

# NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 7, 1962: John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, announced today that an exhibition of the work of John Gadsby Chapman, 19th century painter and illustrator, will open to the public on Sunday, December 16 and remain on view through January 13.

A name almost unknown today, his works practically forgotten, John Gadsby Chapman was in his day one of America's leading artists.

Born in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1808, Chapman died in Staten Island in 1889, his life spanning the greater part of the 19th century. An indefatigable painter and illustrator, his friends considered him a "universal genius" and his output was prodigious, as portrait, historical and landscape painter, illustrator and etcher.

He would have preferred to have been known for his historical scenes, and today we can still see his vast painting of the "Baptism of Pocahontas" in the rotunda of the Capitol. But Chapman was most in demand as an illustrator for periodicals and books of all sorts, histories, novels, children's stories, grammars and church manuals. His most famous illustrations were the designs for the 1400 wood engravings for Harper's Illuminated Bible, executed between 1843 and 1846.

The exhibition of John Gadsby Chapman at the National Gallery consists of a selection of 70 paintings, etchings, drawings, and book illustrations, dating from 1827 to 1888. Although Chapman also lived and worked in Italy for many years, his major appeal for us today lies in his earlier American work.

Particularly characteristic is the series of nine oil paintings of scenes in Virginia connected with the life of George Washington, painted in 1833 and 1834 and lent to the exhibition by Mr. Chauncey Stillman.

In his foreword to the illustrated catalogue which accompanies the exhibition, Mr. Walker says, "His varied work suggests a poetic and tranquil existence, which leaves us with a feeling of nostalgia, even of envy, for the quiet charm of the world in which he lived a little more than a century ago."

Photographs or further information through J. Carter Brown, National Gallery of Art, Washington 25, D.C., REpublic 7-4215, Ext. 248.