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Quaestionis of the Sketches at the American Philosophical Society 1

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# TITIAN RAMSAY PEALE'S 1831 "OBSCURE EXPEDITION TO COLOMBIA": *STATUS QUAESTIONIS* OF THE SKETCHES AT THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

La "oscura expedición a Colombia" de Titian Ramsey Peale en 1831: *status quaestionis* de los bocetos en la Sociedad Filosófica Americana

A "escura expedição à Colômbia" de Titian Ramsey Peale em 1831: *status quaestionis* dos esbocetos na Sociedade Filosófica Americana

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## ABSTRACT:

Titian Ramsey Peale, was an American naturalist and artist and the youngest son of the painter Charles Willson Peale. He was well-known for his participation as an illustrator in various scientific expeditions in the United States and around the world at the beginning of the nineteenth century and also for his beautiful drawings, product of his research on the Lepidoptera Americana, an order of butterflies. There is little knowledge and very few records of an enigmatic expedition to the Magdalena River in New Granada in which the young Peale participated in 1831. This article wishes to bring to light this expedition through the archival findings at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia in order to begin to understand this mysterious journey, the whereabouts of the graphic material and its relevance in documenting the history of foreign nineteenth-century travelers to Colombia.

## KEYWORDS:

Titian Ramsey Peale, traveling artists, 19th century, scientific expeditions, Magdalena river.

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RESUMEN:

Titian Ramsey Peale era un naturalista y artista americano e hijo menor del pintor Charles Willson Peale. A principios del siglo xix era conocido por su participación como ilustrador en varias expediciones científicas en los Estados Unidos y al rededor del mundo y también por sus hermosos dibujos, producto de su investigación sobre los Lepidoptera Americana, una orden de mariposas. Hay poco conocimiento y muy pocos registros de una enigmática expedición al río Magdalena en Nueva Granada en la que participó el joven Peale en 1831. Este artículo desea sacar a la luz esta expedición a través de los hallazgos de los archivos de la Sociedad Filosófica Americana en Filadelfia para comenzar a comprender este misterioso viaje, el paradero del material gráfico y su relevancia en la documentación de la historia de los viajeros extranjeros del siglo xix a Colombia.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Titian Ramsey Peale, artistas viajeros, siglo xix, expediciones científicas, río Magdalena.

RESUMO:

Titian Ramsey Peale foi um naturalista e artista norte-americano, o filho mais novo do pintor Charles Willson Peale. Ao começo do século xix, era conhecido pela sua participação como ilustrador de múltiplas expedições científicas nos Estados Unidos e noutros países, e mesmo pelo reconhecimento de suas belas ilustrações, resultadas da sua pesquisa das Lepidoptera Americana, uma espécie de borboleta. Contudo, há poucos registros sobre uma expedição ao rio Magdalena na Nova Granada na que Peale participou em 1831. Este artigo quer trazer à luz a expedição apresentando o pesquisado nos espólios da Sociedade Filosófica Americana em Filadelfia para começar a compreender esta viagem misteriosa, a paragem do material gráfico e a sua relevância na documentação da história dos viajeros estrangeiros na Colômbia do século xix.

PALAVRAS CHAVE:

Titian Ramsey Peale, artistas viajeros, século xix, expedições científicas, rio Magdalena.

## INTRODUCTION

Painter and naturalist Titian Ramsay Peale II, son of Charles Willson Peale, famous painter of the American Revolution and founder of one of the first museums in the United States, was born and raised in Philadelphia (1799-1885). He participated in several scientific expeditions such as the Long Expedition of 1818-1820 to the American West, Charles Lucien Bonaparte's 2nd Expedition to Florida of 1824 and Charles Wilkes's United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-1842. The youngest of eleven siblings from his father's two marriages, Titian Ramsay Peale II grew up in a highly intellectual family of artists and scientists who followed their father's love for art and science. Not coincidentally, the elder Peale gave some of his children names like Raphaele, Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian Ramsey I (painter, died 1789), Sophonisba, Charles Linnaeus, Benjamin Franklin, and Sibylla Miriam. Peale's unavoidable and strong family legacy in Philadelphia, his talent and the quality of his botanical and zoological drawings, made him a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1817 when he was only eighteen years old. His father died in 1827 and the young Peale "assumed the title 'Professor of Zoology in and Curator of the Museum,' and the responsibility for augmenting its collections".<sup>2</sup> In 1832 he was appointed as a member of the American Philosophical Society<sup>3</sup> and named Director of the Philadelphia Museum. Although he made a name for himself in American intellectual circles for his knowledge of the natural sciences, there is very little information to be found in archives and documents of a mysterious expedition during the 1830s, which Robert Cushman Murphy described as "an obscure expedition to Colombia."<sup>4</sup> Much of what will be stated in this text about this expedition can be labelled as speculation, precisely due to the gaps and current conditions of the information found. Nevertheless, this is an exercise in archival findings that attempts to understand that particular journey on the basis of the available evidence, acknowledging the limits of substantial verification.

This article seeks to shed some light on this obscure expedition and on the *status quaestionis* of the sketches that are currently archived at the APS in Philadelphia. Through archival research into primary sources and documents, using secondary sources to support different findings, and via the description of the ten sketches as the material evidence remaining from this particular trip, this article will place Titian Ramsay Peale's trip to Nueva Granada on the map. The purpose is to add on to the history of visual encounters and findings by North American travelers to the young Republic of Colombia during the first half of the nineteenth century. Looking at this material is important in the larger picture of the history of travel to Nueva Granada because it augments the list and

2. Kenneth Haltman, "Titian Ramsay Peale's Specimen Portraiture; or, Natural History as Family History," in *The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy 1770-1870*, edited by Lillian B. Miller (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996), 195.

3. APS for the remainder of this article.

4. Robert Cushman Murphy, "The Sketches of Titian Ramsay Peale (1799-1885)." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge* 101 (1957): 531.

nationalities of scientific travelers that visited this country during politically tumultuous times. Finding new information on non-European voyagers enriches the dialogue created exclusively by European travelers and shifts discussions towards North American voyagers as well, in a period of history that is explicitly known for the endeavors of English and French visitors and for their legacy in terms of visual, scientific, and literary material. Even if it is only possible to place young Peale within the scope of Colombian adventures, it creates potential and possibility for the emergence of new information on the great number of foreigners who travelled up the Magdalena River. Art historian Katherine Manthorne's research on Frederic Edwin Church and other American artists who travelled to the southern continent during the nineteenth century has shown that "[a] long with Church at least thirty other draftsmen and painters headed south in these years, including Martin Heade and James Whistler, Titian Peale and Norton Bush: the famous and the less well known, the painters who traveled independently and those attached to expeditions."<sup>5</sup> Understanding the transcontinental relationships between modern Colombia and the United States through material such as Peale's drawings enhances the study of exchanges, influences, and of how these are revealed through the coupling of art and science.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

Peale's legacy is large and well-known to researchers, archives, museums, and institutions of the natural sciences. His main interests in botany, zoology, and entomology can be studied through his well-kept drawings, part of which can be found today in different institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History, the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian, and the American Philosophical Society (APS). According to Murphy, "[i]n 1955 and 1956 the American Philosophical Society came into possession of more than two hundred and fifty drawings and paintings by Titian Ramsay Peale. These had formerly been owned by Miss Jacqueline Hoffmire, a great-grandniece of Peale's second wife, Lucy MacMullen, whom he married in 1850. [...] [M]ost other memorabilia of this artist-naturalist were long since scattered or destroyed."<sup>6</sup> As part of his survey of this material, Murphy provides a broad account of the themes and places found in these boxes that briefly report on Peale's visit to Colombia.

The records of loose sheets are equally representative of many times and places. Some of the landscapes and depictions of buildings have not been identified as to provenance. The pictures vary in style from the simplest of outlines, in some cases covered with mnemonic scribbles regarding color masses, to finished paintings of flowers, animal life, and landscape. An index of the sketches would necessarily be overlapping. Some of the outdoor views, for instance, have

5. Katherine Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1989): 1.

6. Murphy, "The Sketches of Titian Ramsay Peale," 523.

historical, botanical, ethnographic, or other interest in addition to their esthetic charm. The following generalized listing, which omits reference to the medium, is intended only as a clue to subject matter: landscape, vegetation, huts, houses, boats, mountain, seashore, and harbor sketches made in New Jersey, Florida, Madeira, Colombia, Patagonia, Philippines, Polynesia, the Fiji Islands, and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

The APS is the only archive where material from this barely documented expedition is to be found, with the sole exception of one drawing kept by the American Museum of Natural History in New York, which will be discussed below. Archives in Colombia have no known material regarding Peale's visit, including entrance to the country or registered activity. For this reason, and after a great deal of research, this text will work only with the APS material found to this date.

Peale's first relevant scientific trip was the Long Expedition posting, which proved to be an essential point of departure for the juvenile naturalist and his future career. This government expedition to the Mississippi and Rocky Mountains took place between 1818 and 1820. Stephen Harriman Long, a topographical engineer and member of the US army, was placed in charge of the scientific investigation, and Colonel Henry Atkinson was responsible for the military mission. In turn, Thomas Say was named head zoologist and Samuel Seymour was the official artist commissioned to paint landscapes and portraits. Titian Ramsey Peale II was the assistant naturalist and painter of natural history, and we know that he executed one hundred and twenty-two sketches and drawings, of which only twenty-two were regarded as finished.<sup>8</sup>

Ten years after this expedition to the western United States, Peale seems to have gained a great deal of experience through the expedition to South America, which might have been strategic towards his future engagement as chief naturalist on the Wilkes Expedition of 1838. During that western experience, as art historian Jessie Poesch explains, Peale

had already proven himself as a good field man [...]. He knew what to look for and what to collect. He had the technical skills necessary for a field man: he was exceedingly able with a gun; he knew and understood anatomy, and was a capable dissector and preserver. He could draw with competence and accuracy, and was thus able to record certain details on the spot. His associations with other scientific men had taught him to be accurate in making measurements and in immediately recording his observations. Peale also had the courage and physical hardihood to undertake and enjoy field work.<sup>9</sup>

The trip to Nueva Granada was, in essence, Peale's first exposure to a terrain and natural history outside of the United States, and it may have had

7. Murphy, "The Sketches of Titian Ramsay Peale," 531.

8. Jessie Poesch, *Titian Ramsay Peale, 1799-1885: And his Journals of the Wilkes Expedition* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1961): 35.

9. Poesch, *Titian Ramsay Peale*, 42.

10. Poesch, 53.
11. Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance*, 1.
12. APS, Mary Jane Peale Papers, BP3152c.

a great impact on his professional experience and outlook towards the natural environment. The expedition allowed him to test his skills as a lead naturalist, not merely as an assistant, and it was after this brief journey that he was hired and promoted for the Wilkes Expedition, a trip around the world. The lack of abundant evidence regarding the South American sojourn does not necessarily devalue its importance. Certain phenomena, such as Peale's *modus operandi* of leaving behind scattered material, unfinished drawings, sketches, and visual studies, all common to his later practice and thought process, already come to the surface in this strange expedition, which allows us to situate this fragmented experience in the overall scope of his life and his work.

In the fall of 1830, Titian Ramsey Peale was working as curator of the Philadelphia Museum when he left for this trip (which was expected to last one year)<sup>10</sup> in the company of English artist, architect, and explorer Frederick Catherwood<sup>11</sup> and of William McGuigan, a taxidermist from Philadelphia who later also joined the Wilkes Expedition (Img. 1). The APS holds a document that reveals information regarding at least one of his companions: a handwritten fragment on two pieces of paper of an auto-biographical text by Peale titled "A dream of life," which briefly synthesizes important moments in the life of the naturalist.<sup>12</sup> In ink, Peale writes: "Next, spent one year on the Magdalena River, New Grenada." Apparently while proofreading the text Peale penciled a scribble over this statement: "Next a Taxophilite" (Img. 2). Although its intention is not entirely clear, the correction seems to add to the information and to imply that

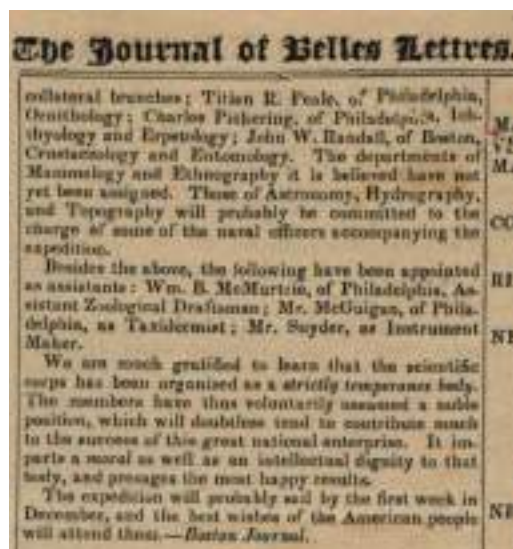
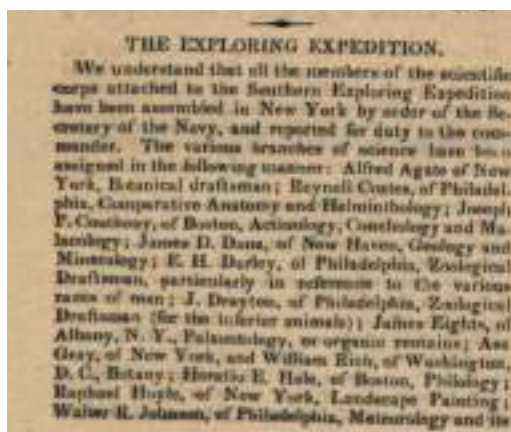
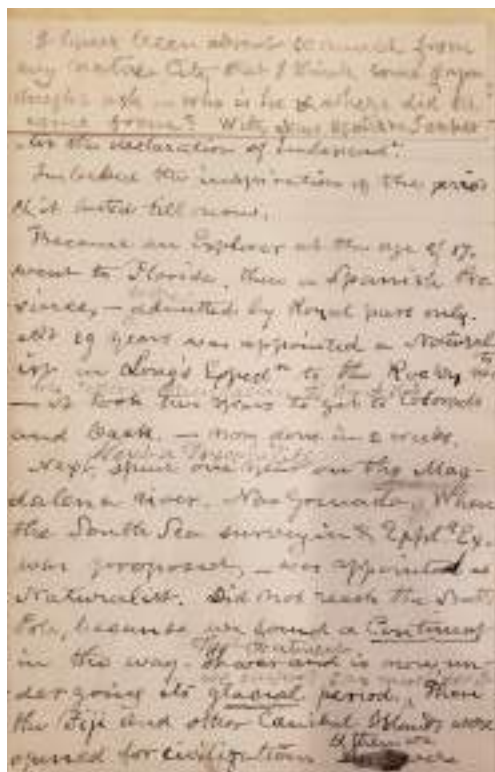
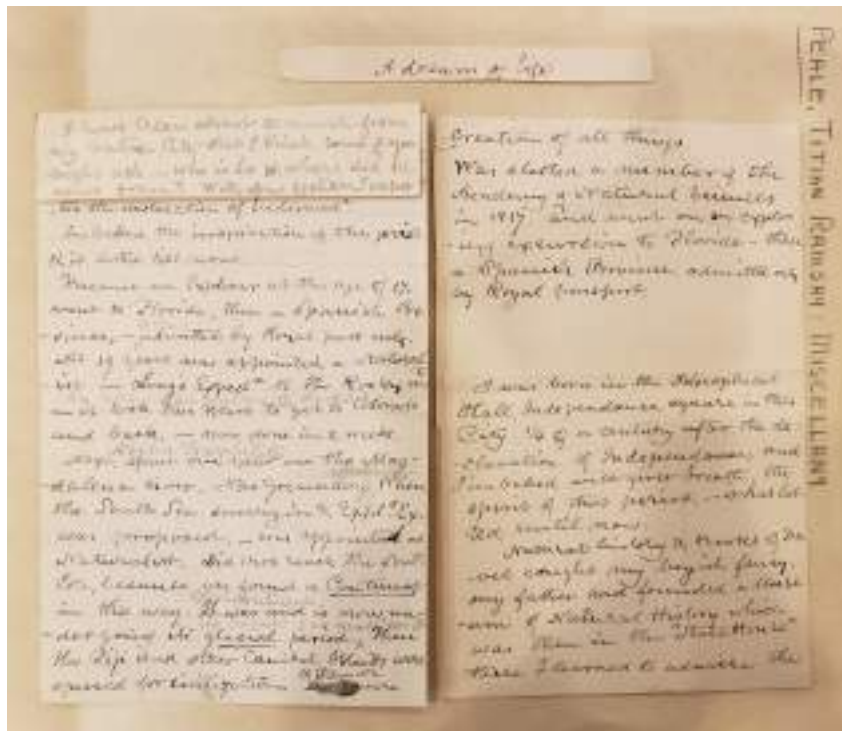


Image 1. *Waldie's Select Circulating Library Containing the Best Popular Literature Including Memoirs, Biography, Novels, Tales, Travels, Voyages &c.* Part II – July-December, 1837. Printed and Published by Adam Waldie, Philadelphia.



Image 2. Titian Ramsey Peale. *A dream of life*. American Philosophical Society. Mary Jane Peale Papers. BP3152c



he made this trip in the company of a taxophilite, i.e. a lover of archery. Peale offers no further indications, and provides no specifics as to names, patrons, or company.

Peale visited Colombia, Suriname, and Brazil,<sup>13</sup> and returned in February 1832.<sup>14</sup> The boxes containing Peale's drawings also contains few referenced drawings to either Surinam or Brazil, adding on the strangeness of this unverified trip. The context and timing of Peale's journey is interesting for two reasons: First, 1831 was a complex and confusing year for the Colombian Republic, as a result of Simón Bolívar's death in December of 1830, leading to the dissolution of his leadership and of his vision of creating one great, unified country that would have brought together present-day Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. Second, there is uncertainty and confusion in the scant available evidence regarding the trip in general, and its source of funding in particular. According to Poesch, a Mr. Silas E. Burrows, a merchant, was the patron,<sup>15</sup> a claim that was confirmed by Professor Katherine Manthorne.<sup>16</sup> Independent researcher Douglas Wamsley explains that Silas Enoch Burrows, a merchant, ship owner, and traveler from Connecticut was commercially active in South America and that this Mr. Burrows

[p]ossessed of an untiring will, [...] was actively engaged in the whaling and sealing business and also succeeded in building a profitable line of packets sailing to the port of Cartagena, Colombia, frequently carrying invalided passengers afflicted with tuberculosis.<sup>17</sup>

Burrows was politically involved in Colombia between 1827 and 1835. He was close to President Simón Bolívar to whom he had donated "a fine pair of horses."<sup>18</sup> This friendship seems to have gone a long way, as shown by a curious document from 1831, a musical adaptation of a piece by Beethoven for voice and piano published in New York under the title *I Pity and Forgive: The Last Words of General Simon Bolivar*, respectfully dedicated to Silas E. Burrows (Img. 3).

Both the "Libertador" and Burrows were involved in the turmoil around steam-navigation politics during the 1820s and '30s along the Magdalena River. In 1828 vice-president Francisco de Paula Santander gave German citizen Juan Bernardo Elbers the monopoly on steam-boat navigation along this major river for a period of twenty years. That same year, Elbers acquired a new boat from Burrows and called it, precisely, *Libertador*. In 1829, Bolívar suddenly revoked this exclusive privilege from Elbers. When the *Libertador* (the boat, that is) arrived in Santa Marta, Burrows repossessed it and sold it to Joaquín de Mier, a close friend of Bolívar and owner of the estate where the latter would die in Santa Marta.<sup>19</sup> The American Museum of Natural History holds a sketch of this vessel,

13. Poesch, Titian Ramsay Peale, 52.

14. Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980), 262.

15. Poesch, Titian Ramsay Peale, 53.

16. Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance*, 40.

17. Douglas Wamsley, "Silas Enoch Burrows and the Search for Sir John Franklin." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Maritime Studies* 8, n.º 2 (2018): 26.

18. Wamsley, "Silas Enoch Burrows," 27.

19. See: Juan Vilorio de la Hoz, *Empresarios de Santa Marta: El caso de Joaquín y Manuel de Mier, 1800-1896* (Cartagena: Banco de la República, 2000).



Image 3. *Pity and forgive: The last words of Genl. Simon Bolivar*. Sung by Mr. Jones. The poetry by S. Woodworth Esq. Music from Beethoven. Arranged with an Accompaniment for the Piano Forte By N.C. Bochsa. Respectfully Dedicated to Silas E. Burrows Esq. Firth & Hall, 358 Pearl Street, New York. 1831. Courtesy the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University

signed in the back by Peale in 1830. The drawing shows the steamboat stranded on the river near the town of Honda.

Politically speaking, Peale's mysterious trip could also be understood in the context of the notorious Monroe Doctrine. As Manthorne explains,

Central and South America were regarded [...] as the geographical extension of the United States. Departing for the southern continent, the northern artist expected to locate himself in a landscape he explicitly possessed as spiritual property. Once he arrived on its shores, however, he discovered it to be strange and unfamiliar, difficult to assimilate into his concept of America. In this precarious mix that Latin America presented to him of self and other, familiar and foreign, lies the uniqueness of this encounter.<sup>20</sup>

20. Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance*, 4.

The dates of Peale's trip are relevant in relation to United States history. Burrows's acquaintance with President James Monroe (1817-1825) is well accounted for, for it is known that Monroe "offered him a window into diplomatic circles and a marked interest in international affairs and service."<sup>21</sup> The fifth president of the United States is famous, amongst other things, for the doctrine that bears his name, an important foreign affairs policy that sought to prevent European powers from continuing colonization while giving the United States the power to interfere when it was deemed necessary. Monroe's successors, John Quincy Adams (1825-1829) and Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), retained this diplomatic approach and at the same time began exercising the notion of "Manifest Destiny," the belief that territorial expansion by North Americans was justified and inevitable. Although this idea was associated with expansion towards the West, its effects reached beyond the continental boundaries. The phrase was officially coined in the 1840s, but its implications towards the countries of Latin America and US engagement with them were already visible years before. One question that calls for further inquiry is what was the nature of Peale's relationship to Burrows, and of Burrows's connections to both the US and the Colombian government.

Interestingly enough, the archives at the APS also hold an 1826 signed passport of entry to Colombia for Charles L. Peale, Titian's older brother. Although the reasons for this visit remain unknown, there is ample room for speculation, bearing in mind that this Peale was a mill keeper, a farmer, a soldier, a sailor, and a museum manager (Img. 4).<sup>22</sup> Charles L. Peale probably also had a previous relationship with Burrows and, considering his multiple activities, some sort of either political, military, or maritime business in Colombia. In any case, the relationship between Burrows and Charles L. Peale was in all likelihood practical in nature. Manthorne elaborates that

independent artists, unattached to navy vessels, found it difficult to reach even some of the relatively close Atlantic ports. Titian Peale's collecting expedition to Colombia in 1830 is a case in point, for it would have been nearly impossible for him to have made it even a few years earlier. The patronage of Silas E. Burrows, who in 1829 organized a line of packet brigs connecting New York with Cartagena and the Isthmus of Panama, made the expedition possible.<sup>23</sup>

It is curious though, that, upon Peale's return, the Philadelphia Museum presented Burrows with a medal made from gold found in Antioquia and procured by the very same expedition that he had possibly financed.<sup>24</sup> No other information on this event or artifact has been found.

21. Wamsley, "Silas Enoch Burrows," 26.

22. Poesch, Titian Ramsay Peale, 5.

23. Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance*, 40.

24. Poesch, Titian Ramsay Peale, 56.

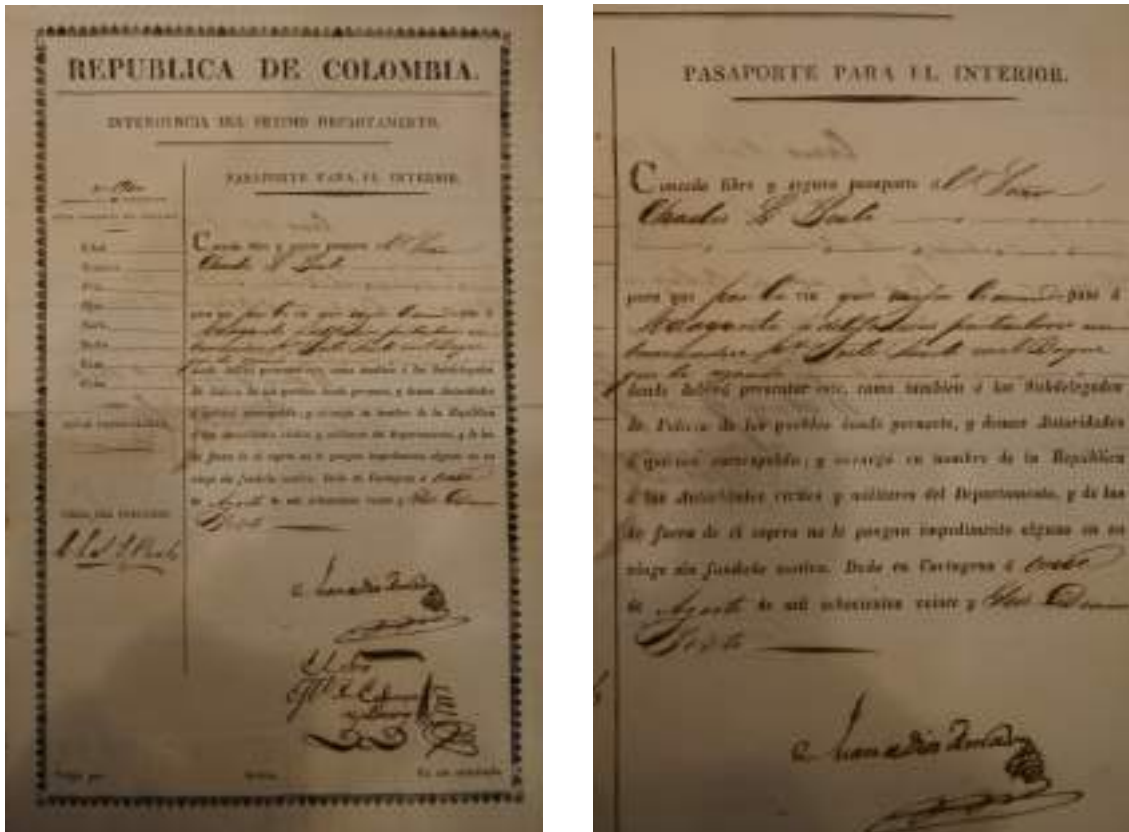


Image 4. Charles L. Peale passport entrance to Colombia in Cartagena. August 11, 1826. American Philosophical Society

There is a second possible patron of this trip, whose name leads to some degree of confusion in the process of tracing the evidence, namely, a Marmaduke Burrows discussed by two scholars who have briefly examined Peale's voyage to Colombia. According to the American ornithologist, botanist, and mammologist Witmer Stone,

[i]n 1831, according to Dr. A. C. Peale,<sup>25</sup> Titian accompanied an expedition to the Magdalena River in Columbia, which was financed through the liberality of Dr. Marmaduke Burrough [...]. The collections obtained were presented to the Philadelphia Museum, though later Dr. Burrough presented many specimens to the Philadelphia Academy.<sup>26</sup>

Murphy also names this specific Burrows in his 1957 proceedings when he explains that this expedition “was financed by Dr. Marmaduke Burrough, who in the following year was elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society, as was Titian Peale himself.”<sup>27</sup>

25. Albert Charles Peale, grandson to Rubens Peale, geologist, mineralogist and paleobotanist.

26. Witmer Stone, *Cassinia: Proceedings of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club* (1915): 9.

27. Cushman Murphy, 526.

28. "A.C. Peale in TRP, *Bull. Philos. Soc. Washington* 14: 322, 1905, states that the trip was sponsored by Dr. Marmaduke Burrows. R. Tucker Abbott in The Titian R. Peale shell collection, *The Nautilus* 68: 123, 1955, states, 'Seven years later Titian accompanied Dr. M. Burrough's expedition to the Magdalena River in Colombia, South America. The land and freshwater mollusks were described by Isaac Lea, and some of the figured types were retained in Titian's private collection.' Lea's article, Description of new freshwater and land shells, *Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc.* n.s. 6: 1-109, 1839, mentions shells collected by Peale in South America as well as shells from the collection of Dr. Marmaduke Burrough, but does not make any specific or direct connection between the two men and makes no mention of a shared expedition. Robert Cushman Murphy in The Sketches of Titian Ramsey Peale (1799-1885), *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* 101: 526, 1957, also states that the expedition was sponsored by Dr. Marmaduke Burroughs. Dr. Marmaduke Burroughs was a member of both the American Philosophical Society and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. For a time, he was resident consul in Vera Cruz, Mexico. During the years 1830 to 1832 he made a number of gifts of specimens to the ANSP from such widely diverse places as the East Indies, Bengal, Calcutta, etc., as well as from such locations in South America. He attended meetings of the ANSP during the period Peale was away, but there is no mention in the Academy's minutes connecting the two men in any way. Moreover, while Peale was away there is no mention of him or his South American expedition in the Academy minutes. After his return from South America, Peale was less active in Academy affairs than he had been earlier. I believe that Silas E. Burrows, the merchant, was the sponsor of the expedition—an expedition especially designed to increase and to improve the collection of the Philadelphia Museum, and that there was no direct connection between this expedition and Dr. Marmaduke Burroughs or the ANSP. The substitution of the name of Marmaduke Burroughs for Silas E. Burrows probably began with A.C. Peale's error when he cited Dr. M. Burrows. Possibly he remembered T.R. Peale telling him a Mr. Burrows had sponsored the trip and later, when he checked contemporary records, he came upon the name of Dr. Marmaduke Burroughs. Others possibly 'corrected' A. C. Peale's spelling of Burrows as Burroughs." Poesch, *Titian Ramsay Peale*, 53.

29. Daniela Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages: Images of Latin American Nature from Columbus to Darwin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 165.

30. Bleichmar, *Visual Voyages*, 169.

When revisiting the APS archives, specifically a folder titled "Marmaduke" found amongst the Peal Papers, one encounters receipts that locate this Burrough, a physicist and a diplomat, in Calcutta in 1830. Whatever the specific circumstances may have been, it is obvious that financing the trip does not imply that he would have accompanied Peale, so that this Burrough could have acted as the patron while being in India. The closest explanation of this confusion in the names of the two possible patrons is outlined by Poesch in a very long footnote that is quite precise and explanatory and that may be described as the most complete account of this specific trip. According to Poesch the trip was definitely financed by Silas E. Burrows.<sup>28</sup>

Arguably, Peale's trip cannot be characterized as picturesque, in the sense defined by art historian Daniela Bleichmar in her discussion of Humboldt's and others' productive travels:

Inspired by Humboldt's voyage and his exaltation of the artist's important role in capturing the drama of equatorial nature, many European and U.S. artists flocked to the region, eager to capture a sense of place. They traveled through newly autonomous nations, creating hundreds of sketches, watercolors, and paintings, many of which appeared later in print. Their depictions of nature favored striking elements, such as the dense vegetation of tropical forests, the fiery craters of volcanoes, roaring waterfalls, or tall mountain ranges, in particular the Andes with their Humboldtian association. These artists also represented human populations, scenes from everyday life, antiquities. If naturalists in the last decades of the eighteenth century had described their expeditions as 'philosophical voyages,' artists now conceived of their travels as 'picturesque voyages.'<sup>29</sup>

Precisely because there are so many unknowns and questions concerning this trip, it cannot be labelled outright as "picturesque." However, it could be understood as picturesque in its political context, if one considers Bleichmar's additional remark that "[t]he picturesque voyage as a genre could at times provide glimpses into the complicated struggles of the new independent nations of Latin America, even when they often retained a Romantic approach."<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Peale's voyage to Colombia brings into view the complex interactions between travelers, merchants, commercial routes, and power.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

No scholarly text has been published specifically devoted to this short and enigmatic journey, although there is sufficient material to put together this puzzle.



Recent texts that mention this specific voyage<sup>31</sup> refer to Poesch's book, cited above, as the sole text that documents Peale's trip to Colombia. The book mentions the trip only briefly, as its main focus is on the Wilkes Expedition. Even Charlotte M. Porter's survey article, "The Lifework of Titian Ramsay Peale" which purports to establish the importance of his life and legacy, settles for succinctly noting that "Peale traveled to Colombia, South America, in 1831," followed by a quotation from C. S. Rafinesque (see below) and some information on the number of collections that he brought back.<sup>32</sup> Nothing more. Although this gap seems to be due to either lack of documentation, the scattering and loss of material, or the tragic history of the Philadelphia Museum, whose collections would be eventually dismembered and consumed by a fire, the evidence that does remain sheds light on the expedition as one that recollected and registered a great quantity of specimens and samples. In view of the loss of physical material, Karie Diethorn links the scarcity of the collections to the history of the Peale Family museum, pointing out that "[a]lways subject to financial crises and changing public tastes, the Philadelphia Museum struggled to maintain its prominence as the nineteenth century unfolded."<sup>33</sup> This trip can also simply be seen as an unsuccessful voyage, or, in some way, as an excursion meant to remain in the dark as a result of political intrigues or similar circumstances. It may well be the case, moreover, that the absence of information regarding this sojourn can be attributed to the historiography, which predictably has been drawn towards the Long or the Wilkes expeditions, which preserved large amounts of visual and written material. Whatever the case, it is of great value to lay on the table the material found to date and to allow it to build upon the work of previous scholars.

An 1833 newspaper (Img. 5) entry by the eccentric naturalist and archaeologist C. S. Rafinesque in the *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge* reads:

Mr. Peale is just returned from his voyage to South America, and travels in 1831 up to the R. Magdalena in Bogota. He has brought a fine zoological collection for the Philadelphia Museum, among which are 500 birds and 50 quadrupeds, which were not there. It is expected that he will publish an account of his zoological travels and discoveries. He asserts the very singular fact that the R. Magdalena has no shells and but few fishes.<sup>34</sup>

Other sources establish that Silas Burrows "offered free transportation for an expedition to the jungles of Colombia, the board [of the Philadelphia Museum] eagerly accepted, taking only the precaution of a \$5,000 insurance policy on its curator's life."<sup>35</sup> This information places credibility on the trip and indicates Peale's value as a curator of the family museum. Poesch questions the motivations behind this financial agreement, wondering

31. Haltman, "Titian Ramsay Peale's Specimen Portraiture," and Manthorne's *Tropical Renaissance*, are the two texts that most contribute to documenting this mysterious journey.

32. Charlotte M. Porter, "The Lifework of Titian Ramsay Peale." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 129, n.º 3 (1985): 302.

33. Diethorn goes on to explain the destruction and loss of most of the collections: "Just after Peale's death in 1827, the museum moved from the Pennsylvania State House one block west to the new and larger Chestnut Street Arcade. After two subsequent museum relocations, burdened by rising maintenance costs unmet by admission revenues, the Peale family sold the museum collection (except for the portraits) in 1849. The Philadelphia Museum collection's buyers, Phineas T. Barnum (1810-91) and Moses Kimball (1809-95), had their own museums in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. Within a short time, all of them experienced a series of fires and financial hardships that destroyed or dispersed their holdings. By the early twentieth century the former Philadelphia Museum's vast natural history and ethnographic collection was known only by four bird specimens at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology and possibly (records are unclear) some American Indian and Oceanic artifacts at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology." Karie Diethorn, "Peale's Philadelphia Museum," <https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/peales-philadelphia-museum/>.

34. *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge: a Cyclopedic Journal and Review of Universal Science and Knowledge: Historical, Natural and Medical Arts and Sciences: Industry, Agriculture, Education and Every Useful Information: with Numerous Figures* 1, n.º 1 (1832): 26.

35. Sellers, Mr. Peale's Museum, 262.





Image 5. Rafinesque, C. S. (ed.). "Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge: a Cyclopedia Journal and Review of Universal Science and Knowledge: Historical, Natural and Medical Arts and Sciences: Industry, Agriculture, Education and Every Useful Information: with Numerous Figures". Vol. 1, n.º 1 (Philadelphia, Spring 1832): 26.

whether Charles Waterton's<sup>36</sup> reports on his travels in South America might not have spurred Peale to undertake this South American venture. [...] By June, 1831, he had already sent boxes of bird, shell, and fish specimens from the port city of Cartagena, and he was at the mountain city of Bogotá, at least a day's hard climb from the Magdalena River, on August 19, 1831. Peale traveled four hundred miles up the Magdalena.<sup>37</sup>

Colombian periodicals and journals published on these dates were consulted in Colombian archives and no reports of Peale's presence were found, in spite of which Poesch details dates and places with great specificity.

Haltman, for his part, claims that the young Peale's voyages

36. Charles Waterton (1782-1865), English naturalist and explorer.

37. Poesch, Titian Ramsay Peale, 53.

in the northern extremity of South America between the fall of 1830 and the spring of 1832, though poorly documented, are known to have produced

hundreds of new specimens and a number of careful topographical drawings. The confident spirit of post-Enlightenment imperialism expressed in this foray into the wilds of Suriname, Colombia, and Brazil, similar to that which underlay the earlier expeditions in which he had participated, was given narrative form in the frontispiece to Titian's 1831 *Circular of the Philadelphia Museum*.<sup>38</sup>

This is also the second time we encounter a statement that includes Suriname and Brazil as part of the itinerary. The frontispiece by Peale, which would be an essential element to understanding another possible scope of this enigmatic trip, has not yet been identified or found. The AMP holds a copy of the *Circular* for this date, but the frontispice image is a depiction of the Philadelphia Museum Arcade, with no visible connection to the trip (Img. 6). There is further reason to doubt the attribution of this date, since this specific *Circular* was written by Peale and published in 1831, when he supposedly was away.

## THE TEN SKETCHES AT THE APS

Peale was an artist-traveler and in all his other voyages kept sketchbooks to document what he saw. There are at least five known sketchbooks from the Long Exhibition,<sup>39</sup> which according to Haltman contain

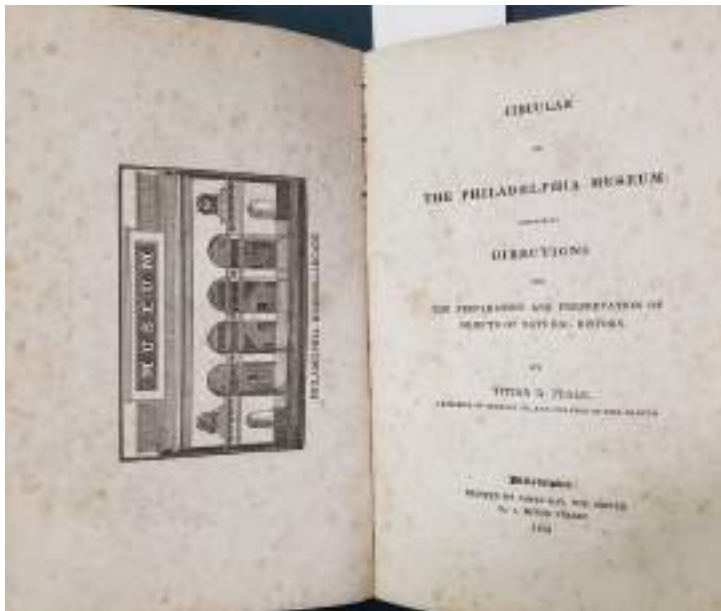


Image 6. Titian R. Peale. *Circular of The Philadelphia Museum*, 1831. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

38. Haltman, "Titian Ramsey Peale's Specimen Portraiture," 195.

39. Held at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the Yale Art Gallery in New Haven.

40. Kenneth Haltman, "Private Impressions and Public Views: Titian Ramsay Peale's Sketchbooks from the Long Expedition, 1819-1820." *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin* (1989): 40.

a total of one hundred thirty-seven marked sheets, some of which bear several images, in addition to numerous blanks. Beyond sheet numbers, problems of classification are posed by Peale's attention to widely disparate subject matter, and by his work in a variety of media: whereas the majority of images in the first four books especially are rapid field sketches done in pencil, pen and ink, or wash, the books include a number of finished watercolors as well. The randomness is compounded by a lack of systematic dating which, though probably typical of sketchbooks in an artist's oeuvre, seems unusual given the scientific nature of the expedition. More importantly, however, the sketchbooks are incomplete. At least twenty-four sheets have been visibly removed; and others, detached across the stitching, may have disappeared without a trace.<sup>40</sup>

This shows that Peale practiced the use of bound sketchbooks in addition to the more detailed, finished drawings that would be used for prints and publications. Although nothing is known of the whereabouts and history of the Colombian natural history collections, and of the attendant bound sketches and completed drawings, if they ever existed, the existence of such sketches can be surmised from the fact that Peale was a prolific drawer and observer. An undated small sketch, titled *Self-portrait? Three Poses* (Img. 7), accounts for the



Image 7. Titian Ramsay Peale. *Self-portrait? Three poses*. n.d. Pencil on paper. American Philosophical Society. N°. 457.

young Peale's affinity for the practice of sketching, as two of the poses show him drawing outdoors. This allows us not only to yearn for possibly lost or inexistent South American sketchbooks, but also to wonder if it is possible to approach the South American trip through the ten, apparently unimportant drawings currently held by The American Philosophical Society. This institution only holds these ten very small sketches from this expedition, as well as other documents and folders already mentioned. Murphy describes the complete collection of sketches in the following terms:

The collection as a whole is by no means one in which notable works of art are to be sought. Rather, it comprises the camp and open-air graphic memoranda of a long and busy life. It bristles with reflection of our great age of exploration.<sup>41</sup>

The limited material available must be understood as a complex system of loose thoughts which were never published and that seem to have been dislodged from a more cohesive body of work. For example, in the case of the Long Expedition sketchbooks, which may shed some light on the sort of material that could have been produced during the south American trip, Haltman states that they offer "a sense of Titian's process in arriving at his vision. They suggest intriguing ways in which his plein air personal impressions differed from his carefully constructed public views, works for the most part executed in watercolor and intended for more popular consumption."<sup>42</sup> The ten sketches are heterogeneous, comprising three carefully completed pieces that depict an iguana, a lizard, and a grasshopper (Img. 8-10). These are drawings made with care, in line with



Image 8. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Iguana*. 1830. Watercolor. N°. 229. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

41. Murphy, "The Sketches of Titian Ramsay Peale," 531.

42. Haltman, "Private Impressions," 40.



Image 9. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Lizard, Magdalena River, So. America* (recto and verso). 1830. Watercolor. 7 x 9 cms. N°. 223. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.



Image 10. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Grasshopper 1831 April 4*. Watercolor, pencil. 23 x 14 cms. N°. 224. American Philosophical Society.

the best of Peale's well-known zoological studies from the Long and the Wilkes expeditions. All different in size and intention, they nevertheless attest to Peale's capacities for observation capacity. Pablo Diener, who has closely studied travelers and traveling in South America, elaborates on the context that allowed for images such as these to become essential to understanding nineteenth-century voyages, stating that "Humboldt gave scientific illustration an artistic status, and in doing so he established theoretical principles for the task of producing visual recordings, describing this task as a complex intellectual construction that combines direct observation and conceptual elaboration based on naturalist knowledge."<sup>43</sup>

The iguana is beautifully detailed and includes a shadow, which differentiates it aesthetically from the grasshopper, although the function of both is clearly taxonomical. The small lizard is drawn on paper that has been glued to a thick cardboard surface, as well as framed by a paper oval frame. Other drawings include a pencil diagram of an unidentified bird (Img. 11) and a pencil sketch of a king vulture's head (Img. 12). When this item was originally examined in 2018, it was found in a folder that the APS had assigned to material from Colombia; when the material was consulted again in 2020, the same drawing had now been now in a folder of undated drawings and titled *New World Vulture*.<sup>44</sup> The same species is depicted in another pencil drawing, hand-colored with watercolor and presenting two other viewpoints of the vulture's head (Img. 13). Although according to Witmer Stone this species of bird, *Cathartes burrovianus*, was named after Marmaduke Burroughs,<sup>45</sup> Peale himself inscribed the drawing in pencil with the words: "King Vulture (*Vultur papa*) from life, Turbaco New Grenada, TRP, 1830."



Image 11. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Bird (diagram)*. Pencil. 1830. 13 × 20 cms. N°. 222 American Philosophical Society.

43. Pablo Diener, "El paisajismo en la obra de los artistas viajeros: el concepto artístico de Johann Moritz Rugendas," in *Paisaje en las Américas: Pinturas desde la Tierra del Fuego al Ártico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015): 57. My translation.

44. APS. N°. 402. This archive was first visited in March 2018 and more recently in January 2020.

45. Stone, Cassinia, 9.





Image 12. Titian Ramsey Peale. *King Vulture*. Pencil. Undated, 8,5 × 9 cms. N°. 402. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.



Image 13. Titian Ramsay Peale. *King Vulture (Vultur papa) from life, Turbaco*. New Grenada, TRP, 1830. 14 × 18 cms. Watercolor. N°. 221. APS, Philadelphia.

The group of drawings contains a landscape sketch, or more precisely, a quick outline of the famous Falls of Tequendama that Humboldt and other travelers famously measured (Img. 14).<sup>46</sup> Titian Ramsay Peale was five years of age when Humboldt visited Philadelphia on his way back to Europe from South America, and Charles Willson Peale had been Humboldt's companion during the trip from Philadelphia to Washington in 1804. By 1830 Titian would have been well aware of the relevance of the German naturalist's work in the tropics and of his publications. The relevance and impact of Humboldt's studies in South America has been recently studied in depth, but as Manthorne explained,

Humboldt's writings stirred the outside world to levels of excitement about Latin America unmatched since its discovery and conquest. Besides reporting on the natural history of the Andes and the Orinoco, he also pointed out what a rich yet untapped source of inspiration these regions offered the visual artist.<sup>47</sup>

The Tequendama drawing is also inscribed by the author: "Falls of Tiquendama; near Bogata, New Grenada June 1831," and carries a very small study the backside of the paper, on the lower left-hand corner, depicting a soldier, and next to him soldier's hat presented to the viewer as a try-out. This small construction is not counted as a standalone item in the list of ten drawings that have been surveyed for this investigation, since the Tequendama piece is understood as one sketch with a *recto* and *verso*.

46. For a study of the importance of this waterfall amongst travelers to nineteenth-century Colombia, see: Verónica Uribe, "Pintar el ruido con silencio: descripciones sonoras y representaciones visuales decimonónicas del salto del Tequendama," *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* XLI, n.º 115 (2019): 9-60.

47. Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance* 3.



Image 14. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Falls of Tiquendama; near Bogata, New Grenada* June 1831. Pencil. N.º. 225. 14 x 23 cms. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

Another small sheet captures a horse saddle, without a horse, and also includes an additional image on the back of the paper, of a masculine torso engaged in some sort of animated gesture (Img. 15). These anatomical observations are also present in another very small scrap piece of paper, cut very narrow and very clumsily, in the back of which Peale recorded some sort of indigenous

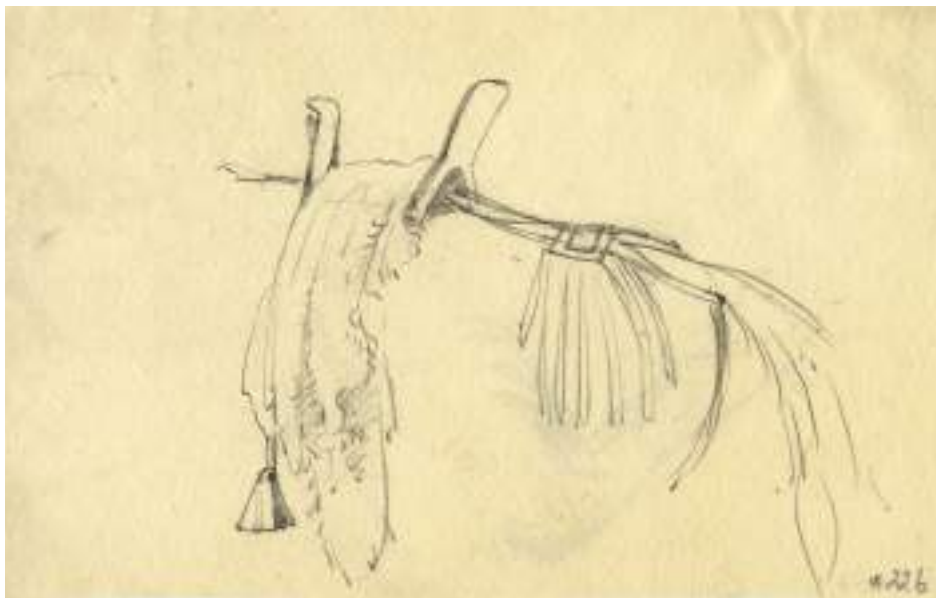


Image 15. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Sketched while in So. America*. 1830-32. Pencil. 8,5 × 14 cms. N.º 226A (verso). APS, Philadelphia/ Titian Ramsey Peale. *Torso, (human)*. 1830-32. Pencil. 8,5 × 14 cms. N.º 226 B (reverse). American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

weapon or tool (Img. 16). The last sketch is likewise extremely small and fragmented, and it depicts a stirrup (Img. 17), very similar to one currently found currently in the collections of the Museo Nacional de Colombia (Img. 18). These drawings as a whole do not comprise any sort of visual program or intention, indeed, most seem random and improvised, and even cut from another drawing, possibly a sketchbook or a larger sheet of paper. They give the impression of being part of a broader, scattered visual dictionary that may have been used later



Image 16. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Spear*. 1830-32. Pencil. N°. 228A. 3,5 × 20 cms. APS, Philadelphia/ Titian Ramsey Peale. *Torso (arm & head)*. 1830-32. Pencil. N°. 228 B. 3,5 × 20 cms. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

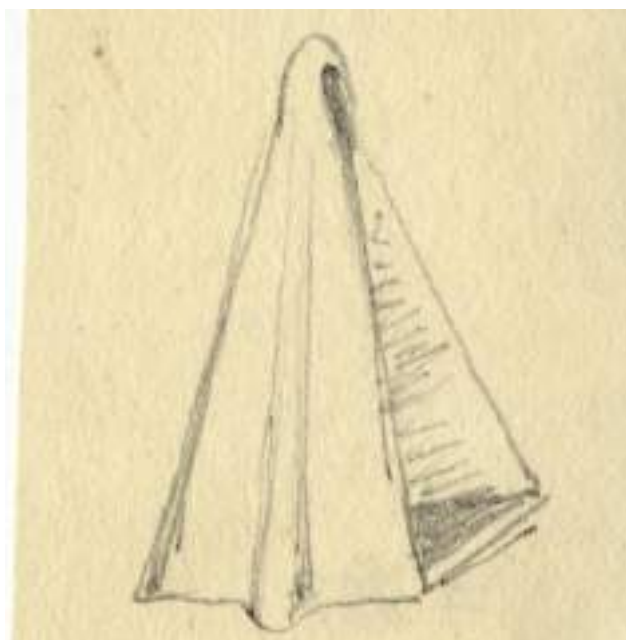


Image 17. Titian Ramsey Peale. *Saddle stirrup*. 1830-32. Pencil. N°. 227. 4 × 4,5 cms. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.



Image 18. Unknown maker. *Saddle stirrup from the plains in times of Independence*. Ca. 1810. Carved wood and wrought iron. Reg. 212. Museo Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

as an *aide memoire*. Thematically, at least, they have nothing in common except for their author and their geography.

## CONCLUSION

Peale's practice of compiling a very dissimilar group of sketches is not exclusive to this trip, which is why this article seeks to show that through the observation of these bits and pieces, alongside other disarticulate primary and secondary sources, many things can be ascertained. First, that this so-called enigmatic trip did take place. Second, that in addition to the records that indicate that it was a one-year trip, there is reason to think that it might not have been a scientific trip, and that Peale would have sketched these rough drawings simply because he was compelled to by his artistic and scientific eye, or that if it did have this purpose it would have been a collecting trip, as suggested by the numbers of alleged specimens mentioned in some of the documents. Third, that regardless

of the impossibility of tying a knot around Peale's visit to Nueva Granada, it is still important and worth the effort to unearth the relevant information and try to make sense and order out of, in order to continue building upon scholarship related to travels, travelling, and travel materials in nineteenth-century Colombia.

This is inevitably a strange, obscure, mysterious journey, judging from the known graphic and textual materials found at the APS. Through his family's work and legacy Peale had an important understanding of how these lands could have contributed to his studies, especially to his great future project based on the study of the butterfly species *Lepidoptera americana*. The research proposed here acknowledges the relevance of this expedition within the wider scope of the history of travel in nineteenth-century Nueva Granada. This study also argues for the possibility that not all research leads to spectacular conclusions, and that maybe it shouldn't have to. If materials are laid on the table and placed in the open, enough has been done to build brick by brick on the history, not only of this trip, but of archives, collections, and documentation.

These sketches at the APS do not include any samples of the butterflies that were Peale's main scientific interest, once again, the material seems poor. If there are documents that indicate that he brought back more than 500 specimens, it is hard not to wonder why Peale would not have undertaken a visual project equally ambitious in scope. Regardless of their number, this minor sample of fragmented views of animals, landscape, people, and objects must be studied as a whole when it comes to this expedition. Quantity does not, in this case, serve as an argument as to quality, interest, or relevance. What is essential is the possibility that this trip was something even greater than we can imagine, for not only did it include a whole new collection of species, but it most likely played a role in catapulting Peale's career as a naturalist. The how, when, and why of the hypothetical disappearance of any other drawings that may have been produced during the expedition, or the reasons behind the inconvenient cutting of small papers for tiny sketches, all seem irrelevant when thinking about these types of mysterious voyages and their importance in a broader field of exchanges, specifically those related to art and science.





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