

Acklen herself, commissioned throughout her life, are quite telling and depict her in various guises including as a young bride, an accomplished equestrian, a devoted mother, and a widow in mourning. Her first portrait was probably taken in 1834 by Washington Bogart Cooper upon the occasion of her engagement at age seventeen to Alphonse Gibbs, a graduate of Harvard Law School and the son of an influential Nashville family. Cooper would go on to become Acklen's preferred artist, for whom she sat multiple times throughout her life. This first striking and simple portrait depicts the beautiful dark-haired Adelia Hayes in half length and wearing a simple off-the-shoulder black dress. Originally, Acklen appeared in the portrait in a white dress, typical of engagement portraits. However, she was devastated when Gibbs died suddenly during their engagement, and at some point the dress was painted black to reflect her sudden and deeply felt loss.<sup>26</sup>

Acklen waited five years before she decided to accept a marriage proposal again, and this time Cooper received another commission from her on the occasion of her marriage to Isaac Franklin. The image depicts the now twenty-two-year-old Adelia in a three-quarter length view with a bouquet of roses on the table behind her arm. Not only did she love flowers, but they were common in portraits of young women and symbolized delicacy and fecundity. Her dress is finer than many others seen in Tennessee portraits of the period,

although still not as ostentatious as something that might be seen in the less conservative cities of Charleston or New Orleans. The gauzy gown is gathered at the bust and her arms are visible through the lace on her sleeves. Her hair is parted conservatively in the center and lays flat against her head and away from the milky-white skin of her décolletage. Aside from a bracelet with garnet stones, she wears no jewelry. In her marriage to Franklin, Adelia had come into a household of substantial wealth and this marriage portrait certainly reveals her as a woman of means. Even so, the portrait might still be considered modest and no more showy than comparable Tennessee portraits.

Acklen sat for at least one other portrait during her marriage to Franklin. *Adelia Franklin with Horse Bucephalus* was the largest and most stunning and involved portrait yet. The work was created by William Browning Cooper, younger brother to Washington Bogart Cooper, who ultimately became a popular painter in Memphis. The portrait depicts Acklen with her beloved horse Bucephalus, whom she named after Alexander the Great's horse. She also owned a bronze statuette of the horse. Acklen was noted for her superior equestrian skills. Her great-granddaughter remembered, "Unlike some ladies, grandmother liked to take the reins and drive even the most spirited animals," and it was said that she would rather jump over a closed gate than stop to open it. This grand work reveals Adelia in one of the

roles in which she took great pride.<sup>27</sup> This portrait also comes closest to representing her strength. Typically, however, she chose to display images of other historically strong women in her home, rather than herself, and these included the Cumean Sibyl, Judith, Hagar, and Queen Victoria.

As Acklen's wealth grew, interestingly her portraits became more modest. The pride the Acklens placed in their family unit can be seen in a touching trio of images, perhaps the most personal of all of Acklen's portraits. In 1851 and 1852 John Wood Dodge created three miniature portraits that depict Joseph Acklen, Adelia Acklen, and their first child at age 2, Joseph Hayes Acklen.<sup>28</sup> These works represent a model of domestic harmony according to nineteenth-century standards. Joseph Acklen appears upright and strong, while she seems steady and feminine.<sup>29</sup> Her milky white skin was a sign of refinement. Little Joseph Hayes Acklen's round miniature is typical of the period as children were often shown as if protected in their angelic innocence by a bed of clouds. Although nothing is known about the commissioning of these works, miniatures are intimate portraits, usually given as gifts in recognition of the personal bond between sitter and recipient. Perhaps the Acklen works were gifts between husband and wife. The first miniature appears in Dodge's account book on November 3, 1851, as "J. A. S. Acklen, one hand." The price was \$125, paid in cash. A year later the portraits of "Mrs. J. A. S. Acklen" and Joseph appear in Dodge's

account book for \$125 and \$75 respectively, making this trio among Dodge's priciest works.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Joseph Acklen first commissioned his own miniature as a gift to his wife, especially in light of their regular periods of separation, and Adelia returned the favor the following year.

Together these objects comprise a popular form of portraiture in mid-nineteenth century Nashville.

According to one newspaper article from 1840, "If a portrait is wanted, Mr. Cooper is the artist—but if a miniature be preferred for mother, wife or 'ladye love' call upon Mr. Dodge."<sup>31</sup> After apprenticing to a sign painter in his native New York at age sixteen, Dodge (1807–1893) gained some training at the National Academy of Design, and by the early 1830s had established himself as a popular miniature painter. He lived in New York until the late 1830s when failing health caused his doctor to advise him to head south. After first spending time in Huntsville, Alabama, Dodge ultimately settled in the larger city of Nashville by May 1840.<sup>32</sup> Nashville remained his base of operations for the next twenty-one years.<sup>33</sup> Dodge was a successful and popular miniature painter from the start, and he found ready patrons and quick work in Nashville. Miniature painting is a tedious and unforgiving medium and Dodge excelled at it. His miniatures were generally of the larger mode, 2 ½ or 3 inches high, and were often intended to be hung around the neck. They were expensive items, usually costing between \$50