



HAWTHORNE Fine Art

Rebekah T. Furness (1854-1937)

Rebekah Thwing Furness was born on October 13, 1854 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her parents, Elizabeth M. (Eliot) Furness and James Thwing Furness, a merchant, both came from prominent Bostonian families. Her paternal uncle, the Rev. William Henry Furness, was a much respected Unitarian clergyman and abolitionist. Horace Howard Furness, a Shakespearean scholar, and Frank Furness, architect of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts building, were her cousins. She is descended on her mother's side from Sheriff William Greenleaf, who along with Col. Thomas Crafts read the newly signed Declaration of Independence from the balcony of the State House in Boston in 1776.¹

Furness studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and was friend and classmate of artist Cecilia Beaux. She exhibited at the Academy in the 52nd Annual Exhibition (1881), in the Special Exhibition of Paintings by American Artists at home and in Europe (1881) and again in the 55th Annual Exhibition (1884). She also exhibited at the Art Hall of the Inter-State Industrial Exposition of Chicago (1882) and with the Philadelphia Society of Art for the 4th and 5th Annual exhibitions (1883-84). In 1886, Furness was one of 120 American artists included in the Paris Salon.

Early in the twentieth century, Furness, her sister Laura and her brother Dawes Eliot Furness, left Philadelphia and settled in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood. In 1907, a replica of Boston's "Old State House" was built for the Jamestown Exposition in Norfolk, Virginia celebrating the Tercentennial of the founding of Jamestown. A portrait of Col. Thomas Dawes and a portrait of Madam Pickering, copied from Gilbert Stuart by Furness, were displayed in the Council

¹ *Proceedings of the Bostonian Society annual meeting.* (Boston, MA: The Bostonian Society, 1913), 12



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Chamber on the second floor.² In 1908, Furness's portrait of Mrs. John Ewing, copied from a miniature, was presented to the University of Pennsylvania by F. Dickinson Sergeant. It would later be hung above the mantle in the general reception room at Sergeant House, the Women's temporary dormitory.³

On July 18th, 1913, an oil portrait of Col. Thomas Crafts painted by Furness, from a miniature, was presented to the Bostonian Society on the 137th Anniversary of the reading of the Declaration of Independence at the State House. Her portrait of Salem shipmaster James Dunlap Gillis – copied after F. de Braekleer's [Antwerp]1826 portrait, was hung in the Marine Room of the Peabody Museum of Salem [Salem, Ma].⁴

Rebekah Thwing Furness died in June of 1937 at the age of 82.

² *The Massachusetts Building, Hampton Roads Virginia*. (Boston, MA.: Massachusetts Board of Jamestown exposition managers, 1907), 21-22.

³ George E. Nitzsche, *University of Pennsylvania: its history, traditions, buildings and memorials: also a brief guide to Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia, PA.: International printing company, 1918), 74.

⁴ John Robinson, *The Marine room of the Peabody Museum of Salem*. (Salem, MA.: Peabody Museum, 1921), 108.