

Transcription of LCP Board Minutes relating to Jennings Painting

LCP Minutes vol. 3, April 1, 1790, p. 195-197:

"Extract of a Letter from Samuel Jennings, dated London January 12th, 1790. `My Dear Father. Having lately received Information that an Elegant Building is now erecting for the Philadelphia Library, an Idea immediately struck me, that if it would not be thought presumptuous, I should esteem myself very happy to have the honor of presenting a Painting to the Company that would be applicable to so noble, and useful an Institution, and which if agreeable to the Gentlemen who have the Directions of it, shall use my utmost exertion & abilities to make it acceptable; the great affection I retain for my native Country, will always be an inducement to me to contribute my mite towards the Encouragement of Arts and Sciences, hoping in due time, they will arrive to as great perfection as they are at present, in the place I now reside--- As I do not know who the Gentlemen are that have the direction of the Library, I request you will be so obliging as to communicate to them the Information I have given you, and if they should be pleased to approve of it, as I hope they will, it will be necessary for me to be acquainted with the length, breadth and height of the Room, together with the Situation they would wish to place in it, and if over the Fire-place, the distance from the Mantle-piece to the Ceiling-- You will perhaps think me too particular, but these are things essentially necessary--/As soon as I receive an answer from you with their approbation, which I hope will be by the first Packet from New York, or any other immediate opportunity, I shall put the piece into Execution.

In regard to the subject, there are three, which I think would be applicable to the Institution vizt. Cleo - Goddess of History, and Heroic Poetry. Calliope - Goddess of Harmony, Rhetoric, & Heroic Poetry - Minerva- Goddess of Wisdom & all the Arts, The Presidentess of Learning, which seems to comprehend everything that can be desired. The dress of Minerva is grand, and would make a better picture than either of the others. But if my other Subject should be their choice, I shall with plesure, comply with it-' This handsome Compliment from one of our Fellow Citizens now in London, is gratefully received, and Mordecai Lewis, John Kaighn, Doctor Parke, Thomas Morris and Richard Wells, are appointed a Committee to prepare a Letter to go by the next Packet expressive of the high Sense which the Board entertain of the genteel proposal, and that the Committee take the subject of the picture into consideration, and transmit their opinion thereon-."

Vol. 3, May 6, 1790, p. 206-207:

"The Committee appointed by the last board reported that they had transmitted a letter to Samuel Jennings in answer to his polite and liberal offer of a painting for this Institution which was read and ordered to be entered on the minutes--- `Phila. April 3, 1790, Esteemed Friend- The Directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia having been furnished with an extract of thy letter respecting a Piece of Painting intended for the Library they have instructed us to transmit their grateful acknowledgments for so genteel a notice of their Institution--To recieve

such a proof of Attachment from one of their Fellow-Citizens, at so great a distance, must be truly pleasing to every Member of the Company, to whom the Directors will have an opportunity of communicating it, at their annual Election next month-/ The Board have considered the three Subjects submitted to their Choice, and readily agree in giving a preference to that of Minerva; but as a more general latitude has been so politely granted, they take the liberty of suggesting an Idea of Substituting the figure of Liberty/with her Cap and proper Insignia/displaying the arts by some of the most striking Symbols of Painting, Architecture, Mechanics, Astronomy etc, whilst She appears in the attitude of placing on the top of a Pedestal, a pile of books, lettered with, Agriculture, Commerce, Philosophy, & Catalogue of Philadelphia Library.

A broken chain under her feet, and in the distant background a Groupe of Negroes sitting on the Earth, or in some attitude expressive of Ease & Joy -/ This is handed merely as a Sketch of what struck the Directors, but they have so much diffidence on Subjects of this nature, that they wish to submit the whole to thy own Judgment-/ We are on behalf of the Directors very respectfully Thy Friends. Signed by Richard Wells, Thomas Morris, Thomas Parke, John Kaighn'.