

# Codman Scion Portrait *IS HOME TO STAY*



by Nancy Carlisle, Senior Curator of Collections

Portrait of John Codman III (1755-1803), c. 1800,  
by John Singleton Copley (1738-1815), oil on canvas.

son's executor the elder Codman spent the next ten years turning the property into an up-to-date country seat that his contemporary, Mrs. Christopher Gore, called "the handsomest place in America."

In the 1760s and 1770s, John Singleton Copley was America's most successful and accomplished artist. It is not surprising that John Codman sought Copley when he visited England some years after the artist had moved there. Copley painted Codman's portrait in Torquay, England, around 1800. The portrait shows a ruddy-cheeked Codman in front of a red damask curtain and beyond him in the lower left is a mountainous landscape with dramatic clouds. Perhaps Copley included the landscape because he knew about Codman's obsession with his family's land in Lincoln. Copley had visited the property in the 1760s when it belonged to Codman's in-laws.

Most of the paintings at the Codman Estate came through Ogden Codman Sr. or his progeny. However, this portrait descended through the son of John Codman III, to the family members who loaned it to Historic New England in 1988. They recently offered it for private sale and we were able to purchase it. The painting will remain on view, a core part of the museum's story and a legacy of the Codman family. 🐾

**J**OHN CODMAN, A SUCCESSFUL MERCHANT WHOSE ships traded with Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, and the French West Indies, is one of the pivotal figures in the history of the Codman Estate, located in Lincoln, Massachusetts. In the 1790s he invested thousands of dollars of his own money, as well as funds he held in trust for his son, and turned a two-story L-shaped Georgian house into the three-story Federal mansion that we know today.

Codman's wife's family, the Russells, constructed the original house around 1740. Codman's son, Charles Russell Codman, inherited the residence in 1790. As his

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