



## **Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters, and Society 1790-1850**

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# Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters, and Society 1790-1850

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Portraits have an immediacy which makes them compelling windows on the past. As images, they provide tangible information about their subjects and the world in which they lived. As art and cultural artifacts they reveal the dynamic social, aesthetic, and economic forces that shaped them.

When Old Sturbridge Village opened the Meet Your Neighbors: New England Portraits, Painters, and Society, 1790-1850 exhibition, it was the entry into a new stage in the Museum's life cycle. It brought public view and scholarly attention to a significant collection of non-academic portraits that had little exposure through exhibition or publication.

This book uses portraiture as a prism through which to look at rural New England society. In those years industrialization, immigration, and urbanization undermined the old order and encouraged the emergence of a new class of Americans. This middle class redefined tastes and material standards in a wider cultural movement, creating a new age of abundance. Meet Your Neighbors focuses on artists, their patrons, and the community at large to shed light on these profound and complex social and economic changes.

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