In 1959, Louisiana State University purchased a Tudor portrait, attributed to Federigo Zuccaro, labeled simply as ‘Madame Savage’ (Figure 1).\(^1\) Since then, it appears that no attempt was made to further identify the sitter.\(^2\) Still, the portrait does provide certain references, particularly with regard to the inscriptions and heraldry, that have helped in finally identifying the sitter as Lady Eleanor Savage (née Cotgreave), who died before Lady Day, 1612.\(^3\)

As the picture is inscribed ‘Madame Savage,’\(^4\) in the past it has been wrongly assumed that the blazon of arms inscribed on the picture are those of the Savage family.\(^5\) My research, however, indicates that they are the arms of the Cotgreaves of Chester, Cheshire.\(^6\) The connection between the Cotgreaves and the Savages, also of Cheshire, came about by the marriage, in 1571, of Eleanor Pexhall (née Cotgreave) and Sir John Savage. In 1579, Sir John was elected Sheriff of Cheshire and it is likely that this picture was commissioned in commemoration of that event.\(^7\)

Unfortunately, the archives tell us very little of Eleanor’s early life. We do know that her father, John Cotgreave, was a draper and land-owner who lived in Chester and that his extended family was actively involved in city politics.\(^8\) John married twice: first to Alice Fletcher, the daughter of...
Richard Fletcher of Morley, in Barrow, Cheshire, sometime after 1512 and, secondly, to Margery Hurleston, of Lancaster. In June, 1596 Eleanor gave her age as 50. If accurate, that would date her birth from between June, 1545 and June, 1546.

During her life Eleanor would marry four times, beginning with her marriage to Sir Richard Pexhall sometime after 1558. The Pexhall family had resided at their family seat, Brocas, in Cheshire since at least 1428, where they were landed gentry actively involved in local politics. During his life, however, Pexhall showed himself to be extraordinarily ambitious and, as a result, lifted the family fortunes out of the local sphere of influence and much closer to the Court in London. As it would turn out, Eleanor’s marriage to him was a fortuitous one for a woman who started life the daughter of a Chester draper.

Although he was already a wealthy man with a great deal of inherited property in the southwest of England, it wasn’t until Richard Pexhall’s first marriage to Eleanor Paulet—the youngest daughter of William Paulet, Marquis of Winchester—that his ambitions really began to gain traction. At the start of their marriage William Paulet was a rising star at Court and was Sheriff of Hampshire in the 1540s. It is likely that Pexhall’s marriage had much to do with his own appointment as Sheriff of Hampshire in 1551 since Paulet was by then Lord High Treasurer and a man of considerable power and reputation. Pexhall also appears to have been a very effective and popular Sheriff as he was re-appointed in 1558 and again in 1561. In 1553 Pexhall was knighted, and before the end of the following year he was granted the hereditary office of the Master of the Buckhounds under Mary I; he would continue in that office under Elizabeth I.

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9 Her marriage contract was drawn up in 1512 (Harley MS 2153/258). Given that Alice gave her age as 60 in 1560 (C24/50/1), it would suggest she was born c. 1500. Alice died in July 1563 and was buried in St. Vedast’s Church, London (Harleian Society Register Series, 1903, 122).

10 BM Harley MS 1505/f. 40. Margery died in before September, 1611 and was buried at Trinity Church, Chester. Also see Cheshire Sheaf, December 1902, 123. The Hurlestons of Chester were involved in Chester politics; both Roger and Hugh Hurleston were Mayor of Chester in the late 15th century. See Cheshire Sheaf, March 15, 1882, 324 for more.

11 C21/S43/f.11. Eleanor was the youngest of seven siblings.

12 His surname is variously spelled ‘Pexhall’, ‘Pexsall’, and ‘Pearsall’.

13 It seems that the Paulets and the Pexhalls may have had a longstanding relationship. See Burrows, The Family of Brocas, 195 for more. At the time of his death Pexhall owned or leased 16 manors and a further thirty-four estates in different areas in the south of England. See Burrows, The Family of Brocas, 210 and ‘Parishes: Peper Harow’, A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 3, 1911, 49-52 for more.


her letter of appointment, Mary wrote that Pexall was granted the office for “the good, true, and faithful service which her beloved servant had before that time rendered her in many ways...” This comment suggests that Pexhall had been of help to Mary in 1553, during the very tumultuous year after Edward VI died, and this may also be why Pexall was knighted that year. It was during this same time that Pexhall decided to pull down the old family seat of Brocas and, in its place, build a beautiful Tudor mansion, calling it Beaurepaire. Although his son-in-law would ultimately complete the mansion, it was for Pexhall surely a symbol of his growing fortune and status.¹⁶

Not long after Eleanor Paulet died, in September 1558, Richard and Eleanor Cotgreave were married.¹⁷ They were to have a childless marriage, as indeed all of Eleanor’s were, although from the remaining accounts their union was a happy one. By example, when Pexhall died in 1571, in a fairly unusual step for the period, he left the vast majority of his fortune to Eleanor, including Beaurepaire and many other estates, to the exclusion of his own children by his first wife.¹⁸ What remained of his estate, after his many gifts to Eleanor, was left to his grandson, Pexall Brocas, who was the son of his eldest daughter, Anne, by her marriage to Bernard Brocas of Horton.¹⁹ Yet, even here Pexhall specified that Eleanor was to act as trustee to Brocas’ legacy until he reached the age of majority. Pexhall’s will also left the Mastership of the Buckhounds—a hereditary title—to Eleanor rather than his children. And, as a clear indication of his wishes, Pexhall’s will also states that, should anyone challenge his legacies to Eleanor, they would be disinherited.²⁰

Soon after Pexhall died, Eleanor erected a magnificent alabaster and marble memorial monument to him in the Chapel of St. Edmund at Westminster Abbey, where he was also buried (Figure 2). An inscription on the monument reads:

“To God and future ages. Here rests, expecting the glorious Resurrection of Christ, Richard Pecksall Knight, excellent in his religion and probity; he married first Alianor,

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¹⁸ PRO 11/63. The will was proved on 8 November, 1571.
²⁰ PRO 11/63/3
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daughter of William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester, and Lord Treasurer of England, who bore him four daughters. His second wife was Alianor, daughter of John Cotgrave, and after his death married to Sir John Savage Knight of the county of Chester; who out of respectful regard towards her dear husband, and in perpetual memory of their marriage faith, hath, at his charge, freely and willingly erected this monument.”

As the inscription indicates, soon after Pexhall died, Eleanor married Sir John Savage.

Originating in Derbyshire in the 14th century, the Savages rose in power and wealth through a series of advantageous marriages and military campaigns. By the early 16th century their base of power had been consolidated in Cheshire where they lived at the Old Hall, Clifton. Sir John’s father, John Savage VII, although a man of great wealth, managed to lose—through a series of legal entanglements—nearly all of the Savage land outside of Cheshire just before our John, John Savage VIII, was born. Sadly, by the time that he was three, Savage’s father had died, leaving him as sole heir to the family fortune, or rather what remained of it in Cheshire.

At the time of his death, in 1597, Savage was said to be 74; this would suggest that he was born in c. 1523. His mother, Elizabeth Somerset, was the daughter of Charles Somerset, 1st Earl of Worchester and Henry VIII’s Lord Chamberlain; she was also Henry VIII second cousin. Although nothing is known of his formative years, as an adult John first married Elizabeth Manners, the daughter of the Earl of Rutland. Thomas Manners was an extremely powerful figure in the Tudor courts and is probably most well known for his employment in the Royal household,

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21 For more on this monument see ‘Westminster Abbey—Monument to Sir Richard Pecksall,’ accessed online 10 February 2010 <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/richard-pecksall>.
22 They were married sometime in 1572.
26 BM Harley MS. 1535, f. 246. Upon John’s death, Elizabeth would marry Sir William Brereton. The Brereton’s were relatives by the marriage of John’s mother, Elizabeth Somerset, who had married William Brereton before 1536. See Ormerod, The History of the County Palatine, 528. There is, as well, a portrait in the collection at the Detroit Institute of Art said to be of Sir William Brereton, also dated 1579, and also recently attributed (by me) to Robert Peake (Accession Number 50.194). It is possible that Eleanor had access to Robert Peake by virtue of her kinship with William through her mother-in-law.
acting in various capacities for Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, and Catherine Parr. John and Elizabeth’s marriage was a fruitful one; they would have ten children together, including John’s heir, also called John Savage.

During his life Savage held a variety of public offices including Sheriff of Cheshire in 1550, 1560, 1567, 1570, 1575, 1576, 1579, and 1591. He was also sometime Knight of the Shire (under Elizabeth I), elected MP for Cheshire in 1585 and again in 1588, and was also Seneschal of Halton Castle, Clifton, under both Mary I and Elizabeth I. During the mid-16th century the Castle was the seat of the Sheriffs of the county. As both Sheriff and Seneschal, Savage was responsible for the overall management of the property and held twice-monthly courts where he would attend to local grievances. Under Elizabeth I the Castle was also used as a prison for Catholic recusants and Savage acted as host to a variety of Lancashire recusants, among them Sir John Southworth.

In 1564, Savage determined to build a new manor on the site of the Old Hall at Clifton, probably built as emblematic of his rising fortunes. The new mansion, called Rocksavage, was completed in 1568 and was one of the greatest Elizabethan houses in the county. Built on a hillside overlooking the Weaver River, in 1674 Rocksavage was described as the second largest house in Cheshire, with nearly fifty hearths.

In August of 1570 Lady Elizabeth Manners died and was interred in the Savage Chapel at St. Michael’s, Macclesfield; in less than two years Savage would marry Eleanor. Unfortunately,

28 BM Harley MS. 1535, f. 246.
32 Ibid.
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aside from a series of legal maneuvers over Eleanor’s inheritance, there is little archival information concerning their marriage.\(^{35}\) Even so, given the various offices that Savage held in Cheshire, and her own extensive properties, Eleanor would have had a busy life.

After more than 25 years of marriage, in January, 1597, Savage died at his estate, Rocksavage. Surviving reports of his obsequies suggest that he was held in much esteem in Cheshire; more than 80 people attended his funeral.\(^{36}\) After much ceremony he was buried next to his first wife, Lady Eleanor Manners, at Savage Chapel, Macclesfield (Figure 3). Although Savage elected to be buried next to Lady Manners, in his will he made Eleanor his sole executrix, granting her annuities from several of his properties and full right to the majority of her lands from her marriage to Richard Pexhall.\(^{37}\)

After Savage’s death the surviving documents tell us very little of Eleanor; there is no extant will or other archival details that may better inform us as to her last years. We do know, however, that she was married twice more: first to a Sir Richard Remington, sometime prior to 1599, and lastly to a Sir George Douglas, after Remington’s death in 1610 and before her death in 1612.\(^{38}\) After her death Douglas buried her at the Church of the Holy Ghost at Basingstoke, which was destroyed at the end of the 17th century.\(^{39}\) Today, then, all that remains of Eleanor is this beautiful and gentle portrait of a Tudor woman who, through a series of extraordinary marriages and, no doubt, her own intelligence and skill, managed to rise from the relatively obscurity of the daughter of a simple Chester draper to become the wife of King Henry VIII’s third cousin.

A Brief Note on the Provenance: As previously discussed, this portrait entered the collection of Louisiana State University with little, if any, provenance. The Norbert Fischman Gallery—who sold the portrait to LSU in 1959—closed their doors many years ago and any remaining gallery

\(^{35}\) The best overview of these issues, which mainly deal with Eleanor’s management of Pexhall Brocas’ estates, is Burrows, *The Family of Brocas*, 209-211.

\(^{36}\) John Rylands, *Cheshire and Lancashire Funeral Certificates; 1600 to 1678*, London, 1882, 7-10.

\(^{37}\) PRO 11/99/f. S. The one notable exception was Eleanor’s claim to Bearepare. John left her a life interest in the property but ownership was given over to his son, John.


\(^{39}\) Ibid.
archives have been lost, making the development of a provenance nearly impossible.\textsuperscript{40} Recent research, however, has uncovered some additional information regarding this picture that demonstrates that, from at least 1910, the portrait was in the collection of Philip Witham, then owner of Sutton Place, Surrey.

In January, 1910 \textit{The Connoisseur} published an article concerning Sutton Place that includes a description of a portrait, hanging in the Great Hall, inscribed “Madame Savage” and dated 1579.\textsuperscript{41} The article also includes a photograph of the Great Hall.\textsuperscript{42} A comparison of the LSU portrait in its frame, against this photograph, suggests that the portrait of Eleanor was indeed at Sutton Place in 1910 (Figure 4 & 5).

A search of other archival documents provided no evidence that the portrait was in the house prior to this date, suggesting that the picture was recently acquired although, from whence it came and by whom it was purchased, remain a mystery.\textsuperscript{43}

\textbf{A Brief Note on the Artist Attribution:} In 1959, when the picture was acquired by Louisiana State University, it was attributed to Federigo Zuccaro.\textsuperscript{44} More recently, LSU graduate student Quincy Lee has argued that the picture “is more likely to have [been] painted by Hans Eworth…” because of the dark background and the gold lettering used for the inscriptions, which he believes are common motifs in Eworth’s \textit{oeuvre}.\textsuperscript{45} In fact, when Eworth did present a plain background, it was most often grey-black and, although Eworth’s inscriptions are most often in gold paint, this picture is devoid of Eworth’s customary ‘HE monogram and, given the date, would make it the very last work in his known \textit{oeuvre}.\textsuperscript{46} In addition, although the portrait is clearly by a skilled

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} Most of LSU’s records were lost or destroyed sometime in the past. Personal communication, Fran Huber, Assistant Director for Collection Management at the LSU Museum of Art, 25 March, 2010.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Leonard Willouby, “Sutton Place, Guilford: A Surrey Manor House-Part II,” \textit{The Connoisseur} 26(101), January 1910, 12.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Willouby, “Sutton Place,” 16.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Robert Dell, “A Tudor Manor House: Sutton Place,” \textit{The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs} 7(28), July 1905, 289-301 and Frederic Harrison, \textit{Annals of an Old Manor House: Sutton Place, Guilford}, London: MacMillan, 1893, Chapter 6 (188-198). There is only one Tudor-era inventory of Sutton Place (c. 1542) and this picture—as would be expected given its date—is not mentioned. See J.O. Halliwell-Phillipps, eds., \textit{Ancient inventories of Furniture, pictures, tapestry, plate etc.}, London, 1854, Appendix and Harrison, \textit{Annals of}, 1893, 206-12. For more on the collection at Sutton Place, see #117.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Lee, \textit{A Catalogue}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{46} The last inscribed work in Eworth’s \textit{oeuvre} is dated 1574.
\end{itemize}
hand, the details—particularly of the jewels—are lacking in dimensionality and the kind of triple-highlight that is characteristic of Eworth’s works.

In fact, rather than Hans Eworth, this portrait has more in common with the oeuvre of Robert Peake the Elder (c. 1551-1619). Robert Peake’s appearance in London is first recorded in the pay of the Office of the Revels in 1576. 47 Although he is best known for his later full-length, large scale portraits of Stuart royals, the vast majority of his pictures during the 1580s and 90s are half-length portraits of wealthy Londoners and ancillary members of the Court. In most cases these portraits are inscribed with the sitter’s heraldic blazon, a date, and additional text in gold block lettering (Figure 6). According to Roy Strong, although there is only one known autographed work by Peake, he had a rather idiosyncratic inscription style that is in keeping with this portrait’s inscriptions. 48 Further, the known Peake autograph is peculiar in that the ‘A’ in the inscription is three-legged and nearly identical to that found in this picture (Figure 7 & 8).

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47 Ellis Waterhouse, Painting in Britain, 1530 to 1790, London, 1969, 43.
Figure 1

*Portrait of Lady Eleanor Savage (née Cotgreave)*
Attributed to Robert Peake
1579
Oil on Panel
24 x 19 ¾ in. (60.9 x 50.1 cm)
Louisiana State University, USA [59.9.2]
Figure 2

Detail from West View of St. Edmunds Chapel
[with the Monument of Richard Pexhall in the red box]
From Rudolph Ackermann’s The History of the Abbey Church of Westminster

Figure 3

Monument to Lady Eleanor Manners and Sir John Savage
t Savage Chapel, St. Michael’s, Macclesfield, United Kingdom

For more on this monument see Jane Laughton, The Church in the Market Place, St. Michael’s Church, 2003, 60. I wish to thank Mr. David Budget of St. Michael’s for providing this photograph of the monument.
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Figure 4
LSU 59.9.2 in frame

Figure 5
Detail of a photograph of the Great Hall, Sutton Place, Facing West, published in The Connoisseur 26(101), January 1910, 12
Figure 6

*Portrait of Sir Edward Grimston*
Robert Peake the Elder
1590
Oil on panel
31 x 24 ½ in. (78.7 x 62.3 cm)
The Collection of the Earl of Verulam, Gorhambury House, Herefordshire
Figure 7
Detail of Robert Peake The Elder’s autograph from the reverse of a portrait of an Unknown Military Commander in the collection of Lord Rootes, United Kingdom.

Figure 8
Detail from the inscription of the Portrait of Lady Eleanor Savage.