

An Unsolved Mystery: Angelica Kauffman's Elusive Self-Portrait

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The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks (Landmarks) owns the Powel House on South Third Street in Philadelphia. This impressive Georgian structure, built in 1765–1766 by the Philadelphia merchant Charles Stedman, was acquired by Samuel Powel (1738–1793) on August 2, 1769, five days before he married Elizabeth Willing (1743–1830) in a union of two prominent Philadelphia families. The Powel House survived the deterioration of its Society Hill neighborhood at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Since Landmarks acquired control of the Powel House in the 1930s, it has become a popular destination for visitors to Philadelphia.²

Guides at the Powel House routinely call attention to a portrait of an attractive young woman on display there. Landmarks first obtained the portrait on loan from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA); it later acquired the portrait by purchase from PAFA in 2002. The painting has long been labeled a self-portrait of the celebrated Swiss artist Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807), which she painted and sent to Dr. John Morgan (1735–1789) after he provided her with medical advice while he and Samuel Powel were in Rome in 1764.³ For

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2 For background on the Powel House and its occupants, see George B. Tatum, *Philadelphia Georgian: The City House of Samuel Powel and Some of Its Neighbors* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1976); Roger W. Moss, *Historic Houses of Philadelphia: A Tour of the Region's Museum Homes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 34–39; David W. Maxey, *A Portrait of Elizabeth Willing Powel, 1743–1830*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 96, no. 4 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2006); and Alexandra Alevizatos Kirtley, “Front Parlor from the Powel House, 1769–70,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 46, no. 2/3 (2012): E12–E23.

3 The Kauffman name has been subject to both variant and aberrant spellings. Angelica Kauffman was a child prodigy who received artistic training while living in Italy. She took London by storm when she moved there in 1766, becoming a founding member of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768 and a highly acclaimed portraitist and history painter. But for the coronavirus, she would have again taken London by storm in the opening of the Royal Academy's traveling retrospective of her art scheduled for June 2020, which had to be canceled; that same exhibition opened at the Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf at the end of January 2020 but shut down less than halfway through its run. A valuable exhibition catalog covering

many years, the provenance of the painting was regarded as reliably established from its acquisition by John Morgan through its acquisition by PAFA. Morgan's transfer of the painting to Samuel Powel seemed consistent with the close friendship they had formed while abroad and the enthusiasm they shared for the artist-subject.⁴

According to this accepted provenance, the portrait remained with the Powels until Elizabeth Powel, as a widow, gave it to PAFA not long after PAFA was founded in the early 19th century. Beginning with PAFA's first exhibition in 1811, the Academy identified the portrait in a succession of catalogs as a portrait of Angelica Kauffman "painted by herself." Eventually, in a more detailed catalog format, it listed the painting as a portrait of Angelica Kauffman painted by herself and presented to the Academy in 1817. Given this background, PAFA appeared, from the second decade of the 19th century onward, to have continuous ownership of the self-portrait that Angelica Kauffman had sent to her benefactor, Dr. John Morgan, and that Morgan had transferred to Samuel Powel before Morgan died in 1789.

In 2015, the executive director of Landmarks reached out to the Angelika Kauffmann Research Project (AK Research Project) headquartered in Düsseldorf, Germany, in the hope that the Powel House portrait might be included in an authoritative catalog of the artist's work. The AK Research Project consists of a respected group of professionals engaged in authenticating Kauffman's works and assembling a *catalogue raisonné* of her oeuvre. Some time passed before a reply was received from Dr. Bettina Baumgärtel, the head of the painting collection at the Museum Kunstpalast Düsseldorf and founder and director of the AK Research Project, who informed Landmarks that she would be attending a conference in Philadelphia in February 2017. She inquired whether it might then be possible for her to remove the painting and to take it to the Philadelphia Museum of Art for photographing and technical examination.

Kauffman's prolific career is available in an English edition: Bettina Baumgärtel, ed., *Angelica Kauffman*, with contributions by B. Baumgärtel, I. Holubec, J. Myssok, and H. Valentine (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2020). For additional perspective on the artist and her life, see Angelica Gooden, *Miss Angel, The Art and World of Angelica Kauffman* (London: Pimlico, 2005); and Angela Rosenthal, *Angelica Kauffman: Art and Sensibility* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

4 See, e.g., Tatum, *Philadelphia Georgian*, 11–12, 149–50n47; and Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., *John Morgan, Continental Doctor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 87, 275n27. Whitfield Bell (1914–2009) was long the librarian and executive officer of the American Philosophical Society. In addition to his biography of John Morgan, he authored an updated biographical entry for Morgan in his *Patriot-Improvers: Biographical Sketches of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 1, 1743–1768 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1997), 327–36, as well as an informative biographical entry for Samuel Powel, *ibid.*, 257–69.

Landmarks readily granted permission. Dr. Baumgärtel came to Philadelphia, accompanied by her colleague Inken Holubec, and they together proceeded to determine whether the painting qualified in their expert analysis as the authentic work of Angelica Kauffman. To Landmarks' chagrin, Dr. Baumgärtel and Ms. Holubec concluded that the Powel House portrait was a copy from a different hand. They suggested that it might have been the work of Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827), a great admirer of Angelica Kauffman who named one of his daughters after her, or perhaps the work of his son Rembrandt Peale.⁵

The AK Research Project included its findings as part of a catalog published in 2018 for an exhibition in Dessau, Germany. In that publication, Dr. Baumgärtel and Ms. Holubec compared the Powel House portrait with another self-portrait of Angelica Kauffman, which was sold at auction in Amsterdam in 2012 and captioned as “European school, early 19th c, Portrait of a Woman.” A London dealer acquired it at an advantageous price and then sold it in 2013 to a private collection whose owner wishes to remain anonymous.

This second portrait (for ease of reference, sometimes hereafter the “Amsterdam portrait”) appeared to be very similar in its features to the Powel House painting. Of almost exactly the same dimensions, both portraits were presented in an oval format (Figure 1). In the considered judgment of the AK Research Project, the Amsterdam portrait—and not the painting that hung in the Powel House—was the authentic work of Angelica Kauffman.⁶

The finding of the AK Research Project that the Amsterdam portrait, surfacing without provenance after a long period of virtual invisibility, is the original self-portrait was based on a scientific evaluation of microscopic and other physical evidence disclosed by the examination of the two portraits, and on what was known about Angelica Kauffman's techniques and practices. Yet a fundamental question remains: How could the self-portrait that the artist gave to John

5 The author expresses appreciation to Landmarks' collections committee and its successive executive directors, Jonathan Burton and Kayla Anthony, for clarifying this sequence of events.

6 Bettina Baumgärtel, ed., *Angelika Kauffmann, Unbekannte Schätze aus Vorarlberger Privatsammlungen* (Munich: Hirmer, 2018), chap. 1, 41–49. Francis Hoeber has provided an essential translation of this text from the German. The 2020 catalog of the Kauffman retrospective (see note 3) devotes extensive consideration to Kauffman self-portraits, but without reference to this self-portrait. “Even today,” the catalog notes, “there are innumerable ‘Kauffman self-portraits’ in circulation that on closer inspection turn out to be wrongly attributed. Kauffman in fact created only 24 self-portraits between 1753 and 1802, among them three drawings and one etching.” Baumgärtel, *Angelika Kauffmann*, 39.



FIGURE 1. Left: Amsterdam portrait. Angelika Kauffmann, “Self Portrait with Jeweled Garland” (*Selbstbildnis mit Schmuck Kränzchen*), Private collection A.&.S.G. © Angelika Kauffmann Research Project, Foto Baumgärtel Archiv. Right: Powel House portrait. Courtesy of The Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, and photograph by the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Morgan have possibly become the Amsterdam portrait? In pursuing our inquiry, we will be required to test the authenticity and location of the Powel House portrait at critical points in time, beginning with its presumed ownership by John Morgan.

JOHN MORGAN AND SAMUEL POWEL

Samuel Powel, following his graduation from the nascent College of Philadelphia (later to become the University of Pennsylvania), spent seven years—from 1760 to 1767—in the British Isles and Continental Europe. He had been preceded abroad by John Morgan, a member of the first graduating class of the College of Philadelphia (1757), who would pursue with distinction his medical education in England and Scotland and return home in 1765 “flushed with honors.”⁷

The two men embarked on a European tour in 1764. They stayed in Rome for several weeks in the late spring and early summer of that year. Both of them kept journals that were published much later.

⁷ George Roberts to Samuel Powel, May 21, 1765, in “Powel-Roberts Correspondence, 1761–1765,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 18, no. 1 (1894): 40. The best account of their joint experience remains Bell, *John Morgan*, chaps. 3–5.

Morgan's journal began only after they left Rome, and Powel's journal entries when in Rome contain a mind-numbing catalog of paintings and monuments he saw. Neither of them mentioned that, while in Rome, they met the beguiling Angelica Kauffman, who painted both their portraits. Nor did either of them record that, in return for the medical treatment Angelica Kauffman received from Morgan, she agreed to send Morgan her self-portrait.⁸

Of our several testing points in this attempt to determine the authenticity and location of the Kauffman self-portrait, we have a solid piece of documentary evidence in an exchange of correspondence between Henry Pelham, the half-brother of John Singleton Copley, and John Morgan in 1774. When Pelham had traveled to Philadelphia, he wrote that Dr. Morgan showed him "every mark of Civility in his Power."

Among "the many favors" conferred on Pelham, Morgan gave him the opportunity, as an artist in his own right, to make a copy of the Kauffman self-portrait. On his return trip home to Boston, Pelham wrote Morgan on December 4, 1774, and asked for an additional favor (the spelling eccentricities in his letter are retained):

A little minute of the Ladys name, who painted the charm'g portrait in your Possession which I so much admire, and of which, by you[r] kindness I have a Copy, with he[r] age and the time when and the place where she did it, and any other perticulars you may pleas[e] to add, will (by putting it upon my Copy) ennoble me to gratify some antiquary in whose hands time may threw it, some future Walpole who may think its want of meritt happily attoned for by being the Portrait of the justly celebrated An[gelica]. . . .

Morgan replied before the year's end and supplied these particulars about the painting which, but for his letter, would be unknown:

. . . I am to inform You that the Portrait in my Possession which I lent You to copy is an original Portrait of the justly celebrated Angelica Mariana Kaufman, done by herself at Rome, at the Age (as nearly as I can recollect at this distance of time) at about 19 Years. It was done by her and sent to me at my own desire. She had been labouring for some time under an Indisposition for which she was pleased to take my Advice. The Seat of her Disorder was in her

8 John Morgan, *The Journal of Dr. John Morgan of Philadelphia from the City of Rome to the City of London 1764*, ed. Julia Morgan Harding, with biographical sketch (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1907); and Samuel Powel, *A Journal of Samuel Powel (Rome, 1764)*, ed. Sarah Jackson, with an extended introductory essay on "Philadelphia and Rome: Early American Tourists" (Firenze: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 2001). See also Arthur S. Marks, "Angelica Kauffmann and Some Americans on the Grand Tour," *American Art Journal* 12, no. 2 (1980): 4–24.

Stomach and proceeded from Indigestion. I believe that it arose from her sedentary life and close Application to Painting. . . .

On my leaving Rome she wanted to pay me for my Advice. I refused taking any money from her on which she insisted on making me a present of a piece of painting. . . . I thereupon begged her own Portrait, as of an article I greatly valued, and on asking her Father's permission, which he readily granted, she promised to send it to me, which did about a year after she came to London with a Letter accompanying it, —being induced to visit England from the great Encouragement given to her by the English Nobility and Gentlemen then in Rome. . . .

At the Age of 10 Years, she spoke English and French as familiarly as if they were her Native Language, which she learned chiefly by conversation. She could read Spanish with equal ease, tho' for want of Opportunities to practice it, did not pretend to be Mistress of it; but was quite Mistress of the Italian, and of German which was her native Tongue. She had an agreeable person, a sweet and open Countenance, of a very modest and engaging deportment, and was no small proficient in Musick. At her coming to England she was soon presented to the Queen and employed to take her Majesty's Portrait. In short, she was in a fair way of rising to fame to honour and fortune, but an unlucky Marriage was a great Clog to her.

At the end of his letter, Morgan cautioned Pelham to exercise discretion in sharing any of its contents because Angelica might take it “amiss” should she learn that “I had thus attempted to sketch her Character . . . which in every particular falls infinitely short of her.”⁹ Pelham produced a copy of the self-portrait, now lost, which in all likelihood was a miniature since Pelham worked almost exclusively in that genre.¹⁰

If John Morgan clearly held the original Kauffman self-portrait as the American Revolution approached, did he keep possession of it in the years ahead? In considering that question, one must acknowledge that John Morgan's life story was one of significant honors and accomplishments, but also of controversy and distress. Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1765, he preempted the position of lecturer and founder of the Medical School in Philadelphia—deeply offending in the process Dr. William Shippen, Jr. (1736–1808), a cousin of Elizabeth Willing,

9 *Letters and Papers of John Singleton Copley and Henry Pelham, 1739–1776* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1914), 277–78, 282–84.

10 See Dale T. Johnson, *American Portrait Miniatures in the Manney Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990), 177–78.

who was soon to become Samuel Powel's wife. Initially strained relations between Morgan and Shippen would harden into lasting enmity that was on full display in the competing assignments they were called upon to carry out in providing medical service to the American Army during the Revolution.¹¹

The Morgan-Shippen feud may have affected the relationship that Samuel Powel and his wife had with Morgan. Another serious matter to be weighed in the balance is the attempt Morgan made to inoculate the Powels' infant son, born in 1770, against smallpox; the son died a year later from smallpox contracted as a result of Morgan's effort. Although the Powels do not appear to have held the trauma of that loss against Morgan, Elizabeth Powel notably turned in her difficult pregnancies to her Shippen relatives, William Shippen and William Shippen, Jr., father and son, for medical assistance.¹² Even if they had wanted to, Samuel Powel and John Morgan couldn't have managed to avoid meeting each other frequently: they lived in the same neighborhood in Philadelphia; they served as members of Christ Church's vestry before the Revolution; they regularly attended service at St. Peter's Church, where they were pew holders; and they were active participants in the American Philosophical Society.¹³

Morgan's role during the Revolution was laden with ambiguity. Like the Powels, he stayed in Philadelphia during the British occupation of the city from September 1777 to June 1778, but unlike the Powels, who maintained a low profile, Morgan may have openly fraternized with the British. His adversary, William Shippen, Jr., would later publicly make that charge to Morgan's anguished reaction.¹⁴

Morgan married Mary Hopkinson in 1765. His wife's brother was Francis Hopkinson (1737–1791), a lawyer, merchant, poet, essayist,

11 See Bell, *John Morgan*, 107–113, chaps. 11–14; and Randolph Shipley Klein, *Portrait of an Early American Family: The Shippens of Pennsylvania across Five Generations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975), 123–25, 192–95. Benjamin Rush conspicuously took Morgan's side against Shippen, for whom he composed an unflattering memorial piece. Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His "Travels Through Life" Together with His Commonplace Book for 1789–1813*, ed. George W. Corner, with introduction and notes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 322–23.

12 See Maxey, *Portrait of Elizabeth Willing Powel*, 23–24. Samantha Snyder, a librarian at The Fred W. Smith Library for the Study of George Washington at Mount Vernon, who is currently conducting research in preparation for a comprehensive biography of Elizabeth Powel, has found in the extensive Powel Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Elizabeth Powel's narrative in transcript of her son's protracted struggle following the smallpox inoculation.

13 See Cordelia Francis Biddle, Elizabeth S. Browne, Alan J. Heavens, and Charles P. Peitz, *St. Peter's Church: Faith in Action for 250 Years* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 2011), 30; and Bell, *Patriot-Improvers*, 1:266–67, 332–33.

14 Bell, *John Morgan*, 210–11, 247–48.

and musician who also signed the Declaration of Independence.¹⁵ Hopkinson owned a large house in Bordentown, New Jersey, where Morgan, faced with the threatening advance of British forces in 1776, stored some of his most valuable possessions. Was the Kauffman self-portrait among them? If it had been, it might well have been lost when the British descended on the Hopkinson house in January 1777 and reportedly carried away or destroyed artwork, books, manuscripts, and expensive pieces of furniture.¹⁶

As alternative protection for the Kauffman self-portrait, Morgan might have entrusted it to Samuel Powel. In any event, what must be admitted is that there is no record yet disclosed of Morgan's transferring, or of Samuel Powel's receiving, the painting before Morgan's death.

Morgan's wife died at the beginning of January 1785, and Morgan went steadily downhill afterward. According to Whitfield Bell's biography, sensing that his end was near, Morgan put many of his household goods up for auction in 1788, including paintings he had acquired in Italy. In an endnote, Bell refers to an inventory of that sale which, if we could now consult it, might shed light on how much property was disposed of by Morgan. Unfortunately, the inventory of that sale can no longer be found at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia where Whitfield Bell deposited a photostatic copy. Absent that inventory, one is permitted to engage in speculation—this time that Samuel Powel might have bid on the Kauffman portrait at that sale. Yet it is unlikely that Bell would have failed to note the presence of that painting if it were included in the inventory of items offered for sale.¹⁷

Morgan signed his will on July 22, 1788. He prefaced the dispositive provisions with language of religious intensity directing his burial beside his wife in St. Peter's Church "in a plain frugal and decent Manner, as becometh one who may justly say to Corruption, thou art my Father, and to the Worm thou art my Mother." The Morgans had no children, and his will was, therefore, a relatively simple document. He left monetary bequests to Pennsylvania Hospital and to the combined Congregations of Christ Church and St. Peter's. He designated books by title in his library that should go to the College of

15 See the biographical entry for Francis Hopkinson in Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., *Patriot-Improvers: Biographical Sketches of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 2, 1768 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1999), 24–32.

16 Bell, *John Morgan*, 204–205.

17 Ibid., 261, 268 (bibliographical note), 291n18. The art historian Arthur S. Marks, focusing specifically on the Angelica Kauffman self-portrait, appears to have had access in the preparation of his 1980 article to the copy of the inventory deposited at the College of Physicians, and Marks found no mention of the self-portrait. Marks, "Angelica Kauffmann," 10n27, 11n38.

Physicians in Philadelphia. He left the residue of his estate to his brother George Morgan in trust for his brother's children in such shares as his brother might designate in his own will.¹⁸

His will contained no provision about the Angelica Kauffman self-portrait. We are once again handicapped by not being able to examine the inventory customarily filed in the estate papers in either the Philadelphia City Archives, where it is missing, or at the College of Physicians. Such inventories, however, usually contain only generic descriptions, like "paintings," and not the artist or subject.¹⁹ We do know that, whether identified specifically or not, the portrait that Angelica Kauffman painted of John Morgan appears to have been included in the residuary estate passing to his brother. That portrait is now in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, where its published provenance supports that conclusion (Figure 2).²⁰

John Morgan died in Philadelphia on October 15, 1789. His protégé and admirer Benjamin Rush arrived at his bedside shortly after his death, finding him "in a small hovel, surrounded with books and papers on a light dirty bed . . . attended only by a washerwoman, one of his tenants." Rush lamented in the spirit of *sic transit gloria mundi* the "change from his former rank and prospects in Life."²¹

18 Morgan's will (No. 156 of 1789) was probated on November 10, 1789, and recorded in the Register of Wills Book U, page 377 et seq. Carol Soltis in her admirable study of the Peale family and its artistic output has been misled by secondary sources to state that Morgan bequeathed both the self-portrait and Kauffman's portrait of himself to Powel. Carol Eaton Soltis, *The Art of the Peales in the Philadelphia Museum of Art: Adaptations and Innovations* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2017), 286n286.

19 Both Whitfield Bell and Arthur Marks, consulting this inventory as well, made no mention of any reference to the Angelica Kauffman self-portrait appearing in it.

20 For the National Portrait Gallery's published provenance of the Kauffman portrait of Morgan, see https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.78.221. The portrait shows Morgan wearing a banyan and surrounded by books and other references to his profession. The visual clues suggest that Morgan and Kauffman may have corresponded after he left Rome and that she drew on information he later supplied in completing the portrait and sending it to him. See the entry on the Morgan portrait in "Franklin & His Friends" in <https://npg.si.edu/exh/franklin/morgan.htm>; and also Marks, "Angelica Kauffmann," 12–15. Angelica Gooden in her biography of Kauffman reads this portrait in an unkindly fashion, depicting "the self-satisfied medic . . . a man who seems desperate to impress the spectator with his professional weight." Gooden, *Miss Angel*, 202. Whitfield Bell sees him portrayed as "the very gentleman of leisure Rome knew in the spring of 1764," an image that one might find difficult to verify. Bell, *John Morgan*, 87.

21 *Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, 180. When Philadelphia's first city directory was published in 1785 (the second one would not be published until 1791), John Morgan was listed as residing at the corner of Second and Spruce Streets. Francis White, *Philadelphia Directory* (Philadelphia: Young, Stewart, and McCulloch, 1785), 94.



FIGURE 2. Angelica Kauffmann Portrait of John Morgan, c. 1765. National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC.

ELIZABETH POWEL AND THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS

In the absence of a paper trail, logic and sentiment combine to support the assumption that Samuel Powel acquired the self-portrait from John Morgan before Morgan died in 1789. When precisely that may have happened, and whether by gift or purchase, or indeed whether it happened at all, are questions to which the consulted records do not yield clear answers.

The next task in constructing a provenance for the self-portrait depends on establishing its transfer from Elizabeth Powel to the newly organized Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.²² The record at the Academy of such a transfer initially appears as a blurred one. Nowhere in the preserved minutes of PAFA's board of directors, from the

²² For an informative view of the initial design and construction of the Academy and the attempt to assemble a collection to be displayed on its walls, see Wendy Bellion, Lea C. Stephenson, and James Kelleher, with Allan McLeod and Kristen Nassif, "West on the Walls: The 1807 Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2022), <https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2022.21.1.21>. As providing added context, see Carrie Rebor, "Robert Fulton's Art Collection," *American Art Journal* 22, no. 3 (1990): 41–63.

Academy's inception onward, is there any acknowledgment of Elizabeth Powel's gift of the portrait.

Moreover, the early PAFA catalogs, beginning with the first catalog published in 1811, prove distinctly unhelpful in answering that question. The 1811 inaugural catalog contained 507 listed items in these categories: paintings that were the work of American artists; paintings that were the work of foreign artists; drawings by American artists; and prints, medallions, models, and figures and busts "from the Antique." Item 203 reads simply "Portrait of Angelica Kauffman . . . [by] A. Kauffman."²³

The painting next appeared in the catalog published for the Academy's fifth annual exhibition in 1816. There, it was identified as "Portrait of Angelica Cauffman [*sic*] by . . . herself."²⁴ In 1822 it was listed in the 11th annual exhibition's catalog as "Portrait of Angelica Kauffman, painted by herself." The annual exhibitions at PAFA both showcased art acquired by the Academy and provided an opportunity for young artists to display their work and seize the moment to make a sale. But the early catalogs did not disclose what items were owned outright by the Academy, as distinguished from those deposited on loan. Nor was PAFA ownership clarified until the catalog format changed in 1845 to show the subject of the painting, the artist, and the proprietor, at which point the Academy was for the first time identified as the proprietor owning item 44, on page 12: "Portrait by Herself . . . Angelica Kauffman."²⁵

Another 20 years would pass before, in an 1865 catalog, the Academy added the source of painting as "Presented by E. Powel."²⁶ It would take still more time before the Academy inserted the accession year of 1817 in a cataloged description of the portrait. To compound confusion, three different years were variously proposed for the gift: 1809, 1811, and 1817.

Yet PAFA has in its archives remarkable evidence not only about Elizabeth Powel's presence and generous support at the Academy's founding, but also about her gift of the Kauffman self-portrait. That this evidence has only recently come to light is the result of discovering

23 *First Annual Exhibition of the Society of Artists of the United States* (Philadelphia: Tho. L. Plowman, 1811), 12 (#203).

24 *Fifth Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (Philadelphia: John Bioren, 1815), 9 (#29).

25 *Exhibition of Paintings, Statues, and Casts, at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Chestnut Street above Tenth, Founded in 1806* (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1845).

26 *Catalogue of the Forty-Second Annual Exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Chestnut Street above Tenth, 1865, founded A.D. 1806* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1865), 1 (#4).

in the Powel Family Papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) annual payments of \$2 that Elizabeth Powel made to “the Arts Society” and of then pursuing in the PAFA archives an inquiry concerning Elizabeth Powel’s possible status as an early subscriber and dues payer.

That inquiry led to a major discovery in the archives. It was a document dating from before PAFA achieved organizational status (it would be incorporated in 1806). Sixteen persons of establishment rank in Philadelphia—many of them lawyers—affixed their signatures to a document pledging:

to associate ourselves for the purpose of promoting the fine arts in the City of Philadelphia on such terms as shall hereafter be agreed upon by a majority of the Subscribers, and we promise to pay to William Rawle or William Tilghman Esquires the sums affixed to our names respectively to be applied to the purposes of that Institution

_____ Philad^a May 27, 1805.

The several subscribers committed to paying a total of \$400. The first person who lined up at the head of the list was Elizabeth Powel, who wrote beside her bold signature the sum of \$50, while the other subscribers, all men, agreed to pay less than that.²⁷

Under the pressure of obtaining funds for the construction of a museum building at Chestnut Street above Tenth (Figure 3), the number of subscribers would increase substantially over the composition of this first group to include the President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. Charles Willson Peale and Jefferson carried on an extensive correspondence during Jefferson’s presidency. They discussed a variety of subjects, but especially the “Polygraph,” a duplicating device that intrigued them both by allowing a facsimile copy to be made simultaneously with the creation of the original using pen and ink. In a long letter to Jefferson dated April 5, 1806, Peale turned to the “Academy of the fine Arts” and its shortage of funds for the construction of the new building to house its collections:

As one of the Directors I think it my duty to mention to you our want of funds to finish this Building, that your aid will be very acceptable in a small sum, at the present more particularly as we

²⁷ PAFA Archives, RG.05.01, Financial Records, Stockholders’ Association, 1805–1806 Subscribers List. A photocopy of this foundational subscription document appears in the appendix to this paper. The clue to Elizabeth Powel’s status as an early dues-paying subscriber must be credited to the diligent research effort of Samantha Snyder, a librarian at Mount Vernon. The discovery of the pledge documents and other subscription material from the early period is thanks to the work of PAFA’s highly competent and invariably forthcoming archivist, Hoang Tran.

are in debt to some of the workman [*sic*] who have advanced materials—from \$20 to \$50 have been the amount of all the subscriptions yet received, and really [*sic*] it has been a pleasing reflection to find more liberality than I expected in the City of Phila. on such an Occasion.

It took a couple months before Jefferson focused on this request at the end of Peale's long letter: "I shall cheerfully contribute my mite to your Academy of fine arts by inclosing you 50. D at my next pay-day (early in July) as I devote one day in every month to the expediting and adjusting all my pecuniary concerns." The President of the United States thus joined Elizabeth Powel in his equally generous support of this new institution.²⁸

Financial considerations continued, however, to weigh on the Academy when its first president George Clymer, a prominent citizen of Philadelphia and a signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, delivered what a reporter described as "an ingenious and elegant harangue" at the Academy's opening ceremony in 1807. Clymer, a close friend of the Powels, both husband and wife, and the father of Henry Clymer, who married Elizabeth Powel's niece, appealed to the continuing generosity of the Academy's founders and patrons: ". . . it would be well if the directors could say that the funds so generously supplied, had been equal to the objects. And they could speak of their saving management in the expenditure, but this, I fear, would be a questionable theme. The truth indeed is that the cost has exceeded the estimate!"²⁹

An address given three years later would be more upbeat in tone. It was delivered by Joseph Hopkinson (1770–1842), who, to a distinguished lineage, would add his own impressive accomplishments: the composer of the lyrics for "Hail, Columbia," a constitutional lawyer of notable rank, a congressman, vice president of the American

28 For the enlarged subscriptions list, see PAFA Archives, RG.05.01, Financial Records, Stockholders' Association, 1805–1806, Subscribers List. For the Peale-Jefferson exchange, see Founders Online (Jefferson Papers): Peale to Jefferson, April 5, 1806, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/99-01-02-3524>, and Jefferson to Peale, June 19, 1806, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/99-01-02-3868>. It is puzzling that, in a historical view of PAFA posted on its website, the author Stephen May comments in a footnote that "There is no evidence in the Pennsylvania Academy Archives that Jefferson ever sent his contribution." Stephen May, *An Enduring Legacy: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805–2005*, https://www.pafa.org/sites/default/files/documents/press-kits/PAFA_History.pdf, 27n6. Jefferson's pledge is marked "Paid" in the expanded list of subscribers.

29 Clymer's address appears in a Philadelphia literary and political magazine, *The Port Folio* (Philadelphia: Smith & Maxwell, 1807), 3:278–82 (including resolutions passed by PAFA's board of directors raising the initial subscription amount to \$50). The description of Clymer's address came no doubt from the pen of the publication's editor, Joseph Dennie, who wrote under the *nom de plume* of "Oliver Oldschool."



FIGURE 3. The first building of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, at Tenth and Chestnut Streets, 1809, engraved by Benjamin Tanner after a drawing by John James Barralet. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Gift of Charles Henry Hart, 1893.5.6.

Philosophical Society, and a federal judge. Hopkinson succeeded George Clymer as PAFA's president after Clymer's death in 1813 and remained in that position until his own death in 1842.³⁰

It bears keeping in mind for our purposes that Joseph Hopkinson was both Elizabeth Powel's godson and related to John Morgan, who had married his father's sister. If not inspired on her own to handsomely support the Academy in its cradle years, Elizabeth Powel would have received ample encouragement from Clymer and Hopkinson.

Hopkinson began his lengthy remarks in a congratulatory vein:

After five years of experiment, not, indeed, without much laborious effort and occasional despondency, the directors have infinite satisfaction, mingled with some pride, in being able to say to those gentlemen by whose liberality this house of the arts; this school of native genius, has been erected and maintained, that the "**Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts**" may now be considered as completely formed and established. . . .

Toward the end of his address, he took pains to acknowledge a particular benefactor: "I would not hope for pardon were I to conclude this

³⁰ Biographical information about Joseph Hopkinson appears in the "Background note" to the online finding aid at HSP for the Hopkinson Family Papers (Collection 1978): https://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/findingaid1978hopkinson.pdf. See also, for Hopkinson's early role at PAFA, Burton Alva Konkle, *Joseph Hopkinson, 1770–1842: Jurist, Scholar, Inspirer of the Arts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 146–51.

address without some acknowledgment for the patronage this institution has received from the ladies of our city. The first contribution to it was by a lady, equally distinguished for her taste and liberality; for the native powers of her intellect and the improvement they have received from a judicious cultivation."³¹

Hopkinson sent a copy of that address to the unnamed benefactor and received a warm reply from Elizabeth Powel that illustrated her writing style at its most rococo: "Receive my very best thanks for your flattering attention in sending me a copy of your last Work. I was prepared to read the composition of my much valued friend with exultation arising from the approbation and previous encomiums that I had heard conferred on it, by some of the best informed, and most respectable of the Auditory that attended the Discourse." Hopkinson had also lamented in his address the neglect that Washington had received in the years following his death—"Not a stone tells the stranger where the hero is laid"—and Elizabeth Powel responded in similar effusion to his "impressive Apostrophe to our sainted Hero."³²

It was not money alone that Elizabeth Powel gave to the Academy. The Academy's archives contain another important resource confirming her generosity. It is a bound volume whose cover bears the inscription "Donations to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts" and whose spine reads "Donations 1810–1852." This volume itemizes works of art given to the Academy during that period, and on page two the first entry is "A Portrait of Angelica Kauffman—painted by herself. From Mrs. Elizabeth Powel." In the left-hand margin appears a penciled-in accession number of "1809-1," making the gift among the first paintings, if not the very first, acquired by PAFA.³³

We are now on firm ground in attributing to Elizabeth Powel the transfer of "A Portrait of Angelica Kauffman—painted by herself." But are we safe in concluding that it was *the* portrait that the grateful artist gave John Morgan and that he, in turn, transferred to Samuel Powel? There was, after all, a brisk business in making copies of portraits, whether that was done by the original artist, by a member of the artist's

31 *The Port Folio* (Philadelphia: Bradford & Inskeep, 1810), 4 (Supp. at end of vol.): 6, 34. Somewhat more conveniently, Hopkinson's address may also be found in Gordon S. Wood, ed., *The Rising Glory of America*, rev. ed. (Boston: Northeastern University, 1990), 322–38. In a letter dated April 6, 1813 [?], accompanying a gift of silver asparagus tongs to Hopkinson, Elizabeth Powel identifies it "as a token from your friend and God-Mother." Hopkinson Family Papers, HSP (Collection 1978), vol. 12 ("Letters from Ladies, 1793–1878"), 12.

32 Elizabeth Powel to Joseph Hopkinson, November 29, 1810, Hopkinson Family Papers, HSP (Collection 1978), vol. 12 ("Letters from Ladies, 1793–1878"), 8.

33 PAFA Archives. It must be remarked that this Donations Book and its opening entries have been largely overlooked in the subsequent preparation of PAFA catalogs and the effort to pin down the year of Elizabeth Powel's gift of the self-portrait.

studio, or by an independent contractor seeking to turn a profit. One need only look at the range of attributions provided for the gallery of “celebrated personages” associated with the American Revolution, which, while first assembled for the Peale Museum, are now on display in the Second Bank of the United States at Independence National Historical Park.³⁴

Yet, as to this question of authenticity, only two people would have indisputably known the answer: Elizabeth Powel and Joseph Hopkinson. Elizabeth Powel seems an unlikely candidate to pass off a copy of a painting as an original, especially when one struggles to imagine how or why her late husband might have obtained such a copy. She came from a family whose members valued the art of portraiture, holding on to portraits painted of them; and we know that she was discriminating in her own choice of artists for whom she would sit.³⁵

Joseph Hopkinson would also have been aware of the fate of the self-portrait that his uncle by marriage, John Morgan, owned. He may well have seen it when it was in Morgan’s possession. His praise of his godmother’s generosity would be hard to reconcile with the Academy’s acceptance of a second-hand version of what he may be taken as implicitly certifying was the real thing.

CHARLES WILLSON PEALE AND JOSEPH HARRISON, JR.

Charles Willson Peale was but one more man who had succumbed to the charms of Angelica Kauffman. Peale met her in London in the late 1760s when he was a student of Benjamin West, who had previously fallen under her spell. So strong a memory did Peale retain of Angelica Kauffman that he named his daughter after her.³⁶

On June 26, 1808, Peale wrote to his daughter Angelica Kauffman Peale Robinson that “Since you left [on May 6] I have painted 3 portraits” which he added to his museum’s “collection of distinguished

34 See Doris Devine Fanelli, *History of the Portrait Collection, Independence National Historical Park and Catalog of the Collection*, ed. Karie Diethorn, with introduction by John C. Miley (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2001), 36–37 and generally.

35 See Maxey, *Portrait of Elizabeth Willing Powel*, 43–47, 63; and the online essay of the Worcester Art Museum, John Wollaston, “Charles Willing, 1752,” https://www.worcesterart.org/collection/Early_American/Artists/wollaston/C_Willing/painting-discussion.html.

36 Arthur S. Marks, “Private and Public in ‘The Peale Family’: Charles Willson Peale as Pater and Painter,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 156, no. 2 (2012), 153, 155n119 (Marks in the footnote is doubly in error in having Morgan bequeathing the portrait to Samuel Powel and having the Powel family giving it to PAFA after Elizabeth Powel’s death “in 1811”).

personages.” In that letter, he does not identify the subjects of the three portraits, but two days later he wrote to his son Rembrandt Peale, then in Paris, “I have added to the collection one of Lieutenant Pike, Wm. Bartram, Angelica Kaufman & your representative, Jonathan B. Smith [the last referring to Jonathan B. Smith, painted by Rembrandt Peale].” “I shall,” he went on, “at every opportunity of meeting with eminent charactors [*sic*] add to my collection of heads in the Museum. I have placed amongst them some artists and lately one of Angelica Kaughman [*sic*].”³⁷

Peale knew of the self-portrait that Angelica Kauffman had given John Morgan.³⁸ Did he ask Elizabeth Powel for permission to make his copy from the painting in her possession? If he obtained the painting on temporary loan—and one is inclined to assign a high probability to that occurrence—it is worth pausing briefly to consider what relationship, if any, the Powels and Peale may have had.

One commentator has theorized that the Powels would have regarded Peale, for all his evident talent, as an arriviste, tainted by his father's status as a convicted felon who accepted deportation to America in commutation of a death sentence handed down in England for embezzlement and fraud.³⁹ The Powels are more likely to have reacted to Peale's radical stance during the Revolutionary period when Samuel Powel chose to maintain a low profile and a guarded commitment to the patriot cause.⁴⁰ Neither Samuel Powel nor his wife ever sat for a portrait by Peale, and together in 1783 they appear to have talked a young Bushrod Washington, George Washington's nephew, out of his

37 *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family: Charles Willson Peale, The Artist as Museum Keeper, 1791–1810*, vol. 2, part 2, ed. Lillian B. Miller et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 1087, 1093, 1103. The timing of Peale's decision to include Kauffman in the museum may have been tied to her recent death.

38 See *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family: The Autobiography of Charles Willson Peale*, vol. 5, ed. Lillian B. Miller et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 320.

39 Sarah Burns and John Davis, *American Art to 1900: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 76.

40 Benjamin Rush appears to have reacted to Peale's radical position, especially in defense of Pennsylvania's Constitution of 1776, which Samuel Powel would have likewise opposed. See *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, for the American Philosophical Society, 1951), 1:244 and n5. For Peale's radicalism, see also *Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family: Charles Willson Peale, Artist in Revolutionary America, 1735–1791*, vol. 1, ed. Lillian B. Miler et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), chap. 5, “A Radical in Philadelphia, May 1778–October 1782,” 282–373. For Samuel Powel's tepid patriotism, see Tatum, *Philadelphia Georgian*, 20–22; Bell, *Patriot-Improvers*, 1:265–66; and Maxey, *Portrait of Elizabeth Willing Powel*, 24–26.

initial decision to ask Peale to paint his portrait.⁴¹ On the other hand, Elizabeth Powel's brother, Thomas Willing, despite sharing Samuel Powel's hesitations concerning the Revolution, overcame whatever doubts he may have had about Peale's past and commissioned him to paint his portrait in 1782.⁴²

By the time Peale decided to add a copy of the Angelica Kauffman self-portrait to his museum collection of portraits in 1808, Elizabeth Powel would also have overcome any misgivings she had about Peale—enough that, if asked, she would have willingly lent him the self-portrait for copying. He then had a reputation as an artist of the first rank, a naturalist, a voracious collector, an inventor, and the incomparable impresario presiding over the Philadelphia Museum, commonly referred to as Peale's Museum, whose collecting scope encompassed a diverse assortment of objects.

Moreover, if not even earlier, a bond of mutual respect may have developed between them as a consequence of Elizabeth Powel's leadership pledge of funds to PAFA at its conception. On October 26, 1805, in the same year as the pledge, the accession book for Peale's Museum records two items that "Mrs. Powel" had donated to the museum: "A Collection of Ancient Coins" and "A large Glass and Cover."⁴³ In their old age, Peale testified to their close connection in letters sent to his son Rubens, writing in 1822, "I now and then visit some old Acquaintances, Mrs. Powil [*sic*], Mrs. Wistar, Mrs. Mifflin, and Miss Di[c]kinson &c"; and in 1823, "I have wrote an Address which I intend delivering myself on the subject of natural history as connected with the [Peale] Museum. . . . I read it to Mrs. Powel this morning, she told me that she was fully of opinion that it would be well received by the Citizens, & would benefit the Institution."⁴⁴

When Peale sought to add the Kauffman portrait to his gallery, he was in the process of completing a portrait of George Clymer, PAFA's first president. It is a curious coincidence that, when Peale later donated

41 Bushrod Washington's several letters to his mother, Hannah Bushrod Washington, concerning his portrait may be found in full text in Stephen E. Patrick, "'I Have at Length Determined to Have My Picture Taken': An Eighteenth-Century Young Man's Thoughts about His Portrait by Henry Benbridge," *American Art Journal* 22, no. 4 (1990): 68–81. See also Burns and Davis, *American Art to 1900*, 76–77.

42 Now in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11719>.

43 Peale Family Papers, HSP (Collection 481), Records of Accessions and Memoranda of the Philadelphia Museum, 1803–1842, p. 9.

44 CWP to Rubens Peale, May 29, 1822, and CWP to Rubens Peale, February 26, 1823, *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family: Charles Willson Peale, His Last Years, 1821–1827*, vol. 4, ed. Lillian B. Miller et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 130–131, 225, 226. I am grateful to Carol Soltis for calling my attention to these two letters.

Clymer's portrait to PAFA, it was accessioned in the Donations Book as "1809-2," following on the same page Elizabeth Powel's recorded gift of the Kauffman self-portrait. Perhaps Peale, acting both for himself and as Elizabeth Powel's agent, delivered the two paintings to PAFA. Peale's handsome portrait of Clymer remains in PAFA's collections today.⁴⁵

As for the Angelica Kauffman portrait Peale copied, there is every reason to believe that it remained in the "collection of distinguished personages" Peale assembled, subject, however, to the vicissitudes to which that collection and his Philadelphia Museum would be exposed in the years ahead.⁴⁶ Charles Willson Peale eventually turned over the management of the museum to his sons, but after Peale's death in 1827 they confronted one financial crisis after another. Of the varied assortment of objects in the museum, all but the paintings were sold in 1849 to P. T. Barnum and Moses Kimball, and on October 6, 1854, the "Peale's Museum National Portrait Gallery" was auctioned off by M. Thomas & Sons.⁴⁷

The catalog of that sale ran to 16 pages and covered 269 paintings, not all of them portraits. By far the bulk of the collection was purchased by the City of Philadelphia bidding under a contrived name—thus ensuring that the portrait gallery would remain largely intact as it is now displayed in the Second Bank of the United States on Chestnut Street.⁴⁸ Some paintings, however, strayed off into other hands, including item 180 in the catalog, "Maria Anna Angelica Kaufmann, the celebrated Artist," which Joseph Harrison, Jr. (1810–1874), bid in for the nominal amount of \$10. That Angelica Kauffman portrait was one of over 20 paintings that Harrison acquired at the 1854 Peale auction.⁴⁹

Harrison was a self-made man who patented his breakthrough invention that substantially increased the pulling power of railroad locomotives. In 1843 he was called to Russia by Czar Nicholas I to design and build the locomotives and rolling stock for a railroad

45 Donations Book, PAFA Archives, p. 2. The Clymer portrait, although Peale had not completely finished it, appears to have been exhibited as early as 1807. See Bellion et al., "West on the Walls," 26–27 (in pdf).

46 The painting was recorded in *Historical Catalogue of the Paintings in the Philadelphia Museum, Consisting Chiefly of Portraits of Revolutionary Patriots and Other Distinguished Characters* ([Philadelphia], n.p., 1813), no. 90, 47–48.

47 Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), 330–31.

48 Fanelli, *History of the Portrait Collection*, 33–35.

49 *Catalogue of Peale's Museum National Portrait Gallery To Be Sold without Reserve on Friday, October 6, 1854, by M. Thomas & Sons, Auctioneers, Nos. 67 & 69 South Fourth Street*. The Kauffman portrait is item 180 on page 10 of the catalog.

between Moscow and St. Petersburg, a distance of 400 miles. Harrison showed the grateful czar how to get his railroad up and running, and for that service he became a very wealthy man. On his return to Philadelphia in 1852, he built a mansion on the east side of Rittenhouse Square, befitting his status as a titan of industry (Figure 4). To help furnish the mansion, he set about buying monumental art like Benjamin West's *Christ Rejected*, which hangs today at PAFA and occupies an entire wall in the second-floor gallery of the Furness Building. Sarah Harrison, as Harrison's widow, would later donate to PAFA the many masterpieces in the Harrison collection, including this enormous canvas by Benjamin West.⁵⁰

If Joseph Harrison attended any of a number of PAFA's annual exhibitions after purchasing Peale's portrait of Angelica Kauffman, we may fancifully picture him standing before a portrait of that artist hanging in a PAFA gallery and asking himself where he had seen that likeness before. In 1874, the year of Harrison's death, an extensive "Catalogue of Pictures, Statuary and Bronzes of the Gallery of the late Joseph Harrison, Jr., Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia" was privately published. Entry 151 on page 24 of that catalog leaves no doubt that Harrison regarded his Angelica Kauffman self-portrait as her authentic work.⁵¹

The opportunity for a real double-take occurred at the major "Loan Exhibition of Historical Portraits" mounted at PAFA from December 1, 1887, to January 15, 1888. The exhibition produced a catalog of 503 portraits listed alphabetically by artist; biographical sketches of the artists were printed at the end of the catalog. Mixed in with the preponderance of privately owned portraits were 46 from the Academy's holdings.⁵² The Academy's Kauffman self-portrait (entry 220, p. 54) and Mrs. Joseph Harrison's (entry 221, p. 54) were both on display.

Was the omission of the Harrison painting's oval format design a deliberate attempt to deflect questions about what, on the face of it, were identical twin paintings attributed to the same artist? Did any visitor to the exhibition inquire about these two self-portraits? The curators saw no need to expand on the bare catalog descriptions, but

50 For a biographical tribute to Joseph Harrison, Jr., see Coleman Sellers, "An Obituary Notice of Mr. Joseph Harrison, Jr.," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 4, no. 94 (1875): 347–55. See also Joseph Harrison, Jr., *The Iron Worker and King Solomon, with a Memoir and an Appendix* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1869), 37, for Harrison's then stated career objective "of making steam generation safe from its present destructiveness to life and property."

51 PAFA Archives.

52 *Loan Exhibition of Historical Portraits, Dec. 1, 1887–Jan. 15, 1888, Catalogue*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: [PAFA], 1887), available in the PAFA Archives.



FIGURE 4. Joseph Harrison mansion on 18th Street opposite Rittenhouse Square. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

as a precautionary measure, the catalog announced at the outset that “the Academy has given the names of the artists as furnished by the exhibitors, but does not hold itself responsible for their correctness.”

One way of explaining how the self-portrait John Morgan received in the 1760s might have become the Amsterdam portrait in 2012 is to focus on the dismounting and return of the paintings that were on loan to the Academy. Doing so would have been no small task, and one cannot dismiss entirely the possibility that the two portraits might have been switched. The AK Research Project speculates on that as a possibility in its report.

The risk of an inadvertent switch would arguably have been greater had the two portraits hung side by side, but that does not appear to have been the case. According to an introductory note in the catalog, “The number of a portrait is printed at the left of the name [of the artist]; the number of the wall on which it is hung, at the right.” The number on the right for the Academy’s portrait is 75, whereas the number on the right for the Harrison portrait is 43 (see Figure 5).

As the 19th century came to a close, the Academy would increasingly concentrate on American art and artists, especially those trained at the Academy like Thomas Eakins, Cecilia Beaux, Mary Cassatt, and

- 220. Kauffmann, Angelica—1741–1807. A. Kauffmann. 75**
 Bust, facing right. Oval on square canvas, 18 x 23.

See Kauffmann in list of artists.

Academy, A 148.

- 221. — The same. The same. 43**

Bust, facing right. 19 x 23.

Mrs. Joseph Harrison.

54

FIGURE 5. Entries from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Loan Exhibition Portraits, December 1, 1887–January 15, 1888.

Robert Henri, among others.⁵³ No longer in the century ahead would it compile and publish as it did in 1894 a “Descriptive Catalogue of the Permanent Collections of Works of Art on Exhibition in the Galleries,” which included a listing of American Pictures, British Pictures, Continental Pictures before the Nineteenth Century, and Continental Pictures of the Nineteenth Century. In the category of British Pictures was placed the self-portrait of “Maria Anna Angelica Catharina Kauffmann, R.A.,” whose identification as a British artist the Academy deemed appropriate because, as a brief accompanying biographical sketch noted, she was “One of the original thirty-six members of the Royal Academy in 1768.”⁵⁴

Whether this portrait of Angelica Kauffman, “First exhibited in the P.A.F.A, 1811, [and] Presented by Mrs. Elizabeth Powel in 1817,” was meant to remain in the Academy’s permanent collections would become problematic in the 20th century.

THE 20TH CENTURY

Sarah Harrison, Joseph Harrison’s widow, died in 1906. Notwithstanding her generosity in transferring by gift to PAFA much of her husband’s art collection, a great deal of art remained that her executors exposed for auction at the Philadelphia Art Galleries in 1910 and again in 1912. Among the 240 paintings from her estate auctioned off in 1910 was “a” portrait of Angelica Kauffman that sold for \$50 to an

⁵³ Beginning in the 1890s, the Academy deliberately proceeded to sell or trade off its European works. *Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts: 200 Years of Excellence* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2005), 32–33.

⁵⁴ PAFA Archives. The Kauffman portrait is listed on p. 75 (B210).

unidentified buyer.⁵⁵ What happened to that painting after the 1910 auction is an unresolved mystery.

One may view the PAFA portrait of Angelica Kauffman in something approaching orphan status in this new century. Yet interest in it was expressed from time to time as disclosed in the deaccession file the Academy gathered together in anticipation of transferring the portrait to Landmarks in 2002. The portrait was exhibited at the Annual Antique Show, which was held for the benefit of the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in 1965, and was included in the exhibition of "Old Mistresses: Women Artists of the Past" at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore in 1972.⁵⁶

The Academy also periodically received requests for permission to reproduce the portrait in forthcoming publications. In June 1950 it received a letter from Charles Sellers, a Peale descendant and an art historian, then a curator at Dickinson College, who had published works on Charles Willson Peale and who would publish more thereafter. "Does the Academy's portrait of Angelica Kauffmann come from the Joseph Harrison estate?" Sellers inquired. "If so, I am sure it is by CWP, a copy probably from the self-portrait owned by Dr. John Morgan, and if so, I would be very grateful if you could let me have a photo. . . ."

Mrs. Barbara Roberts, Registrar, immediately wrote back to Sellers, supplying this information:

The Kauffman portrait . . . if our records are correct . . . is not the one you refer to. It was exhibited in the very early exhibitions and by the time owners were given it was listed as Academy property (the 1840s). Later, in the 60s, it was listed as having been presented by E. Powell [*sic*], and later still as the gift of Mrs. Elizabeth Powell in 1817, and this is about all I can find. I checked the minutes of 1817 and find no record of the gift, but this is not unusual.

As an afterthought, Mrs. Roberts added, "It is an interesting portrait and both Mr. Fraser [Joseph Fraser, PAFA's Director] and I feel that it has some characteristics of Peale work."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Catalogue of Paintings, Statuary, etc., The Collection of the Late Joseph Harrison, Jr., and belonging to the Estate of Mrs. Sarah Harrison, Deceased*, The Philadelphia Art Galleries (M. Thomas & Sons), February 23, 24, and 25, 1910, p. 49 (#176). See also *American Art Annual*, vol. 8, 1910–1911 (New York), 353 (Harrison), 371 (Kauffman).

⁵⁶ See Gale Rawson, Asst. Registrar at PAFA, to Bodil Otteson, 28 October 1981, PAFA Archives, deaccession file.

⁵⁷ Charles Sellers to Barbara S. Roberts, June 24, 1950, and Barbara S. Roberts to Charles Sellers, June 28, 1950, PAFA Archives, deaccession file. Sellers appears to have accepted this explanation in his large study of *Portraits and Miniatures by Charles Willson Peale*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 42, no. 1 (1952), 115.

The painting underwent extensive restoration care in 1967. Theodor Siegl submitted his before-and-after report to PAFA, noting that the painting had been previously relined and retouched; that the old lining had become brittle and weak; that the surface was very dirty; and that the old varnish had discolored to amber. In his restoration of the painting, he removed grime, discolored varnish, and old retouches from the surface, but he was unable to preserve the former lining.

In concluding his report, Siegl wrote that “the present design covers an earlier painting, and that some of the brush marks of this earlier design appeared as *pentimenti*,” which areas he inpainted with specified pigments. Mr. Siegel parenthetically raised the possibility that the painting might be a copy.⁵⁸

In 1976 George Tatum, a professor of art history at the University of Delaware, published *Philadelphia Georgian: The City House of Samuel Powel and Some of Its Eighteenth-Century Neighbors*. Tatum’s work, based on meticulous research, continues to be the authoritative study of the Powel House and its occupants. Tatum may be forgiven for accepting without serious question the PAFA self-portrait as the original painted by Angelica Kauffman, which she gave to John Morgan, who in turn gave it to Samuel Powel, whose widow gave it to PAFA. Such was the narrative line then uniformly adhered to. In preparing his work for publication, however, Tatum sought to pin down the precise year in which Elizabeth Powel transferred the portrait to PAFA. He asked the Academy for confirmation that the date was 1817, as set forth in its catalogs. The reply he received from the office of the PAFA registrar threw cold water on the 1817 date. The assistant registrar pointed out that the portrait had an accession number of 1809.1, and that the painting was exhibited in the Annual Exhibition of 1811, making the 1817 date “rather dubious.”

Tatum capitulated under the pressure of getting his work to press in the bicentennial year and settled on 1809 as the year of the gift. “I agree with you,” he wrote in acknowledging the guidance he had received, “that the earlier date seems the more likely, and this is therefore the one we are using. Thanks to you this may be one less error I have made—or perpetuated.”⁵⁹

The deaccession file contains a final outside inquiry addressed in 1986 to Kathleen A. Foster when she was chief curator and director of research and publications at PAFA.⁶⁰ It is quoted in full as follows:

⁵⁸ Theodor Siegl to PAFA, September 28, 1967, PAFA Archives, deaccession file.

⁵⁹ George B. Tatum to PAFA, October 28, 1975, Pam Lajeunesse, Asst. Registrar, to Tatum, November 24, 1975, and Tatum to Lajeunesse, March 3, 1976, PAFA Archives, deaccession file.

⁶⁰ Kathleen Foster is now the Robert L. McNeil, Jr., Senior Curator of American Art

Bonn, 22. 4. 86

Dear Madam,

As a student of the Institute of Art History, University Bonn, I am engaged in writing a PhD thesis on Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807).

Would you be so kind and give me information about a self-portrait which should be in your collection. I would be very grateful if you would give me exact information about the subject, signature, measure and provenance. I am also interested in other oil paintings or drawings of A. Kauffmann if they are in your collection. Can you send me a photo of the paintings?

Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

/s/ Baumgärtel

This was the same Bettina Baumgärtel who 30 years later would examine the Amsterdam and Powel House portraits, giving rise to the questions discussed in this paper. We know from notations appearing on the bottom of this letter that Kathleen Foster replied, giving the portrait's accepted provenance, but adding "acc. date not certain" and "attribution problem?"⁶¹

SUMMATION

In summary, we now need to indicate what is known, what is not known, and what is conjectural about Angelica Kauffman's elusive self-portrait.

a. It is known that John Morgan received the self-portrait from the grateful artist shortly after he returned to Philadelphia in 1765 following a period of his medical studies abroad.

b. It is known that in 1774 Morgan permitted Henry Pelham, John Singleton Copley's half-brother, to borrow the portrait in order for Pelham, usually working as a miniaturist, to make a copy, and that Pelham returned the self-portrait to Morgan. In all probability the Pelham copy has been lost.

c. It is not known for a certainty how long Morgan retained possession of the self-portrait and whether during his lifetime he transferred it by gift or sale to Samuel Powel, his friend and his traveling companion while they were abroad and met Angelica Kauffman in Rome in 1764.

and the Director of the Center for American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

61 Baumgärtel to Kathleen A. Foster, April 22, 1986, PAFA Archives, deaccession file.

d. It is not known whether the self-portrait was included in Morgan's residuary estate that passed under his will to his brother George Morgan in trust for the latter's children. This appears to have been the case for the portrait that Angelica Kauffman painted of John Morgan, now in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. If the self-portrait was included in the residuary estate, its presence there would lead to unanswerable questions about the location and ownership of the self-portrait over a period of more than two centuries.

e. It is known that Elizabeth Powel was a major benefactor of PAFA at its inception and that she is recorded in PAFA's Donations Book, 1810–1852, as giving to the Academy "A Portrait of Angelica Kauffman—painted by herself" in 1809.

f. It is known that Charles Willson Peale undertook in 1808 to procure for his museum's collection of portraits a copy of the self-portrait, and that he made such a copy. It is not known whether he borrowed Elizabeth Powel's painting as a model, but it seems a reasonable supposition that he did, especially given the cordial relationship that appears to have developed between them.

g. It is not known for certain that the painting Elizabeth Powel gave to the Academy in 1809 was the original self-portrait Morgan received from the artist, although the working assumption in this paper is that she did. How the original self-portrait became the Amsterdam portrait that was sold at auction in 2012 remains, however, an unresolved mystery.

h. It is also reasonable to assume that the version of the self-portrait that Charles Willson Peale obtained for his museum collection stayed in the collection until it was purchased at auction by Joseph Harrison, Jr., in 1854.

i. It is known that both the PAFA self-portrait and the Harrison self-portrait were displayed in a major exhibition at the Academy in 1887–1888, but absent any apparent curatorial attention given to the two paintings' similarities. The AK Research Project has speculated, among other possibilities, that, in the dismounting of the exhibition, the two paintings may have been switched and that Sarah Harrison, Joseph Harrison's widow, wound up with the original. One is hesitant to accord serious weight to that possibility, although admittedly that could be one way of partially explaining how, after its disappearance for a century, the original self-portrait surfaced as the Amsterdam portrait.

j. It is known that a painting purportedly by Angelica Kauffman of herself was included in an auction of the Harrison estate in 1910 where it sold to an unidentified buyer for \$50. That painting thereafter disappeared from recorded ownership.

k. It is known that, while PAFA consistently maintained its claim to owning the original self-portrait during the 20th century, doubts began to emerge about the painting's authorship as the work of Angelica Kauffman. No direct challenge was made, however, until Landmarks, as the then owner of the painting, took the initiative and communicated with the AK Research Project in 2015.

The author of this study would like to hope that, despite the AK Research Project's disappointing findings, Landmarks will authorize a new, thorough technical examination of the Powel House portrait, now more than two centuries old. In the report that PAFA received from Theodor Siegel in 1967, after he had completed restoration work on the painting, he noted that "the present design covers an earlier painting," which upon further technical investigation might help to reveal who produced the portrait. It might even have been Charles Willson Peale—not a bad fallback position, one ventures to suggest, for Landmarks.

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