



Marks of Friendship

250 YEARS OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC TREASURES

A Painting's Diplomatic Journey



The Peale Family by Charles Willson Peale, c. 1773-1809. Oil on canvas, 56 1/2 x 89 1/2 in. (143.5 x 227.3 cm). Gift of Thomas Jefferson Bryan. The New York Historical Society, 1867.298.

January 3, 1777

George Washington and the Continental Army defeat the British at the Battle of Princeton. Peale serves as a Captain in the Continental Army and fights in this battle.

April 15, 1741

Charles Willson Peale, an American painter and portraitist, is born. In 1775, Peale moves to Philadelphia and opens a painting studio. He joins the Sons of Liberty and later serves in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. After the war, Peale paints dozens of historic figures including many of America's founding fathers. He has sixteen children, many of whom are named after his favorite artists and become noted artists themselves.

1779

Charles Willson Peale completes the original *Washington at Princeton*, a portrait commissioned to honor General Washington's recent military success. While on display in Philadelphia, the portrait is met with public acclaim.

1779

Founding Father Henry Laurens (1724-1792) orders a replica from Peale. The copy is to be a diplomatic gift for the Dutch, from whom the Americans hope to secure a loan to fund the Revolutionary War effort.



This painting depicts the maritime world in which the *Mercury* operated: the crowded wharves of Philadelphia, the construction of hastily converted warships, and the look and feel of American vessels during the early years of the Revolution.

W. Howland Van Powell, oil painting, Continental Ship *Alfred* placed in commission at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 3 December 1772. Courtesy of the U.S. Navy Art Collection, Washington, D.C.

1780

As an envoy of the Continental Congress, Laurens sets sail on the American ship, *Mercury*, with the portrait and a draft treaty for Dutch consideration. During the voyage, all are captured at sea by British Captain George Keppel of HMS *Vestal*. As a prisoner of war, Laurens is taken to the Tower of London—the only American in history to suffer that fate. Through Keppel, the portrait enters the Albemarle family collection and is held at their family seat in Sussex, England, for more than 160 years.

1946

The Albemarle family sells the portrait at auction in London to George Davey. While en route from London to New York, the painting is sold again to art dealer E. J. Rousuck, of Scott & Fowles Gallery, New York. This marks the second time the Laurens-Albermarle copy of *Washington at Princeton* has changed hands at sea.



E. J. Rousuck. Undated photograph. Emanuel J. Rousuck papers, 1946-1970. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Mid-1960s

Rousuck sells the painting sometime between 1955 and 1963 to American heiress and Francophile Caroline Ryan Foulke. By the mid-1960s, Mrs. Foulke leaves her New York apartment and moves many of her paintings and furnishings to storage, including the Laurens-Albermarle copy of *Washington at Princeton*.

1977

Mrs. Foulke relocates to Paris, and the portrait is sent to France shortly thereafter.

1981

The portrait is loaned by Mrs. Foulke for display at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Paris. Eight years later, the portrait is formally bequeathed to the U.S. Department of State in Mrs. Foulke's will. She stipulates it should remain on display at the residence in Paris. Documents suggest that the painting is believed to be by Peale but has not been formally attributed.

U.S. Ambassador's Residence, Paris



2015

The Office of Cultural Heritage is officially established at the U.S. Department of State with the mission to preserve America's historic properties and collections abroad.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

2021-2023

The Office of Cultural Heritage embarks on a technical study and authentication of the State Department's portrait, including archival research, examination, and analysis of the painting itself, as well as other versions in America and France. The portrait is studied in situ at the Ambassador's residence in Paris and at laboratory facilities managed by Centre de recherche et de restauration des musées de France (C2RMF) at the Louvre. C2RMF is France's national center for analysis and restoration of art and historical objects. The analysis, study, and research conclude that the State Department's portrait is indeed the Laurens-Albermarle portrait painted about 244 years earlier by Charles Willson Peale.

2024-2025

The portrait is taken to C2RMF's facilities at Versailles for conservation treatment under the guidance of a panel of American and French curatorial and conservation experts. As part of this Franco-American partnership, Versailles loans its copy of *Washington at Princeton* to hang at the Ambassador's residence while the Peale is away for treatment.

Conservation is completed, and the portrait returns to the Ambassador's residence in Paris in a strengthened frame for long-term display.



The results of the portrait's authentication study were announced in *The New York Times* on February 20, 2023.