

Bulletin of

**THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS
OF THE CITY OF DETROIT**

**VOL. XXIII . . . NO. 7
APRIL 1944**



GENERAL WILLIAM NORTH
BY CHARLES WILLSON PEALE, 1741-1827
Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1942

PAINTINGS BY THE PEALES. The recent interest in the painters Peale exemplified by the exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1923 and in many subsequent special exhibitions in New York and elsewhere, and the fact that the Detroit Institute of Arts owns five works by this numerous family of artists, make it fitting to review here in order the paintings which we own though some of them have been published in earlier numbers of the *Bulletin*. Several, on the other hand, are recent accessions, now published in the *Bulletin* for the first time.

GENERAL WILLIAM NORTH BY CHARLES WILLSON PEALE (1741-1827). Charles Willson Peale, the founder of this painting clan, was born in Queen Anne's County, Maryland. He truly exemplifies the ingenuity of the self-reliant Yankee. After serving his apprenticeship as a saddler, he set up a shop for himself, but he could build a coach as well as make a harness, or construct a clock with equal assurance. He was one of the first American dentists. Then after discovering the bones of a mammoth, he founded a science museum and became a taxidermist of no mean ability. He was a patriot and a soldier, serving as aide-de-camp to George Washington. During a brief excursion into political affairs, he represented Philadelphia in the Pennsylvania Legislature of 1779.

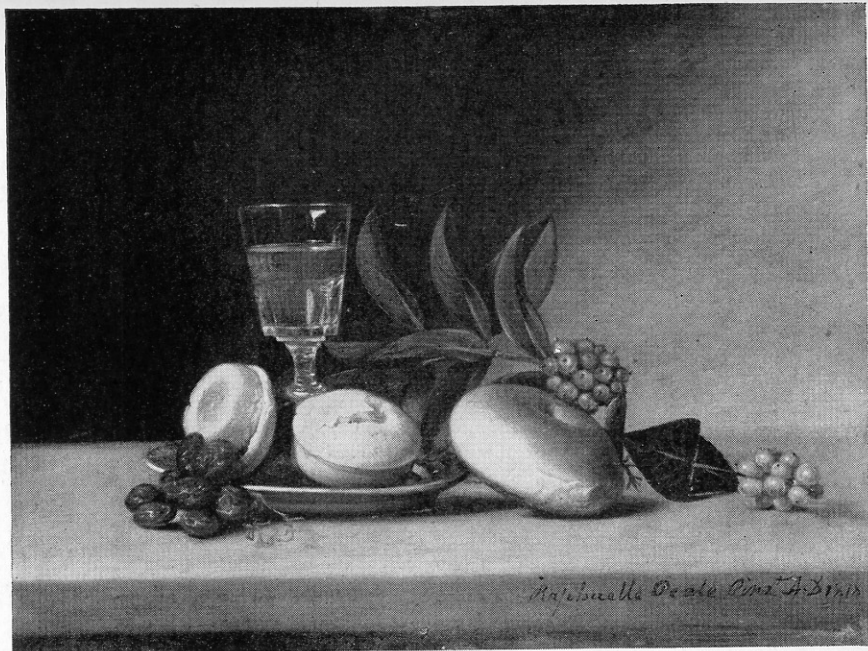
But Charles Willson Peale's chief interest from an early age was painting. After a few lessons with John Hesselius (1764), who was then living in the neighborhood of Annapolis, and some brief instruction from Copley in Boston, Peale launched his career as a portrait and miniature painter. After practising his profession in New England and in Virginia, Peale returned to Annapolis in 1767, and a group of his friends, impressed with his talent, made up a purse to send him to London to study with Benjamin West. Returning to America in 1769, he found profitable employment for his brush in the Middle Atlantic States. While serving in the Revolutionary War, he painted portraits of many of the officers, including Washington. Settled in Philadelphia, he established a studio and gallery which attracted wide attention, and in 1802 his portrait gallery of distinguished people was moved to Independence Hall, where many of his portraits are exhibited today.

Charles Willson Peale was blessed with a large family, many of whom became artists, and his paramount interest in the painting profession is indicated by the fact that he named several of his children after well-known old masters, such as Raphaelle, Rembrandt, Titian, Rubens, and Van Dyke, and contemporary artists like Angelica Kauffman and Rosalba. Paintings by three of his sons—Raphaelle, Rembrandt, and Rubens—are represented in our collection.

The portrait of General William North, painted in oval, presented in 1942 by Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. (Acc. No. 42.117), is of the same size (H. 23; W. 19 inches) as the portraits by Peale exhibited since 1802 in Independence Hall. Painted about 1786, it shows the general in his uniform of dark blue with buff facings. On the lapel of the coat is pinned the Order of the Cincinnati, organized in 1783 among the officers of the Continental Army. The picture is accompanied by the General's original diploma of the Order of the Cincinnati, dated December 10, 1785, and signed by George Washington, President, and Henry Knox, Secretary.

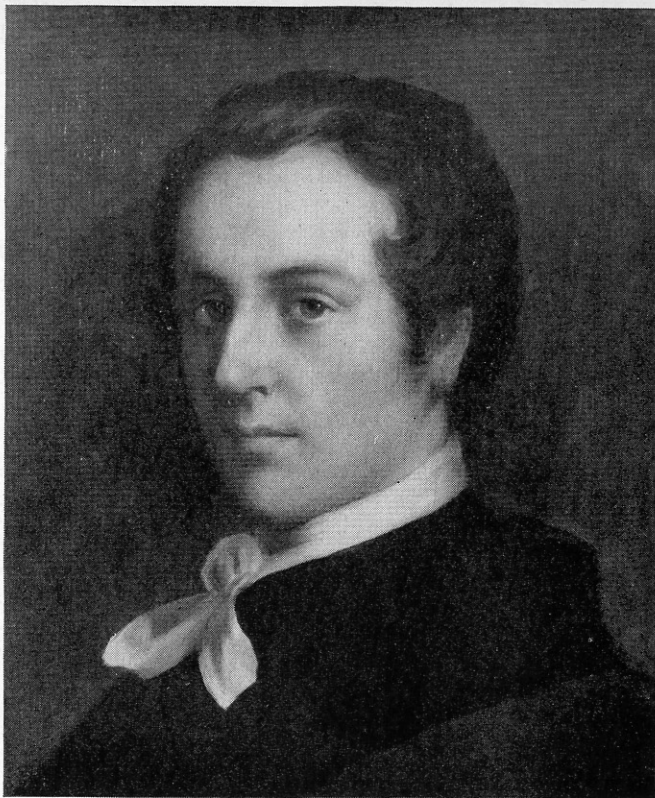
General William North was born in Maine in 1755 and entered the Continental Army at Boston at the age of 21. Between 1776 and 1800 he served as Second Lieutenant of Knox's Regiment of Continental Artillery, Captain of Lee's Con-

Published monthly, October to May inclusive, at the Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit, 5200 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Detroit, Michigan, under date of October 29, 1934. Subscription price \$1.00 per year.



tinental Regiment and Spencer's Regiment, Aide-de-camp to Baron von Steuben, Brevet Major, Major and Inspector of the Army, and finally Brigadier General and Adjutant General. He played an important part throughout the Revolution. North's relationship with Von Steuben (who died in 1794 on his lands in Oneida County, New York) was especially close. Serving as his aide-de-camp from 1779 to 1783, North helped with the reorganization of the Continental Army and, having been adopted by Von Steuben as his son, he acted as one of Von Steuben's executors, erected a monument over his grave, and wrote the sketch upon which the official biography of Von Steuben was based. In 1787 North married the daughter of Judge James Duane of New York and settled on the estate of one thousand acres presented to him by his father-in-law at Duanesburg, New York, erecting a four-square mansion still standing today. Here he frequently entertained such visitors as Baron von Steuben, Generals Popham and Schuyler, and other famous men of his day. He served several sessions in the New York Assembly and was appointed United States Senator from New York in 1798. He died in 1836 in New York City and was buried at Duanesburg.

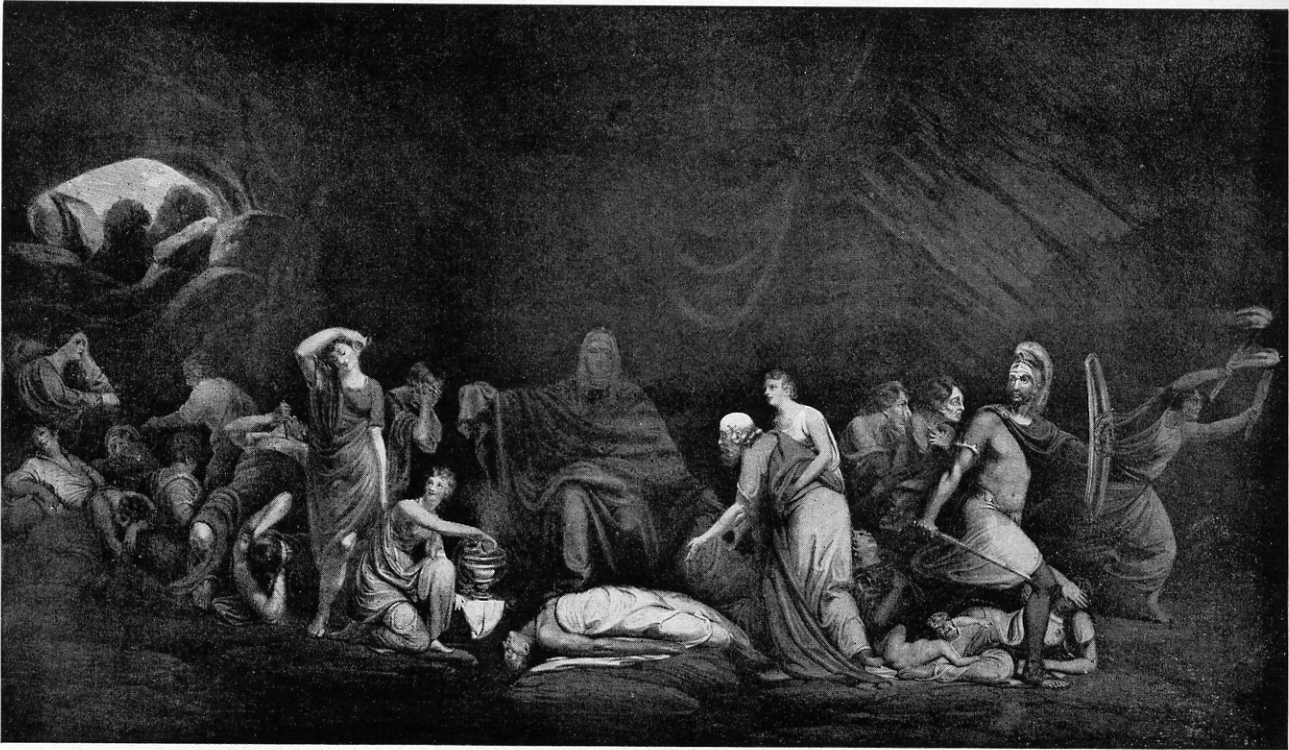
STILL LIFE BY RAPHAELLE PEALE (1774-1825), the eldest son of Charles Willson Peale. He studied painting with his father, and, like his parent, set up in Philadelphia as a portrait and miniature painter. At one time he was associated with his brother, Rembrandt, in an attempt to start a portrait gallery of distinguished persons in Baltimore. In this endeavor he does not seem to have achieved success, and he was often in financial difficulties. Raphaelle Peale was most successful in his painting of still life, which he did with great charm and fidelity. This was acquired through the Laura H. Murphy Fund in 1939 (Acc. No. 39.7. Signed at lower right: *Raphael Peale Pinxt, A. D. 1818*. H. 10¼; W. 13⅝ inches. *The Art Quarterly*, Vol. III, 1940, pp. 89, 92).

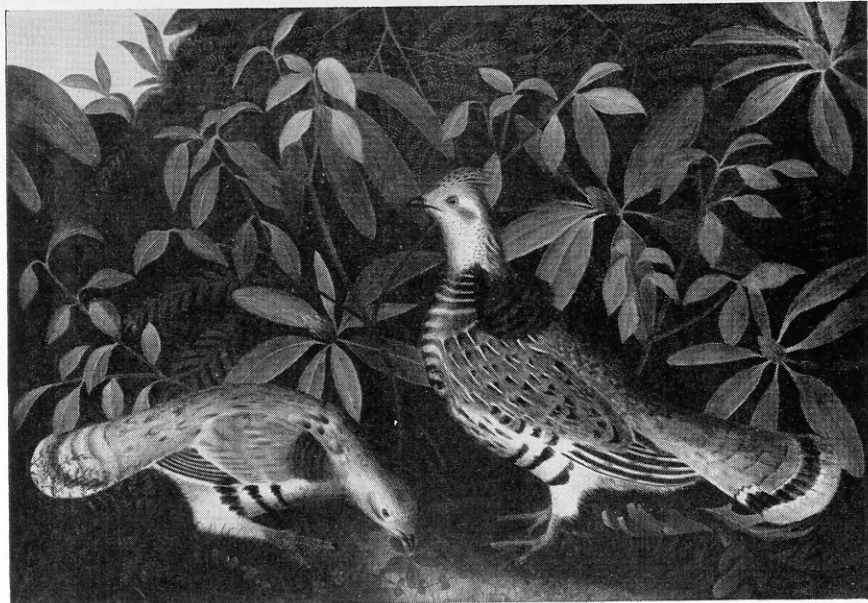


HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW BY REMBRANDT PEALE (1778-1860). This artist, the second son of Charles Willson Peale, was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He too was instructed in painting by his father at a very early age. On the retirement of his father from portrait painting in 1795, Rembrandt Peale was recommended to the public as his successor. In 1802-3 he studied in England under Benjamin West, as his father before him. Upon his return he found his services as a portrait painter greatly in demand. He went abroad again in 1807 and 1809, this time to Paris, and some years after his return, established his museum and gallery of painting in the city of Baltimore where the large canvas of *The Court of Death* was painted, together with many portraits from his hand. He was one of the original members of the National Academy of Design and one of the founders of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

The portrait of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow came to the Art Institute in 1935 as a gift of the Nancy Brown Experience Column of The Detroit News (Acc. No. 35.104. H. 18¼; W. 14¾ inches). It shows the sensitive features of America's most popular poet at the age of twenty-seven. It was probably painted while Longfellow was professor of modern languages at Bowdoin College and antedates his poetic works. As this picture has been published in the *Bulletin* (Vol. XV, 1935-36, p. 39), there is no necessity of discussing it further here.

THE COURT OF DEATH BY REMBRANDT PEALE. The name of Peale has been closely associated with this Museum since its beginning, for in 1885 at the suggestion of James E. Scripps, one of its founders, his brother George H. Scripps, purchased





and presented Rembrandt Peale's famous picture, *The Court of Death* (*Bulletin*, Old Series, Vol. IV, 1910, p. 38. Acc. No. 85.3). This immense allegorical picture, 11 feet 6 inches in height, 23 feet 5 inches in width, was painted by Rembrandt Peale in rivalry with Benjamin West's *Death on a Pale Horse*, now in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. The picture was exhibited in all the leading cities of the country, earning large revenues wherever it was shown. Because of lack of space it has not been on exhibition in Detroit for some time but an older generation will remember it nostalgically.

In 1931 *The Court of Death* was loaned to the Municipal Museum of the City of Baltimore which was the old Peale Museum, established by Rembrandt Peale. For nearly a decade the painting hung in the very building in which it was painted and first shown in 1820. With the outbreak of the present war it was deemed advisable to have it returned to us and we hope in the near future to see it installed temporarily in our large main hall in order to refresh the memory of those who have seen it in time past and to acquaint a new generation of Detroiters with this enormous allegory.

TWO GROUSE IN UNDERBRUSH BY RUBENS PEALE (1784-1865). Rubens, fourth son of Charles Willson Peale, was overshadowed by his more talented brother, Rembrandt, and consequently his works are not so well known. Recently, this charming example of his work was presented to the Museum by Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. (Acc. No. 43.41. H. 19¼; W. 27¼ inches. Inscribed on the back of the re-lined canvas: *Painted by Rubens Peale in his eightieth year, April 1864; copied from an old inscription*). The birds in their natural setting are drawn with such precision that they would satisfy the scientific demands of a naturalist. At the same time the picture loses nothing of its artistic charm for being so carefully delineated. This example of the art of Rubens Peale nicely supplements and adds to the importance of the group of Peale paintings in Detroit.

CLYDE H. BURROUGHS.



A TALL CLOCK BY FREDERICK MAUS (Active 1785-93), of carved mahogany, in the Philadelphia Chippendale style, acquired through the Gibbs-Williams Fund (Acc. No. 44.44), has been placed in the eighteenth century dining room of the American galleries. The rectangular hood has a broken arch with finely carved scroll terminations and a spirited rooster, carved in wood, as a finial. The arched glass door is flanked by fluted columns. The painted and enameled dial shows the phases of the moon and bears the signature *Fredk Maus Philadelphia*. Its total height is eight feet, four and a half inches.

E. P. R.



FOURTEEN ENGRAVINGS BY CRISPIN VAN DE PASSE (1565-1637) have been added to the print collection through the Hal H. Smith Fund. They represent a period which saw the decline of original engraving and the rise of great print publishing houses, of which the house of van de Passe was among the best known. Crispin van de Passe the Elder was the founder of the house which was carried on by sons, a daughter, and grandsons.

This gift includes a set of four engravings, *The Four Temperaments: The Sanguine, The Phlegmatic, The Choleric, and The Melancholic*, all engraved after Martin de Vos; but they have none of the coldness of much of the reproductive engraving of this time.

THE PERIODS OF LIFE, ten engravings, from the tenth year to the extraordinary age of one hundred years, are all shown in original design. The rich man of sixty years of age is illustrated. Crispin van de Passe succeeded best in figures of small size. *The Periods of Life*, enclosed in round frame, are also charming in general design. They portray Flemish life with careful detail, a liveliness of line, and a richness of tone, which make them a valued addition to the collection. (Acc. Nos. 44.13-16 and 44.17-26.)

I. W.