

WASHINGTON AND HIS FAMILY.

A large oil painting which was supposed to have disappeared in a fire in New-York was discovered some time ago hanging in the old Boston Museum in Tremont Street much dulled by dirt and neglect, but protected by its inconspicuous position and dinginess from the vandalism of the "restorer." It is a picture by Edward Savage, an American painter born in 1761, who died in 1817, and shows George Washington and Martha Washington seated by a table on which is spread a map of the embryo City of Washington and parts of the Potomac. Near Mrs. Washington stands her daughter, little Miss Custis, and close to Washington stands his young stepson. The black body servant, Billy Lee, is on the right, entering the room with a salver in his hand. All the portraits are the size of life, and, without being very great works of art, are individual and apparently good likenesses. The picture was bought by Mr. S. P. Avery, Jr., from Moses Kimball, who has owned it since 1840, and after being carefully washed, but not restored, was seen and purchased by Mr. William F. Havemeyer.

It hangs in one of Mr. Avery's galleries, 368 Fifth Avenue.

Two large prints of this family group have been issued, but are now very rare. One is in "stipple" and was taken by Edward Savage from his own painting and published in 1798, two years after the picture was painted. The veteran engraver John Sartain of Philadelphia, who is still living, states in a letter to Mr. Avery that Savage did not engrave it himself, although the print names the painter as the engraver also. Mr. Sartain holds that the work was done by David Edwin, but it appears that Edwin was too young in 1798 to have done so. Mr. Sartain also engraved the family group, but this was in 1840, and he did not have the original to work from. A certain Mr. Fessenden brought him in that year a poor lithograph, and it was from the lithograph that he made a mezzotint published in 1840.

Mr. Avery has specimens of both the prints. The earlier "stipple" is much superior, although somewhat dry in workmanship. The faces of Washington and his wife are strongly modeled, and both are distinctly old persons. One sees in the distance a reach of the Potomac with boats under sail—details lacking to the Sartain print of 1840. The face of Washington in the latter print is much younger and decidedly weak. The pattern on his upholstered chair is not true to the original; the veining of the marble column behind him is not given, and the head of Billy Lee, the body servant, is seen against a slightly different background. These discrepancies prove that Sartain must have worked without the aid of the painting or the engraving. That of 1798 has a French inscription on the margin to the right setting forth the names of the group, and explaining thereby that Savage proposed to sell the print in Europe. A grandson of Edward Savage informs Mr. Avery that the venture on his grandfather's part was successful, and that the painter and engraver found the sale of the print very profitable. "He made a large sum of money from the sale of these engravings, France and the United States being on such good terms, and Washington dying the next year." It was published in London by Robert Wilkinson.

According to the same authority, it appears that the family group in oils was a private speculation by Edward Savage and was not painted directly from the members of Washington's family. In 1793 Edward Savage painted a portrait of the Father of His Country from life, using a panel taken from a state coach of King George III. which was broken up while the artist was in London. Some years before he painted Washington from life for Harvard College while the President was in New-York; this portrait is now in Memorial Hall; and in the same year—the Winter of 1789-90—he took, in Philadelphia, a likeness of Martha Washington. The latter belongs to Mrs. Charles Francis Adams and is in Quincy, Mass. His grandson supposes that he used these portraits of George and Martha Washington for the family group which has hung so long in the Boston Museum.

The painting is slightly injured in some spots, but not badly, considering its age. The colors are still strong and doubtless more agreeable now than they were 100 years ago. Mr. Havemeyer is to be congratulated on the possession of an interesting historical picture.