



## HAWTHORNE Fine Art

### **Sarah Goodridge (1788-1853)**

James Trask Woodbury & Augusta Porter Woodbury, 1828

Watercolor miniatures on ivory

4 7/8 x 2 3/4 and 3 3/4 x 2 3/4

Sarah Goodridge (or Goodrich as it is sometimes spelled) was a singularly successful woman artist in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She was largely self-taught, never married, yet managed to provide for herself throughout her life and attract the attention of several famous men with her artistic skills.

This pair of portrait miniatures was painted at the height of her success and talent, during the decade when she painted the miniature portrait of Gilbert Stuart, for which she is best known. The sitters have now been identified, thanks to the sharp eye and persistent research of Carol Aiken of Baltimore, who also conserved the paintings and the frame. She identified the sitters as James Trask Woodbury and his wife, Augusta Porter Woodbury, whose biological data matches the handwritten note accompanying the miniatures: “This miniature is that of my wife, Augusta, /taken at Boston Mass Nov. 1828 in the 26<sup>th</sup>/year of her age and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of her marriage. /The lock of dark hair is hers also. The/ lock of light my own. The painting is by/ Miss Sarah Goodrich. /JT Woodbury/Aug. 1829.” The two locks of hair have been preserved and still accompany the miniatures.

James Woodbury was born May 9, 1803, in Francestown, NH, and died January 16, 1861.

Augusta Porter was born March 1, 1803, in Medford, MA, and died March 11, 1883. The couple was married in May 1827. He was ordained in the Evangelical Church in Acton, MA, and served there and in Milford, MA, where they both died. It is not known how Sarah Goodridge came to paint these two individuals.



## HAWTHORNE Fine Art

She was born in Templeton, MA, in 1788, and showed artistic promise as a child. She apparently had some art lessons in Hartford, CT, and in Boston. She taught school for a while in Templeton and moved to Boston in 1818. The turning point in her career was meeting Gilbert Stuart, from whom she had some instruction. He eventually allowed her to paint his portrait in miniature in 1825 and proclaimed it his only true likeness. (Two other versions of this portrait are found today, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.)

She is also known for several portrait miniatures of Daniel Webster, the first done in 1827. A less proper miniature, of female breasts, descended in the family of Daniel Webster and was the subject of an article by John Updike (“The Revealed and the Concealed,” *Art and Antiques*, February 1993). He surmises that the breasts are a self-portrait of this apparently proper Bostonian woman, presented to Webster in 1828, at a time when his wife had just died. Updike also notes that a later self-portrait of Goodridge and her easel and paint box remained in the Webster family over the generations. The miniature of the breasts is also in the Metropolitan Museum. Her relationship with Webster may never be known, for while she saved all his letters and notes to her, none of hers has survived.

She painted the portraits of other famous individuals, including General Henry Lee.

She lived with relatives for a good part of her life, but later was able to buy a house in Reading, MA, and to support several relatives. She opened a studio in Boston in 1820 and was apparently a successful businesswoman and quite prolific, reportedly turning out a miniature every few days. She exhibited in five exhibitions at the Boston Athenaeum between 1827-35. A sister Eliza was also a painter of portrait miniatures.

Today Sarah Goodridge is regarded as one of the important early miniature painters. Her works are found in several museums including Yale University Art Gallery, Dartmouth College, Worcester Art Museum, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum.