

THE POST SERIAL

The Acquisition of Largillière's *Portrait of Monsieur de Puysegur*

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At the Eleanor Post Close (1909-2006) sale in December 2017 at Sotheby, Paris, Hillwood bid on lot 609, a three-quarter-length portrait of *Monsieur de Puysegur*, likely *Jacques-François de Chastenet, Marquis de Puysegur* by Nicolas de Largillière, at right. It was a unique opportunity for Hillwood to acquire an excellent example of French portraiture and reacquire a painting that was part of Marjorie Post's collection until 1964.

Born in France, Largillière trained in Peter Lely's atelier in England and became a renowned portraitist. Upon his return to Paris in 1679, Largillière served as First Painter to King Louis XIV and depicted many royals and members of the European and French aristocracy, among them the Marquis de Puysegur. The sitter, framed by a classical column, is depicted wearing abundant drapery of shimmering fabrics while elegantly gesturing to his left, a testament to Largillière's technique and virtuosity.¹



Portrait of Monsieur de Puysegur



Archived photo showing the Largillière painting displayed at Hillwood

First documented in France in 1902, Marjorie Post Hutton acquired the portrait in New York in 1922. In 1937, the portrait was recorded in the draft catalogue of Marjorie's art collection.² It was first displayed in her library in New York, then in the entry hall at Tregaron, and finally in the second floor hall at Hillwood as seen in the photo to the left.

In 1964, Marjorie sent the portrait to her daughter, Eleanor Close Barzin, in Paris in exchange for the return of Jean-Marc Nattier's [*Portrait of the Duchess of Parma and her Daughter Isabelle*](#), which Marjorie gave to Eleanor as a wedding present.³ In June 1984, Hillwood's curator, Katrina

V. H. Taylor, stated that “the return of this painting would add to the interest of the collection at Hillwood”, referring to the portrait.⁴ Thanks to the persistence and generosity of Ellen Charles, Marjorie Post’s granddaughter and president emerita of Hillwood, who personally attended the sale and memorably surpassed Hillwood’s maximum bid, the painting will return to Hillwood for good. “It was no surprise that this important portrait exceeded the estimated auction price,” said Mrs. Charles. “I am thrilled and honored that I could be there in person and contribute to Hillwood’s important acquisition. I just felt that I had to bring it home.”

Highly anticipated, the portrait is expected to arrive this summer and will be displayed in the entry hall, replacing the large [Portrait of a Lady](#), also by Largillière. The latter will move to the opposite wall in lieu of the [Portrait of Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna](#), which will replace the [tapestry portrait of Catherine the Great](#) flanking the front door. The tapestry portrait will move upstairs where it will replace a second [portrait of Catherine the Great](#) and be exposed to less direct light. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting addition. A public lecture, [A Homecoming for Hillwood](#), is scheduled for September 12.

1. “Une Dynastie Américaine en Europe,” Sotheby’s, Paris (December 19-20, 2017), lot 609, p. 190.
2. Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, Archives.
3. Eleanor Post Close married Belgian-born American conductor, Léon Eugene Barzin (1900-1999), in 1956.
4. Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, Archives, Curatorial Files.

Hillwood Happenings for Volunteers

All Hillwood volunteers are invited to take advantage of the educational offerings listed below. While advance registration is not necessary for all continuing education events, **please register in advance** when stated, as space is limited for some opportunities. Advanced registration can be completed on the clipboard at the horticulture sign-in station or by contacting Drew Asbury at 202.243.3907 or DAsbury@hillwoodmuseum.org.

The Spring Display and More Tour | Tuesday, April 17—Friday, April 20, 11:30 a.m.

Jessica Bonilla, head gardener, will discuss Hillwood’s spring seasonal displays. Please sign up on the clipboard in the horticulture office. Space is limited to 15 volunteers per tour. Meet in the horticulture break room.

Viburnum and Friends Tour | Tuesday, May 15 and Wednesday, May 16, 10:30 a.m.

Join Marshall Paquin, senior gardener, as he highlights Viburnums and other spring blooming shrubs. Please sign up on the clipboard in the horticulture office. Space is limited to 15 volunteers per tour. Meet in the horticulture break room.

Hanging Basket Workshop | Tuesday, May 15, 11:30 a.m.

Join Drew Asbury, horticulturist, in the greenhouse workroom to create your very own summer-flowering hanging basket with a selection of flowering and trailing plants. A \$25 fee covers the cost of materials. Please sign up on the clipboard in the horticulture office. Space is limited to 12 volunteers. Meet in the greenhouse workroom.

Container Workshop | Wednesday, May 16, 11:30 a.m.

Jessica Bonilla, head gardener, will provide inspiration to help you create your very own container of summer-flowering plants. A \$25 fee covers the cost of materials. Please sign up on the clip-