

NEWS RELEASE

National Gallery of Art
Washington, D. C.

FOR RELEASE: Sunday Papers of
June 15, 1947

WASHINGTON, June 14: An important acquisition for the collection of American painting at the National Gallery of Art, announced today by David E. Finley, Director, is the portrait of Charles Stewart by Thomas Sully.

"It is the gift of Mrs. Georg Vetlesen of New York", Mr. Finley said. "Mrs Vetlesen has again shown the same generosity that prompted her gift of Sully's Lady with a Harp to the National Gallery, in November, 1945. Her present gift is very similar in size of canvas, and will allow these two masterpieces of portraiture to be exhibited as a pair."

Charles Stewart, who is represented in the portrait at the age of thirty-three, fought with distinction in the Tripolitan War and the War of 1812, and was made a rear admiral in the Civil War. Due to his brilliant exploits when in command of the Constitution, Captain Stewart, like that famous frigate, was affectionately known as "Old Ironsides".

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Sully took nine months over this painting, completing it in April 1812, and receiving for it the sum of three hundred dollars, the highest price paid to him up to that time.

John Walker, Chief Curator of the National Gallery of Art, said he thought that, with this superb addition, the National Gallery now owned the outstanding collection of Thomas Sully's work. "The portrait of Captain Charles Stewart", Mr. Walker explained, "is Sully at his most virile. It is beautifully and carefully drawn.

"While it reminds one of Lawrence in its fine color and decisive lighting, it has also a strength of characterization rivaling Raeburn's. When one considers that Sully had completed his first full-length portrait the same month, June 1811, that he started this painting, the accomplished quality of the picture is all the more remarkable."

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