



Noyes
Museum of Art
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

Education Guide: Extended

March 13 – September 11, 2020

Estell Empire: Ships, Settlements, Suffrage, and Society

- **Opening Reception:**
Third Thursday, Date TBD,
5:00 – 7:00 pm
- **Lunch & Learn: Date TBD**
- **Public Sightseeing Tour:**
Date TBD, 12:00 – 6:00 pm



Thomas Gordon, *A Map of the State of New Jersey with Part of the Adjoining States*, Engraved by H. S. Tanner, E. B. Dawson and W. Allen (Trenton: Thomas Gordon; Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1828)

OVERVIEW *Estell Empire* tells the fascinating story of the Estell family of New Jersey: a story of ships, settlements, the 1600s, to New Jersey’s first female mayor Rebecca Estell Bourgeois. The Estells’ commercial ventures evolved over time in a succession of industries using the natural resources of their vast estate: from harvesting and milling lumber, making charcoal and pitch, to glassmaking and establishing immigrant farming settlements, among other endeavors. Many pieces on exhibition were owned by the family, including portraits, fine china, and silverware, as well as artifacts such as a ledger book and handwritten letters.

The first of the Estells to arrive in America were the brothers Daniel, William, and Thomas. Their younger brother, Daniel Estell, arrived from England in 1671 and acquired 271 acres in what is now Monmouth County. That land was sold in 1687 by John Estell, Daniel’s son, who then acquired approximately 20,000 acres of property, covering much of what is now known as Estell Manor and Dorothy. John’s son, named Daniel after his father, married Margaret Browning, a member of one of the original Dutch families of “West Jersey.” Possibly the most celebrated of the family line was Captain Joseph Estell, who was commissioned in 1777 and served during the Revolutionary War. After Captain Joseph, there came another John, another Daniel, and Anne E. Estell, who became the wife of Anderson Bourgeois, a political leader in Weymouth Township. Anne and Anderson were the parents of the last member of this branch of the family, Rebecca Estell Bourgeois.

EARLY ESTELLS

The Estell family name can be traced to the French *d'Estelle* (possibly derived from *d'Esail*) going back to the 11th century, at the time that William the Conqueror ascended to power in England. They were Huguenots (Calvinist Protestants) who fled from France to the Netherlands, England, and eventually to America to escape persecution by the Roman Catholics. There is mention of a Jean Andre d'Estelle, a nobleman, marrying Jeanette Pastier in 1525 in Provence, France. In the nearby town of Marseilles, there is a street called Rue Estelle. In 1572, Balthazar d'Estelle, a direct descendant of Jean and Jeanette, fled France after the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572. It is believed that Balthazar escaped to the Netherlands as there is a record dated 1625, at Stuys in Zeeland, of his presence at a baptism where he was named the godfather of a child.

From there, the Estells fled to England and eventually America. John Estell was born in 1636 in Langdale, England. By this time his three brothers, Daniel, William, and Thomas Estell had already immigrated to America. There are records locating the Estell brothers in other states before they came to New Jersey; Thomas appears as a witness to James Lane in Malden, Middlesex County, Massachusetts in 1662. There is a Dutch record on Long Island, dated 1662, that shows Daniel exchanged a promissory note with Nicolaes DeMayer for 58 guilders and 17 stivers.

In 1664, the three brothers joined a group of settlers from Long Island to establish a colony at Middletown, Monmouth County. Daniel Estell became the more well-known of the brothers as he was the signer of the original patent for the colony, which was 274 acres. John did not arrive in New Jersey until 1677, and by this time he was a yeoman in England. By some accounts, John received land grants for what became Estellville. John purchased additional land in Weymouth Township, augmenting the original grants. John had at least one son, also named John, and by 1729 this John was one of the largest landowners in Atlantic County.

John, in turn, had two sons; John and Joseph. John Estell was born in 1720 and married Ruhamah Conover in circa 1750. Together they built a house which later became the home of the South River Game Preserve Club. John and Ruhamah had five children, one of whom was Joseph Estell. John died in 1780.

Joseph Estell married Elizabeth Risley in 1771. Joseph was a captain in the third battalion for Gloucester County, New Jersey, commissioned on September 8, 1777, and served during the Revolutionary War. Captain Joseph and Elizabeth had a son, John Estell in 1780. Captain Joseph died on May 29, 1792.



The house built by John Estell, c. 1750
Photo: Atlantic County Historical Society



The Estell Manor Mansion, built by Daniel E. Estell in 1832, is now the site of the Atlantic County Veterans Museum.

John Estell married Martha Knowles in 1802. The children of John and Martha were Martha K. and Daniel E. Estell. Daniel and his first wife, Maria Inglis West, built the Estell Manor mansion in 1832, which stands to this day repurposed as the Atlantic County Veterans Museum.

DANIEL E. AND JOHN ESTELL

John Estell and his two sons Daniel E. Estell and John Estell (who were half brothers) were the driving forces behind industry in Estellville in the 1800s.

Father John owned a successful trade company, John Estell and Son, and worked closely with coastal towns in the region. Daniel, described as an “energetic and successful businessman,” co-owned the Estellville Glass Works from 1836 - 1858 with his brother John. Daniel oversaw all major aspects of industries in Estellville, including the shipping of timber, corn, and various other products, but the high demand for window glass and other manufactured products in big cities are what made him extremely successful.

He corresponded regularly with trading partners in

New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston, as well as many other glassworks in South Jersey.



Ruins of the Estellville Glassworks, photograph
Photo: Atlantic County Historical Society

SHIPS

Three documents in this exhibition describe the schooner BENJAMINE. VALENTINE, one of Daniel E. Estell’s trading vessels, on a voyage delivering cargo of corn meal and rye flour from Philadelphia to New York City. What began as a routine trip for the schooner and its captain, William M. Phillips, quickly spiraled out of control. Having loaded the shipment at the port of Philadelphia and set sail for New York City, the VALENTINE, sailing during the heart of winter, was caught at sea in a week-long nor’easter gale in January 1831. The ship’s perilous voyage culminated in an expensive loss of cargo, time, and necessary ship repairs.

On January 13th, having completed a three-day voyage down the ice-choked Delaware River, the ship’s crew attempted to take the schooner up the New Jersey coast to New York Harbor. But gale-force winds of a nor’easter drove the schooner farther and farther down the Atlantic coast and away from its intended destination. The captain and crew continuously battled winds, waves and ice throughout the next few days, making and taking in the sails, battening down the hatches, and futilely attempting to turn northward. At 8:00 a.m. on January 15th, the winds increased and carried away the jib, jibboom, and bowsprit, along with other sails. Three hours later, the schooner lost part of its deck cargo and the jolly boat (a small skiff) hanging from davits off the stern. The starboard bower anchor broke loose and dropped from the bow into the raging ocean, causing a drag and imperiling the ship in the midst of the storm. Captain Phillips ordered the crew to cut the rope attached to the anchor to preserve the vessel. While engaged in cutting this rope at the bow, the rudder head at the



Amos Lay Map, 1834 - Showing intended versus actual route of schooner BENJAMINE. VALENTINE, South Jersey Collection – Stockton University

schooner's stern split and the body of the rudder sprung in its brackets, making navigation far more difficult. The following day, the sustained winds blew at gale force and beyond and, at 10:00 a.m., the BENJAMIN E. VALENTINE lost its top gaff sail. On January 24th, Captain Phillips scanned the shoreline and found the schooner was off Hog Island, located along the lower eastern shore of Virginia. After consulting the crew, the decision was made to sail for the nearest port for repairs. The BENJAMIN E. VALENTINE completed this voyage on April 26, never reaching its original destination of Manhattan.

The documents shown in this exhibition helped to establish the details of the voyage as well as damage to ship and cargo for insurance purposes. Daniel E. Estell had insured the ship and was reimbursed for \$907.72 in damages and repairs.

EARLY INDUSTRIES: SHIPBUILDING, TIMBER, & GLASS

The harvesting of timber, because of its multiple uses, was an industry crucial to the early success of Estellville. Thousands of acres of trees on Estell land were an abundant and readily available resource for use in every industry. Notably, barrel hoops were made from white oak stump-sprouts due to the long shoots enduring and flexible nature. Pine trees were especially valued for producing pitch, tar, turpentine and charcoal production. Oak and pine charcoal was important as it fueled iron furnaces and forges or was also sent to Philadelphia and New York City to be refined for household use. White cedar shingles were popular in these cities as well because of the wood's resistance to rotting. In addition, oakum, used to seal cracks in ships, was made from sisal and hemp roping and infused with tar or pitch.

Timber production was critical to the shipping industry in Estellville. Multiple shipyards in Mays Landing and along the Great Egg Harbor River reveal a thriving industry. Trees, of course, contributed to all aspects of wooden shipbuilding. Locally-built ships carried essential goods from Estellville, including grain, glass, wood, and other valuable materials to cities all along the Eastern Seaboard.

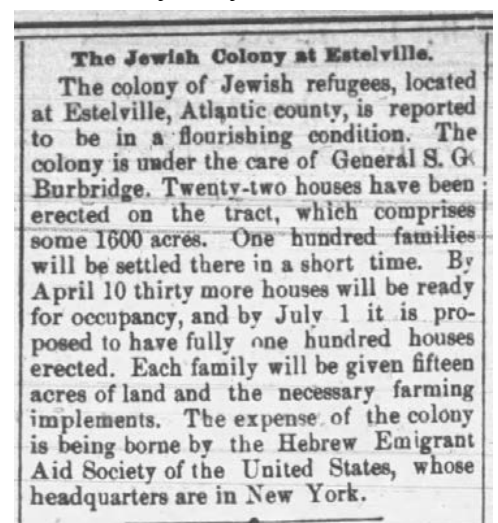
Along with the commercial successes of shipping came risk and misfortune. THE TWO SISTERS wrecked on the coast of New York in July of 1834. Four years later, in November 1840, the schooner GRANGER sank with all hands on board while carrying a cargo of charcoal.

From accounts and letters, it is clear that window glass was the mainstay of the Estells' success during the late 1830s through the 1850s, when ownership of the glasshouse changed. Their factory was producing a large amount of glass that was in high demand in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Boston. The Estellville window-glass trade had four brand names: *Greenwood* and *Extra Greenwood*, their top-grade products; *Weymouth*, named after the nearby Weymouth Iron Furnace; and *Atlantic*, considered the least expensive grade. One ledger shows that in a period of one month, they sold 473 boxes totaling sales of \$2,146.10. For the time period, that amount was impressive.

SETTLEMENTS

BURBRIDGE COLONY

The Burbridge Colony of Estellville, spanning the years 1882-1883, remains a relatively forgotten and short-lived piece of local history. The colony, initiated by former Civil War General S. G. Burbridge and partners, was established to provide a community for Jewish refugees who had emigrated from Russia. Through the help of the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society (HEAS) in New York,



refugees were placed in Estellville with the belief that they would be able to thrive independently in the area. Approximately twenty families from the Alliance colony adjacent to the city of Vineland became the first to settle in Burbridge.

Through the support of the HEAS, Jewish refugee families were each given a fifteen-acre plot of land and the tools necessary for survival. Houses were ready-built and fully furnished, including kitchen ware, farming tools, domestic animals, and various seeds to be used for planting. Colonists were tasked with cutting down the brushy timber on their plots and transforming them into suitable land for farming. General Burbridge, having previous agricultural experience, was entrusted with overseeing the affairs of the colony. Refugees were expected to repay a total of \$600 to HEAS over several years.



General S. G. Burbridge, c. 1860 – 1865, U.S. National Archives, Photographer: Mathew Brady

Despite the promised resources, life in Burbridge Colony did not go smoothly. The land was poor for farming, and a drought in the summer of 1883 made it nearly impossible to grow crops. A cottage fire in August of that summer killed two children, an eleven-year-old girl and eight-year-old boy, while also severely injuring their mother. To make things bleaker, General Burbridge was not as present on-site as he had promised to be; he was eventually caught embezzling money meant for the colonists. Because of these factors, many of the refugees could not repay HEAS and inevitably moved to larger cities for work. By December of 1883, only a year after its founding, Burbridge Colony was nearly deserted by all of its inhabitants.

ESTELLE COLONY



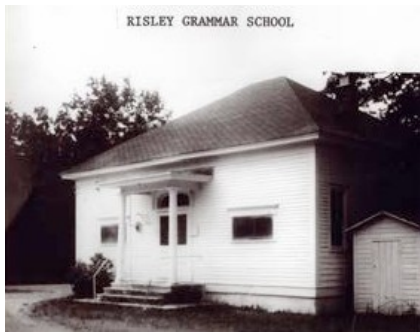
Daniel L. Risley

In 1894, real estate agent and developer Daniel L. Risley bought two large tracts of land in Estell Manor (about 9,863 acres) from Rebecca Smith Estell and her daughter Annie Estell Bourgeois with a mortgage of \$47,000 collectively. Risley developed the land, sectioned it into lots, and enticed hundreds of families, mostly immigrants, to purchase property. Risley marketed what became known as the Estelle Colony as ideal for farming, calling it “the greatest agricultural colony on earth.” This was especially alluring to immigrant families living in cramped conditions in major cities such as New York and Philadelphia. Risley was able to sell off lots to an assortment of English, Irish, German, Italian, Polish, Russian and Swiss immigrants in addition to buyers from out of state.

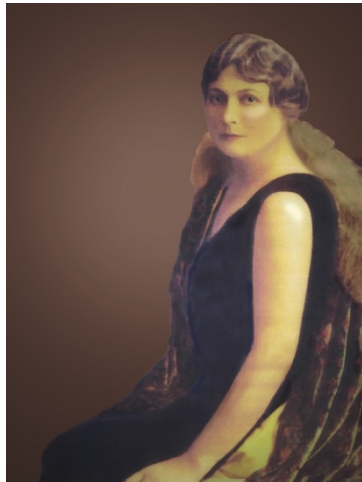
Risley sold the land, predominantly on installment plans, to hundreds of families. He gave buyers a warranty deed, assured them that the transaction was perfect, and many took him at his word. He did not tell them that there was a large mortgage on the property where they were now building their homes on. In 1901, Risley failed to meet the terms of the mortgages, to pay off their balances within five years, and the mortgage holders, the Estells, sought foreclosure.

This resulted in one of the largest property lawsuits in Atlantic County history, with one thousand defendants named in the Chancery court of New Jersey against Daniel Risley. Two suits were filed by Rebecca Smith Estell, Annie Estell Bourgeois, and Thomas Anderson Bourgeois for Risley’s failure to repay the mortgages that were held on the thousands of acres Risley had sold.

In 1903, a sale of the foreclosed properties was held at the American Hotel of Mays Landing, and at the sale the Estell-Bourgeois family proceeded to buy back nearly all of the land Risley had lost. Although some land owners in the Estelle Colony were fortunate enough to repurchase their land, hundreds lost their property, original purchase money, and the homes they had built.



Risley School House, then and now



Rebecca Estell Bourgeois, c. late 1920s, Photo courtesy of Marguerite Bourgeois



School children on logging wagon, photograph. Woman, third from left, uncertainly identified as Rebecca E. Bourgeois. Photo: Collection of the New Jersey Historical Society

SUFFRAGE

REBECCA ESTELL BOURGEOIS

Rebecca Estell Bourgeois was born on October 21, 1887, to Thomas Anderson Bourgeois and Anna Maria “Annie” Estell. Her grandmother, Rebecca Smith Estell, was the second wife of Daniel E. Estell, who built the Estell Manor mansion in 1832. She attended Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and graduated in 1908. Rebecca was a schoolteacher in Mount Holly and Camden, NJ, and would have been a familiar figure at the Risley schoolhouse in Estell Manor, which her family helped to construct in 1913.

The photograph on the bottom left depicts school children atop and alongside a typical Jersey logging wagon, the chassis of Pinelands “charcoal boats” of yore. Notice how the thick, wide wheels of this horse-drawn vehicle were designed to maximize traction for a heavy load pulled along Pine Barrens drift-sand tracks and over wetland cripples. A cord (4’ x 4’ x 8’ measure) of cordwood, cut by axe from coppice scions (stump-sprouts) is loaded for transport to fuel the schoolhouse stove. Rebecca Estell Bourgeois is reported to have brought firewood to her charges while she was a teacher. The woman with the open weskit has been uncertainly identified as Rebecca Estell Bourgeois.

In 1918, Rebecca married James Meriwether Winston, a lawyer and assistant manager of construction at the Sun Shipbuilding Company of Chester, PA. Their marriage was brief and ended in divorce. She renovated her childhood home at Estell Manor in 1920 in the Colonial Revival style and lived there for the rest of her life.

Rebecca was an accomplished politician, serving two terms on the Weymouth Township Committee, four terms on the Atlantic County Democratic Committee, and two terms on the Township Board of Education. She was the first woman foreman on the Atlantic County Grand Jury. Rebecca drew the boundaries for Estell Manor with a red pencil at a table in front of her mansion.

She was a Democrat, and if anyone was a Republican, she drew around them, making the boundaries of Estell Manor a jagged zigzag. In 1925, she convinced the state legislature to make Estell Manor its own municipality. She became mayor of Estell Manor that same year, making her the first female mayor in the State of New Jersey. Until the incorporation of Vineland in 1952, Estell Manor was the largest city in New Jersey in terms of land area, with 53 square miles.

On June 30, 1933, Rebecca died in Atlantic City after an operation for appendicitis. She was 46 years old. Because she had no will, children, or siblings, her

estate went to her uncle George A. Bourgeois II, an Atlantic City lawyer. At the time of her death, Rebecca owned about 15,000 acres of land, including the mansion in Estell Manor where she lived. Her funeral service was held in Estell Manor, and she was honored by club women from all over South Jersey, including fellow members of the Lafayette Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Red Cross, the Mays Landing District, and the Board of Vineland Soldiers' Home. In a news article about her death, she was named the "first lady of Atlantic County Democracy."

SOCIETY

GEORGE WASHINGTON CONARROE (1802–1882)

The painter George Washington Conarroe (pronounced Kuh- NAIR-oh) was born on October 20, 1802, in New Castle Hundred, Delaware. In the early nineteenth century, many male infants were named for the first American president, who had died in 1799. The name of Conarroe's birthplace – New Castle Hundred – indicates an unincorporated subdivision of New Castle County. "Hundreds" were once the basis for representation in the Delaware General Assembly."

Conarroe's mother, Margaret Mecum (1770–1846), was a descendent of the Mecum and Sinnickson families of Salem County, New Jersey. His father, Antrim Conarroe (born 1763), was a Quaker from Burlington, New Jersey, whose family had moved to the Northern Liberties section of Philadelphia during his childhood. As a young man Antrim moved back to New Jersey, where he and his brother would inherit the family property, which they called a "plantation," in 1793. Their land was located in Springfield Township southeast of Burlington. Since Margaret was Episcopalian, Antrim married "out of meeting" or "out of society" when he made her his bride in 1793, the same year his father died. He was thus forced to leave the Society of Friends. Around 1816, Margaret and Antrim Conarroe moved from Delaware to Salem, New Jersey, with their son George and his four sisters, probably to live closer to Margaret's family. Margaret and Antrim divorced two years later. Little is known of the artist's early years, although a book of poetry he owned is inscribed "Burlington, July 1822," placing him across the river from Philadelphia, perhaps visiting relatives or looking for work, at the age of nineteen.

In May 1826, Conarroe began working as a cabinetmaker with William G. Beesley, a noted chair maker in Salem. As a young craftsman in Salem, he was one of many businessmen and town leaders who signed the petition drawn up in 1826 to incorporate the town. Conarroe learned the art of painting signs and furniture during his time with Beesley and subsequently transferred his skills to portraiture. His first known painting is dated 1827. Although Conarroe and Beesley had dissolved their business partnership by March 1828, the artist continued to purchase oil paints from his former partner until moving to Philadelphia in 1830.

Conarroe probably met his future wife, Charlotte Biddle West (1802–1885), while painting portraits at her family home in 1829. The West family lived at the Catawba Plantation, an estate four miles south of Mays Landing, New Jersey in what was then Gloucester County (now Atlantic County). George Spencer West (1806–1829) is the young man shown holding a quill pen in one of the portraits exhibited here. The quill pen and the column in the background are indications of his wealth and education. George, his brother James, and both their parents died of disease during a one-month period in 1829, the year this portrait was painted. All four are buried at the Catawba Meetinghouse Burying Ground across the road from their home. The three remaining West siblings married within two years of this tragedy.



G. W. Conarroe, Portrait of George Spencer West, Collection of G. Albert Bourgeois

Charlotte, the oldest, married the artist George Washington Conarroe in February 1831; Maria (c. 1814–1834), the youngest, married Daniel E. Estell in September 1830; and Joseph English West (1808–1883), the second youngest and the only remaining son, married Huldah Ann Stewart in October 1830.

Conarroe painted Charlotte’s brother Joseph English West and his wife Huldah in 1831, the year after they were married. According to a list of his early portraits, Conarroe charged the couple \$35 for Joseph’s portrait and \$25 each for portraits of Huldah and their son, George Spencer West. About two years later he painted Huldah again, this time holding her son. The latter canvas, which shows Huldah embracing her young son, is a charming example of the artist’s work and was reproduced in *Tall Pines at Catawba*, a book about the West family.

Charlotte’s younger sister Maria Inglis West Estell is the young woman in red and white shown playing the piano in one of these portraits. Despite some anatomical awkwardness, Conarroe’s portrait of her is one of his most beautiful early portraits of a young woman. It is unusual in showing her seated at a piano with sheet music in front of her. Like the quill pen and column in George West’s portrait, the piano and sheet music are signs that Maria was educated and “accomplished.” The window in the background may be a romanticized, fictional addition to the room, but the landscape shown out the window – real or not – is an indication that the family owned property.

Maria West married Daniel E. Estell (1801–1858), who was more than ten years her senior. Shown in a portrait here, Daniel Estell appears as a dashing, attractive man with Byronic, disheveled hair. Like Joseph English West, he is shown in fashionable men’s attire for the period: a dark jacket, white vest or “waistcoat,” and a white shirt with a high collar. Unlike Joseph, his cravat or “stock” is white rather than black and he wears a light blue gemstone set in gold. Daniel Estell and his brother John operated the Estellville glass factory after the death of their father in 1839. The ruins of the glassworks still exist in Estell Manor County Park.

Daniel Estell built the house on Route 50, now known as Estell Manor House, for his wife Maria in 1832. She died in 1834, only three years after their wedding. Daniel later remarried, and the fourth portrait here depicts his second wife, Rebecca Smith Estell (1821–1904). The portraits of Daniel and Rebecca Estell exhibited here are probably wedding portraits; they face toward each other, the figures are approximately the same relative size in the paintings, both portraits contain portions of a red chair, and their dark backgrounds are similar. Daniel and Rebecca’s granddaughter, Rebecca Estell Bourgeois (1887–1933) later lived in the Estell Manor House. Rebecca is notable as the first female mayor in New Jersey. During her time as mayor, Estell Manor separated from Weymouth Township and was established as its own municipality.



G. W. Conarroe, Portrait of Maria Inglis West Estell, Collection of G. Albert Bourgeois



G. W. Conarroe, Portrait of Daniel E. Estell, Collection of G. Albert Bourgeois



G. W. Conarroe, Portrait of Rebecca Smith Estell, Collection of G. Albert Bourgeois

Daniel and Rebecca Estell and their daughter Anna Estell Bourgeois— Rebecca’s mother— are buried in the cemetery of Estellville Methodist Church, which Daniel Estell helped found in 1832. Buried with them is their daughter Martha K. Estell (1854–1869), who died at the age of fifteen.



Estellville M.E. Church, Photo:
Atlantic County Historical Society

When Charlotte West married the artist George Washington Conarroe, she brought with her a dowry of \$10,000, giving the couple more financial security than many beginning artists. After their wedding, Conarroe brought her to Philadelphia, where he had moved in 1830 to further his career as a painter. A handsome, sociable man, Conarroe apparently invested some of his wife’s dowry in real estate while pursuing work as a portrait painter. Although not as talented, or perhaps not as well trained, as Philadelphia portraitists such as Thomas Sully and John Neagle, Conarroe’s personality and his income from real estate allowed him to be active in Philadelphia’s social and artistic circles. He attended Saint Mark’s Episcopal Church on Locust Street, and by the late 1840s, was also a member of the Church of Saint James-the-Less on West Clearfield Street – a charming small Gothic-style church overlooking the Schuylkill River, where he and his wife would later be buried.

In modern terms, Conarroe was a “joiner” who “gave back” to his adopted city through service to its artistic and cultural organizations. He was elected an Academician or full professional member of the Pennsylvania Academy and served on various committees there, including the Committee on Exhibitions and the Committee on Instruction. (The former organized the Academy’s annual exhibitions; the latter supervised the “life school,” which offered drawing classes using live models.) He served on the Board of Managers of The Franklin Institute from 1851 to 1863 and was a life member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A member of the Art Union of Philadelphia, he also served as an officer of the Artists’ Fund Society, an organization founded to give financial assistance to impoverished artists and their widows and children.

Among Conarroe’s most prestigious clients were merchants, lawyers, politicians, and men of the church. Early in his career he painted Joseph Parker Norris, president of the Bank of Pennsylvania. Another client was the businessman John McAllister, Jr., member of a wealthy family whose ventures included manufacturing and selling optical equipment, mathematical instruments, and commercial photographs. A promising commission arrived in 1848, when Conarroe was asked to paint the statesman Henry Clay. (The commission apparently fell through.) Slightly less famous was the Honorable Edward Everett, a notable politician who posed for Conarroe while visiting Philadelphia in 1859 to lecture.

George and Charlotte Conarroe raised three children in Philadelphia: George Mecum Conarroe (1831–1896), Maria (1835–1906), and Ellen (1840–1921). They were able to send their son to the Protestant Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania and their younger daughter to the exclusive Moravian Seminar for Young Ladies in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Conarroes maintained a country house, “Hillside,” at Fern Hill near West Chester. The prices of Conarroe’s portraits rose gradually over the course of his career. As an established artist, he standardized his fees, with rates based on canvas size as well as the portion of the subject’s body included in the portrait.

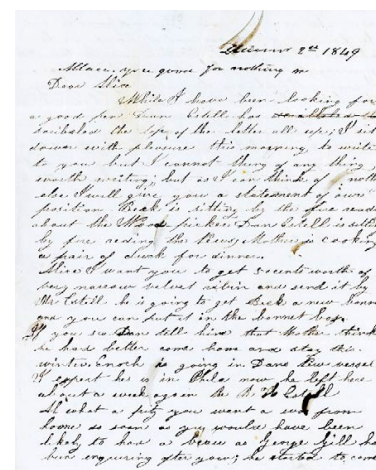
By the time of his death, Conarroe owned nine properties in Philadelphia, including several at upscale locations on Walnut Street, Spruce Street, Market Street, and at the corner of Juniper and Cherry Streets. His holdings also included one lot in Villanova, two in Wayne, and his country house near West Chester, Pennsylvania. George Washington Conarroe died in Philadelphia on

Easter Sunday, April 9, 1882. His wife Charlotte survived him by three years, and her will disposed of the paintings still in her household at the time of her death. Many of those paintings are still owned by the descendants of those who posed for the artist. Two notable collections of his work are housed by Salem County (NJ) Historical Society and the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent in Philadelphia.

SMITH SISTER LETTERS

Letter from Anna Smith to Alice Smith, December 2, 1849

Anna Smith writes to her older sister Alice in Philadelphia, relaying news from their home in Estellville, New Jersey. Anna is seventeen years old and Alice is nineteen. The younger sister describes searching the house for a good quill pen only to return to find that her brother-in-law, “Dan Estell,” has jokingly scribbled a note at the top of the writing paper. Daniel E. Estell and Rebecca Smith, Anna and Alice’s oldest sister, had married in early 1849. With little family news, Anna describes the domestic scene before her. “Beck,” the familiarly named Rebecca, sits by the fire reading about the “Wood-picker,” a story or poem. Dan also sits by the fire, reading the newspaper. Anna’s mother, Anne Smith Steelman, is cooking a pair of ducks for dinner. Anna and Alice’s brother Daniel Smith is in the coastal trade, along with the unidentified “Enoch,” who is sailing on the R&H ESTELL.



Letter from Anna Smith to Alice Smith, December 2, 1849, South Jersey Collections of Stockton University

Anna passes along the message to Alice that their mother wants Dan to come home for the winter. She also asks her sister to buy 50 cents worth of “very narrow velvet ribbon” and to send it back with Daniel E., who is going to Philadelphia “to get Beck a new bonnet.” Anna shows her affection for her sister through her witty description of George Gill, a prospective beau for Alice, and her delivery of affectionate family news: “Father and Mother talk of coming up about Christmas in the carriage.” The letter closes: “I don’t know whether you can read this letter or not for it is as much as I can do, but I have got a bad pen you know this is always a bad writers excuse.” The evidence of the letter suggests happy newlyweds, financial success, closeness between sisters and comfortable relationships between in-laws.

On November 5, 1850, Anna Smith wrote to Alice Smith, saying she was staying in Absecon with Rebecca Smith to have Doctor Jonathan Pitney attend to her. In December 1850, Anna is asking for Alice to send her more clothes, though the last cloak was a bit too large, bonnet was good. Anna says her cough has gotten better but “weakness almost destroys my hope and that is all I have.”

THANK YOU to our partners for making this exhibition possible:

Atlantic County Historical Society, Atlantic County Park at Estell Manor, Atlantic County Veterans Museum, Estell Manor Historical Preservation Commission, Estell Manor Historical Society, Friends of the Park, Inc., Hamilton Historical Society, South Jersey Culture & History Center, South Jersey Collections of Stockton University, and Weymouth Township Museum

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