

arts

I am my beloved's, my beloved is mine

Exhibition celebrates 19th century African-American artist Edward Bannister's artistic partnership with his wife Christiana Carteau

By Alexander Castro

 @OhNoCastro

They met in 1853. He was eight years her junior, an aspiring painter. She was a businesswoman and abolitionist, a daughter of doubly marginal heritage: black and Narragansett. He was black too, born in Canada to a Barbadian father and a mother of murky Scottish origin. With few opportunities for painters of color in the antebellum era, he began barbering at her salon.

Four years later, Edward Bannister and Christiana Carteau were married.

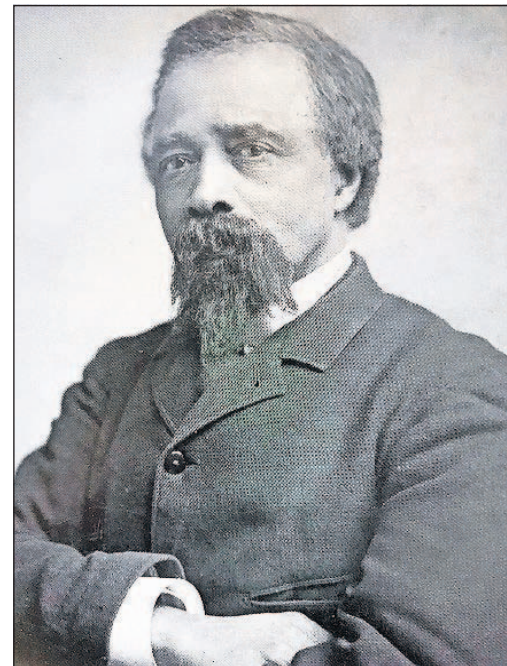
They moved to Providence in 1870. Madam Bannister, as she was professionally known, continued her profitable venture as a "hair doctress."

Financially empowered by his wife's

success, Edward Bannister's art career took off. He was awarded a First Place prize in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial, though this triumph foreshadowed later obscurity. Bannister's winning painting remains lost. Such was an omen for his notability in the next century, though as another millennium approached, a series of successful New York shows renewed public interest.

"Many of his paintings have changed hands since [the 1990s] and some are now more readily accessible," said Nancy Whipple Grinnell, curator emerita of the Newport Art Museum. "[Bannister]

See **BANNISTER**, 9



Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828-1901) was among Providence's leading painters during the 1870s and 1880s.

[NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, GIFT OF SANDRA AND JACOB TURNER]



'Providence River,' 1881. KENKELEBA GALLERY, NYC