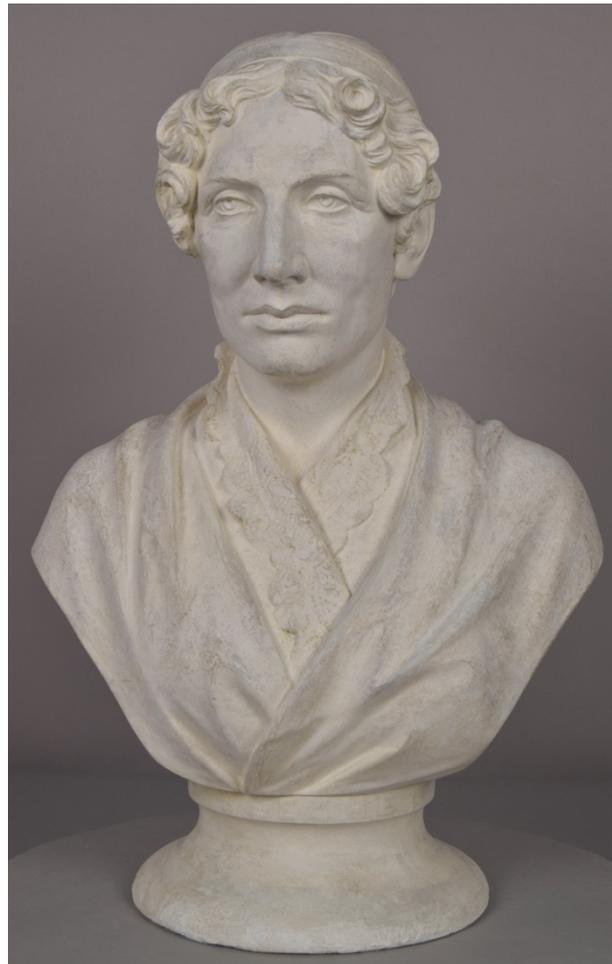


**IMPORTANT 19TH CENTURY BUST, BY A WOMAN ARTIST, OF A WOMAN AUTHOR,
ACQUIRED BY BOWDOIN COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART**

Brunswick, ME—March 30, 2023—The Bowdoin College Museum of Art (BCMA) announced today that it has acquired an 1893 plaster work by sculptor Anne Whitney (1821–1915) of the noted author and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896). Whitney was a prominent New England artist—as well as a teacher, writer, and abolitionist—whose works include several major public sculpture commissions, including of Samuel Adams (1880) and Harriet Martineau (1883). The work is an important addition to the BCMA’s collection, reflecting Stowe’s connections both to Brunswick, Maine, and Bowdoin College, where her husband taught.

The creation of this work reveals several interesting historical connections that enhance the importance and meaning of this bust. The sculpture was commissioned by Stowe’s sister, Isabella Beecher Hooker, who is best known for her decades-long campaign supporting women’s right to vote. The selection of Anne Whitney as the artist reflects an alignment of views: Whitney’s sculptures often espoused her sympathy toward social and political inequities, including the challenges faced by newly emancipated African Americans, as well as the political disenfranchisement of women. And Stowe is best known for writing one of the most important abolitionist novels, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), which further galvanized support for the anti-slavery movement in the United States in the decade before the Civil War.

“This work brings together the remarkable genius of two major American women artists, one seeking to capture the beauty and enduring spirit of the other in sculptural form,” said Frank Goodyear, co-director of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Regarding the portrait, Anne Collins Goodyear, co-director, adds: “Whitney gives Stowe, then in her 80s, an almost ageless appearance save for a few creases around the eyes, but the sharply rendered features, along with a slightly downcast gaze, all give Stowe a sense of both humanity and gravitas. Made nearly 30 years after the end of the Civil War, when the issue of slavery had been resolved but the larger issues of fair and equal treatment of African Americans had not, the bust honors Stowe’s role as a leading American abolitionist without glorifying her.”



Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1893, plaster by Anne Whitney, American, 1821–1915. Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Brunswick, Maine.

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A portrait rendered in plaster—and eventually in marble—Stowe is shown wearing a lace-trimmed blouse covered by an undecorated shawl; her hair is pulled back with a similarly plain headband. Whitney’s skill as a sculptor is evident in the virtuosic depiction of ringlets of hair, apparent on the forehead and from behind. The intricately patterned lace collar flares and bends at irregular angles—mainly surrounding the neck—underscoring the sculpture’s dynamism and verisimilitude. This plaster formed the model for a marble bust, also completed in 1893, and in the collection of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, Connecticut.

At BCMA, the acquisition of this work connects to the museum’s ongoing work to expand its holdings of art that connects to the abolitionist movement. This will be the second likeness of Harriet Beecher Stowe in the collection, joining a studio photograph that shows her alongside her brother Henry Ward Beecher. In 2022, the museum acquired William Gale’s 1856 painting *The Captured Runaway*, a work that responds to the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which overrode state laws to legalize the extradition of Southern runaway slaves even from Northern states opposed to slavery. Gale’s work underscores the English interest in and attention to the American abolitionist movement.

About the Artist

Anne Whitney (1821–1915) was a teacher, writer, abolitionist, and prominent sculptor active in New England, mainly Boston, during the last half of the nineteenth century. Whitney studied anatomy in a Brooklyn hospital before receiving private art lessons from New York-based sculptor and painter William Rimmer (1816–1879), director of the Cooper Union School of Design for Women. Her early sculptural work consists largely of allegorical figures, often meant to embody pointed social messages, such as *Africa* (1860), *Lady Godiva* (1864), *Chaldean Shepherd* (1868), and *Roma* (1869). Her later work comprises depictions of historic and contemporary liberators (produced both on commission and on speculation), which blend allegorical generalization with the specificity of portraiture. Whitney lived in Rome from 1867 to 1871, during which time she also traveled and studied in other European art centers such as Munich and Paris. From 1876, she lived and worked at various addresses in Boston, with her life partner Abby Adeline Manning (1836–1906).

Bowdoin College Museum of Art

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is the cornerstone of the arts and culture at Bowdoin. One of the earliest collegiate art collections in the nation, it came into being through the 1811 bequest of James Bowdoin III of 70 European paintings and a portfolio of 141 old master drawings. The collection has been expanded through the generosity of the Bowdoin family, alumni and friends, and now numbers more than 20,000 objects, including paintings, sculpture, works on paper, decorative arts and artifacts from prehistory to the present from civilizations around the world. www.bowdoin.edu

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