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**THE SHIPCARVERS' ART:
SHOP AND CIGAR STORE FIGURES IN AMERICA**

by

Ralph Sessions

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2000

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Introduction

At the height of their popularity, carved wooden figures advertising a wide variety of goods and services were a common sight on the streets of urban and small town America. As a journalist noted in 1886, "...few objects, policemen and lampposts excepted, are more familiar to the public than the cigar store wooden Indian."¹ Countless numbers of shop figures were carved in the United States and Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fanciful images of American Indians were by far the most common, but especially after about 1860, any character that caught the public's imagination could and would be skillfully personified, from the more traditional Turks and Scotsmen to up-to-date baseball players and fashionable women.

The earliest surviving American cigar store Indian dates to the turn of the nineteenth century, but they were surely used throughout the colonial period. By the mid-nineteenth century, nearly every tobacco store had a carved image of an Indian or some related type to advertise its wares. They were used for many other purposes as well, including, as William Demuth, a successful tobacco products distributor, claimed in 1871, "...all classes of business, such as segar stores, wine & liquors, druggists, yankee notions, umbrella, clothing, tea stores, theatres, gardens, banks, insurance companies, &c."²

The vast majority of these figures were made by shipcarvers, the men responsible for creating figureheads, stern carvings and other types of ship decorations. Trained in traditional Anglo-American woodcarving techniques, they were a tightly knit group bound by family ties and master-apprentice relationships who operated through a network

of workshops in port cities and towns along the East Coast and, to a lesser extent, the Great Lakes. They were never very numerous, as theirs was a highly skilled craft that required many years of specialized training. A newspaper reporter explained in the late nineteenth century that:

Twelve to fourteen years of apprenticeship is said to be necessary to make a competent workman, and that accounts for the scarcity of good hands, for the wages are low, and the demand limited.³

Until the second half of the nineteenth century, shipcarvers were by and large the only artisans in a particular community who were capable of consistently producing large-scale ornamental work in wood. As a result, they were frequently called upon to do architectural and church carving as well as figureheads and shop figures.

By tradition, American carvers were in touch with current trends in the fine arts. In this, they followed the lead of generations of European shipcarvers, beginning with Italian sculptors and carvers of the Renaissance and descending through leading French baroque artists like Pierre Puget (1620-1694) and Charles Le Brun (1619-1690). In North America, shipcarving reflected the general stylistic developments of the time, from the baroque-inspired designs of the eighteenth century through the neoclassicism, romanticism, and realism of the nineteenth.

While many talented shipcarvers worked in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the most influential was undoubtedly William Rush (1756-1833), who is best known today as one of the country's first sculptors and a founder of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Rush trained as a shipcarver, however, and operated an active workshop for over fifty years. He is generally credited with

introducing into the American carver's repertoire a type of full-length, freestanding figurehead that had been developed in seventeenth century France.⁴ His innovative designs helped determine the course that figurehead and shop figure carving was to take throughout the nineteenth century.

Among Rush's most prominent contemporaries were John (1746-1800) and Simeon Skillin, Jr. (1756/7-1806), members of a family of Boston carvers who dominated the profession in that city from the mid-eighteenth century to the first decade of the nineteenth, and one of their apprentices, Isaac Fowle (w. 1800-1832). They are known to have created a wide range of shipcarving and architectural ornament in their time, but almost none of it exists today. In the case of John and Simeon Skillin, Jr., for example, only seven figures can be fully documented as their work.⁵ This survival rate is unfortunately typical for shipcarving, rendering the researcher's task all the more difficult.

Shop figure carving reached its height in America from about 1840 to 1890, a period that coincided with the last great era of shipcarving. In response to the emergence of the ocean clippers in the 1840s, shipcarvers developed a new style of figurehead with a dynamic presence that matched the fast and sleek vessels. Due to the increased need for speed on the lucrative and highly competitive trade routes to California and the Orient, other types of ship decoration, most notably the elaborate stern carvings of the baroque era, were greatly reduced or eliminated altogether.⁶ The figurehead became the focus of the carver's creativity, resulting in some of the finest examples ever produced in this country. It was perhaps inevitable that this burst of activity would influence other aspects of the shipcarver's repertoire as well.

At the beginning of the clipper ship era, American shipcarvers also developed new types of shop figures, often life-size, that came to be known as show figures. By merging the tradition of full-size figureheads with that of the generally smaller shop figures, they created imposing sculptural forms that were readily adaptable to the rapidly expanding and increasingly competitive American business environment. For the next fifty years, they carved innumerable cigar store Indians, as well as a parade of other characters that reflected the latest fashions or public opinion.

Five New York City shipcarvers – John Cromwell (1805-1873), Thomas Millard (1803-1870), Thomas Brooks (1828-1895), Thomas White (1825-1902), and Samuel Robb (1851-1928) – were largely responsible for developing the most popular types of show figures.⁷ Aided by an undetermined number of journeymen and apprentices, this small group of men worked in a similar style over the course of three generations, producing thousands of figures that were marketed nationally by William Demuth & Company and a few other tobacco products distributors. Demuth issued mail-order catalogs, sent salesmen across the country, and set up elaborate displays in major national expositions and industrial fairs, including the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.⁸ Together, he and the carvers were instrumental in establishing New York City as the major center of production and distribution, spreading the New York show figure style across the country.

The active carving business in America attracted other skilled artisans as well, most notably German figure carvers who came to the United States after the Revolution of 1848. Many of them had trained in state craft schools, where they studied with academic sculptors and learned principles of drawing and composition as well as carving

techniques. Several established themselves in New York City, and while they generally did not create figureheads, they did carve many other types of wooden figures, such as carousel animals, shop figures, and decorative statues for architecture.

The best known European-trained woodcarver and sculptor to work in the United States was Julius Melchers (1829-1909), a native of Prussia who settled in Detroit in 1855 and operated a workshop there for nearly fifty years. He also conducted classes in drawing and modeling, providing instruction and inspiration to a number of aspiring artists including his most famous student, his son, the painter Gari Melchers (1860-1932).⁹

In addition to these men, a third group of carvers was comprised of those self-taught artists who fashioned figures for local markets, often in smaller inland towns and rural areas. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, carpenters, cabinetmakers and part-time woodworkers in all parts of the country produced shop figures on demand or for personal enjoyment. Little can be said about common training or techniques of these generally unidentified artists, other than what can be inferred from their work. They represent a diverse collection of individuals who usually operated independently of one another, often creating unique, one-of-a-kind pieces patterned after those made in the seaport shops. In all, they produced far fewer figures than shipcarvers, and again survival rates are low. As a result, their work is extremely rare today.

Throughout Victorian America, then, shop and cigar store figures found a niche in the rapidly evolving arenas of commercial art and popular culture. The vogue did not last long. For a variety of reasons, including changing tastes, new modes of advertising, and oversupply, the production of new figures had virtually ceased by 1900. They were

increasingly seen as old-fashioned, symbols of an era that was rapidly passing away. Most of the traditional shipcarvers were out of business anyway, their craft having been doomed by the advent of metal-hulled ships several decades earlier. When Samuel Robb closed his workshop on Centre Street in 1903, the end was in sight.¹⁰ While many figures lingered in front of shops for decades, the art of the shipcarver gradually faded from the American scene.

As products of a shared artistic and cultural imagination, nineteenth century show figures speak to several important aspects of American social history, including racial and gender stereotyping, and the emergence of a national popular culture. Based on contemporary perceptions, they reflect the opinions and prejudices of mainstream white society. Humor was injected into these stereotypical images through caricature. In this, the carvers followed English and European precedent, as seen in the work of eighteenth century artists such as William Hogarth and other social and political satirists.

Indian figures were generally rendered in the "Noble Savage" mode, a characterization influenced by the art and literature of late eighteenth century neoclassicism and early nineteenth century romanticism. As such, the imaginary American Indian assumed the dual roles of ancient stoic and doomed modern hero on an inevitable course of destruction due to forces beyond his control. Caught in the clutches of Western civilization, he was a hapless victim of progress and one of the last members of a vanishing race.

The most derogatory depiction was reserved for images of African Americans, which were patterned after the racist characters seen in minstrel shows and the popular

press. Fictitious and exaggerated physical features and dress that fit the general minstrel stereotype dominated the portrayal of most black figures. Other caricatures poked fun at contemporary urban types like vain, fashion-conscious young women and their slightly disreputable male counterparts. As for foreigners, Scotsmen, Turks and Chinese with their respective associations with tobacco and tea, were typically rendered in exotic costumes that bespoke far-off lands.

For most of the nineteenth century, the American public found these images irresistible, and show figures occupied a prominent place in the national consciousness. They were so much a part of the scene, in fact, that no one thought to make note of them until they were threatened with extinction in the final decades of the century. Sparked by the growing antiquarian interest at the time, curious reporters visited the workshops of the "sign sculptors," as one journalist dubbed them,¹¹ to investigate the inner workings of the craft before its final demise. As a result, a handful of newspaper and magazine articles written mainly in the 1880s and '90s, along with some photographs and magazine illustrations are all that survive in the way of contemporary commentary.

Just as they were vanishing from city streets in the early twentieth century, however, the figures began to experience renewed interest as museum pieces and collector's items. Many of the finest examples with especially long histories or links to a particular locale were donated to local historical societies. The first book on the topic, *Hunting Indians in a Taxi-Cab* by Kate Sanborn, appeared in 1911. In a breezy, anecdotal style, the author recounts her adventures and the information that she gleaned while locating figures for her country home.

By 1915 or so, shop figures and figureheads were also being collected by modernist artists searching for forms of expression that they considered to be truly American. The trend gathered momentum throughout the 1920s, culminating in the landmark exhibition “American Folk Sculpture,” organized by Holger Cahill for the Newark Museum in 1931.

Soon thereafter, shipcarving and shop figures finally began to receive some scholarly attention, albeit on a limited scale. A few articles on both topics appeared in *Antiques Magazine* in the 1930s, while the first major book on shipcarving, Pauline A. Pinckney’s *American Figureheads and Their Carvers*, was published in 1940. Pinckney presents an interesting discussion of the subject bolstered by extensive research, but her information is not totally reliable and her text is not footnoted.¹² The best general source is still Marion V. Brewington, *Shipcarvers of North America*, which first appeared in 1962. One of the leading maritime historians of his generation, Brewington gives a well-researched and well-documented history of American shipcarving in a concise fashion.

As for shop figures, the first significant book is Anthony W. Pendergast and W. Porter Ware, *Cigar Store Figures in American Folk Art*, published in 1953. Pendergast had assembled a major collection of shop and cigar store figures, and while his text is largely anecdotal and must be read with a critical eye, his years of collecting experience gave him an impressive knowledge of what was then an undocumented field.

The most important reference to date is Frederick Fried’s *Artists in Wood*, published in 1970. Following the lead of Pendergast and others, Fried conducted extensive research and assembled a significant amount of information on the history of shop figures and related themes. His biographical research is especially important, as he

was the first to establish the identities of many of the most accomplished nineteenth-century American carvers. This dissertation could not have been written without his groundbreaking work. As with Brewington and Pinckney, though, he approaches his topic as an historian and does not employ a rigorous stylistic analysis or any other type of art historical methodology. As a result, the book's major problem lies in the attribution of specific figures to specific carvers, an area that merits reexamination.

Among the first writers to attempt to place figureheads, shop figures and other types of folk sculpture in an art historical context was Jean Lipman, whose *American Folk Art in Wood, Metal and Stone* appeared in 1948. Predating Brewington, Pendergast and Fried, her book provides a number of important insights, but also contains information that is somewhat dated.

More recently, two major art historical studies concerning the most important eighteenth and early nineteenth century carvers in Philadelphia and Boston have been written. *William Rush, American Sculptor*, edited by Linda Bantel, is the catalog of an exhibition that was held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1982. It includes scholarly essays on all aspects of Rush's career, including one on the critical reception of his work by William H. Gerds that demonstrates that Rush's carved wooden figures, while widely admired, did not and in fact could not transcend the well-established contemporary distinctions between craft and art.

The second study is Sylvia L. Lahvis' dissertation, "The Skillin Workshop: The Emblematic Image in Federal Boston" (University of Delaware, 1992), which presents a detailed investigation of the lives and work of this important family of carvers.¹³ Lahvis' principal thesis is that English figure carving evolved along with the symbolic language

of civic pageantry, and that eighteenth-century shipcarvers like the Skillins transformed these images into icons of American trade and commerce.

Whether rendered in detailed realism or a more stylized and individualized fashion, shop and cigar store figures represent one of the largest and most expressive of all American sculptural traditions. Along with figureheads, and garden and architectural figures, they can lay claim to being the first major form of public sculpture in this country, particularly before about 1865, when cities and towns throughout the United States began commissioning Civil War memorials and other types of commemorative statues in large numbers.

While not considered fine art by most contemporary observers, figure carving was generally seen as a vibrant form of contemporary expression. Its venues were the streets and wharves of America, and its intent was to speak directly to a large, popular audience. The extent of its success has been obscured by a lack of critical recognition in its own time, and overshadowed by the work of native-born sculptors who began working in Europe in the 1820s and '30s. Horatio Greenough (1800-1852) first went to Italy in 1825, followed by Thomas Crawford (1813-1857) in 1835 and Hiram Powers (1805-1873) in 1837.

Coincidentally, the decade of the 1830s was also marked by the death of William Rush, which has provided art historians with a convenient endpoint for the consideration of figure carving as a significant American art form. This is perhaps most clearly stated in Wayne Craven's comprehensive survey, *Sculpture in America*, which has deservedly become a standard reference. Towards the end of the first chapter, which is entitled

“Artisan-Craftsmen Beginnings.” Craven affirms the major contribution that figure carvers made to the development of American sculpture up to 1830. He then writes.

But the great era of the figurehead had passed by 1830, for such carvers failed to follow the lead of William Rush, who had elevated wood carving to a fine art. Before long, even the craft of wood carving virtually ceased to be practical as it became a victim of the wood-carving machines of the Industrial Revolution, dying out almost altogether soon after the Civil War.¹⁴

A central aim of the discussion that follows is to revise this widely held opinion, and to demonstrate that shipcarving retained its vibrancy until the end of the nineteenth century. The 1840s and '50s were decades of innovation, not decline, as the carvers responded to myriad social and artistic developments, as well as the emergence of the United States as a major maritime presence. Because they have survived in reasonable numbers, shop and cigar store figures are the most visible manifestations of this, providing the best opportunity for exploring the shipcarver's art.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their figures graced the prows of ships, gardens of well-to-do citizens, ceremonial structures built for civic celebrations, and storefronts of enterprising merchants. As sculpture, shop figures and figureheads can be appreciated more today than they could in their own time, and their place in the history of American art is more evident. As cultural images, they resonate with meaning, embodying traditional values while at the same time reflecting the attitudes, prejudices and trends of a rapidly developing society.

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- ¹ "Manufacture of Dummy Indians." *Tobacco* 2 (12 November 1886): 2.
- ² Printed advertisement for William Demuth & Company. New York City. 1871.
- ³ "Lo Takes a Spring Suit." *Tobacco* 6 (12 April 1889): 1.
- ⁴ John F. Watson. *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia. E.L. Cary & A. Hart. 1830). 551.
- ⁵ Sylvia Leistyna Lahvis, "The Skillin Workshop: The Emblematic Image in Federal Boston" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1992). 110.
- ⁶ Marion V. Brewington. *Shipcarvers of North America* (Barre. MA: Barre Publishing Company. 1962). 57. 60-61.
- ⁷ Samuel Robb identified the other four carvers as "...prominent figures in the early history of the art." in Frank Weitenkamp. "Lo, the Wooden Indian." *New York Times*. 3 August 1890. 13. Their lives were first documented in Frederick Fried. *Artists in Wood* (New York: Clarkson Potter. 1970). 177-238.
- ⁸ William Demuth & Company. *Illustrated Catalogue of Smokers' Articles and Show Figures* (New York: William Demuth & Co., 1875): Fried. 32-35, 60-61.
- ⁹ George B. Catlin. "Old Detroit Artists Found Trade Dull. But Market for Wooden Indians Brisk." *Detroit News*. 4 January 1925. pt. 2. p. 17.
- ¹⁰ Fried. 223.
- ¹¹ Weitenkamp. 13.
- ¹² See Brewington's review of Pinckney's book in "Book Reviews." *American Neptune* 1 (1 April 1941): 178-81. for a blistering assessment of the book's shortcomings. While much of his criticism is no doubt justified. the reader is left with the impression that the tone of the article results from other motivations.
- ¹³ Dr. Lahvis has also published two articles on the Skillins. "Icons of the American Trade: The Skillin Workshop and the Language of Spectacle." *Winterthur Portfolio* 27 (Winter 1992): 213-33. and "The Skillin Workshop." *Antiques* 155 (March 1999): 442-51.
- ¹⁴ Wayne Craven. *Sculpture in America* (Cranbury. NJ: Cornwall Books. 1984). 26.

Chapter I - Black Boys and Virginians: Shop Figures and Tobacco in England

In 1617, an Englishman named Richard Brathwait wrote *The Smoking Age, or The Life and Death of Tobacco*, a long, rambling tale of the origins of tobacco that ridiculed the extravagance of fashionable London smokers. As such, it was not a particularly remarkable piece of writing, but its frontispiece is notable as the earliest known representation of the interior of a tobacco shop. (Fig. 1) On the counter is a sculpture of a small, vaguely African figure in a feathered skirt with a tobacco roll under his left arm, another in his mouth and several clay pipes at his feet. Brathwait explains that this is "A Black-more upon the Stall. with rolls of tobacco. Drinking his Petoune."¹ The story that follows is presented as a quasi-mythological fable that casts Tobacco as the illegitimate son of Bacchus and Proserpine. Pluto becomes Tobacco's champion and mentor, and at one point advises him to "Plant thy selfe in the eye of the Citie: set mee the picture of some sallow-faced Blackamoore. or a Virginia-man. for that will draw custome upon the Frontispiece of thy doore...."²

Acknowledging that Brathwait's allusions must have been familiar to his readers, his book demonstrates that counter-size figures known variously as blackamoors, black boys or Virginians were closely associated with the tobacco trade by the early seventeenth century.³ In fact, several other contemporary references further confirm this link between the image of black boys and tobacco. Among them is Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, first published in 1614, which mentions "...the black boy in Bucklersbury, that takes the scurvy, roguy tobacco, there."⁴

As common as the relationship was by this time, however, its origins are not entirely clear. Certainly, the association of Virginia with tobacco is understandable, as the colony was the source of much of the tobacco being imported into England. The depiction of Virginians as Africans is a more complicated issue that will be discussed later in this chapter. At this point suffice it to say that it was largely due to the unfamiliarity of most seventeenth-century Europeans with American Indians and the already standardized conventions of artistic representation of the New World and its inhabitants.

Overall, little is known about the origins and early history of shop figures. The tradition surely dates to at least late medieval times when the resurgence of commerce and growth of trade sparked economic development throughout Europe. Given the ancient and widespread use of wooden ecclesiastical and ceremonial figures, it is not difficult to imagine that enterprising tradesmen of an even earlier date commissioned carved images to identify and advertise their places of business. Two-dimensional signboards, at least, were universal at an early date, particularly for inns and taverns.⁵ Their history can be traced through medieval times to the seventeenth century, when due to their ever expanding numbers, they became subject to regulation in several European cities.

A few years after London's Great Fire of 1666, an ordinance was enacted that required signboards to be affixed to the walls of buildings instead of projecting out into the streets.⁶ Apparently, the efforts of merchants and tradesmen to continually outdo one another in order to attract business had resulted in a dense, overhead canopy of large wooden signs on ornate iron fixtures that clogged narrow urban streets and threatened pedestrians. A similar ordinance was passed in Paris during the reign of Louis XIV.⁷

Neither seems to have been enforced very rigorously, though, and the familiar profusion of projecting signs continued to be a part of the urban landscape in Great Britain and Europe until well into the eighteenth century.

In 1718, a commission of inquiry was appointed in London to investigate an incident in which the size and weight of a sign caused the wall of the building to which it was attached to collapse into the street, killing several people.⁸ Then, in 1762, yet another ordinance was effected that called for “all...encroachments, projections, and annoyances whatsoever within the said cities...to be affixed or placed on the fronts of the houses, shops, warehouses, or buildings to which they belong...”⁹ By this time, though, the old, projecting signboards were finally beginning to disappear, in part because of these regulations, but also due to several other factors, including the increasing use of street numbers and the general rise of literacy among the population.

Throughout the seventeenth and most of the eighteenth centuries, signboards were often elaborately decorated, both by ornamental painters and well-known artists. Ornate iron fixtures were constructed at significant expense, a phenomenon that prompted the *Gentlemen's Quarterly* to comment in the mid-eighteenth century that:

Long after signs became unnecessary, it was not unusual for an opulent shopkeeper to lay out as much upon a sign, and the curious ironwork with which it was fixed in the house, so as to project nearly in the middle of the street, as would furnish a less considerable dealer with stock in trade.¹⁰

In addition, three-dimensional, hanging images of shoes, gloves, hats and the like were common. Tobacconists frequently used a representation of a tobacco roll, a series of circular cakes of ten to twelve inches in diameter strung together for shipment.

Constructed of wood, the signs were usually painted brown and gold. Several examples of this type of sign survive in the collections of English museums, while one source published in 1957 indicated that they “may be found even today hanging in the doorways of old-established Tobacconists.”¹¹

Small, carved human figures were sometimes attached to the more elaborate of these signboard constructions.¹² Due to the lack of documentation, it is difficult to estimate how many freestanding figures were placed outside of shops during this period. Judging by the remarkable growth in popularity of tobacco in the seventeenth century, however, images of black boys in the form of painted signboards, exterior shop signs, or carved counter figures must have been everywhere.

Tobacco began to have a significant impact on Europe around 1560, the year that Jean Nicot, the French Ambassador to Portugal, is credited with conducting the first medical experiments with it.¹³ The early explorers had noted tobacco use among American Indians several decades earlier, and Columbus may have brought a few seeds to Europe on one of his return voyages, but, even so, it was too rare and exotic a commodity before the middle of the sixteenth century to generate much interest.¹⁴ That was to change quickly, however, as news of Nicot's experiments caused a great stir in the French court and elsewhere. André Thevet, a Franciscan who had spent several years in Brazil, disputed Nicot's claim of being the first to recognize tobacco's potential and reported that upon his return to Europe in 1556, he had planted tobacco seeds in his garden and had begun to investigate its properties.¹⁵ Thevet also holds the distinction of publishing the earliest known illustration of a smoker. A plate from his *Les Singularities de la France*

Antartique, first published in Paris in 1557, shows a Brazilian Indian smoking a large roll of tobacco, the direct predecessor of the cigar. (Fig. 2)

By 1570 or so, tobacco was cultivated in botanical gardens throughout Europe. Widely hailed by medical men as a universal panacea, it was not infrequently dubbed the "holy herb." According to the prevailing theory of bodily humors, tobacco was believed to expel phlegm, and warm and dry the body. It was therefore considered to be particularly good for older men whose brains were "cold and moist," and for all those living in damp, low-lying places.¹⁶ Claims for its beneficial and curative properties grew more and more extravagant, and before long, "nicotian therapeutics," as its medical applications were often called, emerged as a common household remedy. Tobacco was variously prescribed for almost all known ailments, including asthma, ulcers, labor pains, rheumatism, ringworm, toothache, constipation, deafness and cataracts. At least one author went so far as to promote its use to counter the plague.¹⁷

As the list of tobacco's virtues grew, some recognized the absurdity of many of the claims. By the early seventeenth century, the belief in the herb's therapeutic value was beginning to be challenged. In addition, it had become the center of an even larger controversy surrounding its social and recreational use, which many people believed to be spiraling out of control. Most medical men opposed the smoking habit on the grounds that tobacco was a medicinal agent that should not be used indiscriminately.¹⁸ In literary circles, Brathwait's *The Smoaking Age* was just one of many satirical tracts that ridiculed the fashionableness of smoking. An earlier reference comes from a Bishop Hall who wrote in 1597 that the young man of fashion "quaffs a whole tunnel of tobacco smoke."¹⁹

The most famous early opponent of tobacco use was undoubtedly James I. whose *A Counterblast to Tobacco*, published in London in 1604, characterized smoking as:

A custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the Brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stigian smoke of the pit that is bottomless.²⁰

The King pursued a lifelong crusade against the habit, and at one point increased the tariff on tobacco 4000% in an effort to curtail consumption. He seems to have had an extreme personal aversion to tobacco, but his antipathy towards Sir Walter Raleigh, one of tobacco's great promoters, no doubt contributed to his position as well.²¹ It should also be noted how useful his moral outrage was in providing a rationale for a significant new source of tax revenue.

Royal opposition to tobacco use appeared in many parts of the world in the early seventeenth century. In 1634, for example, a decree was issued in Russia that prohibited smoking or selling tobacco on pain of death or banishment for habitual offenders. Similar edicts were issued in Turkey, China and Japan as well, not only due to tobacco's dubious health value, but also because it was considered a corrupting influence introduced by foreigners. While these laws were enforced somewhat sporadically and arbitrarily, they remained in place for several decades.²²

Related, but not quite as drastic measures have been recorded in Denmark, Sweden, Sicily, present-day Germany, and other parts of Europe.²³ The Catholic Church weighed in as well, when Urban VIII introduced a papal interdiction in 1642 that prohibited tobacco use in and around churches. The Pope noted not only the objectionable

odors that filled the air, but also the frequent interruptions during religious services caused by those who left the church to have a smoke.²⁴

Despite opposition in high places, tobacco consumption grew at an astounding rate. In 1603, approximately 25,000 pounds of tobacco were imported into England. By 1700, the total had reached 38,000,000 pounds.²⁵ As prices dropped throughout the seventeenth century, tobacco reached all corners of society and seemingly became everyone's favorite habit. As early as 1598, a German traveler named Hentzner recorded that the "English are constantly smoking tobacco." while in 1625, another observer wrote that "Tobacco shops are set up in greater number than either Alehouses or Tavernes."²⁶ Other European countries experienced a similar phenomenon, particularly Holland, which was consuming close to 3,000,000 pounds a year by 1670.²⁷

As an exotic herb with reputed medicinal qualities, tobacco was first sold in apothecaries. Shops such as the one illustrated by Brathwait, which also sold drugs and liquors, usually offered patrons a place to indulge their tobacco habit. In this case, the three smokers are sitting in a private room that could be screened from the public by a curtain. As the popularity of smoking increased in the seventeenth century, tobacco shops quickly became more specialized concerns that were entirely devoted to the sale and consumption of tobacco products.

Although Brathwait chose to depict three gentlemen in the shop, tobacco use was not a male prerogative. On both sides of the Atlantic, it was popular among women and children of all social classes, and little evidence survives to suggest any widespread gender or age prohibition until the nineteenth century. As a visitor to backwoods America wrote in 1686:

Everyone smokes while working and idling. I sometimes went to hear the sermon; their churches are in the woods and when everyone has arrived the minister and all the others smoke before going in. The preaching over, they do the same thing before parting. They have seats for that purpose. It was here I saw that everybody smokes, men, women, girls and boys from the age of seven.²⁸

Pipe smoking was by far the most popular way to consume tobacco in seventeenth-century England, Holland and North America. In Spain, on the other hand, cigars were preferred and the pipe was almost unknown. Apparently, Europeans adopted the prevailing custom among Native Americans in their respective colonies, as North American Indians generally used pipes, while their Central and South American neighbors rolled tobacco in a variety of vegetal wrappers.²⁹ The two other forms of tobacco use, snuffing and chewing, were also reported by the early explorers, although their popularity was at first somewhat limited in Europe.

Snuff came into its own in the eighteenth century. By the time of Queen Anne, it was considered much more fashionable than smoking in England and on the Continent.³⁰ Elaborate rituals and an extensive array of paraphernalia deemed necessary for the proper taking of snuff evolved among the aristocracy and all those with social pretensions. Snuffboxes became something of an art form, considered by many to be the equivalent of jewelry. As a Parisian observer noted in the second half of the eighteenth century:

One has boxes for each season. That for winter is heavy; that for summer light. It's by this characteristic feature that one recognizes a man of taste. One is excused for not having a library or a cabinet of natural history when one has 300 snuff boxes.³¹

Devotees of snuff disdained smoking as an uncouth habit that fouled both air and expensive wardrobes. Snuff's prominence prompted the venerable Doctor Samuel Johnson to pronounce in 1773 that "Smoaking has gone out."³²

While this sentiment may have reflected the preference of the fashionable, however, it was far from universally true. Smoking remained popular among the middle and working classes in both city and country.³³ The image of the pipe-smoking country squire or parson became a typical artistic and literary device, while many artists, students and other bohemian types flaunted smoking as a declaration of their independence from the dictates of fashion.

Cigars began to be seen outside of Spain only after about 1770. They had become quite popular in England by 1825, probably as a result of the influence of British soldiers returning from Napoleonic wars in Spain and Portugal.³⁴ By that time, cigar smoking was also common in other European countries and in North America. Unlike pipes and snuff, cigars were generally considered to be a part of the masculine domain, which would seem to be a significant comment on the emergence of new gender distinctions during the Victorian era. In the late 1850s, an English author noted that the cigar had made major inroads in the previous twenty years, and that it was a prominent feature of the gentleman's study or library.³⁵ Cigars continued to gain ground among smokers until the end of the century. By then, they had begun to be eclipsed by the cigarette, which is, of course, the most popular tobacco product today.

As for the development of tobacco shop figures in England, it is reasonable to assume that due to the rapid growth in tobacco consumption, the number of carved

wooden figures advertising the sale of tobacco products must have increased dramatically in the seventeenth century. Most of these were fanciful representations of African boys, ranging from about two to three feet in height, that were intended for display on a counter of a shop that dispensed tobacco, as illustrated in Brathwait's book. They shared a number of common attributes and accessories that helped identify their purpose, including skirts of feathers or tobacco leaves, feathered headdresses, necklaces with gorgets, pipes, and rolls of tobacco. Their bodies were proportioned either as adults or children.

The two figures illustrated here, which are probably English dating from the mid-eighteenth century, are well carved with somewhat generalized soft and round bodies typical of representations of children during the period. (Fig. 3 & 4) They are both in the collection of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York City. The feathers or leaves of the skirt and headdress of the figure holding the pipe are more crisply rendered, and are painted in several different colors. Lips, pupils and necklace are also highlighted with color. Other surviving examples, such as the figure with the tobacco roll under his arm, are entirely black. Both have old surfaces. It should be noted that the issues surrounding color and surface treatment are complicated, as most shop figures were frequently repainted during their working lives. Original surfaces are rare to the point of nonexistence, and "old" is a relative term at best, particularly when applied to early counter figures. Nevertheless, the coloring of these two figures is both typical and traditional.

The image of the black man or African as a symbol of an exotic, far-off land certainly predates the introduction of tobacco in Europe. Commonly known as Ethiopians, North Africans had figured into the European imagination for centuries. As

such, they embodied several different meanings. They could serve as fairly straightforward references to foreign places or products, as in the present instance. By the seventeenth century, black boys dressed in exotic costumes were also in much demand as pages and other types of fashionable appendages to aristocratic households.³⁶

On a deeper level, images of Africans were representations of otherness from beyond the borders of Christendom that embodied a range of conflicting and generally negative characteristics more comfortably ascribed to outsiders than recognized as a part of European culture and civilization.³⁷ The frequent allusions to blackamoors and other African types in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature provide ample evidence of their many roles. In the Brathwait illustration of a tobacco shop, for example, several scrolls containing Latin phrases hover above the heads of the three smokers at right. (Fig. 1) The words may be translated as, "How much changed from whites are these Englishmen transformed into Ethiopians." In this case, sixteenth-century racial humor is used to indict smoking through association with the negative values attached to the image of otherness.

The issue is, of course, not the realistic representation of foreigners, but is rather one of European conceptions of the foreign constructed through cultural and artistic traditions. This in turn makes it easier to understand the link between the blackamoor and tobacco. The African was a much more familiar type than the Native American. Few sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans had ever seen an American Indian. In the absence of existing models, artists and craftsmen relied on convention when called upon to represent the inhabitants of the New World. The Brazilian smoker and his companions

illustrated in Thevet's 1557 book have idealized bodies derived from Classical and Renaissance precedents. (Fig. 2)

One of the earliest illustrations of the New World, a German woodcut of 1505 that relates to the letters of Amerigo Vespucci, shows Caribbean or Brazilian Indians with European beards. (Fig. 5) It also highlights their feather ornaments, some of which are fairly accurate. The feathered skirts are not, however, and it has been speculated that they are a misinterpretation of Vespucci's verbal descriptions of people who wore no clothes but decorated themselves with feathers. European artists could not conceive of such a state of affairs, and so invented the feathered skirt.³⁸ Before long, this became a standard feature of representations of American Indians, surviving into the nineteenth century as the tobacco-leaf skirt of cigar store figures.

In Frankfort from 1580 to 1634, Theodor de Bry and his family published a thirteen-volume series entitled *The Great Voyages*, more commonly known as the *America* series. The first attempt to create a comprehensive chronicle of the European discovery and colonization of the New World, the volumes contained over 300 copperplate engravings, including maps, topographical views and, above all, scenes of the voyages, the conquest and the lifestyles of American Indians. The series was widely distributed and reprinted numerous times, particularly in the seventeenth century. Its collective impact upon the popular conception of the discovery and conquest of America has been enormous. Its illustrations have served as models for many artists, while over the years, a large number of visual motifs have been extracted from the original prints and inserted into countless new contexts.

The frontispiece of volume nine, first published in 1602, features an idealized Indian man wearing a feathered skirt and headdress, and holding a bow and arrow. (Fig. 6) His appearance demonstrates that these items had already become artistic conventions by this time. When combined with the image of the blackamoor, they result in the Virginian, an exotic figure from the distant land where tobacco is grown. Once fixed, the depiction remained remarkably consistent across a variety of formats into the nineteenth century.

As a shop sign, the black boy reigned supreme in Great Britain until the eighteenth century. By then, he was finally being challenged by the image of the Highlander, usually a kilted Scotsman offering a pinch to passersby or holding a snuff box or a mull, a hand-held grinder used to prepare the powdered mixture. The earliest known reference appeared on the 1720 trade card of David Wishart of London, who advertised that he "Makes & sells all sorts of Snuff" at the sign of the "Highlander, Thistle and Crown."³⁹ Whether Wishart used a signboard or a carved wooden figure is not known, but certainly such figures existed by this time. Their numbers grew with the increasing use of snuff until, by mid-century, they were apparently encountered more frequently than the older image of the blackamoor. Their widespread popularity is confirmed by an item that appeared in 1747, two years after the English had put down the Jacobite Rebellion in Scotland and Parliament had enacted legislation to suppress Scottish dress, ballads, and other aspects of traditional culture. Veiling his criticism of English policy in satire, the author wrote:

We hear that the dapper wooden Highlanders, who guard so heroically the doors of snuff-shops, intend to petition the Legislature, in order that they may be excused from complying with the act of Parliament with regards to their change of dress: alleging that they have ever been faithful subjects to his Majesty, having constantly supplied his Guards with a pinch out of their mulls when they marched by them, and so far from engaging in any Rebellion, that they have never entertained a rebellious thought: whence they humbly hope that they shall not be put to the Expense of buying new cloaths.⁴⁰

Eighteenth-century Highlanders were either life-sized representations placed outside of shops or smaller figures in the tradition of their blackamoor predecessors that were displayed on counters and above doorways. Carvers generally paid great attention to details of costuming, while faces could be either generalized or quite specific in the delineation of features. All were brightly painted in the manner of one or more Highland regiments.

Having attained near universal popularity throughout Great Britain, the Highlander remained a common sight throughout the nineteenth century. That wry observer of English life, Charles Dickens, recognized him as such a general feature of tobacco shops around 1855 that he wrote in *Little Dorrit* that:

The business was of too modest a character to support a life-sized Highlander, but it maintained a little one on a bracket on the door-post, who looked like a fallen Cherub that had found it necessary to take to a kilt.⁴¹

The counter-sized figure illustrated here speaks to the longevity of the tradition. (Fig. 7) Created around 1910 for Ratray's Snuff Shop in Perth, Scotland, it is now in a private collection in New York City. A lively characterization, it features all of the Highlander's typical attributes, from snuff mull to regimental uniform. The finely detailed carving reinforces the naturalism of the little Scotsman's pose and demeanor.

While the Highlander was the most common type of English shop figure after about 1750, he was not the only character to stand alongside the older black boys. Turks and sailors were also very popular. Turbaned Turks or Moors, as they were frequently called, were portrayed in long flowing robes and loose-fitting trousers in a generalized conception of Middle Eastern dress. They often served more than one purpose, and were just as frequently used by coffeehouses as tobacco shops.⁴² It was usually just a simple matter of different accessories. With pipe in hand, a Turk identified a tobacconist, without it, he advertised a coffee shop.

It should be noted that regardless of historical and cultural realities, costuming is the most important distinguishing feature between the types of shop figures known as Moors and blackamoors. That is, while historically the European words "moor" and "blackamoor" could both refer to Islamic North Africans and, to a lesser extent, all Arabic peoples, the shop figure tradition makes a different distinction. Generally speaking, Moors and Turks were those figures in orientalized costumes, and blackamoors, black boys and Virginians wore feather or tobacco-leaf skirts.⁴³ The distinction is important because it aids in the interpretation of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century references to a variety of figures that no longer exist.

Sailors, too, played a dual role, as signs for both tobacco merchants and marine suppliers. Because smoking was usually restricted on board ships due to the fire hazard of an open flame, sailors were particularly partial to chewing tobacco.⁴⁴ Peter Kalm, a Swedish botanist, noted during a visit to Philadelphia in the mid-eighteenth century that:

The English chewed tobacco a great deal, especially if they had been sailors. Not an hour passed when they did not take as much cut tobacco as they could hold in

the fingers of the right hand and stuff it in the mouth. Young fellows from fifteen to eighteen years of age were often as bad as the older men.⁴⁵

As a result of this preference, sailors were commonly identified with chewing tobacco, while sailor figures frequently presided over the sections of tobacco shops that dispensed that particular product.

If, on the other hand, the sailor figure held a spyglass, sextant or some other navigational device, he became a sign for a nautical instrument shop or a chandlery that sold all types of marine supplies. For obvious reasons, they were frequently encountered in coastal towns, and could be found in a variety of sizes, from detailed, full-sized representations standing in doorways to smaller versions in shop windows or attached to storefronts. Again Dickens provides a contemporary reference and a sly comment on their widespread use. In a description of London's maritime district in *Dealing with the Firm of Dombey and Son*, which first appeared in serialized form in 1846, he wrote that:

Anywhere in the immediate vicinity there might be seen...outfitting warehouses ready to pack off anybody anywhere, fully equipped in half an hour; and little timber midshipmen in obsolete naval uniforms, eternally employed outside shop doors of nautical-instrument makers in taking observations of the hackney coaches.⁴⁶

According to a late nineteenth century source, the figure that inspired Dickens was a well-known sign for the shop of Norie and Wilson that was in use by 1763. Supposedly, King William IV once saluted him with a tip of the hat as he passed by on his way to Trinity House.⁴⁷

Because these little sailors and other types of shop figures were so adaptable and provided such humorous, recognizable, and easily remembered identifications, it should

come as no surprise to learn that they were also prevalent in other parts of Europe by the eighteenth century. In fact, it has been suggested that blackamoor figures were first used on the Continent and were introduced into England around 1615.⁴⁸ References to the use of carved wooden figures in Holland, Germany, France and elsewhere are quite common, although usually they are mentioned only in passing, no doubt because it was assumed that everyone was familiar with them. In Holland, the traditional triumvirate of Highlander, Turk and sailor was particularly popular. In addition to three-dimensional figures, the three characters could also be seen together on signboards in an image inspired by a popular rhyme that translates into English as:

We three are engaged in one cause
I snuffs, I smokes and I chaws.⁴⁹

As for shop figures in the American colonies, little evidence exists before the Revolutionary War period, but again it is certain that they were in use, at least in some of the larger coastal towns. A figure of a sailor carved by Lemuel Beadle is known to have stood in front of the Watch House in Salem, Massachusetts by 1712, although it was strictly not a shop sign.⁵⁰ *The Little Admiral*, an old figure that has been in the collection of the Bostonian Society since 1916, has a more secure claim to being the oldest known American shop figure. (Fig. 8) William Williams, a mathematical instrument maker, was using the figure as a sign for his shop at the corner of State Street and Merchants Row before 1770. The location had previously been the site of The Admiral Vernon Tavern, a popular gathering place that was in operation as early as 1743. Admiral Edward Vernon was a well-known personality who died in 1758. *The Little Admiral* has long been

identified with the tavern as well as with Williams' shop, and in fact, his now empty right hand could have just as easily held a glass of grog as a quadrant.⁵¹

Two closely related eighteenth-century figures of *Bacchus* astride a keg have histories that are similarly varied. The one illustrated here is believed to have been used for many years as a sign for the Backus Hotel in Norwich, Connecticut.⁵² (Fig. 9) It is now in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford. A nearly identical piece painted white and holding a basket of fruit instead of a bottle and cup has a long history in nearby Windham, and is still displayed in the Windham Public Library. They are likely the work of the same carver, although tradition holds that the Windham Bacchus was made by four British seamen from the sloop *Bombrig* who were captured and imprisoned there in 1776. It was first presented to a Widow Cary as a token of appreciation for her kindness, and subsequently served as a sign for several different taverns for over a hundred years.⁵³ One of the prisoners was a ship carpenter named John Russell, but whether or not he was the carver will never be known. Whoever was responsible for these cheerful, chubby figures can be credited with a good understanding of contemporary decorative work in a late rococo style.

As for tobacconist figures, a colonial character in a powdered wig and knee breeches that is owned by Demuth's Tobacco Shop in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is often cited as the earliest known example. (Fig. 10) The store was founded by Christopher Demuth in 1770, and remains the oldest tobacco shop in the United States that is operated by descendants of the original owner. A counter figure approximately two feet in height, the piece is usually dated to 1770, the year that the shop was opened. More likely it was carved a few decades later by Christopher's son, John Demuth (b. 1770), who was a

woodcarver by profession.⁵⁴ While it may very well be the oldest surviving American tobacconist figure, it was certainly not the first, for, as has been shown, tobacco use was widespread in America by the late seventeenth century.

Tobacco was also a vital element of the colonial economy. One source estimates that around the time of the American Revolution, tobacco represented over 75% of the total value of goods exported from Virginia and Maryland. In 1770, for example, the two colonies shipped over 100,000 hogsheads of tobacco to England. The cargo was carried in from 300 to 400 vessels, employing about 4,000 seamen.⁵⁵ A case can therefore be made for the importance of tobacco not only to the growth of the shop figure tradition, but also to the development of American shipbuilding. The link is far from being random or inconsequential.

¹ Richard Brathwait, *The Smoaking Age, or The Life and Death of Tobacco* (London: E. Griffin, 1617). "Drinking his Petoune" is an obsolete phrase that in current usage would be "smoking his tobacco." In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, inhaling smoke was frequently characterized as "drinking," due to the perceived similarities in the mode of ingestion. "Petoune" is an English translation of "petun" or "petum," which is in turn a Portuguese adaptation of a Brazilian Indian word for tobacco. See Jerome E. Brooks, *Tobacco: Its History Illustrated by the Books, Manuscripts and Engravings in the Library of George Arents, Jr.* (New York: Rosenbach Company, 1937), 1:17-19, and V.G. Kiernan, *Tobacco: A History* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1991), 13.

² Quoted in Brooks, 2:40.

³ "Blackamoor," "black boy," and "Virginian" are used interchangeably in the text, as they were in popular usage at the time. All three refer to two- and three-dimensional images of Africans that advertised places where tobacco was sold and consumed. See p. 27 for an explanation of the contemporary distinction between "blackamoor" and "moor."

⁴ Ben Johnson, *Bartholomew Fair* (London, [1614]; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 31.

⁵ Cecil A. Meadows, *Trade Signs and Their Origins* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 4-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷ Ernest C. Peixotto, "Artistic Street Signs. Revival of an Old Custom as Seen in Paris," *New York Herald Sunday Magazine*, 15 January 1905, 7. As the title indicates, the article is primarily concerned with signboards painted by established artists, a custom that the author claimed was experiencing a revival at the time. He mentions the famous inn sign of a white horse painted by Théodore Géricault, as well as signs known to have been created by Horace Vernet, Jean Goujon and Antoine Watteau. He also notes that in 1826 Balzac published a small volume entitled, *Petit Dictionnaire critique et anecdotique des Enseignes de Paris par un Bateur de Pavé*, that was essentially a catalog of interesting street signs.

⁸ Meadows, 7.

⁹ Quoted in Meadows, 8.

¹⁰ Quoted in Jacob Larwood and John Camden Hotten, *The History of Signboards* (London: J.C. Hotten, 1866), 26.

¹¹ Meadows, 38. See also Larwood and Hotten, 252; and G.L. Apperson *The Social History of Smoking* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 237.

¹² In 1719, a French traveler identified as Mission noted that, "Out of London, and particularly in villages, the signs of inns are suspended in the middle of a great wooden portal, which may be looked upon as a kind of triumphal arch to the honour of Bacchus." Quoted in Larwood and Hotten, 26.

Illustrations of some of these arches show large three-dimensional figures. See *English Inn Signs: Being a Revised and Modern Version of History of Signboards* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951).

¹³ Brooks, 1:30-31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (New York: Routledge, 1993). 39-40, 75-76.

The ancient humoral system is believed to have been first formulated in Greece. Hippocrates is credited as the originator, with further development by Galen, whose writings were unquestioned until well after the Renaissance. In the seventeenth century, the system was based on the binary combination of four opposing qualities – hot and cold, moist and dry. The human body had four humors – blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile – each of which had a specific essence. Blood, for example, was hot and moist, while phlegm was cold and moist. Healthy bodies were in humoral equilibrium. A diseased body was in disequilibrium, and it was the physician's task to restore equilibrium by drawing off excess humor through bloodletting, purging, sweating and other practices. Being "hot and dry," tobacco was considered useful for treating imbalances relating to "moist humors." See also Brooks, 1: 33.

¹⁷ Brooks, 1:32-33; Goodman. 79-80.

¹⁸ Brooks. 1:34.

¹⁹ Quoted in Apperson. 26.

²⁰ Quoted in Brooks, 1:404.

²¹ Ibid.. 55-56. 401.

²² Ibid.. 71. 73. 75.

²³ Ibid.. 78.

²⁴ Brooks, 1:79-80; Goodman. 69.

²⁵ Goodman. 59.

²⁶ Quoted in Apperson. 32. 45.

²⁷ Goodman. 60.

²⁸ Quoted in Goodman. 63.

²⁹ Brooks. 1:22; Goodman. 67.

³⁰ Apperson, 57. 96-97; Brooks, 1:161; Goodman, 72.

³¹ Quoted in Goodman. 74.

³² In a letter to James Boswell in 1773, Johnson wrote:

Smoking has gone out. To be sure it is a shocking thing, blowing smook out of our mouths into other peoples mouths, eyes, and noses, and having the same thing done to us. Yet I cannot account why a thing which requires so little exertion, and yet preserves the mind from total vacuity, should have gone out.

From *The Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides* (London: Henry Baldwin, 1785), quoted in Brooks, 4:9-10. See also Brooks, 1:161, and Apperson, 119.

³³ Apperson, 99; Brooks, 1:162.

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- ³⁴ Brooks. 1:167; Apperson. 139.
- ³⁵ Apperson, 166; Brooks, 1:167.
- ³⁶ Charles G. Shaw, "Black Boys and Their Playfellows," *Antiques* 25 (March 1934): 101.
- ³⁷ For a Postmodern discussion of this see Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other* (New York: Routledge, 1990). A Structuralist perspective is provided by Bernadette Bucher. *Icon and Conquest: A Structuralist Analysis of the Illustrations of de Bry's 'Great Voyages'* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- ³⁸ William C. Sturtevant, "First Visual Images of Native Americans," in *First Images of America*, ed. Fredi Chiappelli (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 1:420. The author notes that coastal Brazilian Indians were known to have worn feather belts, along with other feather adornments, but that skirts made of very large feathers such as those shown in the woodcut are not only improbable, but would also have been impractical.
- ³⁹ Meadows, 43.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted in Larwood, 421.
- ⁴¹ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (London, [1857]: London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 214.
- ⁴² Larwood and Hotten, 426-27; Meadows, 40-41.
- ⁴³ Meadows, 40.
- ⁴⁴ In 1653, the British Admiralty issued a regulation forbidding smoking on all "...ships at sea in the service of the commonwealth." See Brooks, 1:162. Soon thereafter, most merchant vessels adopted the same practice.
- ⁴⁵ Quoted in Goodman, 63.
- ⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, *Dealing with the Firm of Dombey and Son* (London, [1848]: London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 32.
- ⁴⁷ William Allingham, "Figure-heads," *The Nautical Magazine* 68 (August 1899): 523.
- ⁴⁸ Brooks, 1:37. See also Larwood and Hotten, 431.
- ⁴⁹ Larwood and Hotten, 426.
- ⁵⁰ Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (Cranbury, NJ: Cornwall Books, 1984), 11.
- ⁵¹ Harriet Cabot, *Handbook of the Bostonian Society* (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1979), 53.
- ⁵² *Illustrated Catalogue of A.E. Brook's Collection of Antique Guns, Pistols, Etc.* (Hartford: Hartford Press, 1899), 197. In 1882, a Colonel Perkins claimed that he had owned the figure for over seventy years, and that he remembered it being attached to a signpost in front of the Backus Hotel when he was a small boy.
- ⁵³ Brigham Payne, *The Story of Bacchus and Centennial Souvenir* (Hartford: A.E. Brooks, 1876); *A.E. Brook's Collection*, 189-94.

⁵⁴ Charles G. Shaw, "Speaking of Wooden Indians." *Antiques* 36 (September 1939): 133; Erwin O. Christensen. *Early American Wood Carving* (New York: Dover, 1972), 128.

The modernist artist, Charles Demuth, was directly related to Christopher and John Demuth. The family home was two doors from the tobacco shop. See Betsy Fahlman, *Pennsylvania Modern: Charles Demuth in Lancaster* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1983), 14-15.

⁵⁵ Brooks, 1:138.

Chapter II - The Art of the Shipcarver

The history of shop figures is closely tied to that of shipcarving and figureheads, particularly in North America, where the vast majority of figures were created by shipcarvers trained in traditional Anglo-American woodcarving techniques who operated through a network of workshops in port cities and towns along the East Coast, and, to a lesser extent, the Great Lakes. Their art was an ancient one, long deemed essential for any self-respecting maritime nation. Well-executed shipcarvings that bespoke wealth and power were as critical to national prestige as the size of the vessels that carried them. In fact, during the period when ship decoration was at the height of ornateness, from about the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, the massive programs of baroque-inspired carving applied to the largest European warships were so extreme that they were known to interfere with ships' operations.¹

The situation was somewhat different in colonial North America. Royal patronage did not exist, of course, and of the many ships built along the Eastern seaboard before the Revolution, most were small coastal vessels. American shipyards did not begin to build mid-sized, twenty-six and forty-four gun frigates rivaling those of England and France until the 1770s, and even these were no match for the huge first- and second-rate English ships of the line that carried from ninety to 120 guns and the most ornate carvings.² Still, the craft of shipcarving was just as important in America during the colonial period as it was in England, albeit for a different reason.

In eighteenth-century London, the carving trade was divided into five categories: framecarving, coachcarving, chaircarving, housecarving and shipcarving.³ Generally

speaking, no such specializations existed here. By and large, shipcarvers were the only artisans in a particular locale who were capable of consistently producing skilled ornamental work in wood. Because of this, they were frequently called upon to do architectural and furniture carving as well as figureheads and stern carvings. Throughout the eighteenth century, their figures graced the prows of ships, gardens of well-to-do citizens, ceremonial structures built for civic celebrations, and storefronts of enterprising merchants.

Almost all of this work has long since succumbed to the ravages of time and the elements. As a result, documentary sources provide the primary evidence of the colonial carver's art. The earliest known record of an American figurehead dates to 1689, when Edward Budd and Richard Knight of Boston presented a bill for a "Lyon" for the sloop *Speedwell*.⁴ In this, they were closely following English practice, in which lion figureheads were the general rule on all but the largest naval vessels throughout the seventeenth and first three or four decades of the eighteenth centuries. Numerous other references to lions carved for American vessels after 1700 attest to their widespread use during the period. The carvers themselves emphasized their familiarity with English styles, or better yet, their English training. Typical of the advertisements that appeared in American newspapers were, "Henry Crouch, Carver from London, now living in Annapolis Makes any sort of carved work for Ships" and "Philip Witherstone, carver from Bristol, Ship Carving done as Cheap as in England."⁵

It was not until after 1727, when the British Navy Board issued an order permitting the use of figures other than lions, that a wider variety of carvings began to appear, first on English and soon thereafter on American ships.⁶ Representations of sea

horses, horses' heads and other animals became quite popular for a time, along with human figures, both real and mythological. By mid-century, lions were decidedly out of fashion, although they continued to be seen on older ships. Then, after about 1765, animal figureheads of all types began disappearing in favor of human figures symbolizing the name of the vessel.⁷

In order to place these developments in their proper perspective, a digression in the history of ship decoration would seem to be in order. Figureheads are ancient and universal, but it is not necessary to travel back to the dawn of civilization. Most important for the purposes of this discussion is the intersection of shipcarving with the fine arts of Western Europe that began during the Renaissance. Overall, the history of European shipcarving during the period is one of increasingly complex programs of carved and painted ornamentation. The oared galleys that had plied the Mediterranean since ancient times were the first to evidence the trend. In describing Spanish ships used in the war with the Turkish corsair and Ottoman admiral, Barbarossa, in the early sixteenth century, an historian wrote:

... The flagships were distinguished by their external adornment, especially those that accompanied Charles V. It was the time of the Renaissance, and ships were not exempt from its influence; which was evident from the sculpted figures on the prows, in the carving and gilding of the sterns, in the elegant form of the lanterns, in the painting of the pavesses, and the beauty of the tilts, standards and streamers. The fact that Barbarossa sent to the Sultan the scutcheon from the stern of the galley of Portuondo, as an artistic jewel, indicates the labor that was spent on it, and yet this was surpassed by the decoration of the galley in which the prince Don Felipe was at Genoa, which was the work of the best Italian artists.⁸

As the century progressed and Europe entered a period of maritime expansion fueled by the exploration and colonization of the New World, ship design and

construction developed rapidly. By 1600, Spain, England and Holland had built powerful navies of increasingly large warships and armed merchant vessels, while several other nations were committing more and more resources to shipbuilding in an effort to compete with them. The most significant developments in ship decoration centered in France, where in 1665, Jean-Baptiste Colbert was appointed director of the fleet, charged with making his country into a major naval power.⁹ The French had previously relied upon the Dutch for the construction of their larger ships. Colbert changed this by greatly expanding shipbuilding operations in several French ports, including Marseilles, Toulon, Brest, Dunkirk, and Rochefort. He also turned his attention to ship decoration, enlisting the aid of leading French artists, including Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), Director of the Académie Royal, Pierre Puget (1620-1694), and later Jean Bérain (1640-1709).¹⁰ Colbert summarized his belief in the importance of shipcarving when he wrote "that nothing should be neglected in order to declare the magnificence of His Majesty on the seas."¹¹

Strongly influenced by Italian ship work, French carvers at the Mediterranean ports of Marseilles and Toulon developed what one historian has characterized as a "flourishing French school of naval sculpture" by mid-century.¹² With Colbert's encouragement, the training of shipcarving apprentices at the major centers was formalized through the study of drawing and modeling, the use of live models, and other techniques adopted from the fine arts. As the dockyard workshops expanded and gained prominence, several added classrooms that came to be known locally as "academies." By 1668, for example, more than forty master, journeymen and apprentice carvers were employed in the carving school and workshop at Toulon.¹³

The director of ship decoration at Toulon at that time was Pierre Puget. Due to the fame that he has achieved in the annals of art history, his career has been fairly well documented. As such, it provides a rare glimpse into the development of shipcarving in seventeenth-century France and its close relationship to the fine arts. Born near Marseilles in 1620, Puget was apprenticed to a shipcarver named Roman. His talent was recognized at an early age and, according to an often-repeated story, his master recognized that he had nothing more to teach him after three months.¹⁴ Following in the footsteps of generations of aspiring French artists, Puget left for Italy at age seventeen. He studied and worked in Florence and Rome with leading baroque sculptors and painters including Pietro de Cortona.¹⁵

Returning to Marseilles three years later, he set himself up as a portrait painter while continuing to carve for ships. After a few years, he again traveled to Italy, where he continued to develop his interest in sculpture and architecture. Upon his return to France, he began receiving important painting and sculpture commissions. Working primarily in Marseilles and Genoa, he firmly established his reputation over the next decade, leading Colbert to appoint him to the post at Toulon in 1668.¹⁶ Before long, he had also assumed the position of master sculptor at the dockyards in Marseilles, while at the same time continuing to execute major works in marble and other types of stone. Among his many accomplishments, he is credited with developing the shipcarving school at Toulon into an important center that taught generations of apprentices in southern France.¹⁷

As might be expected, the style that emerged was entirely baroque. Puget was particularly noted for designing complex compositions for the sterns of major vessels that featured large human figures in classical dress, gods and goddesses, mermaids and tritons,

winged horses, portraits of contemporary subjects, caryatids, emblematic shields, and rows of huge columns. (Fig. 11) Le Brun and other French artists also made major contributions to the development of the French style, and many influential designs have been credited to their hands. It was Puget, however, who became particularly notorious among shipbuilders and seamen for creating the weighty figures, massive pillars and other carvings that overloaded the ships to which they were applied and interfered with their handling. His extravagance prompted reprimands from Colbert and led to an order signed by the King in September, 1673 restricting the weight of stern figures.¹⁸ A popular story of the day recounted how one captain, having protested his ship's excessive decoration to no avail while in port, sawed off Puget's huge stern figures and set them adrift as soon as he got to sea.¹⁹

In contrast to elaborate sterns, French figureheads of the period were generally much simpler affairs. Single figures in classical dress trailing acanthus leaves and other baroque motifs were the general rule. They were often designed to emerge from the ship's head, a decorative structure built out over the water to support the figurehead and protect the bow of the vessel. (Fig. 12) Others were "cut clear and through" in shipcarver's terminology. That is, they were carved as freestanding figures and then mounted on a platform at the forward part of the head. Unlike most other European nations, the French never used the lion to any extent, except on some of their small northern coastal vessels that were strongly influenced by the Dutch.²⁰ Their emphasis on unified decorative schemes designed by leading sculptors and painters in an up-to-date aesthetic of baroque classicism was also exceptional.

The same can not be said of contemporary English practice. In the early part of the seventeenth century, lions, dragons and unicorns, all survivors of late mediaevalism, were by far the most popular figurehead types.²¹ As previously mentioned, the lion reigned supreme by the second half of the century, in compositions that were frequently embellished with cherubs or putti-type figures. The largest vessels were given equestrian portraits of the members of royalty after which they were named, or, as the tendency towards greater elaboration increased, multi-figured groupings of humans and animals with complex allegorical or symbolic references.²² In addition to classical and baroque motifs, figureheads could also include knights in armor, double-headed horses and other unrelated elements. The ship *Naseby* of the Commonwealth period was described by a contemporary observer as having a figurehead of "Oliver [Cromwell] on horseback trampling six nations underfoot: a Scot, Irishman, Dutchman, Frenchman, Spaniard and English, as was easily made out by their several habits. A Fame held a laurel over his insulting head: the word 'God with us'."²³

Other English figureheads of the period were comprised of even more complicated groups of allegorical figures. Animals, birds, armed warriors, mythological figures, coats of arms, and crowns were frequently fused in almost indecipherable masses. A carver's model for the figurehead of the *Victory* of 1765, for example, includes no less than eleven figures and busts representing the King, Britannia, Peace, Fame, Europe, America, Africa, Asia, the British lion, a five-headed Hydra, and the Genius of navigation or mathematics. The official specifications call for it to be twenty-four feet long, eighteen feet wide and twelve feet deep.²⁴

Much of the confusion in this and other English figureheads resulted from the fact that unlike the French, the British Admiralty did not employ sculptors or shipcarvers familiar with problems of composition to design major programs of ship work. Instead, the ideas and allegories to be represented were conceived in the Admiralty office and passed along to the dockyards as verbal descriptions.²⁵ Without the aid of sketches, the carvers were then expected to translate these ideas into wood. This disjunction between conception and execution took little account of the actualities of effective design and the necessary restrictions imposed by the placement of the carvings on vessels of different sizes. Moreover, the weight of these overly complex compositions exceeded the practical limits of their purpose. They were just too heavy and too expensive.

The first serious attempt to control the size and cost of carvings on English ships came in 1703, when the Navy Board issued an order that "...the carved works be reduced to only a lion and trailboard for the head," and that stern and cabin decoration be greatly restricted as well.²⁶ The new regulations apparently had some effect, but as we have seen in the case of the *Victory* described above, the largest ships were often exempted. In both 1737 and 1773, the prices allowed for carving were restricted, while in 1742, an order to further reduce the size of stern carvings and "to make the lion or figures of the head as small and light as possible" was issued.²⁷ The latter order is particularly relevant to this discussion, as it was largely responsible for the replacement of hardwoods with pine as the principal wood for figureheads, a custom that was followed until the end of the era of wooden ships.²⁸

The final regulation in this century-long attempt to restrict excessive decoration came in 1796, when the Board of Admiralty issued an order "to explode carve work

altogether on board H.M. ships that may be built or repaired in the future, except what may be necessary for the mouldings about the scroll or billet head, and the stern and quarters."²⁹ The order was very unpopular, particularly in regards to billetheads, which were scrolls with a forward-curving spiral. Naval officials who sought to economize had for some time promoted them in the place of figureheads, but almost everyone else, from shipbuilders to seamen, resisted the move to discard the time-honored tradition of a representational figure on the prow. Every effort was made to evade the new regulation, and the figurehead survived a potential death blow. The order did result in a significant reduction in the amount of carving, however, including figureheads that generally became smaller and simpler affairs. When the *Victory* received major repairs in 1802-03, for example, its complex group figurehead was replaced with a royal coat of arms, crowned and supported by a pair of cupids.³⁰

It should be noted that aesthetics and changing fashion also played a role in these developments, as baroque and rococo exuberance gave way to the more austere neoclassical style in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The end result was a predominance of full-length, single figureheads on larger vessels, and bust portraits and billetheads on smaller ships. The figureheads were usually "straddle heads," in which the figure was placed astride the ship's knee, the principal vertical timber in the bow, often in a very awkward fashion. (Fig. 13) The piece illustrated here is actually American, created around 1800 by the well-known Salem, Massachusetts architect and carver, Samuel McIntire (1757-1811). It is a rare example of a shipcarving done by a man who is primarily known for his furniture and architectural carving. Due to its small size and fine

state of preservation, it is thought to have been done either as a model or a shop sign that was never mounted on a ship.³¹

English merchant ships generally followed the example of naval vessels throughout the period. By the closing decades of the eighteenth century, East Indiamen and other large commercial vessels usually carried figureheads that symbolized the name of the ship, while smaller craft frequently had bust portraits of classical figures, contemporary personalities or the ship owner himself.³²

As demonstrated by the McIntire figure, most American carvers continued to closely follow English practice throughout the eighteenth century. Again an incomplete written record must be depended upon, as no figureheads or actual designs survive from before about 1775. Still, it is clear that, just as in England, the ubiquitous lion was disappearing by mid-century in favor of human and animal figures and other related motifs. In 1745, John Welch (1711-1789), a leading Boston shipcarver, submitted a bill in court for figures carved for Benjamin Bagnall during the preceding nine years. The list included nine lion's heads, two Neptunes, two seahorses and four double-headed seahorses, one of which included a rider.³³ Twenty years later, Samuel Skillin (1742-1793), a shipcarver who worked in both Boston and Philadelphia, presented a bill "for Carved Work Don for the Brigg *Morning Star*, To a Venus head 7 feet long...."³⁴ Other references from the 1760s and '70s illustrate the wide range of figures being produced, including representations of the King of Portugal, General Israel Putnam and the Black Prince.

British Admiralty records of American ships captured by privateers during the Revolution and bought for the Royal Navy provide the first accurate sketches of the types of figureheads produced here. Several of the frigates ordered by the Continental Congress in 1775 and 1778 fell into British hands, and all of the existing drawings show single, full-length figures of the straddle-head type. The *Raleigh*, built in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the *Hancock*, of Newburyport, Massachusetts, bore likenesses of their namesakes, while the *Confederacy*, of Norwich, Connecticut, is shown with a representation of a Greek soldier in a breastplate and plumed helmet. Other ships captured by the British included the frigate *Boston* and the privateer *Rattlesnake*, both of which had an American Indian as a figurehead, the first known examples of what was to become a popular motif in the next century.³⁵

The number of shipcarvers working in America increased steadily throughout the eighteenth century, but, all in all, they remained a relatively small group due to the specialized nature of their craft. Testimony given in Boston in 1695 indicated that only three shipcarvers, Edward Budd, William Shute, Jr., and George Robinson, Sr., were operating there at that time.³⁶ Of the approximately 224 craftsmen who participated in the Boston furniture trade between 1725 and 1760, only sixteen listed themselves as carvers.³⁷ Most of these men were primarily shipcarvers who would readily engage in other types of ornamental work when the opportunity presented itself. The previously mentioned John Welch, for example, not only carved for ships, but also worked on furniture and picture frames, and is perhaps best known for his "Sacred Codfish," commissioned for the Hall of Representatives in 1736 "as a memorial of the importance

of the Cod Fishery." Later in the century, Welsh also conducted a successful business importing looking glasses.³⁸

The most famous Boston shipcarvers are the members of three generations of the Skillin family who dominated the trade from the mid-eighteenth century through the first decade of the nineteenth. The Skillins have received a considerable amount of attention in recent years, beginning with two articles published in *Antiques Magazine* in the 1930s.³⁹ Interested readers are referred to these sources, as only a brief review of biographical information will be presented here. The family workshop was established by Simeon Skillin, Sr. (1716-78), some time after he completed his apprenticeship in 1737. He had probably trained with William Shute, Jr. and William Burbeck, the only shipcarvers known to have been active in Boston at the time. Three of his sons became carvers, the previously mentioned Samuel, John (1745-1800), and Simeon, Jr. (1756-1806). Samuel moved to Philadelphia soon after he completed his apprenticeship with his father. John and Simeon, Jr. remained in Boston, working in partnership with Simeon, Sr. until his death in 1778, at which time they assumed control of the shop.

Two members of the next generation continued the family tradition. Simeon III (1766-1830), the son of Samuel, was born in Philadelphia, but returned to Boston with his father and received his training in the family shop. He was in New York City by 1789 where he remained a carver until 1822 when he went into the crockery business. Samuel II (b. 1770), was the son of Richard, a blockmaker and brother of Samuel, John and Simeon, Jr. Born and raised in Boston, he no doubt apprenticed with his uncles. He was active as a carver and headbuilder, that is, a craftsman who specialized in mounting figureheads on ships, until at least 1816, but nothing is known of his later years.

As the most prominent carvers in Boston after about 1760, the Skillins were jointly responsible for a wide range of ship and architectural work, some of which was recorded in contracts or commented upon by contemporary observers. Among the most important commissions executed by Simeon, Sr. was a bust of William Pitt for the *Pillar of Liberty* erected in 1767 by the Town of Dedham to celebrate the repeal of the Stamp Act. As such, it represents the earliest recorded public monument created by a native-born sculptor. The wooden bust and pillar have long since disappeared, but the stone base was still in place on the original site of Dedham's Church Green as late as 1944.⁴⁰

The names of many of the ships for which Simeon, Sr. provided carved work in the 1740s and '50s are known, but descriptions are lacking and no actual examples survive. Due to the sketchiness of the historical record, little else can be ascribed to him with certainty, even though it is known that he had a long and productive career.

More information is available regarding John and Simeon, Jr., the two sons who operated the Boston workshop. Among the many important shipcarving commissions executed by John, the elder brother, were the figureheads and sterns of the frigate *Confederacy* mentioned above, and the privateer *General Putnam*, both done in the late 1770s. By this time he had emerged as the most prominent carver in Boston. His standing resulted in his being chosen to lead the Boston carvers in the Federal Procession to celebrate the ratification of the Constitution in 1788 and in the entry procession of George Washington the following year.⁴¹

After the Revolution, the brothers continued to provide carvings for many ships, including the *America*, which was commanded by John Paul Jones and presented as a gift to the French government, and the sternboard and a figurehead of Hercules for the famous

frigate *Constitution*. By 1790, the Skillin shop was also producing most of the carved architectural ornament for Boston's major building projects, such as Charles Bulfinch's designs for the Federal Street Theatre in 1793, the Massachusetts State House in 1797, and the New North Church in 1804.⁴²

The Skillins also counted several of the area's most powerful merchant families as patrons. They did much work for Samuel Haskett Derby of Salem, for example, including three celebrated little figures of *America*, *Peace*, and *Plenty* for a chest-on-chest made by Stephen Badlam in 1791 that is in the Garvan Collection at Yale University. In 1793 and '94, Derby commissioned at least six garden figures for his farm in Danvers, three of which still exist. Figures of *Pomona* and a *Shepherdess* are in the collection of the Peabody-Essex Museum in Salem, and a *Shepherd* is owned by the Danvers Historical Society.⁴³

In all, then, the Skillins were responsible for an impressive amount of figural carving in and around Boston. John and Simeon, Jr. in particular were widely recognized for their achievements, as was evident in John's obituary which stated that, "He was for many years the most eminent man in his profession." Despite their versatility and the many pieces that have been attributed to them over the years, however, only seven figures that can be fully documented as the work of members of the Skillin family have survived.⁴⁴ In addition to the three on the Badlam chest and the three Derby garden figures, they include a figure of *Mercury* carved for the Boston Post Office in 1792 that is now in the collection of The Bostonian Society. For purposes of this discussion, the *Mercury* is the most important and merits special attention. (Fig. 14)

The significance of this spirited, half life-size figure was recorded in *The Columbian Centinel* a few days after it was mounted over the door to the new Post Office building on State Street:

...the repairs and ornaments of the buildings add much to the beauty of the Street; and must impress foreigners, who enter the town from the water, with favorable ideas of its wealth and consequence. Among the ornaments above alluded to a very handsome one was added a few days since over the door of the Post Office. It is a winged *Mercury*, in the act of bounding from a *Globe*, supporting his *Caduceus* in his left hand - and holding in his right a letter directed to *Thomas Russell Esq. Merchant, Boston per post* - conveying a handsome compliment to the mercantile interest of the town, and to one of its principal supporters. The execution of the work was by Skillings - and mentioning that, precludes the necessity of saying it is elegantly done.⁴⁵

The figure has all the characteristics of the best work of eighteenth-century American shipcarvers. Its lively forward thrust, balanced on one leg with an extended right arm that has lost the original caduceus, animates the piece and emphasizes the element of dispatch attributed to the messenger of the gods and the patron saint of commerce. The traditional winged helmet and sandals reinforce this quality, as does the wind-blown drapery that discreetly covers the otherwise nude figure. The piece is both detailed and stylized. The emphasis on smooth planes in the handling of the face and the musculature of the torso alternates with the expressiveness of deeply cut flowing hair and drapery. At the same time, the form is strongly defined to the point of a rounded stockiness that makes it easily identifiable at a distance. Overall, the proportions are closer to that of a child than an adult, which, when combined with the figure's dynamism further link it to the inherent conservatism of the baroque-inspired style of shipcarvers

that resisted the more fashionable aspects of neoclassicism that were then coming into vogue in America.

According to records at The Bostonian Society, the most direct source for the piece was a contemporary logo of the Post Office Department.⁴⁶ Ultimately, though, its iconography can be traced through prints, English lead garden figures, ceramic statues and related marbles to the famous *Mercury* created by Giovanni da Bologna in 1564.⁴⁷ The Skillins' image of Mercury had many familiar connotations at the time of its installation on State Street, and its presence as a type of shop figure represented the aspirations of the "mercantile interest of the town." The traditional prestige attached to the finest shipcarvings and the vessels that bore them had been transferred to the streets of Boston and transformed to symbolize the ideals of commerce and civic pride.

This was certainly not a new development, as carved wooden figures had played a prominent role in forms of English civic pageantry for centuries. American colonists had naturally enough continued the tradition in their own commemorative ceremonies, processions and parades.⁴⁸ The previously mentioned bust of William Pitt carved in 1767 by Simeon Skillin, Sr. for the *Pillar of Liberty* in Dedham is just one example. Still, the significance attached to eighteenth-century American figures like the Boston Post Office *Mercury* can not be fully understood without recognizing the ways in which they resonated with traditional values while at the same time operating as signs and advertisements for commercial establishments.

The sense of prestige and local pride that was invested in the shipcarver's art extended throughout eighteenth-century America. In 1775, John Hancock instructed the superintendent of the two frigates ordered by the Continental Congress that were being

built in Massachusetts to "let the heads & Galleries for the Ships be neatly carv'd and Executed, I leave the Devise to you, but by all means let ours be as good, handsome, strong & as early compleated as any building here in Philadelphia."⁴⁹

Hancock's concern reflected the fact that Philadelphia had become Boston's chief rival in shipbuilding by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Philadelphia was also the most populous city and the most important mercantile center south of New England. Its wharves and shipyards were busy throughout most of the Revolution, but were particularly active in the decades following the end of the war. A number of shipcarvers worked there, producing a wide range of carving that was highly regarded by local residents. As one commentator noted in 1791:

The art of carving, especially heads of ships, we may without boasting say is brought to the greatest degree of perfection in this city. A stranger walking along the wharves, must be struck with the beautiful female figures of Peace, Plenty, Love, Harmony, Ariel, Astronomy, Minerva, America, etc., etc., and also with the masculine statues of American Warriors, Alexanders, Hannibals, Caesars, etc., etc....as we may allow sea Captains to be judges, they are generally of the opinion that the carving of heads of vessels in Philadelphia is superior to any they have seen in any part of the world.⁵⁰

Of the many shipcarvers responsible for this diversity of figures, the most gifted and influential was William Rush (1756-1833), who is best known today as one of America's first sculptors and a founder of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Rush trained as a shipcarver, however, and operated an active workshop for over fifty years. His masterful and innovative work for both the federal government and Philadelphia's leading merchants and shipbuilders was widely recognized during his lifetime.

The son of a ship carpenter, Rush was apprenticed around 1771 to Edward Cutbush (c.1735-1790), a London-trained shipcarver who was considered the best carver in Philadelphia at the time. According to William Dunlap's account, which seems to have come directly from both William Rush and his son, John, the talented student had surpassed his master after three years, four years less than the traditional period of an apprenticeship.⁵¹

By 1788, Rush had established himself as one of the city's leading carvers, as evidenced by his participation in Philadelphia's Grand Federal Procession on July 4th of that year. Organized to celebrate the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the ratification of the Constitution by ten of thirteen states, the parade consisted of over 5,000 people and a number of decorated pageant wagons.⁵² The carvers and gilders were led by Rush's master, Edward Cutbush, along with James Reynolds and Martin Jugiez, prominent furniture and architectural carvers who had trained in London. They were followed by a group of younger craftsmen and an elaborate "federal car" designed by Rush. A detailed account of the car appeared in the *American Museum*, an extended excerpt of which is presented here, not only due to its relevance to William Rush, but also because it is a rare description of the type of work that American carvers produced for important civic ceremonies:

The carvers and gilders exhibited an ornamental car, on a federal plan, being thirteen feet by ten on the floor, on which were erected thirteen pilasters, richly ornamented with carved work....In the centre a column, with a twining laurel running in a spiral form to the capping, which was ten feet high, on the top of which was placed a bust of General Washington crowned with a wreath of laurel, and dressed in an American uniform with the thirteen stars on a collar....

In the centre of the front, the head of Phidias, the most eminent of the ancient carvers, with emblematic figures supporting it; inside of the front rail a large figure for the head of a ship, richly carved and painted; the whole outside of the car decorated with figures of the seasons, the cardinal virtues, and other devises in carved work....In the car was a number of artists at work, superintended by mr. Rush, ship-carver, who planned and executed the car with its principal ornaments.⁵³

If this complex arrangement of historical figures, allegorical references and symbolic columns calls to mind some of the English group figureheads discussed earlier in this chapter, it is not by chance or coincidence. Whether the pageantry took place on the oceans or city streets, England was the principal source of a design vocabulary that was adapted to American circumstances.

In 1794, Philadelphia shipbuilder Joshua Humphreys was appointed the nation's first Naval Constructor, charged with establishing the beginnings of the United States Navy. He was authorized by Congress to design six new frigates, each to be built in a different city. The *United States* was launched in Philadelphia in 1797, followed by the *Constellation* in Baltimore, and the *Constitution* in Boston. The other three, the *Chesapeake* of Norfolk, Virginia, the *Congress* of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and the *President* of New York were completed two years later.⁵⁴

Humphreys turned to Rush for preliminary designs for all of the figureheads and stern carvings, and for a list of carvers who could accomplish the work in a timely fashion. The extent of Rush's prominence is further demonstrated in a letter from Secretary of War, Timothy Pickering, to George Washington that stated that the decorative work for the ships being built in Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York would take a long time, because Rush was the only carver in the middle states who was

competent to complete their carvings.⁵⁵ Rush's shop eventually completed four of the six figureheads. The fifth was done by the Skillins for the *Constitution*, and the sixth by Daniel Train, a former apprentice of Rush, for the *President*.⁵⁶

Rush's preliminary designs survive in a letter to Humphreys, and his descriptions of two of the figureheads that he completed are known. In each case, they were elaborate, symbolic groups that expressed American political ideals while following English design precedents. A central figure, either a mythological hero or a female allegory, was surrounded and supported by smaller figures and related motifs extending from the figurehead back into the trailboard. The best description of one of them comes from Rush himself:

The genius of the United States: she is crest with a Constellation her hair and drapery flowing. Suspended to the ringlets of hair which fall or wave over her Breast and reclining in her bosom is the portrait of her favorite son, George Washington. President of the United States; her waist bound with a Civic Band. In her Right hand, which is advanced, she holds a spear, suspended to which is a Belt of Wampum containing the Emblems of Peace and War. On her left side is a Tablet, which supports three large columns which relate to three Branches of Government; the Scale, emblematic of Justice, blended with them. The Left Hand suspends the Constitution over the books, &c on the Tablet; the Eagle with his wings half extended, with the Escutcheon, &c of the Arms of the United States on the Right, designated the figure. The attributes, Commerce and Agriculture, and a modest position of the Arts and Sciences.⁵⁷

As impressive as this and the other group figureheads must have been, though, they were part of a stylistic tradition that had been in decline in England for several decades. Nothing as complex would be mounted on an American ship again. In fact, William Rush's most important and far-reaching contribution to American shipcarving did not have its origins in England, but in seventeenth-century France.

Rush is generally credited with introducing the French style of full-length, freestanding figurehead into the American carvers' repertoire. Sometime in the early 1780s, he saw two examples on French frigates that were being repaired in Joshua Humphreys' shipyard.⁵⁸ According to a somewhat embellished account recorded by a contemporary historian who knew him, he then "...instantly conceived the design of more tasteful and graceful figures than had been before executed."⁵⁹ Unlike the somewhat stiff and unnatural straddle heads of English and Anglo-American tradition that were designed so that the ship's knee or cutwater split the legs below the waist, French "walking figures," as they were often called, emphasized movement through a forward lean with one foot raised and supported on a scroll. They had been used since the time of Puget and Le Brun, but were particularly popular with French carvers after about 1750. *Peace* of about 1805-10, the only full-length figurehead securely attributed to Rush that has survived relatively intact, is a good example of the style.⁶⁰ (Fig. 15)

A dynamic and engaging conception, *Peace* is a masterful piece of carving that illustrates why Rush's work was so influential. The figure transmits an impression of windswept motion, seen particularly in the bold carving of the dress at the shoulders and around the feet, and in the shawl that is draped over the figure's arm. This sense of movement is entirely appropriate and traditional for a figurehead, as is the far-off look in the figure's eyes, and yet her face has a gentle expressiveness that is all too often missing in the work of lesser hands. The tendency towards mass that is especially apparent in the neck and lower body must be considered in light of the design requirements of a figurehead that was meant to withstand extreme conditions. In spite of this, Rush was able to give his figure a graceful and naturalistic presence.

Whether or not Rush was actually the first to carve French-style “walking figures” in the United States, he was certainly the most innovative and influential American shipcarver of his day. His approach was quickly taken up by others, and was largely responsible for the course that figurehead carving was to take in the nineteenth century. Shipcarvers were a tightly knit group, bound by family and master-apprentice relationships. They were also itinerant and highly competitive, and so news of new developments traveled fast. As previously discussed, for example, Samuel Skillin worked in both Philadelphia and Boston, while his brothers, John and Simeon, Jr., executed Rush's designs for the *Constitution*. All of these men would have had first-hand knowledge of Rush's latest designs soon after they left his shop.

Rush also designed and carved an allegorical figurehead of *Wisdom* for the frigate *Congress*, the sister ship of the *Constitution* that was built in Portsmouth. A local carver, William Dearing (b. 1741), was commissioned to do the secondary work for the vessel. The fact that Dearing was not asked to do all the carving became something of a sore point in New England, a wound to local pride that resulted in a revealing editorial that found its way into several newspapers:

Mr. William Deering has displayed much taste and neatness in the execution of the carved work which is finished in a beautiful stil, of neat simplicity. It is only to be regretted that this gentleman's abilities were not called into more powerful action by proper encouragement, and the fanciful heads of the South would no longer take place of the more solid imagery of the North.⁶¹

Evidently, then, some New Englanders did not approve of Rush's bold style and artistic pretensions.

The passage also provides evidence that regional stylistic preference played a role in shipcarving, just as it did in the decorative arts. Unfortunately, however, not enough ship work survives from this period to make any definitive judgments on this point. What is apparent is that by the early years of the nineteenth century, there was a gradual shift away from the baroque-inspired allegories that had been so popular in previous years. The next generation favored a more restrained, and in many cases, more naturalistic approach that incorporated aspects of neoclassicism on the one hand, and realistic portraiture on the other.

It should be noted that the trend was not entirely new, as the head of Rush's figure of *Peace* is relatively naturalistic, her allegorical name and flowing garments notwithstanding. Rush also carved figurehead portraits of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington in the 1780s, as well as a series of busts of French philosophers for ships owned by the wealthy Philadelphia merchant Stephen Gerard in the 1790s.⁶² Still, the tendency towards realistic handling is more pronounced in the work of a number of early nineteenth-century carvers, including Isaac Fowle (w. 1800-1832), one of the successors to the Skillin dynasty in Boston.

Little is known about Fowle's life, other than the fact that he carried on an active carving business from about 1806 to 1832. He apprenticed in the Skillin shop, and was directly related to the family. His father, Henry, had married one of John and Simeon, Jr.'s sisters, while John Skillin himself first married Anne Fowle, and after her death, Mary Fowle.⁶³ In July 1806, Isaac and Edmund Raymond, another former Skillin apprentice, advertised in *The Boston Gazette* that they "have commenced business at the shop formerly occupied by the late Mr. Simeon Skillin, carver, where they intend to carry on

House and Ship ornamental Carving in its various branches."⁶⁴ Isaac was in business by himself after 1813, and his sons continued a successful family business until 1865.⁶⁵

Isaac Fowle must have carved a great many figures during his lifetime, and several pieces now in museum collections have been attributed to his shop. Only one can be definitely documented to him, however, a figurehead of around 1820 known as *The Lady with a Scarf* that is owned by The Bostonian Society. (Fig. 16) She is particularly important for this discussion, as she was used as a sample and a sign for the Fowle shop, and was never mounted on a ship, which helps explain her excellent condition.⁶⁶ A finely executed figure, she stands dramatically poised upon a scroll wearing deeply cut and billowing skirt, petticoats and shawl, and staring into the distance like so many of her ancestors. The individualized handling of her face emphasized by the slight turn of the head, and the realistic treatment of her hair, earring and costume, as well as her exposed ankle and contemporary shoe, raises the question as to whether or not she was a portrait of some attractive young Bostonian. Figurehead portraits of ship owner's daughters or wives were certainly common later in the century.

The use of full-size figures carved in a more naturalistic manner became the general rule for figureheads on larger ships in the early nineteenth century. The neoclassical style that was then in vogue often called for gods, goddesses or Greek warriors to be sure, but even so, as a less ornate aesthetic than the preceding baroque style, it accommodated the American shipcarver's interest in capturing a good likeness of his subject. The figure's face might be carved as either an idealized rendering of a goddess or a more recognizable portrait of a mortal, but more often than not, the costume showed great attention to detail whether it was a toga or a contemporary outfit.

Then again, it is also true that figureheads were intended to point the way, to dramatically and emphatically lead a ship onward in a rush of motion, which, in the final analysis, was not compatible with the tenets of neoclassicism. Continuing the conservatism of their predecessors, nineteenth-century carvers did not abandon one style for another. Change was more gradual, as they modified older styles by incorporating new design elements into their traditional repertoire.

A trade card of Levi L. Cushing of Boston that dates to the 1820s that is in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, illustrates this point. (Fig. 17) At top is an elaborate design for a stern that features up-to-date neoclassical motifs, demonstrating that the carver was aware of the latest stylistic trends in the fine and decorative arts. By highlighting the ship's stern, which had been the focus of the most ornate programs of baroque carving for the past two hundred years or so, he was, at the same time, adapting the new elements to an older format and placing his modern design vocabulary in a familiar context.

Most early nineteenth-century shipcarvers like Cushing and Fowle still worked in traditional workshop settings that bound masters, journeymen and apprentices in close economic and personal relationships. The system was never as highly organized in America as it was in Europe, though. No craft guilds ever existed here, and while tradesmen often attempted to control local markets, the lack of skilled labor in most parts of the country and the general dislike of English institutions agitated against the development of a closed workshop system in the eighteenth century. By the second quarter of the nineteenth, growing industrialization and an increasing use of semi-skilled

wage labor had rendered the old apprenticeship system obsolete in many of the larger trades like cabinetmaking, construction, and printing.⁶⁷ Due to the specialized nature and high degree of skill required for shipcarving, however, traditional apprenticeships remained the rule. Still, while most carvers served out their time with their masters before going into business for themselves, a talented individual could usually find work regardless of his particular background and training.

The varied career of Solomon Willard (1783-1861), a Boston carver, architect and businessman, is a case in point. Although he is best known as the controversial Architect and Superintendent of the Bunker Hill Monument, Willard started in a much more humble position. Arriving in Boston in 1804 at age twenty-one, he began working as a carpenter. Five years later, he was carving capitals, panels and other architectural elements for local builders. In 1810, he carved an eagle with a five-foot wing span for the pediment of the Custom's House, and by 1813, he was working as a shipcarver. Among his known commissions are carvings for the ship *Tarter*, and a figurehead of an Arab for the ship *Caravan*. His most important surviving work is a bust of George Washington for the ship *Washington*, built in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1815-16, that is now at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis.

Through it all, Willard pursued a course of self-education that included lessons in drawing, perspective, anatomy, chemistry, geography, and French. Clearly an ambitious man, he seems to have given up shipcarving by the mid-1820s in favor of other pursuits that he no doubt considered more prestigious. He created architectural models for Charles Bullfinch, was a founder of the Boston Mechanic's Institute and Lyceum in 1826, and was

an active member of the committee in charge of the Bunker Hill Monument for almost twenty years. Later in life, he was a stone contractor and architect.⁶⁸

Willard's biographer tells us that he never served a formal apprenticeship for any of the trades in which he was involved.⁶⁹ Although he certainly learned by observing the skilled artisans with whom he was working, he was apparently largely self-taught, which makes him the earliest identifiable shipcarver who did not pass through the workshop system in the traditional manner. Surely others preceded him in this, but their names have been lost. As will be seen, the issue of self-taught carvers versus those with formal training assumed greater significance later in the century. For the sake of historical perspective, then, it is important to introduce the concept at this point in the discussion.

As a self-taught carver, Willard could not depend upon the reputation of his master to help him secure his first commissions. He gained them instead through his persistence, his skill as a carver, and his growing number of personal contacts. He was also fortunate to be working at a time when the American shipbuilding industry was entering a period of major expansion and his skills were in great demand.

The trend had begun a few decades earlier at the close of the American Revolution. Peace with Britain brought an increase in international trade and renewed prosperity. The demand for new ships to meet these expanding commercial opportunities and to replace those lost during the war brought a significant increase of activity to shipyards along the East Coast. In addition, ships were much less expensive to build here than in Europe, largely because of the abundance of cheap timber.⁷⁰ As a result, American shipbuilders received many orders from English and Continental merchants, as well as from their own countrymen. In the 1790s, the European preoccupation with the escalating

Napoleonic Wars created even more opportunities for American commercial interests, while the India and China trade continued to expand rapidly. American shipyards responded by producing more and more vessels of all sizes, establishing a pattern of growth that would continue until the late 1850s. With the exception of the period around the Embargo of 1807 and the War of 1812, when shipbuilding in East Coast ports fell off significantly due to international trade restrictions and warfare on both sides of the Atlantic, the shipyards and maritime trades fueled the development of American commerce and industry.⁷¹

Philadelphia was generally considered to be the most important shipbuilding center around the turn of the nineteenth century. As the country's most populous city and the national capital from 1790 to 1800, it had more experienced naval architects, shipbuilders, and tradesmen than anywhere else.⁷² By the close of the War of 1812, however, the tide was beginning to turn in favor of New York City. Several geographical and economic factors conspired to give New York an advantage in both national and international trade, including the size and ease of access to its harbor. In addition, the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 created a direct water link with the Great Lakes and Midwest. Before long, the East River shipyards below 12th Street were the busiest in the country, supporting about 650 shipwrights, carpenters, and caulkers by 1830. In 1850, the number of men employed in the maritime trades in New York and the surrounding area had increased to over 2,600.⁷³

The increased shipbuilding activity naturally enough brought more work to New York carvers, and their numbers swelled proportionally. The situation was quite different in the eighteenth century, when New York workshops offered little competition to those

in Boston and Philadelphia. The names of only a few eighteenth-century New York carvers are known, and even less biographical information about them is available. The earliest recorded carver was George Warburton who set up shop in 1729. At mid-century, both Henry Hardcastle and Stephen Dwight, a former apprentice, were doing "ship and house work." Dwight also advertised that he did "tables, chairs, picture and looking glass frames, and all kinds of work for cabinetmakers," as well as portraits, history painting and instruction in drawing.⁷⁴

As previously discussed, Simeon Skillin III relocated from Boston to New York around 1789. He was active as a carver until 1822 when he entered the crockery business. In 1799, Daniel Train (w. c.1799-1812), the young carver mentioned earlier in the chapter as the creator of the figurehead for the frigate *President*, placed an advertisement in the *New York Gazette and Commercial Advertiser* that read:

Daniel N. Train, Carver, No. 144 Cherry-street, near the Ship Yards, offers his professional services to the citizens of New-York and others, particularly owners and builders of ships. Having studied Naval Sculpture under Wm. Rush, of Philadelphia, whose talents are extensively known, he hopes, from this advantage and his future exertion, to merit the patronage he now solicits. Heads and other ornamental parts of ships will be executed or prepared with neatness and dispatch.⁷⁵

With their connections to well-known shops in Boston and Philadelphia, Skillin and Train were the leading carvers in New York City at the turn of the nineteenth century. They are known to have produced a wide range of work, though they were probably somewhat more specialized than their predecessor, Stephen Dwight.

In the mid-eighteenth century, American carvers frequently advertised that they would undertake any and all types of carving, from figureheads to furniture. Like Dwight,

the Boston carver, John Welch, worked on furniture and picture frames in addition to being a shipcarver. He could do so due to a lack of competition and specialization. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, furniture and frame carving was generally done by men who had trained specifically for those tasks, often either in England or with a master who had recently emigrated from there. For the most part, nineteenth-century shipcarvers concentrated on “ship and house work,” areas in which they were undeniably the most qualified.

As New York became a major shipbuilding center in its own right, other men besides Samuel Skillin and Daniel Train assumed prominence. Chief among them are two members of the Dodge family. Jeremiah (1781-1860) and his son Charles (1806-1886). The son of a shipwright, Jeremiah entered into a brief partnership with Simeon Skillin III from 1804-06. He was a partner of Cornelius Sharp from 1815-21, and later with his son, Charles, from 1833-39. After that he seems to have retired from the carving business to assume duties at the Customs House. Charles continued to operate the shop, and from 1843-47 was a partner with another talented carver, Jacob Anderson. He was also active in politics and civic affairs, serving as an alderman, assessor, tax commissioner, and colonel of the tenth regiment of the militia. He finally gave up his carving shop in 1870.⁷⁶

Three pieces known to have been executed by the Dodges illustrate the range of their work. One is a bust of Hercules carved by Dodge and Sharp for the USS *Ohio* in 1820 that was possibly based on a sketch by William Rush. (Fig. 18) After being removed from the *Ohio* when she was decommissioned in 1883, it spent several decades in front of the Canoe Place Inn in Hampton Bays, New York. Around 1945, it was moved to the village green in Stony Brook, New York. Its present whereabouts are unknown.⁷⁷

The second carving is a head of Andrew Jackson carved by the Dodges in 1835 to replace one that was surreptitiously removed from the figurehead of the USS *Constitution* while she was being refitted at the Boston Navy Yard. (Fig. 19) Therein lies a tale of political passions and the symbolic power of figureheads that bears repeating.

In the early 1830s, the Navy Department proposed scrapping the famous frigate due to the extensive damage that she had suffered during the War of 1812. Oliver Wendell Holmes led the fight to save her with his poem, "Old Ironsides," and galvanized the country with his opening line, "Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!" The Navy eventually relented to public pressure and had the vessel rebuilt in Boston. During the course of the work, President Andrew Jackson visited the city and received such an enthusiastic reception that it was decided to place a figurehead of him on the *Constitution's* prow instead of recreating the original Hercules. Laban Beecher (1805-1876) was commissioned to carve a monumental ten-foot figure of Jackson in contemporary dress, hat in hand, and draped in a cloak that was said to be his customary riding habit.

While working on the figure, Beecher received an offer of \$1,500 from some ardent anti-Jacksonians to allow the piece to be stolen from his shop. This was not an insignificant sum, particularly considering the fact that his final bill to the Navy was only \$300. The patriotic carver immediately informed naval officials of the plot, and the partially completed figure was moved from his shop to the Navy Yard so that the work could proceed without further interference. Nevertheless, soon after it was mounted on the *Constitution* in April, 1834, the Navy received threats against it. As a precautionary measure, the ship was moved away from the docks to a mooring in the harbor.

A few months later, on a rainy night in July, a young man named Samuel Dewey rowed out to it and, escaping the notice of several armed sentries, sawed the head off the figure. The public reaction to the news of the desecration was immediate and predictable, as anti-Jacksonians responded with glee and their counterparts condemned the treachery. Political cartoons and poems from both sides appeared in newspapers throughout the country, while the Secretary of the Navy personally visited the ship and ordered the figure draped in canvas. The *Constitution* finally left Boston the following March and sailed for New York with a flag covering the still headless figure. Within a few days of its arrival, Dodge & Sons had supplied President Jackson with a new cranium, and the ship quickly departed for France.⁷⁸

As fascinating and revealing of contemporary attitudes as this little tale of intrigue might be, the work around which the controversy swirled is not a particularly remarkable piece of carving. Beecher's figure of Jackson is somewhat stiff and lifeless, with little of the animation that might be expected in a figurehead portrait of such a dynamic national hero. The Dodges' head is an adequate representation with recognizable detailing of facial features, though again it does not transmit much of a sense of the vitality of the man it represents.

Much more accomplished is a portrait bust of *Jeremiah Dodge* done by his son Charles around 1835. (Fig. 20) The piece descended in the family until it was given to the New-York Historical Society in 1952, which makes it a rare and important example with a clearly documented history.⁷⁹ Its well-modeled face is quite distinctive and individualized in a sensitive portrait of the man, with boldly swirling hair carved in the sure strokes of a master shipcarver. The costume, too, is finely detailed and crisply

rendered. Overall, the carver has used his wooden medium to the best advantage, while at the same time demonstrating his familiarity with contemporary academic models more commonly rendered in marble. It is certainly a fitting portrait of a man who was one of the leading shipcarvers of his day.

Overall, Charles Dodge's career spanned the last major era of wooden shipbuilding. When he began his apprenticeship with his father around 1820, American shipyards were responding to the increased demand for merchant vessels that resulted from a period of national prosperity and the continued expansion of international trade routes that followed the wars of the previous decade. Twenty years later, when Dodge was a master carver in his own right, American shipbuilders and naval architects were perfecting the design of the clipper ship, the fast, sleek vessels that dominated the China trade for a generation. The 1840s also witnessed great improvements in wooden-hulled steamships, both the paddle-wheelers that plied the rivers and inland water routes and the ocean-going vessels that combined sail and steam. The California Gold Rush that began in the late 1840s brought many more orders to East Coast shipyards, and for a time, builders in major ports like New York were working at full capacity. From about 1847 to 1856, at least thirty-three shipyards were active in the New York area alone.⁸⁰

The tide turned quickly, however, and for a variety of reasons, a significant and irreversible slowdown had begun by the mid-1850s. The economic depression of 1855 slowed ship construction considerably, and a year later, the Gold Rush was essentially over, which lessened the demand even more.⁸¹ By then, the days of wooden sailing ships were numbered anyway, as evidenced by the metal-hulled vessels built in Europe that were crossing the Atlantic in increasing numbers. American shipbuilders remained

wedded to the wooden hull for some time to come, but even so, several smaller iron ships were built here before 1860. During the Civil War, government contracts brought a short-lived period of activity to shipyards in the northern states. In 1866, though, the government sold most of its ships, causing a glut in the market that led to the final decline in major shipbuilding centers like New York City.⁸² When Charles Dodge retired in 1870, only one shipyard was still in operation in Manhattan, while four others in Brooklyn and across the Hudson River in New Jersey were struggling to survive. Most of the sailing ships that were still being built came from Maine and Massachusetts, but even their numbers were steadily diminishing. From a peak of 1,781 in 1855, new construction had declined to 798 twenty years later. In 1895, only 397 sailing ships were built in the United States.⁸³

The ocean clippers built during the 1840s and '50s represent one of the last significant developments in sailing ship design. Descendants of the Baltimore Flyers and colonial revenue cutters of an earlier date, they were built with one object in mind, speed. Through the use of a modified hull design, increased sail area, and the elimination of unnecessary weight, the clippers were the fastest sailing vessels ever seen, developed to satisfy the increasing demand for speed in the lucrative and highly competitive routes to California and the Orient.⁸⁴ Carvings were reduced to a minimum, usually only a light stern carving of some sort and a figurehead.⁸⁵ Gone were the sweeping rails, ornamental brackets, and elaborate sternboards of the packets and frigates. The tendency towards the reduction in weight of shipcarving that had begun in the early eighteenth century had reached its logical conclusion.

Some builders opted to forego full-length figureheads on even their largest ships, choosing instead to use the busts and billeheads that had become standard on smaller vessels. Others continued to commission standing figures, but, due to the redesign of the clipper bow, the traditional position occupied by the figurehead, almost vertical on a knee or cutwater that was low to the water, was eliminated. The new figureheads were attached higher, at a more inclined angle at the top of a raised and elongated knee, and as a consequence appeared to extend further out, ahead of the ship. Whether by design or coincidence, the results were even more dramatic than before, as the leaning figure, made all the more conspicuous by the lack of other carvings competing for the viewer's attention, seemed to be actively leading the ship onward in a rush of motion.

Throughout these developments, the figurehead maintained much of its traditional symbolic importance, which contributed significantly to its survival into the dawn of the era of functional design despite the ambivalence of many shipbuilders and naval architects. John W. Griffiths, a leading New York shipbuilder who was intimately involved with the development of the clipper ship, demonstrated his progressive views in 1850 when he wrote in his influential *Treatise on Marine and Naval Architecture* that:

With regard to beauty in ships, we have said that it consisted in fitness for the purpose and proportion to effect the object obtained....It is not the many mouldings on a ship, or the amount of carved work on the head and stern, that makes her appear to have life; so far from adding to the appearance of a handsome ship, they detract from it....

...in very many instances, our coasting and river vessels would look much better without a head than with one; but the eye of the owner having become familiarized with its appearance, sees nothing amiss.⁸⁶

At the same time, however, his mid-century functionalism still found a place for figureheads. Perhaps he felt that only the largest ocean clippers merited figureheads, or perhaps he, too, was just too accustomed to seeing them. Either way, the designs for bows that appeared in his book included several with full-length figureheads. Elsewhere he wrote:

There is a certain fitness about the head of a ship that at once stamps an impression on the mind in relation to the entire ship, and why? We say that the head of a ship is like a portrait, we look at the physiognomy of the man, and judge his intellectual endowments - of his internal and external qualities: so with the ship, it is the builder's mechanical portrait...⁸⁷

In the final era of wooden-hulled sailing ships, then, the figurehead reigned supreme among shipcarvings. No longer a part of a larger program of decoration, it was the central focus. The only significant piece of carved work on the ship, the figurehead was both the survivor and inheritor of an age-old tradition.

As if in recognition of this, American carvers produced some of the finest examples of full-length figureheads during the clipper ship era. Designs ranged from late neoclassical conceptions like one created around 1850 for the *Queen of Sheba* by John W. Mason of Boston (Fig. 21), to realistic portrayals of American heroes, such as a figurehead for the ship *David Crockett* carved by Jacob Anderson (1810-1855) of New York in 1853. (Fig. 22)

In Anderson's piece, the frontiersman stands poised on a scroll with rifle in hand and eyes searching the horizon, ever vigilant as the ship's protector and tutelary deity. Little is known about the carver, other than that he was active in New York from about 1830 to his death in 1855, and, as previously mentioned, was a partner with Charles

Dodge from 1843-47. In 1850, Anderson operated the largest shipcarving workshop in New York City. According to the Products of Industry Schedules of the Federal Census, his shop had seven employees producing figures worth \$6,000, while Dodge employed four, with an output valued at \$3,250.⁸⁸ The ship *David Crockett* was built in Mystic, Connecticut in 1853 by George Greenman & Co.⁸⁹ Anderson's skillful handling of the figurehead, with its fine modeling and attention to the details of a woodsman's dress mark him as one of the best carvers of his day.

In addition to carving figureheads for sailing ships, carvers also found opportunities on newer types of vessels. The great paddle-wheel steamers that plied inland water routes after 1840 or so offered a number of possibilities for ornamental work. Designed to attract a prosperous middle-class clientele, they featured opulent cabins with carved architectural detail and plush furnishings. While their straight-stemmed bows, flat bottoms, and shallow draft precluded the use of figureheads, many of the river steamers displayed full-length figures on their decks or on top of a central pilothouse. One of the finest surviving examples of this type of work is a deck figure from the Hudson River steamer *Albany*, built in 1849, that is now in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York. (Fig. 23) A realistically carved figure of a farm hand in a somewhat anachronistic costume, he holds a sickle and sheath of wheat that emphasize the bounty of the land and productivity of the Empire State. He is poised with his left leg raised, as if intending to remind the viewer of his relationship to his figurehead ancestors.

The diversity of work done by mid-century carvers is illustrated by the activities of the Mystic, Connecticut shop of James Campbell (w.1854-1900) and John Colby

(1833-1891), as recorded in local newspapers and in the papers of George Greenman & Co., the shipbuilding firm that commissioned the Davy Crockett figurehead from Jacob Anderson.⁹⁰ Campbell and Colby were partners from about 1858 to 1877, at a time when Mystic was one of the most important shipbuilding centers on the East Coast. In spite of its relatively small size, the town supported seven large shipyards and a number of smaller boatyards. Along with New York, Boston and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, it was a principal builder of clipper ships, while it also produced many steamships and a wide range of smaller vessels.

Among the most interesting pieces of shipcarving known to have been done by John Colby was a self-portrait for the stern of a schooner named after himself.⁹¹ In 1869, *The Mystic Pioneer* recorded the launching of the *Frolic*, which carried a figurehead by the firm. The reporter noted that:

...she has a splendid figurehead carved by our artistic townsmen, Campbell & Colby. It is a lady with a bat in one hand in the act of striking a ball which she holds in the other, enjoying a frolic. It is very appropriate.⁹²

In addition to figureheads and related shipcarvings, Campbell & Colby completed an eight-foot allegorical figure of justice for the Morgan County Courthouse in Jacksonville, Illinois, and a liberty cap for a liberty pole in Norwich, Connecticut. They also carved and gilded signs and produced ornamental fencing. A few years after they dissolved their partnership, a New London directory listed J.N. Colby & Co. as "carvers, gilders and ornamental woodworkers, polishing a specialty, wood turning, jig sawing and fancy scroll work."⁹³

Although nothing survives that can be attributed to either man, several figures by unidentified makers attest to the versatility and skill of their fellows. One such piece is a *Personification of Time*, thought to have been made for a hearse in Essex County, Massachusetts, around 1837 that is now in the collection of Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Massachusetts.⁹⁴ (Fig. 24) Holding an hourglass and quill to mark the passage of time and the deeds of men, the figure surges forward in a typical figurehead pose. The carver has delineated the female form under the flowing drapery in a manner that is consistent with contemporary sculptural technique. While the arm holding the hourglass is a bit stiff, the figure transmits a dynamic sense of movement that emphasizes the passage of time. One of the most notable features of the piece is its exuberant, deeply carved wings that billow out from the shoulders balancing the curve of the lower body and the windblown drapery that extends back behind the figure. Surely her creator was as familiar with eagles as he was with the other popular types in the shipcarver's repertoire.

Naturally enough, one of these was the sailor himself. As in England, representations of sailors or Jack Tars, as ordinary seamen were often called, were used for a variety of purposes, particularly as shop signs for nautical instrument makers and tobacconists. Three figures from the third quarter of the nineteenth century provide an interesting comparison in possible approaches to the interpretation of the seafaring man. The first is a relatively realistic tobacconist figure that was probably carved in New York City that has been in the collection of the New-York Historical Society since 1937. (Fig. 25) Holding a package of tobacco in his right hand, he strikes a relaxed pose while he casually offers his wares.

In contrast, the second example is a rotund contemporary with a quizzical look on his face that is owned by the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont. (Fig. 26) A caricature of everyone's favorite Jack Tar, he is standing still for a moment, but seems somewhat uncomfortable as the object of the viewer's gaze. He was likely derived from a popular print. A nearly identical chalkware figure that was recorded in the Index of American Design provides support for this conjecture.⁹⁵

A third sailor that is in a private collection is the most lively of the group, as he tips his hat to passersby or perhaps prepares to dance a jig. (Fig. 27) The sense of movement is enhanced through a verticality emphasized by long legs and a diagonal formed by the figure's curving arms. As with his counterparts, he is skillfully carved with great attention to details of costuming, in this case a fairly accurate rendering of an American merchant seaman's outfit of around 1845.⁹⁶ On the other hand, the individualized handling of his facial features, including his receding hairline and prominent cheekbones, differentiate him from generalized, smooth planes of the first figure's face and the fleshy caricature of the second's.

As for other figures, a *Sailor with Binnacle*, a housing for a ship compass, that was made in 1851 for the clipper *N.B. Palmer* is a rare variation on the theme. (Fig. 28) According to oral tradition, he was removed from the deck of the ship after its first voyage to the Orient because crew members were uncomfortable with his gaze and believed him to be an ill omen. He then served for many years as a shop sign for T.S. Negus & Co., nautical instrument makers on Water Street in New York City. He is now in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York.⁹⁷

Another fine example of the type is a *Man with Spyglass* that was carved around 1850 and is now at Mystic Seaport Museum. (Fig. 29) Probably used as a ship chandler's sign, the gentleman represents a merchant or ship owner striding forward as he surveys the distance through his glass. This sense of movement gives him a dynamic presence that marks him as an exceptional work. He has, in fact, become something of an icon of American folk art and is frequently illustrated.

A final piece that has achieved a similar status is the famous *Little Navigator* in the collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum in New Bedford, Massachusetts. (Fig.30) The stocky little figure is a highly simplified form with rather shallow carving and generalized features. As such, it relates directly to traditional English nautical figures such as the one noted by Charles Dickens in *Dealing with the Firm of Dombey and Sons* that was discussed in the previous chapter.

Thought to have been carved around 1810 by Samuel King (1749-1820) of Newport, Rhode Island, the figure was first used as a nautical instrument maker's sign by James Fales of Newport, and later by his son, James, Jr., a watch and clock maker in New Bedford. King was a versatile man who was both a nautical instrument maker and a painter of portraits and miniatures. He was Washington Allston's first teacher, and may have given lessons to a young Gilbert Stuart.⁹⁸ If he did create this piece, then the strength of his stylization marks him as a talented carver as well.

A photograph of the *Little Navigator* in place above the doorway of the shop of James Fales, Jr. around 1870 speaks volumes about the place of traditional carved wooden signs in nineteenth century America. (Fig. 31) The information transmitted by the pocket watch, rifle and navigator is direct and immediately understandable, while at the

same time visually richer than the utilitarian painted and lettered signboard that is visible to the left. Everyday objects such as these resonate with personal meaning. The depth of possible associations with the viewer's own experience that is embodied in carved and figural shop signs relates them to the symbolic function of figureheads, and helps to explain their popularity in an era of general literacy when they were no longer necessary on a practical level.

The widespread use of carved wooden figures in a variety of circumstances in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrates their continued cultural significance. As figureheads, stern figures, commemorative civic sculpture, garden figures or shop signs, they simultaneously played symbolic, ceremonial and commercial roles to varying degrees. The figures themselves were often interchangeable, or at least readily adaptable to any of these desired purposes. The men who created them were the inheritors of a tradition that has been traced from Renaissance Europe to Victorian America. Although their art was doomed to extinction with the passing of the wooden-hulled sailing ship in the second half of the nineteenth century, shipcarvers continued to collectively exercise their talents and training for as long as possible in a final burst of creativity seen particularly in shop and cigar store figures.

¹ For contemporary visual records of seventeenth-century European shipcarving see especially the paintings of Willem van de Velde the Elder and the Younger. Two good sources are David Cordingly. *The Art of the van de Velde* (Greenwich, England: National Maritime Museum, 1982), and George S. Keyes. *Mirror of Empire: Dutch Marine Art of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). The best known example in art history, however, is probably Rubens' painting of 1622, "The Arrival of Marie de' Medici at Marseilles," which shows the newly married queen disembarking from an ornately carved state barge.

² The first warships authorized by the Continental Congress were thirteen frigates ordered in 1775 and built in 1776. Marion V. Brewington, *Shipcarvers of North America* (Barre, MA: Barre Publishing Company, 1962), 12.

³ Lahvis, "The Skillin Workshop." 39-40.

⁴ Brewington, 4.

⁵ Quoted in Brewington, 2.

⁶ Leonard George Carr Laughton, *Old Ship Figure-heads and Sterns* (London: Holton and Truscott Smith, 1925), 77; Peter Norton, *Ships' Figureheads* (Barre, MA: Barre Publishing Company, 1976), 67, 78, 85-86; Brewington, 2, 6-8.

⁷ Brewington, 8.

⁸ Cesareo Fernandez-Duro, *Armada Española desde la Union de los Reinos de Castilla y de León* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1895), 1:324. The passage reads:

...Las capitanas se distinguian por el adorno exterior, notable en las que condujeron á Carlos V. Era el tiempo llamado del renacimiento de las artes, y á su influencia no se sustraian los bajeles: patente estaba en las figuras esulpidas en las proas, en la talla y dorado de las popas, en la forma elegante de los fanales, en las pinturas de los paveses y en el primor de los tendales, enstandartes y flámulas. El hecho de haber enviado Barbarroja al Sultán el escudo de popa de la galera de Portuondo, como joya artistica, indica la labor empleada, y todavia más se pondera la de la galera en que fué á Génova el principe D. Felipe, obra de los mejores artistas de Italia.

See also Laughton, 10.

⁹ Andrew Trout, *Jean-Baptiste Colbert* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978), 137.

¹⁰ Norton, 60; Laughton, 42.

¹¹ Quoted in André Michel, *Histoire de l'Art* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1922), 6, pt. 2:684.

¹² Philippe Auquier, *Pierre Puget: Decorateur Naval et Mariniste* (Paris: D.A. Longuet, 1909), 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5. In this regard, it is interesting to note Giorgio Vasari's well-known account of Giotto's apprenticeship to Cimabue, which holds that the young, previously untutored shepherd quickly equaled and then surpassed his master. The anecdote surely ranks as an archetype in the annals of artists' biographies. See Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1912), 1:72.

¹⁵ E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs* (Paris: Librairie Gründ, 1976), 8:518; Norton, 60.

¹⁶ Auquier, 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18, 21; See also Michel, 6, pt. 2:684, for an excerpt of a letter from Colbert to Puget dated December 26, 1670, in which he requests that Puget restrain himself in his designs for sterns so as not to add unnecessary weight that interferes with ships' maneuvers.

¹⁹ Laughton, 14.

²⁰ Laughton, 96; Norton, 63.

²¹ Norton, 52-53.

²² Norton, 57-58; Laughton, 71.

²³ Quoted in Laughton, 70-71.

²⁴ Laughton, 80-81; Norton, 72-75.

²⁵ Norton, 75-76.

²⁶ Laughton, 25.

²⁷ Laughton, 28; Norton, 66-67.

²⁸ Laughton, 18-19.

²⁹ Quoted in Laughton, 28-29.

³⁰ Laughton, 89.

³¹ Nina Fletcher Little, "Carved Figures by Samuel McIntire and His Contemporaries," in *Samuel McIntire: A Bicentennial Symposium* (Salem, MA: Essex Institute, 1957), 193. The figure is in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts.

³² Norton, 85.

³³ Sylvia Leistyna Lahvis, "Icons of the American Trade: The Skillin Workshop and the Language of Spectacle," *Winterthur Portfolio* 27 (Winter 1992): 220.

³⁴ Quoted in Brewington, 8.

³⁵ Brewington, 12-18.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁷ Brock Jobe, "The Boston Furniture Industry, 1720-1740," in *Boston Furniture of the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Walter Muir Whitehill, Brock Jobe and Jonathan Fairbanks (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1974), 3.

- ³⁸ Mabel M. Swan. "Boston's Carvers and Joiners. Part I. Pre-Revolutionary." *Antiques* 53 (March 1948): 198-99; Mary Ellen Hayward Yehia, "Ornamental Carving." in *Boston Furniture of the Eighteenth Century*. 213-15.
- ³⁹ The most important Skillin sources are: Homer Eaton Keyes, "Milton, Beverly, and Salem." *Antiques* 23 (April 1933): 120-22; Leroy L. Thwing, "The Four Carving Skillins." *Antiques* 33 (June 1938): 326-28; Mabel M. Swan. "Boston's Carvers and Joiners, Part I.." 198-201, and "Boston Carvers and Joiners, Part II. Post-Revolutionary." *Antiques* 53 (April 1948): 281-85; Mabel M. Swan, "Simeon Skillin. Senior, The First American Sculptor," *Antiques* 46 (July 1944): 21; and the two previously cited works by Sylvia Lahvis, "The Skillin Workshop" and "Icons."
- ⁴⁰ Swan. "Simeon Skillin." 21.
- ⁴¹ Mabel M. Swan. "Artisan Leaders of 1788." *Antiques* 27 (March 1935): 90.
- ⁴² Lahvis. "The Skillin Workshop." 69-70. 77-96.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 107. 110-126.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ⁴⁵ *The Columbian Centennial*, 18 July 1793, 3.
- ⁴⁶ Cabot. 55.
- ⁴⁷ Giovanni da Bologna's elongated, classicized *Mercury* is a very different conception than the Skillins' figure. Given the similarities of pose, as well as the widespread reproduction of Bologna's sculpture in a variety of different media over the course of several centuries, however, it can surely be credited as the ultimate source. See Lahvis, "The Skillin Workshop." 125-26. 156.
- ⁴⁸ See Lahvis. "The Skillin Workshop." 160-214, and "Icons of American Trade." 216-24, for discussions of the relationship between shipcarving and civic pageantry in Britain and colonial America. For a more complete treatment of the pageantry tradition in England, see David M. Bergeron. *English Civic Pageantry, 1558-1642* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), and L.J. Morrissay. "English Pageant-Wagons," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9 (Spring 1976): 352-74.
- ⁴⁹ John Hancock to Thomas Cushing. Connarroe Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, quoted in Brewington, 12.
- ⁵⁰ *Pennsylvania Journal*, 23 November 1791, quoted in Henri Marceau. *William Rush, 1756-1833. The First Native American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1937), 65.
- ⁵¹ William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Design in the United States* (New York, [1834]; New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 1:315. As in the case of Pierre Puget, the parallel with Vasari's account of Giotto's apprenticeship with Cimabue should be noted. Dunlap gives the term as three years, however, which is somewhat more believable than Puget's three months.
- ⁵² Linda Bantel, "William Rush, Esq.," *William Rush: American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1982): 10; Swan, "Artisan Leaders of 1788," 91.
- ⁵³ Francis Hopkinson. "An Account of the grand federal procession in Philadelphia. July 4. 1788." *American Museum* (July, 1788), 4:64, quoted in Bantel, 10.

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- ⁵⁴ Pauline A. Pinckney, *American Figureheads and Their Carvers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1940), 65-70.
- ⁵⁵ Eugene S. Ferguson, "The Figure-head of the United States Frigate *Constellation*," *American Neptune* 7 (October 1947): 256.
- ⁵⁶ Brewington, 35-37; Pinckney, 70.
- ⁵⁷ *American Daily Advertiser*, 4 March 1797, quoted in Marceau, 69-70. Brewington dates the article to March 4, 1794, see p. 35.
- ⁵⁸ Joshua Humphreys Accounts, 1773-95, Historical Society of Pennsylvania: Brewington, 33.
- ⁵⁹ John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: E.L. Cary & A. Hart, 1830), 551.
- ⁶⁰ *Peace* suffered fairly substantial water damage and insect infestation while serving as a garden ornament during the second half of the twentieth century, but was conserved at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1981. See Bantel, 107.
- A full-length figure of an Indian, which is possibly a figurehead by Rush, has been in a private collection in New Hampshire since 1985. The piece has survived in fairly good condition, except for its arms and some other losses. The owner has conducted a considerable amount of research and believes it to be the figure of an *Indian Trader*, done by Rush for the *William Penn* around 1790. See Lita Solis-Cohen, "Tamanend the Striding Indian Trader: 'A Fine Figure in William Rush's Best Style,'" *Maine Antiques Digest*, November 1996, 28-A - 30-A.
- ⁶¹ *The American and Daily Advertiser*, 4 September 1799, quoted in Lahvis, "The Skillin Workshop," 217: See also Pinckney, p. 69, for a slightly different transcription, presumably from another source.
- ⁶² Brewington, 33; Bantel, 13-14.
- ⁶³ Lahvis, "The Skillin Workshop," 24.
- ⁶⁴ *The Boston Gazette*, 30 July 1806.
- ⁶⁵ Swan, "Boston Carvers and Joiners, Part II," 283; Brewington, 42.
- ⁶⁶ David A. Wasson, "The Silent Pilots," *The Outlook* 109 (27 January 1915): 209; Swan, "Boston Carvers and Joiners, Part II," 283; Cabot, 85; Pinckney, 131.
- ⁶⁷ Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Colonial Craftsman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 132-34, 136; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 28, 33-34.
- ⁶⁸ William W. Wheildon, *Memoir of Solomon Willard: Architect and Superintendent of the Bunker Hill Monument*, (Boston: Monument Association, 1865).
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ⁷⁰ James M. Morris, *Our Maritime Heritage: Maritime Developments and Their Impact on American Life* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), 164.
- ⁷¹ John H. Morrison, *History of New York Ship Yards* (New York: Wm. F. Sametz, 1909), 40-43.

⁷² Ibid.. 38.

⁷³ Ibid.. 57. 150.

⁷⁴ Brewington, 5; *New-York Mercury*, 21 July 1755, and *New-York Gazette and General Advertiser*. 12 April 1762. quoted in Frederick Fried, *Artists in Wood* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1972), 171.

⁷⁵ *New-York Gazette and General Advertiser*. 25 May 1799. quoted in Fried, 172.

⁷⁶ New York Directories; Brewington, 47; Fried. 174-77.

⁷⁷ "Report of the Trustees," *Annual Report of the New-York Historical Society* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953), 16-18; Brewington, 47-48; Pinckney, 92-95.

⁷⁸ The original head, carved by Laban Beecher, was recently reunited with the figurehead. The Museum of the City of New York acquired it in the Spring of 1998 from a private collection in France. Overall, the incident is probably the most frequently recounted story in the literature on American figureheads. See, for example, Robert G. Denig, "Historic Figureheads," *Cosmopolitan* 14 (April 1893): 694-95; Allingham (1899): 522; and Wasson (1915): 208-09. The most complete accounts appear in Pinckney, 103-14, and Brewington, 129-36.

⁷⁹ "Report of the Trustees." 19-21.

⁸⁰ G. W. Sheldon. "The Old Ship-builders of New York." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 65 (July 1882): 223; Morrison, 96-97. 118. 126.

⁸¹ Morrison, 153-54. In "Ship-Building in New York for 1856." *The U.S. Nautical Magazine and Naval Journal* 5 (February 1857): 381, the editors reported that:

The great depression experienced in 1855 was gradually removed during the year, and general confidence has steadily increased, although there has not been a return to the measure of activity and enterprise which has distinguished former years.

⁸² Morrison, 155-58; Sheldon, 241.

⁸³ Morrison, 162; Brewington, 77.

⁸⁴ Howard Irving Chapelle. *The History of American Sailing Ships* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1935), 281-82, 84-86.

⁸⁵ Brewington, 57.

⁸⁶ John W. Griffiths, *A Treatise on Marine and Naval Architecture* (New York: D. Appleton, 1850), 181, 185.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 184.

⁸⁸ See pp. 110-11 for an explanation of the Products of Industry Schedules and a discussion of their importance.

⁸⁹ Brewington, 66.

⁹⁰ The papers of George Greenman & Co. are in the collection of the G. W. Blunt White Library at Mystic Seaport Museum.

⁹¹ The figurehead is known from an article that appeared in the *Mystic Press*, 31 October 1873. An excerpt reads:

Mr. Colby is carving a likeness of himself as a centerpiece for the stern of the new schooner *John N. Colby* named after him. Even in the rough state in which we saw it is a fair likeness, though rather wooden. Messrs. Campbell & Colby are artists in the line of vessel decoration.

Quoted in William N. Peterson, "Campbell & Colby: Shipcarvers at Mystic Seaport." *Log of Mystic Seaport* 27 (October 1977): 69-70.

⁹² *The Mystic Pioneer*, 31 July 1869, quoted in Peterson, 68-69.

⁹³ Peterson, 68-70.

⁹⁴ Accession files, Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Massachusetts.

⁹⁵ An illustration appears in Clarence P. Hornung, *Treasury of American Design and Antiques* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1972), 384.

⁹⁶ J. Wells Henderson and Rodney P. Carlisle, *Jack Tar: A Sailor's Life, 1750-1910* (Woodbridge, England: Antique Collectors' Club, 1999), 44.

⁹⁷ Allingham, 523; Accession file, Museum of the City of New York.

⁹⁸ William H. Gerds, "*A Man of Genius*": *The Art of Washington Allston (1779-1843)*. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1979), 13; *New Bedford and Old Dartmouth* (New Bedford, MA: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1975), 58.

Chapter III - Wooden Indians and Noble Savages

On March 22, 1856, just four months after Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*, was first published, the clipper *Minehaha* was launched at Donald McKay's East Boston shipyard. Its figurehead, carved by William Gleason (w. ca. 1845-1875), represented the celebrated English actress, Julia Bennet Barrow, as Minehaha, as she currently appeared in costume when giving readings from the poem in Boston and Salem. Among the guests at the "entertainment" held at McKay's home following the launch were the poet himself, Mrs. Barrow, General John S. Tyler, and "Col. Adams." After a series of remarks and well wishes for the success of the ship and its owner, Mrs. Barrow recited passages from the poem. Throughout the evening, "...Both [Longfellow and Barrow] were complimented by sentiments which elicited the warm applause of the company..."¹

Besides affording a glimpse of a fashionable Boston social event, this anecdote highlights some important aspects of the relationship between art, commerce and shipcarving in mid-century America. Shipbuilder, poet and actress gathered to celebrate an important community event, the launching of new ship, and were united in their mutual appreciation of their various accomplishments. McKay no doubt wished to honor Longfellow's poem and Barrow's interpretation of it through his choice of *Minehaha* as the name of his clipper, but he must also have calculated that their popularity with the press and public would bring the maximum amount of favorable publicity to his new commercial venture. His prestige and that of his ship would be increased by association with these well-known celebrities, both of whom in turn benefited from the accolades

bestowed upon them by Boston's leading shipbuilder and the other prominent citizens who had gathered that night.

At the center of the story is the image of the American Indian, in this case a figurehead that is also a theatrical portrait and a fictitious literary character.² Each of these types of representation of the Indian was popular at the time, and when used in combination, they were all the more effective in capturing public attention. This was particularly true in the East, which was not only the center of American commerce and culture, but was also an area where the "Indian problem" had already been settled. Far from the warfare and displacement that was taking place further west, Easterners could more comfortably contemplate the Indian's imagined past and uncertain future than those who were in closer contact with independent Native communities that were still resisting the encroachment of soldiers and settlers.

White America expressed its ambivalent feelings about Indians in a variety of ways in the nineteenth century, most of which had evolved from European precedents. The image of the American Indian continued to function as a national symbol of sorts, for example, a role that it had played since the earliest days of European discovery and conquest. As discussed earlier, the figure of the Native American was used by Europeans to represent the New World by the mid-sixteenth century. Indians embellished maps, prints, ceramics, textiles and anything else inspired by the theme of America or the four continents. American colonists adopted the convention and made it their own, as graphically illustrated by the Boston Tea Party of 1773, during which a group of disgruntled merchants and patriots disguised themselves as Indians in order to protest British policy. By the early nineteenth century, other idealized images were competing for

the title of national symbol, most notably the closely related personifications of the Goddess of Liberty and Columbia. Nevertheless, the figure of the American Indian maintained its symbolic importance through several stylistic changes and an increasing number of applications.³

As noted, English tobacconists were among the first to capitalize upon the image of the Native American. Black boys and Virginians, in reality highly fanciful combinations of Indians and Africans, were meant to represent the inhabitants of the New World and advertise shops that dispensed the "Indian weed." The extent to which this type of figure was used in the American colonies is unknown, although it is reasonable to assume that merchants employed them in some of the larger port towns. The earliest visual evidence of the use of a tobacconist Indian in America appears in a watercolor of the corner of Greenwich and Dey Streets in New York City, done by the Baroness Hyde de Neuville in January 1810. The drawing shows a small Indian figure prominently displayed outside a tobacco shop, the second building from the right.⁴ (Fig. 32)

As for figures themselves, the oldest known example of an American cigar store Indian is a piece from Albany, New York, that is usually dated around 1810 and is currently on long-term loan to the Albany Institute of History and Art. (Fig. 33) A representation of it that appeared in an advertisement for Caldwell & Solomons Tobacco and Snuff Store in the November 17, 1817 issue of the *Albany Gazette and Daily Advertiser* documents its existence. (Fig. 34) In 1823, the figure was repainted by Ezra Ames, who recorded in his account book that he charged "Mr. Solomon" for "painting an Indian statue."⁵

It is entirely likely that the figure was carved several decades earlier than 1810, however, as it is executed in a generally baroque style more typical of the eighteenth century. The deeply carved tunic and cape, along with the prominence of details of costuming and accessories give it a rococo exuberance that was out of date by the early nineteenth century. It may be a late example of the style, or it may have been featured in the Caldwell & Solomons advertisement because it was a well-known local landmark that had been on the streets of Albany for many years.

Because neoclassicism, the most up-to-date mode in America in the first decades of the nineteenth century, was primarily concerned with ancient Greece and Rome, and the virtues of “calm grandeur and noble simplicity” as defined by the eighteenth-century German art historian, Johann Winckelmann, the image of the American Indian was less appropriate in and of itself, unless modified to conform to this emphasis on Old World classicism. This was easily accomplished in the fine arts, and the Indian did in fact figure into neoclassical philosophy as the stoic, moral Noble Savage who lived a simple life close to nature, just as the ancient Greeks were imagined to have done.

The famous story of Benjamin West and his first encounter with the *Apollo Belvedere* is a case in point. While probably apocryphal, the anecdote is nonetheless significant for what it reveals about contemporary attitudes. Shortly after arriving in Rome, West was supposedly taken to see the statue by Cardinal Albani and a group of his friends. Upon viewing it, the artist remarked that it reminded him of a Mohawk warrior. His hosts were at first shocked that he found a resemblance between this sublime icon of classicism and a foreign savage, but after learning of the rustic nobility and pastoral virtues of the Mohawks, they agreed that it was an apt comparison.⁶

West used American Indians in several of his paintings, but none is more appropriate for current purposes than his *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* of 1771-72. (Fig. 35) The moment depicted in this neoclassical composition is one in which the leaders of two different races meet in harmony to forge an agreement that will benefit both and allow for the peaceful and orderly development of the promised land of Pennsylvania. Although a Native American artist would have no doubt interpreted the scene quite differently, West's image resonated through American culture for decades, as seen in Edward Hicks' paintings by the same name. (Fig. 36) In all, Hicks (1780-1849) painted thirteen versions of *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*. He probably based his picture on an engraving by John Hall, published by John Boydell of London in 1775. Both Hall's and Hicks' compositions are reversed as a result of the engraving process. In addition, West's painting did not arrive in the United States until three years after Hicks' death.⁷

Elements of neoclassicism profoundly effected the depiction of nineteenth-century cigar store Indians, although they were rarely incorporated without some modification. One of the finest examples of this is *Chief Blackhawk*, believed to have been carved in New York City around 1848 for J.C. Baumberger, the Swiss Counsel in Louisville, Kentucky. (Fig. 37) The piece stood in front of three different cigar stores in Louisville until purchased by a New York real estate developer in 1926.⁸ It is now in the collection of Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Massachusetts. In his pose and toga-like costume, this highly individualized carving of a nineteenth-century Indian warrior transmits the distinct impression of a Roman Senator. On the other hand, his scalp lock and the catamount pelt draped over his shoulder are contemporary features that provide him with a more modern identity.

Gods and goddesses in a modified neoclassical style were also popular subjects at the time, as seen in a figure of *Mercury*, carved around 1830 and attributed to William Rush. (Fig. 38) The figure stood in front of John Foble's Tobacco Store in Cambridge, Maryland from about 1830 to 1926, when it was given to the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. As the patron of commerce and messenger of the gods, Mercury is an appropriate choice for a tobacconist's sign. Then again, the store owner may have simply wanted a distinctive figure carved in the latest style. The details of *Mercury's* costume are crisply rendered, while the attention to anatomical details seen in the musculature of the neck and legs mark it as the work of a master like Rush. Compared to the Albany Indian discussed above, its shallower and more realistic carving illustrates an important stylistic development that is also evident in many figureheads of the period.

As up-to-date as Mr. Foble may have wished to be, however, by the time he placed his *Mercury* in front of his shop, a new stylistic and philosophical trend that had been circulating in intellectual circles in Europe for several decades was challenging neoclassicism's dominance and gaining wide currency in America. Known generally as romanticism, it is particularly important to this discussion because it radically altered the popular conception of the American Indian, introducing new elements into literary and artistic characterizations of the Noble Savage.

Whereas the imaginary Indian of the eighteenth century was a combination of the ancient stoic of neoclassicism and the natural, rational man of Enlightenment philosophy, his nineteenth-century counterpart gained the more emotional and melancholic personality of a romantic hero on an inevitable course of destruction due to forces beyond his control. If the Indian had previously stood apart from the decadence of Western

civilization and offered a model for its salvation, he was now caught in its clutches, a hapless victim of progress and one of the last remaining members of a vanishing race.⁹

The figure of the American Indian was in fact central to the development of the literary and artistic genres of romanticism. His role can be traced to the first stirrings of the movement, as seen, for example, in Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* of 1770 and Joseph Wright's *The Indian Widow* of 1783-85, both of which fuse elements of neoclassicism and romanticism in dramatic, emotionally charged canvases.¹⁰

As for literature, Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* of 1733-34 provides an important early point of reference. While Pope was an eighteenth-century humanist and not a romantic, his poem incorporated certain motifs and imagery that have a definite romantic tinge to them. A stanza from Epistle I, part III, is particularly significant, as its opening lines achieved widespread recognition in England and America, becoming one of the most frequently quoted characterizations of the American Indian until the end of the nineteenth century. They read:

Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His soul proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk or milky way;¹¹

The first phrase, "Lo! the poor Indian," was so ubiquitous, in fact, that many cigar store Indians were nicknamed "Lo," and the reference appeared in the titles of a number of articles about them.

In the United States, the poems of Philip Freneau were the first to develop the image of the romantic Noble Savage and his tragic destiny. Among them were "The

Prophecy of King Tammany” (1782), “The Dying Indian” (1784), and “The Indian Burying Ground” (1788).¹² Underlying these and other works was the image of the rational, enlightened savage who began to sense his fate and the futility of resistance in the face of the onslaught of a superior civilization. As he did, he became an object of compassion, nostalgia and sentimentalism. the perfect vehicle for romantic sensibilities.

This new definition of the Indian proved to be very appealing to European and American audiences. particularly after the appearance in 1801 of François-René de Chateaubriand's *Atala*, which is perhaps the single most influential work in the popularization of the romantic conception of Noble Savage. Set in the Mississippi River Valley in the late seventeenth century. it is the story of two star-crossed lovers. Chactas, a member of the Natchez tribe, and Atala, the Christianized. half-Indian daughter of a chief of their sworn enemies, the Muscogee. Escaping torture and certain death. Chactas and Atala journey through mysterious forests and primeval landscapes to reach the Mission of the friendly Père Aubry. only to have Atala reveal that she has poisoned herself in order to avoid temptation and fulfill a vow of chastity taken as her mother's dying wish.¹³ The novel was an immediate success and went through eleven editions between 1801 and 1805, while also inspiring countless imitators and a long line of paintings, prints and statues based on its most touching moments.¹⁴

The most famous of these is undoubtedly Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson's painting, *The Burial of Atala*, in the collection of the Louvre. Completed in 1808, it depicts a classicized Chactas and hooded Père Aubry lowering an angelic Atala into her grave. Another well-known depiction is Eugène Delacroix's *Les Natchez*, of 1824-35, which is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Fig. 39) In this case, the artist based his

painting on an episode found in the story's epilogue, in which the scene shifts to the present day, that is, the late eighteenth century. The narrator tells of his encounter with an Indian couple at Niagara who are lamenting the death of their newborn child. They provide the details of Chactas' later life and Père Aubry's martyrdom at the hands of the Cherokees. The reader is also informed that they are the last of the Natchez, the sole survivors of a once-proud tribe.¹⁵

This theme of the American Indian as a member of a vanishing race became a dominant one that was repeated countless times throughout the nineteenth century. Though at first more popular in Europe, it had gained wide acceptance in the Eastern United States by mid-century, not long after the first reservations had been created and the official policy of removal to the West had taken effect. For many white Americans, the Indian was a figure of curiosity and nostalgia, and what better way to indulge sentimental notions and perhaps assuage underlying feelings of guilt than to cloak him in the mysterious aura of a fallen romantic hero? As the original inhabitant of the New World, he was, after all, the perfect vehicle for expressing nationalistic sentiments in a country that was searching to establish its identity and distinguish itself from Europe. No longer a direct threat, the Indian was a picturesque detail that evoked visions of the primeval bounty of the promised land of America. An editorial that appeared in 1856 in *The Crayon* expressed several of these ideas:

It seems to us that the Indian has not received justice in American art.... It should be held in dutiful remembrance that he is fast passing away from the face of the earth. Soon the last red man will have faded forever from his native land, and those who come after us will trust to our scanty records for their knowledge of his habits and appearance....Seen in his primitive garb, the wild, untamed denizen of

an unknown country, he is a sublimely eloquent representative of the hidden resources, and the mental solitude of the uncivilized wilderness....

The Indian, reposing at night by his campfire, or seen in the energy of his fiercest fight, sulking behind logs and trees, stealthily tracing his enemies' path in the leaves and bushes, grouped in council or roving in solitude – in all these positions, and in hundreds of others, is eminently picturesque and interesting. As an accessory in landscape, the Indian may be used with great effect. He is at home in every scene of primitive country. Picture them marching "Indian file," winding silently along through the light and shade of some grand old primitive forest.¹⁶

The writer has presented us with a catalog of stereotypical images of the imaginary Indian. In another section of the essay, he considers the many visual possibilities presented to artists by colonial Indian wars. While discussing King Philip's War, he describes the chief as "the solitary warrior, in an open clearing, seated on a stump, his face buried in his hands, brooding over the fallen fortunes of his country." This motif of the melancholic Indian chief seated with his chin supported by a bent arm is the nineteenth-century Noble Savage par excellence. It was used in a wide range of literary and visual representations, including Thomas Crawford's *Dying Chief Contemplating the Progress of Civilization*, which was designed for the Senate pediment of the United States Capitol and completed in 1856, the same year that *The Crayon* article was published. (Fig. 40) The image has a long history in Western art, and can ultimately be traced to Albrecht Dürer's seated angel in his engraving *Melancholia I* of 1514.¹⁷ (Fig. 41)

As suggested in the passage from *The Crayon*, however, the Noble Savage was only one half of the equation. His counterpart, the "ignoble savage" or bad Indian, was the treacherous warrior "sulking behind logs and tress" and engaged in his "fiercest fight." He was the terrifying presence of the frontier, the blood-thirsty demon who attacked isolated

cabins and lay in wait for defenseless travelers. In the safety of a comfortable Eastern home, he could send a romantic chill up the spine of a reader, or serve as intellectual justification for the government's Indian policy. He, too, could be found in a variety of melodramatic guises, from a caricature of a degraded savage to an idealized conception of dangers of the primeval forest. As for the latter of these, John Vanderlyn's *The Death of Jane McCrea* of 1804 is certainly one of the most influential images of the bad Indian in American art. (Fig. 42)

The painting is based upon an incident that occurred in upstate New York in the summer of 1777. Jane McCrea, a Tory from New Jersey, was being escorted through the woods near Lake George by a party of Indians on her way to meet her fiancé, a young British officer serving under General Burgoyne. At some point, they met another group of Indians, a dispute broke out, and she was killed and scalped. The event was widely publicized and quickly seized upon by politicians and the press as a prime example of the atrocities committed by Indian mercenaries in British service. The ensuing controversy resulted in a major propaganda coup for the American cause, while the fact that the victim was an English sympathizer was conveniently forgotten.¹⁸

Originally commissioned by Joel Barlow as an illustration for his epic poem the *Columbiad*, Vanderlyn's picture is a highly idealized conception of the actual incident, a fashionable neoclassical composition with a strong dose of melodramatic romanticism. The physiques and poses of the Indians are based on several antique precedents, while Miss McCrea is suitably exposed and vulnerable enough to evoke sympathy from even the most hard-hearted viewer. Painted in Paris, the picture was a great success at the annual salon of 1804, and brought widespread recognition to the young American artist. It

was then sent to New York, where it seems to have been received somewhat less enthusiastically.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it was the first in a long series of nineteenth-century interpretations of the subject, some of which were based on Vanderlyn's painting, while others were derived from different sources. Paintings, prints, broadsides and book-plates all celebrated this famous Revolutionary War incident.²⁰

The point to be made here is that by the early nineteenth century, even representations of the bad Indian, presumably based on the dangerous foe who was still active on the Western frontier, were often highly romanticized in contemporary art and literature. Entire genres were based on the fictions of the good and bad Indian, an updated version of the eternal struggle between good and evil. The Noble Savage and his counterpart were useful for a variety of artistic, philosophical and political purposes, and were readily employed across a wide spectrum of issues and ideas.

In fact, the image of the good and bad Indian infused nineteenth-century American culture. While solid citizens like tobacco store owners and shipcarvers may not have read *The Crayon* or kept up on the latest art from Paris, they were certainly familiar with Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and other representations of American Indians in popular literature and art.²¹ Schoolchildren memorized passages from the famous poem, while adults devoured the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, whose *Leatherstocking Tales* of the 1820s, '30s and '40s were international best-sellers. Cooper's characterizations of Hawkeye, the woodsman, Chinagachook and Uncas, the last of the Mohicans, and Magua, the evil Huron, became household names to generations of Americans.

Prints depicting Indian themes were also widely distributed. In 1858, for example, Currier & Ives published the first in a series of seven *Hiawatha* prints that were issued

over a ten-year period. *Hiawatha's Departure*, which first appeared in 1868, is particularly relevant to this discussion. (Fig. 43) Standing in his canoe, the hero bids farewell to his people as he embarks on his final journey westward to the land of the setting sun. Viewers would have recognized the symbolism of the image, as well as the obvious allusion to American Indians as a vanishing race being forced to the west by the inexorable march of civilization.²²

Another venue in which the Noble Savage made a frequent appearance was the theater. Indian melodramas were very popular in the East, and leading tragic actors found the figure of the Native American to be a perfect vehicle for wrenching emotions from eager audiences. One of the first such plays was a romantic tale of Pocahontas entitled, *The Indian Princess; Or, La Belle Sauvage: An Operatic Melo-Drame*, written by James Nelson Barker in 1808.²³

The most successful and longest-running Indian play, however, was John Augustus Stones' *Metamora: or, The Last of the Wampanoags*. In November 1828, the famous actor, Edwin Forrest, offered a sum of five hundred dollars and a half-benefit for "the best tragedy, in five acts, of which the hero, or principal character, shall be an aboriginal of this country."²⁴ The Committee of Award, which was headed by William Cullen Bryant, chose Stones' play from the fourteen that were submitted during the competition. Based on the old story of King Philip's War and the treachery of New England colonists, *Metamora* once again exploited the theme of a vanishing race of good Indians. Upon its debut in New York in December, 1829, the play was an immediate success, and it remained in Forrest's repertoire for nearly forty years. Evidently, American audiences could not get enough, as it was still being performed by other actors in 1887.²⁵

Forrest's characterization of *Metamora* inspired other works of art in a number of different media, including a theatrical portrait by Frederick Agate that was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1833, and a photograph by Matthew Brady taken in the 1860s. (Fig. 44) It also inspired at least one carver, as evidenced by a well rendered figure of the actor in costume that has "Metamora" inscribed on its base. (Fig. 45) Although the original purpose of the piece is not known, it most likely served as a theater or shop sign. The figure is in the collection of the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.²⁶

Another distinctive cigar store figure rendered in the Noble Savage mode is a piece known as the *Breneiser Chief* that is owned by the Historical Society of Berks County in Reading, Pennsylvania. (Fig. 46) Possibly made in New York or Philadelphia, it stood in front of the tobacco shop and cigar manufactory of Charles Breneiser and Sons of Reading for about seventy years.²⁷ Boldly carved, the figure is particularly notable for the attention to details of costuming such as the sun disk that he wears around his neck, as well as the definition given to anatomical features in the chest and neck areas. The tobacco leaves in his right hand identify his purpose, but his pensive, far-away look indicates that his mind is not on his work. Even though he is not seated in the more traditional pose of the vanishing American, by resting his bent arm on a staff and his chin in his hand, the figure clearly references the familiar image of the solitary warrior contemplating the inevitable extinction of his race.

As for his counterpart, the bad Indian was one of the most popular of all cigar store figures, particularly if he was represented as a chief brandishing a raised tomahawk in a menacing gesture.²⁸ (Fig. 47) Contemporary accounts indicate that the type was a

standard for much of the nineteenth century, even more common than some of the comely female figures that were generally rendered in the good Indian mode. A newspaper article about the production and popularity of cigar store figures that first appeared in the *New York Sun* in 1886 quoted a carver as saying:

Oh, of course styles change, but the genuine old roving redskin with a bad eye and ugly-looking tomahawk in his hand is the stand-by – that is, in the majority of the eastern and middle states....the plain old war-whoop savage of the plains is the only chap you can bank on as steadily trustworthy. Indian maidens do very well, but not so well as the fine old gore-drinking warriors, with feathers and meat axes.²⁹

Working within the prevailing stereotypes, then, the carvers responded to public demand by creating any number of variations on the theme of the bad Indian.

The example illustrated here has been attributed to John L. Cromwell (1805-73), one of the leading New York shipcarvers of his generation. Born and presumably trained in Boston, Cromwell had opened a shop on Cherry Street in New York City's maritime district by 1831. Over the course of the next thirty years, he operated shops in several different locations, and is known to have completed a number of important shipcarving commissions, including a figurehead, taffrail and stern carving for the ship *Samoset*, built in 1847 by Fernald & Pettigrew of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. He actively diversified his business as well, not only by producing shop figures, but also by being one of the first shipcarvers to create decorations for circus wagons, a line of work that became an increasingly important source of income for many carvers as the century progressed.³⁰

Folk art historian, Jean Lipman, published a photograph of a piece that is very similar to Figure 47 in 1948, noting that a previous owner claimed that it had been in his family's possession since 1857 and that many years earlier Cromwell's son had identified it as his father's work.³¹ Assuming that this account is accurate, it represents a rare and significant piece of evidence that establishes the importance of Cromwell's role in the development of shop figure carving in New York. The figure shows many typical features of a new type of work that was produced in New York City after about 1850.

The 1840s and '50s were decades of innovation in American figure carving. As previously discussed, in response to the emergence of the clipper ship and its distinctive bow, shipcarvers developed a new style of figurehead with a horizontal thrust and dynamic presence that matched the fast and sleek vessels. As stern carvings, taffrails and other types of ship decoration were greatly reduced or eliminated altogether, the figurehead became the focus of the carver's creativity, resulting in some of the finest examples of the art ever produced in this country. It was perhaps inevitable that this burst of activity would influence other aspects of the shipcarver's repertoire as well. Shop and cigar store figures are a case in point. While the older types of counter and half life-size figures continued to be popular, the carvers also began to produce a new kind of figure that quickly captured the public imagination and transformed a time-honored tradition into a Victorian fad.

Certainly, cigar store Indians were already in widespread use in America by this time. A rare reference to their popularity appears in *Big Abel and the Little Manhattan*, a humorous tale written by Cornelius Matthews that was published in 1845. In it, a descendent of Henry Hudson and a member of the tribe that once inhabited the island

walk the streets of New York to determine whether white men or Indians are the rightful owners. Upon seeing a cigar store Indian in front of a store, Little Manhattan claims all the tobacconists shops with similar figures as his own, at which point. "...Big Abel staggers at the recollection that the town is held in every part by such as these."³²

By merging the tradition of life-size or larger figureheads with that of the generally smaller shop figures, mid-century carvers created an imposing sculptural form that was readily adaptable to the rapidly expanding and increasingly competitive American business environment. In this they were again following English precedent, as full-size representations of Scotsmen had been used as tobacconist signs since the eighteenth century. The British figures were relatively few, however, compared to the burst of creativity that was about to ensue on this side of the Atlantic.

A comparison of three figures that were probably made within a few years of one another in the mid-1840s illustrates some of these stylistic developments. The first piece stood in front of the Maltzberger cigar store in Reading, Pennsylvania from 1847 to 1928, and is now in the collection of the Historical Society of Berks County. (Fig. 48) By tradition, John Maltzberger purchased it from a New York City carver when he opened his shop.³³ Although it has been repaired and repainted over the years, it is still a fine example of its type. The raised right leg and the right arm that crosses the chest close to the body are reminiscent of figureheads of the period.

The second figure from a private collection is closely related stylistically and in a better state of preservation. (Fig. 49) Both pieces feature details that relate them to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century print sources. This is seen particularly in the flattened plumed headdresses, and in the tightly wrapped, thin bundle of tobacco leaves

held by the *Maltzberger Indian*. In addition, the grouping of tobacco coils, cigars and boxes at their feet are typical of earlier graphic representations of Indians used for trade cards and tobacconists' advertisements.

The third example has a long history in New York City. (Fig. 50) It was probably purchased in the mid-1840s by David McAlpin for his tobacco shop on Catherine Street. In 1866, he moved it to his tobacco store and factory on East 10th Street. Then, when the McAlpin Hotel opened in Herald Square in 1919, it was placed in a prominent location in the lobby. It was finally donated to the Museum of the City of New York in 1934.³⁴ The figure shares some general similarities with the two discussed above, particularly the plumed headdress that covers its head and the stack of coiled tobacco and boxes upon which it rests its arm. Overall, though, it is more characteristic of the new type of figure that would be produced until the end of the century. Its costuming and the details of necklaces, knotted sash at the waist, and the distinctive banded sleeve are all features that would be repeated by carvers for decades to come. The McAlpin Indian also bears a greater resemblance to the standard mid-century representation of the imaginary Indian seen in the popular press than do the other two. In addition, at twice their size, it has a more commanding presence.

The McAlpin Indian, then, marks the emergence a new type of cigar store figure, one that came to be known as a "show figure." Due to a lack of documentation, it is impossible to determine just how innovative it was in the mid-1840s. It may have been more typical than it currently appears, but in any event, it establishes an approximate date for the beginnings of what can best be described as the New York City show figure style.

One of the finest surviving examples from later in the century is illustrated here. a female Indian with the words, "S.A. Robb. Carver, 114 Centre St." incised on the top front edge of its base. (Fig. 51) Now in a private collection, the piece is in an excellent state of preservation, retaining most of its original carved detail and paint surface. It may have spent much of its working life indoors, possibly in a store window, and therefore escaped the exposure to the elements and other types of wear and tear that led many figures to be routinely repainted. The fact that the paint is particularly bright in areas that would have been protected from the sun lends credence to this thought. In any event, the figure's expressive face and cross-legged pose give it a casual, almost jaunty, air that is much more lifelike than many of its more static contemporaries.

Among the identifying stylistic traits that it shares with the Cromwell figure and the McAlpin Indian are the generally shallow carving overall and the emphasis on smooth planes. The idealized handling of the face is typical as well, as is the costuming, most notably the pronounced skirt-like effect that was probably derived from the tunic of neoclassical representation. Other important details include the banded sleeves, knotted sash or row of tobacco leaves at the waist, and painted bands below the knees. Two other standard New York show figure features seen on the Robb and Cromwell pieces are the rows of vertically scored fringe at the bottom of the skirt and elsewhere, and the headdress of multi-colored, shaded feathers.

Starting with John Cromwell and some of his contemporaries, three generations of New York shipcarvers worked in this manner, producing thousands of figures that are largely variations on a relatively small number of themes. With the exception of special commissions, upon which the carvers would often indulge their imaginations in highly

individualized conceptions, the majority of figures were created using a standard repertoire of poses, expressions and accessories. Working within this context, the carvers still found many ways to express their originality. The number of combinations of the various elements was seemingly endless, and the best carvers imparted an individualized touch to their work. Even in the case of the most popular types of figures, no two pieces were exactly alike.

The figure illustrated in figure 51 came from the workshop of Samuel Anderson Robb (1851-1928), the most successful member of the last generation of New York City shipcarvers who made show figures. Robb is also the best known New York carver today. Because his workshop was the largest and most active of its kind in the 1880s and '90s, he and some of his employees were interviewed on several different occasions by reporters who were curious about the history of a craft that was by that time recognized as being on the verge of extinction. In addition, Frederick Fried collected a significant amount of information from Samuel Robb's daughter, Elizabeth, before she died in 1967. As a result, Robb's career is among the best documented of any American shipcarver.

Born in New York in 1851, Samuel Robb was the son of Peter, a Scottish shipwright who had recently immigrated to the United States. Peter's wife, Elizabeth, was related to Jacob Anderson, the prominent New York shipcarver who was introduced in the previous chapter. Samuel was probably apprenticed to Thomas V. Brooks around 1864.³⁵ Brooks was another successful shipcarver who, as will be seen, played a central role in the development of the show figure business. After serving his term in Brook's shop, Robb went to work carving figures for William Demuth, a tobacco products distributor who was also instrumental in promoting the shop figure fad. At the same time,

Robb undertook some formal instruction in the fine arts. He received a certificate in Perspective Drawing from the Free Night School of Science and Art at the Cooper Union in 1872, and then studied at the National Academy of Design, where he was enrolled in the Antique Class from 1867-75 and the Life Class in 1869-75.³⁶

In 1876, Robb opened his first shop at 195 Canal Street. He continued to supply figures to Demuth, but also developed a successful business of his own. By the early 1880s, he was the leading shop figure carver in the city. His shop took in a variety of other types of work as well, including commissions for a twenty-three foot dragon for a pier in Naragansett, Rhode Island, an oversized wooden cow that dispensed milk at Coney Island, and circus carvings for P.T. Barnum and Adam Forepaugh. In 1888, he moved his workshop to 114 Centre Street, where he remained until 1903. By that time the demand for figures was much reduced. His shop had just completed a large job for circus wagons for Barnum & Bailey that had occupied most of his time for the previous year and a half, but evidently, not enough new orders followed to sustain the business. He closed the Centre Street shop, and for the next fifteen years operated on a smaller scale at several different locations, finally setting up a small workroom in his home. He died in 1928 after a three-year illness.³⁷

A rare photograph of the interior of Robb's Canal Street workshop that was taken around 1879 further documents the New York show figure style. (Fig. 52) Robb can be seen on the right. To his right and along the wall behind him are several Indian figures in various stages of completion. All show the typical features of the type. The use of bold colors and strongly shaded feathers on the pieces that have been painted is particularly notable. Though faded with time, this color scheme is still evident on a number of

surviving examples, including a figure in the collection of the New-York Historical Society that is marked "S.A. Robb Carver 195 Canal St." in the usual spot on the top front edge of the base. (Fig. 53) The address confirms that the piece is more or less contemporary with those in the photograph. Comparing it to them indicates that this solid, well-carved Indian with an idealized Anglo-American face represents a popular type that was produced in large numbers.

Another marked example is an Indian woman with a chubby child looking over her shoulder that is owned by Museum Village in Monroe, New York. Carved in the best New York style, it features an idealized female face and many of the now-familiar details of costuming seen in related types. (Fig. 54) The piece lost most of its paint surface some time ago, making it something of a study of the carver's art. The top front edge of the base is incised "S.A. Robb Manu'fr. 195 Canal St."

A third piece that can be confidently attributed to Robb's shop is a large and imposing male figure wearing an eagle headdress and holding a large pipe in its right hand. (Fig. 55) The headdress, gold breastplate and other details of costuming identify it as vaguely Mexican, based on contemporary conceptions of an Aztec warrior. A similar figure appeared on a trade card that advertised Robb's Centre Street shop.³⁸

Because of their incised markings or through comparison with other marked examples, figures such as these are frequently identified as the work of Samuel Robb himself. As tempting as this attribution might be, it ignores both the complexity of the workshop system in which they were made, as well as some of the recorded facts about the contributions of other carvers. One of the best pieces of evidence comes from an article about a visit to Robb's shop that appeared in the *New York Times* in 1890. In it, the

reporter discusses a number of notable shop and circus figures to be seen in the New York area. He then adds that, "Nearly all of these figures came from Robb's shop, and many of them are Thomas White's handiwork."³⁹

Born in New York City, Thomas J. White (1825-1902) probably apprenticed with John Cromwell. He completed his training around 1847, and for the next decade seems to have worked as a journeyman carver in the maritime district. Following the economic depression of 1855, he moved to Boston, where he opened a shop with William H. Rumney as his partner. He returned to New York around 1866, and by 1870, had entered a brief partnership with Thomas Brooks. He then went to work for William Demuth. When Samuel Robb opened his Canal Street shop in 1876, White joined him, beginning a relationship that lasted for more than twenty years. He also worked for others during that time, including a period in the mid-1890s when he seems to have been employed by Charles Dare's New York Carousel Company.⁴⁰ All in all, though, he was a mainstay of Robb's shop. He can be seen standing next to Samuel Robb in the center of the photograph of Robb's shop. (Fig. 52)

Thomas V. Brooks (1828-1895), Whites' partner in 1870 and Samuel Robb's master in the 1860s, was another major player in the shop figure business. He, too, was born in New York City and apprenticed to John Cromwell. In 1848, he opened a shop on South Street, and the next year entered a brief partnership with another carver, Thomas Millard. Around 1855, he began supplying figures to Edward Hen, a tobacco products distributor who marketed them nationally. He continued to operate his shop in New York until 1880 or '81, when he moved to Chicago in search of new opportunities. For the next decade, he maintained shops in both cities, though he spent most of his time in Chicago.

After 1890, he increasingly relied on one of his employees, Isaac Lewin, to run the Chicago shop. He died in 1895, and Lewin, who by that time had changed his name to Lewis, bought the business.⁴¹

Thomas Millard, Jr. (1803-1870), the man who was Thomas Brook's partner in 1849-50, also made a major contribution to the development of the New York show figure style. A contemporary of John Cromwell, he was born in Connecticut, the son of shipcarver from Philadelphia. It has been suggested that he apprenticed with William Rush, but this remains speculative, because several members of the Millard family worked as shipcarvers in Philadelphia from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries and none can be positively identified as Rush's student.⁴² At any rate, it is known that Thomas Millard opened a shop on Cherry Street in New York in 1827. In the early 1850s, he began producing shop figures for James Chichester, another tobacco products supplier with an active business. He moved to Brooklyn in 1855, and for most the rest of his career, worked for other carvers instead of maintaining his own shop.⁴³

Among the other shipcarvers who were involved in the shop figure business were Nicholas Collins (w.1871-1890) and John W. Anderson (1834-1904), both of whom were about ten years younger than Brooks and White. Collins holds the distinction of being one of six men, along with Cromwell, Brooks, White, Millard and Robb, to be mentioned by name in the *New York Times* in 1890 as "prominent figures in the early history of the art."⁴⁴ Unfortunately, however, his relationship to the other, better known carvers has not been established. It is known that he operated a shop on South Street in the maritime district in the 1870s, and that he had a number of partners over the years.⁴⁵ Perhaps he was one of the several carvers who chiefly hired themselves out to other shops. If so, the

nature of his contributions to the development of the show figure business may never be clear.

John Anderson is an example of a mid-century shipcarver who concentrated on figureheads and other types of ship work, but who also produced shop figures. He was the son of Jacob Anderson, one of the most prominent shipcarvers of his generation and the man who created the figurehead for the *David Crockett* that was discussed in the last chapter. Jacob died prematurely in 1855, when his son was barely beyond the apprentice stage of his career. Rather than close the family shop, Jacob's wife, Jane, took over the business, an unusual arrangement in a profession dominated by men. In the 1860 Federal Census, she listed herself as "agent, widow of Jacob S.." in charge of a shop with one employee, presumably her son.⁴⁶

By 1870, John had assumed control, and his shop was one of the most active in Manhattan. Among his carvings for ships was the figurehead of Admiral David Farragut for the clipper *The Great Admiral*, built in East Boston in 1868-69. As with Nick Collins, the extent of his involvement in the show figure business is not known, although he listed his products as "Figure Heads," "Cigar Signs" and "Ornaments" in the 1870 Federal Census.⁴⁷ In addition, he advertised in 1881 that he had "Ornamental Figures for Cigar Stores Constantly on Hand."⁴⁸ He was also distantly related to Samuel Anderson Robb.

Another carver who deserves recognition is Thomas Brook's son, James (1869-1937), particularly because he was one of the last traditional shipcarvers to practice the trade. By 1889, he was a partner with his father, listing himself as "sculptor" in the Chicago business directory. He returned to New York City around 1890 to manage the family shop there. After the Chicago shop was sold in 1895, he operated out of his home

in Brooklyn under the name of the Standard Show Figure Company. He stopped carving in 1902.⁴⁹ Still other carvers who should be mentioned are Charles Robb (1855-1904) and Clarence Robb (1878-1956), Samuel's brother and son respectively. Both worked in the Centre Street shop, with Charles assuming an important enough role to be listed on the firm's trade card for several years.⁵⁰

The intent of these brief biographical sketches is to demonstrate the extent to which the shop figure carving business in New York was dominated over the course of three generations by a small group of men who were bound by master-apprentice relationships and numerous short-lived partnerships. A few additional names could be mentioned and still others remain unrecognized, but, all in all, it is clear that, at any one time, there were never more than a handful of journeymen and master shipcarvers working in New York City or in any American city, for that matter. Theirs was a highly skilled craft that required many years of specialized training. Although the prevailing daily wage was relatively high, work was often sporadic even in the best of times, and so few who entered the trade as apprentices remained in it for their entire careers. As a journalist explained in 1889:

Twelve to fourteen years of apprenticeship is said to be necessary to make a competent workman, and that accounts for the scarcity of good hands, for the wages are low, and the demand limited.

The carvers are paid four dollars a day, but the work is unsteady, and only a poor average is made at the end of the year, as orders come and go irregularly, and a workman may call every day for a month, and find no figure in the embryo stage of an order....Owing to the scarcity of employment, the carvers may be said not to work much...⁵¹

It is true that these comments were made at a time when shop figures were past the point of their greatest popularity and shipcarving was rapidly becoming a lost art. Certainly, times had been better for carvers, particularly from about 1830-80, during the period that the boom years of wooden shipbuilding overlapped with the height of the shop figure fad. Still, shipcarvers were never numerous. As an unidentified carver is quoted as saying in an article that appeared in the *New York Sun* in 1886, "There never was over a dozen carvers here in New York at one time. There are not over six here now."⁵²

With these thoughts in mind, the history of the show figure business in New York City during its heyday can be reconstructed to some extent. The process is aided considerably by information contained in the Products of Industry Schedules of the Federal Census. Between 1810 and 1890, the Census surveyed businesses as well as individuals, summarizing and publishing the results in the Census of Manufactures for each census year. While these aggregates are of no use in researching shipcarving, which was too small an occupation to merit attention, the original block schedules for the years 1820, 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 have survived, albeit in a somewhat fragmentary form. The 1850, 1860 and 1870 Schedules are the most significant, because in them the census taker recorded several important pieces of information in a block-by-block survey organized in New York City by the old wards, in much the same way as the population census was taken. The categories included number of employees, average wages, type and value of materials used, and type and value of product, among others. To this writer's knowledge, this is the only source of such information, and it has never previously been published. Some limitations must be acknowledged, however. A number of pages in the

Schedules are illegible, for example, particularly in 1870. In addition, only proprietors or businesses with an annual product of over \$500 are included, which no doubt eliminated a number of shipcarvers from the roles. Still, the larger shops are recorded, providing facts and data that establish their size for the first time and help assess their relative importance.

In 1850, around the time that large, characteristic type of figure that has been labeled the New York show figure emerged, four leading carvers are listed – Jacob Anderson, John Cromwell, Charles Dodge and Thomas Brooks. Their shops were close to one another on South Street in the maritime district in the old Seventh Ward.⁵³ As mentioned in the last chapter, Anderson's shop was the largest, with an average of seven employees producing "various Figures" valued at \$6,000. The other three were similar to one another in size. Cromwell listed five employees and figures worth \$3,000; Dodge, four employees and carving worth \$3,250; and Brooks, four employees and figures worth \$4,500.

While all of these carvers probably created show figures to some extent, Cromwell's shop appears to have been the center for many of the most important developments in the 1840s, as both Thomas Brooks and Thomas White were apprenticed there. As discussed, Cromwell was actively diversifying his shipcarving business by 1850, taking in orders for decorative work for circus wagons as well as shop figures.

His contemporary, Thomas Millard, who was not listed in the 1850 Schedules, was also increasingly concentrating on show figures. He may have been included as one of Brooks' employees in the census, because his business address was the same as Brooks' in the New York Directories in the early 1850s. In any event, after interviewing

Samuel Robb in 1890, a reporter wrote that, "It appears that the first man to introduce carved figures as tobacconist's signs was a certain Chichester. They were carved by one Tom Millard. This was about forty years ago."⁵⁴ Clearly, either Robb was misquoted or misinformed about the origins of his art, but the fact that he linked Millard with a type of figure that was gaining popularity around 1850 provides good evidence for his contribution to their development.

Anderson and Dodge were probably still concentrating on figureheads and ship work at the time. Dodge listed his product as "ship carving" on the Schedules, for example, while both Cromwell and Brooks listed theirs as "various carved figures." Dodge is known to have produced shop figures, however, though the extent of his involvement with them is unclear. In 1883, a journalist noted that:

Old Jim Crow, a famous figure cut forty years ago by "Charley" Dodge – now dead and gone – was in the Canal Street shop for repairs not long ago. A new foot was put on, a missing ear supplied, a piece chipped out of the cheek was replaced, the hat was reconstructed, and Old Jim Crow emerged as good as new. The figure is now doing service in an up-town hotel.⁵⁵

Over twenty years younger than these men, Thomas Brooks had just recently established his own shop when the 1850 census was taken. His brief partnership with Millard in 1848-49 has already been mentioned. With this experience in hand, he went on to become the single most innovative and influential shop figure carver of his generation. The testimony comes from the carvers themselves. One is recorded in the 1880s as saying, "The father of the business is Brooks of Chicago. He left here some years ago. I remember him forty years ago."⁵⁶ At about the same time another carver was interviewed in "a shop on Canal Street," a likely reference to Samuel Robb's workshop. He said:

The image business is not what it was a few years ago, ...because we have lost old Daddy Brooks. Ah, old Daddy was the boss carver, and he taught about all the carvers we have here. That's why we call him Daddy. He used to be down in West Broadway somewhere. Now he is in Chicago, and he took alot of boys out with him – that is he took three or four.⁵⁷

By the late 1850s, after Cromwell had turned over much of his business to him, Brooks had become the dominant force in the trade. Jacob Anderson was dead. Charles Dodge was apparently devoting most of his time to his duties as a tax commissioner, and Thomas White was in Boston.⁵⁸ For a time Brooks had little serious competition. In the 1860 Schedules, he is listed in the Sixth Ward as the proprietor of a shop with six employees, producing 100 figures worth \$4,000. Significantly, he listed himself as a “Carver & Gilder” and not a “Ship Carver,” which would seem to indicate the extent to which he was diversifying his shop. He also gave two business addresses in the New York City Directory for that year – 117 Canal Street, in the Sixth Ward, and 256 South Street, in the Seventh Ward.

In comparison, the next largest shop in the 1860s Schedules was that of “M'Laren & Lawlor,” which had three employees producing six figures and “repairing.” Nothing else is known about these two men. As mentioned above, Jacob Anderson’s widow, Jane, was also listed as an “agent.” The family workshop had one employee, probably John, producing four figures valued at \$250 and “repairing” worth \$450.

Brooks apparently employed several of the best carvers in his shop, including Thomas White after his return to New York around 1866. It seems reasonable to assume that many of the elements of the New York show figure style were established in Brooks’ shop in the 1850s and '60s. An old photograph of a standing chief probably made by

Brooks is illustrated here. (Fig. 56) Known to the carvers as a “scout” because it holds its right hand to its brow, the piece shows many typical features. The photo was once owned by Samuel Robb and has “Brooks” lightly penciled on its reverse.⁵⁹

The demand for wooden figures remained strong throughout the 1870s. Brooks was listed in the 1870 Schedules in the Seventh Ward in partnership with Thomas White, as “Brooks & White – Carvers,” with a product of “Figure Heads” and “Cigar Figures” valued at \$2,800. Curiously, though, the shop recorded only one man and one youth under sixteen as employees. In addition, no entry for a shop on Canal Street or thereabouts could be located, although the search was hampered by several pages in the Schedules that were virtually illegible. While these mysteries will probably never be solved, evidence of Brook’s prominence reappeared in the *New York City Directory* for 1872, where he advertised that he was a “Show Figure and Ornamental Carver” who had “From 75 to 100 Figures always on hand.”⁶⁰

Two other shops were located close to Brooks and White in the Seventh Ward in the 1870 Schedules – “J.W. Anderson” and “Wm. Demuth & Co.” In charge of the family shop by this time, John Anderson was listed as a “Ship & Ornamental Carver” with two employees who produced “Figure Heads,” “Cigar Signs” and “Ornaments” valued at \$5,000. The Demuth workshop had two employees, one of whom was nineteen-year-old Samuel Robb. It produced 120 show figures worth \$4,000.

The final chapter of the story belongs to Robb. As discussed, he became the undisputed leader in the New York show figure business after Brooks moved to Chicago around 1880.⁶¹ This is confirmed by the 1880 Products of Industry Schedules, although the surviving records are organized differently than they had been in previous decades.

Businesses are grouped by type, not location, and “Wood Turning” and “Carving” shops are listed on the same page without an indication of their particular specialty. The information is therefore somewhat less useful for comparative purposes.

The only recognizable name gleaned from that year is Samuel A. Robb.⁶² Significantly, though, he was listed as having ten employees, the largest number recorded for a carver on any of the Schedules. With Thomas White as a mainstay, and with Charles and Clarence Robb and several other unidentified carvers working with him at times. Robb’s shop continued to be the primary source for New York show figures until the demise of the tradition at the turn of the twentieth century.

Regardless of their size, all of the workshops operated in a similar fashion. The only significant difference was the degree of specialization of tasks resulting from the number of men and boys employed at any one time. The larger shops were comprised of one or two master carvers, a few apprentices, and a number of itinerant journeymen carvers who were engaged on a daily or weekly basis depending upon the number of orders to be filled. Other master carvers worked alone, with or without an apprentice. A good example of this appeared in the 1850 Schedules, where a John Wheeler was listed as a “Ship Carver” with one employee, presumably himself, producing “various ship carving” valued at \$923.

In either case, the work proceeded in a traditional manner, as it had for generations. The preferred material was white pine, usually three- to seven-foot sections of masts purchased at spar yards in the maritime district. First an outline of the desired figure was sketched on the log or “stick,” as the carvers called them. “While the carving is mostly done by the eye, chalk or pencil lines are drawn on the log for general contour.”

a reporter noted at the time.⁶³ For the more popular types that were often repeated, a paper or cardboard pattern was used as a guide. Then the “chopping” began. The most complete description of the carving process was recorded in the *New York Times* article that appeared in August, 1890. Due to its importance, it is quoted here at length:

...The wood used is generally white pine, which is bought in logs of various lengths at the spar yards. The artist begins by making the roughest kind of an outline – a mere suggestion of what the proportions of the figure are to be. In this he is guided by paper patterns. The log is blocked out with the axe into appropriate spaces for the head, the body down to the waist, the portion from there to the knees, the rest of the legs (which are at once divided,) and the feet. In its present embryo state the figure to be is not very apparent to the eye. The feeling for form in the chopped block is so very elementary as to have complete suggestiveness only for the practiced artist.

A hole is now bored into each end of the prepared log about 5 inches deep. Into each of these holes an iron bolt is placed, the projecting parts of which rest on supports, so that the body hangs free. The carver now goes from the general to the particular. The surface of the wood soon becomes chipped up by the chisel, and the log generally takes on more definite form. Then, when the figure is completely evolved, the finishing touches are put on with finer carving tools. Detached hands and arms are made separately and joined on to the body by screws. Then the various portions of the figure are appropriately painted, the whole is set upon a stand running on wheels, and it is ready for delivery....⁶⁴

In the larger shops, three or four people were engaged in different parts of this process. It was the master carver who first roughed out the form with an ax, cutting to within “half an inch of the lines” established by his chalk marks, as another account explains.⁶⁵ A second man, probably a journeyman, finished the body with a mallet and chisels, leaving only the face for the master to complete. An apprentice then smoothed the entire surface with sandpaper, and someone else painted it. Estimates for the amount of time required to complete a figure vary significantly in the few surviving accounts. One states that, “For the ordinary six foot Indian a foot per day is good carving, and painting

and finishing runs at the same speed making twelve days in all."⁶⁶ Another sets the time at four or five days, as follows:

A man can rough this out in one day. For that he gets \$4. Another man for \$2 goes over it with a chisel to take out the gouge marks, but doesn't touch the face, which the other man leaves perfect 'cept for the sandpaper. A boy at 75¢ a day does the sandpaperin'. Then it's ready for the painter who can polish it off in a day.⁶⁷

In all, then, the carving was a cooperative effort that required a significant amount of specialization if it were to be done quickly and efficiently enough for the shop to turn a reasonable profit.⁶⁸ The master's hand was evident in each piece, though, because he was the man responsible for the overall form and detailing of the most important area, the face. He was also in charge of the entire process, supervising the work of his apprentices and journeymen. "Sometimes a workman gets on a spree and would turn out a monstrosity, but for the sharp eye of the master." a journalist noted in 1889.⁶⁹

Those who were closely involved in the trade recognized and appreciated the individual touch of the best carvers. New and successful types of figures were quickly borrowed and adapted by competing shops, and, as has been seen, a general stylistic consistency developed among several of the master carvers, particularly in New York City. Each maintained a signature style, however. Late in his life, James Brooks responded to an article on cigar store figures that appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1929. Besides correcting what he believed to be the author's errors, he offered identifications for some of the illustrations. "Chiseling on wooden Indians is to Mr. Brooks like handwriting to the rest of us and he recognized some of the pictured braves in

October *Scribner's* as the handiwork of old friends." the article's author noted.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, though, he did not record any of Brooks' attributions.

A powerful figure of a chief with a bear claw necklace that is incised "Robb Manu'fr. 114 Centre St." illustrates the distinctive approach of the most accomplished carvers. (Fig. 57) Now in the collection of the National Museum of American History, the figure originally had a bow in its right hand and an arrow in its left. The pose is well articulated, with the weight convincingly shifted to the right leg as the figure looks to the left. The emphasis on the realistic handling of an ideal subject follows the prevailing trend in contemporary sculpture, revealing the influence of Robb's study of fine art models. Metal versions of this figure were exhibited by William Demuth & Co. at both the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 and the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.⁷¹

Another notable figure, in this case certainly a unique work, is a *Seated Indian*, smoking a long pipe and holding a typical bunch of cigars in his left hand. (Fig. 58) Probably made by a New York City shipcarver, it was done for a cigar store on Montigue Street in Brooklyn Heights, either in 1863 when the shop opened or in 1877 when a new owner took over the business. It remained a local landmark until 1930 when it was acquired by the Long Island Historical Society, now the Brooklyn Historical Society.⁷² The carver paid much attention to the realistic rendering of details of costuming and facial expression, resulting in an air of solemn dignity that is rarely surpassed in cigar store figures. The piece is also notable for the rendition of a rustic Adirondack chair, a type that was then coming into vogue.

It has been suggested that the *Seated Indian* is the work of Charles Dodge.⁷³ The piece is not marked, however, nor does any documentation connecting it to a particular shop exist. This is not to say that it could not have been made by Dodge, but rather that there is not enough information to make a definitive judgment. James Brook's knowledge followed him to the grave in 1937. With his death, the direct link with the last generation of New York shipcarvers was severed.

Frederick Fried interviewed Samuel Robb's daughter, Elizabeth, in the 1960s, and she supplied him with important biographical information and photographs that have helped reconstruct the nature of her father's business. She was not a shipcarver herself, nor was she familiar with the work of any of her father's contemporaries. Samuel Robb was the only man who marked his figures with any consistency, but, while it is often assumed that he personally carved all those that he marked, it must be remembered that Thomas White worked alongside him for over two decades. It is therefore likely that the Robb name incised on the base of a number of surviving figures is a shop mark rather than an identification of artistic authorship, particularly since different face types are in evidence. Throughout the long history of the craft in Europe and America, it was never customary for a shipcarver to sign his work.

The problems of attributing a specific figure to a particular carver are illustrated by a comparison of three pieces of the type that is often ascribed to John Cromwell. (Fig. 47, 59 and 60) As discussed earlier, a few distinctive male figures with scalplocks and raised tomahawks have been convincingly identified as Cromwell's work. The three examples shown here share a number of similar features, including pose, headdress and other details of costuming. Upon closer examination, though, several differences are

evident as well. The most obvious are the arrangement of the legs, that is, whether the right or left is forward, and the treatment of the faces. Given the importance of faces and the amount of attention that master carvers paid to them, this difference alone provides strong evidence that they are probably not all from the same shop. These visual observations are confirmed by one final detail. The piece shown in figure 60 has "Robb 114 Centre St. N.Y." inscribed on its base.

Evidently, then, while few examples can be attributed to John Cromwell with any certainty, it was a very popular type of figure that was carved with a significant amount of stylistic consistency in several New York City workshops over the course of three or four decades. As the central players in the development of the New York show figure style, Cromwell, Brooks, White and Robb probably all made them. A final comparison strengthens the case.

Around 1890, Charles Brown (1846-1917) carved an Indian chief in a war bonnet. (Fig. 61) Brown was a New York shipcarver who began advertising in city directories about 1870. In 1872, he formed a partnership with Nicholas Collins that lasted at least six years. He later operated other shops in both the maritime district in Manhattan and across the East River in Brooklyn, and even shared space with Samuel Robb in 1908.⁷⁴ A fine example of its type, the chief is crisply carved, with a precise, if somewhat shallow rendering of costume details. Brown paid particular attention to the face and headdress, cutting expressive lines around the eyes and mouth that give the figure the impression of a certain age and stature.

While it shares some features with other contemporary cigar store figures, however, the chief is not stylistically related to the work that was being produced in

Robb's shop at the same time. In fact, if the piece could not be positively documented as Brown's work, it would be difficult to determine if it was made in New York or in some other East Coast seaport. Even though he was working only a few blocks away from them, Brown was obviously not very closely connected to the succession of carvers who produced the majority of show figures that were so widely distributed around the country.

New York City remained the most influential center of show figure production throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, particularly after the tobacco products retailer, William Demuth, established a system of national distribution through catalog sales in the 1870s. (Demuth's role will be considered in the next chapter.) Elements of the New York show figure style spread in other ways as well. As discussed, Thomas White worked in Boston from 1856 to about 1866. Thomas Brooks moved to Chicago around 1880 and opened a successful shop that received orders from throughout the midwest.

They were by no means the first or only carvers to relocate. Following the itinerant nature of their profession, other New York shipcarvers, including some who had no doubt apprenticed with Cromwell, Brooks or Robb, traveled to other towns in search of opportunity. Pierre Gaspari, a prominent Baltimore tobacconist who was later recalled as "the town's foremost dealer in wooden Indians," is recorded as saying that in 1864 he hired a "man from New York to make figures for him."⁷⁵ He also claimed that for a time he had a "manufacturing branch" in New York, which probably means that he had some sort of business arrangement with one particular shop.⁷⁶

As a principal port for the export of tobacco and a major shipbuilding center, Baltimore was a logical place for a flourishing figure carving business. The frigate *Constellation* was built there in the 1790s, with a figurehead carved by William Rush. The city was also the home of the famous Baltimore Clippers, predecessors of the mid-century clippers that were built between about 1800 and 1825. In his book, *Shipcarvers of North America*, Marion Brewington identified fifteen shipcarvers active in Baltimore from the late eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries, and this was admittedly an incomplete list. The first known carver was John Brown, who trained with Rush and was working from about 1789 to 1804, while at mid-century, James Randolph and two men both named James Mullen were the leaders.⁷⁷ It is not known how many of these carvers made shop figures, but several must have been engaged in it at one time or another. Pierre Gaspari once estimated that there were approximately 800 figures on the streets of Baltimore in the 1870s. At the height of his business, he carried a stock of almost 200, and "sold figures in many other towns and cities."⁷⁸

The best known shop figure carver in Baltimore in the second half of the nineteenth century was John Philip Yaeger (1823-99), a German immigrant who settled there in 1847. When he arrived, he was studying for the priesthood, but evidently it was not his calling, because within a year he was working full-time as a carver and decorator. The nature of his training is not known, but before long he was operating one of the most successful shops in the city. In 1853, he advertised in the Baltimore Directory as a "plain, ornamental and fancy carver" specializing in "architectural and ship work" and "moulds for castings and sculpture." He also carved altars and interiors for local churches.⁷⁹ His most distinctive cigar store figure is a nearly life-size representation of a girl or woman

holding a bunch of cigars in her right hand and tobacco leaves in her left that is now in the collection of the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. (Fig. 62) The model for the piece was his eighth child, Eva Isabelle, wearing a favorite cap and dressed in a vaguely Germanic outfit with a large heart on the bodice.⁸⁰ Otherwise, the overall design of the figure follows many of the conventions of the typical cigar store Indian, resulting in a unique stylization and a highly individualized conception.

Throughout the nineteenth century, many other carvers worked in American towns and cities, filling local demand for shop figures of all shapes and sizes. Some, like Yaeger, were professional woodcarvers, while others were carpenters, furniture makers, or self-taught artists who may have only occasionally fashioned human images from wood. Given the lack of documentation and all the work that has long since disappeared, it is impossible to reconstruct much of what they accomplished. Following is a selective survey of some of the more distinctive figures that have survived and some of their makers, intended to highlight the fact that their efforts rivaled those of their better-known New York contemporaries in diversity and quality of carving, if not in quantity of production.

As one of the earliest shipbuilding centers in the nation, Philadelphia also supported generations of shipcarvers. The career of the most influential of them, William Rush, has already been considered. Brewington lists an additional twenty-five Philadelphia shipcarvers, beginning with Robert Mullard, who was active from about 1709-22, and ending with Samuel Sailor, who operated several shops from about 1858 to 1885.⁸¹ Of them, only Rush and Sailor are known have carved shop figures, the latter's sole documented contribution being a life-size representation of a ship's officer holding a

sextant that served as a sign for Riggs & Brother's nautical instrument and watch shop for nearly one hundred years.⁸² Another carver, John Brown, maintained a shop from about 1883 to 1902, advertising that he supplied "garden ornaments, steamboat eagles, figures, church ornaments, pompeys, and cigar Indians." Finally, an Austrian cabinetmaker named Francis or Fritz Decker is also known to have created some figures in Philadelphia the 1880s and '90s.⁸³ His work was quite distinctive in that it was made of small blocks of wood that were glued together and carved, a technique that was fairly common among European cabinetmakers, but very rare here.

This paucity of information about shop figure carvers in Philadelphia is all the more curious in light of the fact that they were as popular there as they were in any other major American seaport. An article that appeared in the *Philadelphia Times* in December, 1892, states that:

Fifty or sixty years ago the carving of these tobacco signs was a recognized business in this city. One of the principal carvers, as is well known, was William Rush, who afterwards became noted as a sculptor of wood of considerable ability....There is not now in Philadelphia any man, so far as the writer can determine, who makes a business of carving these wooden figures....⁸⁴

Perhaps he should have checked the city directory for John Brown's listing. In any event, when he inquired of a retailer in one of the larger shops how he could acquire a figure, he was told that "...there was a firm in New York who, in connection with the manufacture of pipes, also carved cigar store figures, and,... 'Most of our ship carvers here in this city will get you one up to order.'"⁸⁵

This quote could also have come from Boston, which, as discussed, was the earliest shipbuilding center in America and continued to support a significant number of

shipcarvers until the end of the nineteenth century. Brewington identifies forty-one carvers active in Boston from the 1660s to the 1890s, a total that is surpassed only by New York City.⁸⁶ The careers of several of these men have already been considered, but, while many of them must have made cigar store figures, no surviving examples can be attributed to Boston shops with any certainty. It should be remembered, though, that Thomas White worked on Commercial Street in the maritime district from 1856 to about 1866.

White's partner, William H. Rumney (1837-1927), was a talented carver in his own right who is best known today for a statue of *Andrew Jackson* that is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Fig. 63) The figure was commissioned around 1860 by Daniel Kelly, a prominent East Boston shipbuilder, as a testament to his admiration for the illustrious general and the populist principals of his presidency. An ardent Democrat, Kelly apparently also enjoyed antagonizing his anti-Jacksonian neighbors by prominently displaying the figure in front of his home. The inscription, "The Constitution," on the statue's marble base surely refers to the figurehead carved for the frigate by Laban Beecher in 1834, and the ensuing controversy that was considered in the previous chapter.⁸⁷

Although the body is somewhat stiffly rendered, the figure has a commanding presence that is further emphasized by a strong, well-modeled face, wavy hair, and a richness in details of costuming. Painted white to simulate marble, it is a faithful likeness of its subject, based on a lithograph of "Andrew Jackson at the Hermitage" done in 1832 by John H. Bufford, which was in turn derived from a portrait by Ralph E.W. Earl that

was completed around 1830.⁸⁸ Upon Kelly's death in 1886, his estate was subdivided into small house lots, but the statue remained in place until after 1949.⁸⁹

Nearby Gloucester, Massachusetts, had shipyards of its own, as did, of course, many other smaller ports along the New England coastline. Gloucester is of particular interest, however, because of a unique figure attributed to a shipcarver named David R. Proctor that is owned by the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. (Fig. 64) Nothing is known of Proctor other than the fact that he was active in both Gloucester and Belfast, Maine, from at least 1856 to 1866. The figure stood in front of Mancell's Cigar Store in Gloucester from about 1855 to 1910.⁹⁰ A finely carved piece, it is clothed in a hairy pelt belted at the waist, a rare feature shared by only one or two other known examples. The overall effect relates this imaginary Indian to the much older European tradition of the "wild man," probably inspired by some as yet unidentified print source.

Moving further north, we must note the importance of Maine as a shipbuilding center, particularly after the Civil War. The most active shipyards were in Bath, but several other port towns made significant contributions as well. Between 1850 and 1881, at least thirty-four shipcarvers worked in Maine.⁹¹ The most prominent of them were Charles A.L. Sampson (1825-1881), William Southworth (1826-1909), Emery Jones (1827-1908), Edbury Hatch (1849-1935), and John Halley Bellamy (1836-1914), who has become justly famous for his distinctive eagles. Bellamy's most spectacular piece of work is the eagle figurehead that he carved for the U.S.S. Lancaster in 1880, that is now at the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia. (Fig. 65) Made of blocks of wood that were bolted and screwed together, it has a wingspan of over eighteen feet and weighs more than 3,200 pounds.⁹²

Given the number of carvers who operated in Maine and the diversity of work that they produced, it is again somewhat surprising that to date no shop figures can be positively attributed to any of them. This does not mean that none were made there, of course, but rather that, as in other places, documentation is lacking. Hopefully, more information will be forthcoming in the future.

Shipbuilding was also an important industry in Canada, first in Quebec and nearby towns along the St. Lawrence River, and later in Montreal and ports on the Great Lakes. Just as their counterparts in the United States, shipcarvers produced a wide range of work, from figureheads and shop signs to architectural and church decorations. Due to the strong Catholic tradition in Quebec, religious figures were in great demand, and remained a mainstay for carvers for years after the demand for shipcarving fell off at the end of the nineteenth century.

The French workshop tradition was brought to Quebec early in its colonial history, with the introduction of a guild of master woodworkers-sculptors, also known as the Brotherhood of Saint Anne, around 1650.⁹³ The two best known nineteenth-century French-Canadian carvers, Jean-Baptiste Côté (1834-1907) and Louis Jobin (1845-1928), were trained in that tradition. Both served apprenticeships with François-Xavier Berlinguet, one of Quebec's leading sculptors, architects and civil engineers. Their course of instruction included drawing, drafting and carving techniques, as well as the study of painting and the principles of architecture.⁹⁴ Jobin later recalled that much of the work that he and his fellows did at the time was maritime. "In those days it was all figureheads," he told a journalist in 1922.⁹⁵

Côté practiced architecture for a short time in the 1850s after he left Berlinguet's workshop, but discovered that he was not much interested in the profession. He soon returned to his old neighborhood of Saint Roche on the St. Charles River on the outskirts of Quebec, where his father was a ship carpenter and foreman of a local shipyard. Finding his skills in great demand, he opened a carving shop, and began producing figureheads, religious figures, decorative panels, and shop signs of all types. After the Quebec shipyards closed in the 1880s, he increasingly concentrated on figures of saints and other religious carving. Among the finest surviving examples of his work are a large statue of Johannes Guttenberg, created in 1880, and several life-size images of Saints. All are now at the Musée du Québec. Although he is known to have carved many shop figures, none have been positively identified.⁹⁶

Louis Jobin, on the other hand, developed a distinctive type of tobacconist's Indian of which several fine examples still exist. After completing a three-year apprenticeship with Berlinguet in 1868, he went to New York City, where he continued his apprenticeship for one year with an English sculptor and carver named William Bolton, who had worked in marble before coming to the United States. He then worked with several German carvers. While in New York, he fashioned figures of all types and sizes, and became particularly proficient in roughing-out forms.⁹⁷ Judging by his later work, the shop figures that he learned to make followed the prevailing show figure style that was then reaching the height of its popularity.

Returning to Canada in 1870, Jobin settled in Montreal and opened his own shop. He later recalled that in addition to carving religious figures and altars:

But above all I made signs... I created a hanging sheep, to represent a tailor: female savages to represent tobacco: various types of savages, even little Negroes.⁹⁸

After five years in Montreal, he relocated to Quebec City, where he operated a successful carving business until 1898, when his shop was destroyed by fire for the second time in twenty years. He then moved to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, a small town twenty miles to the northeast on the St. Lawrence River. The site of reported miracles that dated back to the early colonial era. Saint-Anne was a popular destination for pilgrimages. Jobin fashioned saints and votive carvings for visitors until his death in 1928.⁹⁹

Over the course of his long and productive career, Jobin carved hundreds of figures. One of his most legendary works was an Immaculate Conception group, twenty-five feet high and forty feet in diameter, which was installed at Cape Trinity on the Sanugenay River in 1877. Done in pine and sheathed in lead, it was a monumental ex-voto commissioned by a man who believed that his life had been miraculously saved after his carriage broke through the ice on the river.¹⁰⁰ Among Jobin's other carvings are a celebrated figure of Neptune, made as a sign for the Neptune Inn in Quebec in 1880, and two large statues of General Wolfe. They are now in the collections of the Musée du Québec, the Québec Historical Society, and the Musée de la Citadelle, Québec, respectively.

His surviving cigar store figures are particularly notable. (Fig. 66) All share a similar pose, sharply modeled face, large feathered headdress, and several costuming details, including fringed tunic, leggings, and shawl draped over the left shoulder and

arm. Other accessories differ, such as the pipe seen in the piece illustrated here, but the general stylistic consistency of his work is reminiscent of the practice of some of the New York shipcarvers that he might have known as a young man. Like them, Jobin developed the individualized touch of a master carver within the context of the larger show figure tradition.

Besides Jobin, Côté and some of the American shipcarvers already discussed, the best known nineteenth-century carver is undoubtedly Julius Melchers (1829-1909), a German sculptor and woodcarver who settled in Detroit in 1855. His reputation is well deserved, as he was certainly a master of the art. Because he was recognized in his lifetime for his many contributions to his adopted city, several articles were written about him in Detroit newspapers beginning in 1899, including two interviews. The insights to be gleaned from this information provides a fairly complete record of both his career and his workshop practices.

Trained in traditional German woodcarving techniques, Melchers was not a shipcarver, although he did do some maritime work after he settled in Detroit. By and large, European craft traditions were more specialized than those in North America, and while generations of shipcarvers worked in German ports on the North and Baltic Seas, Melchers was not one of them. Born in Soest, Prussia, he was apprenticed to a sculptor and master woodcarver named Minstermann, who taught him to be a carver of architectural, religious, and commemorative sculpture in wood and certain types of stone. As a young man with revolutionary sympathies, he was forced to flee Prussia during the Revolution of 1848. He first went to Paris, where he is said to have studied for a time with Jean Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875) and Antoine Etex (1808-1888). As a result of

his continued political activity, he had to leave France as well. and in 1851, he went to England. While there, he modeled decorations for the famed Crystal Palace. A year later, he sailed for New York City, finally settling in Detroit in 1855.¹⁰¹

Once in Detroit, Melchers joined a growing German community and quickly became involved in a number of social activities and local organizations. He soon found, however, that his specialized carving skills were not much in demand, although he did receive some important church commissions from Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere within the first few years of his arrival.¹⁰² A resourceful and enterprising type, Melchers diversified. He opened a workshop that for almost forty years produced a wide range of architectural sculpture, church carvings, patterns for decorative castings, maritime work, and shop figures.

Among Melchers' major architectural projects was a commission for allegorical figures of Justice, Industry, Art and Commerce for the Detroit City Hall. Completed in 1871, they were fourteen feet high and carved in sandstone. He also conducted classes in drawing and modeling, and so made a major contribution to Detroit's fledgling artistic community. His efforts were later recognized by a local journalist:

It may be said without exaggeration that out of Julius Melchers' studio and his Sunday morning classes came much of Detroit's artistic development during the succeeding 35 years. Practically all the well known artists who have come out of Detroit, and some of them are world-famous, had their early instruction and their basic ideals of art out of Melchers' school.¹⁰³

Included among them was his most famous student and son, the painter Gari Melchers (1860-1932).

While he never considered them to be an art form that was truly worthy of his talents, Melchers produced many shop figures for local merchants. He is also known to have supplied tobacconists throughout Illinois and neighboring states. As he explained to a reporter in 1899:

Then I carved more Indians. I bought a lot of old masts at the old Clark drydock. There's no timber like an old mast for carving. It is straight-grained, and so thoroughly seasoned with its many years of exposure on the deck of a ship that there is no danger of its cracking. I carved all sorts of Indians. Big Indians, little Indians, chiefs, and Indian queens. Sometimes the images represented real characters but they were oftener ideal figures. I made Blackhawks, Pontiacs, Hiawathas and Pocahontases. The first Hiawatha I carved was for Daniel Scotten when he brought out his Hiawatha brand of fine cut. But I made Indians only when there was a lack of other work, or to keep my apprentices employed. I made the models, and they cut out the images. They liked this work as it gave them practice in the study of figures.¹⁰⁴

Not only were shop figures a welcome source of income, then, but they also proved to be a useful means of instruction. Unlike shipcarving workshops in the Eastern seaports in which master carvers, journeymen and apprentices usually cooperated in making a single figure, Melchers apparently allowed his assistants and apprentices to complete an entire piece under his supervision. This helps account for some of the variation seen in figures that have been attributed to him over the years.

Melchers' best figures are sensitively rendered, with a naturalism that is quite convincing. A *Fur Trapper* attributed to him has several conventional features, including a feathered skirt, catamount pelt, and left leg supported by a box, but is nevertheless far from typical. (Fig. 67) The masterful carving seen in the handling of form, as well as in the modeling of the face and other details, is particularly notable. It is owned by the New York State Historical Association in Cooperstown. Another outstanding piece that has

been attributed to his hand is a figure of *Keokuk*, a chief of the Sauk and Fox tribes in the first half of the nineteenth century, that is now at the New-York Historical Society. (Fig. 68) Perhaps based on an as yet unlocated engraving, it is a tour-de-force of realistic carving that was probably a special commission, given the detailed treatment that it received. The entire surface is precisely worked, with individual elements carefully subordinated to the whole.¹⁰⁵

Julius Melchers was just one of many German-born carvers who created shop figures in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century. The work of John Philip Yaeger of Baltimore has already been considered, for example. Still, in spite of a number of contemporary references to German craftsmen working here, most of them remain unidentified. The same can be said for many of the other European-trained carvers who immigrated to the United States and set up workshops in cities and towns throughout the country. Of the many distinctive shop figures made outside the major East Coast seaports, few surviving examples can be documented to specific carvers. Moreover, even when one can be linked to its maker, often little more is known about him than his name and address.

A figure known as *Seneca John* that was made between about 1870 and 1890 is a case in point. (Fig. 69) The piece was carved by Arnold Ruef of Tiffin, Ohio with the help of his son, Peter. According to an article that appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in 1928, it stood in front of John Dehmer's cigar store in Tiffin for many years. Evidently a well-known local landmark, it was also called "The Tiffin Tecumseh" by townspeople.¹⁰⁶ The two nicknames are unrelated. Tecumseh (c.1768-1813) was a legendary Shawnee chief who formed a powerful pan-Indian alliance and helped defeat American attempts to

invade Canada during the War of 1812. He was not a member of the Seneca Nation of upstate New York, nor was his surname John. It can be assumed from this that, as is often the case, the Ruef figure was not originally intended to represent a particular individual, and that the names accrued to it over time.

A skillful piece of carving nonetheless, it is easy to see why the figure has attracted so much attention over the years. Ruef was evidently a trained carver, but where and when he received his instruction is impossible to say. He may have apprenticed with a shipcarver in an Eastern port before moving to Ohio, or may have worked with a European-trained carver in some midwestern city. The mystery will probably never be solved, but the figure remains a testament to the high quality of work that was produced in many smaller American towns.

Among the other distinctive figures by unidentified makers that deserve mention are two that are both known as *Trapper Indians*. (Fig. 70 and Fig. 71) The first, which is now at the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in Williamsburg, Virginia, has been the subject of much speculation since its public debut at the landmark exhibition of folk sculpture held at the Newark Museum in 1931. A finely carved piece with a remarkably expressive face, it is sensitively rendered in the best nineteenth-century fashion. The coils of tobacco and bunches of cigars that surround the figure's feet and legs link it to work that was done before about 1850. It has been suggested that the clothing resembles that worn by Indians in the Southeast, but the piece could have been carved in any one of a number of cities or towns in the Eastern United States or Canada.¹⁰⁷

The second *Trapper Indian* is a more stylized rendition with some striking features that mark it as a one-of-a-kind piece. The headdress of plumes or feathers is

similar to some examples that have been discussed earlier, but in this case, they are exaggerated to the extent of being out of scale with the rest of the figure. The costume is an unusual combination of what appears to be a ruffled shirt and fringed buckskin leggings. The various elements indicate that the figure was carved outside of the major shipcarving centers in the United States, and that it is possibly of French-Canadian origin. It is now in the collection of the National Museum of American History.

Its handling suggests the work of a self-taught carver, one of the many men not trained in either Anglo-American shipcarving or European woodcarving traditions who fashioned figures for local markets, often in smaller inland towns and rural areas. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, carpenters, cabinetmakers and part-time woodworkers in all parts of the country produced shop figures on demand or for personal enjoyment. Little can be said about common training or techniques of these generally unidentified artists, other than what can be inferred from their work. They represent a diverse collection of individuals who usually operated independently of one another, often creating unique, one-of-a-kind pieces patterned after those produced in the seaport shops. In all, they produced far fewer figures than shipcarvers, and again survival rates are low. As a result, their work is extremely rare today. Their artistry speaks for itself, however, and among the surviving examples are some of the most dynamic and engaging pieces of American folk sculpture.

One of the most distinctive of these is a figure of a woman thought to have been carved in Freehold, New Jersey around mid-century by an African-American named Job.¹⁰⁸ (Fig. 72) Powerfully stylized, it has an abstracted presence, stripped of ornamentation and yet presented in a typical pose with the left leg raised and supported by

a bunch of cigars. The carver was obviously aware of the show figures being made some forty miles to the north in New York City. This is particularly evident in his treatment of the two bunches of cigars and the use of scored fringe at the bottom of the skirt and on the sleeves. In addition, the revealing cut of the dress is a rare, but not unknown feature among urban figures designed to catch the eye of male customers. In this case, the result is a highly individualized interpretation that is a unique combination of an eroticized body and a bold, masklike face that has been noted for its formality and an "iconic intensity"¹⁰⁹ suggestive of African sculpture.

Another powerful, if somewhat disquieting, figure by an unidentified self-taught carver is a large and imposing representation of a male Indian, possibly of Southern origin, that is owned by the Culbro Corporation in New York City.¹¹⁰ (Fig. 73) Its massive upper body and head, combined with a short feathered skirt and thin legs, give it a sense of being slightly off-balance. This probably suited the carver's intentions, for the figure seems to be a caricature with strong racial overtones. Its dark, almost naked body, straining neck and face with prominently bulging eyes and light-colored lips present a parody of the stereotypical Indian, suggesting a minstrel figure in blackface. In this way, it is a stark reminder of the range of conflicting feelings towards American Indians in a society that placed this image alongside that of the Noble Savage. The derogatory portrayal of this grotesquely comic figure contrasts sharply with that of the stoic warrior who gallantly accepts his cruel, but inevitable fate in the grand scheme of the progress of civilization.

With this figure, the discussion has moved a considerable distance from Donald McKay's East Boston shipyard and the figurehead of *Minehaha* with which the chapter

began. It has ranged from the network of seaport shops that were the major figure carving centers, through small-town America and its skilled woodcarvers, to the vital self-taught tradition that flourished alongside and in response to the old craft workshops. The common denominator has been the image of the American Indian, a representation that infused American society throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as national symbol, tragic hero of romantic musings, object of derision, and commercial emblem. While none of this has much to do with the reality of Native American life, it does reflect the importance of the Indian presence in the United States and the extent to which it helped shape the American psyche. In the sheer numbers produced and diversity of types represented, shop and cigar store figures tell a complicated tale of the imaginary Indian as a fundamental part of the American experience.

¹ "Launch of the Minnehaha," *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, 24 March 1856, 2; "Mrs. Barrow as Minehaha," *Ballou's Pictorial* 10 (17 May 1856): 305; Nina Fletcher Little, *The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1957), 328; Pinckney, 127-29.

² An item entitled "Mrs. Barrow," that appeared in *Ballou's Pictorial* 10 (12 April 1856): 237, noted that the carver would use a photograph of the actress in costume as a model for the figurehead, which provides a rare piece of documentation of a shipcarver employing a technique that was more often utilized by sculptors and portrait painters. The carver, William Gleason, was not mentioned by name. The paragraph reads in part:

Messrs. Masury, Silsbee & Case have taken an admirable full length photograph of this distinguished artiste, as she appeared in the character of "Minehaha," at the Boston Theatre, which is to be used for modelling the figure-head of Donald McKay's new ship, named after Longfellow's heroine....

³ For examples of the many types of objects that incorporated this imagery, and discussions of the relationships among the images of the American Indian, Goddess of Liberty and Columbia, see especially E. McClung Fleming, "The American Image as Indian Princess, 1765-1783," *Winterthur Portfolio* 2 (1965): 65-81, and "From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess," *Winterthur Portfolio* 3 (1967): 37-66; Clare Le Corbeiller, "Miss America and Her Sisters: Personifications of the Four Parts of the World," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (April 1961): 209-23; and John Hingham, "Indian Princess and Roman Goddess: The First Female Symbols of America," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 100 (1990): 45-79.

For broader treatments of the Indian image in American culture, see Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Knopf, 1978); Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and American Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965); and Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *The Massachusetts Review* 16 (Autumn 1975): 698-716, and "The Indian in Popular American Culture," in *The Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Witcomb Washburn (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1988), 4:587-606.

⁴ See Gloria Gilda Deák, *Picturing America* 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 174, for a discussion of the location and identifications of the owners of the buildings represented in the print

⁵ Theodore Bolton and Irwin F. Cortelyou, *Ezra Ames of Albany: Portrait Painter* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1955), 104.

⁶ John Galt, *The Life and Studies of Benjamin West, Esq.* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand, 1817), 104-06. The veracity of Galt's account has been disputed for some time. Ann Uhry Abrams suggests that the biography was, in fact, an attempt by the elderly West to create his own apotheosis at a time when his reputation was rapidly declining. She interprets the *Apollo Belevedere* story as commentary on one of West's early paintings, *The Savage Chief (The Indian Family)* of ca. 1761. See Abrams, *The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and Grand-Style History Painting* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 31, 75-80.

⁷ Deborah Chotner et al., *American Naïve Paintings* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1992), 189.

⁸ Anthony W. Pendergast and W. Porter Ware, *Cigar Store Figures in American Folk Art* (Chicago: Lightner Publishing Corporation, 1953), 59-61, 72.

⁹ See Berkhofer, 74-80, for a concise discussion of this transition.

¹⁰ For a consideration of the significance of the image of the American Indian in West's painting, see Vivien Green Fryd, "Rereading the Indian in Benjamin West's *Death of General Wolfe*," *American Art* 9 (Spring 1995): 73-85.

¹¹ Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man* (London, [1733-34]; New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 9. The complete stanza is:

Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind:
His soul proud Science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
Yet simple Nature to his hope has giv'n,
Behind the cloud-topped hill, an humbler heav'n:
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in wat'ry waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold!
To Be, contents his natural desire.
He asks no Angel's wing, no Seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky:
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

¹² See *Poems of Freneau*, ed. Harry Hayden Clark (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1960), and Berkhofer, 87-88.

¹³ François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala, ou les amours de deux sauvages dans le désert* (Paris 1801); David Wakefield, "Chateaubriand's 'Atala' as a Source of Inspiration in Nineteenth-century Art," *Burlington Magazine* 120 (January 1978): 14; Berkhofer, 79-80; Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 220-22.

¹⁴ The novel had a significant impact on popular culture as well as the fine arts. In his *Memoirs*, Chateaubriand related that during his travels, he encountered roadside inns that were adorned with inexpensive engravings of scenes from his book, and small wax figures of Atala, Chactas and Père Aubrey that were on sale at booths in fairgrounds. See Wakefield, 14.

¹⁵ Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue 2* (Oxford University Press, 1981), 79; Wakefield, 19-21; Honour, 223.

¹⁶ "The Indians in American Art," *The Crayon* 3 (January 1856): 28.

¹⁷ "The Indians in American Art," 28; Fryd, 81-82.

¹⁸ Samuel Y. Edgerton, "The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American Tableau d'Histoire," *Art Bulletin* 47 (December 1965): 482-83.

¹⁹ Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18-20; Wayne Craven, "The Grand Manner in Early Nineteenth-Century American Painting: Borrowings from Antiquity, the Renaissance, and the Baroque," *American Art Journal* 11 (April 1979): 13-15.

²⁰ See Edgerton, 487-92, for a concise, if somewhat opinionated discussion of the painting's impact and representations in other media.

²¹ For a consideration of Longfellow, *Hiawatha*, and the construction of national memory and American history in the nineteenth century, see Chapter Three, "Motifs of Morality, Myth, and Memory in Antebellum Culture," especially pp. 82-87, in Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991).

²² Cynthia D. Nickerson. "Artistic Interpretations of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha, 1855-1900*." *American Art Journal* 16 (Summer 1984): 50-53.

²³ J.N. Barker, *The Indian Princess; or, La Belle Sauvage: An Operatic Melo-Drame* (Philadelphia: Palmer, 1808); Berkhofer, 90; Don B. Wilmeth, "Nobel or Ruthless Savage?: The American Indian on Stage and in the Drama." *The Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 1 (Spring 1989): 42.

²⁴ Quoted in Eugene R. Page, *Metamora and Other Plays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 4.

²⁵ Page, 4; Ellwood Parry. *The Image of the Indian and Black Man in American Art* (New York: George Braziller, 1974), 159; Berkhofer, 90; Kate Sanborn, *Hunting Indians in a Taxi-Cab* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1911), 28.

See Richard Moody, *Edwin Forrest, First Star of the American Stage* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1960) for a thorough consideration of Forrest's life and career. For an insightful discussion of Indian plays, including *Metamora*, and their role in the development of an American identity in the nineteenth century, see Chapter Four, "Romantic Love, Arranged Marriage, and Indian Melancholy" in Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

²⁶ Curatorial files, Brandywine River Museum; Ann Barton Brown, "'Lo, The Wooden Indian:' Prototypes for Wooden Show Figures." *Brandywine River Museum Antiques Show* (Chadds Ford, PA, 1984), 6, 9.

²⁷ Curatorial files, Historical Society of Berks County. The possible attribution to New York or Philadelphia is made by this writer, based on the high quality of the carving and the fact that Reading is not known to have had any figure carving shops during the period.

²⁸ The figure is now in a private collection.

²⁹ "Designed by Whittling Yankees: A Studio Where Many Statues of Native Americans Are Made." *Tobacco* 1 (14 May 1886): 7.

³⁰ New York City Directories; George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 155; John L. Morrison, "Poor Lo Still Active." *Scribner's Magazine* 85 (January 1929): 40; Fried, 178-80.

³¹ Jean Lipman, *American Folk Art in Wood, Metal and Stone* (Meridan, CT: Pantheon, 1948), 74.

³² Cornilius Mathews, *Big Abel and the Little Manhattan* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 22.

³³ John L. Morrison, "The Passing of the Wooden Indian," *Scribner's Monthly* 84 (October 1928): 401; "Lo! The Poor Indian Finds a Happy Hunting Ground," *Reading Eagle*, 14 July 1936; Pendergast, 56, 61; Curatorial files, Historical Society of Berks County.

³⁴ Morrison, 394; Lawrence F. Jessup, "The Tobacconists' Tribe of Treen," *Antiques* 18 (September 1930): 233; Shaw, "Speaking of Wooden Indians," 133; Curatorial file, Museum of the City of New York.

³⁵ In 1890, a journalist reported that, "S.A. Robb, who has been at it for twenty-six years, is full of reminiscences concerning the history of the art." See Frank Weitenkampf, "Lo, The Wooden Indian," 13.

³⁶ School Register. National Academy of Design Archives; Frederick Fried Folk Art Archive. National Museum of American History. See Fried, 193-238. for an extended discussion of Robb's life and work.

³⁷ New York City Directories; Weitenkamp, 13; Fried, 195, 208, 212, 217-23, 237.

³⁸ Fried, 210. The figure is in the Van Alstyne Collection at the National Museum of American History.

³⁹ Weitenkamp, 13.

⁴⁰ Boston Directories; New York City Directories; Fried, 181-82.

⁴¹ New York City Directories; Chicago Directories; Morrison, "Poor Lo Still Active." 40; Fried. 182-93.

⁴² Fried, 177; Marceau. 14; Bantel. 24.

⁴³ New York City Directories; Weitenkamp. 13; Fried. 177-78.

⁴⁴ Weitenkamp. 13.

⁴⁵ New York City Directories; Fried, 242-43.

⁴⁶ The information is contained in the Products of Industry Schedules of the 1860 Census. See pp. 110-11 for a discussion of their significance.

⁴⁷ Products of Industry Schedules. 1870 Census.

⁴⁸ Phillips & Co.'s *New York Business Directory*; Fried. 242.

⁴⁹ Chicago Directories; Fried. 193.

⁵⁰ Morrison. "Poor Lo Still Active." 40; Fried. 193. 210. 214-15.

⁵¹ "Lo Takes a Spring Suit." *Tobacco* 6 (12 April 1889): 1.

⁵² "Designed by Whittling Yankees." 7.

⁵³ In *Doggett's New York City Directory* for 1849, Cromwell is listed at 222 South Street, Anderson at 236. Dodge at 253, and Brooks at 260.

⁵⁴ Weitenkamp, 13. James Chichester was a tobacconist who sold shop figures from his store on the Bowery. His role in the development of the show figure business will be considered in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ "Wood-carving," *Harper's Weekly* 27 (6 January 1883): 13. The "Canal Street shop" mentioned by the author was probably Samuel Robb's workshop.

⁵⁶ Henry Collins Brown, *Valentine's Manual of Old New York* (New York: Valentine's Manual, 1927), 122.

⁵⁷ "Designed by Whittling Yankees," 7.

⁵⁸ Charles J. Dodge is listed as Deputy Tax Commissioner, and not a carver, in the New York City Directory for 1860.

⁵⁹ The photo is in the Frederick Fried Folk Art Collection at the National Museum of American History. See also Fried, 187.

⁶⁰ *Trow's New York Directory (1872-73)*; Fried, 182.

⁶¹ Brooks was listed at 240 South Street in the 1879 New York City Directory, but was not in the 1880 edition.

⁶² John Anderson was not listed in the Schedules, although he was in the 1880 New York City Directory as a "carver" at 226 South Street.

⁶³ "Wood-carving," 13.

⁶⁴ Weitenkampff, 13.

⁶⁵ "Lo Takes a Spring Suit," 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Henry Collins Brown, 122.

⁶⁸ Figureheads were carved in a similar manner, although they generally took longer to complete. As special commissions, they were also more expensive and considered to be a better type of work than cigar store figures. A journalist noted in 1883 that, "Cigar-store signs are a cheaper class of figures. The work on them is not as fine, and one can be finished in a week." ("Wood-carving," 13).

The best contemporary account of figurehead carving known to this writer appeared in Will M. Clemens, "The Man Who Carves Ship' Figure-heads," *Harper's Weekly* 36 (5 March 1892): 5. The similarity to descriptions of shop figure carving is instructive, and provides a good complement. Clemens wrote:

...The original design is drawn on paper with crayons, and in its rough state gives only the slightest suggestion of the finished work. The next step is to pick out the wood. A solid block is chosen, but sometimes two figures are used, and the parts are separately carved and afterwards joined. The length of the average field figure is seven to eight feet. The block is 'roughed out' on the floor and then lifted on 'horses' where it is finished. The only tools used are chisels, mallets, gauges, and sand-paper. When once started on the figure the paper design is of little use. The carver has to depend most entirely on his eye to get the expression and the proportions. The figure is finished off with sand-paper and gilt. As is everything else, the amount of labor expended depends upon the price. Some figures are finished in a few weeks, and others require months for completion.

⁶⁹ "Lo Takes a Spring Suit," 1.

⁷⁰ Morrison, "Poor Lo Still Active," 40.

⁷¹ "Exhibit of Wm. Demuth & Co.," *Tobacco* 16 (2 February 1894), 1, 3; Fried, 59-61, 212.

The J.L. Mott Iron Works of New York City offered a similar figure in its 1873 and 1890 catalogs, copies of which are in the collection of the Copper Hewitt Museum. It could be ordered separately or as a part of an elaborate drinking fountain for men, horses and dogs. In *Chief Kisco and His Brothers* (Mount Kisco, NY: Mount Kisco Historical Committee, 1980), Oliver A. Knapp documents the history of one such piece that has been a landmark in Mount Kisco since 1907. He also surveys over twenty other examples in cities and towns throughout the East, Midwest and South, as well as several in museum collections. From the illustrations in his book, it is evident that not all of them were made or modeled by the same hand.

Whether or not there was any relationship between Demuth and Mott or Robb and Mott has yet to be determined.

⁷² Lillian Sabine. "The Neighborhood Indian Passes On." *Brooklyn Eagle Magazine*. 30 March 1930. 6: Curatorial file, Brooklyn Historical Society.

⁷³ Fried. 176-77.

⁷⁴ New York City Directories; Fried. 243-44.

⁷⁵ Harold Williams, "Eight Hundred Wooden Indians - And Then There Were Eight." *Baltimore Morning Sun*. 17 February 1947. 23: Sanborn. 54

⁷⁶ Williams, 23.

⁷⁷ Brewington. 37. 62. 72. 158.

⁷⁸ Williams. 23.

⁷⁹ Baltimore Directory (1853-54): Fried. 126-27.

⁸⁰ Fried. 129-30.

⁸¹ Brewington. 162-63.

⁸² Ibid.. 78-79.

⁸³ Brewington. 162-63; Fried. 122. 124; Morrison. "The Passing of the Wooden Indian." 404.

⁸⁴ E. Leslie Gilliams. "Cigar-Store Indians." *Philadelphia Times*. 18 December 1892. 18.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Brewington. 158-59.

⁸⁷ Curatorial files, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Tolles, Thayer, ed. *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 1. *A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Before 1865* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 172-74; Pinckney, 137-38.

⁸⁸ See Georgia Brady Bumgardner, "Political Portraiture: Two Prints of Andrew Jackson," *American Art Journal*, 18, no. 4 (1986): 84-95, and David Tatum, *John Henry Bufford: American Lithographer* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1976).

⁸⁹ Alvin Page Johnson, introduction to *Under Sail and In Port in the Glorious '50s*, by Alvin R. Page (Salem: Peabody Museum. 1950), xxix-xxx.

⁹⁰ Curatorial files, Peabody-Essex Museum; Brewington, 156, 160; Fried, 156.

⁹¹ Brewington. 88.

⁹² Curatorial files, Mariners' Museum; Brewington, 88-89. For the most complete account of Bellamy's life and work, see Yvonne Brault Smith, *John Halley Bellamy: Carver of Eagles* (Hampton, NH: P.E. Randall, 1982).

⁹³ Charles Marius Barbeau, "Louis Jobin, Statuaire." *La Société Royal du Canada, Mémoires* 37 (1943), sec. 1, 17.

⁹⁴ Victoria Hayward, "Jobin – The Wood-Carver." *The Canadian Magazine* 60 (December 1922), 92; Charles Marius Barbeau, "Le denier de nos grands artisans, Louis Jobin." *The Royal Society of Canada, Mémoires* 27 (1933), sec. 1, 43-45.

⁹⁵ Hayward, 93.

⁹⁶ Charles Marius Barbeau, *Côté, the Wood Carver* (Toronto: Reyerson Press, 1943), 3-4, 34, 39-40; Fried, 165-69.

⁹⁷ Barbeau, "Le dernier de nos grands artisans." 45; Hayward, 94; Fried, 157-58.

⁹⁸ Barbeau, "Le dernier de nos grands artisans." 45.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 34-35, 45-46.

¹⁰⁰ Hayward, 97-98; Barbeau, "Louis Jobin." 47.

¹⁰¹ "Julius Melchers Suffers a Stroke. Venerable Sculptor Loses the Power of Speech." *Detroit News*, 30 May 1907; George B. Catlin, "Old Detroit Artists Found Trade Dull, But Market for Wooden Indians Brisk." pt. 2, p. 17; Henriette Lewis-Hind, *Gari Melchers: Painter* (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1928), n.p.n.; Pendergast, 21; Fried, 137-38; C. Kurt Dewhurst, Betty MacDowell and Marsha MacDowell, "The Art of Julius and Gari Melchers." *Antiques* 125 (April 1984): 862.

¹⁰² "Julius Melchers Suffers a Stroke": Catlin, 17; Fried, 138; Dewhurst, 862.

¹⁰³ Catlin, 17.

¹⁰⁴ J.H. Junkin, "The Wooden Indian Is Passing Away." *Detroit News-Tribune*, 23 July 1899, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Both of these attributions have been made on a stylistic basis, and by comparison with documented examples. The most notable of these is an Indian figure purchased in 1867 by the Schott Brothers Tobacco Shop in Lincoln, Illinois. It is now in a private collection in Michigan.

¹⁰⁶ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 22 March 1928; Curatorial files, Henry Ford Museum; Lipman, 14. The figure is now in the collection of the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.

¹⁰⁷ *American Folk Sculpture* (Newark, NJ: Newark Museum Association, 1931), 27, 32; *Antiques* 23 (February 1933): 42; Curatorial file, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center; Lipman, 74, 88; Pendergast, 8.

¹⁰⁸ One of the most celebrated of all cigar store figures, this piece has attained an iconic status in the annals of American folk sculpture. Nevertheless, little is actually known about its origins, other than the oral history that accompanies it. It originally surfaced in the Elie Nadelman collection before 1940, and then passed through several dealers and collectors until it was acquired by Stephen Clark for the New York State Historical Association. Jean Lipman's attribution is the most frequently quoted source. She wrote in 1949 that it was "Said to have been made by a negro slave named Job for a tobacconist in Freehold, New Jersey in the first half of the 19th century." (Lipman, 14.) A date before mid-century is highly unlikely, though, given the treatment of the bunches of cigars and the scored fringe on the skirt.

¹⁰⁹ John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in the Decorative Arts* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978), 37.

¹¹⁰ Almost nothing is known about the origins of this figure. The possible Southern attribution is based on a statement made in an appraisal done in 1982 that seems to have been based on a vague oral history. It is, however, clearly American and dates from the second half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter IV - Show Figures: Caricature and Stereotypes

Sometime around 1850, a figure of Father Diedrich Knickerbocker, the personification of old Dutch New York made famous by Washington Irving, was placed in a niche on the exterior of Knickerbocker Hall on the northwest corner of 23rd Street and 8th Avenue in New York City. (Fig. 74) A dapper gentleman dressed in colonial attire and standing about three feet tall, he was used as a sign for the Knickerbocker Stage Line, which occupied the building until it was demolished in 1867. He can be seen behind one of the company's horse-drawn buses in a contemporary view of Knickerbocker Hall by William Seaman.¹ (Fig. 75)

In his costume, size and traditional associations, Father Knickerbocker represented an older type of figural sign that was rapidly losing favor even as he was assuming pride of place on Knickerbocker Hall. Just like the cigar store Indians that were considered in the last chapter, he and his kind were being rendered obsolete by more up-to-date characters carved in the mid-century show figure style.

As previously discussed, the ubiquitous Indian and his familiar counterparts, the Highlander, Turk and sailor, were part of an old tradition. Painted signboards, wooden figures, and hanging three-dimensional images of shoes, gloves, hats and the like had been employed by merchants and tradesmen for centuries. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the accelerating pace of American life and the increasingly competitive business environment that accompanied it had affected a significant change. An emerging national popular culture engaged the public's attention, whether it was the latest fashion, theatrical performance or political event. The carvers responded to these trends by creating new

types of figures, which shopkeepers found advantageous in their efforts to outdo one another to attract customers. An emphasis on change and variety began to replace the older concepts of familiarity and traditional association that had dominated earlier forms of marketing and advertising.

Reflecting on the popularity of shop figures during past half-century or so, a reporter wrote in 1890 that:

Time changes and so does the popular taste. At first the red man ruled the market almost completely. Then came a heavy sprinkling of other figures - fiery Scotchmen, English officers with small fatigue caps or high bearskins, and heavy swells of ante-bellum times and the war period, with marvelously wide pantaloons and waving mutton chop whiskers, ogled simpering Dolly Vardens with short-cut skirts, bustles, and hats tilted forward over the eyes. Then came grave Turks, gorgeous sultanas, and columbines with alarmingly short skirts. Punch, with rubicund nose and protuberant chin, was a favorite figure. There was also the conventional plantation "nigger," with striped pantaloons and a great expanse of shirt collar.²

Some of these characters and the stereotypical attitudes that they represent are already familiar, while others are more obscure. All of them will be encountered throughout the course of this chapter.

By the mid-1850s, the shop figure tradition had reached the dimensions of a fad, and New York City had become the leading center for production and distribution. New figures were being continually introduced, and the number and types of businesses that displayed them increased dramatically. In 1871, New York tobacco products distributor William Demuth advertised that he had a "Large and Varied Assortment of Wooden Show Figures which we are constantly manufacturing for all classes of business, such as

Segar Stores. Wine & Liquors, Druggists, Yankee Notions, Umbrella, Clothing, Tea Stores, Theatres, Gardens, Banks, Insurance Companies, &c."³ (Fig. 76)

Demuth and a few other distributors were, in fact, a principal reason for the rapid expansion of popularity of show figures. Assuming the role of middlemen and promoters, they employed shipcarvers to make figures that they then added to their inventory and displayed in their stores. They also took custom orders and commissions from their clients and shipped the figures throughout the country. Their increasingly sophisticated marketing techniques made New York show figures readily available on a national basis, thereby further stimulating demand.

Although the surviving evidence is somewhat scarce, the first of these innovative entrepreneurs appears to have been James Chichester, a tobacconist who opened a shop on Water Street in 1837, and relocated in 1848 to the Bowery between Bayard and Canal Streets, not far from the old Bowery Theatre. In the early 1850s, he began carrying a line of shop figures made by Thomas Millard, who, as will be recalled, was later credited by Samuel Robb as being one of the most influential carvers of his generation.⁴ The venture proved to be quite successful, prompting Chichester's shop to be later remembered as "the wooden Indian store."⁵ He does not seem to have expanded his business much beyond New York City, however. Evidently content with the local trade, he left it to others to exploit the marketing potential on a national scale.

At about the time that Chichester opened his first shop, a young German immigrant named Edward Hen arrived in New York. An ambitious man and legendary eccentric who reportedly wore the same cloak for over twenty-six years, Hen established a tobacco and novelty supply business on Liberty Street around 1840. Before long, he was

one of the leading tobacco products distributors in the city, amassing a considerable fortune through years of hard work, frugality and shrewd investments. He was also adept at marketing his products, becoming the first to offer New York show figures on a national basis.⁶ An advertisement that appeared in 1856 read:

Edward Hen, importer of French & German fancy goods, also smoker's articles, clay pipes, of all kinds, real and imitation meerschaums, hookas, and other Turkish waterpipes, adapted for one or more smokers, amber, meerschaums, horns & china segar tubes, tobacco & snuff boxes, segar cases, matches, Turkish tobacco, walking canes, show figures, Indians, &c &c.⁷

Hen's principal source for figures was Thomas Brooks, the most influential carver at the time. The relationship proved to be profitable for both men, with Brooks supplying Hen for over twelve years.⁸ By the late 1860s, Hen's shop was overflowing with figures on display, creating what one long-time cigarmaker later remembered as "the largest congress of wooden braves the world has ever seen or ever will see."⁹ By including the figures as a standard line of merchandise that could be shipped throughout the country, Hen vastly expanded the market for New York work. His business proved to be instrumental in establishing New York City as the center for the production of show figures, as well as a model for a young employee who eventually became his successor, William Demuth.¹⁰

Born in Germany, Demuth immigrated to the United States in 1851 at age sixteen. He was working as a clerk for Hen by 1860, and three years later left to establish his own business as a direct competitor. By the end of the decade he was one of the leading tobacco products distributors in the country. Pipes were a particular specialty, but he also offered a complete line of "segars and smokers' articles." His marketing strategies were

even more aggressive than those of Edward Hen. He sent salesmen across the country, and set up elaborate displays in the major national expositions and industrial fairs, including the World's Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. As his reputation spread and business expanded, he became a wealthy man.¹¹

Following in Hen's footsteps, Demuth also offered show figures as a part of his standard line. Both Samuel Robb and Thomas White worked for him, and other carvers may have as well. Robb began carving for Demuth in the late 1860s, soon after he completed his apprenticeship with Thomas Brooks, and continued to supply him with figures after he opened his own shop in 1876. White entered Demuth's employ a few years later, in 1872 or 1873, after he had ended his brief partnership with Brooks.¹² Since White then joined Robb in the Centre Street shop, it can be assumed that he, too, continued to carve for Demuth, albeit less directly.

As show figures became a larger part of his business, Demuth introduced some important innovations. Around 1868, he approached Moritz J. Seelig, another German immigrant who operated a foundry in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, with the idea of casting figures in zinc. The results of their initial experiment were encouraging, and before long, Demuth was offering a line of metal figures along with the more familiar wooden ones.¹³ In 1869, the American Institute of the City of New York, a group organized to promote agriculture, manufacturing and the "useful arts," awarded Demuth a medal for his entry of "Eight Metal and Wood Figures for Stores" at their Annual Fair.¹⁴ Two years later, he produced the flyer that is illustrated in Figure 76. Then, in 1875, he issued an illustrated catalogue featuring thirty zinc figures that could be ordered in different sizes, or in the case of Indians, as either male or female. In it, Demuth stated that:

After a number of years' experience in the manufacture of Wooden Figures, we were induced to make use of a more durable material, and thus remove a difficulty unavoidably adherent to wood; its cracking from exposure to climatic changes; and, under heavy expenditures for designs, moulds, etc., we commenced the manufacture of our Metal Show Figures. During a period of over seven years we have shipped large numbers to all sections of the country; they have resulted in giving the fullest satisfaction to our patrons, and the sale of Metal Figures is now far exceeding that of wooden ones. Their advantages are evident; made in zinc, they combine strength with beauty; they are as light as wooden figures, and considering their everlasting durability, far cheaper.¹⁵

Evidently, his national market was well established by this time, and zinc figures were rapidly gaining popularity. They would continue to do so, but judging by the significantly larger number of wooden figures that have survived, Demuth's claim that sales of metal figures were "far exceeding that of wooden ones" would seem to be something of an exaggeration.

While it might seem that cast-metal figures had little to do with the old wooden Indians, the new process was actually not as large a departure from tradition as it first appears. Initially, the same men who made wooden figures were engaged to carve the models from which the zinc figures were cast.¹⁶ The resulting metal figures closely resembled their wooden counterparts in many ways. The shipcarver's hand can be detected in both the general contours and detailing of the finished piece.

One such example is a type that was known as *Rising Star*, which was listed as No. 62 in Demuth's 1875 catalog. (Fig. 77) The figure illustrated here is in the collection of the Culbro Corporation in New York City. The treatment of her face, hair, and costume are all consistent with the New York show figure style as defined in the last chapter. She is also interesting as a sort of composite figure that combines elements of a tobacconist's

Indian with the short skirt of another type that was called a *Theatrical*. (Fig. 78) In this case, the wooden figure, which is currently in a private collection, was evidently intended for use outside a theatre or vaudeville hall, as she does not hold a bunch of cigars like her zinc counterpart. Otherwise, the stylistic similarities between the two are quite striking. Both feature racy costumes designed to attract the attention of male patrons. They certainly qualify as "columbines with alarmingly short skirts" as quoted above, rendered marginally acceptable by their somewhat dubious professions as actresses and performers.

In creating these ladies, the carvers were not only responding to male fantasies, but were also reflecting aspects of the shared artistic and cultural imagination seen in all show figures, Indian and non-Indian. As in the case of the Noble Savage, the images were based on contemporary perceptions, mirroring the attitudes, opinions and prejudices of mainstream culture. A fundamental concept underlying their portrayal is the Victorian notion of the anthropological type. One of the principal concerns of the new social science of anthropology was the systematic classification and ordering of humanity through observation and inductive reasoning, in much the same way as the older and more established natural sciences of botany and biology. Closely related were two so-called sciences, physiognomy, the belief that an individual's character was indicated by facial features and forms of the head and body, and phrenology, in which character was read through the shape of the skull. Physiognomy, in particular, was almost universally accepted, and its academic practitioners believed themselves to be employing a scientific system of classification that was as legitimate as the methods used by botanists and zoologists.¹⁷

While it was primarily a means of distinguishing one individual from another, physiognomy also provided a rationale for grouping people who shared certain physical characteristics together. Blurring distinctions between class, race and type, it aided anthropologists and other students of humanity in their efforts to organize mankind according to a hierarchical, Darwinian scheme that assigned specific intellectual and moral identities to physically distinctive individuals and groups.

On a popular level, certain physical and personality traits were commonly used to define characteristics for entire classes of people. The attributed traits might be regional, as with the shrewd Yankee and the genteel Southerner, or ethnic, as with the scrappy Irishman and the swarthy Italian, or racial, as with the inscrutable Chinaman and the happy Negro. Identifying contemporary types and applying generalized, stereotypical identities to them was considered to be an appropriate way to characterize and differentiate humanity, particularly in mainstream Anglo-American society which tended to reserve the most flattering traits for itself.

Following is a survey of many of the most popular types represented by show figures, along with commentary intended to provide identifications and contextual background. Due to low survival rates and a lack of documentation for many of the figures, as well as the enormous amount of literature on ethnic and gender stereotyping, a complete treatment of the material would not be a feasible undertaking. Instead, the discussion will highlight the remarkable diversity of figures carved and cast in the second half of the nineteenth century, and attempt to demonstrate the major artistic trends and social historical issues that informed their creation.

From a twentieth-century vantage point, the stereotypical images in show figures range from the relatively benign to the egregious. By and large, representations of exotic foreign types fall in the former category. The Turk is a case in point. While never totally out of fashion, he experienced something of a comeback as a show figure in the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the finest examples is a life-size *Turk* in a private collection that closely resembles an illustration of a figure listed as No. 40 in William Demuth's 1875 catalog. (Fig. 79) Carved in a realistic style, his face, turban and long, flowing beard are sensitively rendered, while his impassive stare gives him an air of remoteness appropriate to his origins in a faraway land. He is also notable for his long-stemmed pipe, an original accessory and rare survival.

More expressive is a *Sultana* who holds a rose to her breast. (Fig. 80) While she has suffered some loss over the years, her detailed costume, elaborate turban and old paint surface render her remarkable. Her face, though darkened to emphasize her exotic otherness, is in reality rendered with idealized Anglo-American features in a manner similar to representations of cigar store Indians. Equally engaging is a *Turk* with finely carved, gesturing hands that was found in Camden, Delaware. (Fig. 81). He may have been used as a tobacconist's figure, but ultimately, his original purpose remains something of a mystery, as he does not appear to have ever held any identifiable accessories or attributes. Finally, all of these figures bear comparison to a remarkably stylized counter-size piece that was probably done by a self-taught carver. (Fig. 82) The smooth planes and generalized, but sure carving of this stocky little figure illustrate the range of interpretation of the Turk theme at the time. The figures are at the Shelburne

Museum, the Museum of American Folk Art, and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, respectively.

Another traditional type with a long history, the *Highlander*, is represented here by a striking figure in regimental uniform that is in the collection of the Shelburne Museum. (Fig. 83) As will be recalled from Chapter I, Highlanders were much more popular in England, where they were commonly identified with snuff shops throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This American version remains true to his origins, then, as he prepares to take a pinch of snuff.

Rarer still in the United States is his female counterpart, the *Highland Lassie*. (Fig. 84) While this example has a long history in Reading, Pennsylvania, she was probably carved in New York City.¹⁸ The handling of her face and skirt are particularly telling. With a few modifications in costuming, she could easily be an Indian Maiden.

Tea store figures with generalized Chinese features comprise a third category of exotic foreign types. While they seem to have been relatively popular in the nineteenth century, few have survived.¹⁹ Two of the finest examples feature layered costumes and gold beaded necklaces highlighted through carefully restored paint surfaces. (Fig. 85 and Fig. 86) Both are owned by the Henry Ford Museum. The male figure makes his purpose particularly evident by holding a box of tea and twice displaying the letter "T." Close examination reveals that the two figures are not by the same carver, and so, while they could be from the same shop, they were probably not conceived as a pair.

With the exception of the little *Turk* seen in Figure 82, all of these figures mix elements of realism and idealism to varying degrees. Costumes and accessories, while not historically accurate, were carved in a realistic style that was intended to convince the

viewer of their veracity. On the other hand, their generalized faces rendered in smooth planes and regular features crossed into the realm of idealized beauty. As discussed, this was also the case with many figureheads and Indian show figures.

In approaching their work in this way, the carvers reflected one of the major artistic dialogues in the nineteenth century. By the time that show figures were at the height of their popularity, realism was generally considered to be the most appropriate style for commemorative statues and public sculpture, which became particularly evident in the many Civil War memorial groups commissioned throughout the country that featured soldiers in contemporary uniforms. In the private sphere, however, opinions varied and the arguments often grew heated. To some, realism in painting and sculpture was fidelity to Nature and the transcription of human events and natural beauty. To others, it was merely copying, a tedious enterprise not worthy of a true artist.

In the other artistic camp were those who favored older forms of idealism like neoclassicism, the eighteenth-century conception of absolute beauty that lingered long into the nineteenth, particularly in the popular marble sculpture created in Italy. In addition, more modern forms of idealism were evident in many of the new painting styles, such as the bucolic and spiritualized canvases of George Inness (1825-1894) and his French and American Barbizon contemporaries. Again, to some, this was the only True Art, while to others it was either old and lifeless, as in the case of neoclassicism, or misdirected, incomprehensible and not worthy of the name, as with modern art.

While the men who carved show figures did not participate directly in this intellectual and stylistic debate, their work was certainly influenced by it.²⁰ Reviewing new developments after about 1860, a reporter noted that, "Meanwhile, the spirit of

realistic art entered more and more into the work of the sign sculptors. The wooden Indians grew better, quite artistic in some instances. Even the half nude was attempted with success.... [Thomas] White even went into ideal statuary to such an extent as to produce a 'Greek Slave' and 'Adam and Eve' in wood."²¹

The *Greek Slave* was undoubtedly the most famous piece of American sculpture in the nineteenth century. (Fig. 87) Created in 1842 in Florence by the expatriate sculptor, Hiram Powers (1805-1873), it was the first full-length nude sculpture to be successfully exhibited throughout the United States. Its acceptance was largely due to its critical acclaim in Europe and because its subject related to the Greek War for Independence, a cause celebre on both sides of the Atlantic. The statue depicts a virtuous young Christian girl who has been abducted by the Turks and is about to be sold in a slave market in Constantinople. She is therefore nude through no fault of her own. Dubious audiences were assured of her virginal purity by the faultless white marble medium and an aggressive marketing campaign that solicited commendations from respected clergymen, one of whom wrote that she was "clothed all over with sentiment, sheltered, protected by it from every profane eye."²² Considered by many critics to be the height of neoclassical sculpture, it had a major impact in the United States. In all, it was reproduced in six full-size versions, several busts, and numerous other smaller editions in marble and ceramic.²³

Unfortunately, no trace of Thomas White's wooden *Greek Slave* has survived. Other attempts at "ideal statuary" in wood and zinc have, however, providing some examples of the carvers' approach to the subject. The first is a figure of a *Woman with Dove*, a sweetly contemplative piece that shows late neoclassical tendencies in both its subject and execution. (Fig. 88) Probably used as a garden or architectural figure, it may

originate from eastern Massachusetts. It is now in the collection of the National Museum of American History. The half-nude subject in wood is extremely rare, even in as modest a pose as this, indicating that the piece was almost certainly a special commission. Stylistically it appears that it was done by a shipcarver who had a reasonably good understanding of the nude, which he may have acquired through the study of prints or sculpture that could be seen in places like the National Academy of Design in New York City or the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.²⁴

Another figure that was probably a special commission as well is the captivating rendition of idealized beauty seen in Figure 89. She was also most likely used as a garden or architectural figure, though her present condition suggests that she has been protected from the elements for most of her existence. The profusion of flowers in the cornucopia and wreath, along with the roses in her hair, make her allegorical references somewhat mysterious. She could represent Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers, who was usually portrayed with a cornucopia of blossoms that she scattered over the earth. Given her youth and beauty, she might also have been intended to personify Spring, particularly if she was originally part of a series of the four seasons. Then, too, she could represent Love or Beauty, ideals that were commonly associated with roses.

The ancient image of Flora became quite popular in the early nineteenth century due to the revival of interest in flower symbolism, otherwise known as the “language of flowers.” Starting in Napoleonic France, a seemingly endless number of gift books, dictionaries and emblem books gained a huge audience on both sides of the Atlantic. Books like Charlotte de Latour’s *La Langage des Fleurs* of 1819 and Elizabeth Wirt’s *Flora’s Dictionary* of 1829 became international bestsellers, inspiring all sorts of related

visual imagery, from prints to ceramic statues. In the United States, language of flower books reached a high point of popularity in the 1840s and '50s, though they maintained their appeal until the end of the century.²⁵ The Victorian language of flowers was a language of love, a means of expressing sentiments through delicate and beautiful objects. In this case, the figure's exposed leg rendered her too sensual for a church, but her resemblance to a traditional Madonna suggests that she was created by one of the many European-trained carvers who immigrated to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century.²⁶

A final example of a piece that incorporates aspects of nineteenth-century idealism is a zinc figure representing a popular allegory of the idealized Indian princess as a personification of America. (Fig. 90) Closely related to show figures, she features a typical feathered skirt and headdress. She was never used in a shop, however, but instead was a part of a lighting fixture or a torchiere installed at the base of a staircase. She once held a bow in her left hand, and an elaborate gas fixture with three glass globes topped the shaft.²⁷ Similar zinc figures served as cigar lighters in some of the larger and more fashionable tobacconist shops that catered to an upscale urban clientele.

In addition to realism and idealism, another mode of artistic representation that strongly influenced figure carving in the second half of the century was caricature. Widely used in prints, books, magazines and newspapers, it was a popular way to inject humor into many of the standardized stereotypical images of the day. In this, artists and publishers were again following English and European precedent, as seen especially in the work of eighteenth-century artists such as William Hogarth and other social and

political satirists. In both England and America, caricatures of prominent people and important political events could be quite ruthless and devastatingly funny, at least to those who agreed with the point of view expressed in a particular cartoon or illustration. While caricature in shop figures is less politically charged, it is just as inclusive in its range of targets.

The most popular and widely read American satirical magazine in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was *Puck*, published in New York by Joseph Keppler between 1877 and 1918. The magazine's masthead featured an image of Puck, complete with top hat and oversized pen in hand. Its contents included cartoons, humorous articles, editorials, poems and jokes, all of which provided sly commentary on recent political and social events. The well-known trademark descended from medieval English folklore, where a puck was widely believed to be a type of evil spirit. By Shakespeare's time, he had assumed a gentler guise, as best known in the mischievous sprite of *A Midsummer's Nights Dream*.

A statue of Puck commissioned by Keppler from the German-born sculptor, Henry Baerer (1837-1908), can still be seen on the Puck Building on Houston Street in New York City.²⁸ As a cigar store figure, *Puck* was particularly popular in the late 1870s and early '80s, and to a lesser extent, until the end of the century. (Fig. 91) There was also a brand of cigars by the same name. Caspar Buberl (1834-1899), a Czechoslovakian-born sculptor best known for his Civil War memorial groups, modeled a Puck around 1875 that William Demuth offered in zinc.²⁹ The rare wooden version from Samuel Robb's shop that is shown here was based on Buberl's figure. He has lost the bottom half of his

pen, but otherwise is a fine likeness of his namesake. The figure is now in the collection of the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers.

Another popular fictitious character with an ancient lineage was *Punch*, a traditional clown figure identified by his humpback, hooked nose, and mischievous leer. (Fig. 92) The example illustrated here is in the collection of the Mercer Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. His most immediate source of inspiration was the well-known puppet in the Punch and Judy shows that delighted nineteenth-century audiences throughout the United States and England. As with Puck, he, too, had a brand of cigars named after him, and, as both shop figure and cigar, he was particularly popular in the 1870s and '80s.³⁰ Nevertheless, Punch himself was actually much older than any of these nineteenth-century sources. In his traditional English guise of Punchinello, he had been popular for centuries. From there, he can be traced through France to Renaissance Italy, where Pulcinella was a comic figure in the Commedie dell'Arte. His ultimate progenitor is Maccus, a humpbacked, hooked-nose character from the Atellanæ, an ancient form of Roman satirical drama.³¹

More medieval in conception was *Gambrinus*, otherwise known as *King Lager*. (Fig. 93) As seen here, he was usually portrayed holding a frothy mug and sword, bedecked in some sort of armor or military regalia befitting his royal station. King Gambrinus was a mythical character, possibly Flemish in origin, who was celebrated as the inventor of beer. Naturally enough, he was a popular sign for beer halls and saloons in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.³² Few of his kind have survived, though, and today he is very rarely encountered. This figure is in a private collection.

As traditional figures, Puck, Punch, and Gambrinus retained their old associations while being updated as show figures. In order to maximize their appeal to contemporary audiences, the carvers emphasized their humorous elements to a large extent, particularly in the case of Punch. Even so, they did not quite enter the realm of caricature, which was generally reserved for more modern subjects.

The increasingly rapid pace of modern urban life was the subject of much social commentary. Many observers decried the loss of traditional values, citing increased materialism and the accumulation of wealth, the depersonalized and uprooted nature of city life, and the undue attention paid to the latest fads and fashions as evidence of moral and spiritual decay. Others celebrated the era's new ideas, rapid change, and advances in technology and industrialization as progress that was benefiting the entire country. Finally, a third group took the middle ground, accepting the new developments with a nostalgic look backwards to what was perceived as a simpler and more honest past. In short, the discussion was essentially the same as that which is endlessly debated in the media today.

What was new was the emergence of a national popular culture beginning in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. As the Industrial Revolution truly took hold in the United States, a wide range of social and economic factors conspired to usher in the first phase of the modern era. Industrialization and the introduction of processes of mass production significantly increased the supply of consumer goods and made them affordable to many members of the growing middle class. New publishing technologies and greater public demand resulted in less expensive newspapers, dime novels, and magazines that specialized in art, literature and fashion. Improvements in transportation,

from better roads and horse-drawn conveyances to the development of railroads and steamships, promoted travel and communication, as well as the wider distribution of many of these new goods and services. At the same time and certainly in part due to these developments, social mores also began to change, most evidently in the gradual loosening of some of the old restrictions regarding public forms of entertainment, gender roles and interaction between the sexes.

All of this gave artists, writers and other social commentators grist for the mills of caricature. Popular stereotypes were given a contemporary twist and achieved international recognition. A favorite was the *Girl of the Period*, which became a symbol of modern urban life as well as a caricature of the vain, fashionable young woman of the time. (Fig. 94) Satirized and celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic, she was a fashion-plate image for an increasingly fashion-conscious era. As one disapproving English writer noted in the *Saturday Review* in 1868:

The girl of the period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face, as the first articles of her personal religion; whose sole idea of life is plenty of fun and luxury; and whose dress is the object of such thought and intellect as she possesses. Her main endeavor in this is to outvie her neighbors in the extravagance of fashion. No matter whether, as in the time of crinolines, she sacrifices decency, or, as now, in the time of trains, she sacrifices cleanliness; no matter either, whether she makes herself a nuisance and an inconvenience to every one she meets. The girl of the period has done away with such moral muffishness as consideration for others, or regard for counsel and rebuke....she is far too fast and flourishing to be stopped in mid-career by these slow old mortals; and she dresses to please herself, she does not care if she displeases every one else.

This imitation of the *demi-monde* in dress leads to something in manner and feeling, not quite so pronounced perhaps, but far too like to be honourable to herself or satisfactory to her friends. It leads to slang, bold talk, and fastness; to the love of pleasure and indifference to duty; to the desire of money before either love or happiness; to uselessness at home, dissatisfaction with the monotony of ordinary life, and horror of all useful work; in a word, to the worst forms of luxury

and selfishness, to the most fatal effects arising from want of high principle and absence of tender feeling.³³

A few months later, the American magazine, *The Nation*, published a review that condemned this rather vicious commentary as “a wanton exaggeration in the interest of sensationalism.” Its author had a broader target in mind, noting that:

A young girl given up to dress is certainly a very flimsy and empty creature, and there is something truly ignoble in the incessant effort to gratify and stimulate the idle taste of a host of possible “admirers.” But between this sort of thing and the sort of thing described by the Saturday Reviewers there is a very wide gulf – a gulf made by that strong conservative element in the feminine nature of which the writer in question seems to have so little notion....The whole indictment represented by this volume seems to us perfectly irrational. It is impossible to discuss and condemn the follies of “modern women” apart from those of modern men. They are all part and parcel of the follies of modern civilization, which is working itself out through innumerable blunders....We are all of us extravagant, superficial, and luxurious together. It is a “sign of the times.” Women share in the fault not as women, but as simple human beings.³⁴

Modern woman, then, is symptomatic of modern times. Both writers see these developments as lamentable, although the author of the article in *The Nation* blames modern men as much as, if not more than, women for the current state of affairs.

Either way, it was evident that the old social order was changing. At the time, many women were moving away from domesticity of hearth and home, forsaking their traditional roles as wives and mothers for the public realm. Some chose to pursue professional careers instead of marriage, while others asserted their independence in different ways. The women’s suffrage movement came of age in the United States in 1848, for example, with the first Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Later in the century, single women were living alone or sharing apartments in

American cities in such numbers that a new term, “bachelor girls,” had entered the vocabulary.³⁵ Traditionalists, both male and female, were unsettled by these developments, leading to torrents of public criticism such as this.

The Girl of the Period was also known as a Dolly Varden after a character in *Barnaby Rudge*, a Charles Dicken's novel first published in 1841. Set in the 1770s and '80s, the story featured the independently minded and thoroughly modern Miss Varden, the daughter of a well-to-do locksmith. As a show figure, the *Girl of the Period* first emerged in the mid-1860s and remained popular for several decades.³⁶ She could be adapted to a variety of purposes, but was most frequently used as a sign for a tobacconist, milliner, or dressmaker, depending upon her accessories. Generally depicted with the “Grecian bend,” an exaggerated forward lean emphasized by her corset and bustle, she often sported a squirrel hat, reflecting the popularity of small animals, stuffed and skinned, as articles of fashion.

Squirrel hats achieved particular notoriety when they were worn by Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes in a burlesque entitled the “Girl of the Period” that caused a sensation in New York in the late 1860s. According to one reviewer, however, her troupe owed most of its success to “the free exhibition of legs.”³⁷ The show figure illustrated here is in the collection of the New York State Historical Association. A similar example, complete with squirrel hat, appeared as No. 51 in William Demuth's 1875 catalog.

More sedate perhaps, but just as fashionable is a lovely figure holding a fan that is in the collection of the National Museum of American History. (Fig. 95) A highly individualized piece, she may have been modeled after an actual woman, and probably

served as a shop sign for a milliner or dressmaker.³⁸ She is particularly distinctive due to her old paint surface that features a floral motif near her waist.

The *Girl of the Period* had a male counterpart in the *Dude*, another caricature of a contemporary urban type that was popular in many parts of the country. (Fig. 96) As a carver explained in 1886:

When you get away out west there is quite a run of just such flash Bowery girls as I am painting up here now. Dudes had quite a go for a while. I have got fully twenty-five dudes planted around in Brooklyn and New York now, though dudes are on the wane...³⁹

The *Dude* illustrated here stood in front of a tobacco shop in Emporia, Kansas, for many years and is now owned by the Heritage Plantation Museum. With his tight pants and jacket, stripped collar and watch fob, he is the perfect image of the city slicker. A slightly disreputable character, he was also known as a *Sporting Dude* or *Race Track Tout*.⁴⁰ The bold use of paint, which in this case has been carefully restored, is especially important in creating the overall effect.

Closely related to the *Dude* was the erstwhile military man, *Captain Jinks*. (Fig. 97) His name derives from "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines," a popular song composed by T. Maclagan in the early 1860s that satirized vain soldiers who lived beyond their means and seemed more interested in parading in fancy uniforms than serving in the military.⁴¹ It remained a hit for several decades, at a time when it was fashionable for young men to enlist in the National Guard and participate in elaborate drills, which to some observers seemed primarily intended to impress the young women in the audience. This figure could be a portrait of Samuel Robb. According to Robb's daughter, Thomas

White created a figure of him in uniform soon after he enlisted in the New York State National Guard in 1879.⁴² Now in the collection of the Shelburne Museum, the example illustrated here is in a fine state of preservation, retaining a significant amount of carved detail under an old, but not original, paint surface.

Another well-known fictional character who inspired interpretations in a variety of media was *Colonel Sellers*, a character from *The Gilded Age*, written by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in 1873. (Fig. 98) An eternal optimist and self-promoter, Colonel Mulberry Sellers was a parody of the era's overly enthusiastic entrepreneurs who were continually developing new schemes to enrich themselves. The Colonel himself invested in numerous enterprises that eventually failed, always declaring that he saw "millions in it," a phrase that is painted on the left side of the base. This figure, which is now in the collection of the New York State Historical Association, is thought to have been used as an apothecary shop sign in Sellersville, Pennsylvania.⁴³ Its stylized form indicates that it was probably not done by a shipcarver, but rather by a talented local craftsman. No doubt it represents the Colonel hawking one of his favorite products. "Beriah Seller's Infallible Imperial Oriental Optic Liniment and Salvation for Sore Eyes – the Medical Wonder of the Age." Twain also adapted his novel for the stage, and the play successfully toured the country for a number of years. This figure may in fact represent the actor John T. Raymond in his role as Colonel Sellers, based on a small statue of Raymond done by the sculptor, Jonathan Scott Hartley (1845-1912).⁴⁴

Among the other actors immortalized in wood was George Washington Lafayette Fox, a famous pantomimist who created the clown character of "Humpty Dumpty," which became one of his most successful stage roles. A figure of Fox in costume was placed in

the lobby of the Olympic Theatre in New York during the play's long run that began in 1867. Another, or possibly the same, figure stood on the sidewalk outside the Broadway Theatre during Fox's last appearances in October and November 1875.⁴⁵

A cigar store figure that is now in the collection of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center is remarkably similar to existing photographs of Fox. from the ornate frills on the costume to its central medallion. (Fig. 99 and Fig. 100) Even the pose is the same. The only significant difference are the words "Geo. W. Child – Generously Good" that surround the medallion on the figure's chest. and "J. Wertheimer" within the smaller circle at the center. Founder and publisher of the *Philadelphia Ledger*, George W. Child was a well-known philanthropist who, among other honors. had a cigar named after him.⁴⁶

While stage portraits were quite common as paintings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. as shop figures. they were much rarer. The celebrated Shakespearean actor, Edwin Forrest. is known to have been carved in at least two roles. as Metomora. which was discussed in the previous chapter. and as Mark Anthony.⁴⁷ Other contemporary references are few and far between. It is therefore even more remarkable that another figure of George L. Fox. done by a different carver, is owned by the Heritage Plantation of Sandwich.⁴⁸ (Fig. 101) Given the low survival rate of show figures in general, these two examples attest to Fox's widespread popularity and name recognition, while also demonstrating the extent to which carvers succeeded in capturing an accurate likeness of their subject.

Besides identifiable stage personalities like Fox, Raymond and Forrest, other, more generic types of performers were popular as show figures. Examples of the mildly

titillating representations of actresses and acrobats that graced theater entrances and lobbies have already been considered. Minstrel figures were another favorite, derived from the popular touring shows that featured white actors and musicians in blackface. Some were carved with exaggerated black facial features, while others were closer to representations of whites dressed as blacks. In all cases, they played upon one of the most common racist notions in white society, the belief that blacks were natural musicians and mimics. As such, African-Americans were considered ideally suited to be entertainers. American minstrel shows were largely based on this supposition.⁴⁹

Of all the stereotypes presented by shop and cigar store figures, these images are certainly the most derogatory. Reflecting the widely held racist views of mainstream white culture, the imaginary black man was generally characterized as the happy Negro, the smiling servant in northern households or the field worker who spent his free time singing, dancing and otherwise whiling away the hours in the warm southern sun. This image of a dependent and contented race, grateful for the largesse of white overseers, played a complex role in nineteenth-century America, simultaneously serving as a justification for slavery and sharecropping, reinforcing feelings of superiority among white people, and deflecting fears of violent uprising and revolt by African-Americans.⁵⁰

The image of the black minstrel proved to be irresistible to white audiences, both on stage and in front of shops. Fictitious and exaggerated physical features and dress that fit the popular minstrel stereotype dominated the portrayal of most African-American figures, as in the case of one that is in the collection of the Mercer Museum. (Fig. 102) A few of the more thoughtful and sympathetic white observers clearly recognized this fact. In 1892, a Philadelphia journalist noted that:

The tobacconist's wooden negro was invariably sculptured after the most extravagant Ethiopian minstrel pattern. He was generally dressed in a light-blue coat, swallow-tail cut, yellow breeches and top boots, a style not usually affected by colored gentlemen in real life. His head, if covered at all, was dignified with a tall, steeple-crowned hat, and as for his collar, nothing so outrageous as his could really have been manufactured to meet an existing demand.⁵¹

Overt racism became more intense and virulent after emancipation. The slavery system that kept blacks in bondage also defined their place in society before the Civil War. After the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, white society was haunted even more by the nightmare of insurrection and the possibility that African-Americans might challenge its paternalistic authority. Images that expressed notions of racial inferiority, such as a figure that is owned by the Shelburne Museum, were an effective and popular means of reinforcing the status quo that denied blacks access to social and economic opportunities. (Fig. 103)

Even those representations of African-Americans that appear somewhat dignified were frequently accompanied by derogatory associations. A figure of *Reverend Campbell* is one such example. (Fig. 104) For many years Reverend Campbell was the minister of an African-American church on the estate of the famous detective Allen Pinkerton in Onarga, Illinois. The story goes that on a trip to Chicago, Pinkerton was struck by the uniform of a black porter at the hotel in which he was staying. He purchased one like it and presented it to Reverend Campbell upon his return home, telling him that all the black ministers in Chicago wore similar outfits. The minister was supposedly so taken with it that he wore it to church every Sunday for the next ten years, and preached with

his hat on. When he died, Pinkerton commissioned a figure of the beloved minister in his porter's uniform, complete with top hat, umbrella and briefcase.⁵²

This not so subtle tale again plays upon notions of gullibility and ignorance, reinforcing the subservient role assigned to African-Americans as a legacy of slavery. In much the same way as the Noble Savage stereotype operated on the representation of the American Indian, a seemingly positive image is subverted by a subtext of otherness. Show figures and related carvings like *Reverend Campbell* conveyed powerful, if sometimes contradictory, messages that resonated deeply throughout nineteenth-century America.

It will come as no surprise to learn that in the public arena of visual representation, whites fared better than their black and Indian counterparts, both as individuals and groups. Caricatures like the Dude and Girl of the Period were common, but just as popular were idealized images of local and national heroes. Among them, perhaps none were more collectively celebrated than firemen. Seen as men of action and heroic types, they were widely admired for their readiness to risk life and limb to protect their communities. Men from all walks of life joined volunteer companies in cities and towns throughout the country. In the larger urban areas, professional firefighters were a prominent feature by the Civil War era. Volunteers and professionals alike were the subject of much attention, and their courageous deeds were frequently recorded in art and literature. Two of Currier and Ives' most popular series, for example, were entitled "The Life of a Fireman" and "The American Fireman," groups of six and four prints issued between 1854-66 and in 1858, respectively.⁵³ (Fig. 105)

In addition, the firemen themselves often commissioned statues and paintings to commemorate important personalities and events, or to identify their companies. This is particularly true of the many wooden figures of firemen that were created, including a monumental figure of *Harry Howard* that is in the collection of the New-York Historical Society. (Fig. 106) Chief Engineer of the New York City Volunteer Fire Department from 1857 to 1860, Harry Howard was honored by his fellows by having his portrait carved in wood and placed on a pediment on top of Firemen's Hall on Mercer Street. Poised in an attitude of leadership, the figure holds a fire horn in his right hand while gesturing a command with his left, the perfect image of a dramatic popular hero.⁵⁴

Another expressively carved figure that has "Columbia 14" painted on its base is owned by the New York City Fire Museum. (Fig. 107) It is incised "S.A. Robb, Canal St.." which is particularly significant because it establishes that the piece is, in fact, a commemorative figure carved fifteen or twenty years after the Columbian Engine Company 14 had ceased to exist. As will be recalled, Robb had a workshop on Canal Street between 1876 and 1888. Nevertheless, the figure is wearing a uniform that was typical of New York City volunteer companies around 1860. Professional firefighting companies replaced the volunteers in 1865. Until that time, Columbian Engine Company 14 was located at the corner of Vesey and Church Streets in lower Manhattan.⁵⁵

A more poignant and sentimental piece is shown in Figure 108. With babe in arms and fire licking at his feet, this hero is about to meet his doom. The group commemorates the death of Irad Ferry, a volunteer firefighter from Wilton, Connecticut, who died in a fire in New Orleans on January 1, 1837. It was probably commissioned about fifty years later by the Irad Ferry Fire Company of New Orleans, which was named in his memory.

J.C. May, the carver who incised his name on the base, has yet to be identified.⁵⁶ While both this piece, which is now in the collection of the Mercer Museum, and the Robb figure could have been installed outside their respective firehouses as a type of sign, it is more likely that, as commemorative figures, they occupied a place of honor in a meeting room or some other interior space.

Among those heroes with a less dangerous profession were baseball players. By the 1880s, the game was already heralded as the national pastime and the image of the baseball player was nearly ubiquitous throughout the United States. As shop figures, batters and pitchers were the most popular. An exception to the general rule, they were frequently used by tobacco shops even though they did not include any overt references to the products sold inside. They also served as signs for sporting goods stores and a number of other commercial establishments.

One of the finest surviving examples of a batter is shown here, a sturdy star in a period uniform with "Robb, 114 Centre St. NY." on its base that is now in the collection of the Heritage Plantation Museum. (Fig. 109) Other, similar figures from the Robb shop exist in at least two sizes, attesting to the popularity of the type. A rarer, life-size figure holding a ball that was found in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and is owned by the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, may represent a pitcher. (Fig. 110) Alternatively, his left hand could have once rested on a bat, which would make him a more generalized image of a baseball player. In either case, he is particularly notable for the naturalistic style in which he was rendered, and, although the exact reference of the word "Briggs" that is painted on his chest has not been determined, his uniform is historically accurate in every detail.⁵⁷

Heroes and celebrities came in all shapes and sizes, then, as the carvers continually created images of those personalities who made headlines and captured the public imagination. While this survey is necessarily limited in scope, it can not end without a consideration of that species of famous American that is regarded with the most ambivalence, the politician. From the number of figures of this type that have survived or are known to have existed, it seems that nearly everyone who achieved a certain level of political prominence was immortalized in wood at one time or another. With the exception of the most famous, men like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, they were often special commissions and one-of-a-kind carvings. Both shipcarvers and self-taught artists made them, in a range of styles that matches the diversity of individuals represented.

Given the unpredictability of the American electoral process and the shifting fortunes of those involved in politics, it is inevitable that many of these public figures have faded into obscurity. One such gentleman is General Benjamin Franklin Butler (1818-1893), a well-known and highly controversial personality during his lifetime. (Fig. 111) An ambitious and outspoken New Englander, he was a general for the Union Army during the Civil War, at which time he had some major successes as well as a number of highly visible defeats. During his tumultuous political career, he was elected to the Massachusetts legislature several times, was Governor once, and served two terms in Congress. Dubbed a "rapid Republican" due to his opportunistic conversion from a Democrat to a Republican in order to win a seat in Congress, he switched and combined party affiliations several times. He was elected as a Greenback for his second term, as a member of a short-lived party that advocated currency expansion, and in 1884, was the

presidential candidate for the National Greenback party as well as a delegate to the Democratic convention.⁵⁸ This lively caricature of the General as Uncle Sam is an appropriate personification of his strident and self-assured style. Now in a private collection, it was used as a counter figure for the Huth Tobacco Company in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for many years.

At the other end of the spectrum in terms of name recognition and amount of imagery is the "Father of His Country," George Washington. It is scarcely necessary to note that his likeness has been carved, cast and painted for just about every conceivable purpose since the late eighteenth century. Paul Svinin, a Russian diplomat who toured the United States between 1811 and 1813 observed that. "It is noteworthy that every American considers it his sacred duty to have a likeness of Washington in his home, just as we have images of God's saints....Washington's portrait is the finest and sometimes the sole decoration of American homes."⁵⁹

The same can be said of public buildings, fraternal organizations and countless businesses, large and small. One of the most distinctive wooden images of Washington is a uniquely stylized figure in a private collection that is thought to have been created for the Washington Masonic Lodge in Adams, Pennsylvania.⁶⁰ (Fig. 112) The carver has captured the essence of the popular conception of George Washington with a minimum of extraneous detail. Particular attention has been paid to the head and broad shoulders emphasized by epaulets, from which the body tapers to relatively short legs terminating in the suggestion of military boots.

A monumental carving of Washington that has served as both commemorative statue and tobacconist sign presents an interesting counterpoint to this smaller figure, as

well as a fascinating history that has yet to be totally unraveled. (Fig. 113) In April, 1889, the nine-foot figure was placed atop the first Washington Square Arch in New York City to commemorate the Centennial of Washington's Inauguration.⁶¹ (Fig. 114) Designed by Stanford White in the fashionable Beaux-Art style, the arch was made of wood and staff. The figure itself was much older, and was described in the official history of the commemoration as "...a colossal wooden statue of Washington, of ancient workmanship...."⁶² It can be fairly well documented back to the 1840s, when it was sold at a New York City auction to a Mr. Jacques of South Norwalk, Connecticut.⁶³ Before that, its history is something of a mystery. For many years, the figure has been accompanied by a story that it was originally erected in Bowling Green or on the Battery in 1792 to replace a statue of George III that had been torn down during the Revolution. The legend was convincingly debunked in 1926 by I.N. Phelps Stokes in his authoritative work, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, but has continued to circulate to this day.⁶⁴

The figure was probably created sometime in the 1820s or '30s. Stylistically, it appears to be the work of a shipcarver.⁶⁵ This is seen particularly in the sharp folds of the jabot and the lapels and collar of the jacket, the bold strokes for hair and the handling of the face, which, while subject to restoration over the years, still evidences the smooth planes favored by master shipcarvers. Given its impressive size, it was almost certainly done as a special commission, most likely for an important civic celebration like those held during Lafayette's tour of the United States in 1824 and '25, and the centennial of Washington's birth in 1833. Both of these events inspired commemorative works of art of all types. Passing through several hands after the 1840s auction, the piece served as a sign for a tobacconist's shop on 125th Street during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

except, of course, for its brief stint as a commemorative statue in 1889. By 1913, it was being used as a sign for a barber's shop on St. Nicholas Avenue and 182nd Street. Eventually it found a home at the Historical Society of Delaware.⁶⁶

This account has been presented at some length not only because of the importance of this venerable old piece, but also because it provides a good example of the varied histories and multiple uses and reuses of many shop figures and related carvings. As has been discussed, they were designed to be adaptable. A purchaser could specify details and accessories that would render a particular carving appropriate to whatever purpose he or she had in mind. Whether displayed in front of a store, in a garden, a theater lobby or on a commemorative arch, they were signs of the times, reflective of contemporary trends and collective notions of a national past.

Nevertheless, the temporary marriage of the work of an early nineteenth-century shipcarver and a commemorative arch designed in the latest style by a leading American architect may seem a bit incongruous. It is also symbolic. By the Centennial of Washington's Inauguration in 1889, America had embraced a new image of itself. Decades of economic development and territorial expansion after the Civil War had brought prosperity to many, and with it, visions of national greatness and international prominence. Traditional wooden figures and other images handed down from previous generations were rapidly passing into history.

¹ Both the figure of Father Knickerbocker and the painting of Knickerbocker Hall were donated to the New-York Historical Society in 1912 by the estate of George Shepard, the last proprietor of the stage line. It will be noted that the statue is not represented accurately in the painting. The image is reversed and appears to be larger than is actually the case. See Richard J. Koke et al., *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in the New-York Historical Society* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 3:129-30.

² Weitenkampf, 13.

³ Single-sheet advertisement, William Demuth & Company, New York, 1871. A copy is in the archives of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴ Weitenkampf, 13; Fried, 29-30; Charles A. Flammer, "First Wooden Indians. Memories of Chichester's Cigar Store in the Bowery," *New York Times*, 4 May 1926, 26. Flammer recalled that in his youth:

The Chichester mentioned as an original introducer of the wooden Indian in the '50s, was located on the east side of the Bowery, between Bayard and Canal Streets, near Charlie White's Melodeon and the Volks Garden, the Atlantic Garden being opposite, as also the old Bowery Theatre further down the block...

⁵ Flammer, 26.

⁶ "Death of Edward Hen," *Tobacco* 2 (6 May 1887): 3; "E. Hen's Wills," *Tobacco* 3 (13 May 1887): 3; "The Last of E. Hen's Business," *Tobacco* 3 (5 August 1887): 6; Morrison, "The Passing of the Wooden Indian," 394-95; Fried, 30-32.

⁷ *Trow's Directory of New York City* (1855/56), 380; Morrison, 395; Fried, 30.

⁸ Morrison, "Poor Lo Still Active," 40; Fried, 30, 32.

⁹ Morrison, "The Passing of the Wooden Indian," 395.

¹⁰ Morrison, "Poor Lo Still Active," 40.

¹¹ Pendergast, 11-13; Fried, 32-34, 59; "A World's Fair Exhibit," *Tobacco* 14 (7 April 1893): 1; "Exhibit of Wm. Demuth & Co.," 1, 3.

¹² Fried, 181, 194, 196-97.

¹³ Morrison, "Poor Lo Still Active," 40; Fried, 33.

¹⁴ Fried, 33.

¹⁵ *Illustrated Catalogue of Smoker's Articles and Show Figures* (New York: Wm. Demuth & Co., 1875).

¹⁶ According to Fried, Demuth initially selected eight wooden figures from his line of show figures to be used as casting models by Seelig. If this was done in 1868, then it is quite certain that the figures were carved by Samuel Robb and/or some other unidentified New York shipcarver. See Fried, 33.

¹⁷ For an extended discussion of physiognomy and phrenology, and their impact on nineteenth-century English painting, see Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Victorian Art* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Cowling demonstrates convincingly that most people, including artists, subscribed to these beliefs, although phrenology was not as widely accepted as physiognomy. From William Firth to William Holman Hunt and

Charles Dickens to Emily Bronte, artists and writers used physiognomic distinctions in their work, confident that physical features had specific meanings that could and would be deciphered by their audience.

As for the United States, the concepts of the type and typing are fundamental to Elizabeth John's analysis in her study, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

See also Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Lewis P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1971), and Judith Wechsler, *The Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1982).

¹⁸ The figure was donated to the Historical Society of Berks County in 1923. Although its exact history was not recorded at the time, accession records indicate that it was used locally. The attribution to a New York carver is made on a stylistic basis by this writer.

¹⁹ A visual record of the use of Chinese figures occurs in a watercolor entitled *Burroughs* by Jurgan Frederick Hugel that is in the collection of the Bridgeport Public Library in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Done in 1876, it represents the Burroughs Building, a well-known commercial building at the time. Two Chinese figures appear in the windows of the New England Tea Store on the ground floor. See Jean Lipman, "Jurgan Frederick Hugel, 1809-1878," in *American Folk Painters of Three Centuries* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980), 115.

²⁰ One carver's observations on the topic were noted in 1887. He is recorded as telling a journalist that:

"Fidelity to nature or artistic beauty is not much looked to. That Indian," pointing to a melancholy, flat-nosed chief, "was done from life and we can't sell him. Buyers complain that he is too ugly. What they want is something fine-looking and attractive."

("The Tobacconist's Sign," *Tobacco* 2 (8 April 1887): 2.)

²¹ Weitenkampf, 13.

²² The Reverend Orville Dewey, "Mr. Powers' Statue," *The Union Magazine of Literature and Art* 1 (October 1847): 326, quoted in William H. Gerds, *American Neo-Classical Sculpture: The Marble Resurrection* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 53. See also Richard P. Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor* (Woodstock, VT: Woodstock Historical Society, 1974), 25.

²³ Gerds, 52-53; Wunder, 25-27.

²⁴ The earliest known illustration of this figure was done by Elizabeth Moutal for the Massachusetts Project of the Index of American Design. The rendering shows the piece in white and identifies it as a garden figure. The word "Dove" does not appear on the base, indicating that it is a rather recent addition. See Christensen, *Early American Wood Carving*, 12, 150. The attribution to a shipcarver is made by this writer on a stylistic basis.

²⁵ For an extended discussion, see Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995).

²⁶ Nothing is known about the history of this figure. She was found on Staten Island, and appears to have been there for some time. The attribution to a European-trained carver is made by this writer. The piece is now in a private collection.

²⁷ The figure is in a private collection. An illustration of an identical piece appeared in the catalog of Mitchell, Vance & Company, c. 1876. See *Picture Book of Authentic Mid-Victorian Gas Lighting Fixtures: A Reprint of the Historic Mitchell, Vance & Co. Catalog* (New York: Dover Publications, 1984), 57.

²⁸ Frank Weitenkamp. "Some Signs and Others – Sign Painters and Sign Paining Artists." *New York Times*, 3 July 1892, 15.

²⁹ "Designed by Whittling Yankees," 7; "The Puck Cigar," *Tobacco* 8 (15 November 1889): 1; "Wooden Indians," *Tobacco* 26 (6 January 1899): 10; Weitenkamp, "Some Signs and Others," 15.

Weitenkamp was the first to note that Buberl was the sculptor who modeled the Puck offered by Demuth in his 1875 catalog. He also states that the statue on the Puck Building in lower Manhattan was by Baerer, not Buberl, as other writers have suggested. A few versions of the zinc cigar store Puck with "C. Buberl, sculpt." on the base have survived. For a consideration of Buberl's career, see Joyce L. McDaniel, "The Collected Work of Caspar Buberl: An Analysis of a Nineteenth Century Sculptor" (MA thesis, Wellesley College, 1976).

³⁰ "The Punch Factory Under New Management," *Tobacco* 9 (31 October 1890): 1; "Wooden Indians," *Tobacco* 24 (28 January 1898): 3.

³¹ For a history of Pulcinella and other characters of the Commedia dell'Arte, see Maurice Sand, *The History of Harlequinade*, 2 vols. (London and New York: Benjamin Blom, 1915; reprint, 1968).

³² Frank B. Mayer relates in "Signs and Symbols," *Scribner's Monthly* 43 (September 1879): 714, that:

A new claimant to sign-board honors in our day, the only sovereign who in our republic asserts his prerogative of popular homage is his majesty "King Gambrinus," liege lord of lager-beer. His origin is mythical, and probably, like Old King Cole, of fabulous existence.

A metal figure of *Gambrinus* or *King Lager* was offered as No. 49 in William Demuth's 1875 catalog, while an illustration of a Gambrius-type figure holding cigars appeared in "Wooden Indians," *Tobacco* 26 (6 January 1899): 10.

³³ "The Girl of the Period," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 25 (14 March 1868): 340.

³⁴ "Modern Women," *The Nation* 7 (22 October 1868): 334.

³⁵ See, for example, Winifred Sothern, "The Truth About the Bachelor Girl," *Munsey's Magazine* 25 (May 1901): 282-83.

³⁶ One source noted that, "...the Girl of the Period was in great demand during the war..." ("The Tobacconist's Sign," 2), while another journalist (Junkin, 17), quoting Julius Melchers, wrote that:

"...Along in the '70s the fancy figure known as the 'Girl of the Period' was quite popular."... The "Girl of the Period" of which Mr. Melchers spoke was dressed in a style in vogue about 1873 with the "Grecian bend," high heeled shoes and a natty little cap with a squirrel perched upon the top of it.

³⁷ *New York Clipper*, 10 July 1869, 110, quoted in Laurence Senelick, *The Age and Stage of George L. Fox, 1825-1877* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988), 156; see also "Modern Woman," *The Nation* 7 (22 October 1868), 332-34, and Fried, 42.

³⁸ The suggestion that the figure was used as a milliner's shop sign was first made by Jean Lipman in 1948. See *American Folk Art in Wood, Metal and Stone*, 15.

³⁹ "Designed by Whittling Yankees." 7.

⁴⁰ "Wooden Indians," *Tobacco* 24 (28 January 1898): 3.

⁴¹ "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" was popular on both sides of the Atlantic. It was published by Metzler & Company in London in 1862, and by the New England Music Company in Boston and Lee & Walker in Philadelphia in 1868, among other places. In 1879, Frank Mayer noted in "Signs & Symbols" that, "... 'Jim Crow' and 'Captain Jinks' are almost the only instances of the hero of a song being promoted to the sign-board." (Mayer. 713)

⁴² Fried. 198.

⁴³ The attribution of its use as an apothecary sign in Sellersville, Pennsylvania is based on an oral tradition that has accompanied the figure for many years. Lipman states it as fact (see *American Folk Art in Wood, Metal and Stone*, 79), but accession records at the New York State Historical Association are not so definite.

⁴⁴ As purchased and performed by John T. Raymond, the first adaptation of the novel as a play was unauthorized. Raymond then asked Twain to write a second version, which he continued to perform for several years. See "The American on the Stage," *Scribner's Monthly* 18 (July 1879): 328-30. The article illustrates a "statuette" of Raymond as Colonel Sellers, in a pose that is similar to the Cooperstown figure. The caption credits the statuette to J.S. Hartley, who was in fact well-known for his stage portraits. See Rupert Hughes, "Jonathan Scott Hartley," *Munsey's Magazine* 11 (August 1894): 515-20.

⁴⁵ Senelick. 226.

⁴⁶ "Generously Good Window Display," *Tobacco* 30 (5 April 1901): 3; Curatorial files, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center.

⁴⁷ In "Wooden Indians," *Tobacco* 26 (6 January 1899): 10, the author noted that:

When the godson of Edwin Forrest opened the cigar store still located at 744 Broadway, on the site of the Macready-Forrest riots, he had an enormous figure of the tragedian in the character of Marc Anthony outside the store.

⁴⁸ A figure of George L. Fox that is very similar to the one at the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center was illustrated in "Wooden Indians," (6 January 1899): 10. The author identified it as a "clown figure" and stated that, "Around the environs of New York are a number of clown figures, many of them being types of famous clowns of the old-time traveling circus." See also the photograph of a Fox-type figure in Sanborn, 47.

⁴⁹ For considerations of American minstrelsy see Carl Wittke, *Tambo and Bones: A History of the American Minstrel Stage* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1930; reprint Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1968), Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmet and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), and Robert C. Toll, *Blackening Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

⁵⁰ For recent studies of the image of African-Americans in art and visual culture see especially Guy C. McElroy, *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art 1710-1940* (San Francisco: Bedford Arts,

1990); Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 4.: *From the American Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Albert Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1990); and the previously cited Ellwood Parry, *The Image of the Indian and Black Man in American Art*.

McElroy, for example, identifies four general types of depictions of nineteenth-century blacks as “grotesque buffoons, servile menials, comic entertainers, and threatening sub-humans...images that denied the inherent humanity of black people by reinforcing their limited role in American society.” (p. xi)

⁵¹ Gilliams, 18.

⁵² The story is related in Pendergast, 57.

⁵³ The editions are listed in Harry T. Peters, *Currier & Ives: Printmakers to the American People* (Garden City, NY: Doran & Co., 1929; reprint New York: Arno Press, 1976), 229-30.

⁵⁴ The figure was purchased from Elie Nadelman in 1937. Its existence is documented in a lithograph of Firemen's Hall by Endicott and Company, ca. 1860, a copy of which is also at the New-York Historical Society. See Tom Armstrong, “The Innocent Eye: American Folk Sculpture,” in *200 Years of American Sculpture* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1976), 91-92.

⁵⁵ Curatorial files. New York Fire Museum.

⁵⁶ Curatorial files. Mercer Museum of the Bucks County Historical Society.

⁵⁷ Curatorial files. Hood Museum of Art

⁵⁸ *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957-58), 2:357-59.

⁵⁹ Pavel Petrovich Svinin in *A Picturesque Voyage in North America* (St. Petersburg, 1815), 150, quoted in Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Picturesque United States of America: Being a Memoir on Paul Svinin* (New York: William Edwin Ridge, 1930), 34.

⁶⁰ Robert Bishop, *American Folk Sculpture* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974), 117.

⁶¹ “The Washington Triumphal Arch,” *Harper's Weekly* 33 (4 May 1889): 343, 344.

⁶² Richard Watson Gilder, “The Washington Memorial Arch,” in *The History of the Centennial Celebration of the Inauguration of George Washington as First President of the United States*, ed. Clarence Winthrop Bowen (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 409.

⁶³ H. Dick, “This Colossal Washington a Puzzle,” *The World Magazine*, 20 February 1921, 6.

⁶⁴ I.N. Phelps Stokes, *Iconography of Manhattan Island* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-28), 5:1999.

⁶⁵ The attribution is made by the writer.

⁶⁶ Dick, 6; “Lo on His Last Trail,” *Tobacco* 10 (10 April 1891): 9; Stokes, 1999.

Chapter V - The End of an Era

By the time the monumental wooden statue of George Washington was placed on top of Stanford White's Washington Square Arch, the show figure fad had just about run its course. As a Philadelphia journalist noted in 1892:

Many once familiar devices for advertising have been laid on the shelf forever and have thus become obsolete. Foremost among the recently rejected methods for catching trade is the cigar store Indian, at one time the most frequent and conspicuous character of sign in this city, but which has now almost entirely disappeared and, within a few years. will be seen no more.

...So familiar in times past has everyone become with the cigar store Indian that we have forgotten to look for them. Thus the majority of pedestrians have failed to notice the disappearance of these figures from most of our cigar stores throughout the city. To-day not one in twenty cigar stores is so designated, while in times past every cigar store, large and small. was decorated with some character of Pompey....¹

The article goes on to describe and illustrate several figures that could still be seen on the streets of Philadelphia. Among them were a Punch, Highlander, Lord Dundreary, Forty-Niner, and Brother Jonathan or Uncle Sam. So it seems that even as their numbers were thinning, many of the popular show figure types remained in place as local fixtures and neighborhood landmarks. This would be the case for another twenty years or so, but, all in all, they were definitely on the decline.

The single most important reason for the disappearance of show figures from city streets was the fact that they were increasingly seen as old-fashioned, symbols of an era that was rapidly passing away. At the height of their popularity from the 1840s to about 1890, they were a vibrant and humorous form of contemporary expression that occupied

an important niche in the rapidly evolving arenas of popular culture and commercial advertising. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, new modes of advertising and a more cosmopolitan national attitude had greatly diminished their impact. The country was changing quickly, and the brightly painted carved wooden figures did not quite fit the tenor of the times.

The year in which the article that was quoted above appeared, 1892, was also the 400th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America. Celebrations in commemoration of that event were organized throughout the country. By far the largest and most impressive of these was the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago from the first of May to the end of October in 1893. Set on the shores of Lake Michigan seven miles south of downtown Chicago, the sprawling site covered over 686 acres with scores of buildings and exhibition halls, including some of the largest temporary structures ever built. During its six-month run, the fair attracted over 20 million visitors.²

The Exposition presented an unprecedented range of exhibits of American commercial and artistic production, as well as a large number of international pavilions. Among the fair's highlights were the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, Agriculture Hall, the Art Palace, and the Women's Building. Near the main entrance from a pier that jutted out into Lake Michigan was a large artificial lagoon known as the Basin that was dominated at one end by the Columbian Fountain, which featured an imposing sculptural group of a ship manned by numerous allegorical figures that was designed by the American sculptor, Frederick MacMonnies (1863-1937). (Fig. 115) In contrast to this showcase of Western civilization was the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long stretch that was part outdoor ethnological museum, part amusement park. It featured stereotypical

“native” villages from all corners of the globe, along with exotic entertainments, restaurants and a 260-foot Ferris Wheel.³

The largest structure in the Exposition was the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, with over 1.3 million square feet of floor space covering nearly thirty-one acres.⁴ Among the hundreds of displays beneath its roof was, it will be recalled, a large exhibit by William Demuth and Company. In addition to several cases of elaborately carved pipes, the Demuth display featured several zinc show figures, including three Indians, a Gambrinus, and a “Moorish girl,” as one article described it. It also contained four wooden figures of “Nubian boys,” two of which held salvers.⁵ These were not shop signs, but were rather designed for use as decorative pieces in the interior of a fashionable urban store.

One of the major goals of the fair’s organizers was to demonstrate America’s position as a world leader in both the arts and industries. The Columbian Exposition followed in the wake of a number of extremely popular international fairs, beginning with the famous Crystal Palace Exposition in London in 1851. Something of an exposition mania seized Europe and the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, when nearly 100 international fairs were attended by hundreds of millions of visitors.⁶ National reputations were on the line, as each country attempted to demonstrate the strength of its contributions to Western culture and commerce. The stakes were particularly high for the United States, which was just emerging as an international player during these years.

The country had already received widespread recognition for its remarkable economic progress and its many innovative developments in technology and

manufacturing. In a few short decades, it had become a world power in commerce and industry. Europeans still considered the United States hopelessly provincial in the realm of culture and the arts, however, which to many of the country's leading citizens presented a major obstacle to be overcome if America were to fulfill its destiny as the most powerful country on earth.

For this reason, the Art Palace and the fair's architecture in general were matters of great concern to its organizers. The Art Palace contained more than 10,000 works displayed in 145,000 square feet of exhibition space. Over 1,000 of these were by American artists.⁷ The American galleries were situated adjacent to the French in an effort to prove the superiority, or at least the equality, of American painting and sculpture. Some critics felt that the American exhibit succeeded in its intended purpose, and others did not.⁸ In hindsight, though, it is clear that the Exposition was a watershed event that demonstrated that American art had come of age and could compete successfully with European art on the international stage.

As for architecture, most of the fair's major buildings were designed in the eclectic French Beaux-Arts mode, which was generally considered to be the most important contemporary style by all but some of the avant-garde. Overall, the Exposition had a pivotal impact on the future of American architecture. The first major showcase for Beaux-Arts classicism in this country, the fair established it as the quasi-official style for government buildings and the mansions of the wealthy for decades to come.

MacMonnies' Columbian Fountain exemplified the progressive and cosmopolitan attitude that America sought to project at the Exposition. Designed in France, again in the fashionable Beaux-Arts style, it was as up-to-date as the architecture that surrounded it.

Columbia sat alert in the ship of state, with Father Time at the helm and female allegories of the Arts, Sciences and Industries manning the oars. Fame or Victory stood at the prow, guiding the ship into a glorious future. Its rather obvious message was one of a nation come of age. One writer hailed Columbia as "...a fair, youthful figure, eager and alert, not reposing upon the past, but poised in high expectations."⁹

In contrast, the wooden image of George Washington on the arch in Washington Square in 1889 was intended as a commemoration of the past, a tribute to the country's founding and infancy. Still, it is difficult to believe that as one of the country's leading architects, Stanford White would have specified that it be used as the arch's crowning glory. He would have no doubt preferred a new work in staff, executed in a Beaux-Arts style that would have complimented his design. In fact, a sketch of White's first study shows five figures on top of the arch, probably an allegorical group intended to symbolize aspects of America's history and development.¹⁰ It is likely that someone else determined that the George Washington figure should be used, perhaps due to financial considerations or time constraints.

Not only was the old statue out-of-date, it would not have been considered high art by White and his contemporaries. According to the aesthetic criteria of the day, true sculpture was done in marble or bronze. These were the only mediums worthy of either embodying the Truths that Art was meant to express or immortalizing the likeness of an important personage. Wood was an artisan's medium, and shipcarving, while widely admired, was a craft in the eyes of art critics and most fine artists. It was art in the service of commerce, not higher ideals, and was not considered to be particularly edifying or morally uplifting, two of the principal characteristics of high art.¹¹

Some observers took a particularly dim view of what they considered to be popular art. Lamenting the lack of artistic patronage and general appreciation of the fine arts in this country, the mid-century art critic and author, Henry Tuckerman, wrote in 1858, “Who, in this land of railroads and elections, stands apart rapt in solemn visions such as absorbed of old a Durer or an Angelo?”¹² He then went on to note that:

The caricatures in Punch, the rude “counterfeit presentment” of a popular statesman, the wooden filagree of an anomalous villa, the coarsely “illustrated” paper delineating an event or a personage about which the town is occupied, bank-bill vignettes, Ethiopian minstrels, and “the portrait of a gentleman,” form the staple art language for the masses; and in all this, there is little to kindle aspiration, to refine the judgment, or to hint the infinite possibilities of Art.¹³

Even though he did not specifically mention figureheads or shop figures, he surely thought of them in the same way.

To place Tuckerman’s comments in perspective, it is important to recognize the state of the arts in the United States at mid-century. In spite of a growing appreciation for painting and sculpture on the part of an increasingly affluent middle-class, opportunities for American artists were still very limited. Art schools were few and far between, and those that did exist lacked resources. Some private individuals helped artists by acquiring their work or underwriting study tours of Europe, but, with the exception of sporadic portrait commissions, government patronage was nearly non-existent. There were no public art museums, and, the handful of commercial galleries that operated in major cities concentrated on European art. From the late 1830s until 1852, a number of Art Unions organized lotteries that bought works from artists and distributed them on a national scale, but these were relatively short-lived affairs. As a result, the annual exhibitions of

organizations like the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts were almost the only major venues for the display and sale of the work of American artists. Moreover, after the Civil War, many collectors and critics were not particularly interested in American art. Following the lead of their European counterparts, they considered it provincial, the same assessment that was leveled against American culture in general.

The established artistic hierarchies that dominated aesthetic thought in both Europe and America throughout the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries were firmly in place.¹⁴ The distinction between art and craft was strictly enforced, so that work like shipcarving could be appreciated for its decorative and ornamental qualities, but did not qualify as "Art." Operating from a position of cultural inferiority, intellectuals like Tuckerman were all the more sensitive to these distinctions. In response to criticism from Europe that America was marked by crass materialism and that its citizens were only concerned with the accumulation of wealth, they sought to educate the public on the importance of the fine arts in defining a national character. As a result, they were not about to cede any ground to the popular arts.

Despite the fact that he was well-known in artistic circles in Philadelphia, William Rush suffered from these judgements throughout his entire career. Commenting on the figure of *Agriculture* that Rush had designed and carved for the Schuylkill Bridge in 1812, a critic wrote:

In reviewing the works of this truly American sculptor, it is but fair to remark that he has been confined to a particular branch, namely, the figure heads of ships and other ornamental work in naval architecture, in the execution of which he has been limited, both as to time and price....we will venture to say that no man in

any country has ever surpassed Mr. Rush in this department of sculpture. His works have traveled with American commerce, all over the world, and are justly appreciated abroad, as well as at home; and we have no hesitation in giving it our decided opinion that, if his studies had been directed to the higher branches of art, with proper opportunities, he would have rivaled the most eminent sculptors of the present age.¹⁵

While he admired Rush, then, the writer clearly qualified his praise. He recognized Rush's mastery of his medium and even deemed him a sculptor. The association of his work with commerce and "naval architecture" could not be overlooked, though, nor could his use of wood, which, while not specifically mentioned, was obvious to anyone reading the article.

William Dunlap offered a similar assessment when he reminded his readers that while Rush had earned the reputation of "artist," his accomplishments and choice of mediums did not qualify him as a leading practitioner of the art of sculpture. In discussing Charles Willson Peale and his attempt to found the Academy of Fine Arts in 1791,

Dunlap noted that:

The only artists named by his biographer as joining in this scheme are Ceracchi, the celebrated sculptor, and Mr. Rush, who, though by trade a carver of ships' heads, was, by talent and study, an artist.¹⁶

In both cases, though, the writers' comments are decidedly more positive and approving than those of Henry Tuckerman concerning the "lower" branches of art. This is no doubt partly due to Rush's prominence in Philadelphia's artistic community, an indisputable fact that presented a particular problem to contemporary critics. It is also true, however, that this same sort of qualified admiration was frequently applied to the

work of other shipcarvers, none of whom received as much notice in their lifetimes as did Rush.

In 1816, the author of an article that reviewed the state of arts in contemporary Boston echoed the comments about Rush quoted above in discussing Solomon Willard, the only sculptor that he could identify. He wrote:

Mr. Willard is a self-taught artist, who possesses a capacity for sculpture of no ordinary kind. He has lately been employed in carving the ornaments of two or three ships: among them the *Courier* and the *Hindu*, which have lately sailed from Boston. In viewing the freedom, the grace, and harmonious design of these ornaments, it is impossible not to regret that his talents should not be exercised on more noble and durable materials. The gentlemen who patronized him in this way, have however rendered him a service, as it develops his ability, and gives him practice, but it may be hoped that he will hereafter be occupied in higher branches of sculpture.¹⁷

Several years earlier, a rare diary entry made by Elizabeth De Hart Bleeker, a member of one of New York's leading families, noted that she and a group of her friends visited Daniel Train's shop in March, 1799 to "...see the figure of the President belonging to the Frigate the Adams."¹⁸ She did not offer any critical commentary in her terse passage, but the fact that she and several local worthies went to view the figurehead indicates a certain amount of contemporary appreciation for the carver's work.

Throughout the nineteenth century, many observers, particularly journalists and other writers who had less of a vested interest in the future of American art than artists and art critics, were willing to allow that carved wooden figures had definite artistic merit. At times, they were unreserved in their praise, using the words "sculptor" or "artist" without any modifiers when discussing shipcarvers and their work. More often

than not, though, they qualified their judgements by calling the carvers “marine artists,” “wood sculptors,” or “sign sculptors.”¹⁹

One of the articles that discussed the launching of the clipper *Minehaha* in 1856 that was considered at the beginning of Chapter III is particularly telling in this regard. While primarily concerned with Longfellow’s poem and Julia Bennett Barrow’s interpretation of it for the stage, the piece concluded with a description of the launch and the festivities that followed at the shipbuilder’s home. The writer then mentioned that the figurehead was carved by William Gleason, and that it was “...a fine piece of work, evincing much taste, and rising to the dignity of art.”²⁰

These views prevailed until the end of the century. In discussing the evolution of shop figure carving after mid-century, a journalist stated in 1890 that, “The wooden Indians grew better, quite artistic in some instances.” He then wrote about the carvers that “Some of them are men of decided ability and talent....” In using the word “artist,” he sometimes placing it in quotation marks and sometimes not. Towards the end of the article, he attempted to create a distinction between “sculpture in wood” and “wood carving,” placing the former primarily in the distant past in civilizations like that of ancient Egypt. Finally, though, he did acknowledge that in the case of William Rush, “There was one American sculptor, at least, who worked with success in wood.”²¹

The writer’s discussion of ancient wooden sculpture as an art form is particularly significant. It is a rare instance in the nineteenth century in which wood was elevated to the status of an artistic medium. It is true, of course, that by citing examples from a past far removed from the present day, the author was on relatively safe ground and was not offering a radical revaluation of shop figure carving. In addition, it should be noted that

the article was written late in the century, at a time when members of the Arts and Crafts Movement and other avant-garde groups were extolling the virtues of handiwork and pre-industrial modes of production. Still, the linkage between ancient and modern times creates a venerable artistic heritage for contemporary figure carving. A deeper aesthetic appreciation is possible within this context, even if it is not fully explored by the author.

But what of the carvers themselves? What did they think of their work and their place in the hierarchy of artistic production? On the one hand, they were clearly dedicated to their profession and approached it as artists in the twentieth-century understanding of the term. It took many long years of apprenticeship to become a master carver, and the best of them continued to hone their skills throughout their careers. One journalist noted in 1889 that, "...As a rule they take great pride in their work, and spend much time perfecting a feature to their mind, which they could finish in much less time if they were less artistically conscientious."²²

The trade card of Levi L. Cushing of Boston that was illustrated in Chapter II provides some important visual evidence from earlier in the century. (Fig. 17) The rare surviving design for a stern features up-to-date neoclassical motifs that demonstrated that the carver was aware of the latest stylistic trends in the fine and decorative arts. At lower right, he portrayed himself as a sculptor working on a bust and wielding a mallet and chisel with a dramatic flourish. His self-identification as an artist was further reinforced by the name that he chose for the ship pictured at top. The decision to christen it the "Michael Angelo" was hardly coincidental.

As discussed, stylistic developments in shipcarving were closely related to trends in the fine arts throughout the nineteenth century. In addition, several pieces that have

been previously considered illustrate their carvers' familiarity with contemporary academic styles. Among the best examples are Charles Dodge's bust of his father (Fig. 20) and Samuel Robb's figure of a standing Indian with bear-claw necklace that was exhibited in a metal version by William Demuth at several international expositions. (Fig. 57) Thomas White's long-lost wooden copy of Hiram Power's *Greek Slave* provides even more specific evidence of the carvers' interest in the fine arts. Similarly, in 1903, Samuel Robb carved a panel for a Barum & Bailey circus wagon that featured a copy of John Vanderlyn's well-known mural *The Landing of Columbus*, done between 1839 and 1847 for the rotunda of the Capitol building in Washington.²³

At the same time that they claimed a certain amount of artistic recognition for their work, however, it seems that shipcarvers generally accepted the prevailing hierarchy and the contemporary distinction between art and craft. In 1876, for example, Samuel Robb listed his occupation as "Artist in Wood" on his marriage certificate.²⁴ While this is certainly a statement of artistic self-identity, it is one in which Robb both proclaimed his status and qualified it at the same time. Had he believed more strongly that wood was an artistic medium on the par with marble and bronze, he would have presumably listed himself as a sculptor or an artist without feeling compelled to add a modifier. He was asserting his pride in his accomplishments, not challenging the existing system.

Another shipcarver voiced his understanding of existing aesthetic realities in an interview that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1892. He began by stating sadly that, "Ah, sir, the business is not what it was. Only a few American ships have figure-heads now."²⁵ He then continued:

One of the finest figures I ever saw is the one on the bark *Spartan*, which touches at this port frequently. It represents a Spartan warrior, bearing a shield in one hand and a sword in the other. He is in the attitude of attack, and there is a wonderful semblance of life about him. The features are finely made, and the proportions are about as perfect as they can be. It is really a piece of art-work, and would attract attention if it were anywhere else than where it is.²⁶

Others were more modest in their assessments, at least in public. When asked about the nature of his work, one carver who was interviewed in 1886 answered like a true art critic. "Sculpturing?," he is recorded as saying. "No, we don't call it that; just plain chopping, that's all there is to it."²⁷

A cartoon entitled, "In the Year Two Thousand," that appeared in *Life* magazine in that same year presents a succinct visual summation of the general opinion of show figures and shop signs.²⁸ (Fig. 116) Some of the references are obscure today, such as the mention of "Dr. Hammond's bald-headed American" in the caption. Nevertheless, the drawing obviously pokes fun at the notion of exhibiting popular art in a museum setting, while at the same time reinforcing the distinction between craft and art. Show figures belong on the street as a form of public sculpture to be enjoyed by the masses, not as objects of delectation for the connoisseur of fine art. In addition, the collections are presented as relics of a lost era, complete with labels that do not correctly identify their original purposes or histories, the implication being that they will have long since passed away by the year 2000. Fine art, on the other hand, was considered to be as eternal as the Truths that it embodied.

It is against this backdrop that the fate of show figures must be considered. Victims of changing fashion and a more cosmopolitan national attitude, they came to

represent the past at a time when most Americans were much more interested in the future. This was particularly true for American businessmen, including many of the larger urban tobacconists who were concerned with presenting a modern and sophisticated image to their upscale clientele. In 1893, a journalist noted that:

One of our prominent and enterprising retailers, in speaking of this matter, said, that in his opinion the day for the Indian was passed for stores doing any proportion of fine trade; that they now marked the place for low priced goods rather than those stores where an all round high class product was handled; that many of the finest Indians in the city to-day were found before stores doing a low priced trade, and that the dealer catering to a better class needed some distinctive mark.²⁹

These remarks appeared in *Tobacco*, a weekly trade journal published in New York City that was a major forum for the views and opinions of tobacconists. In addition to business news and listings of current tobacco and cigar prices, the paper featured articles and editorials of interest to dealers. One long series in 1886 and '87, for example, concerned the history of the pipe. *Tobacco* is also the source for many of the contemporary articles on show figures and their carvers that have been quoted throughout this discussion. Most were reprinted in it after originally appearing in New York newspapers.

Besides these more historically oriented pieces, the journal also offered advice and instruction in creating the latest in fashionable interiors. Between April and June 1888, for example, it printed four articles entitled "How to Decorate a Cigar Store." Appropriately enough, the writer suggested an up-to-date masculine atmosphere, not too gaudy or elaborate, with a predominance of oak paneling and wall cabinets, shiny brass, clean glass cases and appealing pictures on the walls. Conspicuous for its absence was

any mention of show figures, either on the counter or elsewhere inside or in front of the shop. Instead, cigar lighters, which were generally figural sculptures in bronze or zinc patterned after academic work, were favored.³⁰

Another article called “High Art at Conklin and Fox’s” described the interior of a smoking room in a tobacco shop that was designed in accordance with the principles of the Aesthetic Movement.³¹ Then, in “Art and Tobacco,” the writer discussed a current trend in upscale hotels to combine a bar, cigar stand and picture gallery that featured masculine hunting scenes and still lifes of dead game along with copies of old masters. To pique the reader’s interest even more, it was noted that the galleries were frequently visited by women, but only during morning hours.³²

If these articles provide only indirect evidence for the declining popularity of show figures among tobacconists, two editorials that appeared in 1888 stated the opinion in no uncertain terms. The first was a single paragraph without a title. It read:

The wooden Indian sign has acted well his part and has earned a well deserved rest. No first-class cigar store would be guilty of allowing one of these old tramps to loaf in front of the store. Men who use Indians generally have goods older than the squaw or buck that stands guard over them.³³

No ambiguity here; the writer clearly had no sympathy for this particular tradition, let alone a sense of nostalgia for a passing era.

The second editorial was even more blunt. It was a fairly long piece that begins with an overview of the history of cigar store figures. The author had done some reading on the subject, because he mentioned that the first figure appeared in 1617, which was, it will be recalled, the publication date for Richard Brathwait’s *The Smoking Age, or The*

Life and Death of Tobacco, the book that included the earliest known illustration of a blackamoor counter figure. The tone of the editorial quickly switched from historical speculation to racist diatribe, however, as the writer presented his views not only on show figures, but also on American Indians and the Indian wars that were still fresh in the national memory. The depth and breadth of his prejudicial point of view is quite striking and revealing of the negative side of stereotypical image of the Native American, as discussed in the Chapter III. The editorial will therefore be quoted here at some length:

In no other country do we find the Indian, the squaw, the betting man, the "Puck," the baseball player, or the "Punch," in a series of vile caricatures that make our sidewalks hideous. The Indian was undoubtedly the father of them all, and even now is the most in demand; he served his purpose in past days, but the world is moving along, and by the survival of the fittest the live Indian is fast merging into the mass of population, or, decimated by disease and drink is dying on the reservation.

It is time for the wooden Indian to move on too! There is no real use for him: the image is only a perpetual reminder of past barbarism, bloodshed, deceit, and undying hatred, that even now the strong arm of the law cannot entirely keep within bounds. We, as a nation, are tired of being perpetually reminded of the struggle we had to establish our rule through the Middle and Western States, and would fain forget its sanguinary memories. If an emblem or sign is absolutely necessary to a cigar store, why not take our national emblem, the glorious bird of freedom, which, with outspread wings, shall call to mind all that is best and highest in our national creed, instead of all that is horrible and painful in its past. Strangers make a scoff of the wooden Indian, and who can blame them; but place the bird at our doors and their lips will be closed.³⁴

In this writer's mind, at least, the cigar store Indian holds nothing but negative connotations and should be banished from sight. This intersection of art and life in the late 1880s is a vivid reminder of the bitterness and brutality that accompanied the doctrine of Manifest Destiny that most of white America accepted without question.

Some observers would have disagreed with his opinions, however, and it is easy to imagine a reply that countered his argument with the image of the Noble Savage and his pitiful vanishing race suffering at the hands of white aggressors. In “Lo, on His Last Trail,” another editorial that appeared in *Tobacco* a few years later, the writer stated somewhat wistfully that “...Like their prototypes in flesh and blood, the wooden Indians, who have for so long done duty as signs for tobacconists, are disappearing.”³⁵ As previously discussed, stereotypes and misinformation abound in both of these positions. The point to be made here is that the dialogue surrounding the “Indian question” continued to effect the public reception of cigar store figures for as long as they were a visible part of the American streetscape. The image of the American Indian ran deep in the national psyche, continually surfacing in a variety of guises. In this case, it served as a rationale for the extinction of show figures.

A second and closely related reason for the decline of the show figure tradition was the introduction of new methods of advertising. In 1894, an article entitled “Modern Advertising” explained that:

This may truly be called the era of advertising, and the firm which relies solely on old-time methods and the old stereotyped matter is neglecting its opportunities and is not going with the times.³⁶

The editors of *Tobacco* recommended any number of newer techniques, particularly overhead signs illuminated by electric lights, sidewalk cases and eye-catching window displays. As they noted in one instance:

Many dealers, having really artistic figures, are using them in the windows with good effect; and others are using on the sidewalk lettered signs on black slates, or

artists' easels, the matter being constantly changed; or screens of canvas, which are lit up at night; but the Indian, as a tobacco sign, and on the frontier, is fast disappearing.³⁷

By the mid-1880s, tobacco product distributors were providing free chromolithographs to their customers. With these prints, tobacconists could create colorful window displays that featured up-to-date images in a modern format. They could also be changed on a regular basis, providing variety and a sense of novelty. An article called "Art in Tobacco Shops" that appeared in 1886 described a new type of cooperative advertising arrangement among New York dealers in which a group of paintings was loaned to one shop for a prescribed period and then circulated to another. It also noted that most of advertising material in shop windows consisted of lithographs and photographs, many of which were calculated to catch the eye of potential male customers. Mention was made, for instance, of a recent crusade by the editors of the *New York Sun* against a particular lithograph of a cigarette girl that they considered indecent.³⁸

One enterprising cigar manufacturer loaned full-sized, framed lithographs of Jean-François Millet's famous painting, *The Angelus*, to tobacconists for display in their shops. In what must be one of the earliest instances of a marketing technique that has become ubiquitous, he also advertised that he would send an unframed print to customers who submitted thirty-five cigar box covers as proof of purchase.³⁹

With the increasing emphasis on graphics in advertising, show figures were at a financial disadvantage. They were quite expensive to purchase and required constant maintenance, costs that had to be borne by the shopkeeper. Many merchants were more than happy to forego the old shop signs when manufacturers and distributors began

offering free advertising. When asked the reasons for the gradual disappearance of cigar store figures, one tobacconist responded that:

In the first place a Pompey was an expensive affair, costing all the way from \$25 to \$200. A good figure, in fact, could not be bought for much less than \$75, and this amount was necessarily a serious expenditure for a man commencing the tobacco business in a small way, and the advantages to be derived from it were in no ways proportionate. Then, too, many new devices in the way of advertising have been invented by our wholesale cigar and tobacco dealers, and, as trade was directed to them by the wholesalers, the retail men have not felt it necessary to expend any large amount of money on individual advertising....⁴⁰

Further confirmation of this comes from another dealer who was interviewed in Baltimore in 1908. By this time, show figures were on the endangered species list throughout most of the United States, as indicated by his remarks:

Fifty years ago no tobacconist would think of opening a store without a figure. Now the men in the trade think that to put an Indian out is to waste money. When I started business in 1861, my stock cost \$30, and I had a figure that cost \$40. I had to have the sign, though it cost more money than the stock inside....⁴¹

One consequence of this investment was that the show figure came to be considered a store fixture that was sold with the shop and passed along to the next proprietor. If damaged, it could be readily repaired and given a new coat of paint. Refurbished, it was then either returned to its old spot or, if replaced by some new advertising technique, sold to someone else. The longevity of wooden figures, in combination with lessened demand and the availability of second-hand pieces, resulted in an oversupply by the end of the nineteenth century.⁴²

In addition, new street and sidewalk regulations in several cities cited them as obstructions and restricted their use.⁴³ In other places, merchants discovered that they

could augment their income by leasing their increasingly valuable sidewalk space to outdoor vendors rather than allotting it to an old-fashioned wooden figure.⁴⁴ Together these factors conspired to bring the tradition to an end. Few new show figures were made after the turn of the twentieth century.

Then again, they were not about to give up the ghost altogether. In an article about shop figure carving in New York that appeared in 1887, the writer mentioned that "...Between two and three hundred Indians are put on the market each year. More than half of these are used in New York and the suburbs."⁴⁵ Evidently, while the opinions expressed by the editors of *Tobacco* may have been considered progressive by upscale merchants, they were far from being universally accepted. Beyond the borders of the more fashionable business districts, show figures were still a common sight. A few years later, another observer noted that:

If one would best the lion in his native lair, the rash individual must wander beyond the line of civilization marked by the Bowery, and there he will find the best instances of the aboriginal type in our city statues. Here a sense of justice blends with the love of art; and the stern, impassive Indian, bereft of all other possessions, still lives to fame as the "stoic of the wood."⁴⁶

The Philadelphia journalist who was quoted at the beginning of this chapter seconded this observation. He wrote that "...These cigar figures are still to be seen only in front of small tobacco shops in old-fashioned portions of the city." Upon interviewing the proprietor of a shop that had previously produced figures, he was told that "...The demand for this character of sign is now entirely from the rural districts or country towns...."⁴⁷

So it seems that show figures remained popular and prevalent in much of America at century's end. They lingered on in less stylish urban neighborhoods and smaller towns across the country, in places where the latest opinions did not carry as much weight or were at least slower to take hold. Still, the tradition had lost its vitality and the end was in sight. One of the last articles on the subject to be published in *Tobacco* appeared in 1903. Appropriately, its author will have the final word:

At frequent intervals during the past dozen years more or less elaborate stories have found their way into the secular press to the effect that the wooden Indian had had its day as a cigar store sign, and that it was only a matter of a short time when it would be seen no more.

In spite of the frequency of these predictions, the wooden Indian still lingers in New York City, and there are scores and hundreds of them to be found on the streets and avenues throughout the city. Many of them are old and weather-beaten, to be sure, but others are spick and span as fresh paint can make them, and it seems likely that many a year will have come and gone before the last of them shall have disappeared.

... Why the wooden Indian must go, or rather why he has already gone, is not clear. It is no clearer why girls who looked so sweetly trim in little bolero jackets scarcely reaching to their waists are still more Circian now in Monte Carlo coats that sweep the ground. "Because" is again the reason; "just because." The Indian sign is guiltless. His wooden soul remains unflecked. He is simply out of fashion.⁴⁸

The writer could have added that the carvers, too, were headed for obsolescence by this time. Most traditional shipcarvers were out of business by 1900 or so, their art having been doomed by the advent of metal-hulled ships several decades earlier. Iron-plated ships from European merchant and passenger fleets had been crossing the Atlantic on a regular basis since mid-century.⁴⁹ At first, American shipbuilders resisted the change, but the spectacular success of Civil War gunboats like the *Monitor* and *Merrimac*

convinced even the most skeptical among them. Within a few decades, the construction of wooden ships was greatly curtailed, and the urban shipyards along the East Coast that had been the carvers' mainstay were rapidly closing. Due to rising land values and labor costs, the shipbuilding industry moved out of major urban areas like New York City in favor of smaller coastal towns.⁵⁰ In the Northeast, Maine became a particularly important center during the period.

This, of course, left many urban shipcarvers out of work. The shop figure fad helped for a time, but was not enough to stem the tide. The older carvers retired, and many of the younger men changed professions. Before long, no new apprentices were taken in and the old system began to break down. The case of the Brooks family is typical. After a long and productive career, Thomas "Daddy" Brooks died in 1895. His son and former apprentice, James, operated a small business called the Standard Show Figure Company in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, from 1890 until 1905, but he had no need for assistants. After closing his shop, he became a contractor and painter. He relocated several times before finally settling in Tampa, Florida, where he died in the 1930s.⁵¹

Samuel Robb closed his Centre Street workshop in 1903, not long after completing a major job creating elaborate circus wagons for Barnum and Bailey's. For the next few years, he kept small shops in various locations in Manhattan, and then shared space with fellow carver Charles Brown in Brooklyn from 1908 to 1910. After that, he worked out of his home, primarily doing odd jobs and creating small-scale carvings.⁵²

Robb carved his last figure in 1923, an image of *Santa Claus* that was done as a Christmas present for his daughter, Elizabeth.⁵³ (Fig. 117) A lively characterization, it demonstrates that he still had the master's touch at age seventy-two. The smiling face and

finely carved beard are especially engaging. He died five years later after an extended illness.⁵⁴ The heyday of show figures was long since over by that time, and his death marked the end of an era.

Nevertheless, in what might be considered poetic justice for such an old tradition, show figures began to experience renewed interest as museum pieces and collector's items at the same time that they were vanishing from city streets. Beginning soon after the turn of the twentieth century, many of those figures that had especially long histories or strong links to a particular locale were donated to local historical societies and museums. Many of them were quickly relegated to storage areas or dimly lit recesses to be sure, but others assumed prominent positions in their new settings.

Collectors began to take notice of them early in the twentieth century as well, sparked by the growing antiquarian interest at the time. The first book on the topic, *Hunting Indians in a Taxi-Cab* by Kate Sanborn, appeared in 1911, not long after the last of the urban shipcarvers had given up their shops. In a breezy, anecdotal style, the author recounted some of her adventures in locating figures for her country home. She also presented the results of her research and interviews with some long-time tobacconists who had experienced the show figure fad first-hand. The book's many photographs of figures in front of shops and on city streets are especially important as contemporary documentation.

By 1915 or so, shop figures had also been "discovered" by modernist artists searching for forms of expression that they considered to be truly American. With the breakdown of academic conventions and the late nineteenth-century experiments of Paul Gauguin and others, wood was by then considered a valid artistic medium, at least by

more progressive artists and critics. Wooden figures could finally be seen as sculpture, which opened up a new dimension in their appreciation among the avant-garde. Several American artists began to collect figureheads, shop figures and related carvings which in turn directly inspired their work. One of the earliest instances of this occurred in 1911, when the New York artist and writer, Hamilton Easter Field, founded the School of Painting and Sculpture in Ogunquit, Maine. Field furnished cottages for resident artists with weathervanes, decoys, paintings and textiles, which encouraged many of them to look closely at folk sculpture for the first time.⁵⁵

The trend gathered momentum throughout the 1920s. Early in the decade, the sculptor, Elie Nadelman, and his wife began collecting figureheads, shop figures and other types of folk art. In 1926 they opened the Museum of Folk and Peasant Arts at their home in Riverdale, New York, which has the distinction of being the first folk art museum in the United States.⁵⁶ Two years earlier, in February 1924, Henry Schnackenberg had organized "Early American Art" for the Whitney Studio Club, which is generally considered to be the first public exhibition of folk art. Then, in 1931, Holger Cahill curated his landmark exhibition, "American Folk Sculpture," for the Newark Museum. Five figureheads and twelve cigar store figures were featured, including the Andrew Jackson figurehead for the *Constitution* (Fig. 19), a *Trapper Indian* (Fig. 70), a *Turk* (Fig. 82), two *Girl of the Periods*, and a *Captain Jinks* that had been a landmark in downtown Newark for over fifty years before being donated to the Newark Museum in 1924.⁵⁷

That same year the influential dealer, Edith Gregor Halpert, established the American Folk Art Gallery, the first such venture in this country. The gallery was on the

second floor of her Downtown Gallery on West 13th Street, which was frequented by the modernist artists whom she represented as well as, at one time or another, many progressive critics and collectors. At first the American Folk Art Gallery was a single room, but eventually it occupied the entire floor.⁵⁸ Her first exhibition, held in December 1931 while “American Folk Sculpture” was still at the Newark Museum, was a major success. Entitled “American Ancestors,” it attracted a wide audience and garnered critical praise.⁵⁹ The cycle of rediscovery was complete, and show figures and other folk art genres had finally found their place in the history of American art.

It is also true, though, that shop figures have never totally disappeared from American streets. The work of self-taught artists has continued unabated, made all the more visible in the twentieth century by the demise of many of the old craft traditions. A diverse collection of individuals, they were not subject to the same sorts of market pressures and stylistic changes as were their shipcarver counterparts. Carving on demand or for personal enjoyment, they have fashioned figures for their communities since the colonial era. Throughout the nineteenth century, they often created highly individualized pieces patterned after those made in the seaport shops. At the same time, much of the most innovative self-taught work exhibits few precedents other than the interest in the human figure that is shared by all sculptors. The possibilities are endless and the interpretations diverse. Four examples that bridge the gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will be considered here.

The first two are a pair of Indian figures that first came to the attention of the folk art world in Boston in the 1930s, and are now in the collection of the National Museum of American Art. (Fig. 118 and 119) Their carver remains unidentified, as do their

original purposes, although it is likely that they served as shop figures of some sort. The strength of their characterizations indicates that their maker was an experienced self-taught artist who was familiar with his medium and with the larger shop figure tradition. Highly stylized, they are particularly remarkable for the amount of applied ornamentation on each, especially the dangling cones and bottle plugs that suggest fringed buckskin. The woman's high-topped shoes and wavy hair are typical of the types of Anglo-American features frequently applied to images of American Indians regardless of medium or point of origin.⁶⁰

A third figure that was found in New Jersey and is currently in a private collection can be attributed to the same carver on stylistic grounds.⁶¹ (Fig. 120) This is seen particularly in the handling of the eyes and nose, the folds of the skirt, and the shoes. Although in her current state she is not as ornately adorned as the other two, nail holes around her waist suggest that she, too, may have originally had some applied decoration. The extended left arm is unique, no doubt designed to meet a specific and as yet unknown purpose. More fascinating still, a fourth figure that was probably carved by the same hand is in another private collection. Due to low survival rates, this is extremely rare for self-taught figures as old as these. Evidently, their talented creator was active for a number of years and the strength of his work was recognized early on.

Another outstanding example of figure carving from earlier in this century is *Father Time*, a counter-size piece from the Mohawk River Valley region of upstate New York that was probably created around 1910.⁶² He is now owned by the Museum of American Folk Art. (Fig. 121) Although his original purpose is not certain, he is presumed to have been used in a shop, probably as a doorbell of sorts. The figure was

once articulated so that the right arm moved and the sickle hit the suspended bell. He may also have originally been more modestly attired in a robe, which would seem to be appropriate for so venerable a character. As shown, he is a sleek stylization with a strong vertical thrust that accentuates the idea of an otherworldly being who marks the inevitable passage of time.

As such, he is an appropriate piece with which to end this discussion. The art of the shipcarver gradually faded from the American scene in the early twentieth century, but figure carving remains. A number of the old show figures occupied their spots in front of shops throughout the World War II era and into the 1950s and '60s. By then they had lost their advertising function, but they continued to serve as neighborhood landmarks that reinforced a sense of place among local residents. To others, they were objects of curiosity and nostalgia that invoked images of childhood.⁶³

Many of the cultural issues that the figures embody have an even stronger hold on American society. The old theme of the Noble Savage and his evil twin – the good and bad Indian – continues to haunt the national consciousness. Besides providing inspiration for countless novels, films and plays of all types, its deeper meanings are finally becoming clearer. The pervasive nature of racial and gender stereotyping has only recently been fully understood, while its role in maintaining the status quo and the inequities in American society is still being explored.

The words “cigar store Indian” are still current in the national vocabulary, even among those who have never seen one. If the image that the phrase conjures up is much more vague to most people than it would have been a hundred years ago, the fact that it has survived at all testifies to the importance and longevity of the shop figure tradition.

Father Time and the three Indian figures discussed above represent direct links between nineteenth century figure carving and the type of self-taught work that has become popular in recent years. They and their kind have always been a part of the tradition, once vastly outnumbered by their urban workshop counterparts. They now stand as the sole heirs, as well as a vital form of contemporary expression.

¹ Gilliams, 18.

² Robert W. Rydell, "Rediscovering the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition," in *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the World's Fair*, Carolyn Kinder Carr et al. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1993), 20.

³ See Rydell, 38-44, for a discussion of the mixture of ethnological spectacle and commercialism presented by the Midway Plaisance, and its contrast to the main area of the Exposition, dubbed the White City for the grandiose classicism and color of its principal buildings.

⁴ Daniel H. Burnham, *Final Official Report of the Director of Works of the World's Columbian Exposition*. (Chicago, [1893]: New York: Garland Press, 1989). 1:94.

⁵ "A World's Fair Exhibit," 1: "Exhibit of Wm. Demuth & Co.," 1, 3; Fried. 61.

⁶ Rydell. 20.

⁷ Carolyn Kinder Carr, "Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," in *Revisiting the White City*, 78.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 99-106.

⁹ Burnham. 4:54; Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture of the World's Columbian Exposition," *Century Magazine* 44 (May 1892): 94, quoted in Neil Harris et al., *Grand Illusions: Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993), 85.

¹⁰ Gilder. 409.

¹¹ William H. Gerdtz, "William Rush: Sculptural Genius or Inspired Artisan?" in *William Rush, American Sculptor*, 63-64.

¹² Henry Tuckerman, "Art in America. Its History, Condition, and Prospects," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 3 (December 1858): 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴ One of the clearest expositions of this hierarchy appeared in the July 1827 issue of the *United States Review and Literary Gazette*. In a review of the second annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design, the principal types of painting, sculpture, architecture and engraving were listed in order of importance. The categories for sculpture were:

1. Historical or Fabulous Group, in the round
2. Single statue, in the round
3. Figures in Alto-relievo
4. Figures in Basso-relievo
5. Ornamental Sculpture

While figureheads and shop figures might seem to lay claim to the final category, they were ultimately disqualified by their medium. ("The Exhibition of the National Academy of Design, 1827. The Second. New York," *United States Review and Literary Gazette* 2 (July 1827): 243-45. See John P. Simoni, "Art Critics and Criticism in Nineteenth Century America" (Ph.D. Diss., Ohio State University, 1952), 29-31).

¹⁵ "Review of the Annual Exhibition." *The Port Folio* 8 (August 1812): 145, quoted in Gerdtz, "William Rush." 70.

¹⁶ Dunlap, 1:160.

¹⁷ In a footnote, the author continues:

Some may object that carving in wood, is very different from sculpture in marble. A mere ordinary carver might be unsuccessful in marble, but real talent is wasted in working upon wood.... Mr. Willard observed to the writer, that he could execute much better in marble, than in such a coarse material as wood; just, said he, as a man can write better on white paper than brown.

("For the North-American Journal," *North American Review* 2 (January 1816): 160-61. See Gerdtz, "William Rush." 63.)

¹⁸ Elizabeth De Hart Bleeker Diary, 26 March 1799, n.p.n.

¹⁹ To note just two examples, the author of the *Portfolio* article quoted in this chapter uses the phrase "naval architecture" to characterize Rush's work, while later in the century, the *New York Times* article written in 1890 by Frank Weitenkampf that is referred to several times uses both "wood sculptor" and "sign sculptor" to describe the shipcarvers who made shop figures.

²⁰ "Mrs. Barrow, as Minehaha," 305.

²¹ Weitenkampf, "Lo, The Wooden Indian," 13.

²² "Lo Takes a Spring Suit," 1.

²³ Weitenkampf, "Lo, The Wooden Indian," 13; Fried, 110.

²⁴ Fried, 195.

²⁵ Clemens, 235.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Manufacture of Dummy Indians," *Tobacco* 2 (12 November 1886): 2.

²⁸ W.A. Rogers, "In the Year Two Thousand," *Life* 7 (22 April 1886): 233-34.

²⁹ "Must the Indian Go," *Tobacco* 14 (3 March 1893): 4.

³⁰ "How to Decorate a Cigar Store I," *Tobacco* 4 (13 April 1888); "II," 4 (27 April 1888); "III," 5 (11 May 1888); "IV," 5 (1 June 1888).

³¹ "High Art at Conklin and Fox's," *Tobacco* 1 (27 August 1886): 3.

³² "Art and Tobacco," *Tobacco* 1 (30 July 1886): 2.

³³ *Tobacco* 4 (24 February 1888): 3.

³⁴ "Lo - The Poor Indian," *Tobacco* 4 (8 June 1888): 4-5.

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- ³⁵ "Lo on His Last Trail." *Tobacco* 10 (10 April 1891): 9.
- ³⁶ "Modern Advertising." *Tobacco* 17 (27 July 1894): 8.
- ³⁷ "Lo on His Last Trail." 9.
- ³⁸ "Art in Tobacco Shops," *Tobacco* 1 (22 October 1886): 3.
- ³⁹ "The Angelus," *Tobacco* 9 (16 May 1890): 1.
- ⁴⁰ Gilliams. 18.
- ⁴¹ Sanborn. 54.
- ⁴² "The Tobacconist's Sign," *Tobacco* 2 (8 April 1887): 2; Gilliams. 18.
- ⁴³ Robert J. Casey. "The Man Who Made Wooden Indians." in *Sidewalks of America*. ed. Benjamin A. Bodkin (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1954), 245; Sanborn. 63.
- ⁴⁴ Junkin. 17.
- ⁴⁵ "The Tobacconist's Sign." 2.
- ⁴⁶ "Lo on His Last Trail." 9.
- ⁴⁷ Gilliams. 18.
- ⁴⁸ "Is the Wooden Indian Passing Away?." *Tobacco* 34 (16 January 1903). 3.
- ⁴⁹ Morrison. *History of New York Ship Yards*. 155-56.
- ⁵⁰ Sheldon. 241; Brewington. 77.
- ⁵¹ Morrison. "Poor Lo Still Active," 40; Fried. 193.
- ⁵² Fried, 217-23, 231, 236-7.
- ⁵³ Fried. 237. Elizabeth Robb gave this figure to Frederick Fried before she died in 1967. It is now in a private collection, and is a promised gift to the Museum of American Folk Art.
- ⁵⁴ Fried. 238.
- ⁵⁵ Hamilton Easter Field's Ogunquit School of Painting and Sculpture, and its role in the rediscovery of American folk art among modernist artists and dealers, including Edith Halpert, is frequently mentioned in the literature. See especially Doreen Bolger, "Hamilton Easter Field and His Contribution to Modernism," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1988): 87-97, and Beatrix Rumford, "Uncommon Art of the Uncommon People: A Review of Trends in the Collecting and Exhibiting of American Folk Art," in *Perspectives on American Folk Art*, eds. Ian M.G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980), 14-15. Bolger gives the date of the founding of the School as 1911, while Rumford states that it was in 1913.
- See also Elsa Rogo, ed., *Hamilton Easter Field Collection of Paintings and Sculpture* (New York: College Art Association, 1930).

⁵⁶ The best discussion to date of the Nadelmans' museum is Elizabeth Stillinger, "Elie and Viola Nadelman's unprecedented Museum of Folk Arts," *Antiques* 146 (October 1994): 516-25. Ms. Stillinger has completed a book, *The Folk Art Idea: Collecting in America, 1876-1976*, which will be forthcoming in 2000.

⁵⁷ *American Folk Sculpture* (1931), 11, 25-38.

⁵⁸ Diane Tepfer, "Edith Gregor Halpert and the Downtown Gallery Downtown, 1926-1940: A Study in American Art Patronage" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1989), 48.

⁵⁹ Edward Alden Jewel, "'American Ancestors' Show," *New York Times*, 14 December 1931, 17, and "In the Realm of Art: 'Ancestors' and Other Matters," *New York Times*, 20 December 1931, pt. 8:10. See also Tepfer, 166.

"American Ancestors" was on view at the American Folk Art Gallery from December 9-31, 1931. It was not comprised entirely of folk art, as evidenced by the inclusion of Raphaele Peale's *After the Bath* or *Venus Rising From the Sea*. All in all, the exhibition was quite successful in serving Halpert's purpose of creating a link between nineteenth-century traditions and contemporary modernism. The following excerpt from "In the Realm of Art" is particularly significant because it demonstrates that many more modernist artists were aware of and interested in folk art than those relative few whose work shows a direct influence:

... The current exhibition is composed of material supplied by the Folk Art Gallery, and appears to be a great hit – especially with artists.... In the course of the first two days no fewer than 150 artists paid their respects to our American tradition, among them being Charles Sheeler, Stuart Davis, Niles Spencer, William and Marguerite Zorach, Alexander Brook, Glenn Coleman, Archele Gorky, Judson Smith, Joseph Pollet, Anne Goldthwaite, Bernard Karfoil and Max Weber. As for José Clemente Orozco, his praise seems to have been the most sweeping of all. He is reported to have declared, then and there, that the entire exhibition ought to be turned into a museum.

Favorites are being singled out. So far there are three: the landscape by Joseph Pickett, the "Peaceable Kingdom" by Edward Hicks and Raphaele Peale's amazing "After the Bath," which has been likened not alone to the old masters but also to Pierre Roy.... When Fernand Leger saw the Pickett landscape recently he is quoted as remarking that "Pickett had nothing to learn from Picasso and Braque" and that "The Peaceable Kingdom"... was the greatest painting he saw in America.

⁶⁰ These two figures are among the most celebrated examples of self-taught work. They were offered to Edith Halpert by A. Starnworth of the Boston Antiques Shop in 1933. For a number of years, they were in the Rudolf Haffenreffer Collection in Providence, Rhode Island. Herbert Hemphill acquired them in 1956, and they are now in the Hemphill Collection at the National Museum of American Art. See Lynda Roscoe Hartigan, *Made with Passion: The Hemphill Folk Art Collection in the National Museum of American Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1990), 15-17, 73, 84-85.

⁶¹ The attribution has been reached by consensus among curators and collectors who are familiar with the figure. Almost nothing is known about its history and original purpose.


⁶² Again, little is actually known about the history and original purpose of this well-known figure. It was found in an unrecorded town in the Mohawk River Valley and donated to the Museum of American Folk Art in 1964.

⁶³ A typical example of this is recorded in "I remember the old cigar store Indian at Pratt and Exeter." *Baltimore Sun Magazine*, 23 February 1969, 2. Its author, Mrs. Grenfall T. Kline, began the article as follows:

When strangers in the neighborhood would ask the way to this place or that, the youngsters used to tell them to go down the street until they saw a wooden Indian, and then take a left turn or a right turn.

The strangers were sometimes puzzled, but I think anybody who grew up on East Pratt street will recognize the neighborhood right away as that surrounding the corner of Pratt and Exeter streets. For the wooden Indian which stood in front of my two uncles' tobacco store was a well-known South Baltimore landmark.

THE
 Draught of this Frontispiece
 addressed
 for the Booke entitled
 THE SMOAKING AGE
 OR
 The Life and death of
 TOBACCO.

 Tobacco shop to life preferred.
 A Black-moor upon the Stall, with rolls of Tobacco-Drawing his Fetters, according to the nature and parts of the Country: viz. A great Portion of Tobacco formed in the manner of a Tobacco-pipe, and smoking it continually till it be consumed.

In the verge, are Negroes shadowed; fishing and diving for Pearle: Cased to an Island, expressed by this word, *Necocians*. Before the Part of Entrance of the Shop, a roundell globe or garland stuck full of Tobacco-pipe, with glasses, vials and other proper utensils, representing a Tobacco-shop to life.

Within the Shop, Particloses or Particlos.
 Three men discovered by a Curtaine, and presented to the halfebody; the first, distinguished by the name of Captaine WUFFS, with this impresa above his head; *Qui color aibor eras*: This person is described with an amazed or surprised countenance; meagre and gally; while he smokes down with these words issuing out of the small of the pipe: *Non est inuifera uita*. The second distinguished by the Name of Captaine PUFFS, with a long Tobacco-pipe at his mouth; with these words issuing out of his pipe: *Non est inuifera uita*.

*Quantum uisitas ab illo? with these words beeing out of his Pipe: *Non est inuifera uita*.*

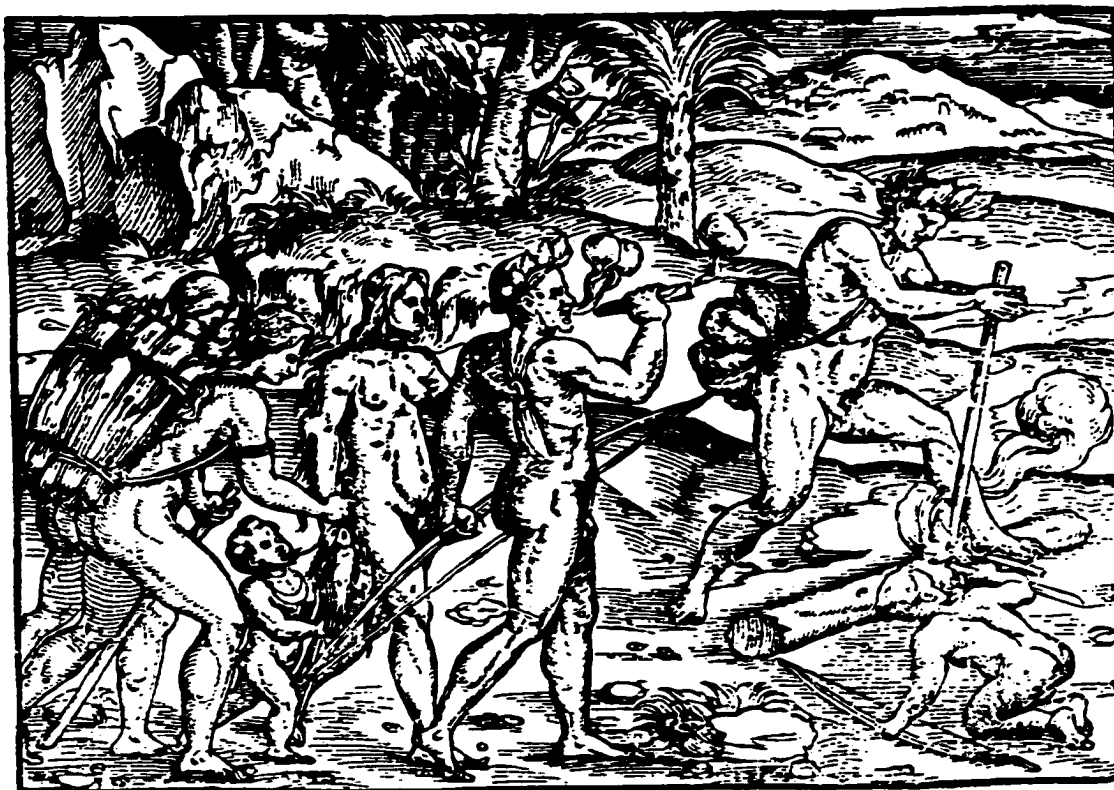
The Third distinguished by the name of Captaine SUFFS, is costumed to smoke issuing from his nose abundantly; holding his two Conforts loosely and heavingly; this impresse above his head, *Non est inuifera uita*; with these words beeing out of his pipe: *Non est inuifera uita*.

No other posture appropriate to these; but only leaving, as persons taken with M'grim, upon one another's shoulders.

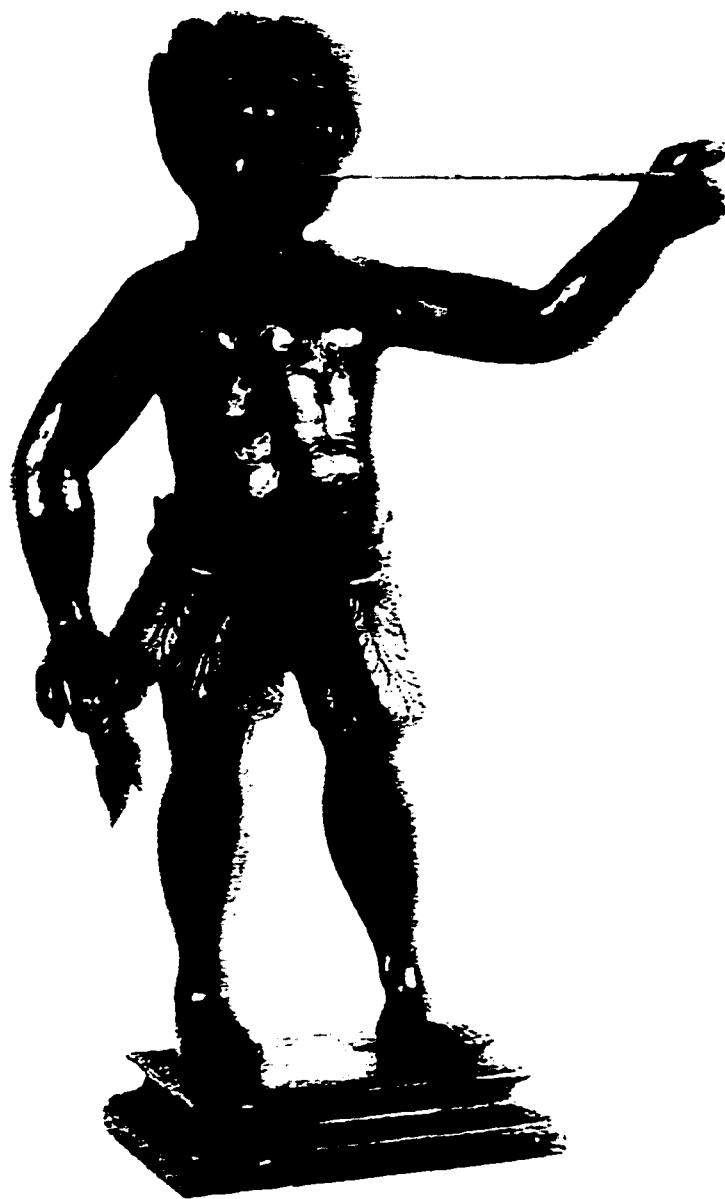
All which are to life described and carefully shadowed, as they shall be used to be farther explained.



1. Frontispiece to Richard Brathwait, *The Smoking Age, or The Life and Death of Tobacco*. London: E. Griffin. 1617.



2. Plate from André Thevet. *Les Singularities de la France Antartique*. Paris, 1557.



3. *Blackamoor with Pipe*, probably English, mid-eighteenth century. Painted wood, 36 x 23 x 12. Museum of American Folk Art, New York.



4. *Blackamoor with Keg*, probably English, mid-eighteenth century. Painted wood, 20½ x 12 x 6. Museum of American Folk Art, New York.



5. *America*, probably Nuremberg or Augsburg. ca. 1505. Woodcut.



6. Frontispiece to Theodor de Bry, *The Great Voyages* 9. Frankfort, 1602.



7. *Highlander*. Perth, Scotland, ca. 1910. Painted wood. 41 x 12 x 12. Private collection.



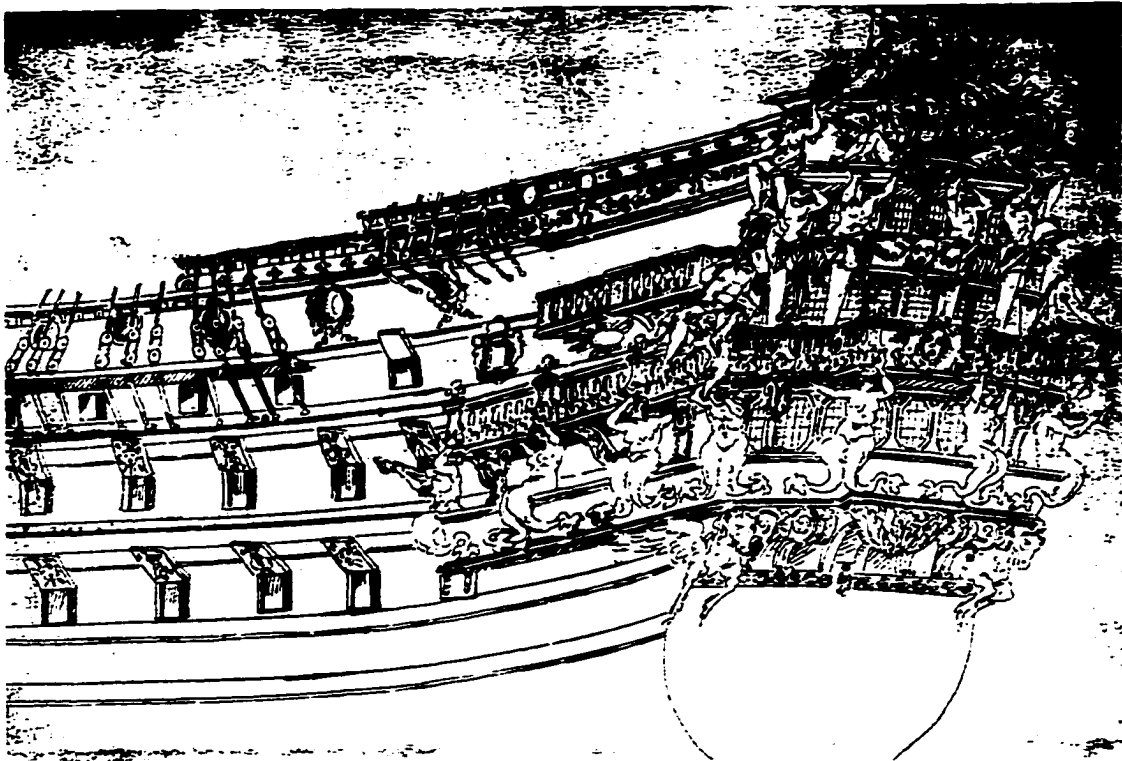
8. *The Little Admiral*, Boston, mid-eighteenth century. Painted wood, 42 x 32½.
Bostonian Society, Massachusetts.



9. *Bacchus on Keg*, Norwich, Connecticut, ca. 1776. Painted wood, 26½ x 15½ x 21. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.



10. Probably Christopher Demuth, *Colonial Man*, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, ca. 1795.
Painted wood, approximately 32 H. Demuth's Tobacco Shop, Lancaster.

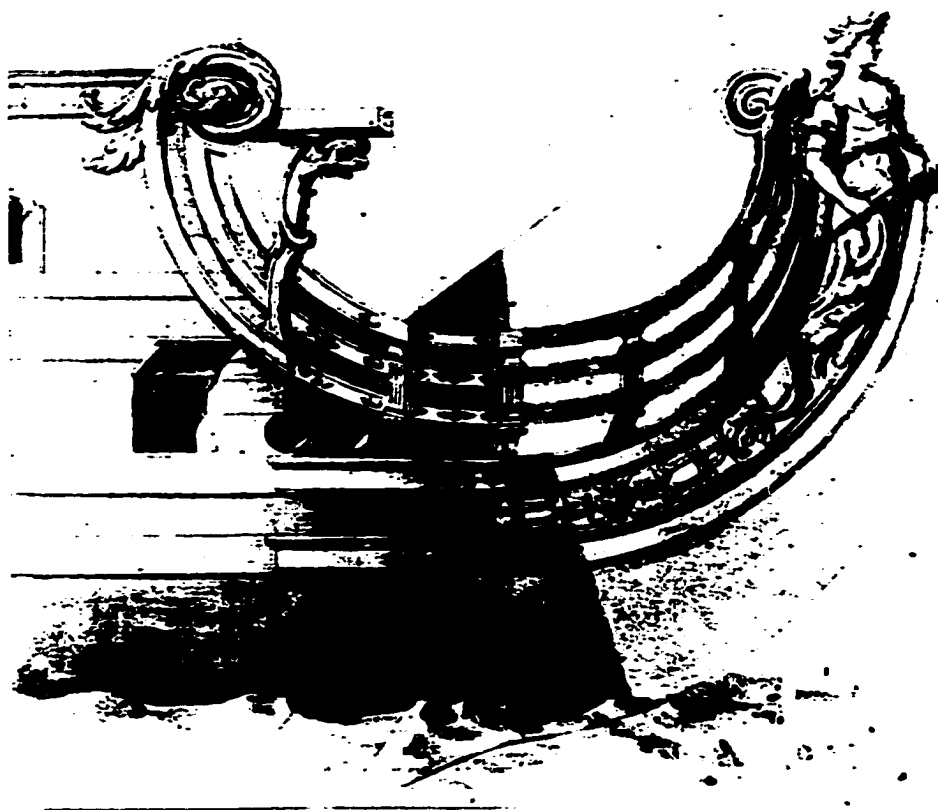


11. Pierre Puget, drawing for the Stern of the *Monarque*, ca. 1670.

PROUE DU VAISSEAU LE BRILLANT

5. Rang

*Dessein de la sculpture de l'antenne de ce V. S. S. S. S.
 par M. de la Cour de Gisors, en 1690. par M. de la Cour de Gisors.
 par M. de la Cour de Gisors, en 1690. par M. de la Cour de Gisors.*



12. Drawing for the prow of *Le Brillant*, Paris, 1690.



13. Samuel McIntire, *Model for a Figurehead*, Salem, Massachusetts, ca. 1800. Painted wood, 26 H. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem.



14. John Skillin and Simeon Skillin, Jr., *Mercury*, Boston, 1793. Painted wood, 38 x 18 x 19. Bostonian Society, Massachusetts.



15. William Rush, *Peace*, Philadelphia, ca. 1805-10. Painted pine. 70 x 24½ x 27½.
Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



16. Isaac Fowle. *Lady with a Scarf*. Boston, ca. 1820. Painted wood, 74 x 18.
Bostonian Society, Massachusetts.



LEVI L. CUSHING,
CARVER,

No 79, Broad Street, opposite Custom House Street,
BOSTON.

Orders for carved work of any description will be attended to with fidelity and despatch.

L. L. Cushing continues the above business in Poplar Street, as usual, where orders will meet with prompt attention. N. B....Models of any kind executed at the shortest notice.

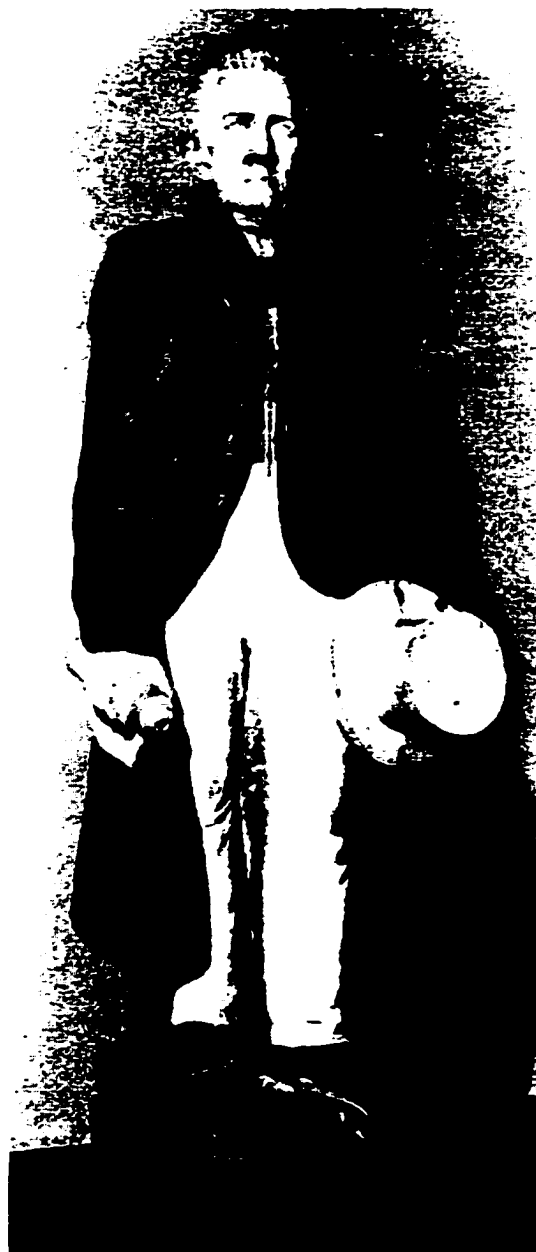


Engraved and Printed by N. Dearborn, 20, State Street.

17. Trade card of Levi Cushing, Boston, ca. 1825. American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



18. Jeremiah Dodge and Cornelius Sharp, *Hercules* for the USS Ohio, New York City, 1820. Painted wood, approximately 42 H. Stony Brook Village Association, Long Island, New York.



19. Laban Beecher and Jeremiah Dodge, *Andrew Jackson* for the USS Constitution, Boston and New York City, 1834. Painted wood, 118 H. Museum of the City of New York.



20. Charles J. Dodge, *Jeremiah Dodge*, New York City, ca. 1835. Painted wood, 27½ x 17 x 11½. New-York Historical Society, New York.



21. John W. Mason, drawing for the *Queen of Sheba*, Boston, ca. 1850. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.



22. Jacob Anderson, *David Crockett*, New York City, 1853. Painted wood, 82 x 26 x 30.
San Francisco Maritime Historical Park, California.



23. Deck figure for the steamboat *Albany*, probably New York City, ca.1849. Painted wood. 78 H. Museum of the City of New York.



24. *Personification of Time*, probably Essex County, Massachusetts, ca. 1837. Wood, 20½ x 11 x 9½. Heritage Plantation Museum of Sandwich, Massachusetts.



25. *Sailor*, New York City, ca. 1860. Painted wood, 75 x 25 x 12. New-York Historical Society, New York.



26. *Jack Tar*, northeastern United States, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 29½ x 42 x 15.
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.



27. *Jack Tar*, northeastern United States, ca. 1845. Painted wood, 86½ H.
Private collection.



28. *Sailor with Binnacle*, New York City, 1851-65. Painted wood, brass and glass, 55 x 18 x 25. Museum of the City of New York.



29. *Man with Spyglass*, New England, ca. 1850. Painted wood, 49 x 14½ x 26¼.
Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut.



30. Attributed to Samuel King, *The Little Navigator*, Newport, Rhode Island, ca. 1810.
Painted wood, 24 x 8 x 11½. New Bedford Whaling Museum, Massachusetts.



31. Shop of James Fales, Jr. New Bedford, Massachusetts, ca. 1870. Photograph in the collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, Massachusetts.



32. Baroness Hyde de Neuville, *Corner of Greenwich Street, Janvier 1810*, 1810.
Watercolor on paper, 7 5/16 x 13 1/16. I.N. Phelps Stokes Collection,
New York Public Library.




33. *Indian*, New York City or Albany, ca. 1810. Painted wood, 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 16.
Private collection.

West Park by the Lakes,
 15 to 2000 Old Water,
 100 ft. Fall in to the right, and
 200 ft. in the stream.
 All of the above will be sold by exchange or
 exchanged for country produce.

G. W. STANTON.

March 25

Tobacco and Snuff Store,
 No. 346, North Market-Street,
 Opposite the Store of Dudley Walsh & Co at the
 sign of the Indian Chief and head of Tobacco.
 CALDWELL & SOLOMONS,



INFORM their friends and the public, that they have at all times on hand, for sale, on the most reasonable terms, by wholesale and retail, of their own manufacture, and which they warrant of the very first quality—

Sweet scented Plug Tobacco, 6 and 8 hands to the lb.
 Pintall Tobacco, in 12 lb. rolls and bags, of 1-1/2 lb. and 1-8 lb. rolls.
 do. do.
 Large and small papers fine cut.
 Large and small papers of common do.
 Fine and common do.
 Large papers and bags of do.
 Spanish, Brazil, and American Vegara,
 Brazil, Meccoba, Scented, coarse and fine
 Rappee, &c.
 Lard, &c.
 Casul Tobacco, and North West Twist.
 Cheesie, Pearl, Holly, Split Peck, and Co.
 and Snuff.

34. Advertisement for Caldwell & Solomons Tobacco and Snuff Store, *Albany Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, November 17, 1817.



35. Benjamin West, *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*, 1771-72. Oil on canvas, 75½ x 107¾. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia.



36. Edward Hicks, *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*, 1840-44. Oil on canvas, 24¼ x 30 1/8.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



37. *Chief Blackhawk*, probably New York City, ca. 1848-55. Painted wood, 80½ x 26½ x 19. Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Massachusetts.



38. Attributed to William Rush, *Mercury*, Philadelphia, ca. 1830. Painted wood, 38 x 10½ x 15. Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.



39. Eugène Delacroix, *Les Natchez*, 1824-35. Oil on canvas. 35½ x 46.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



40. Thomas Crawford, *Dying Chief Contemplating the Progress of Civilization*, 1856.
Marble, 55 H. New-York Historical Society, New York.



41. Albrecht Dürer, *Melancholia I*, 1514. Engraving, 9 3/8 x 7 1/2.



42. John Vanderlyn, *The Death of Jane McCrea*, 1803. Oil on canvas, 32½ x 26½.
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut.



HIAWATHA'S DEPARTURE

43. *Hiawatha's Departure*, 1868. Lithograph, 15 x 20½. Published by Currier & Ives, New York.



44. Matthew Brady, *Edwin Forrest as Metamora*, 1861. Modern albumen silver print from glass-plate negative, 20 x 17. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



45. *Metamora*, probably Philadelphia, ca. 1860. Painted wood, 78 x 20 x 22½.
Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.



46. *Breneiser Chief*, probably New York or Philadelphia, ca. 1860. Painted wood.
approximately 78 H. Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, Pennsylvania.



47. Attributed to John Cromwell. *Indian*. New York City, ca. 1855. Painted wood, 81 x 25 x 25. Private collection.



48. *Maltzberger Indian*, probably New York City, ca. 1845. Painted wood, 44 x 16 x 19.
Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, Pennsylvania.



49. *Indian*, probably New York City, ca. 1845. Painted wood. 44 x 12 x 10.
Private collection.



50. *McAlpin Indian*, New York City, ca. 1845. Painted wood, approximately 62 H.
Museum of the City of New York.



51. Incised on base: "Robb Carver 114 Centre St.," *Indian*. New York City, 1888-1903.
Painted wood. 71½ x 15 x 21. Private collection.



52. Workshop of Samuel Robb. 195 Canal Street. New York City, ca. 1879. Photograph in the Frederick Fried Folk Art Archive. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.



53. Incised on base: "S.A. Robb. Carver. 195 Canal St. NY." *Indian*. New York City. 1876-88. Painted wood, 77 x 19 x 22. New-York Historical Society. New York.



54. Incised on base: SA Robb Manu'f. 195 Canal St., *Indian and Child*. New York City. 1876-88. Painted wood. 80 x 22 x 18. Museum Village. Monroe. New York.



55. Attributed to Robb workshop. *Indian with Pipe*. New York City, ca. 1880. Painted wood, 78 x 22 x 22. National Museum of American History. Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.



56. Indian attributed to Thomas Brooks. Photograph in the Frederick Fried Folk Art Archive, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



57. Incised on base: "Robb Manu'fr. 114 Centre St. NY." *Indian*. New York City, 1888-1903. Painted wood, 79 x 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



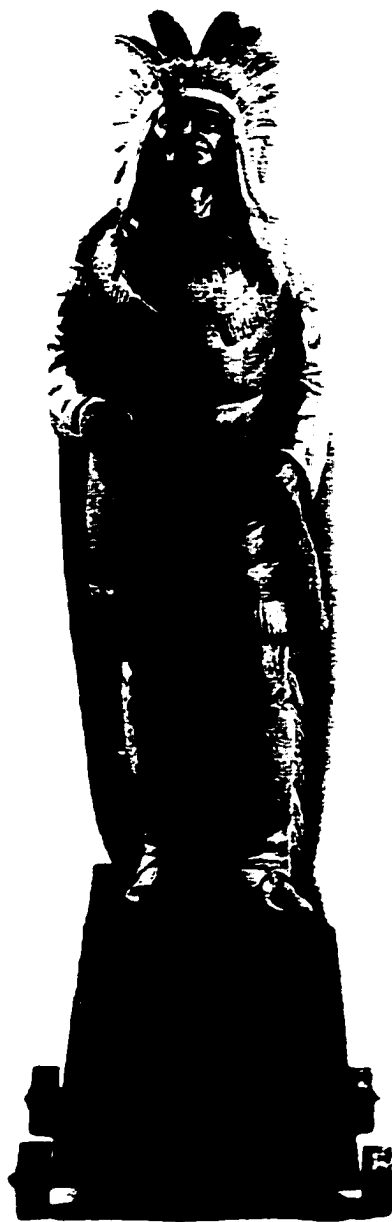
58. *Seated Indian*, New York City. ca. 1863-77. Painted wood. 75 x 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 42 $\frac{1}{2}$.
Brooklyn Historical Society, New York.



59. *Indian*, probably New York City. ca. 1870. Painted wood. 70 ½ x 16 ¼ x 21.
Shelburne Museum, Vermont.



60. Incised on base: "Robb 114 Centre St. N.Y.." *Indian*, New York City. 1888-1903.
Painted wood, 81 x 20½ x 23. Albany Institute of History and Art, New York.



61. Charles Brown. *Indian Chief*. New York City, ca. 1890. Painted wood, 72 x 20 x 22.
Private Collection.



62. John Philip Yaeger. *Tobacconist's Figure*, Baltimore, ca. 1879. Painted wood.
56½ H. Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.



63. William Rumney, *Andrew Jackson*, Boston, ca. 1860. Painted pine. 78 x 29 x 19.
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



64. Attributed to David Proctor. *Indian*. Salem, Massachusetts, 1855-65. Painted wood, 55 ½ x 17 x 17. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.



65. John Halley Bellamy, *Eagle* for the USS Lancaster. Kittery Point, Maine, 1880.
Painted wood, 120 x 232. Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Virginia.



66. Attributed to Louis Jobin. *Indian*. Quebec. ca. 1885. Painted wood, 75 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 22. Shelburne Museum. Shelburne. Vermont.



67. Attributed to Julius Melchers, *Fur Trapper*, Detroit, Michigan. ca. 1865. Painted wood, 46 x 19 x 12½. New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.



68. Attributed to Julius Melchers, *Keokuk*, Detroit, Michigan, ca. 1870. Painted wood, 92 H. New-York Historical Society, New York.



69. Arnold Ruef, *Seneca John*, Tiffin, Ohio, ca. 1870. Painted wood. 81 H.
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.



70. *Trapper Indian*, eastern United States or Canada, ca. 1850. Painted wood, 42¾ H.
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection, Williamsburg, Virginia.



71. *Indian Trapper*. northeastern United States or Canada. mid-nineteenth century.
Painted wood. 38 x 10 x 9¼. National Museum of American History.
Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.



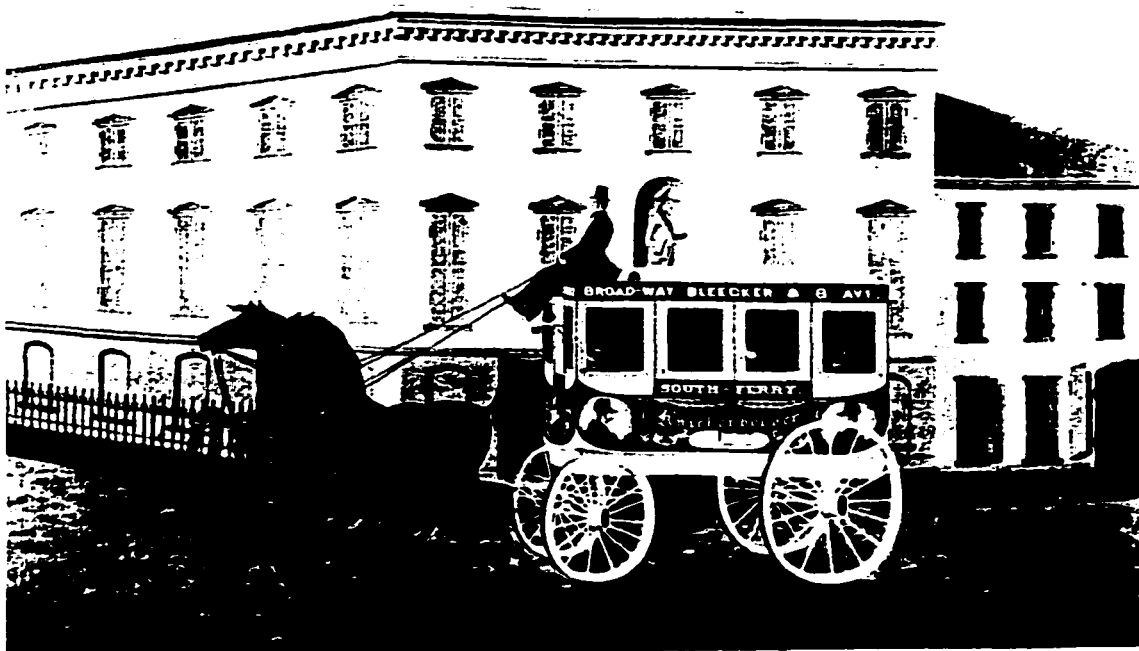
72. Attributed to Job, *African-American Indian*. Freehold. New Jersey. mid-nineteenth century. Painted wood, 46 x 16¼ x 12¼. New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.



73. *Indian*, eastern United States, ca. 1875. Painted wood. 82 x 26 x 24.
General Cigar Holdings Collection, New York.



74. *Father Knickerbocker*. New York City, ca. 1850-69. Painted wood. 36 x 12 x 9½.
New-York Historical Society, New York.



75. William Seaman, *Knickerbocker Stage Line Omnibus*, ca. 1850. Oil on canvas, 28¾ x 36. New-York Historical Society, New York.

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76. Advertisement for William Demuth and Company, New York, 1871. Lithograph.
 National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



77. Plate on base: "Wm. Demuth & Co.," *Rising Star*, New York City, ca. 1880. Painted zinc, 79 x 18 x 18. General Cigar Holdings Collection, New York.



78. *Theatrical Figure*, probably New York City, ca. 1880. Painted wood, 61 H.
Private collection.



79. *Turk*, probably New York City, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 78 x 27 x 27.
Private collection.



80. *Sultana*, probably New York City, ca. 1875. Painted wood, approximately 66 H.
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.



81. *Turk*, probably New York City or Philadelphia. ca. 1875. Painted wood, 77 x 28 x 35.
Museum of American Folk Art, New York.



82. *Turk*, possibly Monmouth County, New Jersey, ca. 1880. Painted wood, approximately 32 H. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.



83. *Highlander*, probably New York City. ca. 1875. Painted wood, 89 x 20 x 25.
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.



84. *Highland Lassie*, probably New York City, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 71 x 21 x 19.
Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, Pennsylvania.



85. *Chinese Woman*. probably New York City, ca. 1875. Painted wood. 6¾ H.
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.



86. *Chinese Man*, probably New York City, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 66½ H.
Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.



87. Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*. 1847. Marble. 65½ H. Newark Museum.
Newark, New Jersey.



88. *Woman with Dove*, possibly Massachusetts. 1850-90. Painted wood, 58 x 15½ x 15½.
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



89. *Flora* or *Spring*, probably New York City. 1840-80. Painted wood. 54 x 17 x 18.
Private Collection.



90. Attributed to William Demuth and Company, *America*. New York City, ca. 1880.
Painted zinc, 81 x 19 x 19. Private Collection.



91. Incised on base: "Robb Manu'fr. 114 Centre St. NY," *Puck*, New York City, 1888-1903. Painted wood, 75½ x 24 x 30. Hudson River Museum of Westchester, Yonkers, New York.



92. *Punch*, possibly New York or New Jersey, ca. 1880. Painted wood. 68 x 24 x 26.
Mercer Museum. Doylestown, Pennsylvania.



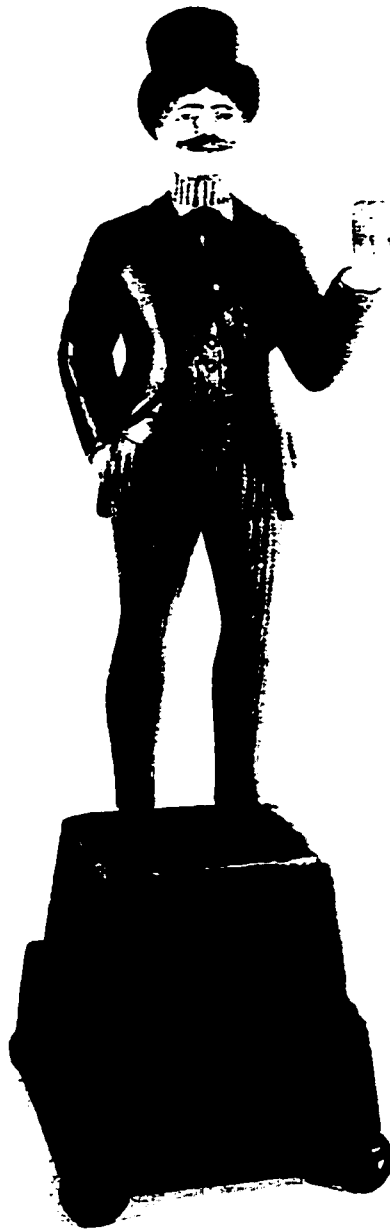
93. *Gambrinus, King Lager*, northeastern United States. ca. 1880. Painted wood, 64 x 20 x 21. Private Collection.



94. *Girl of the Period*. New York City, ca. 1870. Painted wood. 68 x 24 ½ x 22.
New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.



95. *Milliner's Figure*. northeastern United States, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 62 ½ H.
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Washington, D.C.



96. *Dude*, probably New York City or Chicago, ca. 1880. Painted wood. 84 x 22 x 28.
Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Massachusetts.



97. Possibly Thomas White, *Captain Jinks*, New York City, ca. 1880. Painted wood, 75 x 17 x 17. Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.



98. *Colonel Sellers*, probably Sellersville, Pennsylvania, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 52 x 10½ x 12. New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.



99. J. Gurney and Son, *George L. Fox as Humpty Dumpty*, New York, ca. 1865.
Photograph in the Theatre Arts Library, University of Texas at Austin.



100. *George L. Fox as Humpty Dumpty*, northeastern United States, ca. 1870. Painted wood, approximately 72 H. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia.



101. *George L. Fox as Humpty Dumpty*, northeastern United States, ca. 1870. Painted wood, 71 x 23½ x 23½. Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Massachusetts.



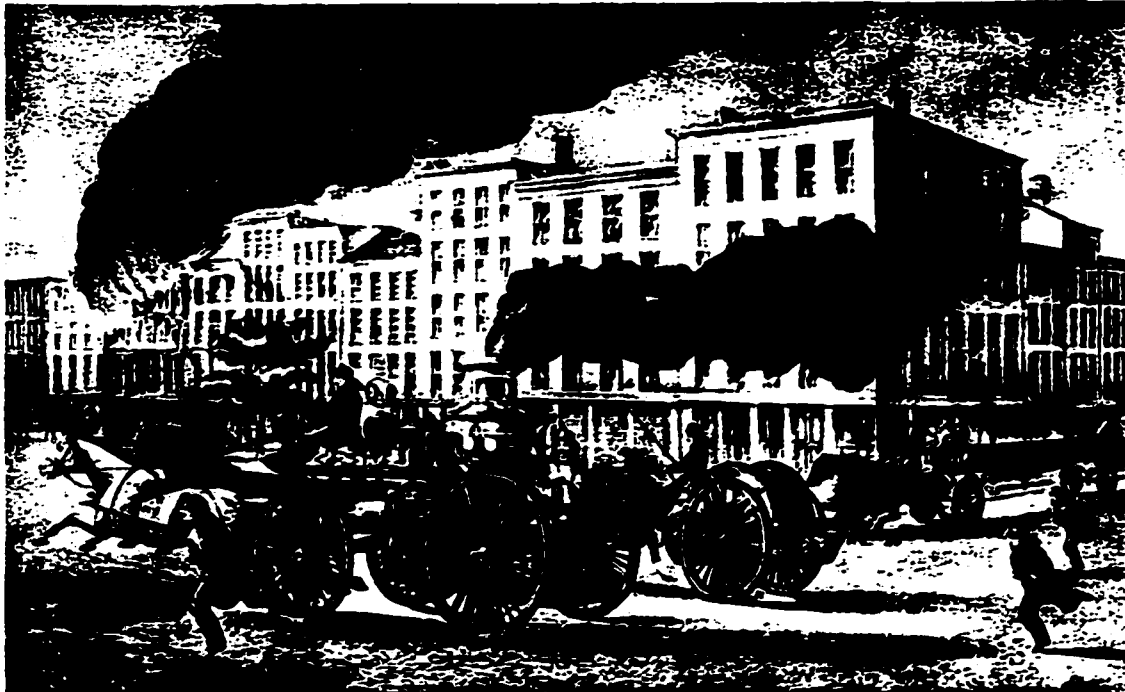
102. *Black Man*, eastern United States, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 61 x 27 x 29.
Mercer Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.



103. *Mantz's Minstrel*. eastern United States, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 51 x 19 x 24.
Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.



104. *Reverend Campbell*, probably Chicago, ca. 1880. Painted wood, approximately 96 H. New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown.



THE LIFE OF A FIREMAN

105. *The Life of a Fireman, The Metropolitan System*, 1866. Lithograph. 17½ x 26¾.
Published by Currier & Ives, New York.



106. *Harry Howard*, New York City, ca. 1860. Painted wood. 91 H.
New-York Historical Society, New York.



107. Incised on Base: "S.A. Robb, 195 Canal St.," *Volunteer Fireman*, New York City, 1876-88. Painted wood, 35 x 11 x 19. New York City Fire Museum, New York.



108. *Fireman with Child*, probably New Orleans, ca. 1885. Painted wood, 54½ x 28 x 30. Mercer Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.



109. Incised on base: "Robb. 114 Centre St. NY." *Baseball Player*, New York City. 1888-1903. Painted wood, 85¼ H. Heritage Plantation Museum of Sandwich, Massachusetts.



110. *Baseball Player*, probably New York City, ca. 1875. Painted wood, 70 ½ H.
Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire.



111. *General Butler*, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, ca. 1880. Painted wood, 31 x 13 x 11.
Private collection.



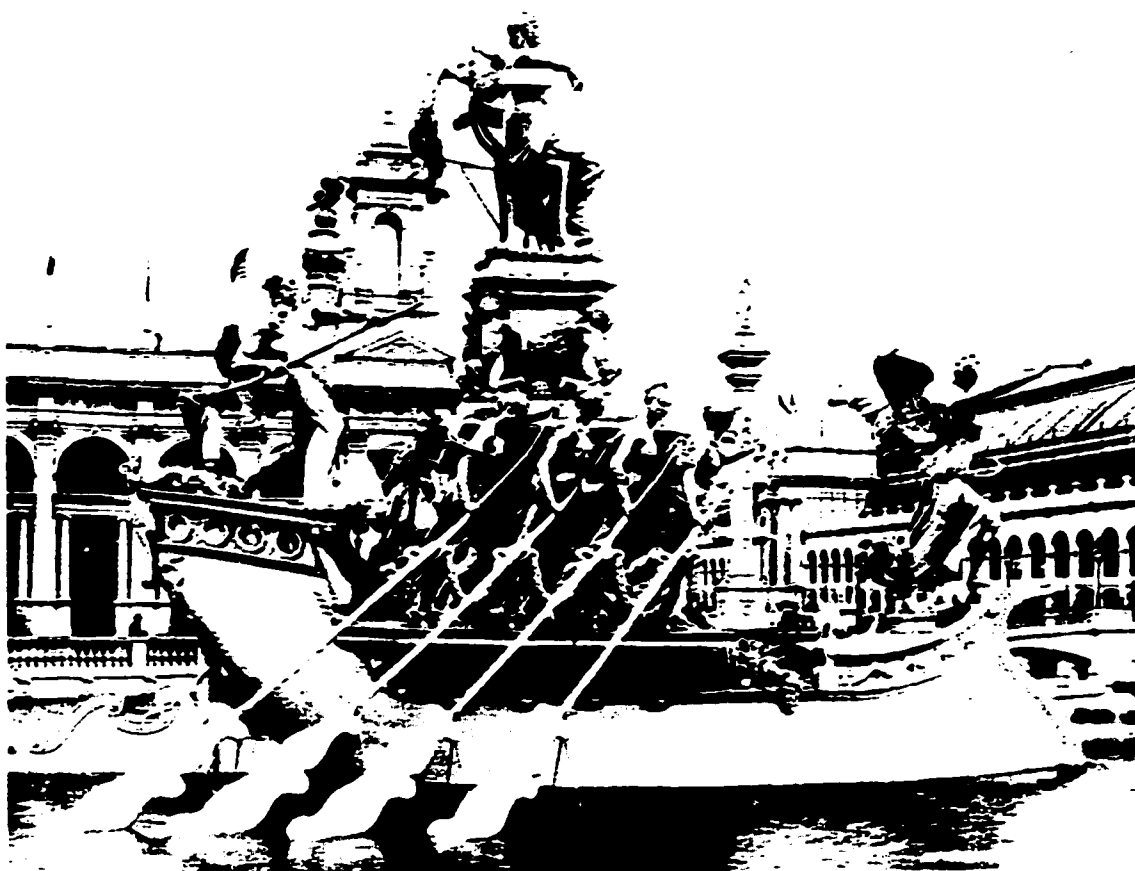
112. *George Washington, Pennsylvania, mid-nineteenth century. Painted wood, 33 x 9 x 9. Private collection.*



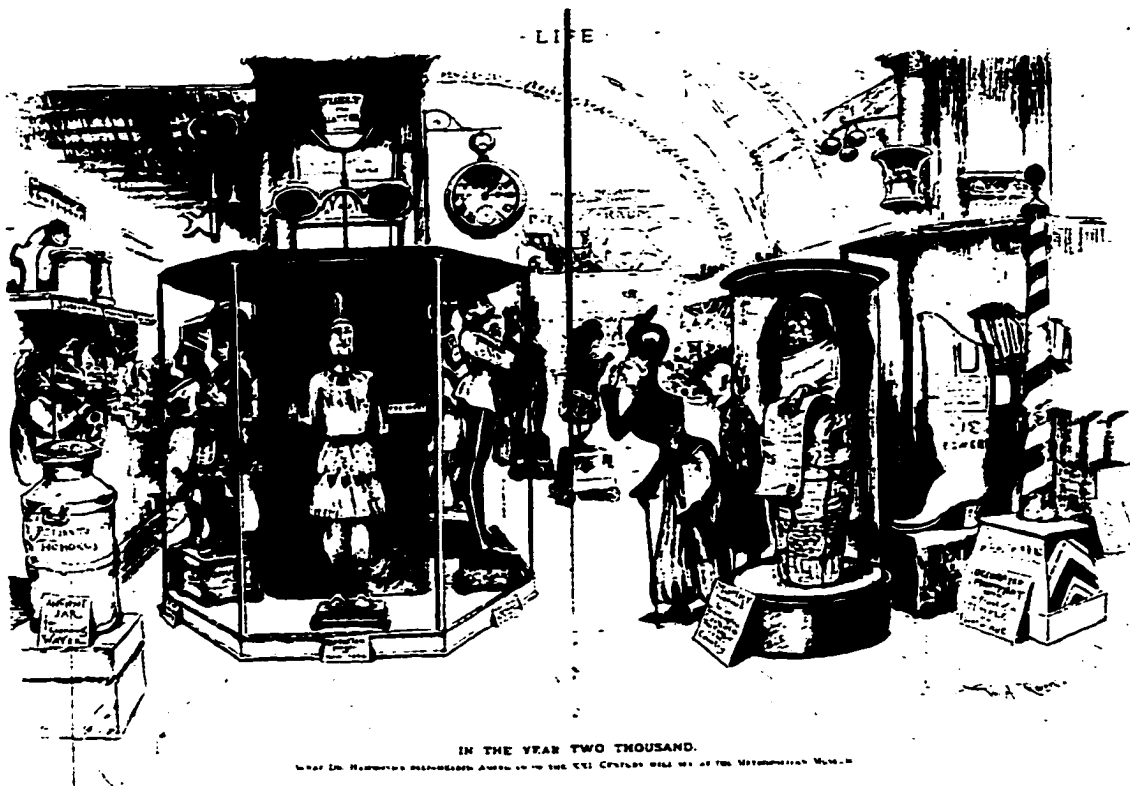
113. *George Washington*, probably New York City. ca. 1820-40. Painted wood. 106 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 43 x 37. Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington.



114. Charles Graham. "The Washington Arch at Fifth Avenue and Washington Square,"
Harper's Weekly 33 (May 4, 1889): 343.



115. Frederick MacMonnies, *Barge of State or Triumph of Columbia*, 1893.
Staff material. Destroyed.



116. W.A. Rogers. "In the Year Two Thousand." *Life* 7 (April 22, 1886): 233-34.



117. Samuel Robb, *Santa Claus*, New York City, 1923. Painted wood, 39 x 16 x 19.
Private collection.



118. *Indian Trapper*, eastern United States, 1860-1910. Painted wood and metal, 60¼ x 29 x 19. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



119. *Indian*, eastern United States, 1860-1910. Painted wood and metal, 48 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{4}$. National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



120. *Indian*, eastern United States, 1860-1919. Painted wood. 54 1/2 x 13 7/8 x 14 1/2.
Private collection.



121. *Father Time*, Mohawk River Valley, New York, ca. 1910. Painted wood, metal and hair. 52¼ x 13¾ x 14½. Museum of American Folk Art, New York.

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