

An Arthur Armstrong End Paper

By Ruth Arnold and Irwin Richman

When we completed our exhaustive study of Arthur Armstrong's career in 1978, we realized that as soon as knowledge of Armstrong the painter became generally available, owners of Armstrong paintings and of "I hope it's an Armstrong painting" would come forward. It was decided that an "end paper" would be published that would record these rediscovered Armstrongs. A cut-off date of January 1, 1982 was established.

The comprehensive article, "Arthur Armstrong, Lancaster Painter, 1798-1851," appeared in this journal, Vol. 82 No. 2 Easter, 1978, and national attention was focused on our subject in "Arthur Armstrong, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, painter," which appeared in *The Magazine Antiques* in August, 1979. Additionally, there were two exhibitions, "Arthur Armstrong: Lancaster Painter," June 2 to June 29, 1979 at the Community Gallery of Lancaster and "Arthur Armstrong, Pennsylvania Portrait Painter, A Rediscovered Lancaster Artist," which ran from July 14 to September 3, 1979 at the William Penn Memorial Museum. Catalog listings were published for both exhibitions. The locations of these additional Armstrong paintings are strong testimony to our mobile society.

I. Signed Armstrongs:

1. *Portrait of James Augustus Crever* (dates unknown), oil on canvas, 25" x 30", signed with stencil on reverse and hand dated 1846. The subject had a varied life. For a brief time he ran a business college in Carlisle

and emigrated to Ohio where he was to be editor of the *Bucyrus Journal* and later Treasurer of Hamilton County. An amateur balloonist, he is credited with 14 voyages. During the Civil War he moved to Washington, D. C. where he worked for the Columbia Engraving Company. He is credited with inventing the process of putting silk



James Augustus Foltz

threads into the paper used in the manufacture of United States currency. He was a friend of Stephen Foster. His portrait has descended to the present owner through George Crever to Florence Crever Renton. Collection: Edwin Crever Ulrich, Florida.

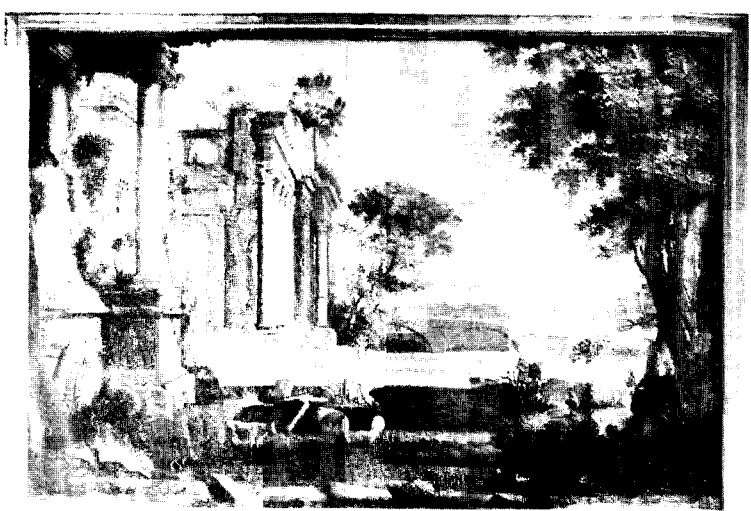
Portrait of George Foltz (d. 1833), oil on canvas, signed by hand on reverse, 22" x 26". The subject, a Lancaster attorney, apparently died young. It is tempting to believe that this is the portrait of *George Foltz* displayed as #34 in the Woolworth Show. There are problems. The Woolworth portrait list records the painting as having been done in 1837. Since Foltz died in 1833, it may have been posthumous. However, the dimensions also do not agree. The Woolworth list records the painting as being 19" x 24". Possibly the painting shown in 1912

was really a portrait of Jonathan Messersmith Folt (who once owned the George Foltz portrait) which is 19½" x 23", or it was a previously unrecorded memorial painting of George Foltz. Prior ownership of this painting can be traced through Josephine Keefer Foltz, Charles Steinman Foltz, Sr. and Jonathan M. Foltz. Collection: Charles Steinmen Foltz, Washington, D. C.

3. *Portrait of Jonathan Messersmith Foltz* (1810-1877), oil on canvas, signed on reverse, dated July 1832, 19½" x 23". The original bill of sale for this extremely well documented painting still exists. An 1830 graduate of the Jefferson Medical College, Foltz's career was as a naval officer. This portrait, in uniform, was probably commissioned upon the sitter's entry into the navy near the age of 21. His distinguished career included a tour of duty under the command of Admiral Farragut (1862-1863) and service as president of the Navel Board of Examiners (1867). In 1853 he married a Miss Steinman of Lancaster. Upon leaving the navy, he settled in his native Lancaster, became a member of the Lancaster County Medical Society, and wrote an autobiography, *Surgeon of the Seas*. This portrait, stylistically, is very closely related to the *Portrait of John Jay Libhart*, illustrated in *JLCHS*, Easter, 1978. An important document of military dress, it has appeared in at least one book on military costume. It has descended through Josephine Keefer Foltz. Collection: Eric C. Herr, M.D., Keene, N.H.
4. *Portrait of an Unidentified Man*, oil on canvas, signed with stencil on reverse and dated 1845, 30" x 25". The pose and costume is identical to the portrait of William Nicholson, illustrated in Easter, 1978 *JLCHS*. Collection: Robert E. Evans, Cinnaminson, N. J.
5. *Portrait of an Unidentified Woman*, oil on canvas, signed with stencil on reverse, c. 1842-1845. The subject is wearing eyeglasses. Her hair is looped in front of and tucked behind her ears. She wears a gold chain with a vial or a pencil at the end. The last stated owner, an antiques dealer, purchased it from a house sale in Chester County. Collection: Patricia Anne Reed, Damariscotta, Maine.
6. *Classical Landscape*, oil on canvas, 45" x 30", signed with stencil on reverse and dated by hand 1839. This is quite possibly after a painting by Hubert Robert (French, 1733-1808), whose work could have been represented in Armstrong's collection of prints. The handling of the trees is very similar to those in the portrait of Margaret Armstrong Kerfoot illustrated in the 1978 *JLCHS*. The painting was purchased from a New York dealer who purchased it in a coastal town in New Hampshire. Collection: Carol Prisant, Roslyn, N. Y.

II. Attribution:

Reigart's Landing, Lancaster County, oil on canvas, framed size 32" x 46", circa 1850. A portrait of one of the most prosperous farms in



Classical Landscape

Lancaster County, this is very closely allied to *The Estate of Bernard Flynn*, which is illustrated in the Easter, 1978 *JLCHS*. Collection: Pennsylvania Farm Museum at Landis Valley, Lancaster, Pa.

In addition to the above listing, there are also two possible Armstrong paintings about which we have some information. One is a painting of a rather ugly little girl seated in landscape, and the other is an interesting genre piece. In both cases we could only see photographs and, accordingly, we cannot make strong attributions. Serendipity has also supplied us with several additional facts about Armstrong's career. A Columbia newspaper in the 1840's suggests that anyone visiting Lancaster "must" visit the painting room and gallery of Mr. Armstrong and suggests that in addition to his portraits and print collection he was also a dealer in European paintings—a fact corroborated by his will. He quite possibly was the first art dealer in the county offering international merchandise.