HENRY BONE (British, 1755–1834)

**Portrait of General Sir Charles Grey, later 1st Earl Grey**

1794

Enamel; oval, 9.6 x 8 cm (3 ¾ x 3 ¼ in.)

Signature: signed right: HBone; inscribed on counter enamel: Sir Chas. Grey K. B. / Henry Bone pinx Aug.st 1794

Setting: modern gilt metal frame

The Edward B. Greene Collection, 1949.550

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**Provenance**

1933
Christie’s (London) sale, March 1933 (exact date unknown).
1933
1949
Purchased by Edward B. Greene (1878–1957, Cleveland) from Leo Schidlof for $600; gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art, December 23, 1949.
1949
The Cleveland Museum of Art.

**Exhibitions**

1795
Royal Academy of Art, London, no. 509.

**Bibliography**


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HENRY BONE WAS A MASTER enameler from Cornwall who began his training in a porcelain factory. In 1778 he moved to London and enameled watches before he began painting miniatures around 1780.¹ Along with his son Henry Pierce, Bone was responsible for bringing about a British renaissance in enamel painting, which had been a highly esteemed form of miniature painting during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, especially in England, with practitioners including Jean Petitot (1607–1691) and Christian Frederich Zincke (1683/85–1767), both of whom are represented in the Cleveland Museum of Art’s collection. Although he did paint original miniature portraits on ivory, particularly during the early years of his career, they are rare and Bone is best known for his enamels. These were frequently copies of portraits and fancy pictures painted in oil by contemporary artists like Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) and Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830), but they also included numerous ambitious

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religious and subject pictures by old masters such as Raphael (1483–1520), Titian (c. 1488–1576), and Correggio (c. 1489–1534).²

Bone was a favorite of George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, who commissioned numerous works from the artist throughout his career. In 1800 Bone was appointed enamel painter to the Prince of Wales and afterward in succession to kings George III, George IV, and William IV. In addition to the miniatures’ beauty, contemporary patrons of Bone’s enamels recognized their resilience and value both as original works of art and as reproductions of paintings in other media more easily damaged by light, humidity, and even fire. He exhibited at the Royal Academy every year from 1781 to 1832, with the exception of 1783. By 1799 he was charging 12 to 14 guineas for his standard-sized portraits and as much as 120 guineas for a full-length portrait for the royal family.³ These rates are similar to those charged during the same period by successful miniature painters Richard Cosway (1742–1821) and George Engleheart (1752–1829).⁴

In spite of Bone’s reputation, he seems to have had financial difficulties during this period. His status as a copyist in enamel was a long-standing impediment to his achievement of recognition in the Royal Academy. In 1806 the diarist Joseph Farington recorded Bone’s frustrations, shedding light on the institutionally marginalized position of miniaturists who copied oil paintings:

Bone called this morning to express His hope that He shd. not be passed by at the next election of Academicians. He said He knew that Hoppner had been an opponent to His being elected; also that Cosway was adverse to it, both of whom He believed, were instigated to it, by their jealousy of His being much patronized by the Prince of Wales. He said the objection to him had been that He did not paint original pictures, but was employed as a Copyist in Enamel; but that the Exhibition Catalogues wd. shew that for a great number of years He painted miniatures from the life, & that He had afterwards devoted his time to Enamel painting in which He had made greater improvements than had before been made . . . He said He should apply to all the Academicians, who, He had to remark, seemed rather to shun His House, for scarcely any of them ever called upon him.⁵

Bone would have to wait five more years before he was elected full academician in 1811, submitting a diploma work titled A Muse and Cupid, painted in enamel after his own design.⁶ Bone’s investiture as Royal Academician coincided with his completion of an enamel of unprecedented size. The work, Bacchus and Ariadne after Titian, measuring 18 by 16 inches, sold for 2,200 guineas and was exhibited to thousands of visitors at the artist’s house.⁷

Bone’s style exhibits a great fluidity, a subtlety in coloring and representation of texture, as well as masterful draftsmanship and an anatomical precision that is often lacking in enamel paintings, particularly those of large size. An innovator of new enameling techniques, Bone was able to retain the brilliance and purity of colors in layered glass enamel while achieving fine, naturalistic details in his portraits by using overglazes to paint the faces.⁸ He often included a great deal of information on the counter enamel of his works, including the identity of the picture he was copying.

In this portrait, Charles Grey’s head and eyes are turned to the right. He has powdered gray hair, gray eyes, and rosy cheeks. He wears a red military coat with black reverse, gold epaulets, buttons,

² Each of these enamel types is represented in the British Royal Collection.
⁵ Farington, Diary, 10: p. 3831. Entry for Saturday, 22 December 1806.
⁷ Sold at Sotheby’s, London, 6 November 1986 (lot 124) for £13,500. Current location unknown.
and a high white stock collar with a frilled cravat. On his left breast he dons the star of the Order of the Bath, which he was awarded in 1783. He stands in front of a dark gray-brown background of ominous clouds. Bone’s skill at capturing the play of light and shadow across different surfaces is especially apparent here in the depiction of gleaming gold epaulets, buttons, and ornaments (figs. 1, 2). The flesh tones are luminous, subtly layered and composed of pinks, yellows, blues, and grays, with highlights on the eyes, nose, and lips. The inscription on the counter enamel reads, “Sir Chas. Grey K. B. / Henry Bone pinx Aug:st 1794” (fig. 3). The miniature was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1795 (no. 509) in a “frame containing four portraits,” including that of Lord Auckland.9

Charles Grey, 1st Earl Grey (1729–1807), served with great distinction in the Seven Years’ War, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolutionary War, establishing him as one of the most important eighteenth-century British generals.10 He became major general in 1777 during the American Revolutionary War and was appointed commander in chief of the British troops in America just as the war ended. He was created 1st Earl Grey in 1806, the year before his death. Grey was a highly ambitious man, adept at self-promotion, and successful in securing advantageous marriages for his daughters and important political, military, and ecclesiastical positions for his sons. According to a biographer, “[h]e was tall and spare, with a narrow chest, sloping shoulders, and a long, slender neck. His face was lean, his eyes were close set, and he had a large, prominent nose, strong chin, and firm mouth. In a word, Grey was not handsome, but his appearance was pleasant, and he first impressed his friends and colleagues as being temperamentally benign and good humored.”11 On a base of pale skin, the dark brows and rosy cheeks of Bone’s portrait lend it a somewhat mask-like quality.

11 Ibid., p. 19.
This miniature by Bone is after an original three-quarter-length oil portrait by Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830) (fig. 4). In his catalogue, Kenneth Garlick notes that the fortress in the background is probably intended to be Martinique, part of the West Indian Islands that Grey was instrumental in capturing from France in March 1794. Lawrence’s portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1795 (no. 131), the same year as Bone’s enamel copy. This dating suggests that Bone had access to the painting in Lawrence’s studio prior to its exhibition, at least to the degree that he was able to make preparatory studies. The National Portrait Gallery in London has two preparatory transfer drawings for this work by Bone, both executed in pencil and squared for transfer onto the enamel ground. The counter enamel is signed and dated August 1794, suggesting that Lawrence’s picture must have been started shortly after Grey returned from Martinique, and rapidly completed, since the oil painting had to have been nearly finished before Bone could transfer the preparatory sketch to begin the time-intensive process of enameling.

The enamel was possibly commissioned from Bone by the Grey family, who also commissioned Lawrence’s portrait and in whose private collection the painting remains. But other patrons for an enamel of the celebrated soldier could not have been wanting. A stipple engraving by Joseph Collyer was published in 1797 and widely circulated (fig. 5). It was advertised by publisher William Austin as available “[f]or the Benefit of the Widows and Children of the brave Men who have lost their Lives during the War” at the price of 2 guineas for a proof print and 1 guinea for a print. Whereas Lawrence’s painting dramatically portrays a hero on the battlefield, Bone’s enamel is a more intimate and elegant portrait of the man.

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13 NPG D17550: 12.7 x 9.7 cm (5 x 3¾ in.); NPG D17758: 18.3 x 14.2 cm (7¼ x 5½ in.). Both are described as “by Henry Bone, after Sir Thomas Lawrence. Pencil drawing squared in ink for transfer, 1794 (1795)” in Henry Bone drawings, volume 3.