

Foreword to the 1980 Edition

IN MY PREFACE to the first edition of this book, written over a decade ago, I deplored the neglect which our public, our universities, and our historians had visited on nineteenth-century American art. That is no longer true—at least to the same extent. Today more people are collecting it, more colleges are teaching its history, and more scholars are at work in the field than ever before. There are still dark areas to be explored and worthy painters, like Porter, to be rescued from oblivion, but the process is under way.

This is gratifying and a tribute to the pioneering work of Jean Lipman and a handful of others, who taught us that early American art has virtues beyond antiquarian ones. But the damage of our original neglect can never be entirely undone. The loss of so many of Porter's lyrical and superbly decorative frescoes is beyond repair. We can only be thankful that Mrs. Lipman's book stemmed the tide and that those paintings which survived are sufficient to establish Porter as one of our finest native painters of the last century.

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