WEST FAMILY GROUP

From the painting by Benjamin West recently purchased for the Nashville Art Association by its President, Mrs. James C. Bradford
Members and Guests of the Art Alliance, Fellow Members of the Historical Society: I bid you welcome to these halls. As you all know, the Art Alliance is at the present time holding a most interesting exhibition of pictures by Benjamin West, which have been loaned for the purpose of stimulating renewed interest in West and his work.

The committee in charge of that particular exhibition called on me about a fortnight ago and asked that the Historical Society should loan its own portraits and drawings and books, but I was obliged to say that the Council, acting under what I think is a very proper precaution, had to decline the request. You can readily understand that we cannot permit our own pictures to be taken from the walls, because if we did it in one instance we would be obliged to do it for almost every celebration or exhibition that is held, and from an entirely fireproof building some of the precious treasures

* An address delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, S. W. Corner of Thirteenth and Locust Streets, Philadelphia, Pa., on the evening of Monday, December 12, 1921.
in our possession would be removed and exposed to a risk which insurance cannot compensate. It may be easy to collect the money on an insurance policy, but insurance can never restore a burnt portrait.

I said, however, that we were perfectly willing, in order to express our entire sympathy with the Art Alliance exhibition, to hold a special meeting in the hall of this society, to which the members of the Art Alliance and their friends would be cordially invited, and that after a few general remarks from the President an opportunity would be given of studying what we have in the way of a West Collection. I think by the time you have made your examination you will be surprised as well as delighted at the extent, variety and excellence of our collection.

John Ruskin once said that great nations wrote their autographs in three manuscripts: in books of deeds, in books of words, and in books of art; and that a careful reading of all three was necessary to a complete knowledge of the history of a nation. Then, with that predilection for Art which was characteristic of him, he added "And perhaps the third book is the only one that is trustworthy."

The thought expressed by Ruskin in general terms, was a premonition, so to speak, of the spirit which is animating the studies and the thoughts of men and women of to-day,—that in order to understand the real life of a people, in order to grasp the true meaning of the right movement of the ages, we must broaden our view and not confine our attention to but portions of events which play a fractional although important part in national development.

When I was in school, and even for many years later, the standpoint of most teachers and lecturers on history was to view the American Revolution as though it were a detached event in human history; and it was not until recently that students began to perceive that the story
of the American Revolution was but a single chapter in the great volume of human fate. We now realize that there can be no adequate appreciation of the importance, the dignity and majesty of our national life unless we sweep the horizon with an eagle glance and carry into the picture all of the influences which make for the uplift of humanity and for the education of men and women in whatever condition of society they may be found.

Mr. Wells's recent book on "Outlines of History" whatever we may think either of his conclusions or of the way in which he has reached them, carries conviction to the mind of the reader that he rests upon a true basic thought when he says that all human history is a unit, and that whether we begin five hundred thousand years ago and trace history through prehistoric man down through the buried and ruined cities which we excavate, or whether we begin with the turmoil and activity of the last six thousand years, signifies but little, for all periods are but a part of the same vast scheme of evolution and development.

Although I am going to talk only about the works of one man, and he a Pennsylvanian, yet at the same time it will be seen that he played an important part in the general history of our American development. Is it not remarkable that in Pennsylvania, at a time when we had but fifty thousand people in a Commonwealth which now numbers ten millions, it should happen that a lad born in a humble structure, in a field with an open spring, with no sword, no office, no influence, no powerful family to push his interests, with no other instrument of success save that of the painter's brush, should have so far impressed himself upon a hostile nation endeavoring to deprive us of the political and basic constitutional rights of our race, as to win its highest honors in Art and that his dead body should be carried by British statesmen and warriors to a crypt beneath
the dome of St. Paul's, there to rest side by side with Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Christopher Wren?

It is well worth dwelling upon to ascertain how it was that a lad of such modest origin should so far influence the life of his time that we are now assembled to recognize his worth, to correct, so far as we can, by our own revived interest, the inattention, the neglect, the lack of appreciation which has obscured his fame for more than seventy years.

Benjamin West was born October 10, 1738, on what is now the campus of Swarthmore College. I shall throw pictures on the screen in a few moments, but I prefer first to give you a general verbal outline of his career before the illustrations are shown. As early as the age of seven he manifested his artistic talents. There are some remarkable stories told about him. Some have been discredited, others have been positively denied; but nevertheless they have a persistent vitality about them, a charm and simplicity of their own which justify me in repeating one or two of them, although you must not expect me critically to examine the evidence upon which each rests.

Much surprise has been expressed that the Quaker lad, as he was called, born into an atmosphere far from artistic, should have developed a taste and displayed a genius for art. There has been a spirited controversy among writers as to whether he was a Quaker or not. Mr. Galt, his biographer, contends that he was a Quaker. Dr. Sharpless, the late President of Haverford, insisted that he was a Quaker; and you will find Dr. Sharpless’s testimony to that effect in the West family Bible loaned us by Mr. Howard Edwards. Charles Henry Hart was of opinion that inasmuch as John West himself, the father of Benjamin, was not in good standing in Quaker Meeting, Benjamin could not have been a Quaker; and also because of the fact that West in no portrait exhibited himself in
Quaker garb, although as you will see in his picture of the West family group his father and half-brother and wife are in Quaker dress, while the artist himself is not. But we must not draw the conclusion that because West painted his father in Quaker garb he necessarily was a Quaker at the time of West’s birth. It was only last evening that I learned that the father had been re-admitted to good standing in Meeting three years after his return to England, in 1765, and the picture being painted about three years later, indicates, of course, the then personal status.

The important thing that is manifest is that West’s talent and zeal and persistency were not characteristic of Quakers. However much he may have startled some of the sect by attempting to walk in worldly fields, yet the story is told of encouragement extended to the boy by Pennington and Williamson, both of whom were strict Quakers, so definitely to the advantage of the lad in the development of his talents.

It is said that when he was but seven years of age he had fraternized with Indian chiefs, who camped out in the neighboring fields and had red and yellow pigments; that they taught him how to use colors in drawing birds and insects and other natural objects about him. To these pigments his mother added a stick of indigo,—which supplied him with the three primary colors, red, yellow and blue; and soon he became master of the secondary colors by mixing them.

The story also was that while his sister, a married woman, was out in the garden plucking flowers, he was left in charge of the crib, and the baby smiled in her sleep; the boy, attracted by that smile, took a stub of a pen which was on the desk and made a little sketch of the baby. When the infant’s mother and grandmother returned he attempted to conceal it from fear of censure, but his mother said, “Why, he has made a picture of Sally.” West afterwards declared: that his Mother’s
smile, and the Mother’s kiss that followed it, made him an artist. Those are his own words as quoted by Galt. Although Galt gives some highly-colored touches, I can scarcely conceive it possible that the book is based on a series of fabrications, and for these reasons: Galt distinctly says that he submitted his book to West for examination, the book was printed in West’s lifetime, and unless West was determined to impose fraudulently upon a credulous public those stories if false would have been stricken out.

Finding that he had been supplied by Indian chiefs with color; that he had been successful in depicting a baby in the cradle—and you will soon see John Sartain’s picture of the incident on the screen—then he found he had no proper brushes, and he was told that camel’s hair brushes were in use. Well, he had no such brushes, and so it was, according to the story, that his childish ingenuity manifested itself by his taking hairs from the cat’s tail, and the cat soon presented such a mottled appearance that her good health was questioned by the father of Benjamin. His mother explained that the cat had been clipped to supply the boy with hairs from which to make brushes.

A painter in Philadelphia, by the name of Williams, hearing what the boy had done, sent him a box of colors, some paint brushes, and a few engravings to stimulate his imagination; with these he retired to the garret, and then began to teach himself, and made two or three discoveries. On one occasion the lad was ill, and, lying in a darkened room saw passing across the counterpane a white cow, marching from one side of the room to the other and then disappearing. He also saw a train of little pigs running in the same way. He mentioned the fact to those about him and they, having eyes but seeing not, said, “He is delirious.” The doctor was called in to take his temperature and count his pulse. He found no excess temperature and the pulse perfectly normal,
so the thoughtful boy sought for an explanation. He found it in a perforated knot-hole in the shutter which closed the window, letting in a ray of light. West began to speculate about the matter, and, pursuing his investigation, in time invented the *camera obscura*—a self invention. He mentioned it to his painter friend, Williams, who said "It is very creditable to you that you invented it yourself, but I received, a few weeks ago, a complete camera from England." So it is plain that, while he was not the original discoverer of the principle upon which the camera was invented, yet so far as his own thoughts were concerned, he was entirely original in his own artistic conception.

He was then thirteen or fourteen years of age. About this time he was introduced to a charming girl of the name of Elizabeth Shewell. The boy who introduced them was later known to history as "Mad Anthony Wayne." Young West and Elizabeth Shewell fell in love with each other, but as they were children they had to wait. West was poor. He went into Lancaster County, and there made friends, and as a particular friend a man of the name of William Henry, a manufacturer, who afterwards was a member of the Continental Congress,—West's portraits of Henry and his wife are on yonder wall. He also became favorably known to the celebrated young Scotchman, James Wilson, one of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence and one of the Framers of the Constitution of the United States. He also became a pupil under the first Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, Provost William Smith; graduating as a member of the class of 1757. Above my head to the left hangs one of the earliest portraits painted by West, that of Dr. Smith as a middle-aged man.

By this time his fame was spreading. He went to New York to seek encouragement there. He found it, although he later said that as New York was uncon-
genial soil he preferred Philadelphia; but it should never be forgotten that Mr. William Kelly, a New York merchant, whose portrait he was then painting, was so much impressed that, without West's knowledge at the time, he sent to his agent in Philadelphia a letter of credit for fifty pounds, to aid the struggling young artist. That credit was the basis of his Italian studies.

There was a food shortage in Italy, then at war with France, and food was being shipped from Philadelphia to Naples. William Allen, who afterward founded Allentown, after whom Allen's Lane, above Germantown, is named, and who served as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania for a period of twenty-eight years; and whose father-in-law, Andrew Hamilton, was the architect of the State House, were both West's patrons, and they with Mr. Kelly sent the young man abroad to study Roman art and Grecian sculpture in Italy. He left our shores in 1760 at the age of nearly twenty-two, and never returned.

His love for the bright, "apple-cheeked girl," as he called her, continued unabated. They had promised to marry each other so soon as his means justified, but this was a long way off. He spent three years in the study of art in Italy—at a time, we must remember, when the Italian galleries were unspoiled by any depredations on the part of Napoleon. He enjoyed Italy to the full extent of her glory. He had the advantage of Venice, Florence, Pisa, and Rome. He could study also great classical statues; and we can see the result of his study in his drawings, in his power to express anatomically the strength and beauty of an arm, a back or a shoulder, or the magnificent chest of Apollo, whom he likened to a Mohawk Indian. It is said,—and this would tend to discountenance the idea that he was at heart a Quaker—that when he first saw the statue of Apollo Belvedere he exclaimed, "My God, Apollo is like a young Mohawk savage!" To his hearers, who were
shocked by his comparing the most beautiful of the Greeks to an American Indian, he justified his statement. He said, "Why, I have seen these Indians stripped, exercising, drawing the bow, bringing their muscles into play, and pursuing their quarry, so that their chests expand; they are precisely like the Apollo Belvedere."

The Italians asked him to paint a portrait in competition with Mengs, a German artist then in Italy. This he did, and in the gallery when West's picture was displayed it was far superior in the mastery of color to that displayed by the highly-reputed German.

Prior to this, West had made a careful study of the methods employed by Titian, and spent two years and a half trying to learn how Titian mixed his colors. He then decided that the mixing of colors was not the most important feature, but that this must be supplemented by delicacy in the stroke of the brush and the skill of the eye in detecting tones. Thereafter West used the brush delicately and blended his tints with half tones.

At the age of twenty-five West went to England and there met Archbishop Drummond, who became his friend. He met also Burke, Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Oliver Goldsmith. The Archbishop read to him one night, finding he had his head full of classical subjects, a thrilling passage from Tacitus, describing "Agrippina landing with the ashes of Germanicus." Drummond asked West to sketch the incident, which West did over night. The Archbishop showed the drawing to George III. The King recognized talent in it, and said, "Send the young man to me." He was introduced to the Royal presence, and they fell to talking about Regulus, and West then painted, within a very brief time, the "Departure of Regulus From Rome." That was the first picture George III bought from West, who soon became historical painter to the King.

A dispute, in the meantime, had taken place between
the artists of the day over the best methods for the pro-
motion of art, and Sir Joshua Reynolds was one of the
unsatisfied. In order to protect Reynolds from what
he thought was unjustified criticism and opposition, the
King founded The Royal Academy, in 1765, and Sir
Joshua became the first president. He held the presi-
dency until 1792, when Benjamin West became his suc-
cessor. West's long career through that time was one
of unbroken success, painting the thirty-eight pictures
of royal selection to be seen at Windsor.

Within two years of his arrival in England he had
established himself on so firm a basis that he wrote to
Elizabeth Shewell, asking her to come to him that they
might be married. She had an obtuse brother, who did
not wish her to marry an unknown man, and it is said
he locked her into a room and confined her there so long
that all visible connection or correspondence between
the young people had ceased. Here is the story: the
moment she heard that success had smiled upon her
lover, and that his arms were extended to her across
the sea, she sought to escape from her prison house;
and on a certain night with the aid of Benjamin Frank-
lin, William White, afterwards Bishop White, and
Francis Hopkinson, she effected her escape. That was
a beautiful conspiracy! Here we have a future Bishop
of the diocese, a famous philosopher, and the author of
"The Battle of the Kegs" rescuing a lady from a third-
story window, by throwing up a rope ladder to her,
during her brother's sleep; they also had a convenient
coach at a dark corner of the roadside; and drove down
to the river, at Chester, where they were holding a
sloop. And, behold, West's father was there, with
Matthew Pratt, the artist. And thus was she carried
across the ocean; and married to West at St. Martin's
in the Fields. No Quaker escapade was that!

Mr. Hart denies the story, but I cannot find sub-
stantiation of his denial except his bald assertion that
the story was not true. Benjamin Franklin was fifty-eight at that time, Bishop White only eighteen, and Francis Hopkinson twenty-five. The escaping girl was nineteen. Whether it was a dark or a moonlight night is not stated, but at all events the conspiracy succeeded. The important feature of the matter is this, that the story was told by Bishop White to a Mr. Swift, of Easton, and he repeated it to Sully, who afterward was a pupil of Benjamin West. To say that all this can be swept aside, and the Bishop discredited, because of the assertion by Matthew Pratt, himself a fellow-conspirator and a witness to the wedding, in his diary that she was married with the express approval of all her relatives and friends—amounting to an express contradiction of the disapproval of her brother—strikes me as being too slight as evidence of contradiction; at least, I would not like to talk to twelve men in the box and expect them to believe the denial,—and when I say "twelve men in the box," of course, I mean there would be six women to be convinced, as well as six men.

West painted four classes of pictures: portraits, minor historical scenes, great historical scenes, and religious subjects. The cloud which settled down for so long a time upon his fame was due measurably to the fact that most of his subjects ceased to attract, where they did not actually repel. The public taste had changed. I have recollections of my own visits to the Academy of Fine Arts, on the site of the old Chestnut Street Opera House, and I can recall my childish gasps in looking at Death on the Pale Horse. I do not feel so now. I regard that picture as a prevision of the late agonies of a World War. Were we not all stirred by the pages of that master work of the Spanish novelist, Ibanez, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"? Did we not see War, Famine, Pestilence and Death in ghastly reality? Did we not realize the truth in the visions of St. John? Suppose that West's picture had
been exhibited during the war, would we not have found in it an artistic expression of our realization of what we were living through? Remember that West lived not only through the American Revolution, but the horrors of the French Revolution, of The Reign of Terror, and of the Napoleonic Wars, when Europe was deluged with blood from the Alps to the Neva. With West's portrayal before us we realize that as a supreme artist he had given expression to the thoughts then burning in the minds of men.

Take the religious picture, "Christ Healing the Sick," the great picture which hangs on the walls of the Pennsylvania Hospital. There is an artistic expression of the fact, never before so much thought of in the world's history as in our own day that Christ walked the wards of the hospitals to relieve the pain and the suffering that war had caused. Take, too, his picture of Christ Rejected, and recall that it was painted during that period in France when Christianity had been abolished, and the Goddess of Reason had been substituted. Plainly his picture expressed the spirit of France in casting out Christianity and the Church.

In order to realize what creative artists mean when they paint allegories, what they feel, what they intend to convey as lessons to humanity, as their messages whisper through the centuries, we must place ourselves in their position and visualize events as they saw them. Then only can we feel as they felt.

From the standpoint of artistic criticism of West's merits or defects of execution I do not feel myself competent to pass judgment upon these works of art. I looked, yesterday, at the portraits assembled by the Art Alliance and I confess that I was not aware that West was so fine a portrait painter. With the historical scenes I was more familiar.

In this last class, West did a distinctive thing: he abolished the classic costume in the robing of English
warriors and heroes in the hour of death. He was called upon to paint "The Death of Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham." His conception was against the express criticism of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who would have wrapped a Roman toga about the dying Wolfe. West sturdily said, "This battle took place in the year 1758, out in the wilds of Canada. That Indian, who was there with his scalping knife and tomahawk, knew nothing about a toga, and it is inappropriate." And so, in spite of his Master, he painted in the scarlet coat and the plumes and the war bonnet. The realism, the propriety of making his pictures fit the facts and suit the historic atmosphere in time captivated Sir Joshua and he surrendered; and from that time it became evident that West had taught the artists a lesson that they never forgot, for never again did an English soldier, or an American, appear in the dress of Greeks or Romans.

Let me now call your attention to our exhibits. The picture which hangs over the mantelpiece is one of the finest and largest of his portraits. It is of William Hamilton, of the Woodlands, and his niece, Mrs. Lyle. If that picture were cleaned, and a coat of varnish given to it, you would find all the brilliant sureness of the original. There is also a delicacy about it in tone, and also a fine accuracy in the painting of the hands of Mrs. Lyle—the artist succeeding in a detail which Gilbert Stuart shunned.

The two little pictures at the right of the mantelpiece are the original studies which Benjamin West executed preparatory to painting the portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte. To the right is a small head of West from the brush of Sir Thomas Lawrence. On the easel is a larger portrait of West, by the same artist. By the fireplace is a portrait of the wife of Thomas Hopkinson, the famous electrician, who discovered what we call "points," which stimulated the imagination of
The Life and Works of Benjamin West.

Benjamin Franklin and started him on his electrical studies, which made him immortal.

Around the corner, in the other room, you will find two early paintings by West, those of William Henry and his wife, the Lancaster portraits, contemporaneous with this above my head of Provost Smith.

In the cases, you will find in two sketch books 110 drawings by West; on the tables seven huge folio volumes of John Galt's "Life of West," extra illustrated, with autograph letters. There, too, is the receipt for West's funeral expenses in 1820 in the sum of £696—a silent witness of the august ceremony attending his interment in St. Paul's—a tribute by the British nation to the Delaware County lad of Pennsylvania. There is also his correspondence with royalty and noblemen and scientific men on both sides of the water, counting over 300 letters in manuscript in West's handwriting. West was also an autograph collector, and his specimens—532 in number, go back, as you will observe, to the reign of Louis XIV and include the autographs of Catherine the Great, Charles V, Queen Isabella, Lorenzo de Medici, and Napoleon I, and among painters, Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Reynolds, Harlow and Flaxman. Also you will find the family Bible of West, also some autograph letters of his, one of which is addressed to Copley, which I will soon throw on the screen. You will observe that some of his principal drawings can be regarded as original studies for several of his most famous pictures. In short, we have here, within these walls, and owned by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, as extraordinary collection of "Westiana" as can anywhere be found. Some were purchased, others picked up and presented to us by enthusiastic admirers of the artist. Nowhere on either side of the Atlantic, will you find in single ownership so complete a collection as we have here.

When succeeding Sir Joshua as President of the
Royal Academy in 1792 West was offered a Knighthood by the King, but refused the honor. "It is not to my taste," said he, "nor is it necessary to my fame."

West lives, too, in his pupils; he became the teacher of many American artists, of whom some were fifteen, twenty or even thirty years younger than himself, and thus transmitted his style, feeling and enthusiasm to other men. He taught Charles Willson Peale, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully, Washington Allston, and even the inventor, Samuel Morse, of electric telegraph fame.

(Pictures are thrown on the screen).

This is West's birthplace, built in the year 1725, now standing on the campus at Swarthmore. About 1874 fire damaged the house, but fortunately did not reach the room in which West was born, which is to the left of the doorway. In other respects the house is much in the position and condition that it originally had, having been carefully restored by the trustees of Swarthmore College.

Here is a purely imaginative piece called "The Young Artist" or "The Inspired Boy," which serves as a frontispiece to an abridged "Life of West," by Galt, published in Boston in the year 1832. The first edition of Galt's Life was printed in Philadelphia, in 1816, during West's lifetime, and, as the title page tells us, compiled from materials furnished by himself, putting an end, I should think, to the doubts of the authenticity of the stories.

Here is John Sartain's imaginative effort to give substance to the attempt of West to draw a picture of his baby niece; there, too, is the cat, seemingly satisfied with any robbery committed on her tail.

There is a sketch of John West, the father of Benjamin West, drawn by Benjamin when he was about seventeen years of age, about the year 1753. There is
no attempt at elaboration, but a few strong strokes give expression both to the figure and to the face.

Here is a picture of the West family, painted by West years after he had married Elizabeth Shewell. West himself is seen in the extreme right-hand corner of the picture, standing behind the chair. His father is sitting immediately in front of him, and his half-brother is seated beside the father. The extraordinary incident with regard to this is that the boy seated beside his father had never seen his father until the arrival of the party from America in 1765, he being the child of the first wife, who remained in England while John West went to America; she died in giving birth to the boy; Benjamin was the youngest son of John West and Sarah Pearson, the second wife. Matthew West, the other son, is the larger boy standing in the left corner, and Benjamin West, Junior, is the baby in the lap of Mrs. West,—Elizabeth Shewell, who so lightly descended that rope ladder, steadied by the firm hand of Franklin.

Here is Matthew Pratt's portrait of Benjamin West, painted in London, at about the period of time of his marriage; and here is the picture of the girl who made her escape, painted by the same artist.

Here is one of the scarcest of the portraits of West, published as an engraving in 1768. The artist is unknown, but the picture appears in Galt, marked simply as "The Scarce Portrait of 1768."

Here is a mezzotint by William Pether of West, after William Lawrenson, which is regarded as still scarcer than the preceding picture; but it gives you a more satisfactory view, as containing two-thirds of his face. At that time he was about forty-two years of age.

Here is Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Benjamin West, Stuart being his pupil. Those of you who can see the left-hand corner of the picture, where the name of the artist appears, will see the name of "Gabriel Stuart."
BENJAMIN WEST ESQ.
HISTORICAL PAINTER to His MAJESTY.
Painted by himself in 1793
Reproduced from the engraving by W. T. Fry
From the original letter in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

[Handwritten text]

[Signature]
THE PROPOSALS
OF
JOHN BOYDELL,
Engraver in CHEAPSIDE.

TWO CAPITAL PRINTS,
PAINTED BY
BENJAMIN WEET,
REPRINTED.

The Death of General Wolfe.
New Engraving by
Mr. WILLIAM WOOLEY.

Written by L. P. C. in 1789.

When he surveyed the Province of Pennsylvania, in North America, 1683.

Now engraving by
Mr. JOHN HALL.

CONDITIONS.

The size of each Print to be 15 by 14 inches in length, and to be finished in
the highest and best manner.

The Price of the Forms to be One Guinea, and of the half Plate Shilling,
half to be paid at the time of订errinding, and the remainder to be paid for the delivery of the
Prints; whilst, from the multiplicity of work, and the great care and attention necessary,
for the better sense of the present pouncing, they are to be delivered three
years from the first impression.

The subscriber shall have the first Impression, which, if bought, will be at a
full, open instrument to encourage the undertaking.

Mr. B. Two Plates, the same size as the Prints, may be kept at J. Boydell's,
No. 80, Cheapside.

[Signature]

Opposite the house of
Mr. William Wooley,
Engraver in Cheapside.
From John Hall's engraving of the painting by Benjamin West
M 359  DEATH ON THE PALE HORSE

From a Thistle Print. Copyright Detroit Publishing Company
WILLIAM HAMILTON OF "THE WOODLANDS"
And His Niece
MRS. ANN HAMILTON LYLE

The original canvas by Benjamin West is in the Hall
of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
BIRTHPLACE OF BENJAMIN WEST
Before the fire
Frontispiece to
"THE PROGRESS OF GENIUS"
Second Edition, Boston, 1832
MRS. BENJAMIN WEST AND CHILD
Painted by Benjamin West
Reproduced from a print in the possession of
Miss Anne Hollingsworth Wharton
MINIATURE OF BENJAMIN WEST, HIS WIFE AND CHILD

Painted by Benjamin West
Reproduced from the photograph in the possession of Miss Anne Hollingsworth Wharton
Engraved by J. Sartain
JOHN WEST, FATHER OF BENJAMIN WEST
As sketched by Benjamin West about the year 1753
From the engraving by G. S. and J. G. Facius of the painting by Benjamin West of himself and family.
Wm. Lawrenson, Pinx

Wm. Pether, Fecit
used to think, when I looked at the full length picture of Washington, after "Gabriel Stuart,"—afterwards called "The Lansdowne Portrait,"—as engraved by Heath, that it was a slip by the engraver, but I have seen so many engravings since with the name Gabriel that I can well believe that Gilbert Stuart was quite sincere when he said, "Well, they intended to make an archangel of me, anyhow."

Here is Benjamin West as portrayed by Sir Thomas Lawrence, who was his successor in the office of the President of The Royal Academy. West is shown as lecturing on the properties of color. That accounts for the rainbow introduced into the upper portion of the picture. And on the curtain is depicted "The Death of Ananias," one of West's most celebrated pictures.

Here is Benjamin West's portrait of himself. The countenance, I think, is more pleasing than that depicted by Sir Thomas. This was in 1793. He has introduced a bust of some classical character as an accessory to the picture, according to the fashion of the times, but I cannot but think that accessories detract from portraiture by distracting attention.

Here is a letter, the original of which is among one of the collections in the other hall. It was written to Copley, the artist, who was one year older than West, being born in 1727. Copley, as you know, went from Boston to England. His son went with him, and in course of time became Lord Chancellor Loughborough, one of the greatest lawyers England ever knew; very few even in England know that the great rival of Lord Brougham was a Boston boy. I show the letter as a specimen of West's handwriting.

Here are the Proposals, printed as a Broadside in 1773, by John Boydell, publisher of an illustrated edition of Shakespeare, for engraving two pictures by
West, "The Death of General Wolfe" and "Penn’s Treaty With the Indians."

I now show you Hall’s engraving of the "Treaty With the Indians," the original painting is in the Reception Chamber of the State House. West has been severely criticized for not observing historical accuracies of dress. William Penn is shown in the garb of a strict Quaker, of portly figure, and a man of middle age. In point of fact, Penn at that time was but thirty-two years of age, with an athletic, energetic body, and could spring, dance and run with the Indians, as he frequently did; and who at the time of the Treaty was in court dress, with a sash.

He has also introduced, in the figure of the old man—the third one in the group to the right—his father; and has again introduced his half-brother into the picture. Of the Treaty, Voltaire declared it was the only treaty that had never been sworn to and never broken. I think, that regard for a full statement of the causes conducing to the peace of Pennsylvania in this South-eastern corner would impel a modern historian to add that besides Penn’s Treaty it was a fact that before an Indian tomahawk could reach a Quaker scalp it would have to fly through fifty miles of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.

Here are illustrations of the charming miniatures which West could paint. The first is of his wife and child. The second of his wife, child, and himself, is quite as charming as anything by Sir Thomas Lawrence. For these I am indebted to Miss Anne Hollingsworth Wharton.

This is an ambitious portrait of Arthur Middleton, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, of South Carolina, with his wife and child, painted by West. The original is in the possession of Dr. Henry Middleton Fisher, of this city.

I now show you the picture, in black and white, of
"Christ Healing the Sick." West wrote to Samuel Coates, of Philadelphia, in the year 1801, that he would paint a picture for the Pennsylvania Hospital. When it was exhibited in London it was so highly thought of that the British Institution bought the original for three thousand guineas, the highest price ever paid for a painting up to that time; West agreed to sell it only on condition that he could paint a replica. The replica was sent to Philadelphia. Here it is in colors. That picture was exhibited before presentation to the hospital, and brought contributions to the hospital sufficient to establish thirty beds in the Pennsylvania Hospital. I can remember a little building, but two stories in height, standing on the south side of Spruce Street, halfway between Eighth and Ninth, on the grounds of the hospital, in which this picture was said to have been exhibited. That building was one of the early homes of this Historical Society, before we came to the Patterson mansion at Thirteenth and Locust Streets, now converted into our present hall. Thus are we pleasingly associated with memories of West. The picture itself hangs to-day in the entrance hall to the middle building of the group which together form the Pennsylvania Hospital. Beneath the picture is a plaster cast of the hand of Benjamin West, and one of the original brushes that he used, displayed under glass.

I thank you for the attention you have given me.