

# Joseph Harrison Jr. papers

MS.024

Finding Aid prepared by Hoang Tran

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PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY  
OF THE FINE ARTS

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Updated by Hoang Tran, January 2016

## Summary Information

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Repository</b>                 | The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives  |
| <b>Creator</b>                    | Joseph Harrison Jr. (1810-1874)   |
| <b>Title</b>                      | Joseph Harrison Jr. papers  |
| <b>Date [bulk]</b>                |   |
| <b>Date [inclusive]</b>           | 1874-1905   |
| <b>Extent</b>                     | 1 flat box (12"), 2 flat boxes (15")  |
| <b>Location note</b>              |   |
| <b>Language</b>                   |   |
| <b>Language of Materials note</b> | English   |
| <b>Abstract</b>                   | Collection includes two large bound volumes, both titled: "Visitors Register/ Joseph Harrison, Jr./Art Gallery." Volume one contains signatures, addresses and a few remarks from visitors to the Harrison residence from October of 1874 to April of 1888. The second volume dates from November 1888 to March 1905. Also donated in April of 2008 were two copies of the printed booklet titled <i>Catalogue of Pictures, Statuary and Bronzes in the Gallery of the Late Joseph Harrison, Jr., Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, 1874.</i> |

### **Preferred Citation note**

[identification of item], Title of Collection, Collection ID#, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

## **Historical note**

Joseph Harrison Jr. was the son of a Philadelphia grocer. He had little formal schooling and worked for several machinery firms in the 1820s and 1830s. In the later 1830s several of his improvements in locomotive engines brought him to the attention of Russian engineers embarking on an ambitious railroad-building project. From 1843 to 1850 Harrison lived with his wife, Sarah Poulterer Harrison, and their growing family in Russia. In 1847, he was decorated by Czar Nicholas I for his work on the Russian project.

In 1850 and 1851 he traveled in Europe, returning to Philadelphia in 1852 a wealthy man. In 1851 he rescued the American painter George Catlin from debt and took possession of Catlin's gallery of American Indian paintings and artifacts (later given by his wife to the Smithsonian Institution). In 1854 he purchased over twenty works from the sale of portraits and historical paintings formerly in Peale's Museum in Philadelphia – his largest single acquisition of art. In 1859 he purchased Benjamin West's monumental painting *Christ Rejected* (now in the Academy collection), realizing its potential importance as a Philadelphia cultural asset. From late 1860 to late 1863 he again traveled abroad, visiting major monuments and galleries, and describing them in a series of letters now preserved at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

In 1863 and 1864 he served on the board of commissioners of the Great Sanitary Fair and as Chairman of its Fine Arts Committee. From 1867 to 1873 he also served as a commissioner of the Fairmount Park Commission.

In 1855 he joined the Pennsylvania Academy board, serving on various committees for fifteen years. Harrison left the board in 1870, after a dispute over the best location for the new Academy building, and as a result of his declining health. In 1872, he donated \$10,000 to the Academy's building fund. After his death, his wife left the Academy a group of the greatest masterpieces from his collection, many of which are among the supreme icons of American art.

Excerpted from "The Joseph and Sarah Harrison Collection," brochure essay for the 1974 Academy exhibition *The Beneficent Connoisseurs*. Also see: *Joseph Harrison, Jr. (1810-1874): Philadelphia Art Collector*, Ph.D. Dissertation by Sue Himelick Nutty, 1993, University of Delaware (copy in Academy library).

## **Scope and Contents note**

The April 2008 portion of the gift included two large bound volumes, both titled: "Visitors Register/ Joseph Harrison, Jr./Art Gallery." Volume one contains signatures, addresses and a few remarks from visitors to the Harrison residence from October of 1874 to April of 1888. The second volume dates from November 1888 to March 1905. The second volume does not carry a

column for remarks, and contains a few “joke” signatures, probably added by Harrison’s grandsons.

Also donated in April of 2008 were two copies of the printed booklet titled *Catalogue of Pictures, Statuary and Bronzes in the Gallery of the Late Joseph Harrison, Jr., Rittenhouse Square, Philadelphia, 1874*. One copy is bound in a leather portfolio; the other is unbound and badly damaged. The damaged copy carries over two dozen annotations. Each reads “Academy,” written after the name of a work of art.

In May of 2009 the collection of photographs of Harrison’s home and family, plus two copies of an engraved portrait of Harrison were transferred to the Academy pending legal disposition of the estate. The donors will sign the deed of gift for these items at a later date.

### **Arrangement note**

### **Administrative Information**

#### **Conditions Governing Access note**

Collection is open for research.

The archives reserves the right to restrict access to materials of sensitive nature. Please contact the department for further information.

#### **Conditions Governing Use note**

The collection is the physical property of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Archives. The Museum holds literary rights only for material created by Museum personnel or given to the Museum with such rights specifically assigned. For all other material, literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. Researchers are responsible for obtaining permission from rights holders for publication and for other purposes where stated.

#### **Immediate Source of Acquisition note**

#### **Provenance note**

Gift of the Maud Harrison Gibbs Trust, 2008.

The Maud Harrison Gibbs Trust was formed to dispose of the “cottage” and its contents at 1430 County Line Road in Rosemont, PA. Maud Harrison Gibbs was the granddaughter of Joseph Harrison, Jr. She and her husband, the painter and illustrator George Fort Gibbs, resided in the “cottage” on the property. After her husband died, she

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was joined by her daughter Sarah Gibbs McClure. Maud died in 1973, and Sarah continued to live on the property until her death in 2006.

In 2006 Maud Harrison Gibbs' grandchildren, Ramona Harrison Gibbs of Peoria, IL, and George F. Gibbs III of Albuquerque, NM, were appointed trustees of her estate

### Processing Information note

## Controlled Access Headings

Person(s)

Corporate Name(s)

Genre(s)

Geographic Name(s)

Subject(s)

## Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements note

## Collection Inventory

| Folder title  | Date                               | Box | Folder |
|---|------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Catalogue of pictures, statuary, and bronzes in the Gallery of the Late Joseph Harrison Jr. (FRAGILE) DIGITIZED | 1874                               | 1   |        |
| Catalogue of pictures, statuary, and bronzes in the Gallery of the Late Joseph Harrison Jr.                     | 1874                               | 1   |        |
| The Iron Worker and King Solomon (book) (digital print)   | 1869                               |     |        |
| Correspondence: Donor   | 2008-2009                          | 1   |        |
| Deeds of Gift   | 2008-2009                          | 1   |        |
| Finding Aid   | 2009                               | 1   |        |
| Photographs: Harrison family (carte de visite) (9 items) *  | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs: family portrait (2 items) *  | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Memorial program  | 1874                               | 1   |        |
| Photograph: home exterior (carte de visite) (2 items) *   | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Images: Sue Nutty dissertation (reproductions)  | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Engraved portrait (head and shoulders), of Joseph Harrison, Jr. by John Sartain.                                | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |

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| Folder title   | Date                               | Box | Folder |
|--|------------------------------------|-----|--------|
| Photographs of works of art: (silver print, mounted on a 10 ½ x 13 ¾ inch black cardboard mount) <i>Bust of Count D'Estaing</i> by Houdon (marble; identification is probable – needs to be checked)   | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs of works of art: (silver print, mounted on a 10 ½ x 13 ¾ inch black cardboard mount) <i>King Lear</i> by Peter Frederick Rothermel   | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs of works of art: (silver print, mounted on a 10 ½ x 13 ¾ inch black cardboard mount) <i>Horses Attacked by Wolves</i> by A.S. Schreyer   | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs of works of art: (silver print, mounted on a 10 ½ x 13 ¾ inch black cardboard mount) <i>King Solomon and the Iron Worker</i> by Christian Schussele  | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs of works of art: (silver print, mounted on a 10 ½ x 13 ¾ inch black cardboard mount) <i>Last Interview of Lord and Lady William Russell</i> by Charles Lucy  | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs of works of art: (silver print, mounted on a 10 ½ x 13 ¾ inch black cardboard mount) <i>Eve Repentant</i> by Edward S. Bartholomew (marble)  | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Photographs of Harrison home: various (7 items)*   | Circa mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century | 1   |        |
| Art Gallery Visitor Register Volume 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contains about 1500 signatures. Notable names include: Stephen J. Ferris, Nov. 11, 1875; C.H. Wolff, Jan. 26, 1876; Henry E. Gilpin, June 5, 1876; Miss M. J. Peale, April 12, 1878; Jos. E. Temple, April 12, 1882; George R. Bonfield, April 16, 1885; Emlen Etting, Jan. 3, 1885; Mary J. Peale Feb. 19, 1886.</li> </ul>  | October 1874-April 1888            | 2   |        |
| Art Gallery Visitor Register Volume 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contains about 350 signatures. Notable names: Herbert Gilchrist, March 27, 1890; Thomas Eakins and William Rudolph O'Donovan, Oct. 27, 1891. This volume contains a small printed card "Admit [name] to view Collection of Pictures in Gallery of the Late Joseph Harrison, on Thursdays, between 10 A.M &amp; 4 P. M. The card is placed at the page for March, 1876 and the name on the card is not legible.</li> </ul> | November 1888-March 1905           | 3   |        |
|  |                                    |     |        |

\*Itemized details

Photographs:

Interiors of the Harrison home:

None of the interior shots carry any inscriptions, dates, or printed identifications. Numbers on the backs of the mounts were added at PAFA.

**No. 1:**

Vertical format shot of the statue niche showing the marble sculpture *Eve Repentant* by Bartholomew (on an elaborate pedestal), with other statues and busts visible on either side of the space. On the right side the bust of Lincoln, now owned by the Woodmere Art Museum, is visible.

Albumen print.

9 5/8 x 7 inches.

Mounted onto same size cardboard mount (unframed at the Pennsylvania Academy).

One copy

**No. 2:**

Horizontal format shot showing the *Eve Repentant* marble from the room next to it. This view is through the three arches separating the room from the side niche. The painting at the center is *King Lear* by Rothermel.

Silver print

6 x 8 1/16 inches.

10 1/2 x 13 3/4 inch black cardboard mount

One copy

**Nos. 3 and 4:**

Horizontal format shot showing the sculpture of the infant Bacchus in a basket, in front of an elaborate semi-circular window arch or partition. Paintings are visible behind and to the right of the sculpture.

Silver print.

6 1/8 x 8 1/8 inches.

10 1/2 x 13 3/4 inch black cardboard mount.

Two identical copies of this photograph.

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**No. 5:**

Vertical format shot showing the same room as numbers 3 and 4. Differs from the horizontal version in that different small sculptures are seen in front of the central painting, and the room behind the partition is well-lit and partially visible.

Albumen print.

9 ¼ x 7 ¼ inches.

14 x 11 inch cream mount board.

One copy

**No. 6:**

Vertical format shot of the grand parlor or salon, with elaborate globe-lit chandeliers hanging from ceiling. At the far end, in front of a large floor to ceiling mirror, is a marble sculpture on a pedestal assumed to be *The Swan of the Vatican* by Joseph Mozier.

Albumen print.

9 1/4 x 7 1/2 inches.

14 x 11 inch cream mount board.

One copy

**No. 7:**

Vertical format shot of grand parlor or salon seen in photograph number 6. This view shows the opposite end of the room, with a marble sculpture of a seated semi-nude girl holding her foot.

Albumen print.

9 1/8 x 7 1/2 inches.

14 x 11 inch cream mount board.

One copy

Photographs of Harrison Family Members:

Group photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr. surrounded by one male and four female children. Further identification and dating for this image are needed.

Platinum print.

4 x 4 1/8 inches on three-ply mount.

Photographer inscription in graphite at lower right of top mount layer is not legible.



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Group shot of eighteen people arranged on the front porch of what may be a summer-house. Sixteen of the subjects are seated or stand on the porch. A man and a woman are seated on horses at either side of the central group. Joseph Harrison, Jr. stands in front of the left porch rail and his wife is probably the woman behind him.

Albumen print.

5 x 7 1/2 inches mounted on cream mat board.

Albumen carte de visite of Joseph Harrison, Jr., seated in carved chair. Ca. 1860. On verso: "Photographie de la Paix / A. Letalle / Boul. des Capucines, 21 / Paris." 3 copies

Albumen carte de visite of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., seated in carved chair. Ca. 1860. On verso: "Photographie de la Paix / A. Letalle / Boul. des Capucines, 21 / Paris." 2 copies.

Albumen carte de visite of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., vignettted. Circa 1870s. On verso: "H. C. Phillips / 1206 Chestnut St./ Philadelphia." 2 copies

Albumen cabinet card photograph of Mrs. Joseph Harrison, Jr., vignettted. Circa 1870s. On verso: "H. C. Phillips / 1206 Chestnut St./ Philadelphia" 1 copy. The image is identical to that in the carte de visite by Phillips.

Albumen carte de visite of Theodore Leland Harrison, standing near a small table with two books. Ca. 1860. On verso: "Photographie de la Paix / A. Letalle / Boul. des Capucines, 21 / Paris." 1 copy

### Harrison Exterior Home:

Exterior of the Harrison home on Rittenhouse Square [constructed 1857; demolished 1925]

Albumen print.

4 x 4 1/8 inches.

Mounted on cabinet card stock with blue line around the border.

Albumen carte de visite showing an unidentified ancient gate or portal, probably from a European or Russian site. Inscribed on verso: "To Mamma / From Joseph Harrison."