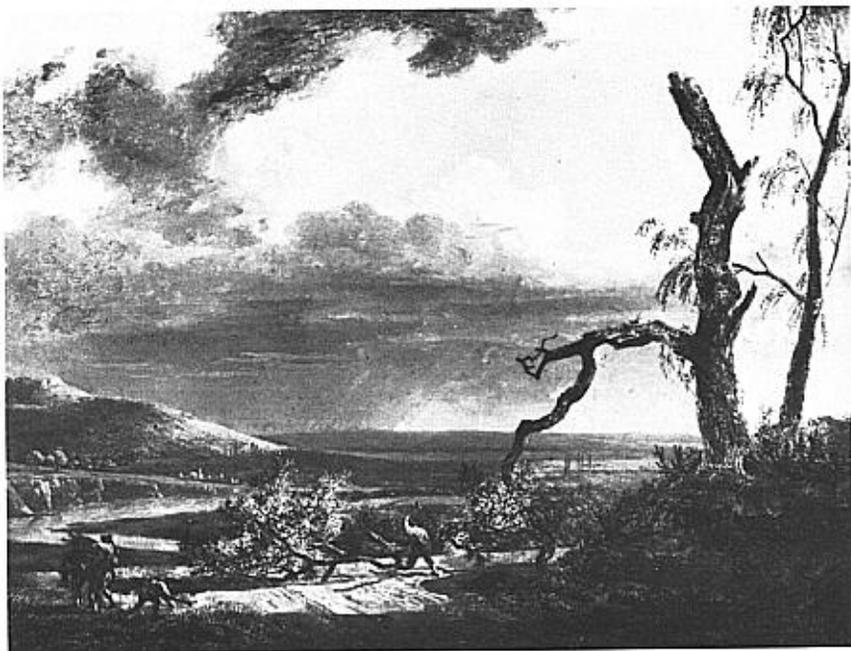


FIG. 79. LOADING WOOD ONTO A DONKEY, BY DUVAL, French, late eighteenth century. A paper label on the stretcher is inscribed by the French picture dealer LeBrun, "No 7 / un paysage / par Duval." (SPNEA, photograph by J. David Bohl.)

died, many of her family's things went to the 168 Marlborough Street home of her daughter and son-in-law, Alice and Theodore Chase. When Aunt Alice Chase died in 1925, Ogden directed his brother Tom in the acquisition of items from that household. He was particularly anxious to have a French painting of a young lady holding a rose which had hung in the dining room at 34 Beacon Street. This picture, by Pierre Joseph Dedreux-Dorcy (1789-1874) had been purchased at the sale of the contents of the Deacon House in 1871.³¹ The Deacon House, in Boston's old South End, was noted for its furnishings acquired in France in the mid-nineteenth century.³²

Many of the paintings that now hang in the upstairs hallway in the Codman House belonged to the Bradlees. The Benjamin Champney (1817-1904) painting of a scene in North Conway, New Hampshire (fig. 77) was no doubt a souvenir of James and Mary Bradlee's summers in that resort. *Bradlee*

Farm, Dorchester, an 1849 painting by Thomas Hinckley (1813-1896), depicts another summer retreat of the family. An early nineteenth-century painting of Niagara Falls (fig. 78), by an unidentified American artist, is very close in composition to an 1804 print after a now lost painting by John Vanderlyn.³³ An early seascape by the Boston artist Samuel Lancaster Gerry (1813-1891) also belonged to the Bradlees.

Portraits of James Bowdoin Bradlee and Mary May Bradlee by George P. A. Healey (1813-1894) and Francis Alexander (1800-1880) respectively, hang in the library at the Codman House. Alexander's 1840 bill for the latter is among the papers of James Bradlee.³⁴

Bradlee's son-in-law Theodore Chase was the owner of a number of paintings that have come to the Codman House. Two are by Ernest Wadsworth Longfellow (1845-1921) son of the poet Henry Wadsworth

Longfellow: *View of Boston over the Flats and Bay of Naples with Vesuvius*. Other Chase paintings now in Lincoln range from *L'Amorosa*, attributed to Godfried Schalcken (1643-1706), to the large copy after Murillo, *Boys Eating Fruit*, which belonged to Chase's parents, to landscapes by nineteenth-century French artists Joseph Ravaisson and Jules Rozier. Chase also owned a painting by Edward Darley Boit, *Two Stranded Fishing Boats*.

As late as 1954, the Codman paintings collection was still growing. At the estate sale of a cousin, Dorothy Codman, daughter of Ogden Codman, Sr. and the last inhabitant of "The Grange," purchased two paintings.³⁵ One was a landscape attributed to the Dutch artist Jan Wynants (active 1643-1684) which had been a gift to Charles Russell Codman's brother Francis. Dorothy also purchased a painting attributed to Duval, (possibly Eustache-François Duval, active in Paris, 1784-1836) which had also belonged to Francis Codman (fig. 79). This was one of the paintings purchased from LeBrun in Paris by Richard Codman, one of "Deux paysages par Duval artiste distingue representent

des cites pittoresques," item seven on LeBrun's bill. At the end of the bill LeBrun stated that each picture "porte Le tiquet et N^o. qui est ecrie de ma main." On this very fine small painting survives the paper label on which is written "No 7/un paysage/par Duval."³⁶

"The Codman Collection of Pictures . . . has always been a source of pride and interest to the family," wrote a family historian in the preface to her book on a portion of the collection.³⁷ Thus the collection has been preserved for us, a rich and varied assemblage of paintings, with the papers of the four generations of family members who amassed the collection over a period of 150 years providing material for the study of one New England family's involvement in the collecting of art. As a large and significant collection, begun at an early date, intact within a domestic setting, with a wealth of documentation and supporting data, the Codman paintings collection is a rare resource.

NOTES

1. Family notes and some manuscript sources pertaining to the paintings acquired by Richard Codman were compiled by Cora Codman Wolcott, a first cousin of Ogden Codman, Jr., in "A History of the Codman Collection of Pictures" (unpublished typescript, 1935, SPNEA). The copy in the Codman Family Manuscripts Collection (hereafter referred to as CFMC), box 195, folder 2948, has annotations made by Dorothy Codman, and is the source for much of the early history of the collection, including Charles Russell Codman's descriptions of paintings here quoted.
2. CFMC, John Codman III probate inventory, in "Richard Codman's Estates in France," box 115, folder 1894.
3. Copley also painted portraits of Richard's brother, John Codman III (fig. 15), his nephew John Codman IV, and a copy of John Johnston's portrait of his father John Codman (1720-1795). For illustrations see Jules David Prown, *John Singleton Copley, 2 vols.*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press for the National Gallery of Art, 1966), vol. 2, figs. 658-660. Copley's relationship with the family was long-standing; his famous *trompe l'oeil* painting of a corkscrew hanging on a nail, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was painted on the library door of the Codman House between 1766 and 1774. See Perry T. Rathbone, "Rediscovery: Copley's Corkscrew," *Art in America* 3 (1965), pp. 48-51.
4. See Yvon Bizardel, *Deux Yankees et Trois Demeures Parisiennes* (Paris: Librairie Historique Clavreuil, 1980), passim. For biographies of Codman family members see Cora Codman Wolcott, *The Codmans of Charlestown and Boston, 1637-1929* (Brookline, Massachusetts: By the Author, 1930) and Richard Codman, *Reminiscences of Richard Codman* (Boston: By the Author, 1923), and Robert Howie's article, this issue.
5. Bizardel, *Deux Yankees*, p. 83.
6. Wolcott, "A History," p. 10.
7. Attributions of paintings are those traditionally assumed by the family.
8. Charles Russell Codman wrote that this painting was signed and dated "T. [J.] Senave 1793," Wolcott, "A History," p. 57. The picture is in poor condition and the signature is not visible at the present time.
9. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Thomas Codman, 29 January 1925, box 87.
10. Theodore Sizer, ed., *The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 186.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Codman Family Photograph Collection, folder 18.
13. Wolcott, "A History," p. 9.
14. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Hugh Codman, 23 January 1924, box 87.
15. Wolcott, "A History," p. 31.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
17. CFMC, Charles Russell Codman diary (transcription), box 118.
18. Codman, *Reminiscences*, p. 2.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
20. Mabel Munson Swan, *The Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1940), pp. 7-10.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
22. For Athenaeum exhibition history of the Codman paintings see Robert F. Perkins, Jr. and William J. Gavin III, eds., *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index* (Boston: Library of the Boston Athenaeum, 1980), pp. 187, 191-193.
23. Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 117.
24. CFMC, Anne McMaster Codman diary (transcription), box 118.
25. Wolcott, "A History," p. 94.
26. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Dorothy Codman, 16 April 1925, box 87.
27. *Ibid.* Swan, like Richard Codman, sought his fortune in Paris during the French Revolution; he sent many fine things home to his wife in

Roxbury, Massachusetts, during this period. See Richard Nylander's article, this issue, for Swan furniture which was acquired by the Codmans.

28. Wolcott, "A History," p. 101.

29. CFMC, bill, Leonard and Company to Ogden Codman, Sr., 1874, box 40, folder 936.

30. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Thomas Codman, 12 October 1925, box 87.

31. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Thomas Codman, 31 October 1925, box 87.

32. See Richard Nylander's article, this issue, for other Deacon House pieces acquired by the Codmans.

33. See Kenneth C. Lindsay, *The Works of John Vanderlyn* (Binghamton, New York: University Art Gallery, 1970), fig. 43.

34. CFMC, bill, Francis Alexander to James Bradlee, 26 February 1840, box 22, folder 358.

35. CFMC, Catalogue of the estate sale of Mrs. Henry Wolcott, 1954, box 196, folder 2953.

36. Codman Family Photograph Collection, folder 18. These passages have been translated by the author as follows: "two landscapes by Duval, distinguished artist, representing picturesque sites" and "bears the label and number which is written in my hand."

37. Wolcott, "A History," preface.