



# Carlyle House

## DOCENT DISPATCH

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Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority 

### John Carlyle's Mysterious "Picture of Bates"

by Jim Bartlinkski

Since the museum's staff first began looking to the "*Inventory of Colo John Carlyles Estate Real & Personal taken 13th Novmr 1780*" to glean information about the furnishings of his Alexandria home, there has been one item listed that has eluded identification: "*1 Picture of Bates.*" Combined with "*3 Tom hawkes,*" the picture of "*Bates*" was assessed at "*3*" shillings in "*Specie*<sup>0</sup>." This image of "*Bates*" must have been so recognizable to the general public of the time that its subject needed no further explanation for identification by the appraisers of Carlyle's estate. Unfortunately, nearly 230 years after Carlyle's "*Estate Real & Personal*" was recorded by his son-in-law William Herbert and his cousin Charles Little, the subject of the "*Picture of Bates*" has remained a mystery.



*William Bates, the Minister. 1700*  
By Robert White.

Is it possible that this "*Picture of Bates*" was an illustration of a location in Carlyle's native England or perhaps in Scotland? By chance was "*Bates*" a place in Carlyle's adopted homeland, America? If not a location, might "*Bates*" have been the surname of a well-known persona of the period, like a statesman, theologian, scholar, military hero, or some other well-known individual whose endeavors merited an image of themselves be produced for an admiring public? Based upon an investigation of 18<sup>th</sup>-century maps of Great Britain and America, a location of that name did not surface. The latter then seems more likely. If so, then who could this "*Bates*" be? Through research two probable candidates have emerged: a seventeenth-century English theologian and a world renowned eighteenth-century English equestrian stunt rider.

The first contender for the sitter in Carlyle's "*Picture of Bates*" is the Presbyterian churchman and professor of theology The Reverend William Bates, Doctor of Divinity (1625-1699). Bates was one of the most

eminent Puritan divines of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century. The Reverend Bates took part in the conflict-ridden Savoy Conference held on April 15, 1661 at the Savoy Hospital in London. The meeting was attended by 12 Anglican bishops and 12 Presbyterian ministers. The conference was convened in an attempt to effect reconciliation between the Church of England and the Presbyterian Church in England. Presbyterians like Doctor Bates, who had helped restore the monarchy, looked for a reward. Charles II promised them a limited episcopacy and other concessions in return for their loyalty, but the King's plan was

rejected by Parliament. Unable to come to a compromise over revisions to the Book of Common Prayer and other issues, Bates and the majority of the Presbyterian attendees, left the Church of England.

The vehemently anti-Puritan parliament passed the Act of Uniformity in 1662. The Act provided that all ministers not episcopally ordained or refusing to conform should be removed from their pulpits on St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24<sup>th</sup>). As a result of his open defiance against the Anglicans, William Bates preached his last sermon under the authority of the Church of England on Sunday, August 24, 1662. Bates was among 2,000 nonconformist ministers and laity excommunicated from the Church of England that day. One observer dubbed this infamous act "*Black*

#### CARLYLE HOUSE

*Mary Ruth Coleman, Director*  
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*Bartholomew's Day.*" Bates biographer, The Reverend W. Farmer, wrote in 1815 that after the passage of the Act, "Dr. Bates was pastor of a dissenting congregation at Hackney, near London, . . . where he exercised his ministry with great success; and at the same time was one of the Tuesday lecturers at Salter's Hall, in London, where his popular talents as a preacher, drew immense crowds." The Glorious Revolution in 1688 brought a limited toleration towards nonconformists like William Bates. Farmer again writes to Bates' credit that he "stood high in the estimation of both their Majesties [William and Mary]" and goes on to say that the Queen read and admired his works, albeit behind closed doors.

Known to his fellow dissenters as the "silver-tongued Bates," the Doctor's sermons were first published a year after his death in 1700. But the earliest known image of Bates is an engraving by William Faithorne, published in 1675. The English engraver Robert White produced a subsequent likeness of the Presbyterian divine in 1700. White's engraving was likely to be included in the first publication of William Bates' works that same year. It can be presumed that as a fellow member of the dissenting faith, John Carlyle held Doctor Bates and his theological views in high regard. And perhaps Carlyle had a volume or two of The Reverend's published sermons in his extensive library. Carlyle had over 235 tomes listed on the 1780 inventory of his possessions. The assessors of Carlyle's property only identified a few of his numerous volumes by name. Unfortunately the works of Bates (or for that matter, any other cleric) are not among those recorded. The list of the five dozen or so paintings and prints mentioned on Carlyle's inventory is similar to that of his publications. There are only vague references to the subject matter of each image like "3 family pictures," 15 "Cumberland prospects," one large "prospect of Carlyle," and of course the elusive "Picture of Bates."

Furthermore, the existing correspondence between John and his older brother Doctor George Carlyle, M.D. are secular in nature. There is little mention of God, Divine Providence, or theology, which leads one to surmise that Carlyle was not a zealot when it came to his Presbyterianism. In addition the images of Bates produced by Faithorne and White, although old by 1780, are of high artistic merit and probably would not have been lumped in with three tomahawks at an appraisal of three shillings. While still plausible, the likelihood that Carlyle's picture was that of The Reverend William Bates, Doctor of Divinity is slim.



A 1766 engraving of the equestrian Jacob Bates and a likely candidate for the "Bates" listed on John Carlyle's inventory.

The more probable candidate for the elusive sitter in the "Picture of Bates" is the celebrated English equestrian Jacob Bates. As a world renowned stunt rider of the eighteenth-century, Jacob Bates had performed for the crowned heads of Europe from George III of Great Britain, and Louis XVI of France to Frederick the Great of Prussia and Catherine the Great of Russia. Jacob Bates was to bring his exciting brand of riding to the people of Colonial America, as well. Known for riding one to perhaps four horses at a time, Bates entertained his audiences with extraordinary acts of horsemanship, like riding standing in the saddle, turning somersaults, riding backwards, or mounting and dismounting a galloping horse.

After completing a successful tour of Europe, Bates arrived in America in the spring of 1773. The May 31, 1773 edition of New York City Gazette reported that "Mr. Bates ... intends to perform Different Feats of Horsemanship, On One, Two, and Three Horses, At the Bull's Head, in the Bowery-Lane, On Wednesday next, the second of June." William Ellery, who represented Rhode Island at the Continental Congress as well as a signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote a description of Bates and his electrifying performance on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1773: "The famous Jacob Bates hath lately exhibited here his most surprising feats of horsemanship, in a circus or enclosure of about one hundred and twenty feet in diameter, erected at the east



end of Mr. Honyman's field. The number of spectators was from three to seven hundred. He exhibited four times, and took half a dollar for a ticket... exhibitions of players, rope-dancers, and mountebanks (I must confess, indeed, there is something manly and generous in the exhibitions of Mr. Bates; for a well-formed man, and a well-shaped, well-limbed, well-sized horse, are fine figures, and in his manage are displayed amazing strength, resolution, and activity)." Bates also performed in Boston and in other cities, towns, and villages of New England and the Mid-Atlantic through 1774. There is some speculation that Jacob Bates stayed in America and fought for Independence. It has also been reported that the celebrated equestrian established a riding school in Philadelphia that was in operation after 1786. But no further evidence has been revealed to substantiate either claim.

Credence is given to the argument for Jacob Bates as the subject of the "Picture of Bates." Carlyle's letters, period newspaper advertisements, and the 1780 inventory of his plantation Thorthorwald bear this out. It is also well documented that horse racing was in John Carlyle's blood. Not only was Carlyle among the first Virginians to import quality Thoroughbreds to the

Colony for breeding, he also raced them. Horse racing was an extremely popular pastime for the landed gentry of Virginia, even in the burgeoning town of Alexandria. The April 3, 1760 edition of the Maryland Gazette advertised a "Run" or horse race to be held, Thursday, May 29th, "At the usual Race Ground at Alexandria." The horses were "to be entered on the Monday before at the Court-House, with Messrs, [John] Carlyle, [William or Robert]



Adams, and [Doctor John] Hunter, between the Hours of Two and Six o'Clock in the Afternoon." The winner of this race received a "Purse of THIRTY POUNDS, the best in three Heats, (three Times round the Ground, which is about two Miles) and a Half each Heat." Similar public announcements for horse races in Alexandria appeared in the Maryland Gazette with Carlyle named as one of the managers well into the

1770s.

In addition, there are several references to the breeding, the sale, the transport, and racing of horses with Arabian bloodlines in the letters between the two Carlyle brothers. Based on his passion for the breeding and racing of blooded horses, it is easy to imagine the likeness of the famous Jacob Bates hanging in Carlyle's home. George William, John Carlyle's son, almost certainly became an accomplished horseman at an early age. It is then very likely that the adolescent Carlyle read of Bates performances and even attempted to try his skills at duplicating them. Besides it would not have been usual for the impressionable boy to want a picture of the "famous Mr. Bates" to admire. Furthermore, the fact that the picture is grouped with the 3 tomahawks with the appraised value of "3 shillings," is indicative of the inferior quality and low cost of most sporting prints. These engravings were intended to be sold to an adoring public at an affordable price.

Perhaps the picture's placement within John Carlyle's "Estate Real & Personal" can provide more credence to the Jacob Bates hypotheses. For instance the "Picture of Bates" is listed on Carlyle's inventory with a number of items associated with horses "A parcel of materials Belonging To a Pheaton," "a parcel of old Harness ...," "1 Saddle with a Buckskin Seat & bridle," "1 portmanteau Saddlmain pillow & portmanteau," and "1 p[air] Saddle Baggs." The fact that the image is recorded along with horse tack gives weight to the theory that the image of Bates appraised by William Herbert and Charles Little in 1780 is Jacob Bates. It may never be known where the image was displayed on Carlyle's estate or the sitter's true identity, but until further evidence comes to light, the celebrated English equestrian Jacob Bates appears to be the frontrunner for the subject of Carlyle's mysterious "Picture of Bates."

*Note: <sup>o</sup>Specie (gold or silver coins) was becoming plentiful in 1780 America, and increasingly was replacing paper money as a medium of exchange. As of April 1780 the Continental dollars traded at 40-60 to one dollar in specie. On March 18, 1780 the Continental Congress had passed a resolution that states accept Continental dollars at a rate of 40:1. This is taken from John Samuel Ezell's, **Fortune's Merry Wheel: The Lottery in America**, Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1960; and Lucius Wilmarding's, **The United States Lottery**, The New York Historical Society Quarterly, 47 (1963) 5-39*

**Works Cited**

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**The Diary of Samuel Pepys**

<http://www.pepysdiary.com/>

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**National Portrait Gallery, St Martin's Place, London**

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**Brief Memoir Of The Rev. W. Bates, D. D.**

The Reverend W. Farmer

Leeds, 1815

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## STUMP THE STAFF

*Why isn't Rachel Carlyle more dressed up in her portrait. Even if the family wasn't wealthy a visitor remarked that she would probably have fancier clothes and jewelry for a portrait?*

~Anne L'Heureux



A look at a miniature of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, painted in 1720 in England, the same year as Rachel Carlyle's portrait was done, shows remarkable similarities. Both women sport the same low neckline, unadorned neck, and pulled-back hairstyles. Rachel Carlyle, it would appear,

was closely following the fashion of her peers in early eighteenth-century England. Additionally, scholars tell us that it was the clothes themselves that were considered markers of social status. Very little jewelry was worn by women in the eighteenth-century a fact that both portraiture and archeological



*Miniature Portrait of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough  
Bernard Lens III the younger  
England (probably London), 1720*



*Rachel Carlyle, 1720*

evidence supports. "For the most part, women's status was marked through the form and type of textiles worn on the body. . . (White, 17). When women did adorn their necks it was most frequently simply a lace (ribbon or cord) around the neck. This is the one form of "jewelry" which is seen moderately often on common women. Upper class women are sometimes seen with necklaces containing actual jewels, but are also frequently seen with the same simple ribbon a common woman might wear. A few portraits show women wearing pearl necklaces tied with ribbons.

Carolyn L. White, *American Artifacts of Personal Adornment, 1680-1820*. Altamira Press, 2005.

# CALENDAR

## February 2, Saturday

*George Washington Comes to Dinner*

12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## February 18, Monday

*Open House Celebration of Washington's Birthday*

11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Free