

COLLECTION SPOTLIGHT:

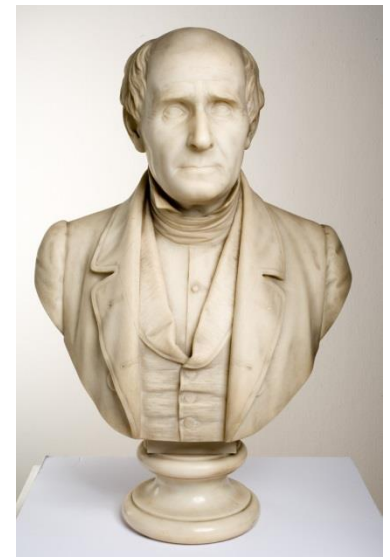
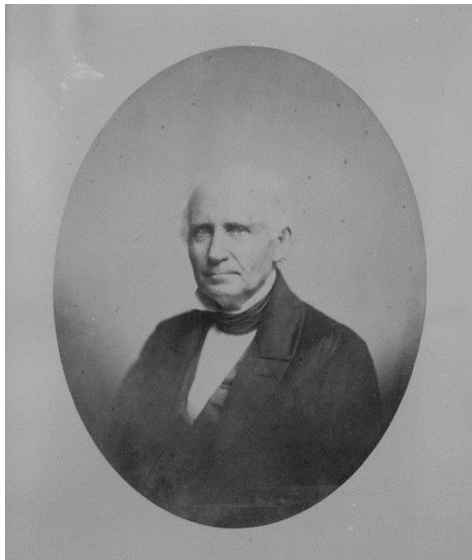
Barnum Hall 1975 Fire “Survivor” Shown for First Time in 40 Years

Marble Bust Portrait of Tufts’ First President Cleaned and Exhibited for Fall 2014 Exhibit

By Laura McDonald, Art Collection Registrar

Preparing to exhibit selected works from the Tufts collection for *Manna: Masterworks from the Tufts Permanent Art Collection*, on view from September 11 to December 7, 2014, required tapping the expertise of art historians, conservators, framers, art preparators, and a curator, all activities orchestrated by a registrar and an exhibits coordinator. In short, this was a team effort. We conducted research on more objects than were ultimately included in the exhibition and, along the way, we discovered and uncovered some interesting stories. One work in particular had so little information available -- and yet had such significance -- that we undertook yeoman’s work to be able to exhibit it for the first time in 40 years. This is the story of how a marble bust of Tufts’ first President, The Reverend Hosea Ballou 2nd (1796-1861), who served from 1852 to 1861, came into being, survived a cataclysmic event, and was resurrected for public display.

Tufts’ first president died in 1861 and the fledgling Tufts Alumni Association wanted to memorialize the Reverend Hosea Ballou 2nd but did not have a good likeness of him. According to Russell Miller’s *Light on the Hill: A History of Tufts College 1852-1952*, “The decision to obtain a bust or portrait of President Ballou resulted in 1866 in an assessment of \$10 on each member of the Association, and the so-called “Ballou Fund” was started with a five year period provided to accumulate it.” Unfortunately, at that time, there were so few Alumni that the goal was not reached and the treasurer



offered to return the money that had been donated. Using some of the funds that had been retained, a painting of Ballou was commissioned from the Boston artist Alfred Wiggin in 1874 based on Ballou’s death mask (now located in the Tufts Digital Collections and Archives at Tisch Library). Unfortunately, the painted portrait was widely regarded not to be a good likeness of the sitter and the painting was declared unsuitable and ordered to be discarded.

In spite of that, the portrait remained at Tufts and has been tracked as part of the Permanent Collection since 1917. According to Miller “No further action to memorialize the late president was considered advisable until at least \$500 had been collected.” In 1877, with \$800 in donations and the expectation that another \$200 would be given imminently, the Ballou Memorial Committee began to look for a sculptor. They settled on American expatriate artist William Wetmore Story (1819-1895), a Harvard grad who had established a studio in Rome. This time, the likeness was developed based on a copy of the photograph above that had been sent to the artist as a reference. A preparatory clay model for the bust was made by Story, and a photograph of that model (published in the *Tuftonian* newspaper) was sent to the College for approval.

Unfortunately, according to Hosea Starr Ballou (1857-1943; nephew of Hosea Ballou 2nd), the finished marble bust *also* was regarded as not being a very good likeness when it arrived on campus in 1890. Hosea Starr Ballou, who was an author, family genealogist and president of the Tufts University Historical Society, engaged in activities at Tufts until his

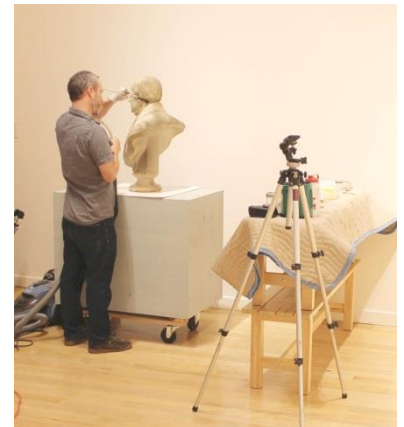
death in 1943. During one of many visits to Tufts, Hosea Starr Ballou delivered a card to President Leonard Carmichael that read:

A Recipe for washing Italian marble received from Mr. Hosea Starr Ballou, February 19, 1940:

1. *Abundance of Rain Water-free of any trace of iron in water.*
2. *Pure Whiting, free of grit, mix it with soda, in Rain Water to make a thick paste.*
3. *Place Marble Bust on a wooden board (in a sink preferably) and, at night, with a soft brush completely cover the marble bust with a thick coating of paste (#2)*
4. *Next morning, with abundances of Rain Water and a soft brush (e.g. tooth brush) wash off all traces of above paste with special reference to corners and rosettes.*



In August 2014, possibly for the first time, the bust underwent a much-needed conservation treatment by Cambridge, MA sculpture conservator Craig Uram. As far as we know, no rainwater was involved in cleaning of the bust. Scratches and chips were filled and the marble was cleaned mechanically with soft brushes, a vacuum, and a variety of chemicals to remove the ash and soot that had marred its surface (see the remarkable process photo showing the cleaning at the half-way point). Remarkably, the bust of Ballou had survived the 1975 fire that destroyed Barnum Hall (and incinerated the taxidermied hide of Jumbo the Elephant as well). The restored bust was on view in the Tisch Gallery during the fall semester of 2014 as part of the exhibition *Manna: Masterworks from the Tufts University Permanent Art Collection*. The marble bust can



now be seen in the lobby of Cohen Auditorium in the Aidekman Arts Center, at 40 Talbot Avenue. The painting of Hosea Ballou by Alfred Wiggin hangs in the Coolidge Room on the second floor of Ballou Hall. Another painted portrait of Ballou by his son, Giddings Hyde Ballou (1820-1886), an itinerant portrait painter, which is also part of the Permanent Art Collection, was completed in 1846 and given to Tufts prior to 1896.

Overall, a total of six paintings and five sculptures, including the only three-dimensional portrait of Hosea Ballou II known to exist, were conserved over the summer, largely funded by the Aidekman Family Fund. Eleven of the “neediest” objects from a longer list were selected for treatment, ranging from cleanings to structural repairs. If you are interested in “adopting” a work of art for conservation treatment, please contact Laura.McDonald@tufts.edu.