SPRING 2021

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

This issue is dedicated to the late Dr. Frank T. Bumpus, the transformative underwriter of the Hudson River Valley Institute as the principal donor to its endowment and with the Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Chair in Hudson River Valley History. We will always remember him as a "Philanthropist, Aviator, Radiologist."

MARIST

The Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College is supported by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

From the Publisher and Executive Director

Our entire Hudson River Valley Institute (HRVI) and Marist College community mourns the loss of Advisory Board member Dr. Frank T. Bumpus, a true champion of HRVI and our region's history, who passed away in December 2020. He was one of Marist College's most generous and transformational benefactors. A resident of Cold Spring, Dr. Bumpus was the principal donor for a National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge grant that underpins HRVI's endowment and also established the endowed Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Chair in Hudson River Valley History.

Dr. Bumpus lived his over ninety-eight years to the fullest, and his public service contributions were legion as a philanthropist, an officer in the U. S. Army in World War II, and a doctor. As a member of the Air Corps, Frank trained as both a bombardier and a navigator and flew forty-three combat missions in Douglas A-20 Havoc bombers from bases in England against targets in France and Germany, for which he was awarded seven Air Medals for meritorious achievement in flight and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Upon his discharge from the Army, he graduated from the University of California, Berkeley and then from Tufts College Medical School as a radiologist, going on to practice medicine at Memorial Hospital, now Memorial Sloan Kettering, in New York City. His philanthropy spanned both coasts, and he devoted his life to good works at the Florida Memorial Hospital in Key West, Tufts University, and HRVI.

Frank's contributions to HRVI extend well beyond the Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Chair in Hudson River Valley History, and will live on at the Institute into the future. Among them, the Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Collection of paintings by artist David Wagner, commemorating the march of Generals Washington's and Rochambeau's armies during the American Revolution, adorn the walls of the Institute, and the Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Internship is awarded annually to a Marist student researching Hudson River Valley history. He was a true Renaissance man in every sense of the word, and it was an honor to have known him. We remember him here in the same way as we do in the plaque in HRVI's offices as "Philanthropist, Aviator, Radiologist" and above even these, "Friend."

Thomas S. Wermuth, *Publisher*, and *HRVI Director*

James M. Johnson, *HRVI Executive Director,* and *Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Chair*

On the cover: Seth Eastman. View from West Point. Oil on Canvas. 11 3/4 x 15 3/4 inches. 1835-1839. West Point Museum Collection, United States Military Academy. Highland Falls, NY

THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

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Explorers, Naturalists, and Military Precursors to the Hudson River School

James Lancel McElhinney

Many have heard the tale of how in 1825 a young Briton named Thomas Cole (1801–1848) boarded a steamer to West Point, where he conceived of a painting of Fort Putnam that won him acclaim. Rambles through the Hudson Valley, New England, and the North Country informed Cole's field practice. Sojourns abroad further refined his art. Finding himself within a circle of artists, patrons, poets, and novelists celebrating the savage beauty of the American wilderness, Cole soon was recognized as its leading light. Following the shock of his unexpected death in 1848, Cole's friends and followers picked up his torch, expanding their travels into the American West and beyond. Frederic Church trekked the Andes and cruised off Labrador. Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran attached themselves to railroad and mineral surveys venturing deep into uncharted territory. Their monumental canvases helped to convince the United States Congress that establishing national parks was a good idea. Recognizing natural wonders as national treasures was one way to celebrate the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon appeared on postage stamps as symbols no less recognizable than George Washington, the Capitol Dome, or Lady Liberty. National-identity narratives have dominated our understanding of the American landscape almost since the beginning. As our population grows more diverse and the national economy more global, Gilded Age visions of magisterial vistas begin to fade. Something else comes into view.

As surely as earth's climate is warming, cultural globalism today is razing silos that set fine art apart from craft and design. I began to notice these changes about thirty years ago and decided to reconsider my artistic practice. A lifelong fascination with expeditionary art led me to the American Philosophical Society, where the curator of collections was Roy Goodman, a friend of many years. Unable to secure funding to retrace George Catlin's first trip up the Missouri River, I shifted my focus to Civil War sites under threat from real estate development. Continuing for more than a decade, the project expanded its purview to explore landscapes of violence and tragedy related to the suppression of Indigenous resistance in the American West.

Keeping sketchbooks had always been an integral part of my studio practice—a device for research and rehearsal in preparation for producing larger works on canvas or paper. When I was hospitalized for a month in 2005, having access to nothing but my notebooks, I had an epiphany. Instead of attempting a concatenation of masterpieces, my sketchbooks advanced from research devices to a position of primacy. Within a few years most people were untethered from desktop computers by carrying handheld devices, which, coincidentally, were roughly the same size as my sketchbooks.

Delving deeply into the history of expeditionary art raised suspicions about the familiar genealogy of the Hudson River School as rooted in the Calvinism of Dutch landscape painting, intertwined with the picturesque classicism of Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), seasoned with the sublime tempestuousness of Salvator Rosa (1615–1673) filtered through British Romanticism, and bred with broad-shouldered Yankee empiricism.

Long before Cole disembarked in the Hudson Highlands, much of the valley had been cleared for farming or logged for lumber. Its tributaries were harnessed by mills. Upward of 200 vessels plied the river between New York City and Albany. Linking the Capitol District to the Champlain Valley and the Saint Lawrence River beyond, canals also expanded the reach of shipping to the Great Lakes. Opening in 1825, the same year as Cole's visit to West Point, the Erie Canal accelerated westward expansion. Cole was certainly at the right place at the right time. Clamoring to establish itself as a center of culture, having its Charles Willson Peale, John Trumbull, Washington Irving, and James Fenimore Cooper, the young republic was ready to welcome a new light into their firmament. Anna Marley has proposed that the Hudson River School is "often erroneously identified as the first American school of painting."[1] Starting the game clock with Cole may be too convenient. Let's explore another and perhaps more plausible backstory.

Fig. 1, Jacques le Moyne des Morgues. (1533–1588). A *Sheet of Studies of Flowers: A Rose, a Heartsease, a Sweet Pea, a Garden Pea, and a Lax-flowered Orchid.* Watercolor and gouache over black chalk. 8 5/16 x 5 7/8 in. (21.1 x 15 cm.) 16th century. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The Birth of Expeditionary Art

Pictorial travel narratives date to antiquity, from red- and black-figure Greek pottery portraying the adventures of Odysseus to Han Dynasty carved reliefs depicting imperial journeys. Pilgrimages, crusades, and voyages adorn the pages of medieval manuscripts. The peripatetic German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer recorded his sojourns in sketchbooks. While the practice of embedding artists and scientists in exploratory missions did not become common until the nineteenth century, a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists and naturalists happened to find themselves at the ends of the earth, in strange and exotic lands. Developed by medieval illuminators, more portable aqueous media were adopted by cartographers and artists specializing in wildlife, floral, and landscape subjects. Miniaturists and botanical illustrators producing more intimate works tended to use water-based mediums such as gouache and watercolor. Most

1 Anna O. Marley, *From the Schuylkill to the Hudson: Landscapes of the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2019), p. 10.

painters of the day, however, preferred to use oils, which were both more durable and better suited to working on a large scale.

The Huguenot artist Jacques LeMoyne des Morgues (1533–1588) accompanied the ill-fated Ribault-Laudonnière expedition to Florida in 1564. When Ribault and most of his colony were slaughtered in a Spanish attack in 1565, LeMoyne and a handful of survivors escaped, arriving in England after several months at sea. As official embroiderer to Mary, Queen of Scots, LeMoyne's father would have exposed his son to the arts of drawing and watercolor. Sixteenth-century botanical art was devoted primarily to the identification of plants and flowers of value to agriculture and medicine. Depictions of newly discovered species were also much in demand as models for fashionable textile design and sartorial embellishment.

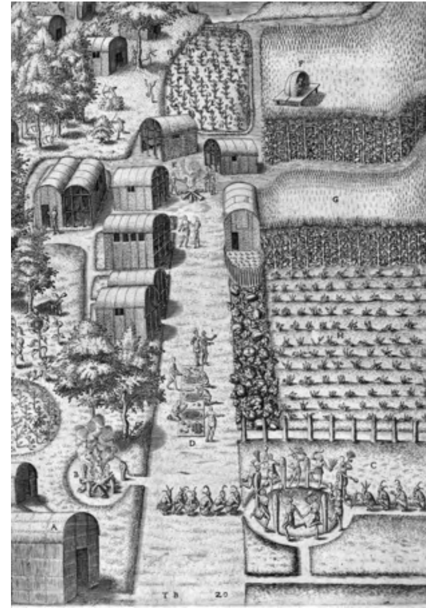


Fig. 2. John White (1539–1593) Algonquin village on the Pamlico River estuary showing Native structures, agriculture, and spiritual life. Engraving by Theodor de Bry, after a drawing by John White. Library of Congress

In 1585 gentleman artist John White accompanied Sir Richard Grenville and 100 colonists to Roanoke Island, located just within the Outer Banks of present-day North Carolina. During his time in America, White visited a number of Indigenous villages to record their structures and residents in a series of stunning watercolors, now in the British Museum.

Fig. 3, Maria Sybilla Merian. (1647–1717) *Study of Capers, Gorse and a Beetle*. Watercolor and white gouache on vellum. sheet: 14 x 10 5/16 in. (35.5 x 26.2 cm). 1693. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Following its independence from Spain in 1635, the Netherlands embraced Calvinism. Stripped of Catholic adornment, Dutch churches celebrated the divine presence in terms of space and light, as did the rise of chorographic landscape painting—sweeping depictions of towns, farms, fields, and cloudscapes. Soon afterward, the Dutch West India Company took possession of Manhattan and established the outpost of Fort Orange (present-day Albany). In 1637 the painters Frans Post (1612–1580) and Albert Eckhout (1610–1665) traveled from the Netherlands to northeastern Brazil to document the Indigenous people, flora, and fauna. Post produced a series depicting the operations of sugar plantations and their African slaves, a subject he would reprise after his return to Holland several years later.

Fig. 4, *Interior View of the Marianne North Museum*.
Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. London, England. Photograph by the author. 2016

Maria Sybilla Merian was born in Germany. The daughter of a noted Swiss engraver, Merian received a thorough training in drawing and painting, which she applied to her calling as a naturalist and botanical illustrator. Like Post and Eckhout, Merian traveled to South America. Studying and delineating local flora and fauna, her drawings and research were published as a lavishly illustrated book.[2] Merian is significant not only because of her gender, but because her scientific work was funded by her own entrepreneurship, rather than by the West India Company or a wealthy patron.

Among the many visitors Frederic Church welcomed to his estate, Olana, was Marianne North (1830–1890). Hundreds of floral landscape paintings produced on her voyages around the globe now hang floor to ceiling in her namesake pavilion at the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, England.

From Cartography to Chorography to High Art

Charting unknown waters and mapping unmeasured coastlines provided intelligence for the successful conduct of travel, trade, and warfare. Reading the aerial perspectives

2 Merian, Maria Sybilla. *Metamorphoses Insectorum Surinamensium*. Joannen Oosterwyck. Amsterdam. 1719.

Fig. 5, Thomas Pownall (1722–1805). *A View of the Great Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River.* Engraved by Paul Sandby (1731–1809). Etching on laid paper. 1945.51d. Bequest of Ledyard Cogswell, Jr. Albany Institute of History and Art purchase. Albany, NY

of nautical charts or topographical maps provided little means of recognizing features of terrain as beheld from the earth's surface. Maps of this period were often published with a border framed by chorographic views of key places, supplying simultaneous elevations to the aerial view. Early maps were less than uniform and thus frequently unreliable. Cartography ultimately fell under the control of central authorities, which assigned the task to military engineers. Standard protocols for conducting surveys and producing maps and charts were developed. Military officers were trained in the art of drawing so they could produce maps and pictorial renderings of specific locations. It soon was realized that instruction by professional artists would be of great benefit. Artistic training would sharpen the military officers' powers of observation, in much the same way CIA analysts use their art collection today.[3] Introducing an aesthetic component raised the bar.

The civilian cartographer Paul Sandby gained acclaim as a landscape painter. Specializing in watercolor with a background in mapmaking, Sandby was the ideal candidate to oversee the drawing program at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, where he arrived in 1768. Topographical landscape painting was already an established genre. That year saw the publication of *Scenographia Americana*, a suite of prints depicting North American landscapes drawn from observation by British military officers, including *A View of the Great Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk River*, based on a field sketch by the former Massachusetts governor Thomas Pownall and elaborated for the engraver by Sandby. One might presume that because Claude had preceded Sandby and the others by more than a century, his work exerted a direct influence on their development of a modern picturesque vocabulary. In fact, however, Claude's *Liber* was known only to those in Georgian England with whom its aristocratic owner, the Duke of Devonshire, had deigned to share it. One

Fig. 6, Claude Lorrain (1600–1682). *Liber Veritatis.* Reproduced as mezzotints by Richard Earlom, published by John Boydell, London. 1774–1776. Reissued 1803. Private collection

3 Carey Dunne, "A Visit to the CIA's 'Secret' Abstract Art Collection," *Hyperallergic*, October 20, 2016.

Fig. 7, page 31

of these was John Boydell, who engaged printmaker Richard Earlom to reproduce all 200 of Claude's drawings in etching and mezzotint for publication in 1774. While it may be tempting to ponder the notion that the success of *Scenographia Americana,* published six years prior, helped convince the duke to share his *Liber Veritatis* with the world, Claude's work was already well known to professional artists.

Filtered through the landscape paintings of Richard Wilson (1713–1782), Paul Sandby, and his brother, Thomas Sandby (1728–1798), Claudian influence can be seen in the early works of British artillery officer Thomas Davies (1737–1812). His 1760 watercolor of the British forts and encampment at Crown Point, New York aestheticizes what could have been little more than a diagram in a way that expresses both topographical specificity and artistic élan. Davies is also purported to be the first European to have drawn Niagara Falls from direct observation.

The visual language developed by the British military for topographical rendering provided some of the undergirding upon which the civilian artists J.R. Cozens, Thomas Girtin, and J.M.W. Turner built more poetic, creative visions of nature. The landed gentry eagerly decorated their dwellings with views of their rural estates, along with portraits of their horses, hounds, and wives. Like Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) and his brother James (1749–1831), the Scotsman Archibald Robertson (1765–1835) and his younger brother, Alexander (1772–1841), trained under Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Royal Academy in London. Moving to New York in 1792, the brothers established the Columbian Academy on William Street in lower Manhattan. Alexander Robertson, drawing on the British topographical tradition represented by Richard Wilson, Thomas Gainsborough, and Cozens, toured the Hudson Valley in 1796, collecting picturesque views along the river. Having arrived in Philadelphia two years prior, the English artist William Russell Birch (1755–1834) engraved and published views of Philadelphia in multiple editions, the first of which was released to popular acclaim in 1800.

Fig. 8, Alexander Roberston (1772-1841).
Sketchbook of the Hudson River.
Inscribed in the margin "Albany from the North. September 1796." Pencil and ink on laid paper. Albany Institute of History and Art. Albany, NY

Fig. 7, Thomas Davies (1727–1812) Watercolor drawing of A *South View of the New Fortress at Crown Point, with the Camp, Commanded by Major General Amherst in the Year 1759*, Thomas Davies, New York, United States, 1759, Ink and watercolor on laid paper, 1953.0189.001, Museum purchase, Courtesy of Winterthur Museum

Fig. 9, William Russell Birch (1755–1834) with Samuel Seymour (c. 1775–c. 1832).
The City of New York, in the State of New York, North America
[The Birch View with the Picnic Party] Hand-colored engraving and etching.
Third state of three. Sheet: 22 1/4 x 26 1/4 in. (56.5 x 66.7 cm) [1803] reissued c. 1820

Fig. 10, William Guy Wall. *West Point* **(No. 16 of the Hudson River Portfolio). Aquatint printed by John Hill in color with hand-coloring; first state (Koke). 1825. 14 1/16 x 20 3/16 in. (35.7 x 51.3 cm) Sheet: 19 x 24 1/2 in. (48.3 x 62.2 cm). The Edward W. C. Arnold Collection of New York Prints, Maps and Pictures, Bequest of Edward W. C. Arnold, 1954. Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Art,7 New York**

Fig. 11, Jacques-Gerard Milbert. ***Sing sing or Mount Pleasant*.** Lithograph.
Image size 7.3/8 x 11 inches. 1830. Collection of the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York

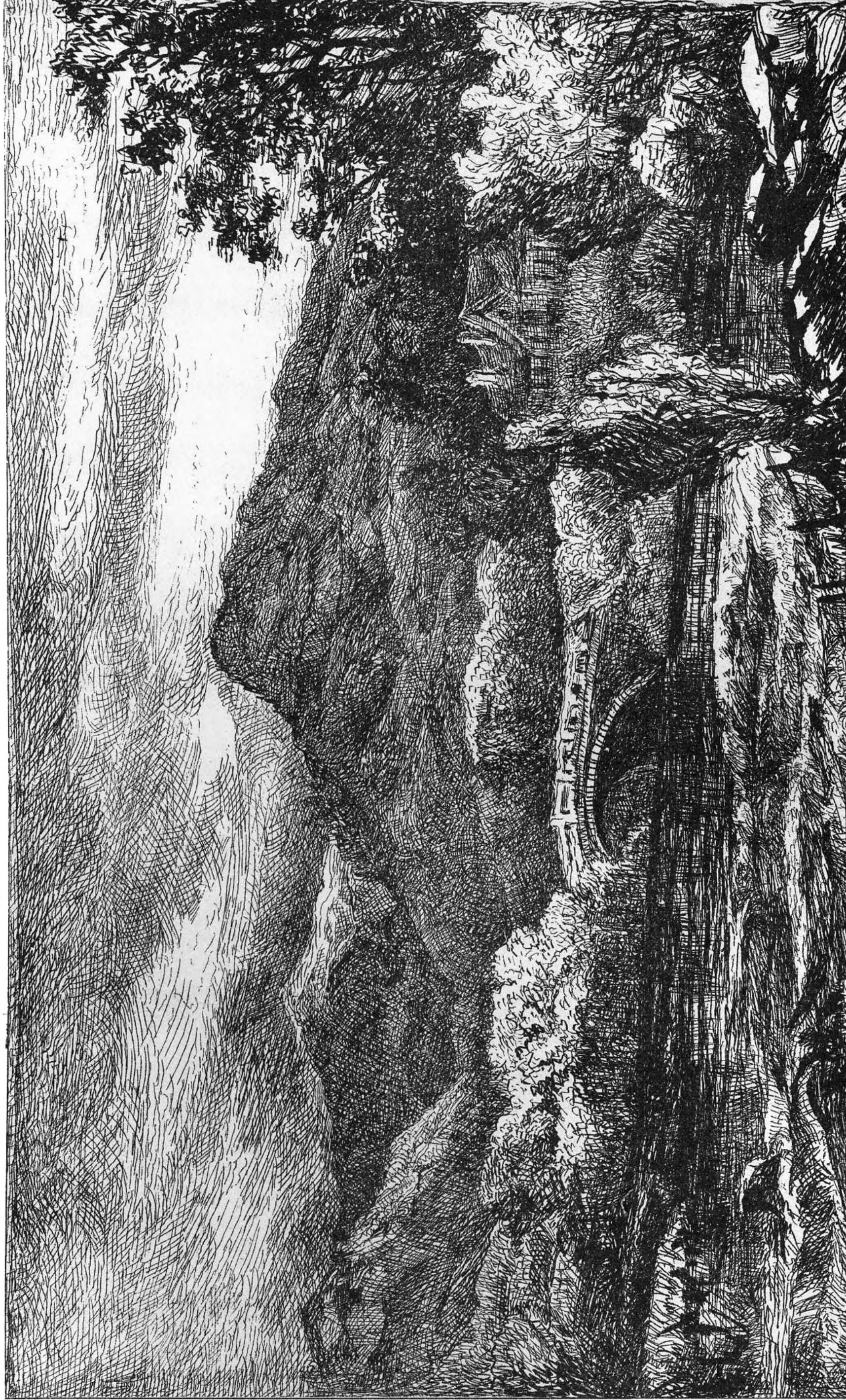
Fig. 12, Samuel Colman. *Looking Northwest from Ossining*. Oil on canvas.
1867. 16 3/8 x 30 3/8 inches. Collection of the Hudson River Museum. Yonkers, New York

Fig. 13, Frederic Edwin Church. (1826–1900) *Heart of the Andes.*
Oil on Canvas. 66 1/8 x 120 3/16 in. (168 x 302.9 cm).
Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 14, Seth Eastman. *View from West Point.* Oil on Canvas.
11 3/4 x 15 3/4 inches. 1835–1839.
West Point Museum. Highland Falls, NY

Fig. 15, Robert Walter Weir. *View of the Hudson River from West Point.*
Oil on canvas. 32 x 48 inches. 1864.
West Point Museum. Highland Falls, NY

Fig. 16, John Mix Stanley. *Awaiting the Return of Mr. Tinkham*. Lithograph. 1854. Collection of the author



First Glimpse of Manitou.

Fig. 17, Eliza Pratt Greatorex. *First Glimpse of Manitou*. Bookplate from *Summer Etchings in Colorado*. G.P. Putnam & Sons. New York. 1873. Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Fig. 18, Anne Diggory. *Shoreline Retrospection II.*
Hybrid on canvas. 46.5 x 37.5 cm. 2015. Courtesy of the artist

Fig. 19, Marcia Clark. *Butterville Road Intersection*.
24 x 24 inches. 2011. Collection of the Hudson River Museum. Yonkers, New York

Fig. 20, James Lancel McElhinney. *Looking South from Boscobel Belvedere*. July 16, 2016.
Journal-painting in aqueous media with colored pens. 3.45 x 10.54 inches.
Collection of the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY

Fig. 21, James Lancel McElhinney. *Twin Bridges near the Mouth of the Sacandaga.*
Journal-painting in aqueous media with colored pens. 3.45 x 10.54 inches.
Collection of the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY

Fig. 22, James Lancel McElhinney. *View of Yonkers from State Line Park.* Journal-painting in aqueous media with colored pens. 3.45 x 10.54 inches. Collection of the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY

Fig. 23, James Lancel McElhinney. *Pictorial Map of North-South Lake*.
Journal-painting in aqueous media with colored pens. 3.45 x 10.54 inches.
Collection of the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY

Fig. 9, page 32

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia became the publishing capital of the nation. A burgeoning print culture supplied the American public with picturesque views of scenic attractions, from Philadelphia's Fairmount Water Works and Virginia's Natural Bridge to New York City. Anna Marley writes, "Centrally located between the mighty Delaware and the picturesque Schuylkill . . . Philadelphia was defined and limited by those powerful borders. Images of these rivers not only embodied the ideals of the new American nation-state, but also led to the creation of the Hudson River School."[4]

Foreign visitors flocked to North American shores. The British naval officer Captain Joshua Rowley Watson filled several notebooks with watercolors of the Schuylkill River and Hudson Valley. The Russian diplomat Pavel Svin'in illustrated his *Voyage pittoresque aux Etats-Unis de l'Amérique* with engravings of his watercolors. Books, periodicals, and picturesque views of the new republic were eagerly consumed by an international readership ravenous for images of America's natural wonders.

In 1820 the Irish landscape painter William Guy Wall rambled the length of the Hudson River with travel writer John Agg. When the talented twenty-three-year-old English immigrant Cole stepped ashore at Manhattan in 1823, publisher Henry Megary had already issued two sets of hand-colored intaglio prints engraved by Thomas Hill of Wall's *Hudson River Port-Folio.* Sixty miles upriver from New York City, the miniaturist Thomas Gimbrede (1781–1832) delivered daily intensive two-hour drawing classes to all second- and third-year cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point. The French naturalist Jacques-Gerard Milbert (1766–1840) arrived in New York in 1815. Excursions up and down the Hudson yielded numerous drawings and writings before he returned to France the same year Cole arrived in New York. By the time Milbert published his *Itinérarie pittoresque du fleuve Hudson et son parties*

Fig. 10, page 33

4 Marley, *From the Schuylkill*, p. 10.

Fig. 11, page 34

latérales de l'Amérique du Nord in 1829, Thomas Cole was already making a name for himself as a rising star in the New York art world. While not the first to have journeyed up the Hudson, Cole's reputation today has overshadowed others who preceded him. Picturesque views identified by Robertson, Wall, and Milbert were revisited later by Hudson River School artists such as Samuel Colman (1832–1920).

Art of Science & Science of Art

The growing interest in botany and natural science was driven in part by medical research and agrarianism. With the creation by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus of a practical system of taxonomy, the hunt was on to discover and name as many new species as could be found. This pursuit extended to every part of nature, from meteorology to fish, fauna, and geology. For a system based on the recognition of visible traits, visual documentation proved to be a necessity. The majority of educated persons could draw as well as they could write. A naturalist's skills might suffice for visual note-taking and fieldwork. Naturalists such as Mark Catesby (1683–1740), William Bartram (1739–1823), and Alexander Wilson (1766–1813) possessed the artistic talent to develop these skills. Established in 1802, the United States Military Academy at West Point adopted a curriculum that included a rigorous course in drawing of all kinds, from mapmaking to pictorial chorography and mechanical drawing—with or without instruments. Professional artists were often hired to produce illustrations based on the field sketches of explorers such as Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), whose travels and writings fired the imagination of a young painter named Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900). Having studied painting with Cole from 1846 to 1848, Church, at the age of twenty-seven, retraced Humboldt's footsteps into the Andes of Ecuador. Returning to South America four years later, Church conceived an ambitious project that culminated in his monumental canvas *The Heart of the Andes* (1859; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), completed the year Humboldt passed away. By formulating a new vision of the unity of nature that reconciled empiricism with transcendental idealism, Humboldt reformed the practice of science as something in which artists could participate.

Fig. 12, page 35

American artists had been primed to embrace this vision by entrepreneurial naturalists such as John Bartram (1699–1777), William Bartram, and Alexander Wilson. In 1801 Charles Willson Peale excavated a fully articulated mastodon skeleton at a farm near the village of Montgomery, in Orange County, New York. His son, Titian Ramsay Peale II (1799–1865), served as assistant naturalist to Major Stephen Harriman Long's 1819–20 exploration of the Great Plains. Also accompanying Long was the English watercolorist Samuel Seymour (c. 1775–d. after 1823), the first artist officially attached to any United States military expedition. Shortly after the departure of the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1804, Thomas Jefferson met with Humboldt, later expressing regret that professional artists and scientists had not been attached to the explorers' Corps of Discovery. When Major Long was planning to ascend the Platte River to the Rocky Mountains, Sylvanus Thayer and Thomas Gimbrede (1781–1832) were overhauling the drawing program at West Point. One of its stars was Seth Eastman (1808–1875). Graduating in 1829, Eastman was posted to Minnesota, where, in his spare time, he produced an impressive collection of views of and around Fort Snelling. Following the untimely death of Gimbrede in 1832, Eastman was recalled to West Point to oversee the drawing program while the academy found a replacement.

Fig. 13, page 36

Having been elected to the National Academy of Design, in New York, in 1829, the painter Robert Walter Weir was appointed Teacher of Drawing at West Point. Weir's pedagogy blended technical rigor with aesthetic refinement. Like art students everywhere, cadets copied art prints and drew from plaster casts. Staying on as Weir's assistant for another six years, Eastman gained entrée to the New York art scene, being elected an associate member of the National Academy of Design in 1838. Juggling military duties with artistic projects like Thomas Davies a century before, Eastman won acclaim for his genre paintings of Native American subjects.[5] Traveling from the Hudson Valley to the windswept plains of Texas, he filled pocket sketchbooks with drawings and watercolors. Completing the last in a series of paintings of American forts[6] commissioned by the House of Representatives'

Fig. 14, page 37

5 Sarah Boehme, *Seth Eastman: A Portfolio of North American Indians* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 2004).
6 James L. McElhinney, "Seth Eastman's Forts," in *Capitol Dome* 55, no. 1 (2018): 16–30.

Committee on Military Affairs, Eastman laid down the brush and breathed his last. On the easel was a view of the Hudson, looking north from his beloved West Point.

Fig. 15, page 38

During the nineteenth century, drawing was considered not only an art form but a visual mode of writing as well, and thus within the general domain of literacy. Half a century before, members of the working class might be capable of reading a book but not their master's cursive handwriting. It was for this reason that social reformers like Horace Mann called drawing "an essential industrial skill" and "a moral force."[7] In the introduction to his textbook *Graphics*, Rembrandt Peale noted, "Writing is nothing else than drawing the forms of letters. Drawing is little more than writing the forms of things. Everyone that can write is capable of learning to draw; and everyone should know how to draw, that can find advantage in writing."[8] Peale's sentiments were echoed by the American artists John Gadsby Chapman (1808–1889). On the title page of his drawing manual is printed, "Any one who can learn to write, can learn to draw."[9] West Point cadets were introduced to drawing in much the same way. "Gimbrede's theory of instruction was simple. Everyone can draw straight and curved lines, which is all a completed composition contains, therefore everyone can draw."[10]

How drawing became a magic trick known only by those with artistic talent is a yarn that could fill a book. To paraphrase the late Andrew Forge, former dean of the Yale School of Art, if you want to understand something, make a drawing of it. Anyone can draw what they know. If one wishes to draw something, it first must be learned. Pushing a line around the page is the best way to gain that knowledge, for which a legible drawing is the acid test. The raison d'être of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century military topographical drawing was intelligence-gathering in ways that exercised the mind and sharpened the senses. Aesthetic considerations represented yet another level of rigor that elevated the process above mere utilitarian goals.

7 A.D. Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), p. 73.

8 Rembrandt Peale, *Graphics: A Manual of Drawing and Writing for the Use of Schools and Families* (New York: J.P. Peaslee, 1835), p. 6.

9 John Gadsby Chapman, *The American Drawing-Book: Manual for the Amateur, Basis of Study for the Professional Artist: Especially Adapted to the Use of Public and Private Schools, as Well as Home Instruction* (New York: J.S. Redfield, Clinton Hall, 1847).

10 David M. Reel, "The Drawing Curriculum at the U.S. Military Academy During the 19th Century," in Joan Carpenter Troccoli et al., *West Point: Points West* (Western Passages). Exhibit catalog, Denver: Institute of Western American Art, Denver Art Museum: 2002.

Civilian Artists & Military Exploration

Prior to the Civil War, the United States government relied on the military to conduct surveys, expeditions, and diplomacy with Indigenous nations. Beginning with Long's 1819–20 expedition, civilian artists and naturalists were attached to these parties as intelligence-gathering specialists. The demand for the kinds of expertise these professionals could provide seems to coincide with Thayer and Gimbrede's reforms to the West Point curriculum that included more rigorous drawing instruction taught by professional artists—a practice reflected by other departments within the academy, such as engineering. The expansion of the republic into vast new territories acquired through the Louisiana Purchase and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago launched a series of missions to chart waterways, to survey rights-of-way for future railroads, and to locate, assess, and manage contact with Indigenous populations standing in the path of Manifest Destiny. The United States was not unique in this practice. Founded in 1791, the British Ordnance Survey dovetailed with the proliferation of picturesque views of the British Isles, produced for popular consumption. Conducted by the elite United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers, the Mexican Boundary Survey of 1848–55 included professional scientists and artists. A simultaneous survey by the Mexican military was underway across the border.

From 1850 to 1862 the Chorographic Commission of New Granada explored and described the terrain, inhabitants, flora, and fauna of present-day Colombia. In the years leading up to the Civil War, members of the United States military conducted numerous railroad surveys west of the Mississippi and across Central America. It was during this period that Church embarked on his two painting trips to Ecuador. The majority of expeditionary artists knew no success nor garnered such acclaim. With the exception of a handful such as William Bartram, Audubon, and Catlin, most worked in relative obscurity. Until recently, few recognized the names, let alone the contributions, of Richard and Edward Kern, Titian Ramsay Peale II, Balduin Möllhausen, John Mix Stanley, Alfred Thomas Agate, or Frederick Egloffstein, despite their having refined a practice that was later adopted by fashionable artists such as Church, Bierstadt, and Moran.

Landscape Painting and the Roots of Environmentalism

Applying their skills beyond the confines of a studio, American artists devoted themselves to technological innovations and advancement of useful knowledge. Charles Willson Peale founded the nation's first museum and pioneered the study of paleontology. Joshua Shaw (1766–1860) was credited with devising a percussion primer for firearms. Robert Fulton (1765–1815) began his career as a painter, as did Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872). The more

Fig. 16, page 39

artists knew about science, the more keenly aware they became of the devastation being wreaked upon nature and Indigenous populations by rapacious industrialism. Traveling up the Missouri River in 1830, George Catlin (1796–1872) devoted himself to the "production of a literal and graphic delineation of the living manners, customs, and character of an interesting race of people, who are rapidly passing away from the face of the earth."[11]

Closely interwoven with the lore of European history were tales of lost cultures and vanished continents, of shipwrecks and mariners swallowed by the sea, mythical lands, and blessed isles visited by Irish saints. Exploration during the Age of Discovery might be likened to a pilgrimage, as might bucket-list tourism today. Catlin may have read James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* or been aware of theories attributing the construction of massive Adena and Mississippian earthworks to Aztecs, Egyptians, or the lost tribes of Israel. When visiting the ruins at Chaco Canyon, I noticed that some of the stonework at Acoma was very similar. I asked my guide what she thought of the Anasazi legend, and she replied, "Maybe somebody lost them. Last time I checked, we're still here."

In his poem *The Lament of the Forest*, Thomas Cole writes,

> "Our reverend ranks, and crashing branches lashed
> The ground, the mighty trunks, the pride of years.
> Rolled on the groaning earth with all their umbrage.
> Stronger than wintry blasts, and gathering strength
> Swept that tornado, stayless, till the Earth,
> Our ancient mother, blasted lay, and bare."[12]

These are not the words of a dreamy eyed poet on a sylvan ramble—the popular image of Cole as immortalized in Asher B. Durand's 1849 painting *Kindred Spirits* (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Ark.). They seethe with outrage at the rape of nature by unchecked industrialism. In the catalogue for the exhibition "Thomas Cole's Refrain: Paintings of Catskill Creek," Daniel Peck observes that while Cole portrays the eponymous creek in an unspoiled pastoral setting, distant plumes of smoke allude to the tanneries and other industries dumping pollutants into the stream: "Cole . . . had his eye on larger processes that—if unchecked—could ruin not just a particular landscape but the whole of American scenery. . . . What had happened to Catskill Creek is what could happen to any river in the Catskills and, indeed, to any river, or any environment, in a new industrial age."[13] Cole's quiet advocacy was born perhaps of the knowledge that such strains on nature also lined the pockets of patrons upon whom artists depended for their income.

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11 George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians* (London: Piccadilly, 1841), vol. 1, p. b2.

12 Thomas Cole, "The Lament of the Forest," *The Knickerbocker: or, New-York Monthly Magazine* 17 (June 1841): 516–19.

13 H. Daniel Peck, *Thomas Cole's Refrain: Paintings of Catskill Creek* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 135.

Across the Atlantic, a group of landscape painters settled around Barbizon, a village southeast of Paris. In 1862, rallying public support for the preservation of the nearby Fontainebleau woods, Theodore Rousseau and his associates pressured Emperor Napoleon III into declaring the forest a national park—the first in the world. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln signed a bill setting aside the Yosemite Valley for "public use, resort, and recreation."[14] That year, the American environmentalist George Perkins Marsh published *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action.* The book was the first prediction that mismanagement of natural resources could result in climate change.

In 1871 Ferdinand Vandever Hayden led a geological expedition and mineral survey of the Yellowstone caldera under the control of the Department of the Interior. He was accompanied by photographer William Henry Jackson and Moran, whose works helped to persuade Congress to establish Yellowstone National Park. In the works of Church, Bierstadt, and "Yellowstone" Moran, we see the artistic fulfillment of Humboldt's vision of the unity of nature through the marriage of art with science.

Irish-born Eliza Pratt Greatorex (1819–1897) immigrated to New York, where she came to be recognized as "the foremost artist of her sex."[15] Trained in New York, Barbizon, and Paris, Greatorex produced a suite of drawings documenting the destruction of colonial New York, as land was cleared for real-estate development within the 1865 Manhattan street plan laid out by civil engineer Egbert L. Viele.[16] Greatorex is reputed to be the first female artist of note to visit the Rocky Mountains, preceding Mary Hallock Foote to Colorado by three years. These women were pioneers in the sense that their productive years straddled a transitional period when expeditionary travel was being outpaced by tourism.

By the end of the nineteenth century, much of the Eastern Seaboard had been cleared for agriculture, timber, and fuel. Industrial waste and sewage flowed freely into the rivers. Cities and towns, blanketed by coal smoke, became breeding grounds for epidemics. Still more lives were lost to war, criminal violence, and colonial genocide. At the same time, we see the establishment of universal education and advances in medicine and health care. Everyone with a high school diploma was more than literate, having read excerpts from the classics in both Latin and Greek. Most had a smattering of a foreign language like French and could play a musical instrument. Knowing how to draw

First Glimpse of Manitou.

Fig. 17, page 40

14 A Bill Authorizing a Grant to the State of California of the "Yo Semite Valley" and of Land Embracing the "Mariposa Big Tree Grove" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives, 1864), S.203.

15 Katherine Manthorne, *Restless Enterprise: The Art and Life of Eliza Pratt Greatorex*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.

16 Egbert Ludovicus Viele, *Topographical Map of the City of New York, showing original water courses and made land* (New York: Ferdinand Mayer & Co., 1865).

endowed them with a better understanding of design. In 1870 the world was inundated with images in a multitude of new mediums, from chromolithography and photography to illustrated books and newspapers. Today each one of us processes more images in a day than our forebears did in a month. The difference is that they could draw.

The challenges today facing proponents of nature conservancy, historic preservation, and environmental sustainability are not so different from those that faced the advocates of public space during the nineteenth century. Urban green spaces and national parks were organized to promote public health by providing city-dwellers with access to clean air in places created for sport, exercise, and the aesthetic enjoyment of nature. This was and remains an ongoing process. During the Civil War, the architect Frederick Law Olmsted was put in charge of the United States Sanitary Commission, the precursor to the American Red Cross. The Metropolitan Fair held in April 1864 was organized in New York City as a fundraiser to support its mission. The centerpiece of the fair was an art exhibition that featured a trio of monumental canvases by Bierstadt, Emmanuel Leutze, and Church installed together, as they hang today in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The museum has long been criticized for turning its back on the park in which it stands, just as the art world has for many years ignored its responsibility to public salubrity as a mediator between culture, nature, and the economy. The same ideals that inspired the design and construction of Central Park helped sell the idea of Chelsea's High Line. As lamentable as the Met's disconnect with Central Park may be, one hopes that Olmsted might have approved of the southern terminus of the High Line being welcomed by the Whitney Museum of American Art. Connect the dots.

Art can play a significant role in promoting public health. Across New York State, improvements to park facilities and the development of recreation corridors have created new rail trails, Walkway Across the Hudson, the Erie Canalway Trail, and the Rip van Winkle Bridge pedestrian walkway linking Cole's Cedar Grove with Church's Olana. For the past few years Olana has been focusing less on the house and more on the grounds, restoring woodlands, water features, and open spaces to replicate Church's original design. Visitor numbers soared during the Covid-19 pandemic at places like Olana, the Adirondack and Catskill High Peaks, and wherever public access to open and wild spaces could be found. The Empire State Trail dedicated a number of new and existing thoroughfares for pedestrians and bicyclists.

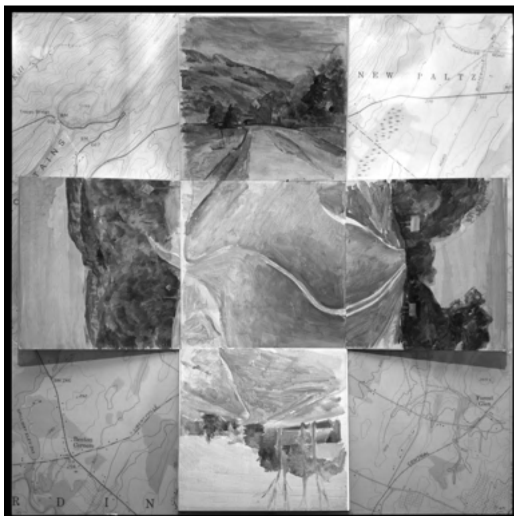
By the time Church set off to paint Niagara, the falls were already a bucket-list tourist destination. Cole's poetic environmentalism and George Perkins Marsh's dire predictions helped shape the thinking of activists like John Muir, John Burroughs, and Rachel Carson. To preserve nature's treasures, we must endeavor to develop new ways to bring human beings to deeper engagements with nature while *leaving no trace*. Artistic skill is not required to benefit from the practice of drawing, writing, and journal keeping—all proven methods for transforming personal experience into knowledge. Access to clean rivers, heritage and eco-tourism itineraries, historic sites, well-maintained hiking and bike trails, and

open spaces enhances public encounters with nature. The more profound and satisfying their experience, the more likely they will be to become concerned with these resources and take steps to protect them. In recent times, a new breed of visual artist has emerged, rebuilding the bridge between art and science.

The artist, biologist, and environmental activist Brandon Ballengée has explored the process of extinction and charted the relationship of biodiversity to pollutants in the Hudson River. The artist-naturalist Mark Dion reprises historic expeditions, gathering specimens he collected into art installations and *Schatzkammers*. The artist-naturalist and avid fly fisherman James Prosek creates mural installations of avian and animal species reminiscent of warship and military aircraft silhouette identification manuals. Anne Diggory paints outdoors. Mining specific locations, Diggory combines past and present views of historic landscape painting motifs. In the spirit of early travelers, Cynthia Daignault crossed the United States, stopping at regular intervals to explore and paint each of her quotidian destinations. Marcia Clark combines pictorial and cartographic modes in constructing a sense of place.

Fig. 18, page 41

Inspired by historic expeditionary artists, my own practice is devoted to maximum mobility and the ability to able to carry all necessary gear on my person, wherever I might go, while *leaving no trace*. The idea of American landscape may have reached maturity in the Hudson Valley, but it was conceived in the notebooks of far-faring explorers, born to the union of art and science and nurtured by topographers and expeditionary draftsmen seeking to expand knowledge by working in the field as much as by solitary artists exploring poetic expression in the studio. Following their example—perhaps through a camera, but always with sketchbook in hand—we can deepen our experience of nature, enriching our encounters with all its wonders in ways that might inspire us to more active stewardship of our natural resources.



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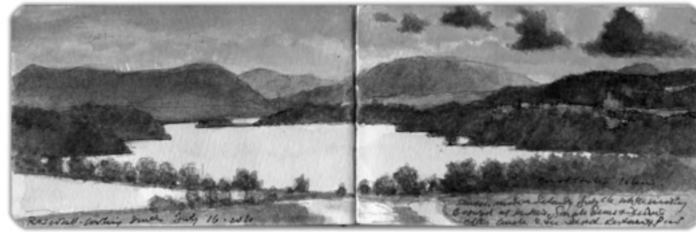

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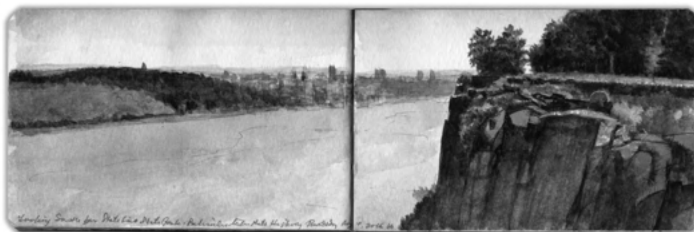

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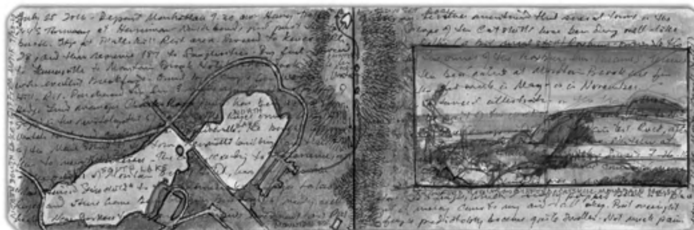

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