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Paul Storr (Westminster 1771 - Tooting 1844)

An English Silver Soup Tureen, Cover and Stand of American Interest

Silver

London, 1799

Maker's mark of Paul Storr

Retailed by Rundell & Bridge,

Length of stand 20 1/2 in, 52.1cm

Weight: 225oz, 6998g

Oval, the lower body chased with acanthus, the neck engraved with contemporary arms on both sides enclosed by applied oak garlands, flanked by rosettes, angular handles decorated with entrelac and beading, rising from acanthus and anthemia, the finial rising from leaves formed as Mercury holding caduceus and cornucopia seated on a bale, the oval stand engraved with contemporary arms and presentation inscriptions, both in oak sprays and with palm and acanthus scroll grips fully marked, the base signed Rundell & Bridge facerunt London

The tureen and stand are both engraved with the seal of the Bank of the United States and the arms of Thomas Willing, the inscription reads, "At a Meeting of the STOCKHOLDERS of the BANK of the UNITED STATES, January the 8th: 1799. ON MOTION RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That the Sum of FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS be appropriated to be laid out subject to the Order of the DIRECTORS, for the Purchase of a Piece of Plate, to be presented to, THOS. Williamg ESQR.: PRESIDENT of the BANK of the UNITED STATES, in Behalf of the STOCKHOLDERS, as a Testimony of their high Sense of his Services and Exertions for the Benefit of the Institution, during the Prevalence of the late EPEDEMIC in the CITY of PHILADELPHIA. H.G. Otis, Secretary. Jacob Read, Chairman."

This majestic silver tureen was presented to Thomas Willing, President of the Bank of the United States, by the stockholders on January 8, 1799. As detailed by the engraving, Willing's service is recognised during the recurring yellow fever epidemics that plagued Philadelphia throughout the last decade of the 18th century.

Biography:

Thomas Willing (1731-1821) was born into Philadelphia aristocracy, the eldest son of Charles Willing (1710-1754) and Anne Shippen. His father served twice as mayor of Philadelphia and was one of the first trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, while his mother was daughter to Philadelphia's second mayor. At age nine, Willing was sent to England for his formal education, returning home to Philadelphia only in 1749. Willing, in partnership with Robert Morris, founded the firm of Willing, Morris, and Company in 1754, the most powerful commercial credit, trade, and transport enterprise of the American colonies. After serving the City in a variety of offices throughout the 1750s, Willing was elected mayor of Philadelphia in 1763 and in 1767 was appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania by

Governor Thomas Penn. Like his father, Thomas also served as a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, from 1760 until 1791.

Willing was chosen to act as a representative from Philadelphia to the Second Continental Congress in 1776. Though he was present when the vote of independence was passed, he voted against its resolution due to his reluctance to break irrevocably with Great Britain. On the basis of his esteem as merchant and businessman, Willing was selected as the first president of the Bank of North America when chartered in 1781. He worked alongside Alexander Hamilton to reduce national debt through the creation of a central bank, and was appointed President of the first Bank of the United States in 1791. Willing died in Philadelphia in 1821.

Willing And The Yellow Fever Epidemic:

Upon his death in 1821, Thomas Willing bequeathed to his son this silver tureen. Emphasizing the property's personal significance, the tureen is the first item that Willing addresses in his will, directly following his decision of estates and land. Willing wrote: "I give to my son Thomas my silver Tureen with all its appurtenances made in London and given to me by the stockholders in the United States Bank as a testimony of their approbation of my conduct as President of that institution." [1]

Willing had strong personal connections with the epidemic, as it caused his father's death in 1754. During Charles Willing's second term as mayor, the yellow fever broke out in Philadelphia: "And Charles Willing, his strength undermined by his exertions in his official capacity to combat that dreaded disease, fell one of its victims." [2] The city of Philadelphia fell victim to the plague on numerous occasions through the late 18th century, upon its striking in 1793, 1797, 1798, and 1799. With an official death toll of 5,000 [3], in addition to residents abandoning the city, Philadelphia's population dwindled from 50,000 at the start of 1793, to 8,000 by the close of 1798.

The role of the Philadelphia banks was crucial in combating the epidemic, as their credit support was needed to support the city's citizens and build protective infrastructure. Commissions were formed voluntarily among individual citizens to superintend the poor, aimed at raising donations from the city's government, banks, and wealthy individuals. Commissioner records from 1797 indicate a \$100 donation from Thomas M. Willing, \$130 received from the Clerks of the Bank of the United States, and \$300 from Willing's son-in-law William Bingham. Furthermore, the Bank of the United States was closely affected by the crisis—by August 1798, the porter had died and two clerks were missing. The monetary donations and public efforts of Willing and those associated with him are commemorated with the presentation of the offered lot.

A Philadelphia Gentleman:

Willing was not merely politically prominent but also extremely well-respected for his character: "He was possessed in a high degree of those sterling qualities of probity, fidelity, and stability, that go to the making up of a model official and business man, and he had and held the public esteem throughout his long career." [4] In his diary from 1774, Founding Father and Second President of the United States John Adams wrote of Willing that, "he is the most sociable, agreeable man of all." The Willings travelled in prominent social circles, often hosting important politicians and foreign dignitaries for supper at their Philadelphia townhouse and country mansion. [5] In his diary while attending the Convention of 1787, George Washington recorded many dinners at the Willings', in addition to his frequent visits at the home of Willing's daughter Anne and her husband William Bingham. [6] In fact, the 1795 wedding of

Willing's Philadelphia house was "one of the brilliant social functions of the Washington administration." [7] Guests in attendance included the Washingtons, Alexander Hamilton, General Henry Knox, and General Benjamin Lincoln. [8]

[1] Thomas Willing Balch, *Willing Letters and Papers 1731-1821* (Philadelphia, 1922), p. 181

[2] *Ibid.*, VII.

[3] <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/yellow-fever-breaks-out-in-philadelphia>.

[4] *Pennsylvania Founding Families, 1681-1911*

[5] Thomas Willing (1731-1821): Philadelphia Financier and Forgotten Founding Father, Robert E. Wright. *Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn 1996), pp. 525-560

[6] Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, *Washingtons in Official Life*

[7] Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, *The Salon in Old Philadelphia*

[8] *Ibid.*

Provenance:

Thomas Willing (1731-1821), to his son
Thomas Willing (d. 1822), probably to his brother
Richard Willing (d. 1858), to his son
Edward Shippen Willing (d. 1906), to his daughter
Susan Ridgway Willing, m. 1899 Francis C. Lawrance, Jr., to their daughter
Frances Alice Willing Lawrance, m. 1919 Prince André Poniatowski Jr., and by descent.

Artist description:

Son of Thomas Storr of Westminster, first silver-chaser later innkeeper, born 1771. Apprenticed c'1785. Before his first partnership with William Frisbee in 1792 he worked at Church Street, Soho, which was the address of Andrew Fogelberg, This is also the address at which Storr's first separate mark is also entered. First mark entered as plateworker, in partnership with William Frisbee, 2 May 1792. Address: 5 Cock Lane, Snow Hill. Second mark alone, 12 January 1793. Address: 30 Church Street, Soho. Third mark, 27 April 1793. Fourth 8 August 1794. Moved to 20 Air Street, 8 October 1796, (where Thomas Pitts had worked till 1793). Fifth mark, 29 November 1799. Sixth, 21 August 1807. Address 53 Dean Street, Soho. Seventh, 10 February 1808. Ninth, 21 October 1813. Tenth, 12 September 1817. Moved to Harrison Street, Gray's Inn Road, 4 March 1819, after severing his connection with Rundell, Bridge and Rundell. Eleventh mark, 2 September 1883. Address: 17 Harrison Street. Twelfth and last mark, 2 September 1833. Heal records him in partnership with Frisbee and alone at Cock Lane in 1792, and at the other addresses and dates above, except Harrison Street. Storr married in 1801, Elizabeth Susanna Beyer of the Saxon family of piano and organ builders of Compton Street, by whom he had ten children. He retired in 1838, to live in Hill House in Tooting. He died 18 March 1844 and is buried in Tooting Churchyard. His will, proved 3 April 1844, shows an estate of £3000. A memorial to him in Otely Church, Suffolk was put up by his son Francis the then incumbent of the parish. For full details of Storr's relationship with Rundell, Bridge and Rundell please see N.M. Penzer, 1954 or Royal Goldsmiths, The Art of Rundell and Bridge, 2005.

Storr's reputation rests on his mastery of the grandiose neo-Classical style developed in the Regency period. His early pieces up to about 1800 show restrained taste, although by 1797 he had produced the remarkable gold font for the Duke of Portland. Here, however the modelling of the classical figures must presumably have been the work of a professional sculptor, as yet unidentified, and many of the pieces produced by him for Rundell and Bridge in the Royal Collection must have sprung from designs commissioned by that firm rather than from his own invention. On the other hand they still existed in his Harrison Street workshop, until destroyed in World War II, a group of Piranesi engravings of classical vases and monuments bearing his signature, presumably used as source material for designs. The massiveness of the best of his compositions is well shown in the fine urn of 1800 at Woborn Abbey, but the Theocritus Cup in the Royal Collection must be essentially ascribed to the restraint of its designer John Flaxman, while not denying to Storr its superb execution. Lord Spencer's ice pails of 1817 show similar quality. Not all Storr's work however was of classical inspiration. The candelabra of 1807 at Woburn derive from candlesticks by Paul Crespin of the George II period, formerly part of the Bedford Collection, and he attempted essays in floral rococo design from time to time, which tend to over-floridity. On occasions the excellence of his technical qualities was marred by a lack of good proportions, as in the chalices of the church plate of St Pancras, 1821. In spite of these small lapses there is no doubt that Storr rose to the demands made upon him as the author of more fine display plate than any other English goldsmith, including Paul De Lamerie, was ever called upon to produce.