

CHARLESTON'S MASTER WORKS PRESENTED BY HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

BY KATHARINE S. ROBINSON



As British North America's most cosmopolitan seaport, Charleston fascinated and astonished visitors from both sides of the Atlantic. As early as 1709, English explorer and naturalist John Lawson (1674–1711) marveled at the thriving community he found: "They have a considerable Trade both to Europe and the West Indies, whereby they become rich and are supply'd with all Things necessary for Trade and genteel Living, which several other Places fall short of." After traveling to the city in 1750, Lutheran minister and Georgia resident Johann Martin Bolzius (1703–1765) opined, "The splendor, lust, and opulence there has grown almost to the limit." In a letter to his wife in

1773, Bostonian Josiah Quincy (1744–1775) reckoned that "in grandeur, splendour of buildings, decorations, equipages...indeed in almost every thing, it far surpasses all I ever saw, or ever expected to see, in America."¹

Fortunately for twenty-first century visitors, the architecture, objects, and stories of which earlier travelers took notice have not been lost completely. Since 1947, Historic Charleston Foundation (HCF) has been preserving and interpreting Charleston's architectural and artistic heritage for new generations. As the January 2011 Winter Antiques Show loan exhibitor, HCF is presenting the best of its important collection of colonial and antebellum objects, as well

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John William Hill (American, 1812–1897),
artist; Smith Brothers, printer,
Bird's Eye View of Charleston, S.C.
(London, England, 1851).
Hand-tinted lithograph,
34¼ x 35¼ x 1⅝ (framed) inches.
Courtesy, Historic Charleston Foundation,
collection purchase, Charleston, S.C., 80.1.4.

This depiction of Charleston is a part of a series of large folio engravings and lithographs published between 1848 and 1856. In the tradition of Hill's other city vistas, this view of Charleston is taken from an elevated viewpoint. It shows in great detail the buildings and streets from the southern part of the peninsula at White Point Gardens and South Battery to the north towards Calhoun Street. Visible in the tinted lithograph are many of Charleston's most important historic residences and churches including the First Presbyterian Church, St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Circular Church, and St. Philip's Episcopal Church, for which Charleston receives its attribution as the Holy City.

Nathaniel Russell House,
51 Meeting Street, 1808.
Historic Charleston Foundation.
Photography by Rick McKee.

One of two properties owned and operated by Historic Charleston Foundation, the Nathaniel Russell House, a nationally recognized Federal-style structure, serves as the ideal exhibition space for the Foundation's collection of fine and decorative arts. Enhancing and interpreting the collection is one of the many ways that HCF actively preserves the city's rich cultural heritage. Many of the key holdings, such as the portrait of Mary Rutledge Smith painted by George Romney (1734–1802) in England, have local provenances, and other objects, like the dressing chest, were made in Charleston.

HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION was founded in 1947 to preserve and protect the integrity of Charleston's architectural, historical and cultural heritage. The Foundation seeks to achieve this through active advocacy, participation in community planning, innovative educational and volunteer programs, the preservation of properties, research, and technical and financial assistance programs. For information on HCF, visit www.historiccharleston.org or call 843.723.1623.





George Romney (English, 1734–1802),
Mary Rutledge Smith and Son Edward,
London, England, 1786.
Oil on canvas, 106 x 70 x 3¼ (framed) inches.
Historic Charleston Foundation, Charleston, S.C.,
collection purchase with contributions by an
anonymous southern foundation, 77.1.1.
Photography by Rick Rhodes.

George Romney painted this portrait in England during fifteen sittings between January and May of 1786, at a cost of £104-18s-0d. The sitter was the wife of Colonel Roger Smith (born in England in 1785), and is shown with their son Edward Nutt Smith, the twelfth of the couple's thirteen children. When the family returned to Charleston in 1788, they brought the painting with them. It passed down through the Smith line and, though temporarily removed to Columbia, South Carolina, for safe keeping during the Civil War, was exhibited throughout the nineteenth century at the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts and the Carolina Art Association. As a result, the painting was well known and much admired in the city. Because of financial difficulties, however, in 1888 family members sent the painting to London where it was sold the following year for the remarkable sum of \$18,546.81. For the next eighty-seven years it remained in the collection of Swinton Collection at Masham, England. With the help of a preservation-minded patron, HCF was able to purchase the portrait in 1976 and it returned to Charleston with much fanfare.



Savinien Edmé Dubourjal (French, 1795–ca. 1865),
William Aiken Jr., France, 1829.
Watercolor on ivory in original
red leather case, 6½ x 5 inches.
Historic Charleston Foundation, Charleston, S.C.,
gift of the heirs of Mary Green Maybank, 2000.3.20.

A successful businessman and distinguished politician, Governor William Aiken Jr. (1806–1887) travelled abroad on the first of several grand tours after graduating from South Carolina College (University of South Carolina) in 1825. While in Paris in 1829, Aiken commissioned a miniature portrait by Savinien Edmé Dubourjal² (1795–1865), a French artist most noted for his watercolor portraits. Dubourjal spent most of his life working in Paris, with a short sojourn in New York and Boston in 1846–1850. Although somewhat obscure, Dubourjal executed watercolor portraits of several notable American politicians including John C. Calhoun, James Knox Polk, and Daniel Webster.

Samuel Courtauld (English, 1720–1765),
Salver, London, England, 1762/63.

Silver. H. 1¾, Diam. 13½ in.

Engraved with the crest of Lt. Gov. William Bull II (1710–1791)
of Charleston, S.C. Stamped on bottom: lion passant, crowned
leopard, date letter and a sun over SC. Courtesy, Historic
Charleston Foundation, Charleston, S.C., with contributions
by John M. Rivers and James P. Barrow, 97.2.1.
Photography by Russell Buskirk.

Detail of Salver, illustrated above.
Photography by Russell Buskirk.

Engraved with the crest of Lt. Governor William Bull II
(1710–1791) of Charleston, this high-style Rococo salver was
made in the London workshop of the notable Huguenot sil-
versmith Samuel Courtauld. It is among two pieces of silver in
HCF's collection that descended in the Bull family, and it is
indicative of the fashionable plate that was imported from
England for the city's sophisticated clientele.



John Bartlam (English-born, working in Charleston, 1765–1783),
Teabowl, Cain Hoy, South Carolina, 1765/1769.
Soft-paste porcelain with transfer-printed decoration.
H. 1 $\frac{1}{8}$, Diam. 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.
Courtesy, Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, Wisc.
Photography by Jim Wildman.

The only intact example of the first porcelain to be manufactured in America, the Bartlam teabowl illustrates the sophistication of Charleston's luxury goods market. When selecting an American colonial city in which to locate his ceramics manufactory, Bartlam chose Charleston, causing English manufacturers, such as Josiah Wedgwood, great concern. The teabowl will be exhibited alongside three sherds excavated from Bartlam's Cain Hoy kiln site. Nearly identical decorative scenes, dubbed "Bartlam on the Wando," appear on both the intact example and the fragments. Together the teabowl and sherds highlight the seminal importance of South Carolina in the history of American porcelain manufacture.

INSET:

John Bartlam (English-born, working in Charleston, 1765–1783),
Teabowl fragments, Charleston, S.C., ca. 1765/1769.
Soft-paste porcelain with transfer-printed decoration.
A-90A: H. 1 $\frac{1}{4}$, W. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in; A-90B/E: H. 1 $\frac{1}{8}$, W. 3 in; A-90A: H. 1 $\frac{3}{8}$, W. 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.
Courtesy, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology,
Columbia, S.C., 388K1349A-90A, 388K1349A-90B/E, and 388K1349A-90A.
Photography by Russell Buskirk.





Jean Antoine Lépine (French, 1720-1814),
Macaroni with watch, Paris, France, 1797.
Gold, pearls, enamel, agate and carnelian;
steel, brass. L. 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.
Courtesy, The Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.,
HQ 0184, 1946.086. Photography by Kevin Bourque.

By the eighteenth century, women in the middle and upper classes adopted the fashion of wearing timepieces fastened at the waist to *chatelaines*, which would often have additional chains to suspend keys, corkscrews, scissors, penknives or sewing instruments. This particular style of *chatelaine* is called a *macaroni*, after the Macaroni Club, a group of London dandies, that in the 1770s wore watches and chains looped over their belts. The watch on this *macaroni* was commissioned by Mary Stead Pinckney in 1797 for her thirteen year-old niece, Eliza Izard Pinckney (1784-1862), whose initials "EI" appear engraved on a cipher.

Francis Butty and Nicholas Dumeé
(English, working, ca. 1758-1773),
Epergne, London, England, ca. 1771/2.
Silver. H. 18 $\frac{3}{4}$, W. 17 (overall), D. 17 (overall) in.
Engraved with Middleton family arms;
Stamped on bottom: lion passant,
crowned leopard's head, date letter,
and FB over ND. Courtesy, Middleton
Place Foundation, Charleston, S.C.
Photography by Rick Rhodes.

In May 1768, Arthur Middleton and his wife Mary Izard Middleton sailed abroad on a three year grand tour of Europe. When they returned to Charleston, they brought with them goods purchased during their travels, including over forty pieces of elegant plate. Among the silver was this outstanding epergne, with eight hanging baskets, all engraved with the Middleton coat of arms. The vast majority of Arthur and Mary Middleton's eighteenth-century silver has remained in the family, and most of it is currently exhibited in the house museum at Middleton Place.



Edward Greene Malbone
(American 1777–1807),
Eliza Izard (Mrs. Thomas Pinckney Jr.), 1801.
Watercolor on ivory, 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.
Image courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of
Art/Carolina Art Association, 1939.04.0004.

Edward Greene Malbone
(American, 1777–1807),
Colonel Thomas Pinckney Jr., 1801–1802.
Watercolor on ivory, 3 x 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.
Image courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of
Art/Carolina Art Association, 1939.04.0003.

In a series of letters written between Thomas Pinckney Jr. (1780–1842) and his cousin Harriott Pinckney (1776–1866), Thomas unabashedly betrays his affection for Eliza Izard (1784–1862), whom he would marry in 1803. The letters indicate that both Thomas and Eliza sat for miniatures between December 1801 and January

1802 in the Charleston studio of Edward Greene Malbone (1777–1807), an American-born portraitist. Known for his skill of rendering small-scale works and for capturing the most handsome features of his subjects, Malbone had a successful, though short career painting wealthy clientele in New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah.



George Edwards (English, 1694–1773),
drawing of a little owl, ca. 1733.
Watercolor and ink on laid paper,
10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.
Inscribed upper left: 8.
Courtesy, Drayton Hall, a historic site of
the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Prior to publishing his engraved works, George Edwards, the father of British ornithology, completed watercolors during the process of studying natural history specimens. A collection of forty-eight of Edwards' watercolors were acquired by Charleston, South Carolina, planter John Drayton (1715–1779) in circa 1733. Such works, completed ten years before the artist's published etchings, are the oldest of their type to survive in North America. Indeed, one of the only comparable assemblages exists as part of Sir Hans Sloane's collection in the British Library.




Sideboard, Charleston, South Carolina, 1790–1800.

Mahogany and mahogany veneer with ash (drawer supports), tulip poplar (drawer bottoms), and white pine. H. 45½, W. 66¾, D. 31 in. Courtesy, the Rivers Collection. Photography by Gavin Ashworth.

This is one of only four documented Charleston examples of a “stage-top” or double tier sideboard. With fine proportions and exceptional veneers, the sideboard represents the work of Charleston’s Scottish school of craftsmen and the direct transfer of style from across the Atlantic. The tier does not have a functional use beyond a place to display an array of silverplate—a visual sign of wealth.

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as significant examples from other leading Charleston institutions, including Drayton Hall, Gibbes Museum of Art, Middleton Place Foundation, and The Charleston Museum.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Charleston’s sophisticated citizens enjoyed an economic prosperity unparalleled in colonial North America. This affluence drove an appetite for luxury goods of local as well as British manufacture. Thriving in great numbers, the city’s skilled artisans, both enslaved and free, were purveyors of taste. As such, clients patronized local and itinerant artists, cabinet-makers, and silversmiths, who provided both imported and Charleston-made items for their discriminating clientele. Because the London model was favored, Charleston’s eighteenth-century furniture and silver closely followed cues from across the Atlantic. The nineteenth century saw changes in patterns of consumption as the style center shifted to the North East, but although the demand for locally produced goods declined, the city’s inhabitants maintained their reputation for splendor and opulence. 

Grandeur Preserved: Masterworks Presented by Historic Charleston Foundation, sponsored by Chubb Personal Insurance, is on view at the Park Avenue Armory, 67th St. and Park Avenue, New York City, from January 20 to 30, 2011. Various lectures related to the loan exhibit will take place at the Winter Antiques Show from January

21–27. On January 27th, HCF curator Brandy S. Culp will speak on “A Great Variety of Gold and Silver: The Colonial Charleston Silver Trade.” For information about the loan show and associated events, visit www.winterantiquesshow.com

Historic Charleston Foundation thanks its exhibition lenders: Drayton Hall, Gibbes Museum of Art, Middleton Place Foundation, the Rivers Collection, and The Charleston Museum. With special thanks to our additional lenders: The Chipstone Foundation, Circular Congregational Church, the Lockard Family, St. Michael’s Church, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Private Collections.

Katharine S. Robinson is executive director of Historic Charleston Foundation and a nationally noted preservation advocate.

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1. John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina* (1709); Rev. Johann Martin Bolzius, *Reliable Answer to Some Submitted Questions Concerning the Land Carolina...* (1750); Josiah Quincy, *Memoir of the Life of Josiah Quincy, Junior, of Massachusetts Bay, 1744–1775* (1825).
2. The artists name is spelled Savimer Edme Dubourjal in the 1845 Boston directory. There is some speculation as to whether or not the artist was in Philadelphia in 1817; S. Dubouyal, portrait painter, appears in the Philadelphia directory, living at 136 S. Fifth.