Mrs. Hall’s Letter
By Geraldine Tremblay

The Dallin Museum is thrilled to announce the acquisition of a rare oil portrait by Cyrus Dallin entitled Mrs. Hall’s Letter. The painting was purchased at auction with the financial support of Andrew and Irene Jay of Charlestown, Mass.

In 1884, at the age of 22, Dallin painted Mrs. Hall during a crucial period in his early career. That same year, the third model for the Paul Revere Monument was officially accepted by the city of Boston, ruffling the feathers of Bostonians who preferred the commission to be awarded to a more established and experienced sculptor.

The identity of woman in this painting had been unknown until archival research revealed her to be Mrs. Susan Frothingham Hall. Her likeness in the painting closely resembles a photo of Mrs. Hall from a Dallin family album in the Museum’s collection. The photo is signed, “With love and good wishes from Mrs. G.V. Hall 1884.”

The Halls became an integral part of Dallin’s life during his early years in Boston. When Dallin left Truman Bartlett’s studio due to their contentious relationship, he was unable to afford other living arrangements. His good friend, painter Frederick Bound Hall, invited him to stay at the home of his parents, Gustavus and Susan, who lived at 57 High Street in Charlestown. During the several years he stayed in the Hall home, Dallin produced a number of portraits of family members. One such portrait, a small plaster of Mr. and Mrs. Hall’s five-year-old granddaughter, received critical praise at the Massachusetts Institute Fair exhibit in 1882.

In a letter to his parents dated Jan. 21, 1883, Dallin mentioned a portrait he was painting of Mrs. Hall. Several weeks later he wrote that he had “…finished the portrait of Mrs. Hall which is 12 in. by 20 in.” These dimensions exactly match those of Mrs. Hall’s Letter. In 1885, Dallin wrote his parents that he was painting a portrait of Miss Hall, which was to be his birthday gift to Mrs. Hall. He described this full length figure of a girl as “the best thing I have done in the way of painting.”

While living with the Halls, Dallin also painted his fiancé, Vittoria Colonna Murray. In an 1885 letter to his mother, he described his work on a “…study portrait of Colonna in oil color. I shall work on it every Saturday as that is all the time she has.” Dallin maintained his relationship with the Hall family long after he left their home. When he and Vittoria were married 1891, Frederick served as Dallin’s best man, and one of the ushers was Fredrick’s brother Thomas.

The Dallin Museum is delighted to have this rare oil portrait. (All thirty-eight paintings in Dallin’s retrospective exhibit at the Boston Art Club in 1934 were landscape paintings.) We would be ecstatic to locate the paintings of Miss Hall & Vittoria Colonna Dallin. More portraits may be hiding in plain sight! 🎨

Special thanks to Sarah Burks, Andrew Jay & David Noonan for their contributions.
On March 3, 2019, Dallin Museum director Heather Leavell took part in a symposium at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston about the implications of Dallin’s Appeal to the Great Spirit as a public commemoration of Native American history and experience. Visitors to the Dallin Museum experience Appeal as the sculptor’s personal reflection on fellow humans that he admired, and a public commemoration of their resilience in the face ongoing subjugation. Without proper context, however, the statue may have negative associations for viewers. Some MFA visitors have expressed concern that the statue reinforces stereotypical views of Native peoples, are also important to the museum’s interpretation is based: his life and values on which the Appeal to the Great Spirit continues to shape perceptions of Native peoples of the past.

For the MFA, this symposium was an important first step in providing its members with a fuller understanding of this iconic statue and the sculptor responsible for it. Could’t attend the program? The video of Appeal to the Great Spirit Reexamined is available for viewing on the MFA’s YouTube page.

The acquisition of Mrs. Hall’s letter was made possible with the generous support of Andrew and Irene Jay. In fact, Andrew, who is a member of the Friends of the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, spotted the painting on an online auction listing and alerted Museum staff. He reflects:

Having had the pleasure of living in Arlington for several years, we enjoyed the richness of the community and see the Dallin Museum as being an important aspect of the fabric of the community. While he is best known for his sculpture, he was an accomplished painter as well. We were lucky to find this painting in New York. We were particularly impressed with the scholarship within the Dallin team as they quickly pinned down many details around the painting. Irene and I are delighted to support the Museum in growing its collection.

Meet the Donors Behind Mrs. Hall’s Letter

**Arlington Approves $540,000 for Whittemore Park Revitalization Project**

By Heather Leavell

Last month, Town Meeting approved $540,000 in Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for the first phase of a $1.4 million project to revitalize Whittemore Park. This exciting project will transform the vastly underutilized green space in front of the Dallin Museum into a focal point for recreation, civic functions, art, and culture.

Throughout Spring and Fall 2018 the Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development held a series of public forums and conducted an online survey to gather community input on the park design. The planning process was guided by a working group comprised of consultants from Crowley Cottrell, LLC, property and business owners in Arlington Center, and representatives from the Arlington Historical Commission, Arlington Historical Districts, Dallin Museum, Cutter Gallery, and Chamber of Commerce.

Highlights of the final design include a new front lawn and walkway around the perimeter of the park; an accessible path adjacent to the railroad tracks with a raised granite curb engraved with historical information; a paved program space to the right of the building; and a new pedestrian plaza with amphitheater-style steps at the rear of the building. Work on the first phase of this project will begin sometime next year. During this phase, dead and invasive tree species will be removed, new trees planted, the perimeter path will be constructed, and other improvements to the landscaping will be made.

The revitalization of Whittemore Park will provide the Dallin Museum with many opportunities to extend our reach beyond the museum’s walls. We envision new and innovative outdoor programs and deeper, collaborative relationships with Arlington cultural organizations. We are grateful to the Town of Arlington for their dedication to transforming Whittemore Park into a more welcoming, useful, and enjoyable space for all.

Learn more about this project at www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/planning-community-development/
It is with tremendous gratitude that we announce the receipt of a $10,000 unrestricted gift from the Joan Pearson Watkins Revocable Trust. “I want to continue with what help that I can to honor the memory of Cyrus and Joan Watkins,” said Jonathan Fairbanks, Trustee of the Watkins Revocable Trust. “Joan was a talented potter, devoted educator, and avid collector and proponent of the arts. I know that it would please Joan to assist with the Dallin Museum and its collection.”

During her years as a professional ceramicist, Joan Pearson Watkins (1924-2013) exhibited her prize winning work in international venues, headed the Ceramics Department at the California School of Fine Arts, starred in a popular televised pottery instruction program, and conducted groundbreaking Tiffany and Fulbright-funded research on traditional pottery techniques.

Joan and her second husband, famed historian Malcolm Watkins (curator at Old Sturbridge Village) were passionate advocates for, and collectors of, American and Japanese decorative arts. As a consultant for the Smithsonian, Joan was instrumental in elevating the stature of the decorative arts through innovative exhibits for the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

A dear friend of Joan and Malcom, Jonathan Fairbanks, is an accomplished sculptor, painter, educator, historian, and museum professional. Among his many accomplishments is his founding of the American Decorative Arts and Sculpture Department at the MFA, Boston, where he served as curator from 1970-1999. As Executive Director of the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Mass. from 2012-2017, he expanded the Museum’s collection, programming, and reputation to a new level of prominence, helping to reclaim its position as an influential advocate for contemporary crafts.

Jonathan has been a champion of the Dallin Museum for many years, thanks in part to a special connection between the Fairbanks and Dallin families. In 1890, when his grandfather, Utah painter John B. Fairbanks, went to Paris to study, Dallin extended a much appreciated helping hand. He invited John to stay with him until the painter found accommodations. “I understand that this was a typically generous way that Dallin had with everyone,” said Jonathan.

The gift from the Joan Pearson Watkins Revocable Trust will be used to advance the Dallin Museum’s strategic goals for the coming year, including the restoration of Mrs. Hall’s Letter and the production of interpretive panels reflecting our new research on Dallin’s extensive activism for Native civil rights. ☞

Thank you to Winchester Co-operative Bank for their dedicated support to the Dallin Museum and for sponsoring this newsletter.

For more information on sponsoring our quarterly newsletter, please email us at info@dallin.org.
Own your own Cyrus Dallin sculpture! These 6” plaster busts based on Dallin’s Massasoit Ousamequin (Plymouth, MA) were produced exclusively for the Museum by sculptor Robert Shure and his team at Skylight Studios in Woburn, Mass. The design is based on an original cast of the statue by P.P. Caproni and Brother, the Boston plaster casting firm that reproduced Dallin’s work for many collectors in the early 20th century. Quantities are limited!

Produced by Golden State Mint, this beautiful 1-ounce copper bullion coin is the perfect gift for Dallin enthusiasts, museum supporters, and coin collectors.

To purchase items from the gift shop, visit the Museum Friday-Sunday, between 12-4 pm or contact us at info@dallin.org, 781-641-0747. Proceeds support Museum programs and collections care.