

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST



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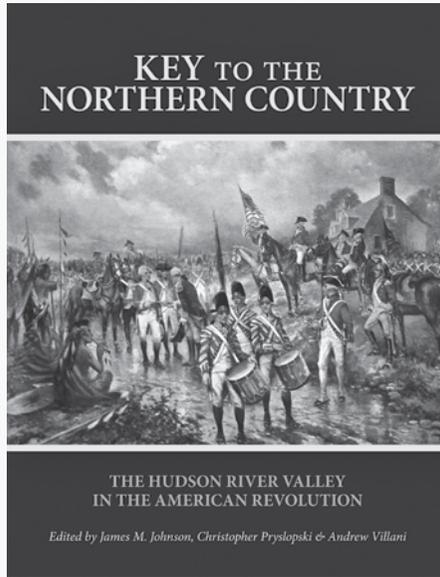
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The Hudson River Valley in the American Revolution

Edited by James M. Johnson, Christopher Pryslopski, & Andrew Villani

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From the Editors

We want to recognize the dedication and effort of our Guest Editors on this issue; Thomas S. Wermuth and Kerry Dean Carso guided the following articles from illustrated lectures to finished articles. They are significant revisions of papers originally delivered at the symposium “Revisiting the Hudson” sponsored by the State University of New York at New Paltz Art History Department and the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art. Kerry Dean Carso, associate professor of art history at SUNY-New Paltz, organized the symposium with the assistance of Sara Pasti, the Neil C. Trager Director of the Dorsky Museum, and her staff. Abigail Duckor (New Paltz class of 2011), a Dorsky Museum intern at the time, also assisted in organizing the event.

Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Nineteenth Century

Thomas S. Wermuth

One of the most popular forms of public entertainment in the nineteenth-century United States was to participate in the “landscape experience.” This ranged from a wealthy patron owning an original Hudson River landscape painting, or perhaps even commissioning one, to making a “Grand Tour” up the Hudson and staying at the Catskill Mountain House. On the other end of the socioeconomic scale, it could be a New York City laborer and his family attending a landscape painting exhibition at the New York Academy. Somewhere between these two, it might be a middle-class family purchasing an engraving or taking a steamboat upriver to hike through the Hudson Highlands or Shawangunks. More or less limited to the Northeastern United States, the landscape experience was centered in and around New York’s Hudson River Valley.

Central to the landscape experience were landscape paintings and writings, and the artists and authors who created them. Over the last several years, scholars have been re-examining the intersection of the landscape, nineteenth-century art, the viewing public, and the related growth of scenic tourism to the sites of the painter’s subjects. The essays in this volume explore that intersection within the social, cultural, and artistic context in which the landscape experience developed and flourished.

Hudson River landscape painting was among America’s most popular art forms in the nineteenth century, with thousands of people viewing exhibitions of the paintings and thousands more journeying up the river to visit historic sites and view striking scenery. For the young United States, lacking key characteristics of a national identity such as its own language or a mythical past, the Hudson’s landscape provided confidence and national pride. As Angela Miller has observed, “images of the American landscape carried a new weight of national meaning for contemporary audiences.” Further, as Barbara Novak has commented, Hudson River landscape painting paralleled “the discovery of the American landscape as an effective substitute for a missing national tradition.”¹

Nevertheless, relatively little landscape painting existed in the United States before the nineteenth century. It did not emerge fully until the late 1820s, when the growth of New York City and the expansion of the U.S. economy led to a professionalizing middle class with the time, resources, and interest to read authors like James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, view the paintings of artists Thomas Cole and Frederic

Church, and visit the storied and beautiful places these artists recreated in their art. The Hudson River Valley, with its magnificent landscape and historic Revolutionary War sites, as well as its proximity to New York City, provided the earliest subject matter for artists, writers, and tourists.²

Several factors converged in the first decades of the nineteenth century to encourage both the artistic depictions of the region and the interest of many to visit it. The development of quick river travel via the steamboat accelerated the process of artistic development and tourist travel.³ A second important factor was an interested and engaged audience. Although a small elite had already developed an interest and taste in landscape paintings imported from Europe, the larger public had not. Nevertheless, the increasing emphasis and emerging popularity in travel guides, such as William Guy Wall's *Hudson River Portfolio* (1821) and Jacques Milbert's *Picturesque Itinerary of the Hudson River* (1826), intensified interest in the region. The guidebooks continued to highlight the Hudson, the Catskills, and the surrounding countryside through the 1850s, and as late as the eve of the Civil War, *Appleton's Illustrated Hand-Book of American Travel* (1857) still recommended the Hudson and the Catskills as the most pleasant and profitable summer excursion in the United States.⁴

The final factor was a desire for people to travel up the river to see the historic sites, visit the mountains and waterfalls, and partake in the landscape experience. The social and economic changes of the early nineteenth century opened up new opportunities for leisure and entertainment different from the traditional rhythms of the rural town or pre-industrial city. The new middle classes, composed of bankers, attorneys, doctors, and other professional groups, with more disposable income and available free time, tended toward museums, exhibition galleries, concert halls, and, increasingly, tourism.⁵

Tourism and the new world of landscape painting and regional writing became intertwined. Central to this potential market for tourism to the Hudson were the writings of Irving and Cooper and the paintings of Cole. Already an accomplished and recognized writer, Irving created a mythic Hudson Valley with a culture and customs that harkened back to European folk-tales. Although he used real settings like Tarrytown and Catskill, and historic figures such as George Washington and Benedict Arnold, his stories—including “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle”—created a fictionalized, mythologized, and mysterious world of great interest to the growing reading public. Cooper was an equally important figure in the developing appreciation for, and desire to visit, the upper Hudson. In the *Last of the Mohicans*, *The Spy*, and *Satanstoe*, he wrote about the Hudson, but it was *The Pioneers*, his first major novel and the first of the Leatherstocking Tales, that has been remembered most for its identification of the upper Hudson and Catskill region as an incomparable place to view. Indeed, his protagonist Natty Bumppo likened the river and its views to “all creation.”⁶

Ultimately, though, it was the painters, first and foremost Thomas Cole, whose work helped develop the landscape experience and memorialize a sense of place. A British émigré, Cole was one of those travelers who journeyed around the Hudson and

in the Catskills and by 1825 had already completed landscape paintings of recognized importance. His art and that of his fellow Hudson River School painters set the stage for the landscape experience.

Voluminous scholarly work exists on the Hudson River School, so little review is needed here. In sum, the group of painters who emerged to the forefront included, of course, Cole, Asher Durand, Frederic Church, Sanford Gifford, and dozens of others. Their landscapes were located first and foremost in the Hudson River Valley, although they travelled to the Adirondacks, Lake George, New Hampshire's White Mountains, the Berkshires, the Maine coast, along with adventures to Europe and South America. By the late nineteenth century, Hudson River landscape-style painters like Albert Bierstadt were painting the Rockies and the far West. Even though there were significant differences in style and artistic approach among these painters, they were in most ways a "school" of painting. They painted similar subjects and themes, knew each other, mentored and critiqued each other's art, and often travelled together on painting forays.⁷

In their heyday in the mid-nineteenth century, Hudson River School paintings were America's foremost artistic contribution and most popular creative art form. Artists' works were commissioned by the wealthiest benefactors in the U.S. and Europe, exhibited in leading museums and galleries, and were the most popular attractions in exhibitions of the New York Academy and New York Art Union where, during the 1830s and 1840s, several hundred thousand people viewed them.⁸

While travel to the Hudson was unnecessary to read or view the works of this artistic avant garde, an increasing number of people wanted to see the subjects firsthand. At first they were limited by irregular and inexpensive travel and unacceptable accommodations. By the late 1820s, the work of hotel operators, steamboat owners, and the nineteenth-century equivalent of the travel industry had begun to meet the growing need. Although the Catskill Mountain House (Pine Orchard) had opened in 1823, its location as the site of Cooper's quote saw its business jump considerably in the late 1820s and continue unabated for another two decades.⁹

Tourists came to the Hudson for many reasons, some of them intertwined. Nevertheless, the main attractions tended to be the scenic beauty as well as the historical associations and cultural identity citizens of the young nation sought in the region's historic battlegrounds and rich heritage. What the Hudson River symbolized to artists, writers, or tourists is still debated.¹⁰ For many tourists, the valley was the "sanctified landscape" painted by Cole and Durand, and written about by Cooper and Irving. As scholars have long noted, the young United States had not yet attained the distinguishing characteristics of a nation. Indeed, it had very little history and, from the European perspective, even less "culture." What the country did have was a striking landscape. Hudson River artists and writers imbued this regional landscape with an historic past, sometimes idealized, to help give meaning to the region's—and, by extension, the nation's—promise. Fran Dunwell points out that the "River became the focus of a quest for national identity." The Revolutionary battlegrounds and ruins of

historic forts gave Americans of the early nineteenth century a sense of a shared past, one that was historic in its foundations. George Washington's Headquarters, West Point, Fort Putnam, the "chain across the Hudson"—all offered generations of Americans a common, honorable, and heroic history.¹¹

Nevertheless, as Harvey Flad has pointed out, for many tourists it was less the history that made the Hudson so important, but its natural beauty.¹² Thousands of people from all across the Northeast and Europe journeyed up the river to glimpse the Palisades, the Hudson Highlands, the Catskills, and other sites. Some who toured the valley did so to hike in the Shawangunks and Catskills and enjoy a "wilderness" experience. This was certainly true of the first group of Hudson River painters who visited the region, boarding at local farmhouses and journeying into the forests, cloves, and gorges for inspiration. These travelers, however, were generally the exception.

Indeed, the large number of tourists who began to travel north up the river did so not simply to see the attractions, but to view those attractions while staying in the new hotels and mountain houses that were springing up throughout the region. By the 1820s, wealthier patrons travelling upriver could stay at the West Point Hotel, or the Catskill Mountain House fifty miles further north, as well as the many other hotels and mountain houses that sprang up in between to meet the needs of the new scenic tourists.¹³

Scholars have noted that many tourists visited the region to escape the city. By the mid-nineteenth century, many saw New York City "as an unhealthy if not dangerous place." Many of the tourists who came in summer did so to escape the heat and growing "teem" of the rapidly enlarging metropolis. Certainly some of the Hudson River painters and writers symbolically distanced themselves from the city that they lived and worked in, keeping the city "at arm's length, offering up a valley landscape as the defining American place disconnected from its intimate urban connections."¹⁴

The resorts themselves became the destination, since they were developed to meet the scenic tourist's every need. Proprietors took great care to build comfortable and sometimes luxurious settings and accommodations that were connected to the landscape surroundings. Verandas, English gardens, paths, and summer houses all were designed and built to highlight the experience and entertain the guest. But it was not a "wilderness experience," nor a "pioneer" one. The experience was human-constructed in the landscape, designed by landscape architects and describing what to see, where to see it, and how to see it. It was, as Harvey Flad has described it, "a parlor in the wilderness."¹⁵

Nevertheless, the height of Hudson River landscape painting and regional tourism developed and thrived at the same time that the actual landscape was undergoing powerful changes with the onset of industrialization, railroads, and general economic growth. As Barbara Novak has observed, the new appreciation of the natural environment, indeed the very emergence of landscape painting, "coincided paradoxically with the relentless destruction of the wilderness in the early nineteenth century."¹⁶ The tanning industry had begun in the Catskills in 1817, a decade before the rapid growth

in tourism to the region. As the local supply of hemlocks was exhausted, the industry moved west, leaving thousands of acres of Catskill woodlands desolate. Ironically, the extractive industry preceded the tourists, providing them with easier roads and better access to the Catskills. The mix of commercial enterprise, extractive industry, and even tourism itself “was transforming the landscape experience in the Catskills.”¹⁷

This was not lost on the painters who chose to explore this theme. Some showed the desolated mountainsides, the railroads, and the smokestacks, whether celebrating them, disguising them, or integrating them. Others presented an anachronistic vision—a mid-nineteenth-century landscape without the “improvements” that had already made their mark on the landscape. Others blended the two, while others still, like Cole and Gifford, hid deep political and cultural concerns in the landscapes they painted. The first third of the nineteenth century was a lively political period, the “Age of Jackson” and “the rise of the common man,” but also a time of increasing political and social battles over slavery, immigration, national identity, and the growing market and manufacturing developments that were transforming young America into a commercial power.¹⁸

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, easier travel to the vast landscapes of the American West, to cultured and historic Europe, and to the increasingly popular health spas in upstate New York, among other recreational pursuits, helped usher in the decline of the valley’s landscape experience. Many Hudson River style-artists continued to paint the region, and some did so in the landscape tradition, but there were fewer commissions and fewer exhibitions. Tourism continued in the valley, but was a much smaller component of the larger U.S. tourist industry, and fewer of the wealthiest travelers spent their time there. And even while a new generation of resorts grew in reputation and popularity, such as the Smiley family’s mountain houses at Mohonk and Minnewaska, the first generation of these hostelryes—including the Catskill Mountain House and Hotel Kaaterskill—declined in popularity, having lost their affluent guests to Europe and other destinations. For decades, the Hudson River landscape painters and their work languished outside the realm of artistic and scholarly interest.

In the last generation, there has been a renewed scholarly interest in Hudson River landscape painting. Moreover, although great interest continues to exist in the work and lives of the painters themselves, increasingly scholars are interested in the role this landscape painting played for the young United States and how it helped to establish identity and history for the young nation. Further, interest has grown in the audience for these paintings—the audiences at the exhibitions and the tourists to the region—and the “landscape experience” they were part of. The essays in this special issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* explore these new scholarly directions.

Notes

1. Angela Miller, *Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.1; Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.20.

2. Edward Nygren, ed., *Views and Vision: American Landscape before 1830* (Washington, D.C., Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1986).
3. David Schuyler, *Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists, and the Hudson River Valley, 1820-1909*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 8-27.
4. Kenneth Myers, *The Catskills: Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Mountains, 1820-1895* (Westchester: The Hudson River Museum, 1987), pp. 31-40; Roland Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House*, (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1966) p.9; Nancy Siegel, "We the Petticoated Ones: Women of the Hudson River School," pp. 152-153 in Siegel, ed., *The Cultured Canvas: New Perspectives on American Landscape Painting*, (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011).
5. Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House 12*; Fran Dunwell, *The Hudson: America's River* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 67-70.
6. Cooper, *The Pioneers*, pp. 292
7. For the Hudson River school, see Angela Miller, *Empire of the Eye*; and also, John K. Howatt, *The Hudson River and Its Painters*, (New York: American Legacy Press, 1972); Raymond O'Brien, *American Sublime: Landscape and Scenery of the Lower Hudson Valley* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Kevin Avery, et. al *Hudson River School Visions: The Landscapes of Sanford R. Gifford* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds., *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Linda Ferber, *The Hudson River School: Nature and American Vision* (New York: New York Historical Society, 2009).
8. Dunwell, *The Hudson* p. 93; Howatt, *The Hudson River and Its Painters*, pp. 44-45; Elwood C. Parry, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), pp.23-25.
9. Van Zandt. *The Catskill Mountain House*, pp.34-43.
10. Myers, *The Catskills*, p. 31; Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House*, p.10.
11. Dunwell *The Hudson*, p.69 ; Schuyler, "The American Revolution Remembered in the Hudson River Valley," *Hudson River Valley Review* 30:1 (Autumn 2013), pp. 7-15; Schuyler, *Sanctified Landscape*, pp. 30-31; 104-105.
12. Harvey Flad, "The Parlor in the Wilderness: Domesticating an Iconic American Landscape," *Geographical Review* 99:3 (2009), p.360.
13. Flad, "The Parlor in the Wilderness," p. 360; Schuyler, *Sanctified Landscape* p. 14
14. Roger Panetta, "The Sanctification of the Hudson River Valley," *Hudson River Valley Review* 29:2 (Spring 2013), pp. 42-44.
15. Harvey Flad, "The Parlor in the Wilderness," pp. 360-61.
16. Novak, *Nature and Culture*, p.4
17. Martin Breugel, *Farm, Shop, and Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley*, (Duke University Press, 2004), pp.81-83; Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House*, p. 19; Schuyler, *Sanctified Landscape*, p. 34
18. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1994); Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (Hill and Wang, 2006); Bruce Levine, *Half-Slave, Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War* (Hill and Wang, 2005).

Call for Essays

The Hudson River Valley Review will consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson River Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself. All articles in *The Hudson River Valley Review* undergo peer analysis.

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HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as one double-spaced typescript, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a CD with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk.

Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

HRVR will accept materials submitted as an e-mail attachment (hrvi@marist.edu) once they have been announced and cleared beforehand.

Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Endnotes rather than footnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The Hudson River Valley Institute

The Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College is the academic arm of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Its mission is to study and to promote the Hudson River Valley and to provide educational resources for heritage tourists, scholars, elementary school educators, environmental organizations, the business community, and the general public. Its many projects include publication of *The Hudson River Valley Review* and the management of a dynamic digital library and leading regional portal site.



On the cover:

View of the Highlands from West Point, John Ferguson Weir, 1862.

Collection of the New-York Historical Society, S-224.

See page 126 for color plate

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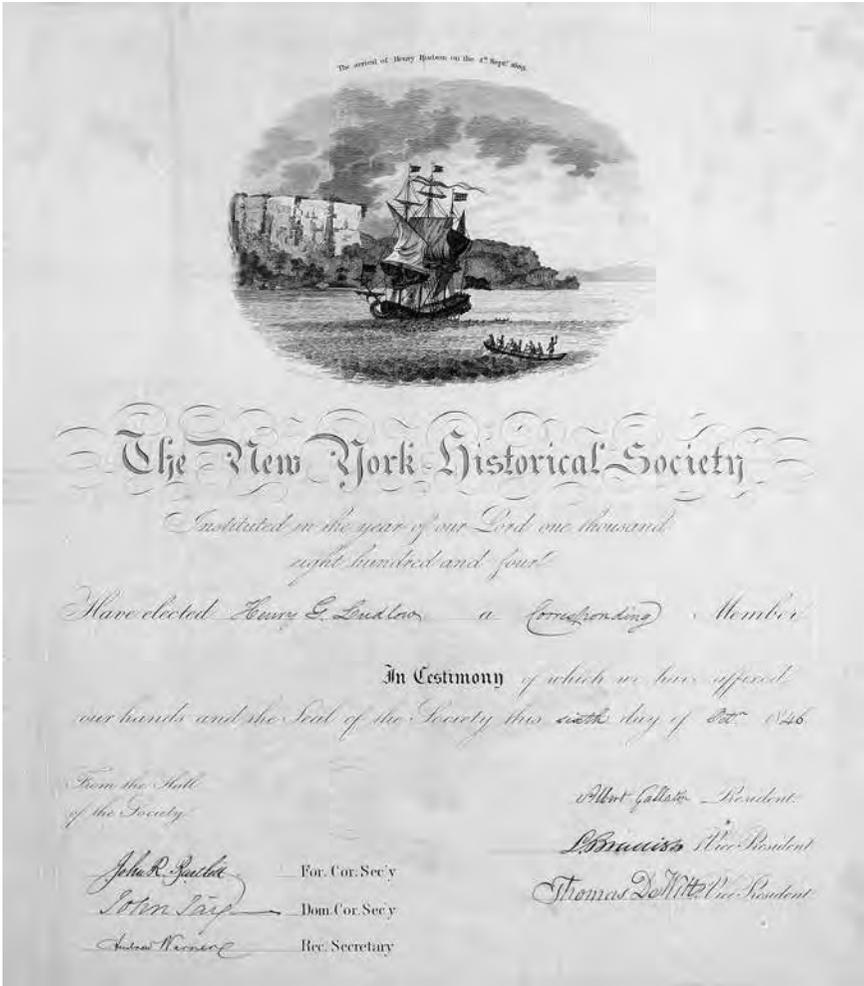


Fig. 1. The arrival of Henry Hudson on 4th Sept. 1609. Vignette on an 1821 New-York Historical Society membership diploma Asher B. Durand engraved after Louis Simond. Collection of the New-York Historical Society Print Room

“The Geography of the Ideal”:

The Hudson River and the Hudson River School

Linda S. Ferber

The genesis of this volume was an exhibition in 2009 drawn from the landscape collections of the New-York Historical Society to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson’s voyage on the river that now bears his name.¹ On the 200th anniversary of that voyage, in 1809, Washington Irving’s famous Dutchman, Diedrich Knickerbocker, had dedicated a pseudo-history of New York to the now venerable but then only five-year-old society. Mindful of the river’s role in history, the society’s membership diplomas, engraved by Asher B. Durand in 1821, were emblazoned with an image of Hudson’s *Half Moon* sailing past the Palisades (Fig. 1). By that time, scenery along the Hudson River was already a source of inspiration to American artists and writers eager to create a national visual and literary culture. With the introduction of steam-powered vessels, picturesque touring on the river became a growth industry. Guidebooks directed tourists to sites extolled for scenic beauty, healthful climates, and historical associations. New Yorkers visited newly developed hotels, built country homes along the river’s course, and purchased landscape paintings by the artists who are known today as the Hudson River School.

This loosely knit group of artists, together with like-minded poets and writers, rose to eminence in New York during the early nineteenth century. Their mission, as they saw it, was to create an “American” landscape vision and literary voice based on the exploration of Nature; the natural world defined as a resource for spiritual renewal and as an expression of cultural and national identity. Elite urban populations embraced the imported taste for regional scenery that depicted images along picturesque touring routes and at sites near resort hotels such as the Catskill Mountain House, which opened in 1824. The market for such images was served first by printmakers and then by painters of the Hudson River School.²

John Frederick Kensett’s famous *View from Cozzen’s Hotel, near West Point, N.Y.* (1863), has long been deemed the iconic example of an artist’s inventive response to the sweeping vista of the Hudson’s course through the Highlands (Fig. 2). The artist was on the porch of another fashionable tourist hotel, this one perched some 180 feet



Fig. 2. *View from Cozzens' Hotel, near West Point, N.Y.*, John Frederick Kensett, 1863. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, S-189

above the river on the western bank about a mile below West Point.³ The essays that follow will investigate a variety of creative responses to the region's scenery and history over the course of the nineteenth century. They reflect upon the means by which the artists associated with the region and the Hudson River School, some canonical and others earlier and less familiar figures, reshaped the specifics of terrain and environment into the recognizable but still imaginative realm that Henry James so fittingly described as "the geography of the ideal."⁴ While we do not automatically associate James, the ultimate cosmopolitan, with the Hudson River or the Hudson River School, in fact he seems to have been rather a fan of both, as we learn from a chapter in his travelogue, *The American Scene* (1907). The former New Yorker had left his birthplace as a youth in 1855, the year that Asher B. Durand's "Letters on Landscape Painting" appeared in the first issues of *The Crayon*. On his return after an absence of many years, James criticized the modern metropolis as a "steel-souled machine room," but seemed startled by the strength of the nostalgic and aesthetic emotions evoked when he revisited the river landscape of his childhood.⁵ Several excursions up (and down) the Hudson River proved to be deeply consequential experiences. The "hazy Hudson" stirred long dormant memories along with a rich medley of visual and literary associations. For example, the physical setting of West Point in the Highlands transformed the "School of the Soldier" for James into a vision of "blinding radiance" redolent of Kensett's *View from Cozzens' Hotel, near West Point*. James described (as Kensett had painted) "the strong silver light, all simplifying and ennobling, in which I see West Point; see it as a cluster of high promontories, . . . overhanging vast receding reaches of river, mountain-guarded and dim, which took their place in the geography of the ideal, in the long perspective of the poetry of association, rather than in those of the

State of New York.”⁶ Inspired by a “golden Sunday” at a “charming old historic house,” James recalled the radiance of long-ago Indian summers along the river, writing: “...the iridescence consists...of a shimmer of association.... some sense of legend, of aboriginal mystery, with a still earlier past for its dim background and the insistent idea of the River as above all romantic....and to the remembrance of which the wonder of Rip Van Winkle and that of the ‘Hudson River School’ of landscape art were, a little later on, to contribute their glamour.”⁷

James’s richly pictorial prose carries the vocabulary of the eighteenth-century picturesque into the twentieth. This hoary set of conventions is still vibrant in the hands of “The Master” and reminds us that *language*, as well as *place*, is very much a part of the “geography of the ideal.” Turning again to Kensett’s painting, we acknowledge the power of the visual artist’s evocation of the *geography of the ideal* in this iconic landscape. Like James, Kensett also acknowledged both historical associations (West Point) and the touring tradition in the title of his painting: *View from Cozzen’s Hotel, near West Point*. But the artist in this innovative, even radical, composition abandoned picturesque framing conventions to explore the deep gorge by sweeping us into a vast, light-filled space, evoking the “blinding radiance” that James describes in his writer’s response to the Highlands’ “strong silver light.” For James and Kensett, as for the artists discussed here, and still for us today, familiar landscapes along the Hudson have gained much of their resonance from being located in what James so eloquently called “the long perspective of the poetry of association.” These rich and complex associations inform the topics addressed in this volume, unpacking the broad-ranging inspirational and didactic uses of landscape scenery in nineteenth-century American culture. A quick survey of some major themes explored will serve to demonstrate how these paintings resonate with many of the ideas discussed in the following chapters.

Plein air practice and the seasonal artist activity at established painting sites along the Hudson River and in the region form a leitmotif through these varied discussions.⁸ Asher B. Durand was the high priest of plein air study; his annual painting excursions almost always included a sojourn in the Catskills, around the cloves and at Shandaken and Shokan, where the



Fig. 3. *Black Birches, Catskill Mountains*, Asher B. Durand, 1860. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1932-30.

See page 121 for color plate



Fig. 4. *Tree Study, Catskill Clove, N.Y.*, Thomas Hiram Hotchkiss, 1858. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1932.37. See page 121 for color plate

deep woods and massive boulders provided striking subjects for both drawings and studies in oil.⁹ For Durand, studies such as *Black Birches, Catskill Mountains* (1860), with their carefully observed details also conveyed the belief that contemplation of unspoiled nature offered opportunities for spiritual meditation and renewal—what Durand called “lessons of high and holy meaning” (Fig. 3). Durand mentored Thomas Hiram Hotchkiss, among many, and the younger artist’s brilliant studies, like *Tree Study, Catskill Clove, N.Y.* (1858), show not only the approach of his master but that he frequented the same sketching grounds¹⁰ (Fig. 4). Creative exchanges and common experiences at these artists’ sketching grounds no doubt underlie much of the convincing sense of place and atmosphere characteristic of the mid-nineteenth-century landscape vision.

We also learn that tourists and landscape painters often followed the same routes. Picturesque touring is exemplified by the well-



Fig. 5. *Niagara Falls*, Louisa Davis Minot, 1818. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1956.4. See page 121 for color plate



Fig. 6. *View of Genesee Falls, Rochester, New York, in 1797, After the Duc de Montpensier, 1823*. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1867.294

turned-out ladies and gentlemen populating Louisa Davis Minot's *Niagara Falls* (1818) (Fig. 5). The artist, a Boston resident, also contributed to the all-important literature of touring employed to enrich, as well as to memorialize, the temporary and transitory nature of the touring experience. Minot was clearly familiar with both modes of expression as demonstrated in her account of the falls published in the *North American Review* of July 1815. Recalling her approach to the cataract, she wrote: "The roar deepened, the rock shook over my head, the earth trembled.... It was some time before I could command my pencil."¹¹ Waterfalls occupied a place of honor on the American landscape itinerary. Other touring practices, such as the alfresco communal meal known as the "picnic," also contributed to the formation of both national and class identity. The Duc de Montpensier's *View of Genesee Falls, Rochester, New York, in 1797* combines both: The falls in western New York State provided the site of a sketching expedition and an aristocratic picnic (Fig. 6). In this landscape of 1823, based on Montpensier's 1797 sketches, the exiled Frenchman is shown recording the site as it appeared, still pristine, in the late eighteenth century before the founding of the city of Rochester and the proliferation of mills and factories driven by the waterpower of the mighty falls.¹²

The essays also explore the period's strong belief in the therapeutic powers of such plain air practices for both artist and patron. In fact, the authors remind us that many artists acquired properties at and near the sketching grounds of the Hudson River School. Durand embraced the healthy exertions of plain air expeditions as what



Fig 7. *Beacon Hills on the Hudson River, Opposite Newburgh—Painted on the Spot*, Asher B. Durand, ca. 1852. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1907.11. See page 132 for color plate

he called “this kind of hard–work–play.”¹³ His 1855 “Letters on Landscape Painting” conveyed the belief that contemplation of unspoiled nature offered opportunities for spiritual meditation and renewal.¹⁴ In search of both, as well as easy access to landscape subjects, Durand purchased a country property overlooking the Hudson near Newburgh in the 1840s. The pleasant vista recorded in *Beacon Hills on the Hudson River, Opposite Newburgh—Painted on the Spot* (ca. 1852) is probably the view from his property looking across the river to Fishkill (Fig. 7). A pre- or post-picnic entourage (perhaps the artist’s family) enjoys a pastoral interlude beneath sheltering trees and from a height offering a splendid view of the busy river and the eastern bank under a placid sky. Thomas Cole’s *Sunset, View on the Catskill* (1833) evokes a pastoral mood as well, capturing twilight at the river’s edge and portraying the creek that meanders from the Catskill Mountains, visible on the horizon, down to the Hudson (Fig. 8). Over the years, Cole often portrayed Catskill Creek, located near his home, Cedar Grove, with its view of North Mountain.¹⁵ His treatment of the spot has been linked with his belief in nature’s power to restore the human spirit. This belief inspired him to celebrate this resonant site in verse as well, composing a poetic hymn to “Sunset in the Catskills” in 1838:

The valleys rest in shadow and the hum/
Of gentle sounds and low toned melodies/
Are stilled, and twilight spreads her misty wing.../
Until the setting sun’s last lingering beams/
Wreath up in many a golden glorious ring/
Around the highest Catskill peak.¹⁶



Fig 8. *Sunset, View on the Catskill*, Thomas Cole, 1833.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1858.44. See page 122 for color plate

These essays also pose important questions about what degree of environmental and proto-ecological awareness, beyond the period's romantic identification with nature, we might infer from the paintings and writings of these key figures. We think of Cole's bitter lamentation when railroad builders destroyed the abundant trees that lined Catskill Creek, and Durand's actual flight when railroad developers despoiled his view and nearby Quassaick Creek. Durand's son John recalled that the railroad "drove him from his country retreat, and obliged him to resume his annual search for the picturesque in the undisturbed wilderness."¹⁷ Our consciousness today of lost or vastly altered landscapes influences our perception of certain sites. Minot's *Niagara Falls* of 1818 recorded a site to be vigorously developed for industrial use during the nineteenth century and, then, to be reclaimed by progressive forces at the century's end. A commission in the 1870s bought back commercially developed lands around the falls to form Niagara Reservation State Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted.¹⁸ Some sites, however, were altered almost beyond recognition. The English writer and actress Fanny Kemble, visiting Rochester in the 1830s, was disturbed by the way the Genesee Falls, the site of the Duc de Montpensier's picnic in 1797, been reduced to a trickle in order to turn the wheels of "a thousand dingy looking mills and manufactories." Kemble lamented: "Truly, mills and steam-engines are wonderful things, and I know that men must live; but I wish it were not expedient to destroy what God has made so very beautiful in order to make it useful."¹⁹ Some sites are lost today. William J. Bennett's *Trenton High Falls* (ca. 1835) records Trenton Falls, not far from Utica, a popular scenic attraction visited regularly by tourists and artists and deemed second in sublimity only to Niagara Falls.²⁰ A topographical artist who provided images for printmakers, Bennett depicted the series of spectacular cataracts in a deep limestone gorge that marked the descent of West Canada Creek to the Mohawk River. At the turn of the twentieth century, the



Fig 9. *View of Hudson River from Tarrytown Heights*, Robert Havell, ca. 1842.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1946.179. See page 122 for color plate



Fig 10. *Thomas Cole's First Studio, Catskill, N.Y.*, John Mackie Falconer, 1881.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1947.421

falls were contained by a dam built to provide hydroelectric power.

These essays also explore the importance of the built environment within the landscape, as well as the choices of residential sites and appropriate architectural designs. Robert Havell's wonderful *View of Hudson River from Tarrytown Heights* (ca. 1842) records the river vista looking north from the Tarrytown area (Fig. 9).²¹ Then as now, the Hudson's banks provided magnificent views for riverside cottages and villas like the charming yellow country, or even suburban, house and gardens seen here. Perhaps the artist already was aware of Andrew Jackson Downing's recently published *Cottage Residences* (1842), a popular volume of house designs and landscape plans suitable for an emerging middle class. In 1836, Thomas Cole would leave New York City to settle permanently at Catskill. His first studio, a modest vernacular building pressed into artistic service, acquired not only *picturesque* allure, but *sanctity*, after the artist's untimely death early in 1848 (Fig. 10). We know from journal entries and letters that Cole's Catskill property at Cedar Grove became a pilgrimage site for artists.²² As late as 1885, an image of Cole's studio based upon this painting of 1881 by his friend and fellow artist, John Mackie Falconer, opened an article in the *Century Magazine* titled "The Summer Haunts of American Artists," suggesting that Cedar Grove was established as a tourist destination as well.²³

We also learn from these essays how industrial sites were not only co-opted into picturesque tour itineraries, but also were naturalized in paintings as well, tucked into landscapes that easily accommodated mills, dams, canals, bridges, telegraph poles, and even prisons. William Rickarby Miller's *Mohawk River at Little Falls, New York* (1892) depicted the man-made and natural waterways at Little Falls, a village on the Mohawk



Fig 11. *Mohawk River at Little Falls, New York*, William Rickarby Miller, 1892.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1959.101



**Fig 12. *View on the Hudson Near Sing-Sing*, Joseph Vollmering, 1845-1850.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1978.57**

River along whose course the Erie Canal was constructed (Fig. 11). Visible in the right foreground is the narrow course of the Little Falls Canal, built in the late eighteenth century. Miller's broad vista, based upon an earlier watercolor view of 1853, presents the sweep of the Mohawk Valley as a fully domesticated landscape punctuated by telegraph poles and set into a transportation network of roadways, river, and canal.²⁴ Joseph Vollmering's panoramic *View on the Hudson Near Sing-Sing* (1845-1850), with its low horizon and overcast sky, includes the industrial waterfront of this old town on the east bank of the Hudson (Fig. 12).²⁵ Sing Sing Prison is shown as the distant cluster of buildings at the river's edge. The state prison, which was a stop on the Hudson River's picturesque touring itinerary, had been established in 1824 as a model penal institution and to provide convict labor for nearby marble quarries.²⁶

Several essays explore varieties of architectural association, as well as the influence of both genuine and newly built ruins along the Hudson. Medieval and Oriental styles were embraced for modern educational buildings in New York City and for country estates along the Hudson. Frederic Edwin Church's Persian fantasy was embodied in his and Calvert Vaux's design for the towers and porches of Olana, set atop a high hill overlooking Cole's Cedar Grove across the river. Samuel F.B. Morse painted *Landscape Composition: Helicon & Aganippe (Allegorical Landscape of New York University)* (1836) not long after the opening of the Gothic Revival University of the City of New York building (today known as New York University) designed by James Dakin and Ithiel

Town. The artist, who was appointed professor of literature and the arts of design in 1834, occupied a studio there in which he also worked on his telegraph.²⁷ This unusual allegorical scene transforms the university's setting on Washington Square into an Arcadian vision graced by a statue of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who seems to welcome the dawn of American civilization. Rich references are encoded in the university building: a Gothic Revival structure signifying European medieval traditions of scholarship set in Morse's painting on a fictitious campus signifying classical learning; a New World Parnassus at the mouth of the Hudson River.²⁸

With John Ferguson Weir's painterly exercise in scenic association, we return to the dramatic scenery of the Hudson Highlands and to James's "School of the Soldier" (Fig. 13). Weir's *View of the Highlands from West Point* (1862) portrays a famous panorama greatly enriched by architectural associations with the Revolutionary War. Nearby, although not actually visible in Weir's painting, are the remains of historic Fort Putnam, long revered as a genuine American ruin. The message conveyed in this often depicted vista would have been a timely one during the Civil War, when Weir painted the view for Robert L. Stuart, a wealthy New York sugar merchant and art collector who also commissioned Kensett's luminous *View from Cozzen's Hotel, Near West Point*. Stuart was an ardent Union supporter and the Hudson Highlands was the center of the North's military-industrial complex. On the east bank, opposite the United States Military Academy at West Point, was the famous West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, then engaged in producing advanced weaponry for the Union army. Stuart may well have considered the two paintings to be pendant views of what he considered hallowed Union ground.²⁹ However, unlike Kensett, Weir was not a landscape specialist. He would go on to portray the foundry itself as an industrial site in fiery operation in his most famous



Fig 13. *View of the Highlands from West Point*, John Ferguson Weir, 1862. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, S-224. See page 126 for color plate

paintings, *The Gun Foundry* (1864-66) and *Forging the Shaft* (1866-68).³⁰ However, in this earlier landscape commission, Weir would evoke the “geography of the ideal,” not through the radiant veil of Kensett’s interpretation, but by means of the carefully accurate topographical view of a destination whose ruined fortification and spectacular view were among the picturesque features, along with the Cold Spring foundry, that brought visitors to West Point and to Cozzen’s Hotel. Drawing upon these multiple associations, undoubtedly shared by his patron, Weir’s landscape steeped contemporary war-making and the Union cause in the aura of natural beauty and national history.

These essays will investigate many other ways in which the forces of history and culture endowed sites along the Hudson River and in the region with the powerful galaxy of ideas and values that comprised the “Landscape Experience” for nineteenth-century artists and tourists alike. This groundbreaking work signals exciting future directions for the study of landscape painting in context.

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Endnotes

1. “The Hudson River to Niagara Falls: 19th-Century American Landscape Paintings from the New-York Historical Society” was on view at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at the State University of New York at New Paltz from July 11 to December 13, 2009.
2. For a general introduction to the Hudson River School, see John Howat, et al, *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987; Linda S. Ferber and Kerry Dean Carso, *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls: 19th-Century American Paintings from the New-York Historical Society* (New Paltz: Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art in assoc. with the State University of New York Press, 2009); and Linda S. Ferber, *The Hudson River School: Nature and the American Vision* (New York: The New-York Historical Society in assoc. with Skira Rizzoli, 2009) which includes a bibliography on the subject of American landscape painting organized by theme and artist, 209-215.
3. For Cozzen’s Hotel, see Benson Lossing, *The Hudson from the Wilderness to the Sea*, 1866, Reprint (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2000) 251-53.
4. Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), 146.
5. op.cit. 73
6. op.cit. 146.
7. op.cit. 149-50.
8. For plein air painting, see: Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Painted Sketch: American Impressions from Nature, 1830-1880* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art in assoc. with Harry N. Abrams, 1998).
9. For Durand, see John Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, 1894, reprint (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2006); Linda S. Ferber, ed., *Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape* (London: D Giles Limited, 2007); Linda S. Ferber, ed., *The American Landscapes of Asher B. Durand* (Madrid: Fundacion Juan March in assoc. with New-York Historical Society, 2010).
10. For Hotchkiss, see Barbara Novak et al., *Dreams and Shadows: Thomas H. Hotchkiss in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (New York: New-York Historical Society in assoc. with Universe Books, 1992).
11. For Minot, see Elizabeth McKinsey, *Niagara Falls: Icon of the American Sublime* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) where the author published the identification of Louis D. Minot and cited her article; Ferber, *Nature and the American Vision*, 123-125.
12. For Monpensier, see Richard J. Koke et al, *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in the New-York Historical Society: A Catalogue of the Collection, including Historical, Narrative, and Marine Art* (New

- York: New-York Historical Society in assoc. with G. K. Hall, 1982), 2: 114-17; Linda S. Ferber, "Landscape Views and Landscape Visions" in Ferber and Carso, *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls*, 11.
13. Asher B. Durand to Francis W. Edmonds, Kingston, September 17, 1844, cited in Ferber, ed., *Kindred Spirits*, 181.
 14. Asher B. Durand "Letters on Landscape Painting," in *The Crayon*, 1855; reprinted in Ferber, ed., *Kindred Spirits* 233-52 and reprinted as facsimiles in Barbara Dayer Gallati, *Asher B. Durand, Letters on Landscape Painting* (1855) (Madrid: Fundacion Juan March, 2010).
 15. For Cole, see Thomas Cole, "Proceedings of the American Lyceum: Essay on American Scenery," *American Monthly Magazine* (January 1836), reprinted in John W. McCoubrey, ed., *American Art, 1700-1960. Sources & Documents in the History of Art* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965); Louis L. Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*. 1853, reprint (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 1997; Elwood C. Parry III, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1988); William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds., *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution in assoc. with Yale University Press, 1994.)
 16. "Sunset in the Catskills" is published in full in Parry, *The Art of Thomas Cole*, 287.
 17. John Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, 184-5.
 18. For Olmsted and Niagara Falls, see McKinsey, *Niagara Falls*, 264.
 19. Fanny Kemble, *Journal* (Philadelphia: Carea, Lea & Blanchard, 1835), 2: 201, 208-9, cited in John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 88.
 20. For artists and Trenton Falls, see David Tatham and Carol Gordon Wood, *The Art of Trenton Falls, 1825-1900* (Utica, NY: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 1989).
 21. For Havell, see Koke et al, *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in the New-York Historical Society*, 2: 114-17.
 22. For Cedar Grove as a pilgrimage site, see Carso in Ferber and Carso, *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls*, 16; Ferber, *Nature and the American Vision*, 68, 70.
 23. Lizzie Champney, "The Summer Haunts of American Artists," *Century Magazine* 30 (October 1885): 845; For Falconer, see: Linda S. Ferber, "Our Mr. John M. Falconer," in *Brooklyn Before the Bridge: American Paintings from the Long Island Historical Society* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1982), 16-23. For artists' houses and studios along the Hudson, see Sandra Phillips and Linda Weintraub, eds., *Charmed Places: Hudson River Artists and Their Houses, Studios, and Vistas* (Annandale-on-Hudson and Poughkeepsie, NY: Edith C. Blum Institute, Bard College, and Vassar College Art Gallery in assoc. with Harry N. Abrams, 1988).
 24. For Miller, see Alexandre Corbin, "William Rickarby Miller," *Art & Antiques* 6, no. 3 (1983): 64-71; Roberta J. M. Olson with the assistance of Alexandra Mazzitelli, *Drawn by New York: Six Centuries of Watercolors and Drawings at the New-York Historical Society* (London: New-York Historical Society in assoc. with D Giles Limited, 2008), 279-83.
 25. For Volmering, see Koke et al, *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in the New-York Historical Society*, 3: 219-21.
 26. For prisons as features on the picturesque itinerary see, Sears, *Sacred Places*, 87-121.
 27. For Morse, see Paul J. Staiti, *Samuel F. B. Morse* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
 28. Kerry Dean Carso, "Temples, Castles, Villas, Ruins: The Role of Architectural Association in American Landscape Painting" in Ferber and Carso, *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls*, 14-15.
 29. The commission from Robert L. Stuart is discussed in Betsy Fahlman, *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press in assoc. with Associated University Presses, 1997), 40-41; Ferber, *Nature and the American Vision*, 63; Carso, "Temples, Castles, Villas, Ruins," in Ferber and Carso, *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls*, 16-17.
 30. For Weir's paintings of the Cold Spring Foundry, see Fahlman, *John Ferguson Weir*, 64-110.

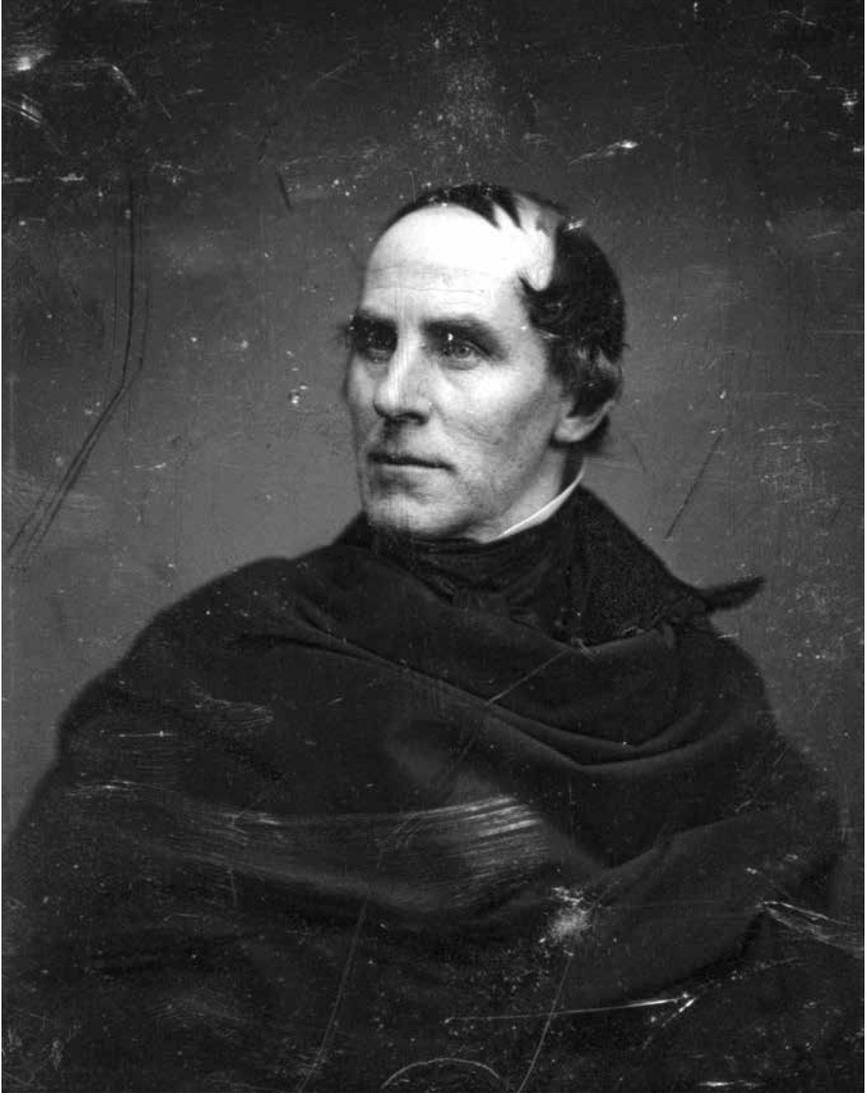


Fig. 1. *Thomas Cole*, ca. 1845. Daguerreotype, Studio of Mathew Brady. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Pencil and Pen in Defense of Nature:

Thomas Cole and the American Landscape

David Schuyler

On May 9, 1835, Thomas Cole rose before an audience at the fifth annual meeting of the American Lyceum Society at Clinton Hall, located at the southwest corner of Nassau and Beekman streets in New York City, and offered his thoughts on the American landscape. When he accepted the society's invitation, Cole conceded that he was more comfortable expressing himself with an artist's pencil than the author's pen, but he recognized the importance of the audience and decided that the occasion would be worth the considerable time and effort he put into preparing his remarks. The organizers scheduled his lecture for the evening in conjunction with the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design, also held in Clinton Hall, an indication that they expected a substantial turnout, but the size of the audience was disappointing. We don't know how well Cole's remarks were received, though the artist worried that his address would be too long. When he expressed this concern to one of the event's organizers, Theodore Dwight, Jr., the corresponding secretary of the Lyceum Society, assured him, "Happy will it be for our countrymen, when they shall be persuaded to think and feel among the scenery of our fields & forests in which we have a portion of our American birthright." Cole delivered the lengthy address as written, but after the event he confessed in his journal that he had been embarrassed by this rare effort at public speaking: "I read badly." However tentative his voice, Cole must have made an impression with his thoughts, as those remarks were published as the proceedings of the American Lyceum under the title "Essay on American Scenery" in the *American Monthly Magazine* the following January.¹

The "Essay on American Scenery" is the longest and most important writing Cole published during his lifetime. It has been reprinted in several anthologies and is frequently cited by scholars. But the context in which Cole wrote the "Essay," the setting and audience of educational reformers, and the author's broader goal of urging his countrymen to restrain the economic development that he saw devastating the American landscape, have been largely unexplored. This essay presents a rereading of Cole's prose within these contexts, which, together with his correspondence and other

writings as well as the most important painting he was working on while writing the “Essay”—*The Course of Empire* series (1833-36)—constitute a sustained argument in defense of the American landscape at a time of rapid and unsettling economic change.

Cole (Fig. 1) had electrified the New York art world a decade prior to his lecture to the American Lyceum Society, when in 1825 he joined his family in the city. He had been painting in the garret of his father’s dwelling on Greenwich Street and exhibited several of his completed works, where they were seen by George W. Bruen, a prosperous merchant. Bruen purchased two of Cole’s paintings, *Storm Composition* and *Trees*, and became Cole’s first patron: He subsidized the artist’s 1825 sketching trip up the Hudson. Surviving records do not indicate whether the artist traveled by sloop, steamboat, or on foot, but as Bruen provided only a “small sum for the purpose” and Cole was an inveterate hiker, it seems likely that the impecunious but ambitious painter walked at least part of the way north through the valley. The first stage of Cole’s trip conformed to the emerging pattern of the tourist experience: He stopped at West Point, a popular destination with a steamboat landing, and from there he sketched a number of sites, including the ruins of Fort Putnam, already revered as a Revolutionary War shrine, and Buttermilk Falls, just south of the grounds of the U.S. Military Academy, as well as the village of Cold Spring on the east bank. Following his exploration of the Hudson Highlands, Cole headed north, perhaps by steamboat, to Albany, bypassing the Catskill Mountains. While in the vicinity of Albany, he sketched a scene in Troy, on the east bank of the Hudson, and also Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River. Only then did Cole reach the Catskills, on his journey back to New York City. On this first foray into the mountains he came to love, Cole sketched Kaaterskill Falls, South Lake, and the Catskill Mountain House. Perhaps surprisingly, his notebooks contain descriptions of the landscape, time of day, and atmospheric effects, but not his aesthetic reaction to the scenery he was sketching, leaving his first biographer, Louis Legrande Noble, to wonder how the artist responded to the places he visited during the 1825 tour.²

Noble attested to the importance of the Hudson River Valley to the young artist. “From the moment when his eye first caught the rural beauties clustering round the cliffs of Wehawken, and glanced up the distance of the Palisades,” he wrote, “Cole’s heart had been wandering in the Highlands, and nestling in the bosom of the Catskills.” The “romantic scenery” of the Hudson Valley and the Catskills, Noble explained in a flight of romantic imagery of his own, “charmed his eye, and took his soul captive.” Upon his return to New York Cole transformed the sketches he had made during his travels into three important paintings: *View of Fort Putnam*, *Lake With Dead Trees (Catskill)*, and a view of Kaaterskill Falls from below, the latter a setting Cole termed magnificent. What struck Cole about the falls, as it has subsequent visitors, was the way the water cascades sequentially over several levels of rock. The first drop of 180 feet reaches a basin carved, over centuries, out of rock. The basin is almost fifty feet in diameter, behind which is a cavern. A second, lower falls drops another eighty feet. The artist was enchanted by the site, and thus described the water: “struggling and

foaming through the shattered fragments of the mountains, and shadowed by fantastic trees, it plunges into the gloomy depths of the valley below.” The overall effect of the falls impressed Cole with its “savage and silent grandeur.” Kaaterskill Falls was, and remains, a place of striking beauty and surely was one of the most frequently visited and illustrated sites in nineteenth-century America.³

What happened next is the stuff of legend. At Bruen’s suggestion Cole placed the three paintings on exhibit at the shop of William A. Colman. There they were seen by John Trumbull, the longtime president of the American Academy of the Fine Arts and a well-connected patrician who was a powerful champion of the arts. Best remembered as the artist who painted four murals for the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol, Trumbull immediately acquired one of the paintings, the view of Kaaterskill Falls, for \$25. An article written by William Dunlap and published in the *New-York Evening Post* reported that Trumbull said to Colman, “This youth has done at once, and without instruction, what I cannot do after fifty years’ practice.” According to a number of sources, which, as historian Alan Wallach has pointed out, became more embellished with each iteration, Trumbull told his friends Dunlap, a playwright and later historian of the arts in America, and engraver Asher B. Durand, about the young painter whose work he had discovered. Dunlap promptly purchased *Lake With Dead Trees (Catskill)* and Durand acquired the *View of Fort Putnam*. Just as his first sketching trip introduced the young artist to the landscapes of the Hudson Highlands and the Catskills, so did the paintings he produced upon his return introduce Cole to three of the most important figures in the New York art world and launch his career as an artist. The inclusion of the three paintings in the November exhibition of the American Academy of the Fine Arts, and the generally favorable critical reviews they received, established Cole’s public reputation. William Cullen Bryant later recalled “what an enthusiasm was awakened by these early works of his,” and especially the “delight which was expressed at the opportunity of contemplating pictures which carried the eye over scenes of wild grandeur peculiar to our country, over our aerial mountain-tops with their mighty growth of forest never touched by the axe, along the banks of streams never deformed by culture, and into the depth of skies bright with the hues of our own climate.”⁴

Over the intervening decade Cole painted a number of commissions for important early collectors such as Robert Gilmor, Jr., of Baltimore, Maryland, and Daniel Wadsworth, of Hartford, Connecticut. He brought to canvas a memorable scene from James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*, as well as the new western hero Daniel Boone, who may have inspired Cooper’s redoubtable fictional character Natty Bumppo. Cole was busily painting both to claim his place in an emerging New York art world and also to support his family, and he clearly worked hard at it. But even as he explored the scenery of the northeastern United States, Cole returned to his beloved Catskill Mountains, and in 1827 he began summering in the village of Catskill, today a sleepy Hudson Valley town but then a rapidly growing community that he described as “my favourite haunt” and that he would later, after his marriage to Maria Bartow in November



Fig. 2. Thomas Cole, *Double Waterfall—Kaaterskill Falls*, 1825 or 1826, graphite, charcoal, and crayon on paper. The Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase, William H. Murphy Fund/Bridgeman Images

1836, make his permanent home. Just to the west of the village the mountains rise to majestic heights and present a spectacular view of the river. From his Catskill home and studio, Cole presented the annual prospect of returning to New York City for the winter season as wearisome, professing to be happiest in the country and perceiving the city with a “presentiment something like of evil.” Cole prescribed for Durand an existence similar to his own. “You must come & live in the country,” he advised, as “Nature is a sovereign remedy” and “in the country we labour under more healthy influences” than in the city. Upon returning to New York City for the winter of 1834-35, Cole wrote in his journal: “How I regret [having left] the country with its delightful tranquility. Here is nothing but turmoil: my mind is distracted with a thousand cares:



Fig. 3. Thomas Cole, *The Falls of Kaaterskill*, 1826
See page 123 for color plate

and although I have commenced painting, it is not with love.” Bryant summarized Cole’s love of nature and aversion to the city in his “Funeral Oration”: “He could not endure a town life; he must live in the continual presence of rural scenes and objects.” Life in the country was, for Cole, “essential to the cheerfulness of the artist and to a healthful judgment of his own works.”⁵

From his Catskill home, Cole made frequent sketching trips to the nearby mountains as well as extended tours in search of picturesque beauty, including visits to Niagara Falls, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Maine coast, the Connecticut River Valley, and the Adirondacks. These detailed sketches were means to Cole’s artistic ends. Only after considerable thought about the overall composition of the painting he

envisioned could he find meaning to extrapolate from the sketches. As he conceded to his fellow artist Asher B. Durand, “I never succeed in painting scenes, however beautiful, immediately on returning from them[.] I must wait for Time to draw a veil over the common details, the unessential parts[,] which shall leave the great features, whether the beautiful or the sublime, dominant in the mind.”⁶

As these words suggest, Cole aspired to what he called a “higher style of landscape art.” He often chose to idealize the landscape rather than simply elaborate what he had sketched or record nature directly. When natural scenery had already been altered by human agency, he often chose to depict it as he imagined it must have been before what Bryant termed the “axe” or “culture” had intervened. In the transition from the sketch to finished painting of *Falls of Katterskill* (Figs. 2, 3), for example, Cole omitted the refreshment pavilion at the very top of the falls and the sawmill that loomed behind it to the north. He also added a rather awkwardly painted image of a Native American next to the great basin between the upper and lower falls. The artist presented a landscape yet untouched by facilities for tourists, a landscape in which the human presence lived in harmony with nature. In other paintings, Cole chose to omit structures by slightly changing the angle to exclude human alterations to the landscape: His painting *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunder Storm (The Oxbow)* (1836), for example, which portrays a carefully tended agricultural landscape adjacent to the Connecticut River below the promontory, is framed to omit the refreshment pavilion for tourists that had stood at the top of the mountain since 1821 and that was recorded in the first of two engravings of the site William Henry Bartlett published in *American Scenery* (1840) and the view that T. Addison Richards engraved for *American Scenery Illustrated* (1854). On other occasions Cole added to the landscape to create a visually more appealing scene than that which nature provided. In his painting *View of Schroon Mountain, Essex County, New York, after a Storm* (1838), he chose to include a small pond in the middle distance that was not visible from the vantage where he and Durand had sketched the scene. “I have taken the liberty of elevating myself a little as though on a treetop,” he wrote Durand, “to get a glimpse of the nearest pond by which we passed—How I have succeeded you shall judge.” Cole idealized the landscape as a source of intellectual and moral inspiration and politely but firmly rejected the advice of his early patron, Gilmor, that his paintings record the landscape with fidelity. Great art, Cole replied, was a matter of composition: “If the imagination is shackled, and nothing is described but what we see, seldom will anything great be produced either in Painting or Poetry.” As Bryant observed, Cole’s paintings were vehicles for expressing “great truths and great lessons.” James Fenimore Cooper concurred. Cole’s paintings were not a “servile copy” of nature but works of a powerful imagination. “The poet and the painter are permitted to give the beau ideal of this nature,” he wrote, “and he who makes it the most attractive, while he maintains the best likeness, is the highest artist.”⁷

Cole longed to return to the Old World to study the works of European masters

and to “acquire information in my art,” he later informed William Dunlap. Just as he was about to commence his extended journey, in 1829, his friend Bryant penned the sonnet, “To an American Painter, Departing for Europe.” Bryant warned the artist to avoid the temptations of Europe and to cherish his memories of the American landscape. The first eight lines describe unique attributes of American scenery, which are followed by four lines that establish a stark contrast with the Old World:

Fair scenes shall greet thee where thou goest—fair
But different—everywhere the trace of men.
Paths, homes, graves, ruins, from the lowest glen
To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.

The poet of American nature urged the painter of the American landscape to study European art and scenery but to “keep that earlier, wilder image bright.” Wherever he traveled, Louis Legrande Noble wrote shortly after the painter’s death, Cole judged the scenery he encountered abroad by comparison with that of the Hudson Valley, which Noble termed “this land of his heart.”⁸

Cole arrived in England in late June 1829. There he visited the studios of other artists, attended exhibitions frequently, toured the Lake District, and painted. His production included a series of ten paintings of American scenery that were engraved (along with two other views engraved from drawings) and published in John Howard Hinton’s *History and Topography of the United States* (2 vols., 1830-32). Nancy Siegel’s thoughtful study of the Hinton commission demonstrates that Cole undoubtedly painted the ten canvasses, including *A Distant View of the Falls of Niagara*, which, in his “last lingering look at our wild scenery,” he had sketched shortly before leaving for his European sojourn. *Distant View* became the frontispiece of the second volume of *History and Topography*. Unfortunately, only two of the paintings are known to survive, *Distant View* and *White Mountains, New Hampshire*. Although Cole was deeply disappointed that his paintings did not sell, he nevertheless must have been pleased that his work, in engraved form, would reach a much larger and geographically diverse audience than did exhibitions of his paintings, which took place principally in New York City. Seven of the engravings were pirated by William Adams & Sons in their American Views series and transfer printed on Staffordshire china for export to the American market.⁹

Cole’s sojourn in England ultimately proved very unsatisfying. He was frustrated not only by the lack of sales, which he counted on to finance his travels, but also by the way paintings he submitted to the Royal Academy and the British Gallery were hung—“in the worst places”—while what he considered much inferior work received the most advantageous locations. “I did not find England so delightful as I anticipated,” he wrote Dunlap. “The gloom of the climate, the coldness of the artists, together with the kind of art in fashion, threw a tone of melancholy over my mind, that lasted for months, even after I had arrived in Italy.”¹⁰

To continue his studies and, undoubtedly, in the hope of finding a more hospitable climate, Cole traveled to France. Here again he was greatly disappointed, as the Old

Masters he wanted to study in the Louvre had been replaced with an exhibition of modern French paintings, which, he reported, were even worse than contemporaneous English art. Only when he arrived in Florence did Cole find the artistic inspiration and the artistic community that he sought abroad. Although he expressed strong distaste for contemporary Italian art, and, perhaps with Bryant's sonnet in mind, claimed that he found "no natural scenery yet which has affected me so powerfully as that which I have seen in the wilderness places of America," Cole found Florence to be delightful, as that city's works of art and seclusion made it a "painter's paradise." There he benefited from the friendship of the Massachusetts-born sculptor Horatio Greenough, who introduced Cole to the expatriate community and who represented, in Joy Kasson's words, "an important link to the poetic and ideal conception of art." Cole also traveled to Rome and Naples and made several tours of the campagna before returning to Florence for a period of sustained work at the easel. "I painted more pictures in three months," he informed William Dunlap, "than I have ever done in twice the time before or since." Bryant later observed that "Cole owed much to the study of nature in the Old World, but very little, I think, to its artists," surely a reference to Cole's contemporaries rather than the Old Masters he studied to great benefit. Unfortunately, the illness of his parents and the outbreak of Asiatic cholera in New York City compelled Cole to return home, reluctantly, in October 1832.¹¹

Upon his return to the United States, Cole found in New York City merchant Luman Reed a sympathetic patron for an ambitious project he had first thought about prior to his extended travels abroad, the large, five-canvas series *The Course of Empire* (1833-36), which became his most important commission. Cole had conceptualized a series of paintings that would be "illustrative of the mutation of earthly things" as early as 1829, and he described his intent in a lengthy letter to Robert Gilmor in January 1832. There would be five canvasses that traced the evolution of a landscape from wilderness to a pastoral state, to a great city, and then the destruction of that city and its fate as a "desolate ruin." The series, he informed Gilmor, "should be the History of a Natural Scene, as well as an Epitome of Man; showing the *natural* changes of Landscape, and those effected by Man." It was while he was laboring over *The Course of Empire* that Cole presented his remarks to the American Lyceum, the "Essay on American Scenery."¹²

The Lyceum Society had invited Cole to speak on a general topic "connected with Painting in the United States." The specific subject of his remarks was thus the artist's choice, and he used the occasion to deliver a powerful message, not about painting but about the human relationship with the natural world. The "Essay on American Scenery" is both a reflection of the author's appreciation for the American landscape and his sorrow at how his countrymen were abusing it. Most of the text is descriptive, a listing of the principal features of American scenery. Wildness of course was its most distinctive attribute, especially in comparison with Europe. Cole then addressed each of the components of scenery—the "gorgeous garb" of American mountains; water, which he termed the "most expressive feature" of the American landscape; waterfalls;

river scenery, especially that of the Hudson, which he described as unsurpassed in its “natural magnificence”; forest scenery, which he judged to be unrivalled; and the sky, the “soul of all scenery.” On one level, Cole’s purpose was to acquaint listeners, and readers, with some of the most important landscape features of the Northeast.¹³

But Cole’s larger goal was didactic: In the second paragraph, he asserted that his topic was “a subject that to every American ought to be of surpassing interest.” “[H]ow undeserving of such a birthright,” Cole exclaimed, “if he can turn towards it an unobserving eye, an unaffected heart!” He was speaking to leading educational reformers in the United States, and as the records of the Lyceum Society indicate, these were individuals deeply concerned not only about what children learned in the classroom but, through the lyceum program that quickly spread across the Northeast and Midwest, about adult education as well. The Lyceum Society described its lecture program as “a cheap and agreeable means of intellectual and moral improvement,” and Cole’s remarks were fully in keeping with that goal. He clearly wanted to impress upon members of the society the need to educate Americans to the importance of “cultivating a taste for scenery,” and he must have thought of his audience as allies in this mission. Developing an appreciation for landscape among his countrymen was desirable in its own right, he insisted, but perhaps more important was also a key to controlling the abuses of nature that Cole saw occurring all around him. Most Americans were indifferent to the importance of scenery; because a “meagre utilitarianism” dominated American culture, too few of his countrymen cherished the landscape as a font of intellectual and spiritual renewal. Cole characterized the majority of Americans as an “insensate multitude” who had little regard for the landscape. Two months after reading his “Essay” to members of the lyceum, Cole hiked to the Catskill Mountain House. In his journal the artist recorded his distaste for typical visitors to the resort, who were more interested in indoor games and dancing than in hiking and experiencing the scenery of the Catskills and the Hudson River Valley.¹⁴

What was so troubling to Cole was that indifference, the lack of attachment to place, had regrettable consequences: It was translated into tolerance of a gospel of improvement that needlessly destroyed the landscape. Cole feared that “what is sometimes called improvement”—the word he and many contemporaries used to describe economic development—was crushing the “bright and tender flowers of the imagination.” In the “Essay” Cole was surely referring to places near the village of Catskill when he lamented that the “beauty of such landscapes are [sic] quickly passing away—the ravages of the axe are daily increasing—the most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation.” Then Cole ominously added, “The way-side is becoming shadeless, and another generation will behold spots, now rife with beauty, desecrated by what is called improvement; which, as yet, generally destroys Nature’s beauty without substituting that of Art.” While working on *The Course of Empire* the following year, Cole wrote to Luman Reed and observed bitterly: “the copper-hearted barbarians are cutting *all* the trees down in this beautiful



Fig. 4. *The Course of Empire: The Savage State*, Thomas Cole, 1834.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.1

valley on which I have looked so often with a loving eye.” Two weeks later, Cole penned a second letter to Reed, on one level apologizing that “what I said about the tree-destroyers might be understood in a more serious light than I intended.” Nevertheless, he expressed contempt for “the miserable creatures who destroy the beautiful works of nature wantonly & for paltry gains” and informed Reed that he had found relief in learning that “some of the trees will be saved yet.” With more than a touch of sarcasm he continued his condemnation of the improvers: “If I live to be *old enough* I may sit down under some bush[,] the last left in the utilitarian world[,] and feel thankful that Intellect in its march has spared one vestige of the Ancient Forest for me to die by.”¹⁵

Cole’s *The Course of Empire* expresses on canvas the sentiments he articulated in his “Essay on American Scenery.” The artist wrote a long description of *The Course of Empire* in a letter to Reed dated September 18, 1833. He was adopting a cyclical theory of history closely associated with the eighteenth-century British philosopher and Anglican bishop, George Berkeley, whose poem “Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America” was well known at the time. In it Berkeley wrote:

Westward the course of empire takes its way
The first four Acts already past,
A fifth shall close the Drama with the day,
Time’s noblest offspring is the last.

But if Berkeley apparently hoped that the new generation rising across the Atlantic might experience a different fate than the Old World civilizations that had reached their apogee and then declined, more than a century later Cole was not as certain. To Reed he explained that the series would “illustrate the history of a natural scene,



Fig. 5. *The Course of Empire: The Pastoral or Arcadian State*, Thomas Cole, 1834. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.2. See page 124 for color plate

as well as be an epitome of Man,—showing the natural changes of landscape, and those effected by man in his progress from barbarism to civilization—to luxury—to the vicious state, or state of destruction—and to the state of ruin and desolation.” To do so, Cole decided to paint the transformation of a single place, and to construct his allegory using the interplay of the natural world and the human impress on it over time. Although the perspective changes in each painting, the setting remained the same. What was different about the five paintings was threefold: the time of day, the season of the year, and the stage of human civilization.¹⁶

When *The Course of Empire* was exhibited in New York in 1836, Cole wrote a pamphlet that described each canvas meticulously. The first, *Savage State* (Fig. 4), is “a view of a wilderness” at daybreak. Clouds over the bay are lifting, a mountain stands in the distance, and humans are dressed pretty much as savages. This canvas represented what Cole later described as “the first rudiments of society.” The second canvas, *The Pastoral or Arcadian State* (Fig. 5), depicts the same scene later in the morning, in early summer, and farther along in the continuum of civilization. Cole described the landscape as “partly cultivated—a rude village near the bay—small vessels in the harbour—groups of peasants either pursuing their labours in the field, watching their flocks, or engaged in some simple amusement.” The “untracked and rude’ has been tamed and softened,” as a shepherd tends his flock and a muse inspires a young boy drawing on stone. A Stonehenge-like structure appears in the middle distance, and at a small village by the bay shipbuilding and other economic activities are taking place. During the pastoral state the human presence is living in harmony with nature.



Fig. 6. *The Course of Empire: The Consummation of Empire*, Thomas Cole, 1835-36. Collection of the New York Historical Society: 1858.3. See page 124 for color plate

The third canvas, *Consummation of Empire* (Fig. 6), which is larger than the other four paintings in the series, represents the same scene at noon and in early autumn. The “rude village has become a magnificent city” characterized by “gorgeous piles of architecture, bridge, aqueducts, temples—the port crowded with vessels—splendid processions, &c.—all that can be combined to show the fulness of prosperity.” Slaves march behind conquering armies, and the wealth that, in classical republican thought, would surely result in corruption, serves as a warning for America. *Consummation of Empire* represented the “summit of human glory,” in Cole’s words, but it also portended decline, a fate not unlike that experienced by the Greek and Roman civilizations whose buildings adorn the banks of the bay. The fourth canvas, *Destruction* (Fig. 7), portrays a “tempest—a battle, and the burning of the city—towers falling, arches broken, vessels wrecking in the harbour... This is the scene of destruction or the vicious state.” Together, an invading army and a fierce storm are reducing the once-glorious city to ruin: “Description of this picture is perhaps needless,” Cole wrote; “carnage and destruction are its elements.”

Finally, the fifth canvas, *Desolation* (Fig. 8), depicts “a sunset,—the mountains riven, the city a desolate ruin—columns standing isolated amid the encroaching waters—ruined temples, broken bridges, fountains, sarcophagi, &c.—no human figure—a solitary bird perhaps: a calm and silent effect. This picture must be as the funereal knell of departed greatness, and may be called the state of desolation.” Tellingly, in his published description of *The Course of Empire* Cole wrote that “though man and his



Fig. 7. *The Course of Empire: Destruction*, Thomas Cole, 1836. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.4. See page 125 for color plate



Fig. 8. *The Course of Empire: Desolation*, Thomas Cole, 1836. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.5. See page 125 for color plate

works have perished, the steep promontory, with its insulated rock, still rears against the sky, unmoved." This important series of paintings demonstrates Cole's deep concern that his adopted country was at a precarious moment when greed and utilitarianism threatened to destroy nature and thus ensure that decline would follow.¹⁷

On one level, Cole's allegory was obvious: Drawing upon the rhetoric of the republican ideology in England and America, it was a throwback to the fear of luxury and centralized power so widely shared by members of the revolutionary generation and a strident condemnation of Andrew Jackson's America. Cole's motto for *The Course of Empire*—from the fourth canto of Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*—went directly to the theme of decline that threatened the United States if it followed the path of republics of old:

First, freedom, and then glory; when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption.

But beyond the theme of the rise and fall of a civilization, Cole was revealing much about himself and his hopes for his adopted country. Berkeley's "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," and the cyclical theory of history upon which it was based, had a powerful meaning for Americans. As Alan Wallach has pointed out, "with all its allegorical discretion," *The Course of Empire* insisted that "the United States was not exempt from the workings of cyclical history, that it, too, was subject to the unchanging law of rise and decline." Art historian Angela Miller has demonstrated that Cole's contemporaries in the 1830s recognized *The Course of Empire* as a Whiggish political statement about America. President Jackson, she observed, whose "imperious and arbitrary style of leadership made him a modern-day Caesar, prepared to manipulate the citizens of the republic for his own corrupt and self-serving ends. . . . To many Whigs, Jackson threatened the delicate balance of republican consensus; like Caesar, he set the stage for the triumph of faction, the concentration of power, and the rise of the corrupt imperial state." James Fenimore Cooper, one of the most aristocratic critics of the emerging democratic impulse in American political culture, described *The Course of Empire* as "the work of the highest genius this country has ever produced" and as "one of the noblest works of art that has ever been wrought." Yet William Cullen Bryant, who had more democratic proclivities than Cooper, could also praise the series as being "among the most remarkable and characteristic of his [Cole's] works."¹⁸

The Course of Empire is so complex a series of paintings and so complex a narrative that there are multiple levels of interpretation. Joy Kasson, for example, has argued that Cole's message, in part, was that American society had "sinned by forsaking nature"; she has interpreted *The Course of Empire* as an expression of the artist's fear that the United States was "on the verge of becoming the soulless society of the third canvas, alienated from nature." She also points out that Cole was offering an extended commentary on the role of the arts in society—dance appears in the first and second canvasses, drawing in the second, architecture dominates the third and fourth, and ruins of a former civilization the fifth—and argues that he was exploring "the way in which artistic expression embodied cultural values."¹⁹

Cole's expressed intent was to portray the natural world as the human impress of civilization affected it over time. The artist was living during the decades of the fastest rate of urban growth in American history, a time when industrialism and the

transportation revolution changed the routines of work and everyday life for many of his contemporaries. For Cole it wasn't simply a romantic convention to insist that there was something unnatural about city life: He had experienced firsthand the dislocations of social change as his father was forced out of business in England and, after other unsuccessful ventures, immigrated to the United States. The progression from *The Pastoral or Arcadian State* to *Consummation of Empire* was occurring even as he worked on *The Course of Empire*, and both the imagery of the paintings and the description he provided suggest that the artist was deeply concerned about how economic development was transforming the natural world, upsetting the delicate balance between nature and the human presence he depicted as Arcadia and believed to be the optimal state. As his letters to Luman Reed and the "Essay on American Scenery" attest, Cole was deeply concerned that the emphasis on progress and improvement was resulting in the senseless destruction of the American landscape.²⁰

The artist made this point explicitly in other ways. The deforestation of large swaths of the Catskills had begun before Cole's first sketching tour in 1825, as hemlock trees were cut down for their bark, which was used in the tanning process, and had continued during his years living near the mountains. In 1835 he prepared a sketch for inclusion in Heath's proposed *Picturesque Annual* that depicted a tanning factory at the base of a clove. Moreover, in his journal Cole described the construction of the Canajoharie and Catskill Railroad along Catskill Creek as a vivid example of how "improvement" needlessly destroyed nature. On August 1, 1836, as he was working on *Destruction and Desolation*, Cole wrote, "I took a walk last evening, up the valley of the Catskill, where they are now constructing the railroad. This was once my favorite walk; but now the charm of solitude and quietness is gone." Near the end of his "Essay on American Scenery" Cole had restated the need for Americans to develop a greater appreciation for natural beauty, which, he implied, was the only sure way of preventing such desecration, of protecting the landscape. "We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly." Urging Americans to experience the "pure enjoyment of rural nature" as a retreat from the demands of everyday life, Cole concluded his address with lines from the eighteenth-century Scots educator and poet John Wilson:

Learn
The laws by which the Eternal doth sublime
And sanctify his works, that we may see
The hidden glory veiled from vulgar eyes.²¹

Two years after publication of his "Essay on American Scenery" Cole returned to the theme of the senseless destruction of nature. He did so not with brush and palette but with verse, a 245-line poem entitled "The Complaint of the Forest." The narrator is enjoying a reverie sitting beside a serene lake (which seems, from internal evidence, to be one of the two lakes behind the Catskill escarpment), on a splendid early summer day. To his surprise he hears the "voice of the great Forest" lamenting the human

impact on nature. Prior to the emergence of the human race, the voice declaimed,

All then was harmony and peace—but man
Arose—he who now vaunts antiquity—
He the destroyer—amid the shades
Of oriental realms, destruction's work began.

The following lines recount the injury inflicted upon the forest:

the axe—the unresting axe
Incessant smote our venerable ranks,
And crashing branches frequent lash'd the ground.
Stupendous trunks the pride of many years,
Roll'd on the groaning earth with all their umbrage.

Old World civilizations cut ancient forests

until the earth
Our ancient mother lay, blasted and bare
Beneath the burning sun—

Initially the voice of the great Forest expressed some consolation that there remained “one bright virgin continent,” separated from the Old World by a vast sea, where the native peoples lived in harmony with nature. But alas, even that New World was subject to the same forces of destruction:

O peace primeval! Would that thou hadst staid!
What mov'd thee to unbar thine azure gates
O mighty oceans when the destroyer came?

The voice of the Forest complained, but no one listened:

Few were his number first; but soon
The work of desolation was begun,
Close by the heaving main, then on the banks
Of rivers far inland our strength was shorn;
And fire and steel did all their office well—
No stay was there—no rest—

The human presence was transforming the landscape, sacrificing scenes of ineffable natural beauty to commerce and development:

And thus comes rushing on
This human hurricane—which hath no bounds.
E'en this secluded spot our sanctuary, ...
Our doom is near; behold from east to west
The skies are darken'd by ascending smoke,
For every valley is an altar made,
Where unto Mammon and to all the gods
Of man's idolatry, the victims we are.

This is an apocalyptic vision, replete with the words destruction and desolation, which suggest that Cole was working out in verse the sentiments he expressed in *The Course of Empire*.²²

“The Complaint of the Forest” may not be Shakespearean verse, but it is nevertheless a powerful poem, one that brings together the sentiments Cole expressed in his



Fig. 9. Thomas Cole, *River in the Catskills*, 1843.
M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings. Photograph copyright 2012
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See page 123 for color plate

paintings, his letters, and his published and unpublished writings. His friend Bryant noted that the artist was deeply concerned that the very processes of settlement and economic development were transforming the American landscape. As evidence of the wanton destruction of nature mounted, Cole used pencil and pen to warn his countrymen of the consequences of their actions.²³

What is so striking about Cole's "Essay on American Scenery," several of his poems, and the letters to Luman Reed is that the painter was reversing the usual progression from barbarism to civilization that an earlier generation, including former Yale president Timothy Dwight and John Agg, who contributed the text to *The Hudson River Port Folio*, as well as contemporaries such as the landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing, litterateur N.P. Willis, and a host of others, had celebrated. As economic development was transforming the landscape of the Hudson Valley, Cole realized that the civilizers were those who cut down the forests to bring fields into cultivation, who were destroying scenes of natural beauty out of greed or ignorance or philistinism. The civilizers, whom he characterized as "dollar-godded utilitarians," had become the modern barbarians.²⁴

Alan Wallach has argued that Cole's painting *River in the Catskills* (1843) (Fig. 9) is an antipastoral, "a deliberate attack on the conventions of pastoral landscape painting and consequently on a pervasive, if often contested, ideology that lauded improvement and material progress." Specifically, the painting is an expression of Cole's anger at the construction of the Canajoharie and Catskill Railroad alongside the Catskill River, a

scene he had sketched and painted frequently. Five years after he first expressed outrage at how the railroad had destroyed one of his favorite places, Cole presented his "Lecture on American Scenery" to the Catskill Lyceum. Most of the text repeated his earlier "Essay on American Scenery," but Cole added a long passage that denounced the destruction of landscapes near the village: "within the last ten years, the beauty of its environs has been shorn away; year by year the groves that adorned the banks of the Catskill wasted away." Cole heaped scorn on the railroad builders and profiteers who sacrificed natural beauty in the name of improvement.

This is a spot that in Europe would be considered as one of the gems of the earth; it would be sought for by the lovers of the beautiful, and protected by law from desecration. But its beauty is gone, and that which a century cannot restore is cut down; what remains? Steep, arid banks, incapable of cultivation, and seamed by unsightly gullies, formed by the waters which find no resistance in the loamy soil. Where once was beauty, there is now barrenness.

If to many Americans the railroad represented progress, to Cole it was an unsettling, destabilizing force at odds with nature.²⁵

Historian Perry Miller long ago argued that Cole was among a relatively small but influential number of American artists and writers who shared a deep anxiety about the direction their country was taking. In "Nature and the National Ego," he aggregated Cole with a group of individuals who feared that economic progress was taking a grievous toll on the American landscape, destroying the very source of the nation's cultural distinctiveness. While theirs was a minority view in "Young America," the phrase made memorable in Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1844 clarion call for the development of an American culture, Bryant, Cooper, Cole, Emerson, and like-minded individuals "denounced or lamented the march of civilization." Their point of view sprang from an abiding and deeply felt concern: according to Miller, they "identified the health, the very personality, of America, with Nature."²⁶

Cole's later paintings, especially *The Voyage of Life* and *The Cross and the World*, continued his attempt to merge history and allegory with the natural world and thereby elevate landscape painting to the highest tier of the academic hierarchy of art. Cole aspired to be much more than a "leaf painter," as he noted in his journal. Bryant observed that "he sought to exemplify his favorite position that landscape painting was capable of the deepest moral interest and deserved to stand second to no other department of art." *The Voyage of Life* is a powerful example of this. In four canvasses Cole portrayed the life cycle from childhood to old age, a passage that led from a tranquil stream to a turbulent sea. The landscape is not a backdrop for Cole's allegory but an essential component of the human progression from childhood, a pastoral scene at dawn, to old age, a stormy scene at the end of the day. This enormously popular work, which was engraved by James Smillie for the American Art-Union for distribution to members, captivated Cole's contemporaries. *The Cross of the World*, left unfinished at the artist's death and surviving only in studies, similarly represents the theme of pilgrimage from youth to old age even as it attests to Cole's deepening religious faith in the 1840s.²⁷

Cole's death in 1848 was a "national loss," according to the *New York Evening Mirror*. Bryant, in his "Funeral Oration," described how the artist's death "affects us with a sense of violence and loss." He referred to Cole's beloved Catskills when he observed that "something of power and greatness is withdrawn from the sublime mountaintops and the broad forests and the rushing waterfalls." Cole's death left the American art community without its most famous and revered member. It also silenced the voice of one of the most important thinkers about the relationship of the human presence to the natural world. Cole loved the Hudson River Valley, and he turned the landscape of the river and its mountains into canvasses that sought to inspire Americans to appreciate nature as the birthright of the continent. Although most of his expressions of outrage at the kind of development that was destroying scenes of ineffable beauty that he cherished were private, in letters to friends or in unpublished verse, or were subject to interpretation, as in *The Course of Empire* and *River in the Catskills*, in his paintings and published writings Cole raised a powerful voice in defense of nature, a clarion call to end what he considered the senseless destruction of the American landscape, especially that of the Hudson River Valley.²⁸

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Notes

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1. Cole to Robert G. Rankin, n.d., in Thomas Cole Papers, New York State Library, Albany (hereafter cited as Cole Papers, NYSL). For the date and setting of Cole's address, see "Transactions of the American Lyceum," in *American Annals of Education* 5 (June 1835), which included the sentence, "The Lyceum then adjourned to meet in the Lecture room, in Clinton Hall, to hear the Essay of Mr. Cole, on American Scenery, written at the request of the society" (p. 271); Theodore Dwight to Cole, Apr. 28, 1835, Thomas Cole Papers, Detroit Institute of Arts Research Library, Detroit, Michigan (hereafter cited as Cole Papers, DIA). When inviting Cole to present a second address a year later, Dwight revealed how disappointing the crowd must have been on May 9, 1835: He promised that the lyceum society would "make arrangements which will secure a larger audience than was assembled on the previous occasion." Dwight to Cole, Jan. 7, 1835, Cole Papers, NYSL. The letter is obviously misdated and was written in 1836. On the difficulties Dwight experienced in arranging publication of the "Essay," see his letter to Cole, Oct. 21, 1835, Cole Papers, NYSL. See also "The American Lyceum," *American Monthly Magazine*, n.s. 1 (Jan. 1836): 110. Ellwood C. Parry, III, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark, De, 1988), pp. 152-53, 164, 171-72, dates Cole's lecture May 8, whereas Cole in his journal, as quoted in Louis Legrande Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, ed. Elliot S. Vesell (1853; Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 143, gives the date as after May 16. See also William H. Gerdtz, "The American 'Discourses': A Survey of Lectures and Writings on American Art, 1770-1858," *American Art Journal* 15 (Summer 1983): 61-79.

2. Parry, *Art of Thomas Cole*, pp. 21-23; Tracie Felker, "First Impressions: Thomas Cole's Drawings of His 1825 Trip Up the Hudson River," *American Art Journal* 24, nos. 1 and 2 (1992): 71-75, 88-89; Alan Wallach, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the Course of American Empire," in *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History*, ed. William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach (New Haven and Washington, 1994), p. 23; Noble, *Life and Works of Cole*, pp. 34, 148.
3. Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, pp. 258-59.
4. American [William Dunlap], *New-York Evening Post*, Nov. 22, 1825, and reviews of Cole's works exhibited at the American Academy, are reproduced in Parry, *Art of Thomas Cole*, pp. 25-28; Wallach, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the Course of American Empire," pp. 23-24; William Cullen Bryant, "A Funeral Oration, Occasioned by the Death of Thomas Cole, Delivered before the National Academy of Design, New York, May 4, 1848," in Bryant, *Orations and Addresses* (New York, 1873), pp. 12-13.
5. Parry, *Art of Thomas Cole*, passim; Cole, journals, entries dated Oct. 7, [1835] and Nov. 8, [1834]; Cole to Asher B. Durand, Sept. 12, 1836, June 12, 1836, Aug. 30, 1836, and Nov. 18, 1836, all in Cole Papers, NYSL; Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, pp. 141, 161-65; Bryant, "Funeral Oration," p. 39. Cole characterized New York City as a discordant "Babel." Cole to Thomas S. Cummings, Sept. 7, 1835, Cole Papers, DIA.
6. Cole to Asher B. Durand, Jan. 4, 1838, Cole Papers, NYSL.
7. Bryant, "Funeral Oration," pp. 12-13, 37; Felker, "First Impressions," pp. 76-81; Cole to A. B. Durand, Jan. 4, 1838, Cole Papers, NYSL; Cole to Robert Gilmor, Dec. 25, 1826, Cole Papers, NYSL (the letter is reprinted in Baltimore Museum of Art, *Annual II: Studies on Thomas Cole, An American Romanticist* [1967], p. 47, though Noble, in *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, dates the letter 1825; J. Fenimore Cooper to Louis Legrande Noble, Jan. 6, 1849, Cole Papers, DIA, also printed in *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, ed. James Franklin Beard, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-68), 5: 396-99.
8. William Cullen Bryant, "To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe," in John W. McCoubrey, ed., *American Art 1700-1960: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), p. 96; Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, p. 35.
9. Cole to William Dunlap, n.d. but probably 1834, printed in Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design*, p. 152; Nancy Siegel, *Along the Juniata: Thomas Cole and the Dissemination of American Landscape Imagery* (Huntingdon, Pa., 2003), pp. 45-61, 75-80; Cole to Dear Sir, n.d. [1829], Cole Papers, NYSL; Parry, *Art of Thomas Cole*, pp. 107-11.
10. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design*, pp. 150-54; Cole to Robert Gilmor, Mar. 1, 1830, Cole Papers, NYSL, reprinted in Baltimore Museum of Art, *Studies on Thomas Cole*, pp. 68-69.
11. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design*, pp. 154-56; Cole to Robert Gilmor, Jan. 29, 1832, Cole Papers, NYSL, reprinted in Baltimore Museum of Art, *Studies on Thomas Cole*, pp. 72-74; Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, p. 101; Joy S. Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers: Europe and the American Imagination in the Works of Irving, Allston, Cole, Cooper, and Hawthorne* (Westport, Conn., 1982), p. 103; Bryant, "Funeral Oration," p. 22.
12. Baltimore Museum of Art, *Studies on Thomas Cole*, pp. 82-101; Cole to Robert Gilmor, Jan. 29, 1832, Cole Papers, NYSL, reprinted in Baltimore Museum of Art, *Studies on Thomas Cole*, pp. 72-74; Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers*, pp. 111-20.
13. Robert Rankin to Cole, July 26, 1834, Cole Papers, NYSL; Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," *American Monthly Magazine*, n.s. 1 (Jan. 1836): 1, 5, 6, 8, 10.
14. "Transactions of the American Lyceum," p. 274; Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," pp. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6; Cole, Journal, July 5, 1835, in Tymn, ed., *Thomas Cole: The Collected Essays and Prose Sketches*, p. 130. My assessment of the educational mission of the lyceum movement is based upon review of the *American Annals of Education* in the mid-1830s. See also Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-century United States* (East Lansing, MI, 2005), and Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York, 1956).
15. Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," pp. 3, 12; Cole to Luman Reed, Mar. 6, 1836, Mar. 20, 1836, Cole Papers, NYSL. Cole's apprehension about Reed's reaction to his denunciation of the tree-destroyers proved unwarranted. Reed responded, "you refer to a former letter in which you made some remarks on the cutting down of the beautiful trees & say perhaps you was [sic] rather severe, not so they met my feelings exactly, I despise that sordid mind that will sacrifice the beauties of nature for ages to put a little 'filthy lucre' in his pocket." Reed to Cole, Mar. 30, 1836, Cole Papers, NYSL.

16. Baltimore Museum of Art, *Studies on Thomas Cole*, pp. 82-101; Cole to Robert Gilmore, Jan. 29, 1832, Cole Papers, NYSL, reprinted in Baltimore Museum of Art, *Studies on Thomas Cole*, pp. 72-74; Cole to Luman Reed, Sept. 18, 1833, Cole Papers, NYSL; Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers*, pp. 111-20. There are several important interpretations of *The Course of Empire*. I am particularly indebted to Alan Wallach, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the Course of American Empire," pp. 79-98, Angela Miller, "Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America: *The Course of Empire* as Political Allegory," *Prospects* 14 (1990): 65-92, and Joy Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers*, pp. 116-28. See also Nancy J. Siegel, "Hellfire and Damnation: The Presence of God and the Hope for Salvation in Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire* and Selected Writings," Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1999, pp. 85-95 and Alan Wallach, "Cole, Byron, and the *Course of Empire*," *Art Bulletin* 50 (Dec. 1968): 375-79.
17. Cole to Luman Reed, Sept. 18, 1833, Cole Papers, NYSL. Joy S. Kasson analyzes the literary and artistic antecedents of *Course of Empire* in *Artistic Voyagers*, pp. 116-28. For Reed's collection see Ella M. Foshay, *Mr. Luman Reed's Picture Gallery: A Pioneer Collection of American Art* (New York, 1990). Cole's printed description of *The Course of Empire* was published in "The Fine Arts," *Knickerbocker* 8 (Nov. 1836): 629-30.
18. Wallach, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the Course of American Empire," pp. 79-98; Miller, "Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America," pp. 71-72; Cooper to L. L. Noble, Jan. 6, 1849, Cole Papers, DIA, also printed in Beard, ed., *Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, 5: 398; Bryant, "Funeral Oration," p. 23.
19. Kasson, *Artistic Voyagers*, pp. 116-28.
20. Tim Barringer, "The Englishness of Thomas Cole," in Nancy Siegel, ed., *The Cultured Canvas: New Perspectives on American Landscape Painting* (Durham, N.H., 2011), pp. 1-52; Christine Stansell and Sean Wilentz, "Cole's America," in *Thomas Cole: Landscape Into History*, pp. 3-21; 28; David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1986), pp. 32-33.
21. Parry, *Art of Thomas Cole*, pp. 165-66; Cole, *Journal*, Aug. 1, 1836, in Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, p. 164; Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," p. 12; Cole to Luman Reed, Mar. 6 and Mar. 20, 1836, Cole Papers, NYSL. Cole had been commissioned to prepare thirty views of the Hudson River Valley for Heath's proposed book and expected that Washington Irving would contribute the text. The volume was never published. Cole to T. S. Cummings, Sept. 7, 1835, Cole Papers, DIA; C. R. Leslie to Cole, July 8, 1835, Washington Irving to Cole, Sept. 25, 1835, and Cole to C. R. Leslie, Sept. 3, 1838, all in Cole Papers, NYSL.
22. Tynn ed., *Thomas Cole's Poetry*, pp. 103-6. A variation of the manuscript "Complaint of the Forest" was submitted to Lewis Gaylord Clark, editor of *Knickerbocker*, who was less than pleased with some of the phraseology of the verse. He asked their mutual friend William Cullen Bryant to edit and revise the poem, which was published as "Lament of the Forest" in *Knickerbocker* 17 (June 1841): 16-19. See James T. Callow, *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807-1855* (Chapel Hill, 1967), and Wallach, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the Course of American Empire," p. 67.
23. Bryant, "Funeral Oration," *passim*.
24. Cole to Luman Reed, Mar. 20, 1836, Cole Papers, NYSL.
25. Wallach, "Thomas Cole's *River in the Catskills* as Antipastoral," *Art Bulletin* 84 (June 2002): 334-50; Cole, "Lecture on American Scenery: Delivered Before the Catskill Lyceum, Apr. 1, 1841," *Northern Light* 1 (May 1841): 25-26, in Tynn, ed., *Thomas Cole: Collected Essays and Prose Sketches*, p. 211. Wallach's interpretation differs from, and is more convincing than, Kenneth W. Maddox's "Thomas Cole and the Railroad: Gentle Maledictions," *Archives of American Art Journal* 30 (1990): 146-54.
26. Perry Miller, "Nature and the National Ego," in *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), pp. 204-16; Emerson, "The Young American" (1844), in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson and Robert E. Spiller, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass, 1971), 1: 222-44.
27. Cole, *Journal*, May 19, 1838, in Noble, *Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, p. 195; Joy S. Kasson, "The Voyage of Life: Thomas Cole and Romantic Disillusionment," *American Quarterly* 27 (Mar. 1975): 42-56; Alan Wallach, "The Voyage of Life as Popular Art," *Art Bulletin* 59 (June 1977): 234-41; Wallach, "Thomas Cole: Landscape and the Course of American Empire," pp. 90-101; Bryant, "Funeral Oration," p. 33.
28. The New York Evening Mirror is quoted in Miller, "Nature and the National Ego," p. 213; Bryant, "Funeral Oration," pp. 3, 40-41.



Fig. 1. "View from Fort Putnam (Hudson River)," from N. P. Willis, et. al., *Forest, Rock and Stream* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1886), following page 64.



Fig. 2. *View of the Highlands from West Point*, John Ferguson Weir, 1862, Collection of the New-York Historical Society, S-224.
See page 126 for color plate

Ruins on the Hudson and Beyond:

The Nineteenth-Century Delight in Decay

Kerry Dean Carso

Hudson River School painters have been fascinated by ruins since the movement's inception. One of the paintings that launched Thomas Cole's career, *View of Fort Putnam* (1825), shows the ruins of this Revolutionary War fort in the distance, situated like a medieval castle on a steep eminence. Fort Putnam was a popular tourist destination in the nineteenth century, not just for the view but for the ruins themselves. N. P. Willis's book, *American Scenery* (1840), popularized William Bartlett's view of the Hudson Highlands from Fort Putnam, with the ruins visible to the right side of the composition in the print (Fig. 1). Consequently, many landscape painters painted this panoramic scene, including the ruins. This essay was inspired by John Ferguson Weir's *View of the Highlands from West Point* in 1862 (Fig. 2), one of the paintings featured in the Dorsky Museum exhibition *The Hudson River to Niagara Falls: 19th-century American Landscape Paintings from the New-York Historical Society*. Weir was quite familiar with the scenery: He was born at West Point, where his father taught drawing at the United States Military Academy. In Bartlett's view and in subsequent paintings, the ruins are clearly evident on the right side of the composition. However, in Weir's painting, the ruins of Fort Putnam are replaced by a large boulder. The artist has situated the viewer below the ruins, excluding the decayed structure from the scene. Why does Weir choose to omit the ruined fort? Answering this question will help us understand the meaning of ruins and the larger, related issue of American national identity in the nineteenth century. This essay will illuminate landscape painting by placing it within the context of Anglo-American literature and picturesque landscape theory and garden design, arguing that ruins aged the American landscape, thereby conferring a cultural status equivalent to Europe's architectural heritage. By imprinting the land with symbols of European culture, landscape gardeners and painters civilized the American wilderness. In an age of increasing nationalism and fervent demands for a uniquely American literature and art, ruins fulfilled a need for a physical heritage beyond pure nature.¹

Scholars have argued for two distinct interpretations of ruins. On the one hand, some argue that nineteenth-century ruins express a kind of cultural anxiety. For instance, Sarah Burns contends that the ruins in Thomas Cole's paintings express Jacksonian anxiety and fear of personal failure. More recently, Nick Yablon writes that nineteenth-

century pictures of ruins (even those of cities destroyed by fire) “were not necessarily expressions of cultural pessimism or nihilism, or even of antipathy toward modernity or urbanism as such.” He continues that since the seventeenth century, ruins have “elicited pleasure as much as gloom.” Certainly, in English examples, one can find both purely pleasurable ruins, as well as ruins-as-political-statements, suggesting the conflicts of the age. The most famous example of the latter is the Temple of Modern Virtue at Stowe, Lord Cobham’s eighteenth-century landscape garden in England. A bastion of Whig secessionism in opposition to Robert Walpole, Stowe’s landscape featured the “Elysian Fields,” where The Temple of Ancient Virtue, an Ionic temple, celebrated antique luminaries, while near it once stood the Temple of Modern Virtue, a ruin surrounding a headless figure thought to represent Walpole.²

In the eighteenth century, English garden designer and author Batty Langley popularized ruins in his book, *New Principles of Gardening* (1728). Purpose-built ruins began to appear in English landscape gardens. Because of the perceived foolishness of such buildings, and other non-functional eye-catchers such as temples and towers, these little buildings earned the name “follies.” In the nineteenth century, William Gilpin, the English clergyman and champion of the picturesque, sought out authentic ruins. In his travel book describing the English countryside, *Observations on Several Parts of the Counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex* (1809), Gilpin juxtaposed completed buildings with their ruinous counterparts. According to Gilpin, ruins gained a picturesque advantage for three reasons: 1) ruins created irregularity in general form with infinite variations; 2) regularized architectural elements, including windows and arches, become irregular in ruins; and 3) colors from weather stains and the growth of plants, including moss, weeds, and ivy; break straight lines and contribute to the picturesque effect. In the Age of Sensibility, to view an authentic ruin was to engage vicariously with the sentiments of the ruin’s former inhabitants. In his book, *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), the landscape writer Thomas Whately notes that “All remains excite an enquiry into the former state of the edifice . . . and certain sensations of regret, of veneration, or compassion, attend the recollection.” While Whately acknowledges that real ruins work best in sparking an imaginative reverie, he also notes that sham or “fictitious” ruins can likewise create weaker, but similar emotions.³

In the Hudson Valley, Matthew Vassar added a miniature replica of the ruins of prehistoric Stonehenge to his Poughkeepsie estate Springside, originally designed by landscape gardener Andrew Jackson Downing in 1850-52 (Fig. 3 shows a plan of Springside; the location of Vassar’s Stonehenge is labeled #4 on the plan). In his book, *Vassar College and Its Founder* (1867), historian and writer Benson J. Lossing described the scene at Springside: “Look up to the left. . . and see, on the summit of this high knoll, how weird appear those huge upright stones, standing here like palisades, and there like solitary sentinels guarding some mysterious spot. This is called Stonehenge because of its suggestiveness of those strange remains of the Druids found at a place of that name in England.” Perhaps Vassar got the idea for including Stonehenge as a picturesque

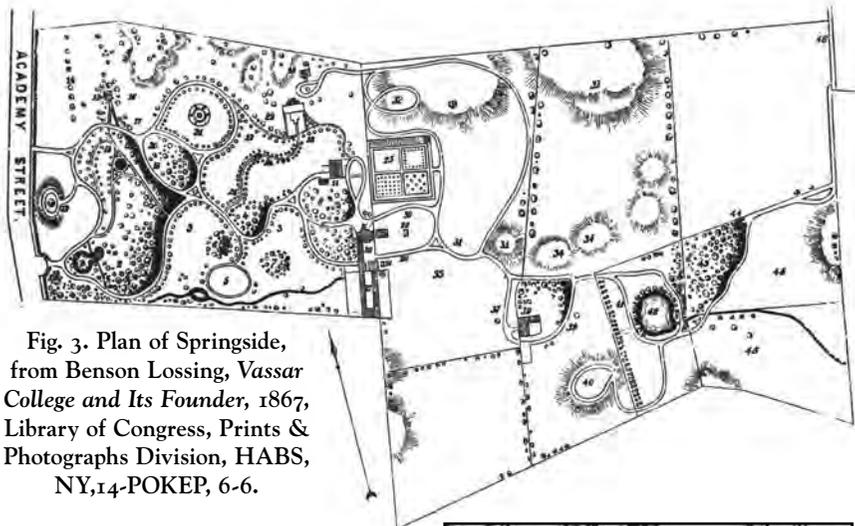
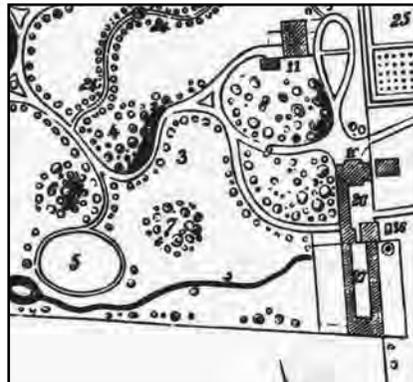


Fig. 3. Plan of Springside, from Benson Lossing, *Vassar College and Its Founder*, 1867, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS, NY,14-POKEP, 6-6.

garden folly from the pages of Scottish garden designer John Claudius Loudon's book, *An Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture*, in which "a huge imitation of Stonehenge" at Alton Towers in Staffordshire, England, is discussed and illustrated (although Vassar's Stonehenge is on a much smaller scale). Today, visitors to the Springside site can view the remains of the Stonehenge ruins, toppled blocks of stone engulfed in plant life.⁴



Stonehenge was one of the most popular English ruins in the nineteenth-century, attracting American landscape painters. Thomas Cole included an intact Stonehenge-like circle of rocks in part two of his *The Course of Empire* series, *The Pastoral or Arcadian State* (1834). In 1882, William Trost Richards painted Stonehenge, about which he wrote: "It has that pathetic look which is peculiar to all human work which has reverted to Nature. Architectural enough to be a ruin, and as rude and moss covered as though ages ago it had been left by some glacier." Images of Stonehenge appeared in American visual culture throughout the nineteenth century, including a view from an article by John Harris Morden entitled "Engla-Land and the Abiding Memorials of its Antiquity," which appeared in *Potter's American Monthly* in 1875. The mystery of the origins of Stonehenge fascinated readers. In the article, Morden wrote, "In viewing Stonehenge, we are almost willing to credit the strange old legend which tells how Merlin, or Merdhin, the magician, flew away, bearing the stones from Curragh of Kildare, Ireland." After listing the many theories about Stonehenge, including English architect Inigo Jones's idea that it was a "Roman temple of the Tuscan," Morden concluded that the accepted theory credits the Druids with the construction of Stonehenge, a common belief in



Fig. 4. *Dover Stone Church, Dover Plains, New York*, Asher B. Durand, c. 1847, graphite with white gouache on gray paper, mounted on card; 14 x 10 in.; inscribed at lower right in graphite: *Stone Church/Dover Plains*; Gift of Miss Nora Durand Woodman, the artist's granddaughter. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1918.125

the nineteenth century.⁵

Ruins in the Hudson River Valley were not necessarily man-made. One popular tourist attraction was the Dover Stone Church in Dover Plains. By 1877, this site had welcomed thousands of visitors, according to the *General History of Dutchess County from 1609-1876, Inclusive* (1877). This “church” is actually a natural rock formation that resembles a ruined Gothic arch. Behind the arch is a cavern with a rock ledge known as “The Pulpit,” completing the church-like effect. In 1876, Benson J. Lossing documented the Dover Stone Church as a tourist site with his pamphlet *The Dover Stone Church*. Earlier, in 1847, the landscape painter Asher B. Durand visited the site and completed three studies of the area in preparation for his oil canvas *Dover Plains, Dutchess County, New York* (1848). Durand’s drawing of the Dover Stone Church highlights the theme of nature as Gothic ruin (Fig. 4). The Dover Stone Church was also a site of nationalistic pride; such age-old rock formations conferred legitimacy on the American landscape. In the eighteenth century, at the dawn of American nationhood, European scholars characterized the continent and its wildlife as young and even inferior compared to Europe. The French naturalist Comte Georges-Louis de Buffon argued that American species were inferior in size to those of Europe, stating that American animals were degenerate due to a hostile environment. The superior attitude of some Europeans sparked Thomas Jefferson’s interest in natural history, which became an intellectual pursuit of many Americans in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; these pursuits were often tinged with the nationalistic desire to prove the Europeans wrong. The heyday of American landscape painting was also a time of exciting new geological discoveries. As Barbara Novack has written, “With every geological discovery America grew older. Geological time, transcending exact chronology, was infinite and thus potentially mythical.” From this point of view, Novack continued, “the ‘nature’ of the New World was superior to the ‘culture’ of the old.” Thus, the popularity of the Dover Stone Church is part of this larger desire for Americans to showcase the age and respectability that a Gothic ruin could bestow on the Hudson Valley landscape, both in terms of natural and cultural history. The fact that this particular geological formation would be re-imagined by writers and tourists as a Gothic arch suggests the power of literature on the nineteenth-century imagination, since it was largely the writings of Gothic novelists that spurred the revival of medieval architecture.⁶

Literature, especially historical romances, played a large role in popularizing ruins. Ruins associated with Scottish poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott provided visitors with fodder for melancholic reverie about the passage of time. In the following passage, Downing explained the allure of Gothic architecture by invoking British history and fiction. Although he does not specifically mention Scott, it is likely he has the Scottish Romantic poet and novelist in mind:

The ideas connected in our minds with Gothic architecture are of a highly *romantic* and *poetical* nature contrasted with the classical associations which the Greek and Roman styles suggest. Although our own country is nearly destitute of ruins

and ancient time-worn edifices, yet the literature of Europe, and particularly of what we term the mother country, is so much our own, that we form a kind of delightful ideal acquaintance with the venerable castles, abbeys, and strongholds of the middle ages. Romantic as is the real history of those times and places, to our minds their charm is greatly enhanced by distance, by the poetry of legendary superstition, and the fascination of fictitious narrative.⁷

Places such as Kenilworth Castle, featured in Scott's novel, *Kenilworth* (1821), became part of the British grand tour, the itinerary of which many American artists and writers, including Downing on his 1851 trip to Great Britain, followed. Books such as *Landscape Illustrations of the Waverley Novels: with Descriptions of the Views* (London, 1832) featured images of ruins associated with Scott and his writings. American painters including Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, John Casilear, and Sanford Gifford visited Kenilworth and made sketches or oil paintings of the ruins. Perhaps more so than complete buildings, ruins suggest a narrative, one that can be constructed by the viewer. Indeed, ruins are inherently narrative structures. In Lilly Martin Spencer's painting, *Reading the Legend* (1852), a couple reads a book while a ruinous castle appears in the background, perhaps conjured up from their imaginations. Literary ruins from the pages of Sir Walter Scott sparked imaginative reveries for readers on both sides of the Atlantic. American landscape painter William Hart was attracted to sites associated with Scott, visiting Dryburgh Abbey (Scott's resting place) and Melrose Abbey, a medieval building in ruins featured in Scott's long narrative poem, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" (1805). In one drawing, he presents us with Melrose, nestled within nature, an organic object in decay (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. William Hart, *Sketch of Melrose Abbey*, 1850, pencil on paper, 14 1/4 x 7 in., inscribed, lower right (obverse): Melrose Abbey 1850/Wm. Hart Scotland; Gift of Alan Lewis in honor of Janice Hart White, 2004.46.215, Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, NY



Fig. 6. George Inness, *Sunnyside*, 1850-1860, oil on canvas. SS.79.34. Historic Hudson Valley, Pocantico Hills, NY. See page 126 for color plate

An American version of Melrose Abbey is Washington Irving's home Sunnyside in the Hudson Valley (1835-37). Irving and his friend, landscape painter George Harvey, transformed an old farmhouse into a picturesque cottage for Irving. Irving had visited Scott at his home, Abbotsford, in Scotland and emulated Scott's baronial manor not in scale but in conception and in details. In the essay "Abbotsford" (1835), Irving describes visiting Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. Most relevant to our discussion is the fact that Irving visited the ruins of Melrose Abbey, located near Abbotsford. From Melrose, Irving took some clippings of the ivy home to New York and later planted it on Sunnyside's walls. Sunnyside, then, became a combination of house and ruin, covered with plant life. George Inness's painting of Sunnyside shows the little cottage almost consumed by nature, a picturesque object of delight (Fig. 6). A winding path through the landscape Irving designed in the English style leads to Sunnyside's door. By creating a house-as-ruin, Irving was conferring age on the landscape. As he noted in his sketch, "The Voyage," the scene of a "mouldering ruin of an abbey overrun with ivy" was "characteristic of England." Hence, Irving borrowed the notion of age to apply to America's landscape. As Alice P. Kenney and Leslie J. Workman write in their seminal essay "Ruins, Romance, and Reality: Medievalism in Anglo-American Imagination and Taste, 1750-1840": "Therefore, although they read the same books, English readers learned from them what to look for in their historic surroundings, while American



Fig. 7. "Ticonderoga at Sunset," Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 127.

York's Fort Ticonderoga, the eighteenth-century fort in use during the French and Indian War and captured by the Americans at the start of the Revolutionary War, became a popular tourist attraction in the nineteenth century, despite its dilapidated state. Lossing illustrates his visit to this "relic of the revolution" in his book, *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* (1850-52; Fig. 7). In the background, the forlorn ruins provide a backdrop for the picturesque tourists in the foreground. Lossing sketched the ruins just before sunset, and in describing them he imagines the events that took place there; he notes the "rickety steps" that Colonel Ethan Allen ascended and the door at which Allen demanded the surrender of the British captain. Later in the evening on the day of his visit, Lossing returned to the ruins to witness them by moonlight. He writes: "All was hushed, and association, with its busy pencil, wrought many a startling picture." Just then, he is indeed startled by a footstep; Lossing's daytime guide to the ruins, an octogenarian and Revolutionary War veteran named Isaac Rice, had also returned, as he claimed he always did, by moonlight. Lossing's description of his visit to Ticonderoga shares much in common with Irving's visit to Melrose Abbey in 1817. Escorting Irving on his tour was Melrose's caretaker, Johnny Bower, who reminds Irving that, according to Scott, the best time to view the abbey was at night. Indeed, darkness and obscurity, features of the Burkean sublime, enhanced the experience of ruins. Like visitors to other spots hallowed by history and literature, including Kenilworth Castle, tourists would imagine the events that had occurred there, much like Lossing did at Ticonderoga.⁹

In the nineteenth century, the power of ruins derived from the larger interest in nature and nationalism in American culture. Ruins suggested that the architectural hubris of humankind will be consumed and that nature will reign triumphant, a common theme in Hudson River School paintings; the most famous example is perhaps Cole's *Desolation* (1836) from his *The Course of Empire* series. Because ruins are often overgrown, ruins embody the idea that architecture and nature are two sides of the

readers learned how to make their surroundings look more historic."⁸

That imaginative reverie could be applied to American ruins as well. Ruins with patriotic associations held particular curiosity. Benson J. Lossing explained the appeal of such ruins: "Broken arches and ruined ramparts are always eloquent and suggestive of valiant deeds, even where their special teachings are not comprehended; but manifold greater are the impressions which they make when the patriotism we adore has hallowed them." Like Fort Putnam, upstate New



Fig. 8. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Evening at Paestum*, 1856
Oil on panel, 9 1/2 x 15 1/2. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College,
Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.1.21. See page 127 for color plate

same coin. In Cole's painting, *Lake with Dead Trees (Catskill)* (1825), no buildings are represented, but the painting depicts a haunted, eerie landscape of nature in ruins, perhaps an implicit reference to the destruction of nature caused by the lumber and tourism industries in the Catskills, as Kenneth Myers has suggested. Art historian Sarah Burns notes, "The lake . . . is closed off on all sides. There is no way out of this graveyard, haunted by the ghosts of trees." In his "Essay on American Scenery" (1836), Cole noted that America had no ruins, but the American landscape did have age, and primeval, old growth forest becomes a replacement for the architectural ruins of human habitation and civilization. That American scenery was superior to European scenery was a rallying cry of nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, a review of Jasper Cropsey's *Evening at Paestum* (Fig. 8) in 1856 is a case in point. In the painting, a spectacular sunset leaves in semi-darkness the ruins of a Greek temple in all its moldering glory. The reviewer in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* wrote:

We will close with the little gem by Mr. Cropsey, entitled "Evening at Paestum." Its treatment is tranquil, its effect solemn yet attractive . . . We understand that Mr. Cropsey contemplates taking up his residence abroad. This we regret, for if he carries [sic] this intention into effect, he will bury his American genius and individuality in the ruins of ancient art. There is not an example of one of our artists going abroad who has been improved . . . If our prairies, hill sides, meadows, mountains, valleys, savannahs, and extensive coasts—our calms and storms, and beautiful and sublime in nature, afford no school for artists, then let them break their palettes in despair, and think no more of art.



Fig. 9. "Design for a summer-house in the Grecian style," in "Garden Decorations," *The Gardener's Monthly* III:8 (August 1861), 236. Courtesy of The Library Company of Philadelphia

American Scenery," in which he instructs Americans to admire their own landscape despite the fact that American scenery is "destitute of . . . vestiges of antiquity." According to this nationalistic view, the ruins are not necessary for the scene to be worthy of being painted.¹⁰

However, despite these echoes of nationalism in nineteenth-century discourse, the desire for man-made ruins in European architectural styles could not be suppressed. Just five years after Cropsey exhibited his painting of Greek ruins, a curiously similar image appeared in the pages of the journal *The Gardener's Monthly*. This Greek Revival summer house (Fig. 9), with its roof "formed of rough boards," its pediment "covered with bark," and its columns formed of "trunks of trees with the bark on" is the ultimate ruin for the American landscape. It is part nature, part man-made, and in a style that recalls the glories of a civilization that Americans, with their democratic ideals, sought to emulate. The temple in the garden suggests that the American wilderness has been civilized and tamed by the landscape gardener. The similarities between Cropsey's painted ruin and the design in *The Gardener's Monthly* highlight the connections between landscape painting and picturesque landscape theory in nineteenth-century America, when ruins were painted and built for pleasurable contemplation but often contained deeper cultural meanings in an age when Americans were searching for a national identity.¹¹

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Endnotes

1. For more on Robert Ferguson Weir, see Betsy Fahlman, *John Ferguson Weir: The Labor of Art* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997).

2. Sarah Burns, *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) and Nick Yablou, *Untimely Ruins: An Archaeology of American Urban Modernity, 1819-1919* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3-4. On Stowe, see *Stowe Landscape Gardens: A Comprehensive Guide* (Swindon, U.K., 1997).
3. William Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of the Counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809), 122; Thomas Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770; New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 131-32.
4. Benson J. Lossing, *Vassar College and Its Founder* (New York: C. A. Alvord Printer, 1867), 67. On Springside, see Harvey Flad, "Matthew Vassar's Springside: '...the hand of Art, when guided by Taste,'" in *Prophet with Honor: The Career of Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989), 219-57; Robert M. Toole, *Landscape Gardens on the Hudson, A History: The Romantic Age, the Great Estates, & the Birth of American Landscape Architecture* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2010), 127-136; and Robert M. Toole, "Springside: A. J. Downing's Only Extant Garden," *Journal of Garden History* 9:1 (1989), 20-39; John Claudius Loudon, *An Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture* (London: Longman, Orme, Rees, 1835), 787. Equally as mysterious as Vassar's Stonehenge were the ruins on Cruger's Island in the Hudson River. John Church Cruger combined Gothic arches and actual Mayan ruins to create a fanciful scene visible to boat travelers. See Kevin Avery's essay "Maya on the Hudson: Church's *Cayambe* and Cruger's 'Folly,'" elsewhere in this volume and Yablou, 44-45.
5. Linder S. Ferber, *William Trost Richards: American Landscape & Marine Painter 1833-1905* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1973), 90; John Harris Morden, "Engla-Land and the Abiding Memorials of Its Antiquity" *Potter's American Monthly*, (V:48; Dec. 1875, 937-944).
6. Philip H. Smith, *General History of Dutchess County, From 1609 to 1876, Inclusive* (Pawling, NY: published by the author, 1877), 150; Benson J. Lossing, *Dover Stone Church* (Amenia, NY: DeLacey & Walsh, 1876); Roberta J. M. Olson, *Drawn by New York: Six Centuries of Watercolors and Drawings at the New-York Historical Society* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 2008), 184-187; Joyce Henri Robinson, "An American Cabinet of Curiosities: Thomas Jefferson's Indian Hall at Monticello," *Winterthur Portfolio* 30:1 (spring 1995), 49; Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 58-9. See also Rebecca Bedell, *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology & American Landscape, 1825-1875* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001). Still in existence, the site now is owned by the Village of Dover Plains; today, tourists still make the short walk to see this local wonder.
7. Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841; New York: A. O. Moore, & Co., 1859), 351.
8. Washington Irving, "The Voyage," in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819-20; New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 20-1; Alice P. Kenney and Leslie J. Workman, "Ruins, Romance, and Reality: Medievalism Anglo-American Imagination and Taste, 1750-1840," *Winterthur Portfolio* 10 (1975), 162.
9. Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution* vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 121, 127-129; Washington Irving, "Abbotsford," *The Crayon Miscellany*, ed. Dahlia Kirby Terrel, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979).
10. Kenneth Myers, *The Catskills: Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Mountains 1820-1895* (Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum of Westchester, 1987), 41; Sarah Burns, *Painting the Dark Side: Art and the Gothic Imagination in Nineteenth-century America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 2; Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," in *American Art 1700-1960. Sources and Documents*, ed. John W. McCoubrey (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 101; "Academy of Design—Landscape Department.," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* 1:18 (April 12, 1856) 281-2; Cole, 101. The rage for ruins continues in the Hudson Valley even now. Two books, *Phantoms of the Hudson Valley: The Glorious Estates of a Lost Era* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1995) by Monica Randall and *Hudson Valley Ruins* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2006) by Thomas E. Rinaldi and Robert J. Yasinsac, attest to our continued fascination with decay. Picturesque tourism continues, as visitors today tour the ruins of the early twentieth-century Bannerman Castle on Pollepel Island in the Hudson River.
11. "D.," "Garden Decorations," *The Gardener's Monthly* 111:8 (August 1861), 236.



Fig. 1. Frederic E. Church. *The Heart of the Andes*, 1859.
Oil on canvas, 66 1/8 x 119 1/4 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Bequest of Margaret E. Dows, 1909 (09.95).
Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. See page 127 for color plate



Fig. 2. *Cayambe*, Frederic E. Church, 1858.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, S-91. See page 127 for color plate

Maya on the Hudson:

Church's *Cayambe* and Cruger's "Folly"

Kevin J. Avery

The Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church earned international renown principally for his panoramas of South American scenery. On the eve of the Civil War, the artist's ten-foot landscape, *The Heart of the Andes* (Fig. 1), became the most famous work of art in America, where it toured first from New York to London and then to seven U.S. cities for almost two years. That success was followed by tropical scenes almost as large and popular: *Cotopaxi* (1862; Detroit Institute of Arts), *Chimborazo* (1864; Huntington Museum and Library, San Marino, California), and *Rainy Season in the Tropics* (1866; Museum of Fine Arts, San Francisco). Still, only once, in the New-York Historical Society's *Cayambe* (Fig. 2), of an Ecuadorean snow peak at sundown and moonrise, did Church include unmistakable reference to Pre-Columbian culture. Remarkably, that single instance finds a precedent, possibly even an influence, in a manifestation of that very culture imported to the shores of the upper Hudson River in the decade before *Cayambe* was painted.

Executed just after Church returned from his second trip to Ecuador in 1857 (four years after the first trip, which had included Colombia), *Cayambe* served partly as a dress rehearsal for *The Heart of the Andes*, which is twice its size and took thirteen months to finish. But that is not to say that *Cayambe* is in any way a minor work. A commission from Robert L. Stuart, the Scottish-born New York sugar refiner, candy manufacturer, and later second president of the American Museum of Natural History, *Cayambe* purports to represent the Ecuadorean snow peak that straddles the Equator. (I say "purports to represent," since the mountain in the painting does not strongly resemble *Cayambe* in Ecuador; the artist evidently synthesized its profile from two or more sketches of different peaks observed in the country.¹) At the turn of the nineteenth century, the mountain had been visited by Alexander von Humboldt, whose scientific tracts and travel accounts inspired Church to follow in his footsteps to explore the Andean environment.² That the equatorial region of the New World attracted Humboldt to collect plants in every habitat niche, from the jungles at sea level to the snow line of the Andean peaks, had everything to do with his so-called "geography of plants," his mapping of the relationship between quantity and kinds of plants and climate at altitudes ascending from sea level to the snow line. Further, Humboldt pro-



Fig. 3. *Cayambe*, Frederic E. Church, 1858, detail of figure 2: ruin. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, S-91

posed an analogy between that link, observed regionally in the equatorial Andes, and a comparable manifestation of botanical life from the equator (i.e., the torrid zone) to the poles (i.e., the frigid zone). Thus Church's essays in *Cayambe* and, especially, *The Heart of the Andes*, represent artistic expressions of Humboldt's geography of plants: they bear the viewer from effulgent tropical foregrounds through a temperate middle ground beyond of forested lakes or rivers and into a background frigid zone of high Andean summits.³ The pictures are microcosms of planet Earth. In the great age of empire, exploration, and, above all, of Humboldt, there was bound to arise a landscape painter who aspired to essay the whole earth in a single picture. Humboldt himself called for such an artist, and Church responded. More than any other of Church's South American paintings, *Cayambe* and *The Heart of the Andes* represent the ideal landscape subject—planet Earth—in what was then the ideal landscape format: the classical landscape, i.e., a prospect, through a foreground of foliage, of a middle distance with water and a background of mountains.

Yet, if *Cayambe* is, by virtue of its size and the circumstances of its making, the lesser of the two works, it is unique among all Church's known South American landscapes in including what looks like pre-Columbian art: in the left foreground is a weathered stone post, bearded with jungle growth, on which the artist not only affixed his signature but depicted a relief of a bust-length figure in profile, whose open mouth emits what looks like either flames or leaves (Fig. 3). Given the Ecuadorian location of the scene, the viewer would assume that the relief figure alludes to Incan or pre-Incan culture.

But the figure is carved with far greater sophistication than anything known in the precolonial art of Ecuador and Peru, and Church's known sketches from 1853 or 1857 give little if any evidence that he saw anything much resembling what he fashioned in the foreground of *Cayambe*. In Ecuador, the Spanish conquerors had long since destroyed or effaced most of this art. Nor would he have seen any in the expeditionary literature he almost undoubtedly consulted as a source for his relief, at that time probably in the extensive library of his patron, Robert Stuart. The truth is that Church's relief has nothing to do with Incan imagery. Instead, what he could have seen, in Stuart's library or elsewhere, were illustrations of reliefs of the ancient Mayans of Central America: Church's relief derives from one or more of at least three engravings of a Mayan tablet, or stela, illustrated in expeditionary texts dating from the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴ The earliest engraving (Fig. 4) is in an 1822 English translation of the eighteenth-century Spanish explorer Antonio del Río's account of his visit—the first known by a European—to the pre-Columbian ruins of Palenque, Mexico.⁵ The latest of the three engravings (Fig. 5) represents the



Fig. 4. Jean Frédéric Maximilien, Comte de Waldeck, after Antonio del Río. Unidentified Bas-Relief from Palenque, engraving illustrated in Antonio del Río, *Description of the Ruins of the Ancient City, discovered near Palenque, in the Kingdom of Guatemala, in Spanish America* (London: Henry Berthoud, 1822), Plate [10]. Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

most accurate hand-made image of the same relief, which is located in the so-called Temple of the Cross at Palenque. Frederic Catherwood, the English topographical and picturesque artist, executed the original drawing for the relief (with the aid of a camera lucida) to illustrate New World explorer John Lloyd Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, published in 1841.⁶ Today the figure, one of a pair flanking a doorway within the Temple of the Cross, is understood to be a lord of the Mayan underworld, who is described as smoking a very large cigar.⁷ (Hence, what the Mayan artist of the relief probably intended to represent as smoke, later artists, including Church, interpreted as leaves or flames.) At Palenque in 1840, Stephens did not quite know what to make of the arresting figure, but speculated that he was an ancient priest.⁸



Fig. 5. A. L. Dick, after Frederick Catherwood. *Bas-Relief on Side of Door of Altar, Casa No. 3*. Engraving published in John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (London: John Murray, 1842), vol. 2, facing p. 353. Photographed from a copy in Goldwater Library Special Collections, Metropolitan Museum of Art, call no. UD S83i 1842 SpecColl vol. 2. Photo by Photo Studio, Metropolitan Museum of Art, neg. no. 11838. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Clearly, though Catherwood's illustrations of the Palenque relief are the unmistakable source of the one in *Cayambe*, Church radically abridged and significantly altered the appearance of the figure. Moreover, he ensconced his relief in a setting clearly not Mayan or Incan in derivation, but European. For the purposes of the argument here, it is the latter modification or contrivance that is of interest. In light of the artist's travels in Ecuador in 1857, the setting's origins are not difficult to divine. Church's original sketches for *Cayambe* (like those for the 1862 *Cotopaxi*) were made from a hill in the capital city of Quito, whose oldest and principal Christian church is San Francisco (1534-1604). Photographs of the church and of one of the ornamental Palladian posts (Figs. 6, 7) that embellish its towers and walls suggest that the artist adapted one of the latter for his jungle ruin. But he embellished its finial by "nesting" it in a frill—perhaps suggested by the repetitive arch-like decoration of the church's center cornice.

If Spanish colonial church architecture is the source for the monument in *Cayambe*, its pictorial function is analogous to the antique and modern Italian landscape subjects of Church's teacher, Thomas Cole. A likely precedent is the vine-covered Roman column in *Consummation*, in Cole's *The Course of Empire* cycle (1834-36; The New-York Historical Society), which Church once claimed his most beloved among his master's paintings.⁹ Alternately, several of Cole's modern



**Fig. 6. Church and Monastery of San Francisco, Quito, Equador, 1534-1604.
Photograph by the author**

Italian subjects, such as *Il Penseroso* of 1845 (Fig. 8), include foreground shrines, frequently with a painted image of the Madonna and Child.

What is distinctive about Church's "shrine" and important to the argument here is the artist's synthesis or at least juxtaposition of pre-Columbian sculpture and western architecture. According to one line of contemporaneous thought, there was eminent logic in what may look to modern observers like a glaring incongruity of art and setting. In the early nineteenth century, the sophistication of Mayan sculpture was deemed too exceptional to have been carved by ancient Americans unless they were either descendants of supposed pre-Columbian visitors from Greece, Mesopotamia, or even Egypt, or at least trained by such Old World explorers.¹⁰ If Church lent cre-



**Fig. 7. Ornamental post near entrance of Church and Monastery of San Francisco, Quito, Equador.
Photograph by the author**



Fig. 8. Thomas Cole. *Il Penseroso*, 1845. Oil on canvas, 32 3/8 x 48 1/16 in. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Trustees Fund, Corporate Donors, and General Acquisitions Fund. M.80.115. See page 128 for color plate



Fig. 9. *Catherwood's Panorama*, Unknown Artist, Woodcut engraving on a broadside for the exhibition of *The Splendid Panorama of Jerusalem* and *A Magnificent Panorama of Thebes* at Catherwood's Panorama, Corner of Prince and Mercer Streets, Broadway, New York, ca 1837. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: SY1837-21

dence to such theories, for example, his monument becomes less an incongruity than a synthesis of a core common aesthetic. Indeed, the changes he makes to the Palenque figure suggest his desire to better harmonize the sculpture with its setting—and both with the natural setting.

But whether or not Church gave credence to such early theories about Mesoamerican civilization (and, if he read his Stephens, he probably did not), his synthesis was outlandishly prefigured in the Hudson River Valley. That is, in an artificial ruin, or “folly,” adorned with actual Mayan sculptures, constructed on an island in the river at Barrytown.

The story of that edifice returns us to the explorer Stephens’ forays at Palenque and elsewhere in Mexico and Central America, vividly described in his *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* as well as in the later *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, published in 1843.¹¹ It turns out that Stephens’ first encounter with what archaeologists now designate “God L,” or “smoking lord of the underworld,” was not in the ancient city of Palenque but in the nearby modern village of the same name, where the relief tablet had been installed in the house of a local official who had removed it from the original site. Stephens sought to acquire the relief (and others transferred there from the ancient city) so he could display it in Catherwood’s panorama rotunda (Fig. 9) in New York, opened since 1838, where he had already been exhibiting artifacts along with Catherwood’s fine watercolors. He treated with the local official to purchase the Palenque stones in his house but, to his sharp disappointment, could not come to terms.¹² Stephens got luckier later at the ancient city



Fig. 10. A. Jones, after Frederick Catherwood. *Kabah, Figure on Jamb of Doorway*. Engraving published in John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (Harper and Brothers, 1843), vol. 1, facing page 412. Goldwater Library in the Department of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, call no. UD S83 1843 SpecColl vol.1. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Fig. 11. *Cruger's Residence, Cruger's Island, Barrytown, New York, ca. 1919.*

of Kabah, in Yucatan. In the temples there he discovered comparable, if somewhat cruder, reliefs and free-standing figures, which Catherwood also drew for engraving (see Figs. 10, 13). Stephens obtained permission from local authorities to remove the sculptures and send them back to New York.¹³ Even as he was shipping them, however, a fire broke out at the panorama, destroying it and virtually all its precious contents. Now lacking the anticipated venue in which to exhibit the Kabah sculptures, Stephens reportedly gave them to his friend John Church Cruger, a retired New York lawyer.¹⁴ Cruger owned an island in the Hudson at Barrytown that is said to have been a meeting ground of various tribes of Native Americans before Dutch settlement of the Hudson River Valley. On the island, Cruger built not only a residence (Fig. 11) but, in the early 1840s, a Romanesque-style folly, or artificial ruin (Fig. 12), in which he installed the Kabah sculptures that Stephens had given him (Fig. 13). Such structures, commonly erected in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Britain and the Continent, were not unknown in America, or even on the Hudson River. Not far south of Barrytown, at Hyde Park, a family named Clews is reported to have built a ruined arch overlooking the river.¹⁵ One possible inspiration for the Cruger ruin was Euphemia White Van Rensselaer, Cruger's bride in



Fig. 12. *Cruger's Ruin, Cruger's Island, Barrytown, New York, ca. 1919.* Courtesy Historic Red Hook



Fig. 13. *Interior of Cruger's Ruin, with stelae from Kabah, Yucatan, Mexico, ca. 1919.* Courtesy Historic Red Hook

1843, who was painted only the year before her marriage in a fine portrait by George Peter Alexander Healy now in the Metropolitan Museum (Fig. 14). In 1842, Euphemia had traveled in Italy, where she appears to be standing, in this portrait, before a background suggesting the Roman Campagna, with indistinct ruins in the distance.¹⁶ As for Cruger's impulse to install Stephens' Mayan sculptures in his ruins, one possible association for him may have been the Native American traditions associated with his island, noted earlier.

In its time, Cruger's folly was well known; indeed, if one accepts the evidence, for example, of William Heine's 1851 painting of Crugers's Island (private collection), with the ruin peaking out of the trees near the island's southern shore at left, the structure must have been virtually impossible to miss from any boat ascending the Hudson River. The once famed Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer, on a tour up the Hudson in 1844 with the renowned landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing, visited the folly and reviewed its exotic contents. In the 1853 translation of her memoir, *Homes of the New World*, she recalled:

On ... a point projecting into the river, has a ruin been built, in which are placed various figures and fragments of walls and columns, which have been brought from the remarkable ruins lately discovered in Central America or Mexico. The countenances and the headdresses resembled greatly the heads of Egyptian statues. I was struck in particular with a sphinx-like countenance, and a head similar to that of a priest of Isis. The ruin and its ornaments, in the midst of a wild, romantic, rocky, and wooded promontory, was a design in the best taste.¹⁷

Both the setting and its contents survived intact until after the First World War, when the American Museum of Natural History purchased the sculptures from Cruger's daughters, still living in their father's house.¹⁸ Today the house is gone but remnants of the folly still stand, visible in winter from an Amtrak train as it speeds north to Albany. The sculptures have been at the museum ever since, on view in the Hall of Mexico and Central America.



Fig. 14. George Peter Alexander Healy. *Euphemia White Van Rensselaer*, 1842. Oil on canvas, 45 3/4 x 35 1/4 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cornelia Cruger, 1923 (23.102). Image ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art
See page 129 for color plate

If one cannot claim that Cruger's folly inspired the conceit in the foreground of Church's *Cayambe*, neither can one dismiss the possibility that it informed it. Indeed, given the circumstances of his training, his attraction to the Southern Hemisphere, and his eventual domestic orientation, it is hard to imagine how the artist could have ignored it. From 1844 to 1846, shortly after the ruin was built and the Mayan sculptures installed there, Church was in nearby Catskill studying with Cole. In 1856, following his first expedition to South America, and in 1858, after his second journey there (and the year he painted *Cayambe*), Church made no fewer than four trips to Niagara Falls that would have taken him up the Hudson past Cruger's Island.¹⁹ By 1860, he and Isabel Carnes, his new bride, had settled themselves on property in Hudson (across the river from Catskill) that eventually grew into the estate they called Olana, from which the artist commuted frequently to New York City. In view of the pre-Columbian-Spanish Renaissance fantasy Church contrived in the jungle foreground of *Cayambe*, the very presence of pre-Columbian artifacts in a Romanesque ruin in a wooded setting of the Hudson River Valley offered a palpable context that may have fortified the artist's creative imagination and surely enriches our understanding of one of his major paintings today.

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Endnotes

1. Gerald Carr discusses several of the drawings and at least one oil sketch relevant to *Cayambe* in *Frederic Edwin Church: Catalogue Raisonné of Works of Art at Olana State Historic Site* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1994), I, 212. Hereafter referred to as "Carr, *Olana Catalogue*."
2. For Humboldt's (thus, Church's) perception of *Cayambe*'s significance, see Alexander von Humboldt, *Researches concerning the Institutions and Monuments of the Ancient Inhabitants of America, with Descriptions and Views of some of the Most Striking Scenes in the Cordilleras!*, trans. Helen Maria Williams (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Browne, 1814), II, 99: "The summit of *Cayambe* is traversed by the equator. We may consider this colossal mountain as one of the eternal monuments, by which Nature has marked the great divisions of the terrestrial Globe." *Cayambe*'s location on the Equator is also cited in the entry on Church's painting of it in *Catalogue of the Paintings in the Robert L. Stuart Collection* (New York: New York Public Library, 1898), no. 135. On the subject, see also Katherine E. Manthorne, *Tropical Renaissance: North American Artists Exploring Latin America, 1839-1879* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 101.
3. For Humboldt's influence on Church's conception of the equatorial world, see Kevin J. Avery, *Church's Great Picture, The Heart of the Andes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993), 12-17.
4. Besides the two illustration sources cited in the text, one other nineteenth-century text in which the relief is illustrated is: M. Dupaix, *The Monuments of New Spain*, in Lord Kingsborough, *Antiquities of Mexico* (London: Robert Havell, 1831), V, 307-308, pl. 40.
5. *Description of the Ruins of the Ancient City, discovered near Palenque, in the Kingdom of Guatemala, in Spanish America; translated from the Original Manuscript Report of Captain Don Antonio del Rio* (London: Henry Berthoud, 1822), pl. [10]. I am greatly indebted to Julie Jones, curator emeritus of the Department of the Arts of Africa, America, and Oceania at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for originally associating the figure in Church's *Cayambe* with the Palenque relief, and for directing my attention to nineteenth-century illustrations of it.

6. John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chipas, and Yucatán*, Richard L. Predmore, ed. (1841; rpt. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1949), hereafter referred to as “Stephens, *Travel in Central America*.”
7. For a detailed description of the relief in the Temple of the Cross, see Merle Greene Robertson, *The Sculpture of Palenque* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), esp. IV, 34-35 and figs. 42, 43.
8. Stephens, *Travel in Central America*, p. 301.
9. “If I were permitted to select three from all the landscapes I have ever seen I should certainly choose for one of them ‘Desolation’ the last of the five pictures by Cole. . . . it is a striking picture, possessing as much poetic feeling as I ever saw in landscape art.” Church to John D. Champlain, 11 September 1883, quoted in Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 128, note 47.
10. The evolution of European and American interpretation of Mesoamerican antiquities, from the presumed connections between Europe and America in classical times to the recognition of pre-Columbian culture as an independent and more recent development, is a principal theme in R. Tripp Evans, *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity and the American Imagination, 1820-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004). Especially pertinent to Frederic Church’s understanding of Mesoamerican antiquities when he painted *Cayambe* are the introduction and chapters 1-3, 1-102.
11. John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatán* (1843; rpt. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), hereafter referred to as “Stephens, *Travel in Yucatán*.” Stephens exploits at Palenque and Kabah are also described in Victor von Hagen, *Maya Explorer: John Lloyd Stephens and the Lost Cities of Central America and the Yucatán* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947; rpt. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990), 156ff., 228-232, hereafter referred to as “Von Hagen, *Maya Explorer*.” On p. 158, Von Hagen mistakenly locates the God L relief figure, found by Stephens in a house in the modern village of Palenque, originally in the Temple of the Sun, also at the ancient city of Palenque.
12. Stephens, *Travel in Central America*, 300. For Catherwood’s Panorama in New York, see Victor Von Hagen, *Frederick Catherwood, Arch’t.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 45-52, 82-84. Von Hagen’s claim that Catherwood’s panorama was the first and last in New York City is mistaken. A more accurate summary of the enterprise is in Kevin J. Avery, “The Panorama and its Manifestations in American Landscape Painting, 1795-1870,” Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University (New York, 1995), I, 22-28.
13. Stephens, *Travel in Yucatán*, 260-266.
14. Von Hagen, *Maya Explorer*, 230-232; Herbert J. Spinden, “The Stephens Sculptures from Yucatán,” *Natural History*, 20, no. 4 (September-October 1920), 379-389, esp. 381; hereafter referred to as “Spinden, *Natural History*.” The author is most grateful to Barbara Mathé, former librarian in the Goldwater Library of the Department of Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas and currently Museum Archivist and Head of Special Library Collections at the American Museum of Natural History, for the reference to John Church Cruger.
15. Carl Carmer, *The Hudson* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1968), 172; Thomas E. Rinaldi and Robert J. Yasinac, *Hudson Valley Ruins: Forgotten Landmarks of an American Landscape* (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2006), 9, 299, note 7; Patricia Edwards Clyne, *Hudson Valley Tales and Trails* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1990), 103-109. Follies of a variety of architectural styles—Classical, Gothic, Islamic—were much in vogue in France and England. For a survey of the latter, see George Mott and Sally Sample Aall, *Follies and Pleasure Pavilions* (London: Pavilion Books Limited, 1989).
16. For the portrait, see John Caldwell and Oswaldo Rodriguez Roque, *American Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume I: A Catalogue of Works by Artists born by 1815* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 572-573.
17. Fredrika Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, Mary Howitt, trans. (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1853), I, 37.
18. Spinden, *Natural History*, 381. Correspondence between American Museum of Natural History officials and John Church Cruger’s daughters relating to the acquisition of the Kabah stelae (30.0/4773 and 4774) in 1919 is in the museum archives. See also Von Hagen, 232.
19. Carr, *Olana Catalogue*, I, 222; see also Jeremy Adamson, *Niagara: Two Centuries of Changing Attitudes, 1697-1901*, exhibition catalogue, The Corcoran Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C., 1985), 62.



Fig. 1. Nicholas Whitman, *View of the House from across the Lake, Olana*, photograph, 2008, nwphoto.com. See page 131 for color plate

Glories of the Hudson:

Frederic Church's Views from Olana

Evelyn Trebilcock and Valerie Balint

The site is the result of a careful study of the river-banks, and commands so many views of varied beauty, that all the glories of the Hudson may be said to circle it.

—H. W. French, *Art and Artists in Connecticut*, 1879¹

Everyone who visits Olana is transfixed by the breathtaking panorama of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains. At Olana, the home of Hudson River School artist Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), today a New York State Historic Site open to the public, rarely a day goes by without a tourist admiring the vista of the river or an artist portraying the profile of the Catskills. Church designed Olana—the property and the house—to take full advantage of these spectacular views. Documenting his passion are the numerous oil and pencil sketches he reserved for his own collection—not necessarily as an aide-mémoire, since certainly he could admire the same views from one of numerous arched windows or winding carriage paths, but as a celebration of his single largest and most personal artistic creation: Olana. Of it he wrote, “Almost an hour this side of Albany is the Center of the World—I own it—”² (Fig. 1)

By the time Frederic Church made his first foray to the Hudson Valley, the river's significance was already firmly ingrained in the American consciousness. Church left his native Hartford, Connecticut, for the Hudson Valley in the spring of 1844 to study with Thomas Cole (1801-1848), then the most renowned landscape artist in the United States. By 1836, Cole had settled in Catskill, taking up residence at Cedar Grove, a 110-acre farm bordering the Hudson River just northeast of the village. The young artist, anticipating that his tutelage would include traipsing about the countryside sketching from nature, stated in his introductory letter to Cole, “it would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you in your rambles about the place, observing nature in all her various appearances.”³

Cole suggested to his pupil numerous sketching destinations, including the hills on the east side of the Hudson River, across from Cedar Grove and a bit to the south. This spot offered a tremendous view of the Hudson framed by the Catskills. From this location he rendered *Scene from Red Hill*, dated May 1845 (Olana Collection).⁴ It is the

first evidence of Church walking and sketching from Red Hill, the land he purchased almost fifteen years later as the initial parcel for what became his extensive property.

After two years of study with Cole, Church chose New York City—then the center of the American art world—as his base. His summer and fall travels sketching throughout New York and New England inspired numerous paintings, bringing the young artist early success.

Church's dramatic depiction of the American landmark and popular nineteenth-century tourist destination *Niagara* (1857; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), presented as a "Great Picture" in solo exhibitions throughout the United States and in London, made him the most renowned artist in America. Venturing beyond the eastern United States, Church explored the more exotic locales of Colombia and Ecuador in 1853 and 1857, and Newfoundland and Labrador in 1859. His expeditions to South America culminated in his monumental canvas *The Heart of the Andes* (1859; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

Church met his future wife, Isabel Carnes (1836-1899), at a showing of *The Heart of the Andes*. Indulging a double entendre, the *Boston Evening Transcript* reported, "Church has been successfully occupied with another *Heart* than that of the *Andes*."⁵ They were married on June 14, 1860.

Now requiring accommodations more suitable to married life, Church returned to the upper Hudson Valley in search of a permanent home. For some time, the successful artist had been thinking of purchasing a house or land in the area where his artistic career began, but it was not until he met Isabel that this became a priority.⁶ The Hudson Valley was a logical location for the landscape artist. In his 1835 "Essay on American Scenery," Cole proclaimed the virtues of the Hudson as a subject for art: "The Rhine has its castled crags, its vine-clad hills, and ancient villages; the Hudson has its wooded mountains, its rugged precipices, its green undulating shores—a natural majesty, and an unbounded capacity for improvement by art."⁷

Since Cole's death in 1848, the areas in and around the Catskill Mountains had become places associated with him and the landscape movement he engendered. As T. Addison Richards related in a book on the subject of "the Romance and Reality of American Landscape," the Catskill Mountains represented an escape from "coy patrons and snarling critics" and had been a "cherished haunt of our great Cole. . . ."⁸ In fact, Cole's own home had become a place of pilgrimage, cited as a destination in numerous travel and guidebooks.⁹ Property within easy proximity to Cedar Grove, Kaaterskill Clove, and the Catskill Mountain House would have held a special appeal for Church.

Just before his wedding, Church decided to purchase the 126-acre "Wynsant Brezie" farmstead, in part because of the unique attributes of the section of the river it overlooked. On the east shore, the hilly terrain comes close to the banks of the river, providing raised viewing platforms. By contrast, the west bank contains a broad floodplain with the backdrop of the most dramatic views of the Catskills from Overlook Mountain to Windham High Peak, including Kaaterskill Clove. Here, the river itself



Fig. 2. Arthur Parton, *Looking Southwest over Church's Farm from the Sienghenburgh*, 1864, oil on canvas, 19 3/4 x 31 in., OL.1981.20.
Collection Olana State Historic Site

is distinctive, being quite narrow just to the north, but then immediately widening almost to a lake-like proportion to form the signature element known as Inbocht Bay, or the “bend in the river.”¹⁰

Just a few miles south of the City of Hudson, directly across the river from the home of Church's late mentor, the acquisition included an old farmhouse, outbuildings to house livestock and store grain, plowed fields, orchards, pasture, a woodlot, and an area of swampy ground. Fortuitously, the parcel also included Red Hill, from which Church had sketched fifteen years earlier.

The newlyweds hired the architect Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895) to plan a small wood-frame home for them. The new house, named *Cosy Cottage*, was situated in the midst of the farm, with a kitchen garden, a floral cutting garden, and myriad fruit trees just beyond its doorways. While the bulk of the hard labor was handled by hired farmhands, Church thoroughly embraced gentleman farming. “The country is very lovely now and the grand scenes which encircle my farm are getting their summer drapery—I should be happy to have the opportunity some time to show you the beautiful views I look daily upon.”¹¹ Artistically, Church assayed a number of the scenes that encircled his farm: *Bee Craft Mountain*, *Blue Hill from Cosy Cottage*, and *Apple Blossoms at Olana* (1863, c. 1869-72, 1870, respectively; Olana Collection). These works suggest the nestled placement of the Churches' home within the farm environs.

Other areas of the property provided more panoramic vistas. In 1864 Church commissioned Arthur Parton (1842-1914), a local artist, to paint *Looking Southwest over Church's Farm from the Sienghenburgh* (Fig. 2).¹² Working from one of the property's higher points, the upper slope of the Sienghenburgh (Dutch for “long hill”), Parton detailed part of the grounds and the view south. He included the southern tips of the Catskills in the distant right side of the canvas and Inbocht Bay in the middle back-

ground. Between the ends of the Catskills and Inbocht Bay is Quarry Hill, crowned with a clump of large evergreens. The other prominent hill in the middle ground is Red Hill, from which Church had drawn *Scene from Red Hill*, and to the left of Red Hill rises the eastern slope of Crown Hill. Eventually Church dredged the area depicted with neatly planted crops, and he removed the trees at the base of Crown Hill to create a lake. In the foreground, Parton articulated mature cornstalks and some goldenrod in bloom to identify the scene as late summer, and the red plowed earth and recently felled trees reference Church's first efforts to transform a hardscrabble countryside into an ornamental farm, a combination working farm and scenic parkland. On one of the felled trees, in the shade of a big American elm, Parton placed a farmer admiring the view. These expansive views to the south and west became Church's focus as he enlarged his property over the ensuing years through numerous land acquisitions.

Envisioning his home as more than a simple farmstead, in 1864 Church purchased "the Bethune lot," the steep hillside that bordered the original farm on the west. He bought the lot expressly to build a new approach to the farm that afforded selected outlooks to the Hudson below as the road wound its way up the sharp ascent through picturesque woods and past rock outcrops.

Traveling up Bethune Road, a visitor remarked: "The Drive went round and round the hill—Mr. Church has taken advantage of [every acre] of ground. . . . Every time we came to the Hudson, it was a new revelation, a complete surprise."¹³ In the oil sketch *Sunset from Olana* (Fig. 3), dated "July 2/70," Church captured a dazzling summer sunset, yellow and pinky red over the northern Catskills and in the Hudson below, reflecting the softer colors of the upper sky. The foreground of treetops and the relation of the



Fig. 3. Frederic Edwin Church, *Sunset from Olana*, July 2, 1870, oil on off-white academy board, 11 1/16 x 15 1/8 in., OL.1976.8. Collection Olana State Historic Site



Fig. 4. Frederic Edwin Church, *The Hudson Valley in Winter from Olana*, c. 1866-72, oil on academy board, 11 3/4 x 18 1/4 in., OL.1980.36. Collection Olana State Historic Site. See page 129 for color plate

mountains and river indicate an upper loop of Bethune Road as Church's sketching spot.

The new road complete, Church then turned his attention to designing a freestanding studio above the farm complex. Church constructed the studio between 1864 and 1865 on what was his highest point of land.¹⁴ The location offered spectacular views down the pastoral slope of the Sienghenburgh to the farm, Red Hill, and Quarry Hill, and farther in the distance to the wide bend in the river and the southern edge of the Catskills. Church had undoubtedly directed Parton to paint from this vantage point for the commission in 1864 (Fig. 2).

Church embraced the opportunity to paint in his newly completed studio. The building included a large window on the north side and a smaller window on the west side.¹⁵ The artist observed: "The big window never fails to shed abundance of light no matter how dull the day may be."¹⁶

A letter of his amusingly headed "Siberia Jany 1st, 1866," recorded, "we have been snow bound..."¹⁷ Could this snowy January have inspired the artist to paint *The Hudson Valley in Winter from Olana* (Fig. 4)? Church depicted the frozen Hudson Valley looking southwest from his studio, with Quarry Hill in the right foreground and the "bend in the river" under a late winter sky. Here Church worked in nearly a monochromatic palette to express the chill of the almost sunless winter sky—an apt depiction of a climate evocative of Siberia. Church eventually mounted this oil sketch on paper to canvas and framed it for display in his home, a personal memento of the view he enjoyed daily from his studio.

The same vantage point from the new studio provided the vista for one of the artist's few finished paintings inspired by the property, *View of the Hudson River Valley from Olana* (1867; Fig. 5). Typical of Church's studio works, it combines elements from different locations. He probably borrowed from studies made in Maine or the Adirondack Mountains to add picturesque drama to the composition.



Fig. 5. Frederic Edwin Church, *View of the Hudson River Valley from Olana*, 1867, oil on canvas, 12 1/4 x 20 3/8 in., Brigham Young University Museum of Art, Provo, Utah



Fig. 6. Frederic Edwin Church, *Winter Sunset from Olana*, c. 1871-72, oil on buff academy board, 8 1/2 x 13 in., OL.1976.13, Collection Olana State Historic Site

Visitors to the property penned descriptions that resembled the perceptions Church set down in his richly colored renderings of breathtaking skies. A guest “sitting spell-bound at the window” witnessed and carefully recorded a phenomenon similar to the one Church had articulated in *Winter Sunset from Olana* (Fig. 6): “the sunset was mar-

velous. After it, while the sky was full of calm color, scarlet, orange, yellow, primrose, pale green, pale blue—up into deep blue—the sharp young moon came out, and the Hudson reflected it & the pale green and blue of the sky...”¹⁸

In the fall of 1867, Church expressed his desire to obtain new parcels of land so he might execute his grander vision for the property: “I want to secure if possible . . . every rood of ground that I shall ever require to make my farm perfect—”¹⁹ To help fulfill the plan for a new house overlooking the river, Church bought an additional eighteen acres later that same month, at last acquiring the hilltop, with its precipice facing the river. To his friend and patron William Henry Osborn, Church wrote:

I only wish and wait for an opportunity to take you and Mrs. Osborn there of a summer evening, when the sun's rays slant across the hills and if you don't both pronounce the views the most beautiful and wonderful—then deprive me of palette and brushes....²⁰

The land secure, in November 1867 Church and his family embarked on an eighteen-month-long trip to Europe and the Middle East, during which he produced hundreds of wonderful drawings and oil studies. The experience also directly influenced his concept for his future house and the extended grounds.

After brief stops in Paris and London, the Churches sailed for Egypt, where they spent only a few nights before continuing on to Beirut. While in the Middle East, Church visited monumental sites such as Hagia Sophia, Istanbul; the ruins at Baalbek, Lebanon; the Nabatean city of Petra; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Tower of David, both in Jerusalem; as well as private homes. All these sites fueled his desire to build. Beyond admiring the structures, Church also appreciated how architecture could function in its surrounding topography:

Beyrout is beautifully situated at the foot of a high range of mountains which are now snow clad and the mountain sides are dotted all over with villages, convents, &c. From the houses on the summit of the hill on which the city is built, the views are charming. The houses' tops are flat and generally have a room or two built upon them with stairs leading to the roof, so that it is convenient as well as agreeable to enjoy frequently the fine panorama.²¹

Here, and elsewhere throughout the trip, Church admired hilltop homes with their impressive views, and he could not help thinking of the similar advantages of his newly acquired property.

From the Middle East, the family traveled to Europe, and by October they were in Rome, staying among friends in the American artistic community. Church reported home, “We are almost as comfortable around our table—illuminated by a carcel lamp and warmed by an oak fire—as if we were lighted by petroleum and basked by hickory coals in our own cottage—But—the Tiber is not the Hudson.”²² These nostalgic and nationalistic sentiments reflected both Church's personal musings and the prevailing patriotic attitudes of Americans toward their native scenery in the mid-nineteenth century.

That spring Church traveled to Greece and was particularly awestruck by the Parthenon and the commanding view out to the Adriatic Sea and Mount Hymettus. For Church this hilltop temple was the “culmination of the genius of man in architecture.” Knowing that he would soon be building, he hoped to take a bit of the “genius” home with him and incorporate it into his site on the Hudson.

While abroad, Church was ever mindful of the dramatic scenery embracing his new plot of land. He often remarked on the relation of buildings to their surroundings, from homes in Beirut and castles in Europe to, ultimately, the Parthenon. Informed by the architecture of Beirut and Damascus, Church endeavored to meld attributes of the homes he had admired in the Middle East—open homes that interacted with their environment—with his own magnificent grounds. He sought a very different result from that of the wood-framed *Cosy Cottage*, which sat nestled within the farm. The new house would be of stone, and it would command the Sienghenburgh slope, constituting a crowning feature both within the park and from the river below.

Once home armed with the ideas, sketches, and photographs he had amassed during his trip, Church hired Calvert Vaux as architect to help him realize his vision.²³ In 1857 Vaux had published *Villas and Cottages*, a book that laid out his philosophies, with engravings of completed buildings as reference. Vaux asserted that “in country houses the design has to be adapted to the location, and not the location to the design,” a principle that could be applied to great advantage when orienting and drafting a show-place for Church’s property.²⁴ Vaux also freely borrowed from all traditions, including non-Western motifs, and therefore was receptive to the ideas with which Church had returned from his trip to Europe and the Middle East.

The evolution of the building from conception to realization is well-documented in both the progressing plans and elevations by Vaux and the hundreds of sketches by Church (Fig. 7).²⁵ Beyond the schemes for what is clearly decorative work are other ideas about window placement and the interrelation of rooms. Certainly, Church also was interested in orienting the house and its flow around the outstanding features of his property. As the views made up one of the most significant attributes, questions of window placement, orientation, and shape were paramount. Essentially, from the house one would look out at a “living landscape painting,” with the river and mountains as background and a middle ground and foreground landscaped by Church.

Numerous published sources inspired Church and served as reference material. For the landscape and the location of the house, he probably consulted Charles H. J. Smith’s *Landscape Gardening*, 1858, which recommended that “the view from the house should... surpass all others...”; and that “of all the varied materials in the composition of natural scenery, there is none that produces more beauty, variety and interest than water...”²⁶

Vaux and Church ultimately executed a building that aimed for a gracious transition between the natural surroundings and the living spaces, allowing family and guests to move easily from the exotically furnished interior onto the grounds beyond. The central



Fig. 7. Frederic Edwin Church, *Southwest Facade, Olana*, c. 1870, watercolor, ink, and graphite on paper, 13 x 21 15/16 in., OL.1980.40. Collection Olana State Historic Site



Fig. 8. Len Jenshel, *View South through the Ombra at Olana*, photograph, 1988. ©Diane Cook and Len Jenshel. See page 129 for color plate

Court Hall opened onto the park through the Ombra, serving as an informal entrance with large stone steps to the south lawn (Fig. 8). This space provided “a contrast of light and shade” and “shelter from the weather”; it was mostly contained within the building, its southern side an open arch to a large, porch-like stone slab.²⁷

From inside the house, large arched windows—each a unique shape and size—provided a “frame” for views of the river, the parkland, and the lake Church had created. To enhance these “pictures,” Church designed elaborate decorative surrounds for some of the windows that mimicked the idea of a frame around a painting. A journalist described the effect looking out from the Churches’ bedroom: “A window of a single pane of plate glass is surrounded by a frame, in such a manner as to give one the impression of gazing at a beautiful picture of river and mountains instead of looking through a window.”²⁸ Church himself noted with satisfaction: “The house will be a curiosity in Architecture but it will be convenient and the picture from each window will be really marvelous.”²⁹

The Bell Tower on the southeastern corner of the building made the ultimate viewing platform, framing the view in a triple pointed arch: “Mrs. Church took us up into the tower to see the sunset—a regular tower—with arched openings painted & decorated with Mexican tiles—Of course I am not going to describe the sunset to you—but I felt all through it that we ought to be looking at it on our knees” (Fig. 9).³⁰



Fig. 9. Linda McLean, *Sunset, View South through the Bell Tower at Olana*, photograph, 2011

Sketches from this period convey the virtuosity of the artist—his ability to capture exquisite color and to fix on paper fleeting and temporal effects. All the works reveal a man who was so completely familiar with his environment that their rendering had become second nature, allowing him to focus on the ever-changing weather conditions, times of day, seasons, and qualities of light.

In *The Hudson Valley in Winter from Olana* (c. 1871-72), Church aimed for the effect of “The river a clear mirror of ice,” the frozen water reflecting the pink tints in the sky (Fig. 10).³¹ The vertical canvas opens up to a bright blue sky, high fluffy clouds, and a wonderful recession into space.

Church took the time to make “a study from my studio window of a sunsets [sic] or twilight nearly every day...”³² Working quickly, he captured a fleeting brilliant orange sunset glowing beyond Indian Head Mountain in *Winter Twilight from Olana* (c. 1871-72; Fig. 11), which is intensified by the blue-gray mountains below and the paler blue-gray clouds above. The sketch was most likely executed from an upper bend in Bethune Road.

Summers brought new colors and unpredictable weather conditions. *Summer Sunset from Olana* (c. 1870-74; Fig. 12), painted from Bethune Road in a cool blue-purple palette, depicts the wide expanse of river visible and the effect. Of this weather, Church remarked: “We are having daily showers which clear up at evening with commendable regularity giving us gorgeous sunsets and twilights which are worth a pilgrimage to see.”³³

The increasingly vivid autumnal hues that transformed the Hudson Valley and the Catskill Mountains by early October were the subject of *Catskill Mountains from the Home of the Artist* (1871; Fig. 13), a commission from his longtime friend and sometimes doctor, Fessenden Nott Otis (1825-1900). For the rock outcroppings and cows in the foreground, Church probably consulted his portfolios of drawings from other locales—since neither would have been found by a visitor to this part of the property.³⁴ This work is Church’s largest and most finished depiction of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains from the property. Years later, at the auction of Dr. Otis’s collection, the artist purchased back the painting, remarking, “I was glad to get the picture because it is a view from my Place.”³⁵



Fig. 10. Frederic Edwin Church, *The Hudson Valley in Winter from Olana*, c. 1871-72, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 20 1/4 x 13 in., OL.1981.14. Collection Olana State Historic Site



Fig. 11. Frederic Edwin Church, *Winter Twilight from Olana*, c. 1871-72,
oil on off-white academy board, 10 1/16 x 13 in., OL.1976.4.
Collection Olana State Historic Site



Fig. 12. Frederic Edwin Church, *Summer Sunset from Olana*, c. 1870-74,
oil on off-white academy board, 11 9/16 x 18 1/16 in., OL.1977.207.
Collection Olana State Historic Site



Fig. 13. Frederic Edwin Church, *Catskill Mountains from the Home of the Artist*, 1871, oil on canvas, 22 1/8 x 36 3/8 in., OL.1981.13.
Collection Olana State Historic Site



Fig. 14. Frederic Edwin Church, *Clouds over Olana*, August 1872, oil on off-white paper, 8 11/16 x 12 1/8 in., OL.1976.1.
Collection Olana State Historic Site. See page 130 for color plate

Clouds over Olana (Fig. 14) is a celebration of the near completion of the new home. Dated August 1872, this cloud study is anchored by the lush green Sienghenburgh slope crowned by the house—easily identifiable by the distinctive Bell Tower. Church also continued to execute his landscaping plans, planting trees, building carriage drives, enhancing the parkland.

At this time, the property had not yet acquired the name Olana. A contemporary account credited Isabel with thinking of the name, described as “the old Latin name for a place in Persia, to which the artist’s home bears some resemblance in situation.”³⁶ Scholars have connected the name to two books in Church’s library. Isabel’s 1879 Christmas gift to Frederic, Strabo’s *Geographica*, discusses “Olane” as one of the “treasure-storehouses” on the Araxes River, and James Morier’s *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the Years 1810 and 1816* identifies Olana as a fortress on the Araxes River with a view of the fertile valley and of Mount Ararat, where Noah’s ark was said to have come to rest. Just as the name “Cosy Cottage” had evoked the small, simple dwelling it described, the Churches had chosen a name for their new home that embodied its character and location, drawing associations between their own Middle Eastern-inspired house with its view over the Hudson and an epic Persian stone fortress perched high above the Araxes River.³⁷

Over the ensuing years, Church focused his artistic energies on further enhancing his property, opening pasture, planting trees, and building ornamental drives. The 1886 *Plan of Olana*, a surveying project made in college by Church’s son, Frederic Joseph,



Fig. 15. Frederic Joseph Church, *Plan of Olana*, September 1886, ink and watercolor on paper, 22 1/8 x 36 1/4 in., OL. 1984.39. Collection Olana State Historic Site. See page 130 for color plate



Fig. 16. Walter Launt Palmer, *Road to Olana*, 1887-88, watercolor and gouache on paper, 13 1/4 x 17 1/4 in., Albany Institute of History and Art, Gift of the estate of Miss Evelyn Newman, 1964.31.44

detailed the realized vision of the artist (Fig. 15). In his own words, Church explained his process of creating a three-dimensional masterpiece: “I have made about 1 3/4 miles of road this season, opening entirely new and beautiful views. I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the studio.”³⁸ The artist’s concept of his landscaping efforts as analogous to painted compositions was firmly rooted in the prevailing attitudes of the landscaping writers and practitioners of the era. Frederick Law Olmsted described the views he orchestrated within New York City’s Central Park as “pictures” through which visitors would wander.³⁹

Visitors took full advantage of Olana. The novelist Susan Hale, who became a friend to both Frederic and Isabel, as well as their children, made the first of her numerous visits in 1884. After arriving, she penned a letter to her sister emphasizing Church’s artistic enhancement of his landscape and the consistent presence of the river from many vantage points: “The place is so large I can walk miles without going off of it. It is very pretty, great avenues of trees, a pond, nooks of shade and always the wide view of the river and mountains.”⁴⁰ Church provided rustic benches to accommodate those who ventured out on foot.

Residents, whether permanent or temporary, walked or drove around the property almost daily. From the carriage drives, family and guests experienced “passages of scenery”: the intimate setting of the farm; the more dramatic vistas available throughout the grounds; and prospects of the house.

Church’s artist friends and students captured aspects of his landscaping efforts. A frequent visitor, Jervis McEntee was given “a beautiful room in the S.W. front of the house looking down the river. . . .”⁴¹ During these stays he employed himself in artistic

endeavors: “Had a very pleasant visit at Church’s and most delightful weather. I made a few sketches.”⁴² Walter Launt Palmer, who had trained with Church, painted *Road to Olana* during the winter of 1887-88 (Fig. 16) in homage to his teacher and his student days, when Church painted many snow scenes of his property. In an impressionistic style that is in sharp contrast to Church’s depictions of winter, Palmer’s watercolor shows a snow-covered, wooded hillside with a winding road—perhaps Bethune Road or North Road. Regardless of the exact location, the image evokes the winding, climbing aspect of the wooded carriage roads Church devised to bring guests and visitors into the natural beauty that surrounded his home.

The public also was made welcome. In 1883 Mrs. Emma Carnes, Isabel’s mother, commented on the visiting public in her diary: “Lovely day... Raft of strangers walked around.”⁴³ The Hudson Register recommended the grounds to tourists:

The home of Frederick [sic] E. Church the artist, is one of the most conspicuous features on the right side of the upper Hudson. It is just opposite Catskill, situated on a high hill, most of which, if not all, is owned by Mr. Church. It can be seen from miles around. A drive to the grounds which Mr. Church is very kind about throwing open to visitors, is one of the pleasantest trips made by people spending the summer in the vicinity.⁴⁴

By 1890 Church had completed all major improvements to the house, including a studio wing, and to the grounds that now totaled 250 acres. A journalist summarized, “As I looked out from its broad veranda . . . the scene that spread before me filled me with regret that I had the soul of an artist without the power to wield the brush. It seemed the spot of all others to lend inspiration, and it is no wonder that the fame of Mr. Church is so great and lasting . . .”⁴⁵

On occasion in later years, Church was still moved to draw from his property, as on August 13, 1892, when he quickly sketched a rain shower over the Catskills across the river. *Rain and Clouds over the Catskills* was composed with an economy of graphite strokes and gentle shading, providing only a suggestion or touchstone for elements now so familiar to Church that he could portray them in a cursory way.

Church traveled the world, and his successful art career made it possible for him to live anywhere he chose. Yet he returned to the Hudson Valley and built a home not once, but twice on the property he continued to perfect for close to forty years. The creation of Olana was Church’s life’s work. His Hudson River Valley home was his locus. He returned to capture the view in oil and pencil sketches and to pursue his most personal artistic project, one on a par with any of his landscape paintings. There is no doubt about Olana’s singular importance for Church.

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This essay is a shortened version of *Glories of the Hudson, Frederic Edwin Church’s Views from Olana*, New York: Cornell University Press and The Olana Partnership, 2009.

Endnotes

1. Church owned French's book. This quote describes Church's home in the context of an artist's biography, which includes descriptions of several of Church's well-known works. There are two letters by Church to John D. Champlin Jr., an editor at *Scribner's*, that reference the book directly: Church to John D. Champlin, September 6, 1885, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter AAA) and Church to Champlin, September 11, 1885, AAA. Copies of the book remain in Church's historic library, at Olana, OL.1983.235 and OL.1990.70.
2. F. E. Church to Erastus Dow Palmer, July 7, 1869, Albany Institute of History & Art Library.
3. F. E. Church to Thomas Cole, May 20, 1844, New York State Library.
4. Gerald L. Carr first identified the location this sketch depicts. See Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: Catalogue Raisonné of Works at Olana State Historic Site* (New York, 1994), p. 64.
5. "Correspondence of the Transcript," *Boston Evening Transcript*, January 10, 1860, Olana Research Collection.
6. Several articles written over the decades following the construction of Olana mention that Church had been looking for property before his engagement. Martha J. Lamb, "The Homes of America," pt. 5, *Art Journal* 20 (August 1876): 245-48, OL.2000.166; "The American Rhine: Interesting Facts about the Country around Hudson," *The World* (July 21, 1889): 8, OL.1993.1-6; Frank J. Bonnelle, "In Summer Time on Olana," *Sunday Boston Herald* (September 7, 1890) (OL.2001.19). See also Robert M. Toole, *Historic Landscape Report: Olana State Historic Site* (Hudson, 1996), pp. 35-37.
7. Thomas Cole in *The Collected Essays and Prose Sketches*, ed. Marshall B. Tymn (St. Paul, 1980), p. 13.
8. T. Addison Richards, *American Scenery Illustrated* (New York, 1854), pp. 16, 258-59.
9. *Ibid.*, and Lossing, *The Hudson*, (New York 1866), p. 152.
10. The authors wish to thank Ellen McClelland Lesser for her assistance with this passage.
11. F. E. Church to J.W. Pinchot, May 12, 1866, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
12. *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 29, 1865, in the Olana Research Collection, and a check for seventy-five dollars dated October 6, 1864, OL. 2000.1147. The initial publication and discussion of this work appears in James Anthony Ryan, "Frederic Church's Olana: Architecture and Landscape as Art," in *Frederic Edwin Church*, by Franklin Kelly et al. (Washington, D.C., 1989), pp. 130-31.
13. Grace King to May King McDowell, June 7, 1887, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.
14. F. E. Church to Joseph Church, May 13, 1864, OL.1998.1.7.1. Until this point, Church was painting from a building in the farm complex, most likely Cosy Cottage. See Charles L. Fisher, *Archeological Discovery of Frederic Church's First Studio at Olana State Historic Site, Columbia County, New York*, (Peebles Island, Waterford, N.Y., 1994).
15. Church took down the studio in 1888, and it is known only through a photograph, references, and maps. See Fisher, *Archeological Discovery of Frederic Church's First Studio*, pp. 4-5; and Jervis McEntee, diary entry, July 18, 1888, Jervis McEntee Papers, 1850-1925, AAA: "[Church] has torn down his [old] studio."
16. F. E. Church to William Henry Osborn, January 1, 1866, OL.1983.1013.
17. *Ibid.* There are numerous oil and pencil sketches in winter done from the studio location. Many are undated, but a pencil sketch, *Wooded Hilltop, Hilly Valley, Sun*, 1917-4-1082a recto, is dated January 1866 and annotated with the word "brilliant" to describe the snow. The sketch is in the collection of the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York. The museum has the largest collection of oil and pencil sketches by Church, numbering more than two thousand. These works were given together in 1917 by Church's youngest son, Louis, who inherited them and Olana after Church's death. Olana has the second-largest collection.
18. Kate Bradbury to an unknown correspondent, December 25, 1889, location unknown, excerpts from transcripts compiled by Dr. Brenda E. Moon.
19. Church to Palmer, October 22, 1867, Albany Institute of History and Art Library.
20. Church to Osborn, November 30, 1868, OL.2003.17.A-F.
21. Church to Osborn, January 13, 1868, OL.2003.9.A-H.

22. Church to Osborn, November 9, 1868, OL.2003.15.A-F.
23. Church at one point hired Hunt to make a proposal, and it is not known when or why Church switched architects. Vaux's involvement at Olana is covered in James Anthony Ryan, *Frederic Church's Olana: Architecture and Landscape as Art* (Hensonville, N.Y., 2001); Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park and City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (New York, 1998); and in Karen Zukowski, "The Furnishings of Olana: Creating a New Eden," in *The Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site*, vol. 1, pp. 107, 111, 118.
24. Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*, (New York, 1857), p. 67; and Kowsky, *Country, Park and City*, pp. 206-15. The location is referenced specifically on page 207.
25. The collection at Olana includes more than 500 architectural sketches and almost 300 stencils. In addition, 330 architectural sketches and stencils have been documented in photographs, though the location of the originals is currently unknown. See Ida Brier, Karen Zukowski, and Kris Gibbons, *Missing Architectural Sketches Documentation Project, Research Report of Olana State Historic Site*, Olana Research Collection, 2000.
26. Charles H. J. Smith, *Landscape Gardening, or Parks and Pleasure Grounds* (New York, 1858), pp. 55, 63, 191. The authors wish to acknowledge the late James Ryan for making the initial connection between the philosophy of Charles Smith and Frederic Church's ideas for the landscape and house placement at Olana.
27. Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*, pp. 110-11.
28. Bonnelle, "In Summer Time on Olana."
29. Church to Osborn, July 22, 1871, Princeton University Libraries.
30. Grace King to May King McDowell, June 7, 1887, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge.
31. Church to Osborn, February 22, 1871, Princeton University Libraries.
32. F. E. Church to Martin Johnson Heade, February, 8, 1871, AAA.
33. F. E. Church to Charles de Wolf Brownell, June 28, 1888, copy from an unknown source, transcript in the Olana Research Collection.
34. The pencil drawing *Rogers Island and the Catskills from Olana* (OL.1977.125) might have served as a topographical template for the middle ground and background.
35. F. E. Church to Jervis McEntee, December 21, 1890, AAA.
36. Karen Zukowski, "The Furnishings of Olana: Creating a New Eden," in *The Historic Furnishings Report for Olana State Historic Site: A History of the Interiors, Thoughts on Their Significance, and Recommendations for Their Restoration*, 3 vols., (Hudson: The Olana Partnership and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation [hereafter TOP, NYSOPRHP, 2001], vol. 1, p. 112."
37. Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo: Literally Translated, with Notes*, trans. H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer (London, 1854), OL.1984.430.1; and James Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the Years 1810 and 1816* (London, 1818), OL.1986.92.
38. Church to Palmer, October 18, 1884, Albany Institute of History and Art Library.
39. Sara Cedar Miller, *Central Park, An American Masterpiece* (New York, 2003), p.111; and Frederick Law Olmsted, "Description of the Central Park," January 1859, published in *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted: Volume III Creating Central Park*, ed. Charles E. Beveridge and David Schuyler (Baltimore and New York, 1983) p. 215.
40. Susan Hale to Lucretia Hale, July 6, 1884, in *Letters of Susan Hale*, ed. Caroline Atkinson (Boston, c. 1918), pp. 141-42.
41. Jervis McEntee, diary entry, July 18, 1888, Jervs McEntee Papers, 1850-1905, AAA.
42. Jervis McEntee, diary entry, Wednesday, September 17, 1873, *ibid*.
43. Emma Carnes, diary entry, August 3, 1883, p. 38, Olana State Historic Site, OL.2000.284.
44. *Hudson Register*, September 11, 1896, p. 4, col. 3.
45. "The American Rhine," p. 8.

“His Nooks and Hiding Places”:

Asher B. Durand’s Retreats in the Hudson Highlands

Kenneth W. Maddox

Easily accessible by water and later by rail, the Hudson Highlands attracted wealthy travelers in the nineteenth century, as well as many not so well-off. The reasons were numerous, not the least being the Highlands’ spectacular scenic beauty and salutary climate. Significantly, the area also was hallowed with historic associations that endeared it to many artists and writers.¹ While most excursionists partook only of the transitory experiences of viewing the passing landscape as they traveled through the Highlands in steamboats, a few illustrious Americans chose to live in the area. Asher B. Durand, one of America’s foremost landscape painters, was among the first to select the Highlands for his residence; later, a number of prominent citizens, including Nathaniel Parker Willis, a prolific nineteenth-century American writer, settled on what he called “the Highland Terrace” above West Point. Willis is almost forgotten today, but he deserves greater respect for his perceptive observations and innovative ideas regarding the shaping of one’s environment.² Willis was pleased that the well-to-do and the creative were among his neighbors: “Downing, one of our most eminent horticulturists, resides here,” he wrote in 1852, “and Powell, one of the most enterprising of our men of wealth; and, along one of the high acclivities of the Terrace, are the beautiful country seats of Durand, our first landscape painter; Miller... Verplanck, Sands, and many others...”³

Although a great deal still remains to be discovered regarding Durand’s retreats in the Hudson Highlands, this essay presents new, unpublished material on a subject previously neglected by scholars. In August-September 1844, Durand stayed for over a month at Pardee’s Hotel in Kingston, Ulster County; after what his daughter described as a difficult period finding lodging in Westchester County.⁴ The next year, Durand sketched at Marbletown, near the edge of the Catskill Mountains in Ulster County, but the following summer he resided in Cornwall, Orange County, probably at the residence of Cornelius H. Clark.⁵ At this time he cordially received a contingent of New York City artists.

As early as June 3, 1843, A. J. Downing had written to Durand that “Mr. C. P. Cranch of Washington, is a valued friend of mine, of whom I spoke to you when I last

had the pleasure of seeing you. He is an enthusiastic lover of art, and a warm admirer of your own beautiful works, and I shall be very sincerely grateful if you will give the entrée of your studio at such times as may be convenient to you.”⁶ Three years later, on July 1, 1846, Cranch, an artist and writer, wrote to Jasper F. Cropsey from “Cedar Cottage, Fishkill Landing” (now Beacon): “I hope you are now ready to come up here and make me a visit. To be sure, I have no house to invite you to, which I am very sorry for—but I think I could find you a boarding place for a week—Durand is at Cornwall, about 6 miles below—We can, if you like, hunt him up out of his nooks & hiding places, and perhaps we may make an excursion with him, and even get a peep at the magician’s mysterious palette.”⁷ Cropsey left New York City in response to Cranch’s invitation on July 13, 1846, hoping to take the elegant passenger boat *Thomas Powell*, which would make the journey to Fishkill Landing in about three hours. A trip of such short duration indicates the accessibility of the Highlands for city residents. The *Thomas Powell* had been running for only two and a half months, and although it had not yet raced any vessels, it was considered the fastest boat on the river.⁸ Unfortunately for Cropsey, the *Powell* was laid up and the artist was forced to take, as he related, a “very slow boat which made my passage very tedious.”⁹ The river journey took five hours. Arriving at Fishkill, Cropsey was “very unexpectedly” greeted at the landing by George W. Austen, patron of the arts and treasurer of the American Art-Union from 1846-51,¹⁰ along with the painters Régis Gignoux and Cranch. The artists—joined later by John

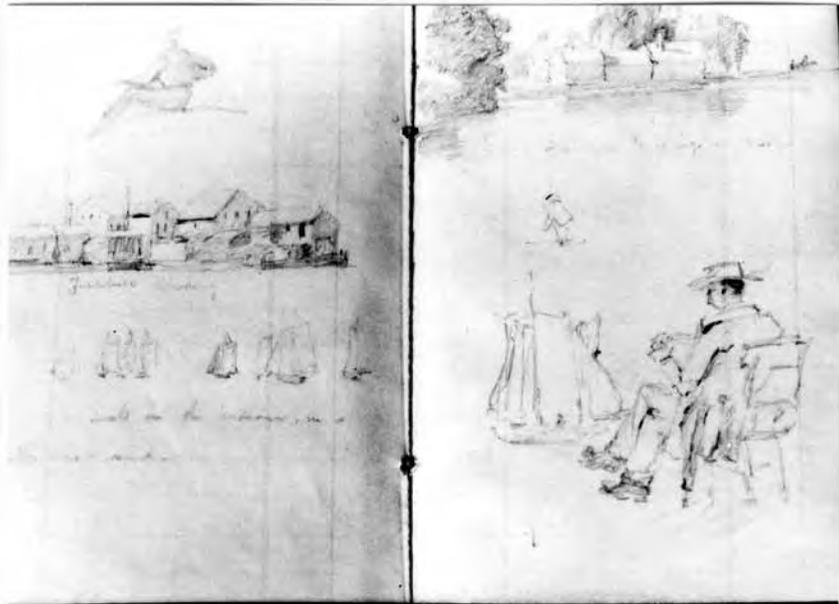


Fig. 1. Jasper F. Cropsey, “Fishkill Landing,” ca. July 16, 1846, *Pocket Sketchbook-Journal*, No. 5, Newington-Cropsey Foundation, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York

M. Falconer—sketched for several days along the east banks of the Hudson¹¹ (Fig. 1).

On July 17, 1846, Cropsey, Cranch, and Falconer took the steamboat across the river to Cornwall and Asher B. Durand's summer residence, about a mile from the landing. Received very cordially, they were introduced to Durand's second wife and two daughters. The artists immediately accompanied Durand to one of his "favorite haunts in the woods, a rocky ravine." The four painters located themselves a little distance apart and began to sketch. Cropsey noted that Durand, Cranch, and Falconer worked in color, while he contented himself by drawing in pencil. The artists dined that noon with Durand and his family, with Cropsey having the pleasure of sitting next to Durand's wife, whom he described as "a very pleasant woman though not graced with beauty, nor an evidence of more than ordinary literary feelings." After eating, the artists, with Durand leading the way, "rambled over fields & fence along the roads and through the bushes, along the rippling brook and over the rocky, barren hillside but could not make a selection from which to sketch." The day, Cropsey related, was "cloudy and gloomy [so] that nature wore but half her charms."¹²

That afternoon Durand showed the artists sketches he had made during the last two summers. Cropsey critically noted, however, that they were "all done with much freedom and considerable character, though not enough," he added, "for we were obliged to ask if such a tree was an oak or, a chestnut, &c."¹³ Not the most charitable comments by artists who were receiving hospitality from the president of the prestigious National Academy of Design. Durand, in fact, would later advise aspiring artists that "if your subject be a tree, observe particularly wherein it differs from those of other species; in the first place, the termination of its foliage, best seen when relieved on the sky, whether pointed or rounded, drooping or springing upward, &c., &c.; next mark the character of its trunk and branches, the manner in which the latter shoot off from the parent stem, their direction, curves, and angles. Every kind of tree has its traits of individuality—"¹⁴ After taking tea with Durand and his family, the painters departed through the rain, paint boxes on their shoulders, very pleased with their first visit to Cornwall.¹⁵

After receiving the New York artists, Durand began to look for a more permanent abode in the Highlands. He wrote to his son, John, from Cornwall on August 2, 1846, that he had heard "nothing further from Mr. Taylor about the Cottage, have just come from a survey of Mr. Geo. Clark's place, which I think cheaper than the other—apples, pears, & plumbs [sic] in abundance with a tolerable old house. If half the trees were forest trees I sh'd like it better, but there are a few Chestnuts & a great place for a fish pond with a fine spring to fill it."¹⁶ The letter provides insights into the attributes the artist sought for a summer residence, placing emphasis on its surroundings rather than focusing on the physical structure of the house itself. Ten days later, Durand was again sketching in his favored area of Marbletown.

Durand continued actively seeking a residence in the Highlands during the fall of the following year. A letter he received from his son, John, on September 8, 1847,



Fig. 2. Five Ledyard Street, New Windsor. Google Maps

indicated that the artist was still considering Mr. Clark's place, which was being offered at \$800, but which he felt could be acquired for \$100 less. Durand's realtor, William Hasbrouck, also suggested a number of other nearby properties, including Carpenter's, which he felt could be purchased for less than \$1,000.¹⁷ A week later, John wrote to his father: "I was at Newburg [sic] again last Sunday. Carpenter has no disposition to sell. there is now only one place in town & it is Judge Denison[s]. I do not know whether you remember the house. it is just below Case's between their place and the river entrance from Montgomery St. The lot is 175 x 100 feet (I think) for which the owner asks \$1,000. there are fine trees in front of the house, not very large yet, but growing finely, plenty of fruit and flowers. the house is large, maybe too large it is like Mr. Roe's with an additional story, tho built of brick & stucco. it commands a fine view up and down the river.—Mr. Hasbrouck thinks it exceedingly cheap."¹⁸

By 1849 Asher B. Durand had found a permanent abode at Newburgh, purchasing a residence belonging to McAuley, possibly 5 Ledyard Street in New Windsor¹⁹ (Fig. 2). Although family letters provide descriptions of several of the properties Durand had considered acquiring, they offer little information regarding the home he actually bought. It was a two-story house, and likely—as were the other residences he considered—surrounded by fruit trees or woodlands. And as his son noted, (page 87), the home was situated upon an elevation overlooking a picturesque stream, or, as Willis described it, "along one of the high acclivities of the Terrace."

Durand arranged to hire caretakers for his place. In a letter dated April 18, William H. Hasbrouck wrote the artist: "I think I have discovered for you a most excellent man, fitted in every respect to take care of your place. He is respectful, faithful, honest, industrious and a very good gardener. . . . and his wife is a very nice woman I believe;

they are English, and are desirous of coming with you.”²⁰ In a letter dated nine days later, William C. Hasbrouck (his relationship to William H. is not known) wrote to Durand that “the lower rooms [of McAuley’s house] are all ready for you: & that you can send up immediately all or any part of your furniture & that he is ready to give possession of the house & premises immediately.”²¹ On May 18, Durand wrote his son that he was settling in his new residence. He requested certain provisions, including two barrels of potatoes as “the price here is \$1.50 pr bl and not so sure as to good quality.” He also mentioned that “the black hen died the night you left—the others are doing well.”²² There is little doubt that the artist, the son of a farmer and watchmaker, was planning to make his new residence at Newburgh a self-sustaining place. On May 22, Durand wrote to his son that he had purchased a cow for forty dollars, and that “all the inside painting is done and we shall furnish the parlour tomorrow, and the house will be all in prime order this week.”²³ In a May 31 letter, he again wrote to his son that he had “just come to Newburgh to make arrangements for the things in case they come to morrow morning. . . . I arrived in the rain and got a good soaking but found all well at home. The cow has come and we have made use of her milk, last night & this morning.”²⁴ While the artist had not yet moved into his new residence, by June 4 he had been to Newburgh almost every day and was expecting the arrival of his wife. Durand had only glowing reports regarding the cow he had purchased, which was “first rate”: “We get 7 to 8 quarts of milk at a time and have just made 3 pounds of beautiful butter.” He also reported that he had recently purchased a horse: “The black one first spoken of by Mr. Hasbrouck & I think by far the best for \$115.” While not yet fully settled into his new residence, Durand was hoping for visits from John William Casilear and John Frederick Kensett.²⁵

The artist’s letter to his son the following year, on July 21, 1850, recorded a number of expenses incurred with his new residence. The bill for a carpenter was \$400, while the bill for masonry work “must carry the cost a good way beyond \$500 for the whole,” which indicates the house he purchased (just as George Clark’s place he had considered) may have been “a tolerable old house.”²⁶ *The Bulletin of the American Art Union*, repeated by *The Literary World*, unhappily reported that “Durand has retired to his new rural residence at Cornwall [sic], which, by the way, we regret to hear is to be hereafter his permanent home,” suggesting that he was abandoning his established Manhattan residence at 91 Amity Street.²⁷

In his letters, Durand does not describe his artistic activities while in the Highlands, but the pleasures of the artist’s country life at Newburgh are illustrated by *Beacon Hills on the Hudson River, Opposite Newburgh—Painted on the Spot* (ca. 1852; Fig. 3-4). The composition looks out from near Durand’s residence across the Hudson to Beacon. The figures in the foreground, Linda S. Ferber has suggested, may be the artist’s family; “their unhurried attitudes suggest that they are out for a casual walk in a landscape that offered the delights of nature just a short distance from home.”²⁸ It illustrates the felicitous experience Durand briefly enjoyed on the banks of the Hudson, while also



Fig. 3. Asher B. Durand, *Beacon Hills on the Hudson River, Opposite Newburgh—Painted on the Spot*, ca. 1852, oil on canvas, 32 x 46 inches, The New-York Historical Society. See page 132 for color plate

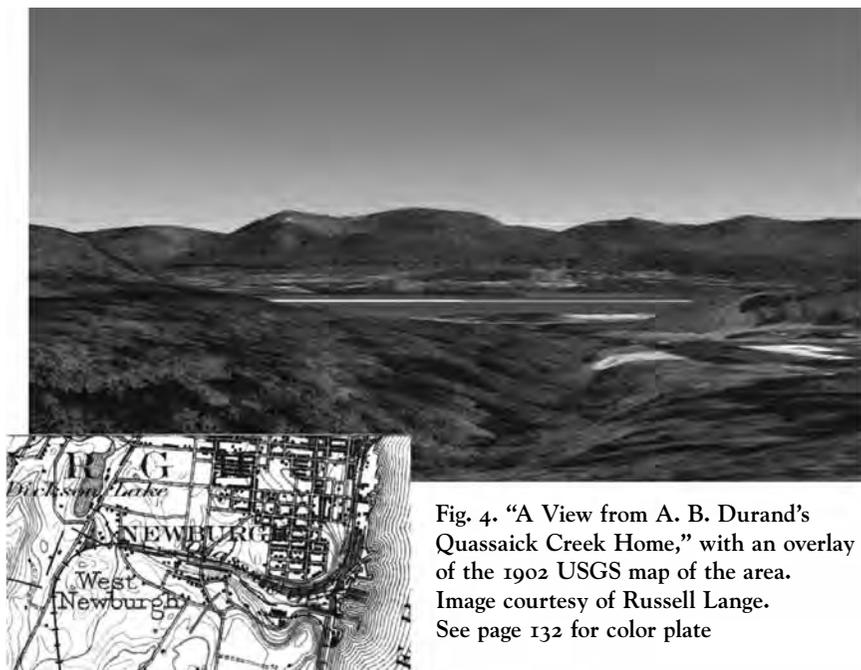


Fig. 4. “A View from A. B. Durand’s Quassaick Creek Home,” with an overlay of the 1902 USGS map of the area. Image courtesy of Russell Lange. See page 132 for color plate



Fig. 5. Asher B. Durand, *A Summer Afternoon*, 1849, oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 42 1/4 inches, David and Laura Grey Collection, New York.
See page 133 for color plate

underscoring the fact that surprisingly little pictorial evidence remains, either through drawings or paintings, of Durand's activities while along the river at Newburgh.²⁹

One other large canvas, *A Summer Afternoon* (1849), undoubtedly records the area near his country residence (Fig. 5). The resplendent landscape, with its bucolic staffage of cattle and sheep in the foreground, also gives a hint of the Hudson River in the middle distance. The water the cows are drinking from is probably not Quassaick Creek but one of the smaller streams running through the area.³⁰

The artist's bucolic existence soon was disrupted, as John Durand recorded in an oft-quoted passage in his father's biography. He acknowledged his father's previous troubles in finding suitable accommodations in upstate New York and the Highlands, writing that "owing to the difficulty of procuring comfortable quarters, good food, and good beds, in farmhouses and at country taverns on these summer excursions, my father was induced in 1849 to try a suburban residence of his own. He accordingly purchased, near Newburg [sic], on the Hudson River, a house situated on an elevation overlooking the 'Vale of Avoca,' through which ran a somewhat picturesque stream" (Figs. 6-7). The name Vale of Avoca, a favorite spot of beauty in Ireland immortalized in Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, was given to a local landmark on Quassaick Creek by Irish immigrants to Newburgh. "Unfortunately," Durand's son continued, "romance yielded to reality. The banks of the stream 'meandering through the vale' were soon wanted for a railroad; the ground was turned up; fever-and-ague made its appearance,

Durand's neighbors in the Highlands might have had an entirely different perspective regarding the intrusion of the railroad into the area than those expressed by Durand's son. Certainly N. P. Willis did, for he embraced the advent of steam power. He saw the building of the branch line of the Erie, which forced Durand from his property, as developing the area into two major transportation arteries. It would provide an east-west route from Boston, linked by ferry to the branch line of the Erie Railroad and connecting by the main line to Lake Erie. This thoroughfare, in turn, would intersect with the north-south route of the Hudson River Railroad, completed in 1851. The Highlands was situated in the center of a compass, with Albany, New York City, Boston, and Buffalo at its "four points, all within reach of an easy excursion." Willis considered the Highland Terrace as "the spot on the Hudson where the two greatest thoroughfares of the North are to cross each other" (Willis's emphasis). "The Hudson, as far as West Point," he proclaimed "will be but a fifty-mile extension of Broadway. The river-banks will have become a suburban avenue—a long street of villas, whose busiest resident will be content that the City Hall is within an hour of his door."³⁸

For Willis, the Highlands was a rural paradise that technological progress, namely the railroad, rendered in close proximity to the great mercantile center of New York. Willis's feelings, thus, would seem almost diametrically opposed to Durand's emotions—or at least those feelings recorded by his son—in which the building of the Erie's branch line disrupted the artist's bucolic residence and forced him to flee from the banks of the Hudson. Yet both men may have shared a common vision for the Highlands. In 1853, Durand exhibited a major composition, *Progress*, which was shown at the National Academy of Design (Fig. 8). The landscape is an idealized view of the Hudson



Vale of Avoca, Newburgh, N. Y.

Fig. 7. Postcard view of the Vale of Avoca, Newburgh. Collection of Russell Lange. See page 133 for color plate



Fig. 8. Asher B. Durand, *Progress, (The Advance of Civilization)*, 1853, oil on canvas, 48 x 71 15/16 inches, unlocated



Fig. 9. "National Academy of Design—The Principal Room." Engraving in *The Illustrated News* 1 (May 7, 1853): 296. The New York Public Library, General Research Division, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Divisions

Highlands. On the left, Native Americans standing on a ledge view the encroachment of civilization, which is displayed in the lower right-hand corner of the composition. The artist's son described the canvas as "showing on American soil the use of canal, steamboat, and railway, and that of the telegraph, then recently perfected."³⁹ While Durand's own experience of being driven from his summer retreat by the building of the Erie's branch line would certainly have allowed him to sympathize with America's first inhabitants being pushed westward by the relentless advance of the White Man, *Progress* celebrates instead the march of civilization in America. It is undoubtedly the artist's greatest work coming out of his experiences in the Highlands, and when shown at the National Academy of Design, the painting was placed in a prominent position in the main room of its exhibition galleries (Fig. 9).

Durand's composition was based upon earlier images, including book illustrations and banknote engravings entitled the "Advance of Civilization" (as was the engraving made after Durand's canvas). The theme reflects the pervasive sentiment of Manifest Destiny that prevailed in mid-nineteenth century America and dictated the inevitable annihilation of the Indian. As one critic proclaimed, the painting "is purely AMERICAN. It tells an American story out of American facts, portrayed with true American feeling, by a devoted and earnest student of Nature."⁴⁰ Celebrating the increase of civilization in the Hudson Highlands and painted two years after the construction of the Erie's branch line, *Progress* calls into question the artist's own feeling toward the building of the railroad that drove him from the Vale of Avoca. In the distance of his composition, a minute train courses over a causeway on the east bank of the Hudson, symbolic of the importance of rail transportation for the area. With its multiple elements signifying development in the Highlands, the painting appears to announce, as Willis also predicted (although wrongly), that the area was destined to become "Nature's Northern Gate to New-York City."⁴¹

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Endnotes

1. See Kenneth W. Maddox, "The Glorious Scenery Must Ever Excite": *Nineteenth-century American Paintings of the Hudson Highlands*, exhibition catalogue (Garrison, NY: Boscobel House and Gardens, 2008).
2. For Willis's provocative ideas regarding the shaping of the environment surrounding his country residences, see Kenneth W. Maddox, "The Lure of the Country," in Roger Panetta, ed., *Westchester: The American Suburb* (New York: Fordham University Press, and Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum, 2006), 104-14.
3. N. P. Willis, "The Highland Terrace, above West Point," in *The Home Book of the Picturesque: or American Scenery, Art, and Literature* (1852 reprint, Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1967), 110.
4. Letter, Lucy Durand to her father, Asher B. Durand, August 30, 1844, Asher B. Durand Papers, Archives of American Art and the New York Public Library, microfilm reel, N20, frame 202, hereafter denoted as Durand Papers. Lucy wrote to her father that "We are very glad to hear that you are so well pleased with Kingston and that you have been able to secure a boarding place that suited[,] a matter which seemed to be pretty difficult in Westchester."

5. An envelope without letter, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 273, is addressed to "Asher B. Durand Esq. / care Mr. Cornelius H. Clark, Cornwall, N.Y."
6. Letter, A. J. Downing, Newburgh, New York, to A. B. Durand, June 30, 1843, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 174.
7. Letter, C. P. Cranch, Cedar Cottage, Fishkill Landing, New York, to Jasper F. Cropsey, July 1, 1846, Newington-Cropsey Foundation. Cranch was Andrew Jackson Downing's brother-in-law and became a close friend of Durand, with the two artists frequently painting together. During his excursion, Cropsey called on Cranch at Cedar Cottage, which belonged to his wife's family. Cranch, Cropsey, and William Wetmore Story traveled together in Italy in 1848. See Nancy Stula, *At Home and Abroad: The Transcendental Landscapes of Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813-1892)* (New London, CT: Lyman Allyn Art Museum, 2008): 86, 112, 116-22, 124-27.
8. "The Steamer Thomas Powell," *Morris's National Press, a Journal for Home* 1 (July 18, 1846): 2.
9. Jasper F. Cropsey, *Journal*, July 13, 1846, transcription, Newington-Cropsey Foundation archives.
10. Austen had commissioned Cropsey on May 28, 1846, to paint a twenty-four-inch tondo, *Spring* (unlocated), which would be part of a set of Four Seasons. Thomas Cole painted *Autumn* in 1845; Durand painted *Summer* and Régis Gignoux *Winter* to complete the set. Cropsey's July 4, 1846, entry in his *Journal* indicated he had finished the painting by July 2, eleven days before his journey to Fishkill Landing. Later Cropsey painted *Mountain Lake* (ca. 1850, unlocated) for Austen. For Cropsey's paintings owned by Austen, see Kenneth W. Maddox, *Jasper Francis Cropsey, catalogue raisonné, Works in Oil, Volume One, 1842-1863* (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Newington-Cropsey Foundation, 2013), 37-38, 97.
11. Cropsey, *Journal*, July 13, 1846.
12. Cropsey, *Journal*, July 17, 1846.
13. *Ibid.*
14. A.B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape Painting, Letter II," *The Crayon* 1 (January 17, 1855): 34.
15. Cropsey, *Journal*, July 17, 1846.
16. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Cornwall, New York, August 2, 1846, Durand Papers, microfilm reel, N20, frame 275-76.
17. Letter, John Durand to his father, Asher B. Durand, New York, September 8, 1847, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frames 340-41.
18. Letter, John Durand to his father, Asher B. Durand, New York, September 15, 1847, Durand Papers, microfilm reel, N20, frame 343.
19. While the property has not yet been documented through property records as the one owned by Durand, 5 Ledyard Street in New Windsor corresponds to the position of the artist's home shown on the 1851 Orange County map (see Fig. 6). It is the only structure still standing in the area that might date back to the time of Durand's residence. Certainly it resembles the type of dwelling the painter was looking for. All credit for this discovery goes to Russell Lange, Executive Director, Hudson River Maritime Museum, who generously shared his information with the author. "New Windsor and Newburgh as villages are on the south and north sides of Quassaick Creek, which is their shared border. The broader area is the Town of Newburgh, often referred to as Newburgh." Information from Russell Lange in an email to the author, July 16, 2014.
20. Letter, William H. Hasbrouck to Asher B. Durand, April 18, 1849, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 498.
21. Letter, William C. Hasbrouck to Asher B. Durand, April 27, 1849, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 502.
22. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Newburgh, May 18, 1849, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 504.
23. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Newburgh, May 22, 1849, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 505.
24. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Newburgh, May 31, 1849, Durand Papers, reel, N20, frame 507.
25. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Newburgh, June 4, 1849, Durand Papers, microfilm reel, N20, frame 516.

26. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Newburgh, July 21, 1850, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 580.
27. "Fine Art Gossip," *The Bulletin of the American Art Union* 2 (August, 1849): 27; cited also in "The Fine Arts," *Literary World* 5 (August 11, 1849): 113.
28. Linda S. Ferber, *The Hudson River School: Nature and the American Vision* (New York: The New York Historical Society, 2009), 68.
29. The painting, which was donated to The New-York Historical Society in 1907 by the artist's daughter, Lucy Maria Durand Woodman, was inscribed on the back of the stretcher: "A. B. Durand. .(?) Newburgh with care." When the painting entered the collection, it was entitled *Hudson River, View of Fishkill Mountains, N.Y.* The date ca. 1856 was given to the painting because it closely corresponds to *Fishkill Mountains, New York* (1856), oil on canvas, twenty-four by thirty-six inches, in the Maryland State Archives, Baltimore, Maryland, that lacks the foreground figures. The present title, *Beacon Hills on the Hudson River, Opposite Newburgh—Painted on the Spot*, and date ca. 1852, were given to the painting in 2007 based on the discovery that in 1852 Durand exhibited a painting with this title, no. 207, at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. I am grateful to Linda Ferber and Sarah Snook of The New-York Historical Society for supplying me with this information from the files of The New-York Historical Society. It can be questioned that such a large-size canvas, thirty-two by forty-six inches, was executed en plein air as the subtitle "Painted on the Spot" indicates, but it might have been painted ca. 1849-50 from Durand's home. Several unlocated paintings with Fishkill or Fishkill Landing (Beacon, New York) in their titles were listed in contemporary auction records: no. 10, *View near Fishkill, Hudson River* (sold for \$90); no. 25, *View on the Hudson River, Fishkill* (sold for \$105); no. 44, *On the Hudson near Fishkill* (sold for \$125); and no. 68, *View on the Hudson, Near Fishkill* (sold for \$140) were offered at the Henry H. Leeds and Miner, New York, auction on December 5, 1867. At the Ortgies Art Gallery, New York, April 13-14, 1887, sale of Durand's works, no. 286, *Hudson River, Near Fishkill Landing, Looking South*, 14 1/2 by 23 1/2 inches and no. 292, *Near Fishkill Landing, N. Y.*, 14 1/2 by 23 1/2 inches, were put on the block. See David B. Lawall, *Asher Brown Durand: His Art and Art Theory in Relation to His Times*, 4 vols. Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1966, vol. 3, 222, 224-25, 227, 232-33. Only three paintings, this work; no. 652, *Nature Study, Trees, Newburgh*, 1849, The New-York Historical Society; and *Study of an Earth-Bank, Newburgh*, which was offered as lot 69 at Henry H. Leeds and Miner's December 5, 1867, auction are documented with Newburgh in their title. Four drawings by Durand in the collection of The New-York Historical Society are inscribed either Newburgh or Newburg [sic]: no. 653, *Study of Rocks, Newburgh, N. Y.*, possibly 1849; no. 654, *Study of a Tree, Newburgh, N. Y.*, possibly 1849; no. 655, *Study of Trees, Newburgh, N. Y.*, possibly 1849; and no. 656, *Study of Trees, Newburgh, N. Y.*, possibly 1849. See Richard J. Koke, *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in The New-York Historical Society*, 3 vols. (New York: The New-York Historical Society in association with G. K. Hall & Co., Boston, Massachusetts, 1982) 327, 329; Lawall, 227. The titles indicate that while in the Highlands Durand spent as much time working on the east side of the river as near his retreat on the west bank.
30. Information from Russell Lange in an email to the author, July 16, 2014. Lange also has suggested that "there was a parallel water sluiceway through the Vale that fed an old mill in the early 19th century that after time might have eroded to look something like this by 1850. It could also be one of several other smaller creeks in the area."
31. John Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, (1894, rpt. New York: Kennedy Graphics, Inc., Da Capo Press, 1970), 184-85. In 1891 local historian John J. Nutt wrote that "near its mouth [Quassaick Creek] flows through a deep valley called the Vale of Avoca. From a small glen a mile west of the river the chasm widens and deepens as you follow the course of the stream. The south bank sweeps off into a semi-circle, but again crowds against the creek just before its union with the Hudson. The banks on either side are over a hundred feet high and precipitous. To one passing the mouth of the stream in a boat the side of the chasm once presented a gloomy pass, just wide enough for the water. Now railroad tracks run along its sides and cross the creek; but even these changes cannot wholly deface its olden charms." Nutt, *Newburgh; Her Institutions, Industries and Leading Citizens* (Newburgh, NY: Ritchie & Hull, 1891), 51.
32. Edward Harold Mott, *Between the Ocean and the Lakes: The Story of Erie* (New York: Ticker Publishing Co., 1908), 357.
33. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son, John, Newburg [sic] July 29, 1850, Durand Papers, reel N20, frame 582.

34. Letter, Asher B. Durand to his son John, Newburg [sic] August 21, 1850, Durand Papers, reel N20, frame 589.
35. "Letters, Science, Art, Public Men, Etc., United States," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 2 (December 1850): 131, citing *The Bulletin of the American Art-Union*.
36. Letter, John Durand to his father, New York, September 8, 1851, Durand Papers, microfilm reel, N20, frame 657.
37. Letter, William C. Hasbrouck to John Durand, Newburgh, January 17, 1852, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 678.
38. Willis, 107, 110-11. See also Henry T. Williams, *Suburban Homes for City Business Men . . . on the Line of the Erie Railway* (New York: Press of the Erie Railway Co., 1867), 39-40 which cited the rail advantages of Newburgh and stressed that "it is a most favorable and popular place of residence both summer and winter."
39. Durand, *The Life and Times of A. B. Durand*, 175.
40. "Editor's Table: Exhibition of the National Academy of Design," *The Knickerbocker* 42 (July 1853): 95. For a detailed discussion regarding the history of *Progress*, see Kenneth W. Maddox, "Asher B. Durand's *Progress*: The Advance of Civilization and the Vanishing American," in Susan Danly and Leo Marx, eds., *The Railroad in American Art: Representations of Technological Change* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988): 51-69. Shortly before Durand's painting was placed on display at the National Academy, he was still being asked to pay bills incurred in 1849 regarding his home in the Highlands. See letter, Adam Lilburn to Asher B. Durand, Newburgh, March 30, 1853, Durand Papers, microfilm reel N20, frame 729.
41. Willis, 107.



Fig. 1. Thomas Cole (1801-1848), *Lake Mohonk*, c. 1846; oil on canvas, 20 1/4 x 30 1/8 inches; Frank M. Gren Collection, Annapolis, Maryland, Image courtesy of Questroyal Fine Art, LLC. See page 134 for color plate

Scenes “most impressive and delightful”:

Nineteenth-century Artists in the Shawangunks

Harvey K. Flad

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the North American landscape began to reflect the rapid changes in the society and political economy of the New World. The changing landscape offered a setting for a discourse on the human relationship to nature as formative to the construction of a new nation.¹ Following the lead of Thomas Cole (1801-1848) and other American and European artists and essayists, paintings and commentaries of the region’s sublime and picturesque landscapes helped to create an American identity through landscape representation.²

The artists sought out sublime landscapes amongst the deep forests, craggy bluffs, cloves, waterfalls, and tumbling streams of the Catskill mountains and the surrounding region, including the Shawangunks; and further north up the Hudson River in the Adirondacks. They also portrayed more picturesque scenes of mountain lakes or fields

and meadows in nearby pastoral valleys.³ Beauty could be found in grand vistas as well as in more intimate spaces. Guesthouses and hotels were developed to accommodate these artists and travelers as well as the thousands of tourists who followed in their wake.⁴ Many nineteenth-century artists, known for their depictions of the Catskills, roamed the nearby dramatic cliffs and sky lakes of the Shawangunks for scenes “most impressive and delightful” near the picturesque grounds of Lake Mohonk and the Mohonk Mountain House.⁵

In their search for the sublime and picturesque, most Hudson River School artists were sensitive to the particularities of the sites and scenes they sketched.⁶ In his “Essay on American Scenery” (1835) Thomas Cole, founder of the group of landscape artists known collectively as the Hudson River School, argued for certain specific elements that construct a landscape scene, such as water (including lakes), streams, and waterfalls; forests; mountains; and the sky.⁷ And, following the dictates of the English art critic John Ruskin, they became carefully attentive to the natural history of particular places, such as a site’s topographical, geological, and botanical features.⁸

In this essay I focus on the artists and their efforts to locate and paint the Shawangunks, a mountainous ridge of extremely resistant quartzite conglomerate rock that parallels the Catskill dome.⁹ Art historians often have neglected the unique geology and ecology of the ridge, usually placing the sketches and paintings done in the area within the generic Catskills. Cole and his followers, however, were keenly aware of the special landscape features of the Shawangunks—affectionately known as the Gunks. This essay offers an introduction to the artists and their works among the lakes, cliffs, talus, and forests of the Shawangunks, with particular attention to the area around Lake Mohonk.

Tourism in the Catskills and Gunks

The Catskills and the Shawangunks were destinations to paint and sketch for travelers and tourists from near and far.¹⁰ Sublime and picturesque settings were made accessible to tourists who stayed at a mountain house. The Catskill Mountain House, begun in 1824 just west of Catskill and perched 2,250 feet above and overlooking the Hudson Valley, commanded a panoramic view and became an extraordinary success.¹¹ Within an easy walk was Kaaterskill Falls, perhaps second only to Niagara for artists and tourists intent on sketching a sublime subject.

Following the success of the Catskill Mountain House, numerous mountain resorts were constructed for travelers seeking healthy air and beautiful scenery.¹² Prospects from which to safely view the surrounding landscape were located, constructed, and often framed by vegetation as pictorial scenes.¹³ Hotel verandas framed panoramic views and scenic prospects.¹⁴ The Mohonk Mountain House, begun in 1869 at Lake Mohonk in the Shawangunks just west of New Paltz, offered scenes described by artist Daniel Huntington as “most impressive and delightful.”¹⁵

Away from the hotel edifice, places that afforded views were located, made acces-

sible, and often given picturesque names, such as Sunset Rock or Artists Rock. On some of these rock ledges, platforms or summerhouses were built to frame the view. The visitor could imagine himself standing, along with the poet William Cullen Bryant and artist Thomas Cole, in Asher B. Durand's 1849 painting *Kindred Spirits*, on the ledge viewing Kaaterskill Cove,¹⁶ or sitting on a bench inside a summerhouse overlooking the Shawangunk cliffs or lake as in Sanford Gifford's *The Shawangunk Mountains* (1864).¹⁷ Many of the sketches and paintings of the iconic topographic feature in the Gunks known as the Trapps were from Artists Rock on Eagle Cliff on the Mohonk Mountain House grounds or from the viewpoint of a gazebo at Cope's Lookout, a few hundred yards further along the cliff.

Lake Mohonk and Mohonk Mountain House

The landscape surrounding the Mohonk Mountain House was a favorite place to visit and contemplate nature and paint. It is situated on the top of the northern Shawangunks, with views of the Catskills to the north and west and the Wallkill Valley to the east.¹⁸ Albert K. Smiley purchased the land surrounding Lake Mohonk in 1869. Over the next few years, he and his twin brother Alfred H. proceeded to construct a large hotel along with a picturesque landscape.¹⁹

The Smileys conceived of the landscape as an artist's canvas; all the Romantic elements were sought out, enhanced, or, if necessary, created.²⁰ The grounds immediately surrounding the hotel featured the lake; craggy white cliffs juxtaposed with a forest cover of deciduous trees and evergreens; enclosure; perspective; and extraordinary vistas. Gardens were introduced to add color in the summer, while mountain laurel in the late spring and autumnal shades of the maples, oaks, beech, and birch gave brilliance in their seasons.

The construction of the designed landscape was an effort of immense proportion, as Albert Smiley made clear in 1869: "I have created this property, the result of seventy-six purchases, as a landscape artist does his canvas, only my canvas covers seven square miles."²¹

Lake Mohonk is one of five "sky lakes," created in the extremely resistant Shawangunk rock by glacial plucking and filled by rainwater. Glacial scouring and scraping 12,000 to 15,000 years ago created a ridge ecosystem with many rare and endangered species and unusual habitats, such as pine-barrens; vertical cliffs; talus slopes with boulders covered in lichen, ferns, and mosses; old growth chestnut oak forests; and deep blue, rain-fed lakes.²² Its towering precipitous cliffs contain a landscape of sublime and highly picturesque natural elements.²³

Thomas Cole visited Lake Mohonk and suggested it and the forests and cliffs in the area as a location to savor and paint. Indeed, as he wrote to his friend and fellow artist Asher B. Durand (1796-1886) in August 1838, "Do let me hear from you when you get among the Gunks. I hope you will find everything there your heart can wish...."²⁴

Cole died before the Smiley family opened the Mohonk Mountain House on

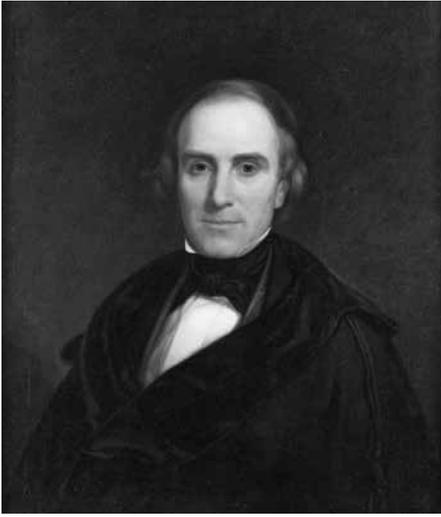


Fig. 2. Portrait of Thomas Cole, Daniel Huntington, 1841. Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1939.161

the shore of Lake Mohonk in 1869, but his depiction of the lake, painted two years before his death, offers a glimpse of Cole's spiritual sensitivity to nature. (Fig. 1) Through energetic brushstrokes rapidly applied *en plein air*, Cole depicts the site's rough rock outcrops and steep cliffs reflected in the lake, along with their rugged forests, while billowing clouds reflect an afternoon sunlight.

In 1841 Daniel Huntington (1816-1906), fellow artist and friend of both Cole and Durand, painted a portrait of Thomas Cole now owned by the New-York Historical Society. (Fig. 2) When Huntington painted Durand's portrait in 1857, he depicted him in a natural setting, with a *plein air* sketch on his easel. Among other honors, Huntington

followed Durand as president of the National Academy of Design in New York City, serving for twenty-one years during the mid to late nineteenth century.²⁵ Although primarily a portraitist, Huntington also traveled to the same landscapes as his fellow artists to seek the picturesque and sublime.

As with other artists of the period, including Cole, Huntington described his emotional feelings toward landscapes in both paint and Romantic prose. On a visit to Lake Mohonk and the Mohonk Mountain House, he described his impression using the rhetoric of the period with reference to the aesthetic theories of English art critic John Ruskin as they had been conveyed to American landscape painters by Durand in *The Crayon*, America's premier art journal of the time.²⁶ As well as a founder and president of the National Academy of Design, Durand had been very close to Cole as the previously cited letter attests. Upon staying at the Mohonk Mountain House in 1871, Huntington remarked:

Lake Mohonk is one of the most interesting places I have visited. Bold and savage features are combined with the gentle and picturesque in inexhaustible variety. Those huge masses of rock tumbled in wild confusion, contrasted with rich forest, distant views of mountain ranges and smiling valleys, with the clear lake reflecting at your feet, form together a *scene most impressive and delightful*, [emphasis added] of which the artist and lover of nature can never weary."²⁷

Huntington's description reflects the pictorial language of the nineteenth-century artist and traveler: the sublime "bold and savage" features alongside picturesque "smiling valleys." The scene, or pictorial composition, of the Mohonk Mountain House



Fig. 3. Daniel Huntington, *Lake Mohonk*, c. 1872; oil on canvas; 26x46 in.; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives. See page 134 for color plate

landscape impressed and delighted the viewer. (Fig. 3)

Huntington's first impression of Lake Mohonk, however, had been more classically sublime. In the mid-1830s Huntington had studied art under Samuel F.B. Morse, at that time president of the National Academy of Design. Although the studio work was mostly in portraiture, Huntington began to try his hand at landscape painting, when, as he recalled, "Professor Morse looked over my sketch and said, 'That won't do... you should go out of doors, and sketch from nature.'" Huntington noted that he spent a good bit of his time then "in the close study of Nature."²⁸

On an 1837 trip out of New York City, the twenty-year-old artist traveled up the Delaware & Hudson Canal and stopped overnight in Alligerville. From there he and a companion hiked up to see "the pond up at the high point." It was a sublime experience, as Huntington described the terror and sense of awe he felt at the time: "It was a dark day and the lake looked like a deep dark lake, and we were almost terrified by the grandness of the scenery."²⁹ In this passage, Huntington reflected Cole's emotional response to the sublime as presented in the "Essay on American Scenery":

Shut in by stupendous mountains which rest on crags that tower more than a thousand feet above the water, whose rugged brows and shadowy breaks are clothed by dark and tangled woods, they have such an aspect of deep seclusion, of utter and unbroken solitude that, when standing on their brink a lonely traveler, I was over-whelmed by an emotion of the sublime, such as I have rarely felt.³⁰

In 1899, six decades after his first visit, Huntington captured his sense of awe of the Shawangunk topography around Lake Mohonk in the brooding sublimity of *Crag and Valley* (Fig. 4), with blasted trees in the left foreground and a distant view past the wild cliff of a watercourse, reminiscent of Cole's *Sunny Morning on the Hudson* (1826).



Fig. 4. Daniel Huntington, *Crag and Valley*, c. 1899; oil on canvas; 29 x 36; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives

Scenes “impressive” in the Shawangunks

The deep, dark lakes and brilliant white sheer cliffs of the Shawangunks offered many impressive views for artists who sought a sublime effect. As art historians Kevin Avery and Franklin Kelly note: “For many artists and travelers, the scenery in the vicinity of the lake [Mohonk], with ‘enormous masses of granite,’ intricate thickets of ‘laurel and evergreen trees,’ and ‘magnificent views of the Wallkill and Hudson River valleys on the east and the Warwarsing (*sic*) valley and the Catskills on the west,’ surpassed even that of the famous Catskill Mountain House farther to the north.”³¹

Among the early artists of the Hudson River School to seek sublime views in the Catskills and the Gunks was Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823-1880). Gifford grew up in Hudson, just across the river from the village of Catskill and the home and studio of Thomas Cole.³² In a memorial upon Gifford’s death in 1880, fellow Hudson River School artist Worthington Whittredge (1820-1910) called attention to his love of the Catskills through his visits and work: “As an artist he was born in the Catskill Mountains. He loved them as he loved his mother, and he could not long stay away from either. No autumn came that he did not visit them, and for a long period of his artist life he went in summer to the Catskills as a boy goes to school.” And, more poetically: “How often his feet have stood! The very lichens there remember him.”³³

Along with his close friends Jervis McEntee and Whittredge, Gifford made forays into the Shawangunks as well, and his sketches point toward impressive vistas

at Mohonk and Minnewaska.³⁴ Gifford made his first visits to the Gunks in the early 1850s, and he sketched there often in the following decades.³⁵ For example, his 1850 oil sketch *Shawangunk Mountains, Sept. 4, 1850* and his 1854 painting *Sunset in the Shawangunk Mountains*, paired with *Morning in the Adirondacks*, offered a window into his wilderness travels and search for the sublime.³⁶ He continued to sketch scenes of the “steep slopes and dangerous precipices” of the Trapps section of the Shawangunk ridge throughout the following two decades.³⁷ (Fig. 5) From these sketches, Gifford painted one of his panoramic paintings, *View of the Trapps, Shawangunk Mountains* (1864; Fig. 6) A decade later, Gifford sketched views of the Trapps and talus and a small vignette, (Fig. 7); it is almost a copy of his 1864 sketch (Fig. 5) that preceded the *View of the Trapps*, his panoramic masterwork.



Fig. 5. Sanford R. Gifford, *View of the Trapps, Shawangunk Mountains*, (verso and recto) continued on 2001.162.26, 1864; graphite on darkened off-white wove paper; 3 1/8 x 4 15/16 in. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Sanford Gifford, 2001.162.25. Photo: Imaging Department ©President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Less dramatic than his sketches of the Trapps is *Mist Rising at Sunset in the Catskills*, c. 1877. Although deemed a “striking study,” it is more picturesque, with the lake in shadows and a small boat and fisherman in the foreground.³⁸ The location of the sketch is “associated with Gifford’s trip to Lake Mohonk in the Shawangunk Mountains”; however, the Shawangunks are incorrectly described as “a range of the eastern Catskills,” and the mistake is repeated in the title.³⁹ Gifford was accompanied on the trip by fellow artists Worthington Whittredge, Jervis McEntee, and John White.

In 1846 Whittredge’s painting *View on the Kanawha [River], Morning* was exhibited at the National Academy of Design, where it received a letter of praise from Durand, then the academy’s president. Whittredge left to study in Europe two years later. He returned to America in 1859, and while in New York City visited the New-York Historical Society.⁴⁰ He reported on this visit in his *Autobiography*, written in 1905:

I took one day to visit the Historical Society, where I knew were reassured among many other valuable things ... Durand’s ‘Thanatopsis’. I may have been a little

nervous, I cannot say, but when I looked at Durand's truly American landscape, so delicate and refined, such a faithful if in some parts somber [sic] delineation of our own hills and valleys, I confess that tears came to my eyes.⁴¹

The title of Durand's painting (*Thanatopsis*) was after William Cullen Bryant's poem of the same name. Durand had quoted a stanza from Bryant's "Thanatopsis" in *The Crayon* that directed artists to "Go forth ... and list to Nature's teachings..." In



Fig. 6. Sanford R. Gifford, *View of the Trapps, Shawangunk Mountains*, 1864; oil on canvas. See page 135 for color plate



Fig. 7. Sanford Robinson Gifford, *View of Trapps, from Shawangunk Mountains, N.Y., Mt. Katadin and Lake Millinocket, Me.* sketchbook, 1873-1879. Pencil on paper, 4 1/2 x 8 1/2". Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Gift of Miss Edith Wilkinson, class of 1889, 1938.14.5.25

this stanza, Durand also referred his readers to the work of John Ruskin, whose writings promoted the direct studies of nature through on-site sketches and reading in botany and geology. As Whittredge would recall in his autobiography, “Bryant’s poems had always affected me deeply. Many of them breathed a spirit of our forests, lakes and rivers so peculiar to their primitive lonesomeness that they struck a note in my breast scarcely touched by any other of our poets.”⁴²

Upon his return from Europe, Whittredge turned to nature for inspiration and found it “in the recesses of the Catskills.” However, it was nature far different from the Old World’s “well-ordered forests, nothing but the primitive woods with their solemn silence reigning everywhere.”⁴³

In 1861 Whittredge visited Lake Mohonk along with Gifford, McEntee, and John White. Whittredge’s *Rocks and Pines* can be seen as documenting the Shawangunk ridge landscape, with its rocky ledges and towering hemlocks. (Fig. 8) The work is painted with careful attention to detail; cracks and crevices in the rock are indicated, as are the lichen that color its surfaces. Meanwhile, it is also a sublimely beautiful painting; one gathers an intense sense of the wild and love of nature.⁴⁴

Whittredge also painted more “impressive” scenes of the Trapps with views of Lake Mohonk. The paintings, both circa 1865 and previously misidentified by his biographer as being from his travels in the West, have also been mistakenly titled as “Mohawk” and “Fishing on the Mohawk,” perhaps because of a similarity in the spelling of the two names (Mohonk and Mohawk) and perhaps because the latter has an Indian teepee on the lake shore, although the fishermen in the boat on the lake are sportsmen, not Indians. However, the topographic features identify the scene as Lake Mohonk and were drawn on the trip with Gifford.⁴⁵

From the same trip, Whittredge painted *Twilight on the Shawangunk*, called “the masterpiece of his career” by his biographer.⁴⁶ (Fig. 9) It is a fully articulated composition in the manner of Frederic Church’s *Twilight in the Wilderness*, (1860)



Fig. 8. Worthington Whittredge, *Rocks and Pines*, c. 1861; oil on canvas; 26 5/8 x 19 1/2 inches; Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College



Fig. 9. Worthington Whittredge, *Twilight on the Shawangunk*, 1865; oil on canvas; Manoogian Collection

and Gifford's *Twilight on Hunter Mountain*, (1865-1866); both of the latter are considered classics of the genre, in that they both signaled changes to the national polity and social and natural landscape.

Numerous other antebellum artists followed these major figures by painting scenes in the Catskills and Shawangunks. For example, *View of the Shawangunke [sic] Mountains* (1865) by the German-born artist Johann Hermann Carmiencke (1810-1867)⁴⁷ is remarkably similar to works by both Gifford and Whittredge.

In the 1850s, landscape paintings by James and William Hart were shown at the National Academy of Design among those of the more famous artists of the Hudson River School.⁴⁸ According to a review in *The Crayon* of the National Academy's 1856 exhibition, paintings by both brothers were praised for their "pure love of nature."⁴⁹ William Hart (1823-1894) sketched throughout the Northeast, including the Hudson River Valley, White Mountains, and the Adirondacks. In the 1850s, Hart sketched along Esopus Creek in the Catskills, such as *Near the Esopus, Ulster Co.* in 1851 and 1856, and the finished oil painting *On the Esopus*,



Fig. 10. William Hart, *On the Shawangunk*, n.d.; pencil sketch on brown paper; 11 1/4 x 12 1/2 inches; Albany Institute of History and Art

Meadow Groves (c. 1857-58). The painting received a positive review in *The Crayon* when it was exhibited in 1858 at the National Academy of Design. The reviewer declared that the composition of a bucolic setting of cattle along a quiet stream “glows with light.”⁵⁰

Hart’s drawing *On the Shawangunk* (n.d.), depicting the cliffs and talus of the Trapps, is a more dramatic view. (Fig. 10) It may be of a later period than the Esopus sketch, as it is drawn with a finer pencil and detail. It more explicitly captures the impressive wild character of the ridge landscape.

Scenes “delightful” in the Shawangunks

The topography of the Catskills and Shawangunks offered artists a remarkable diversity of scenes, both “impressive” and “delightful.” The vertical ridge of the Gunks, with its sharp-angled and brilliant white coarse conglomerate, had aspects of the sublime, while many of the creeks and valleys, in both intimate scenes and panoramic vistas, presented more pastoral or beautiful perspectives.⁵¹

Asher B. Durand was initially a portrait painter and engraver who, in the 1830s, became an early admirer of Cole’s landscape paintings and followed his dictum to sketch the details of the natural landscape, both in the wild sublimity of its dense forests as well as in the intimacy of the forest’s nooks and crannies and along its tumbling brooks. “Durand advocated direct transcription of cultural phenomena in order to capture the inherent spiritual meaning of American places,” according to art historian Karen Lucic, who cites as an example *Where the Streamlet Sings in Rural Joy* (Fig. 11). “[D]espite the literary title” that reflects Bryant’s poetic influence, Lucic notes that “the painting captures the specificities of place with unconventional immediacy, the boulders forming a dense foreground, while the unmanicured pines arrest our view at the middleground.”⁵²

After Cole’s death in 1848, Durand assumed the mantle of the head of the group of landscape artists known as the Hudson River School by virtue of both his paintings and his editorship of *The Crayon*.⁵³ In an 1855 edition of the magazine, Durand published Cole’s declaration that “Untamed nature everywhere asserts her claim upon us, and . . . constitutes an essential part of our Art.”⁵⁴ Durand followed this statement with his own nationalist statement: “Go not abroad



Fig. 11. Asher B. Durand, *Where the Streamlet Sings in Rural Joy*, n.d.; oil on canvas; 24 1/8 x 18 1/4 inches; Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College



Fig. 12. Asher B. Durand,
Through the Woods, 1856
Oil on canvas; 20 1/4 x 15 1/2
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar
College, Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.I.25



Fig. 13. John F. Kensett,
The Mountain Stream, 1856;
oil on canvas; 13 3/4 x 9 1/2 (oval);
Albany Institute of History and Art

then in search of material for the exercise of your pencil, while virgin charms of our native land have claims upon your deepest affections.”⁵⁵

Durand and his fellow New York City artists sought out nature in the nearby forests and glens of the Catskills and Shawangunks, where they made sketches of the streams, rocks, trees, ferns, and other details of nature and brought them back to their studios on Tenth Street to include in oil paintings.⁵⁶ According to fellow artist and traveling companion Worthington Whittredge, Durand was the first of their group to use the “sketch box” in the field.⁵⁷ *Through the Woods* (Fig. 12) is an example of Durand’s sketching trips in the Shawangunks environs.

John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872), like Durand, was strongly influenced by Bryant’s poetry.⁵⁸ Like his mentor, he began as an engraver and became a renowned painter after his travels to Europe with Durand, John Casilear (1811-1893), and Thomas Rossiter (1818-1871).⁵⁹ Upon his return to America in 1848, Kensett immediately began a series of annual sketching trips in the Hudson Valley, including visits to the Adirondacks and Catskills. For example, his oil sketch *The Mountain Stream* (Fig. 13) is a quiet, intimate scene, similar to a Durand sketch⁶⁰, where “broken sunlight flits over a broad range of textures and colors in the rocks, water and trees, all depicted with a luxurious paint surface.”⁶¹ Kensett presented the painting to Erastus Dow Palmer, an Albany sculptor and friend of Frederic Church and other Hudson Valley artists.

Mohonk: Designing “scenes most impressive and delightful”

At Mohonk the Smileys integrated elements of a cultural landscape into the natural landscape, with a natural scientist’s concern for the site’s geology and ecology with sublime and picturesque aesthetic perspectives. As Arnold Guyot, professor of physical geography at Princeton University from 1854 until his death in 1884, wrote to his host after a visit in 1872, “Few spots on our continent unite so much beauty of scenery, both grand and lovely, within so small a compass, to be enjoyed with so much ease.”⁶²

In designing the landscape around Lake Mohonk and the Mohonk Mountain House, the Smileys created a landscape of domestic charm in the manner of Andrew Jackson Downing’s *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) and *Villas and Cottages* (1857) by Calvert Vaux.⁶³ Rustic summerhouses, or “gazebos,” were initially constructed out of American Chestnut, later of cedar, using Downing’s designs and sited on rocky, cliff-side prospects or along the shores of the lake as a place for walkers to rest and contemplate the view or for artists to frame and sketch the landscape.⁶⁴ Paths were laid out, some as an “easy walk for ladies,” as in McEntee’s *Woman Walking*. (Fig. 15)⁶⁵ For visitors who wanted to commune with nature more directly, other trails led to lichen-covered boulders and thick forests in gloomy glens where “immense” hemlocks towered over walkers or “picturesque” rocks made the passages mysterious and romantically delightful.⁶⁶ A tower, or “observatory,” was constructed atop the cliffs at Sky Top for panoramic views eastward toward the Hudson Valley and west to the Catskill Mountains.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, the porches (or verandas) of the Mohonk Mountain House offered views of the lake and cliffs as well as distant views of the Catskills, while specific sites were located along the trails with vegetation cut for extensive vistas of pastoral valleys and mountain wilderness.

Views were established with a painterly eye, as if composing a drawing, and using the language of the landscape artist, as in Frederic Edwin Church’s 1884 reflection on opening up views on Olana’s carriage roads: “I have made about 1 3/4 miles of roads this season, opening entirely new and beautiful views. I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the Studio.”⁶⁸ At Mohonk, as Alfred Smiley wrote to his brother Albert in 1872: “We have produced a very striking effect by opening a view from the road to the cliffs. A part of that stone-free, laurel-covered, pine-crowned hill or mound in foreground, large rocks in middle ground & high cliffs in background.”⁶⁹

Albert Smiley was especially interested in developing flower gardens around the main house, although they came with much effort and expense.⁷⁰ A lawn was arduously created in the English style, according to Downing’s theories and methods.⁷¹ The Smileys planted thousands of annuals and perennials, laid out garden paths, and built small benches and arbors. Engravings of the house and its immediately surrounding grounds show the lawn and various plantings. By the latter part of the nineteenth cen-

tury, a golfing green, horse-drawn carriages, women with parasols, and children playing are seen in illustrations of Mohonk.⁷² The hotel had domesticated the wilderness by bringing the Victorian parlor, with its own library of picture books, such as William Cullen Bryant's *Picturesque America* (1894), into the landscape itself.⁷³

The Smiley family adorned the actual parlor, library, and hallways of the Mohonk Mountain House with paintings by many of their guests. In 1871, during his tenure as president of the National Academy of Design, Daniel Huntington remarked on the landscape surrounding the hotel as "most impressive and delightful."⁷⁴ Huntington became a frequent visitor to the Mohonk Mountain House over the next several decades and, as a guest of owners Albert K. and Eliza P. Smiley, painted their portraits in 1891. (They continue to overlook the main parlor.) The Mohonk Mountain House owns several other paintings of Lake Mohonk and nearby cliffs and vegetation by or attributed to Huntington.

A few years after assisting his brother Albert to develop Mohonk, Alfred built two hotels overlooking Lake Minnewaska, just five miles south. New York State acquired Minnewaska in the 1980s, and while the hotels are no longer extant, its more rugged landscape, along with that of the well-managed Mohonk Mountain House and Mohonk Preserve, continue to offer scenes "most impressive and delightful."



Fig. 14. Jervis McEntee, *On Shawangunk Lake*, 1850; pencil on grey paper; 12 1/4 x 17 1/4 inches; Albany Institute of History and Art. Gift of Mr. Stuart P. Feld, 1948.51.1

Painting at Mohonk

Hudson River School artist Jervis McEntee (1828-1891) was a frequent visitor to Mohonk Mountain House. McEntee was a native son of the Hudson Valley with a home and studio in Rondout, just a few miles north of New Paltz, close to Saugerties and Kingston on the banks of the Hudson River. As a young man he often walked into the nearby Catskills and developed a strong emotional attachment to the region. According to Worthington Whittredge, his frequent traveling companion, McEntee “knew every nook and corner of [the Catskills] and every stepping-stone across their brooks.”⁷⁵

McEntee’s 1850 pencil sketch *On Shawangunk Lake*, with the steep vertical cliffs and talus on the lakeshore, indicates his early walks on the ridge and visits to the sky lakes of Mohonk and Minnewaska. (Fig. 14) The title of

the sketch and its “composition reveals McEntee’s sustained interest in the Shawangunk Mountains.”⁷⁶ McEntee returned to his studio to paint from his sketches; for example, fifteen years later he produced an oil painting from this 1850 sketch. Another lake scene came from his 1861 expedition with Gifford and Whittredge. Titled *Mist Rising near New Paltz*, it is sketched in oil *en plein air* at one of the Gunks’ five sky lakes.⁷⁷

A more intimate scene is an 1865 sketch of a woman walking along a trail with the cliff or talus on the right. (Fig. 15) This perspective strongly suggests that it is from one of the lake-sketching expeditions, as it depicts a familiar trail at Lake Mohonk.

In 1850 and 1851, McEntee went to New York City to study with Church; in 1858, he opened a studio there in the Tenth Street Studio Building. Over the next twenty years, until his wife’s death in 1878, he lived and worked in the city, returning to his home in Rondout during the spring and summer months, often guiding fellow artists to local scenes.⁷⁸

McEntee wrote a daily diary that mentioned his trips into the Catskills and Shawangunks as well as his efforts at selling his artwork.⁷⁹ For example, in a diary entry of August 20, 1877, he recalls his 1861 trip to Lake Mohonk. By 1877, the Smiley family had opened the Mohonk Mountain House, so his trips to Lake Mohonk became



Fig. 15. Jervis McEntee, *Woman Walking*, 1865; pencil and white chalk; 10 1/4 x 6 7/8 inches; from sketchbook titled “Drawings” 1996.25.3.25; Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

more frequent. For example, on August 28, 1878, he wrote:

We returned from a *most delightful* excursion to lakes Minnewaska and Mohonk last evening [emphasis added]....The ride of ten to 12 miles up a long and gradual ascent up the Coxon [sic] Valley. The lake resembles Mohonk in its general features but is about 3 times its area and 500 feet higher..I was at this lake many years ago with Gifford, Whittredge & Jno [sic] White...as John and Gertrude had never been to Mohonk since the house was built we decided to drive up there. Had dinner and remained until nearly 5 when we drove home via Rosendale and Creek Locks. The Smillies [sic] the proprietors were very polite. Knew me by reputation and had a long talk with me on their ideas of the places which seemed to me excellent. They are cultivated men and the house is quiet, pleasant and apparently well constructed. They introduced me to a Mr. Shipley of Philadelphia a picture man who also knew me through my pictures.⁸⁰

The following year, McEntee took his family to visit Lake Minnewaska to see Alfred Smiley's recently opened hotel and then continued over to Mohonk. On July 29, 1879, he also noted meeting his fellow artist and friend Daniel Huntington at the Mohonk Mountain House:

On Monday 27th my father, mother, Mary and I started for lake Minnewaska passing through High Falls where we stopped for a few minutes. We ate our lunch on the road through the clove and reached the house about 4. Mr. Smillie recognized me and was very polite. His house was full and he told he had to refuse applications. I took Mary a row on the lake just where I took dear Gertrude almost a year ago. ... We staid overnight and Tuesday (28th) morning drove over to Mohonk by the road 7 miles. Staid there at dinner and drove home at 4. Met Mr. Huntington and his wife there and Mrs. Davis.⁸¹

In an 1880 diary entry, McEntee mentions meeting Julia Vaux, daughter of Calvert Vaux. (Vaux was McEntee's brother-in-law.) Along with Frederick Law Olmsted, Vaux brought nature into America's cities by developing urban parks. McEntee's diary entry:

Wednesday, June 30, 1880, Drove up to Lake Mohonk via Lucas' turnpike and Coxon bridge. A very comfortable breezy day, very dusty but the wind blew it from us. Gertrude and Marion went along. Arrived there at 11:30 and found Julia Vaux at once who was spending a fortnight there with Mrs. Mendelson and her daughter. Staid there to dine... Mr. Smillie was very polite and took me to his private apartments and introduced me to his wife. He has built a large addition since last year. We left at three o'clock.⁸²

McEntee became noted for his paintings of local forests in their autumnal colors. Like his friend Whittredge, he was inspired by Bryant's poetry. As McEntee commented: "The days and the seasons in their gay or solemn beauty, in their swift departure, influence you, impress you, awaken emotions, convey teachings . . . I look upon a landscape as I look upon a human being—its thoughts, its feelings, its moods, are what interest me: and to these I try to give expression."⁸³

Joseph Tubby (1821-1896) also was from Rondout.⁸⁴ In the summer and autumn, he and McEntee often walked into the nearby Catskills from their homes there; during the winter they shared studio space in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York



Fig. 16. Joseph Tubby, *Sunset at Lake Mohonk*, 1883; oil on canvas; 18 x 30 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives. See page 136 for color plate

City. In 1883 Tubby painted two scenes at Lake Mohonk. He exhibited *From Cosby Seat: Lake Mohonk* at the Pennsylvania Academy that year. *Sunset at Lake Mohonk*, on view at the Mohonk Mountain House, is a luminescent view of the lake with Tower Cliff and Eagle Cliff bracketing the scene. (Fig. 16) Autumnal foliage deepens the colors of the clouds reflecting the sunset's brilliant glow. Towering pines add a bit of dark green to the shadows of the day's last rays. Tubby's painting of the Rondout Valley (Fig. 17) positions his regional interest in the "delightful" landscapes of the Shawangunks region.

James Reid Lambdin (1807-1889) also rented space in the Tenth Street Studio Building. Primarily a portraitist with his main residence in Philadelphia,⁸⁵ Lambdin was a frequent visitor to the Mohonk Mountain House, a registered guest in 1873, 1881, and 1883. Lambdin often sketched the lake and Sky Top from a viewpoint in a narrow ravine overlooking the lake just a short distance from the hotel. The Smileys named it in Lambdin's honor and referred to the path to the glen in an 1875 guidebook. Among many other sketches of the hotel grounds, Huntington drew *Mohonk Pines near Lambdin's Grotto* during the summer of 1879.⁸⁶ (Fig. 18)

Lambdin's 1881 *Shawangunk Mountains, from Artist's Rock, Eagle Cliff, Lake Mohonk, Ulster County, New York* is a view remarkably similar to those by Gifford, Whittredge, and Carmiencke. All offer "a genuine image of specific mountains in the Shawangunk range."⁸⁷ In *Lake View with a Summerhouse, Lake Mohonk* (1880), Lambdin suggests a more picturesque view of the lake and grounds.

John Williamson (1826-1885) painted mountain scenery throughout the Adirondack and Catskill mountains of New York and the Berkshire, White, and Green mountains of New England.⁸⁸ In *Lake Mohonk*, (c. 1860; Fig. 19) Williamson presents a complex



Fig. 17. Joseph Tubby, *In the Rondout Valley*, 1875; oil on canvas; 20 x 30 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives



Fig. 18. Daniel Huntington, *Mohonk Pines Near Lambdin's Grotto*, Aug. 21, 1879; pencil on paper; 9 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives

combination of the sublime and picturesque image of the lake and environs in the manner of and from a similar vantage point as Thomas Cole (Fig. 1) fifteen years earlier. Williamson offers a more tranquil landscape with trees and shrubs on the cliffs and a lake and sky painted a light blue.

Nelson Augustus Moore (1824-1902), known for his paintings of Lake George from 1863 to 1888, became a frequent visitor to Lake Mohonk and the Mohonk Mountain House from 1888 to his death in 1902, making it “his regular spot after 1895.”⁸⁹ His painting of the lake with a woman in a canoe, mountain house, gazebos, and Sky Top’s conical tower painted in 1894 (Fig. 20), and his 1896 painting of the mountain house with its two towers of the Grove and Central buildings and the lake with canoes and a swimming area, depict a domesticated scene every bit as



Fig. 19. John Maynard Williamson, *Lake Mohonk*, c. 1860;
oil on canvas; 14 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives.
See page 135 for color plate



Fig. 20. Nelson Augustus Moore, *Lake Mohonk*, 1894;
oil on canvas; 14 x 24 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives.



Fig. 21. Nelson Augustus Moore, *Rock Fall and Carriage Road*, 1897;
oil on canvas; 12 x 20 inches; courtesy of Mohonk Mountain House Archives.
See page 136 for color plate



Fig. 22. Nelson Augustus Moore, *Lake Shore Bridge*, 1897;
oil on canvas; 10 x 17 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives

“delightful” as Huntington opined two decades earlier.

Moore’s paintings of the carriage roads and trails at Mohonk and Minnewaska, such as *Rock Fall and Carriage Road* (1897; Fig. 21) and *Lake Shore Bridge* (1897; Fig. 22), indicate Moore’s attachment to the Mohonk and Minnewaska landscapes. The carriage roads with mountain laurel in full bloom offer pleasant walks in a picturesque setting.

Conclusion: A Shawangunk Legacy

Cole's recommendation to Durand in 1838 to "get among the Gunks," where the artist might "find everything there your heart can wish," was followed by numerous artists of the Hudson River School. Decades after Cole's visit to Lake Mohonk, the Mohonk Mountain House offered accommodations for artists such as McEntee and Huntington, who would sketch and paint scenes "most impressive and delightful." Lakes Mohonk and Minnewaska and the Shawangunk ridge, the Trapps, Bonticou Crag, and Millbrook Mountain remain as specific places "of which," as Huntington enthused, "the artist and lover of nature can never be weary." Durand advised artists to paint nature by following the precepts of John Ruskin—to study geology and botany and depict its *genius loci*. Their paintings and drawings of the Shawangunks are not to be classified within the Catskills, with its separate geology, ecology, and watercourses, but should be understood in the context of the Gunks' own sense of place.

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Endnotes

1. Huth 1957; Nash [1967] 2001
2. Miller 1993; Daniels 1993; Olwig 2002; Cusack 2010
3. Metropolitan Museum of Art 1987
4. Evers 1972; Blackmar 1979
5. Huntington 1871; Buff 1982, 3
6. Willis 1840
7. Cole 1836
8. Robinson 1993, 58; Ferber 2009, 52-3
9. Snyder 1981; Fagan 1996
10. Evers 1972; Flad 2000; Schuyler 2005
11. Van Zandt 1966; Myers 1988; Ferber 2009, 87-97
12. Stradling 2007
13. Cromley 1979
14. Blackmar and Cromley 1982, 52
15. Huntington 1871
16. Ferber 2007b, 159-61
17. Avery and Kelly 2003, 164-5
18. Burgess 1980

19. Partington [1911] 1970; Smiley & LaBudde 2000
20. Flad 2009, 364
21. Smiley Archives
22. Kiviat 1991
23. See, for example, illustrations in Fagan 1996
24. Cole 1838, quoted in Buff 1982, 3 from archives of American Art, roll ALC-1, unnumbered; see also Josephson 1993, 1
25. Tuckerman [1867] 1966
26. Ferber 2007, 161, 171; Ferber, ed. 2007, appendix
27. Huntington 1871, emphasis added
28. Huntington 1899, 14-15
29. Huntington 1899, 17
30. Cole 1835, quoted by Huntington 1899
31. Avery and Kelley 2003, 164
32. Avery 2005
33. Whittredge [1942] 1969, 14
34. Wilton and Barringer 2002, 163; Avery and Kelley 2003, 164-66
35. Avery and Kelley 2003, 164 note: "Gifford's first visit to the environs of Lake Mohonk on the Shawangunk Mountains must have been in the early 1850s because his *Sunset in the Shawangunk Mountains* [1854] depicts a scene in that immediate locale. An 1861 trip resulted in at least two studies of the same view southwest from the vicinity of Eagle Cliff toward the escarpments known as the Trapps and Near Trapps." Their description of the Shawangunks reflects the search for the sublime: "The Shawangunks are situated in New York State, and although they are not as famous as the Catskills, they include some of the most dramatically rugged scenery in the entire region. The mountains are wild and rocky, with steep slopes and dangerous precipices formed of raised beds of hard pink and white sandstone."
36. The 1850 panorama is illustrated in Cragmoor, p. 27; the dramatic 1854 view of the Trapps is Fig. 9 in Avery and Kelly 2003, p. 10
37. Quotation from Avery and Kelley's description of the Shawangunk Mountains, Avery and Kelley 2003, 164 (see footnote 35 above)
38. Wilton and Barringer 2002, 163, plate 42
39. Wilton and Barringer, 163
40. Bauer [1942] 1969; Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute 1969
41. Whittredge [1942] 1969, 40-41
42. Whittredge [1942] 1969 41
43. Whittredge [1942] 1969, 42
44. Cibulka 1982, 16, although she places the painting "in the Catskills"
45. Locations and titles of paintings are mislabeled in Janson 1989, 92
46. Janson 1989, 94
47. A short biographical note and illustration of Carmiencke's "Catskill Clove, 1863" is found in Driscoll 1981, 50-1
48. Both James and William had homes and studios in Albany; paintings by both brothers are found in Driscoll 1981 and O'Toole 2005.
49. *The Crayon* 1856, 118, 145
50. *The Crayon* 1856, 147
51. Cragmoor Free Library 1982
52. Lucic 2000, 36
53. Ferber 2007
54. Durand 1855
55. Durand 1855, quoted in Koenig 1991, 47 and Lucic 2000, 48

56. Harvey 1998
57. Whittredge [1942] 1969, 59; for examples of sketching *en plein air* see Harvey 1998 and Allen 1998
58. Driscoll 1978, 78
59. Foshay and Mills 1963, 69
60. Hathorn 1967, 17; see also Wallach 2011, 134-9
61. Howat 1968, 24
62. Guyot 1872, 1
63. R.H. Smiley [1977] 2004, 4; see Downing [1850] 1960 and Vaux [1864 2nd ed.] 1970; see also Tatum and MacDougall 1989
64. Matteson and LaChance 1998b, 2; see also Flad 2009, 364-70; use of chestnut and cedar for construction from email correspondence with Paul Huth, August 13, 2014.
65. A.H. Smiley 1871a; Guyot 1872, 2
66. A.H. Smiley 1871a
67. Matteson and LaChance 1998a
68. Church 1884; Ryan 1989, 147
69. A.H. Smiley 1872b
70. Partington [1911] 1970, 39-42
71. R.H. Smiley [1977] 2004, 4
72. For illustration of cover of 1893 brochure, see Fig. 4, Flad 2009, 368
73. Bryant 1894; see also Sweeting 1996, 97-8
74. Huntington 1871
75. Whittredge [1942] 1969, 62
76. Allen 1998, 12
77. Harvey 1998, 215 correctly identifies this painting as being in the Shawangunks, whereas Wilton and Barringer incorrectly describe the Shawangunk ridge as “a range of the eastern Catskills” when locating Gifford’s similar sketch from the same trip (Wilton and Barringer 2002, 163).
78. Whittredge [1942] 1969, 60
79. Schuyler 2011; Schuyler 2012, 110-132
80. McEntee 1850-1905
81. McEntee 1850-1905
82. McEntee 1850-1905
83. Sheldon [1881] 1972, 52
84. Levy 2008; Groce and Wallace 1957, 638
85. Weidner 2002; Groce and Wallace 1957, 382
86. Cragmoor Free Library 1982
87. Weidner 2002
88. Driscoll 1981, 120a
89. Fletcher 1994, 81

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Black Birches, Catskill Mountains,
Asher B. Durand, 1860. Collection of the
New-York Historical Society, 1932.30



Tree Study, Catskill Clove, N.Y., Thomas
Hiram Hotchkiss, 1858. Collection of
the New-York Historical Society, 1932.37



Niagara Falls, Louisa Davis Minot, 1818.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1956.4



Sunset, View on the Catskill, Thomas Cole, 1833.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1858.44



View of Hudson River from Tarrytown Heights, Robert Havell, ca. 1842.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1946.179



Thomas Cole, *The Falls of Kaaterskill*, 1826



Thomas Cole, *River in the Catskills*, 1843.

M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Paintings. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



The Course of Empire: The Pastoral or Arcadian State, Thomas Cole, 1834.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.2



The Course of Empire: The Consummation of Empire, Thomas Cole, 1835-36. Collection of the New York Historical Society: 1858.3



The Course of Empire: Destruction, Thomas Cole, 1836.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.4



The Course of Empire: Desolation, Thomas Cole, 1836.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society: 1858.5



View of the Highlands from West Point, John Ferguson Weir, 1862,
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, The Robert L. Stuart Collection,
on permanent loan from the New York Public Library, S-224



George Inness, *Sunnyside*, 1850-1860, oil on canvas. SS.79.34.
Historic Hudson Valley, Pocantico Hills, NY



Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Evening at Paestum*, 1856
Oil on panel, 9 1/2 x 15 1/2. Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College,
Gift of Matthew Vassar, 1864.I.21



Frederic E. Church, *The Heart of the Andes*, 1859,
oil on canvas, 66 1/8 x 119 1/4 inches.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Margaret E. Dows, 1909 (09.95)



Cayambe, Frederic E. Church, 1858. Oil on canvas, 30 x 48 in.
Collection of the New-York Historical Society, The Robert L. Stuart Collection,
on permanent loan from the New York Public Library, S-91



Thomas Cole, *Il Penseroso*, 1845, oil on canvas, 32 3/8 x 48 1/16 inches.
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art



Left: George Peter Alexander Healy, *Euphemia White Van Rensselaer*, 1842, oil on canvas, 45 3/4 x 35 1/4 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

Below: Frederic Edwin Church, *The Hudson Valley in Winter from Olana*, c. 1866-72, oil on academy board, 11 3/4 x 18 1/4 inches, OL.1980.36. Collection Olana State Historic Site



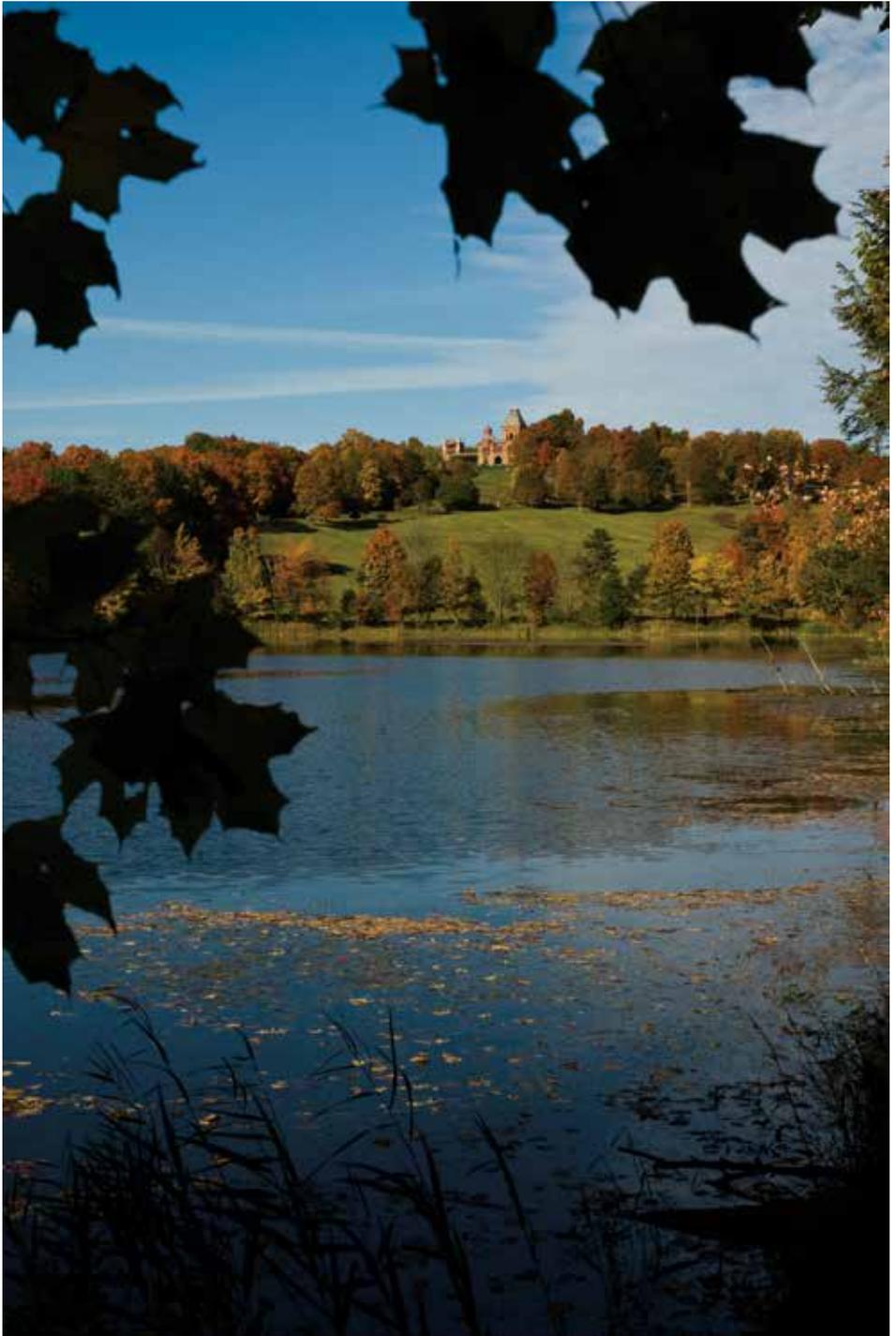
Len Jenschel, *View South through the Ombra at Olana*, 1988.
Photograph © Diane Cook and Len Jenschel



Frederic Edwin Church, *Clouds over Olana*, August 1872,
oil on off-white paper, 8 11/16 x 12 1/8 in., OL.1976.1.
Collection Olana State Historic Site



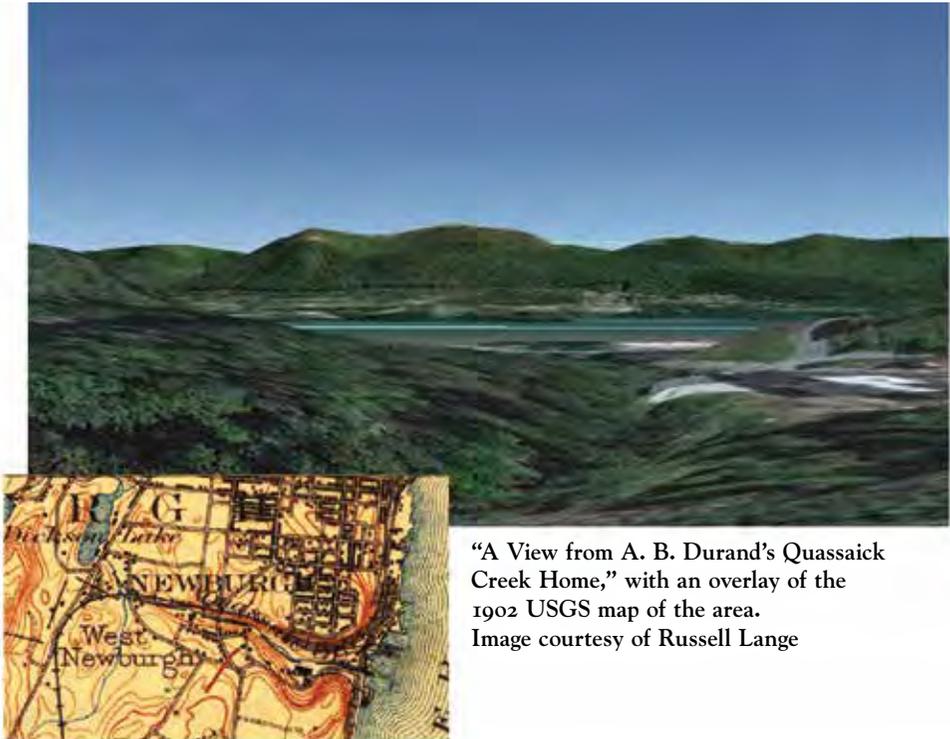
Frederic Joseph Church, *Plan of Olana*, September 1886,
ink and watercolor on paper, 22 1/8 x 36 1/4 in., OL. 1984.39.
Collection Olana State Historic Site



Nicholas Whitman, *View of the House from across the Lake, Olana*, 2008. Photograph



Beacon Hills on the Hudson River, Opposite Newburgh—Painted on the Spot,
Asher B. Durand, ca. 1852. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, 1907.11



"A View from A. B. Durand's Quassaick
Creek Home," with an overlay of the
1902 USGS map of the area.
Image courtesy of Russell Lange



Asher B. Durand, *A Summer Afternoon*, 1849,
oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 42 1/4 inches, David and Laura Grey Collection, New York



Postcard view of the Vale of Avoca. Collection of Russell Lange



Thomas Cole (1801-1848), *Lake Mohonk*, c. 1846;
oil on canvas, 20 1/4 x 30 1/8 inches; Frank M. Gren Collection, Annapolis, Maryland,
Image courtesy of Questroyal Fine Art, LLC



Daniel Huntington, *Lake Mohonk*, c. 1872;
oil on canvas; 26 x 46 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives



Sanford R. Gifford, *View of the Trapps, Shawangunk Mountains*, 1864;
oil on canvas



John Maynard Williamson, *Lake Mohonk*, c. 1860;
oil on canvas; 14 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches; courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives



Joseph Tubby, *Sunset at Lake Mohonk*, 1883; oil on canvas; 18 x 30 inches;
courtesy Mohonk Mountain House Archives



Nelson Augustus Moore, *Rock Fall and Carriage Road*, 1897;
oil on canvas; 12 x 20 inches; courtesy of Mohonk Mountain House Archives

Regional History Forum

Each issue of The Hudson River Valley Review includes the Regional History Forum. This section highlights historic sites in the Valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention is paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR also highlights sites of regional significance.



The studio and house behind, seen from the driveway. Image courtesy of the author

Russel Wright's Manitoga

Russel Wright was an artist, craftsman, naturalist, and writer. However, he is best known for being one of America's most successful industrial designers, with a career spanning from the 1930s through the 1960s. He created one of the first designer brand names by using his signature in all advertisements and applying it to most of his products. He fully embraced the American traditions of simplicity and practicality, and lived by the notion that "good design is for everyone." He was adventurous, innovative, and patient, and he loved to experiment with new materials, technology, and ideas.

Wright designed many furniture and dinnerware lines, and even published a book, *Guide to Easier Living*. However, the Hudson River Valley is home to his grandest legacy: his house and studio and their surrounding landscape. In 1942, Russel and Mary Wright purchased an overgrown quarry on a hill above the Hudson River in Garrison, Putnam County. He named it Manitoga. Wright worked on Manitoga's seventy-five-acre landscape for fifteen years prior to commencing construction of the house. Today open to



Studio Sitting Area. Photo courtesy of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center

the public, the buildings and grounds at Manitoga pay tribute to Wright's significant contribution to American modernism.

Russel Wright was born in Lebanon, Ohio, on 3 April, 1904, and died in 1976. He attended the Cincinnati School of Arts and later studied law at Princeton. He eventually travelled to New York City to apprentice with Norman Bel Geddes—an influential industrial and theatrical designer—and attend the Art Students League. There he met his future wife, Mary Small Einstein, a sculpture student. Though her wealthy family initially was unsupportive of the marriage, the couple proceeded with their wedding plans, marrying in 1927. Mary and Russel Wright began to work together—Wright the designer, Mary his business manager and publicist. Mary convinced her husband to design and build theater props and decorations he could sell. Through this experience, he began to experiment with new materials such as aluminum and chromium-plated sheet metal.

Wright met with such early success in his career, quickly becoming recognized and well off, that he decided to experiment with functional objects. Once again it was Mary who convinced him to transfer his energies elsewhere. She managed to sway him toward the world of industrial design. Wright's colleagues often said that Wright viewed the world as a stage to experiment with, and this was very evident throughout his new designs. In 1929, the couple moved from Rochester, New York, to New York City, where Wright commenced his career in industrial design in earnest.

The housewares he designed and marketed were perfect for the informal American taste—especially after the Great Depression. He employed new materials, such as plastic and spun aluminum, that were durable, convenient, and affordable.

Wright introduced his first line of dinnerware, called American Modern, in 1939. Most china at this time, made of porcelain, had a translucent and glass-like appearance. Wright opted to use stoneware or earthenware, giving his dinnerware a less formal look. American Modern sold extremely well, remaining popular through the mid-1950s. Its success encouraged Wright to create another line, American Way, for Macy's in 1940. Despite the showcase the department store provided, the line soon became a disappointment to Wright; issues over quality control and coordinating deliveries eventually forced him to terminate production.

In 1948, Wright created a new line called Casual China. Produced by the Iroquois China Company, it was intended primarily for hotel and restaurant use. After this, Wright created another line, Highlight Dinnerware. At the same time, he designed and introduced several furniture lines. Whatever the product, Wright was committed to the themes of simple and practical living, and the notion that good design should be accessible to all.

In 1950, the Wrights co-wrote a book, *Guide to Easier Living*, in which they emphasized the importance of comfort and ease as opposed to “gracious living.” The Wrights’ belief that “formality is not necessary for beauty” resonated throughout the book, in all of their industrial designs, and at Manitoga. They embraced an informal lifestyle, writing: “Good informal living substitutes a little headwork for a lot of legwork. It doesn’t need wealth, but it does take thought, some integrity and resourcefulness, and more than a little loving care to create a home that is really your own.” This is exactly what they achieved at Manitoga.

Following Mary’s death in 1952, Wright became more isolated, retreating to the land in Garrison with his daughter Annie. Although Wright still did some design work, he was no longer as active. As the years passed, the construction of Manitoga rose higher on his list of priorities. From the late 1960s on, he focused entirely on the house and grounds.

Manitoga is taken from Algonquin words meaning “place of great spirit.” Wright described the land as a “nondescript piece of woods on the side of a hill where similar woods stretched for 15 miles.” He built Manitoga from the ground up, utilizing as many natural elements as possible—even the abandoned quarry, which he incorporated into his gardens and surrounded with woodland paths. Wright’s personality and theater background are evident throughout this major project, as are his love of experimentation, nature, and his passion for Asian design. As much as he believed in embracing the nature of the land, he also embraced the site’s human history, especially the former quarry. Some areas of Manitoga he shaped and “edited” to create rooms in the landscape to maintain a particular effect; other parts he left natural and self-sustaining. His intent was to shape the human experience. He wanted to create a shelter where



Stairs from Entrance to Den-Mezzanine to Kitchen. Photo by Carol Franklin, courtesy of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center

he could live comfortably and still enjoy the beauty of the land, as well as infuse his lifestyle with nature. As such, Manitoga represents the perfect integration of lifestyle and environment.

The house and grounds have quite a strong Japanese influence, which can be traced to several sources. Wright's interest in Asian design may have begun when he was asked by the U.S. State Department's International Corporation Administration to survey Southeast Asian handicraft industries and recommend strategies for effective American aid. He enjoyed this trip so much that he

wound up making a second visit to Japan. For Manitoga he borrowed many ideas and concepts from Japanese garden traditions and Asian aesthetics. He also was intrigued by the unity of the Japanese house and its natural setting. Focusing on the aesthetic aspects of continuity and contrast (yin and yang), he juxtaposed—modern furniture, high-tech plastics, natural materials, and Asian design—to highlight the qualities of each object and evoke as many senses as possible. The same aesthetic informed the design of Manitoga's woodland paths.

Wright planned out every single detail of the site—he determined where each boulder should be placed, where trees must be thinned and certain plants added. The natural beauty surrounding the house and studio is breathtaking, and although it looks entirely natural, Wright was responsible for its beauty. He used the pre-existing elements and shaped and molded them to enhance the land's dramatic qualities, always drawing upon his theater background. In effect, Manitoga was his stage.

Dragon Rock is the name Annie gave their home and Wright's studio. The studio's interior, while simple and minimal, was very well thought out. In addition to his long, sleek, white desk, it contains a bed and couches that look out onto the woodland gardens. This studio has a very pleasant, yet isolated ambiance. It is uniquely situated within the ground. One's curious eyes are immediately drawn to what is visible: the structure's green roof.

Landscape designer and theorist Ian McHarg called Manitoga a "Temple to Ecological Design." McHarg's theory encompassed the understanding of complex inter-relationships between natural systems and humans. Landscape architect Carol Levy Franklin, who was Wright's cousin, called Manitoga "an ecological garden on

a grand scale.” Manitoga seems to be a precursor of McHarg’s theory: The house, studio, and garden are integrated to achieve a complex relationship between humans and natural systems. Wright genuinely had to consider the relationship between culture and nature, as well as maintain it, through the integration of his house, studio, and garden. Wright’s methods may not have been intentionally ecological, nor were they scientifically based. However, at Manitoga he was clearly an early advocate for environmental education and implementation. Franklin describes it as “a living laboratory demonstrating a sophisticated expertise with the management of natural systems. This management has had two goals: To return the landscape to a diverse, healthy, self-sustaining system, and to create dramatic and complex aesthetic effects”—both of which are true to Wright’s ideals and interests.



Kitchen. Photo by Louis Reems, courtesy of Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center

In 1975, Wright deeded the property to The Nature Conservatory, which opened the trails to the public. Following Wright’s death in 1976, his daughter Annie inherited tenancy rights to the house. In 1984, the non-profit Manitoga, Inc. assumed ownership of the property and studio, and in 2001 it acquired ownership of the house. Five years later Manitoga was designated a National Historic Landmark.

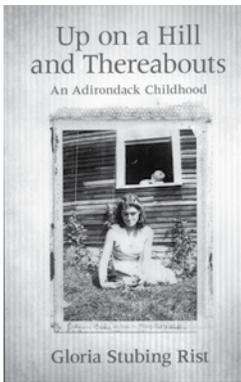
Manitoga was Wright’s most ambitious and treasured project. Its unique concept and design allow the visitor to experience his personality, passion, and persistence. Wright himself said it best:

This place has been here forever, will be here forever. Oh it’s gradually changing, yet it is eternal. It is a very moving thing to be walking through something so much greater than me.

Manitoga/The Russel Wright Design Center is located at 584 Route 9D in Garrison. Ninety-minute tours of Wright’s home, studio, and woodland gardens are available Friday through Monday from May to early November. The cost for general admission is \$20; seniors/students/National Trust members \$15; children under age 12 \$10. Manitoga also offers internships, a Summer Nature & Design Camp program, and an Artist Residency Program. For more information, visit www.russelwrightdesigncenter.org or call 845-424-3812.

Laila Shawwa, Marist ’15

Book Reviews



Up on a Hill and Thereabouts: An Adirondack Childhood. By Gloria Stubing Rist. Albany: SUNY Press, Excelsior Editions, 2013. (344 pp.)

Everyone should want Gloria Stubing Rist as her grandmother. Because at night, when you asked, “Tell me a story,” there would be one: touching, raucous, mischievous, and often very funny. And there would be a new one every night—ninety-two short chapters make up this book. Within each chapter live hobos and gypsies, drunks and “crazy” women, sweet boys and prostitutes. Reading *Up on a Hill and Thereabouts* is to be in the presence of a wonderful storyteller, one who doesn’t analyze or make meaning of her rich material: She just tells the stories of life in the Adirondacks in the 1930s.

At age five, Gloria’s mother Mary (Mim) pulls a gun on her husband and takes Gloria (nicknamed Yada) and her brother Harland (nicknamed Bubby) from their home in the Bronx to the town of Chilson in the Adirondacks. This is where Mim grew up. There, in the rugged wilderness with winter coming on, things are dire: Mim has no money, no food, nobody to help, and two little kids, aged five and three. That relief is available through the New Deal is not an option: “What a horrible thing that would have been—pride would not allow it.” If you can’t take care of yourself, tough luck.

Mim soon finds a boyfriend, Cowboy, who helps out as he drifts in and out of their lives for a few years. And she finds a way to make money: homebrewing. She is a loose-handed parent, repeating, “Yada, what am I going to do with you?” when Gloria gets into mischief. It is easy getting into trouble with a mother who is often absent for days at a time: “At that time, Mim decided to go on one of her disappearances again, I don’t know to where” (239). The reader wonders as well, but the older narrator doesn’t try and fill in that gap, or many others. These tales are told largely from the perspective of the child, who learns about drunks and homelessness, tuberculosis and the clap. An adult understanding would have made this a memoir, which it is not. *Up on a Hill* reads more like an oral history, one that creates a portrait of life in the North Country during the Depression. It’s a portrait of a rugged life, marked by poverty. There is no self-pity in that poverty, as Stubing plays up the fun, the good, the treasures; her life is filled with high jinx and freedom.

The world we are taken into is beautiful and hard. Beautiful for taking us to a place where kids used their imaginations to invent games like “stick can” (played on the ice) and where a sense of humor is essential. Beautiful for the connections made. A black man (the first Gloria has ever met) arrives in Chilson to work as a lumberjack. He is

gentle and attentive, and introduces her to Poe's "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee." He also saves her from her drunken stepfather, Robert Ford. Then there's the starving, fourteen-year-old orphan, Buck, who flees his abusive foster family and comes to work in the pulp mill one summer (he's the one who gets the clap after one night in town), and stays with them for the next few years as an older-brother figure.

But it's not all open doors and love: Food is too scarce (one meal consists of skunk), tempers too quick, and the men often drunk. The drinking is a fact, like the sex that happens up on the hill; there is no judgment here, no moralizing. In one chapter, bums buy "canned heat," which they light and burn until the contents liquefy. They then strain it through a handkerchief and drink the dark red liquid. That's drunk.

The nearest doctors are in Ticonderoga. And so Stubing learns to accept loss at a young age—her first crush to tuberculosis, a friend to leukemia, another to appendicitis (the parents didn't believe in surgery), a neighbor to cancer, and then a long list of dogs and cats lost, killed, or even rabid.

The outside world hardly touches these rustic lives until the summer of 1939. Indeed, this is a near-lawless world of outracing the police while transporting a stock of liquor, and of having a house of ill repute just up the hill (her great grandpa "up and marries the lady who ran the house of ill-repute!"). Or, most astonishingly, one day Bob and Mim tell Gloria and her brother Bub to set fire to a field they want to clear. Then the adults, laughing, go back to bed, leaving responsibility to the children—if the fire jumps the road and burns the woods, the children won't be charged.

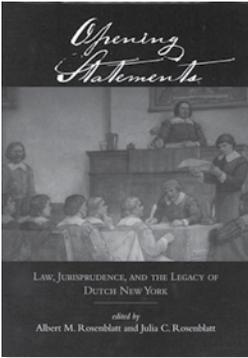
There is some description of the vast natural world that surrounds these people: whippoorwills call from the woods, and a local boy, considered a happy fool, shows her where an owl roosts and where bats hang. But I wished for a greater sense of the land—it's not until well into the tales that those legendary Adirondack mosquitoes are even mentioned.

Stubing is sure of her audience: Young ones wanting to know what life was like "back then." This folksy quality runs through the book, which is part of the appeal. We are being spoken to, and the intimacy and warmth of that is palpable. It also means that there's an artless quality to the narrative, with many a "but that's another story" thrown in. (The most remarkable of these is: "A few years later, Bob tried to kill Mim, but that's another story.")

Though each of the chapters could stand alone, by the end we know some of the central characters well. So when Cowboy—the only decent "father" that Gloria ever had—is shot in a hunting accident, the sadness is shared.

Grainy black and white photos offer a wonderful dimension: We see Yada in all of her youthful energy and beauty, the smile on her face matching the energetic humor of these stories of a place and time we are grateful to be able to read about, grateful that in her nineties, she has had the energy to put pen to paper and share.

Susan Fox Rogers, Bard College



Opening Statements: Law, Jurisprudence, and the Legacy of Dutch New York. Albert M. Rosenblatt and Julia C. Rosenblatt (eds.). Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013. (243 pp.)

Editors Albert and Julia Rosenblatt have assembled a formidable team of scholars to produce this wide-ranging volume, which will be of interest to general readers as well as specialists in the field. Building on the rising tide of interest in New Netherland sparked by Russell Shorto's iconic *The Island at the Center of the World* (2004), this book extends well beyond the limits of the courtroom that its title may suggest. Over the course of a well-contextualized introduction and thirteen essays, the authors discuss Dutch legal implications on subjects ranging from governance and religious and ethnic tensions, to the ever-controversial Dutch legacy in New York and America. While the essays are not uniformly strong, as a whole the volume offers original and thought-provoking contributions to the field of New Netherland studies.

The Rosenblatts' introduction offers a brief overview of New Netherland, its surviving documents, and the New Netherland Project, and points toward Dutch New York's continuing presence in popular culture. While each of the following essays includes some thread of legal history, the diversity of their methodological approaches and focus offer the opportunity to discuss them in topic clusters. As a result, these essays will be taken out of their published order and examined under five key groupings: legal process, governance, religion, ethnicities, and the Dutch legacy.

The volume's first essay, written by Martha Dickinson Shattuck, commences the examination of Dutch jurisprudence through an investigation of court petitions. Though absent from contemporary Dutch legal treatises, petitioning the courts was well-established in Amsterdam as a vital instrument for dispute resolution. In New Netherland, the practice transitioned from a written form into a personal presentation made by the petitioner. Its survival into the English occupation, despite its lack of a Common Law counterpart, marks the first example of the Dutch legal inheritance in this volume. Troy A. McKenzie and Wilson C. Freeman's joint essay on arbitration offers a second example of Dutch legal fecundity. Situating their analysis within current legal debates, the authors trace the history of arbitration from New Netherland to twentieth-century New York. While concluding that modern arbitration differs dramatically from Dutch practice, they nevertheless establish the importance of the practice in New Netherland and the example it offers of a less antagonistic relationship between courts and arbitrators. In the volume's closing essay, David William Voorhees directly examines the impact of Dutch jurisprudence on English legal practice after 1664, drawing on material from Voorhees' longstanding work on the papers of Jacob Leisler. Tracing court development from New Netherland through the mid-eighteenth

century, Voorhees concretely establishes the continuing influence of Dutch ideals of decentralized courts and locating ultimate sovereignty with the people rather than the Crown. Although his comments on later nineteenth-century practice seem largely based on circumstantial evidence, he ably traces the long-lasting influence of Leislerian practices on the contentious relationship between the provincial assembly and royal governors on establishing and operating the court system.

Three essays trace the closely related theme of governance, for the purpose of this review defined as the lived experience of the law in action. Jaap Jacobs provides a thorough analytical reconstruction of the 1647 Melijn-Kuijter Trial, which established the legal tenor of Director General Peter Stuyvesant's administration. Through a close reading of council minutes, Jacobs traces the trial's larger implications for contemporary debates about governance based on divine rule versus popular sovereignty. Jacobs' conclusions that the administration of justice remained a collective responsibility of government, rather than resting in the director general's hands, and that Kuijter and Melijn effectively challenged the entire governmental framework in their attempts against former director Willem Kieft, are supported by his customarily extensive primary source research. Michael E. Gherke's essay examines marital litigation in action through the case of Nicolaas Boot and his wife Merritje Joris. Tracing their tumultuous relationship through court records, Gherke offers enlightening commentary on the differences between Dutch and English practice, ably demonstrating the greater Dutch concern with spousal abuse and willingness to effect a separation. He credits the Dutch example with explaining how early English governors of New York authorized marital dissolutions despite an absence of Common Law precedent for the exact practice. However, he is careful to note that Dutch law, like all others in early modern Europe, frowned on divorce, erecting numerous obstacles against marital dissolution. The divorces in New Netherland and early New York, he concludes, represent "an anomaly rather than a portent for the future." Diana diZerega Wall and Anne-Marie Cantwell round out this section with a reconstruction of the New Amsterdam *stad huys*, using archaeological and historical data. Tracing the building's development from its origins as the *Stadt Herbergh* (City Tavern), the West India Company's watering hole, the authors employ the building as a vehicle for discussing the development of New Amsterdam city government. While concluding that no archaeological remains of the structure survive today, and casting doubt over previous archaeological investigations, the pair ably establishes the status of the original building within New Netherland.

The tumults of Reformation Europe invariably generated religious legal controversies in the Netherlands and its colonies. The essay by the redoubtable Charles Gehring weighs in on the 1657 Flushing Incident, exploring the complicated relationship between freedom of conscience and *pax et concordia* in Dutch practice. While effectively justifying Stuyvesant's reactions by exploring the treasonous overtones of actions undertaken by Flushing's English magistrates, Gehring observes that the West India Company eventually forced Stuyvesant to "wink" at religious transgressions in

the name of secular peace and harmony. Peter R. Christoph offers a contrasting case study with his examination of the Lutheran plight in New Netherland. Through a concise survey of Calvinist-Lutheran relations during the Dutch Revolt and a detailed investigation of Lutheran attempts to establish congregations in New Netherland, Christoph charts the limits of Dutch *de facto* religious tolerance. Though divided in its opinions and orders, ultimately the West India Company supported Stuyvesant's suppression of Lutheran worship, offering a singular counterpoint to claims of a Dutch origin for religious toleration in America.

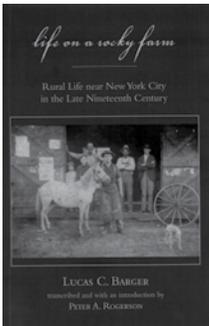
Questions of tolerance also dominate the essays on ethnicities in New Netherland. Joyce D. Goodfriend opens this topic with an examination of Dutch attitudes toward baptizing African-American children. Enslaved African-Americans attempted to employ the religious status-change offered by baptism as a means for manumitting their children, playing on Dutch prohibitions on enslaving co-religionists. While enjoying support from New Netherland's early ministers, by 1655 the Reformed Church implemented regulations blocking African baptism, reserving the rite for people "knowledgeable in the faith." While slave parents pressed for their children's religious education and informal baptism, manumission via this route would remain out of reach. Paul Otto charts Dutch relations with the native Munsees, from whom the former purchased Manhattan. While Otto's analysis is somewhat hampered by the inevitable lack of Munsee sources, he provides a thoughtful account of developing Euro-native relations and positions the land transfer within the larger context of the natives' loss of sovereignty. Leo Hershkowitz rounds out this theme with an investigation of the Jewish experience in New Amsterdam, focusing on the 1650s. Hershkowitz traces the arrival of contrasting Jewish groups: one with West India Company passports who came from New Amsterdam and a party of refugees from Brazil, which recently had been re-conquered by the Portuguese. Through a careful recounting of company attitudes toward these markedly different parties and growing tension between New Netherland officials and Jewish traders, Hershkowitz reveals the complicated tapestry of relations that led many of these early travelers to leave the colony by 1660. The success of one holdout, Asser Levy, who transitioned from itinerant trader to a city-licensed butcher, offers a starting point for today's thriving Jewish community.

The two remaining essays chart the most controversial topic in the volume: the impact of Dutch exemplars on the formation of the United States and the federal Constitution. Wijnand W. Mijnhardt explores the Dutch Revival of the early twentieth century, focusing on Edward Bok's claim "that Holland, not England, was the mother of America." Mijnhardt ably traces that movement's historical basis and arguments before comparing the 1581 Dutch Act of Abjuration and the American Declaration of Independence. He locates both within a similar school of European political thought, but admits the difficulty of locating contemporary American accounts that "unequivocally acknowledge" the adoption of Dutch models. Though Mijnhardt concludes that it is too early to fully evaluate Dutch influence on American revolutionaries, the absence

of a pan-colonial Dutch heritage and a clear line of descent from the English Grand Remonstrances and Revolutions of the seventeenth century (which Mijnhardt neglects to mention) indicate a relatively minor impact. Joep de Koning's essay on the Dutch origins of religious tolerance lacks the carefully-constructed qualifying remarks of the previous essay. While he musters an impressive array of facts ranging from the sixteenth-century introduction of the Spanish Inquisition into the Lowlands to legislation in 1790s New York, he ultimately fails to establish the causal links necessary for supporting his contention that religious toleration in America began on Governor's Island in 1624. Though admirable in their attempt to link Dutch influence to some of the greatest issues in American history, these essays constitute the volume's weakest elements.

Opening Statements is a powerful addition to the growing body of work on New Netherland. The Rosenblatts are to be commended for assembling top talents in the field alongside an impressive collection of key illustrations, resulting in a volume that belongs on the must-read list for enthusiasts and professional scholars in a variety of related fields. Through its wide-ranging coverage, this work demonstrates the multifaceted impact of jurisprudence on the Dutch settlements and the English successor state. The authors perform superbly in establishing the influence of the Dutch legacy for the later colonial period and provide an excellent foundation for further scholarly explorations of the Dutch impact on New York and America in the national era.

William P. Tatum III, Dutchess County Historian



***Life on a Rocky Farm: Rural Life near New York City in the Late Nineteenth Century.* Lucas C. Barger, transcribed with an introduction by Peter A. Rogerson. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2013. (185 pp.)**

Peter A. Rogerson, Distinguished Professor of Geography at the University at Buffalo, has edited the unpublished 1939 manuscript of his fourth-cousin-twice-removed Lucas C. Barger, in which this distant forebear reminisces about farm life in New York's Putnam County in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Rogerson promises to furnish a "unique perspective on the changing cultural and socioeconomic aspects of rural life near New York City at a key point in the history of the region's development" through "the combination of these firsthand observations on a dying way of life, together with [Barger's] detailed descriptions of everything from barn dances to sowing grain" (xxiii-xxiv). Happily, this meandering, idiosyncratic account delivers on its editor's pledge, providing readers with a valuable narrative of Northeastern rural life in an era of decline.

Professor Rogerson's introduction is crisp and helpful, relaying briefly the topographical impediments facing the farmers of Putnam County, explaining the county's

nineteenth-century stagnation, and furnishing a brief biographical sketch of Barger that reveals the author's concerns over the evolution of American social and economic relations. Barger's original introduction also traces the significance of the rocky terrain and explores the central theme of the work—that at some vague point in the late-nineteenth century, “all of a sudden, whatever the farmer turned his hand to that had a dollar in it was swept away from him, and with such regularity that it seemed as though a curse had been put on him” (2).

The next six chapters center generally on a minute analysis of the quotidian chores and challenges of life on a rocky farm. Chapters three and four, on means of earning income outside of grain sales, are particularly valuable. Chapter three, “Handcrafts—Ways of Making Money,” details the various goods farmers could produce for sale by harvesting the local forests and harnessing their own craftsmanship, while chapter four, “Incomes Directly from Nature,” explores farmers' economic stake in both gathering wild products for market and producing food items on the farm.

These chapters are useful both in their exploration of the processes involved and in their consideration of the forces that undermined farmers' ability to compete in a modernizing economy. One problem was technological innovation: “The farmer fell out of step with the early ‘march of progress,’ for steel supplanted timber,” thus ending their engagement with the shipbuilding industry; farm-made tanbark was rendered obsolete by chemists; the potential of hundreds of dollars in annual income from the hoop pole trade evaporated with the arrival of steel hoops; and the “agreeable odor” of farm-made charcoal would disappear from the Putnam County air with the arrival of modern, airtight tanks for the same purpose (16, 18, 21, 22). Farmers who had earned “a few dollars... making handles by hand” were undermined when “the irresistible power of the Machine Age asserted itself once more,” in the form of the Ober lathe; while entrepreneurial farm women who had “dried eight dollars' worth of apples one winter in the kitchen” were outpaced when “some inventor got wise... and produced an ‘evaporator’ ” (19, 35). Moreover, this “progress” is deemed less an organic process of innovation and more the work of unscrupulous profiteers. “The machine-made baskets were not so good for durability, but they were good enough to replace the custom-made articles. In the eyes of big business they were much better, for they would last about one quarter as long, and four could be sold during the life of a single handmade basket” (21). Similarly: “They make vinegar now that is a total stranger to the apple... it has some ingredient in it that is a misfit in vinegar. But as long as it does the farmer out of a few dollars, everybody ought to be satisfied. He was only made to be kicked around, anyhow” (34-35).

Barger, however, is no monomaniac, and another important contribution of his narrative is profound consideration of the farmer's relationship with nature. As with business and technology, nature seems in his view to betray Putnam County farmers. Producing railroad ties had been especially profitable: “Well, the chestnut blight blighted this enterprise, good and proper”; “that damnable blight” exerted a similarly

depressing influence on the collection and sale of nuts (17, 25). Regional farmers could no longer raise turkeys successfully because of a mysterious disease; a “gum disease” arrived to “attack” plums, cherries, and peaches; and yellow leaf blight ensured that in most places “there aren’t any peaches to even have gummy pits” (31-33).

Chapters five and six, “Life of the Rocky Farm Women” and “Men” are similarly wistful but less lugubrious in tone. They match the preceding chapters’ emphasis on process, again with valuable glimpses into the creation of bread, ham, soap, woolen goods (to select only a few examples), as well as the labor of digging, planting, harvesting, and marketing grains and gardens. The focus on work in these chapters does not soften Barger’s economic critique. Exploring the declining fortunes of regional produce when confronted with products shipped from Florida on refrigerated railcars, the author’s conclusion is grim: “Rather than try to make a living by raising garden truck to sell in towns and cities, the rocky farmer might better crawl around the barn and die” (66-67).

There are also celebrations of community ethics. Chapters eight through twelve give episodic insight into the social interactions of the rocky farmers, briefly exploring topics including politics, education, frolics, fairs, church socials, and music. Of these the remembrances of life in the “little red schoolhouse” (“if my fingers hadn’t been frozen half the time, maybe I would have learned to write”) and the frolics (“when all the neighbors would pitch in, and do something, that was something”) were among the most charming (110, 116).

This book, in which Barger manages somehow to remain simultaneously cheerful and intensely pessimistic, will be of great value to select groups of patient readers. It should be of interest to scholars of agricultural history, late-nineteenth-century history, and students of life in the Hudson Valley. Because of its great strength in describing the processes of farm life and labor, the book also holds potential value for collegiate courses on agricultural or nineteenth-century history. In such courses, Barger’s narrative will effectively evoke the sense of impending doom in the face of economic dynamism that historians often ascribe to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American farmers. Indeed, the author captured the psychological ramifications of these transformations: “Instead of the farmer taking a load of turkeys to town for Thanksgiving, he has to go there to get one for himself. Pretty tough, to have to eat a bird from Texas or some of the southern states, when he used to produce some of the best turkeys that ever flopped a wing” (31).

Robert Chiles, University of Maryland

New & Noteworthy Books Received

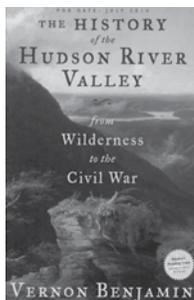


Hidden History of Columbia County New York

By Allison Guertin Marchese
(Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014)
144 pp. \$19.199 (softcover) www.historypress.net

Through the years, Columbia County has played an important role in the history of New York State, and it epitomizes much of what makes the Hudson River Valley unique. *Hidden History* goes beyond the most notable places and events in the county's history to explore some of its unjustly forgotten characters and events.

Complete with photographs, portraits, and postcards, this recounting organized by town takes the reader from Electric Park in Chatham to the gallows of Hudson and beyond.

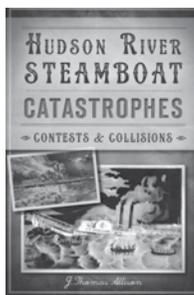


The History of the Hudson River Valley: from Wilderness to the Civil War

By Vernon Benjamin (New York, NY: The Overlook Press, 2014)
576 pp. \$45.00 (hardcover) www.overlookpress.com

The Hudson River Valley Institute's research library contains hundreds of titles, each addressing one or two specific aspects of the region's history, but only a few intrepid authors have ever undertaken to cover the whole of it. Following years of research, Benjamin ably joins these ranks. Featuring more than sixty pages

of references and a smooth narrative that brings isolated historic figures to life, his book reminds readers that the people and events that shaped the valley were interconnected.

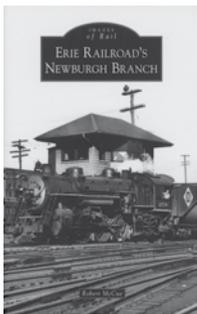


Hudson River Steamboat Catastrophes: Contests and Collisions

By J. Thomas Allison (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013)
142 pp. \$19.99 (softcover) www.historypress.net

Steamboats revolutionized travel, making it faster, more reliable, and democratic. Like any new technology, they also presented a number of risks, with both engineering and operation seemingly learned by trial and error. Allison presents an accessible and intriguing introduction to the industry and its history on

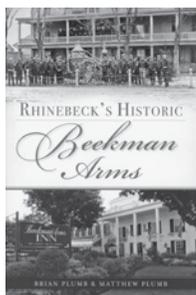
the Hudson River, detailing individual boats, improvements, luxuries, and disasters. Each short chapter conveys the grandeur and dangers involved in this essential era of maritime history.



Images of Rail: Erie Railroad's Newburgh Branch

By Robert McCue (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014)
128 pp. \$21.99 (softcover) www.arcadiapublishing.com

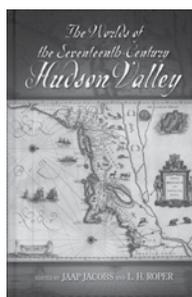
The *Images of Rail* series uses historic photographs and maps to shed new light on a time when railroads really were king. The Newburgh Branch of the Erie Railroad served as a shining example of the power of locomotion through its nineteen miles of track extending from the City of Newburgh to the Erie main line. Though short in length, the Newburgh Branch offered picturesque views and provided a necessary transportation line for countless types of freight and cargo. Robert McCue's documentation of the many sights along the line offers a nice balance between the locomotives, stations, bridges, and businesses that served as the lifeblood for the rail line and the city that grew up around it.



Rhinebeck's Historic Beekman Arms

By Brian Plumb and Matthew Plumb
(Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014)
208 pp. \$19.99 (softcover) www.historypress.net

It goes without saying that an establishment billed as the “oldest hotel in America” would certainly have some history to share. From its early days as a stagecoach and mail stop on the Albany Post Road through several renovations and owners, the Beekman Arms remains integral to life in Rhinebeck and continues to make history. Through extensive research on the property, the authors present historic and modern photos, as well as detailed accounts of changes to the property and the various roles the building has served throughout its existence over the last 200-plus years.



The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley

Edited by Jaap Jacobs and L.H. Roper
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014)
296 pp. \$80.00 (hardcover) www.sunypress.edu

The history of the Hudson River Valley can seem as contested as the place itself: the Netherlands, France, and England vied for control of the region with the Munsee, Mahican, and Mohawk that resided here before them. Since that time, the meeting, clashing, and melding of cultures has been obscured by distance and competing perspectives. The editors and twelve authors included in this volume have set out to uncover these lost nuances of the valley's heritage, examining specific exchanges as well as the mediums of exchange—language, currency, or other. Diverse in tone and topic, the collection offers something for everyone.

Andrew Villani, The Hudson River Valley Institute

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