

P. C. SKOVGAARD

1817–1875

143. *Driveway Near Vejle, in the Background the Town* (1852 or 1854)

(*Opkørsel til Lille Grundet ved Vejle*)¹

Oil on canvas, 39³/₈ x 40 in. (100 x 102 cm)

Signed and dated: P. C. Skovgaard (1852 or 1854, signature unclear)

PROVENANCE: Purchased directly from the painter P. C. Skovgaard by Wholesaler, Honorary Counselor of the King, Hans Puggaard (1788–1866); his son, Rudolph Puggaard (1818–1885); his daughter, Bolette Hartmann (1844–1929), married to the composer Wilhelm Emilius Zinn Hartmann (1836–1898); Bruun Rasmussen, Auction 846, 2014, lot 28, ill.

EXHIBITED: Charlottenborg, *Kunstforeningens Udstilling af P. C. Skovgaards Arbejder i 100 Aaret for hans Fødsel*, 1917, no. 186 (described as *Udsigt over Vejle* 1852).

LITERATURE: H. Ditzel, *Brunshaabprospekter*, Viborg 1975; Nina Damsgaard, "P. C. Skovgaard i Vejle," in *Vejle Amts Årbog* 1982, pp. 41–46; Nina Damsgaard, *Orla Lehmann – og den nationale kunst*, Vejle Kulturhistoriske Museum og Vejle Kunstmuseum 1986 (hereafter referred to as Nina Damsgaard, 1986); Gertrud Oelsner and Karina Lykke Grand (eds.), *P. C. Skovgaard. Dansk guldalder revurderet*, Aarhus 2010.²

D*riveway near Vejle, in the Background the Town* is one of two versions of the same motif painted at one of the many beautiful hillsides in East Jutland near the town of Vejle. Both paintings are presumed to have been acquired directly from the artist. Both the paintings in the Loeb collection and *Udsigt over Vejle* (*A view toward Vejle*, Fig. A) were commissioned by Puggaard's widowed son-in-law, Orla Lehmann (1810–1870), who was one of Denmark's most prominent Liberalists. He served as the Vejle County *amtmand* (chief administrative officer) from 1848–1861. Both Lehmann and Puggaard were active in the Liberalist movement of the 1840s and 1850s, which pushed for replacing the Danish monarchy with a democratic form of government. This painting was intended to boost interest and support of their controversial cause.

During a journey to Rome in 1842, Orla Lehmann met the Puggaard family, who came from Copenhagen. Mrs. Puggaard (Bolette), née Hage (1798–1847), had a deep interest in and understanding of art, which is why she and her husband often traveled in Italy. In 1842, they were accompanied by their young daughter Annette Marie Bolette, called Maria (1821–1849), who, like her mother, drew and painted the many sights there. The year after they met, Orla and Marie became engaged, and in 1844 they married.

Hans and Bolette Puggaard belonged to the first generation of patrons from the bourgeoisie who collected Danish art almost exclusively. Many of the most prominent artists of the time frequently visited their Copenhagen home as well as their country home in Ordrup north of the city. Among them were the sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen and the painters C. W. Eckersberg and Wilhelm Marstrand. In this environment, Orla Lehmann gained an insight into art that he developed with guidance from his wife, whose love and study of art equaled that of her mother. Presumably influenced by his son-in-law, Hans Puggaard offered his home as a meeting place for the national Liberalists. Among these were not only politicians but also painters such as P. C. Skovgaard and J. Th. Lundbye, along with prominent cultural figures including the art historian N. L. Høyen. Orla Lehmann would soon collaborate with Høyen regarding the use of art portraying the beauty of their Danish homeland. It was to be a means of spreading national Liberalist ideas.³

On December 8, 1848, Orla Lehmann was appointed *amtmand* in Vejle County, and he reported there



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in the beginning of January 1849. His pregnant wife was far too ill to accompany him to Jutland, and in the spring of 1849, she and a newborn baby died. Late that summer, Orla Lehmann brought their four-year-old daughter Margrethe (1846–1918) to Vejle, along with her godmother, who would care for her and the Lehmann household.

On July 1, 1852, artist and fellow Liberalist P. C. Skovgaard and his young wife Georgia (1828–1868) arrived at Lehmann's *amtman* residence, staying there until August 30 (about two months). Skovgaard was to produce an idealistic painting of a beautiful area outside the town of Vejle. This was his first visit to Jutland, and he explored more than a few sites for this assignment before settling on the place for this painting.

View toward Vejle (Fig. A), owned by Orla Lehmann, was shown at the annual spring exhibition at Charlottenborg in 1853. *Driveway near Vejle* was not exhibited until February 1917, when the Copenhagen Art Society celebrated the centennial of Skovgaard's birth with an exhibition of some of his work, including the two Vejle paintings. It was then possible to compare their similarities and differences.

Puggaard's painting (in the Loeb collection) is slightly larger than Lehmann's, but both were painted at the same rural location outside Vejle. Among others painted while the artist was in Vejle, they were meant to help boost the Liberalist drive to abolish the monarchy.

The viewer's eyes are first drawn to a brightly lit scene near the front of the picture. A man in a black suit (probably the driver) stands waiting in front of a carriage pulled by two steers. We can imagine that two of the three women pictured at his right came with him from the town in the background and have crossed a small stream, where they have been welcomed by the third woman.

Also dominant is the bright blue sky with a scattering of cumulus clouds, beneath which is the town of Vejle. Just above a tiny speck of red is the towering 600-year-old Church of St. Nikolaj. Next we turn to the darker areas of the picture, composed primarily of wind-blown beech trees. (The beech tree might well be a national symbol of Denmark, just as the maple tree is considered representative of Canada.) Just to the left of the trees we see another steer-drawn cart struggling up a hill, with people in the front and back of the cart. At the very bottom of the picture, we see a fallen tree with a twisted gray-white trunk, its clawlike roots visible.

After viewing it closely, we conclude that, as commissioned by Lehmann/Puggaard, Skovgaard has perfectly rendered an idealistically beautiful rural scene of their beloved homeland. Hans Puggaard, the first owner of this painting, was an ardent collector of Danish art. He would be delighted that *Driveway near Vejle* found a home with Ambassador John L. Loeb Jr., an equally ardent Danish art collector.

S.L.

A lithographed version of Hans Puggaard's painting was made some years after the completion of the work itself (Fig. C).



FIG. A *A View toward Vejle, 1852 (Udsigt over Vejle)*
Oil on canvas, 39³/₈ x 39¹/₄ in. (98 x 100 cm)
Vejle Kunstmuseum



FIG. B *A View of Vejle, Study (1852) (Parti ned over Vejle. Studie)*
Oil on canvas, 13¹/₃ x 12¹/₂ in. (34 x 32 cm)
Vejle Kunstmuseum



FIG. C Julius Helleesen (1823–1877)
The Old Road Leading to the Farm, Lille Grundet.
From a painting by P. C. Skovgaard (ca. 1860)
Lithography (Emilius Bærentzen & Co. Lithographiske
Anstalt), 9½ x 9½ in. (238 x 243 mm)

¹Lille Grundet was a farm with adjacent lands in the hills by Vejle. It was owned by Orla Lehmann's neighbor and good friend, Dankvard Neergaard, who like Lehmann took an interest in art and invited contemporary artists to live with him and work.

²Suzanne Ludvigsen would like to thank Nina Damsgaard for useful information about the Puggaard and Lehmann families. She also wants to thank Gertrud Oelsner and Anne Højer Petersen, Fuglsang Kunstmuseum, for information useful to this article.

³N. L. Høyen believed that art should function educationally on the general national character. Portrayals of typical Danish landscapes painted in the most beautiful way possible should inspire pride in the Danish viewer, love of homeland, and commitment to ongoing Danish ethnicity. With regard to national Liberalism see Loeb collection no. 108, including note 5. See also *The Ambassador John L. Loeb Danish Art Collection* Appendix B, pp. 419–425. The Skovgaard couple belonged to the circle around the art historian N. L. Høyen and the poet priest N. S. Grundtvig. All of them were national Liberalists.