SMARTHISTORY OF ART XIB - NORTH AMERICA 1500 TO 1900



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SmartHistory of Art XIb: North America to 1900

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Licensing

1: Native North American art, c. 1500 – today

- 1.1: Terms and Issues in Native American Art
- 1.2: About geography and chronological periods in Native American art
- 1.3: East
  - 1.3.1: Global trade and an 18th-century Anishinaabe outfit
  - 1.3.2: Anishinaabe shoulder bag
  - 1.3.3: The bandolier bag
  - 1.3.4: Bandolier Bag
  - 1.3.5: Codex Canadensis
- 1.4: West
  - 1.4.1: Juana Basilia Sitmelelene, Presentation Basket (Chumash)
  - 1.4.2: Bear Claw Necklace (Pawnee)
  - 1.4.3: Eastern Shoshone- Hide Painting of the Sun Dance, attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody)
  - 1.4.4: Feathered war bonnet
  - 1.4.5: Headdress (Cheyenne or Lakota)
  - 1.4.6: Paukeigope (Kiowa), Cradleboard
  - 1.4.7: Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), Battle of Little Bighorn
  - 1.4.8: War Shirt (Upper Missouri River)
  - 1.4.9: Nellie Two Bear Gates, Suitcase
  - 1.4.10: Henry Oscar One Bull, Custer's War
  - 1.4.11: Carrie Bethel (Mono Lake Paiute), Basket bowl
  - 1.4.12: Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Earth Song
  - 1.4.13: Brummett Echohawk (Pawnee), An Island of Redbuds on the Cimarron
- 1.5: Southwest
  - 1.5.1: Pueblo architecture and its relationship to place
  - 1.5.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo
  - 1.5.3: Acoma polychrome water jar
  - 1.5.4: Hopi- White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure)
  - 1.5.5: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar
  - 1.5.6: Puebloan- Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel
  - 1.5.7: Julian Martinez, Buffalo Dancers
  - 1.5.8: Awa Tsireh (Puebloan), Pottery Makers
  - 1.5.9: The pueblo modernism of Ma Pe Wi
- 1.6: Northwest coast
  - 1.6.1: Tsimshian shaman's rattle
  - 1.6.2: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw)
  - 1.6.3: Transformation masks
  - 1.6.4: North Wind Mask
  - 1.6.5: Arctic clothing
  - 1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan
  - 1.6.7: Haida potlatch pole
  - 1.6.8: Bentwood Boxes of the Northwest Coast peoples

- 1.6.9: Tlingit mortuary and memorial totem poles
- 1.6.10: Tlingit Proud Raven totem pole, Saxman Totem Park
- 1.6.11: Tlingit Oyster Man totem pole, Saxman Totem Park
- 1.6.12: Dorica Jackson, Diving Whale Chilkat Robe
- 1.6.13: Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit), Resilience Robe
- 1.6.14: Northwest Coast Basketry—Woven Traditions
- 1.7: Contemporary art
  - 1.7.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)
  - 1.7.2: Wendy Red Star, 1880 Crow Peace Delegation
- 1.8: Contemporary Native American Architecture

2: Colonial period

- 2.1: Theodore de Bry's Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies
- 2.2: Portraits of John and Elizabeth Freake (and their baby)
- 2.3: Puritan court cupboard
- 2.4: African Burial Ground, New York City
- 2.5: John Smibert, The Bermuda Group
- 2.6: Gerardus Duyckinck I (attributed), Six portraits of the Levy-Franks family, c. 1735
- 2.7: Silver sugar bowl
- 2.8: Benjamin West
  - 2.8.1: Benjamin West, The Death of General Wolfe
  - 2.8.2: Benjamin West, Penn's Treaty with the Indians
- 2.9: John Singleton Copley
  - 2.9.1: John Singleton Copley, A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)
  - 2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris)
  - 2.9.3: John Singleton Copley, Paul Revere
  - 2.9.4: John Singleton Copley, The Copley Family
  - 2.9.5: Watson and the Shark

3: Early Republic

- 3.1: John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence
- 3.2: Jean-Antoine Houdon, George Washington
- 3.3: Gilbert Stuart
  - 3.3.1: Gilbert Stuart, The Skater
  - 3.3.2: Lansdowne Portrait
- 3.4: Thomas Jefferson
  - 3.4.1: Monticello
  - 3.4.2: Rotunda, University of Virginia
- 3.5: Charles Willson Peale
  - 3.5.1: An African Muslim among the founding fathers, Charles Willson Peale's Yarrow Mamout
  - 3.5.2: Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale)
  - 3.5.3: The Artist in His Museum
- 3.6: John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos
- 3.7: Thomas Birch
  - 3.7.1: Perry's Victory on Lake Erie
  - 3.7.2: Fairmount Water Works

4: United States in the 19th century

- 4.1: Beginner's guide—American art in context
  - 4.1.1: The Mexican-American War- 19th-century American art in context
  - 4.1.2: John Brown's "tragic prelude" to the U.S. Civil War
  - 4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon
  - 4.1.4: Nativism, immigration, and the Know-Nothing party
- 4.2: The 1893 Chicago World's Fair
  - 4.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition- Introduction
  - 4.2.2: The White City and fairgrounds
  - 4.2.3: The Midway
- 4.3: Romanticism
  - 4.3.1: Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert
  - 4.3.2: Thomas Cole
    - 4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden
    - 4.3.2.2: The Oxbow
    - 4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream
    - 4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return
  - 4.3.3: Hicks's The Peaceable Kingdom as Pennsylvania parable
  - 4.3.4: George Catlin, The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas
  - 4.3.5: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze
    - 4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware
    - 4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way
  - 4.3.6: Rothermel, De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi
  - 4.3.7: Jasper Francis Cropsey, Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains
  - 4.3.8: Frederic Edwin Church
    - 4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes
    - 4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi
    - 4.3.8.3: The Iceberg
  - 4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine
  - 4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California
  - 4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
- 4.4: The U.S. Civil War in Art
  - 4.4.1: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War in Art
  - 4.4.2: "The Immediate Cause of the Civil War," an introduction
  - 4.4.3: The problem of picturing slavery
  - 4.4.4: Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology
  - 4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug
  - 4.4.6: Images in a divided world
  - 4.4.7: Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery
  - 4.4.8: Memory and commemoration of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction
  - 4.4.9: Experiences of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction
  - 4.4.10: Refugees, prisoners, and displacement
  - 4.4.11: Homes and families
- 4.5: Realism
  - 4.5.1: Francis Guy, Winter Scene in Brooklyn
  - 4.5.2: John Wesley Jarvis, Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder

- 4.5.3: William Sidney Mount, Bargaining for a Horse
- 4.5.4: John James Audubon, The Wild Turkey
- 4.5.5: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico
- 4.5.6: George Caleb Bingham, Country Politician
- 4.5.7: George Caleb Bingham, The County Election
- 4.5.8: Frederic Church, The Natural Bridge, Virginia
- 4.5.9: Blythe, Justice
- 4.5.10: Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown
- 4.5.11: Eastman Johnson, A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves
- 4.5.12: Lilly Martin Spencer, The Home of the Red, White, and Blue
- 4.5.13: Samuel Colman, Jr., Ships Unloading, New York
- 4.5.14: Thomas Eakins
  - 4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)
  - 4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub
  - 4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic
- 4.5.15: Winslow Homer
  - 4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer
  - 4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters
  - 4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher
  - 4.5.15.4: The Life Line
  - 4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing)
  - 4.5.15.6: Northeaster
- 4.5.16: Grafton Tyler Brown, View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

- 4.6: Western art
  - 4.6.1: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
  - 4.6.2: The end of an era- Remington's The Fall of the Cowboy
- 4.7: Aestheticism and the Gilded Age
  - 4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler
    - 4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl
    - 4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket
  - 4.7.2: John Singer Sargent
    - 4.7.2.1: El Jaleo
    - 4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit
    - 4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)
    - 4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose
    - 4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent
  - 4.7.3: Childe Hassam
    - 4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square
    - 4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago
- 4.8: Photography
  - 4.8.1: Carleton Watkins
    - 4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River
    - 4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins
  - 4.8.2: Timothy O’Sullivan
    - 4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death
    - 4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle

- 4.8.3: Jacob Riis, “Knee-Pants” at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater’s Shop, from How the Other Half Lives
- 4.9: Sculpture and architecture
  - 13.4.9.21: Burnham and Root
    - 4.9.21.1: The Monadnock Building
    - 4.9.21.2: Reliance Building
  - 13.4.9.23: Carrère and Hastings, The New York Public Library
  - 4.9.1: The Alamo (and Mission San Antonio de Valero)
  - 4.9.2: Inventing America, Colt’s Experimental Pocket Pistol
  - 4.9.3: Cultures and slavery in the American south- a Face Jug from Edgefield county
  - 4.9.4: David Drake, Double-handled jug
  - 4.9.5: Little Round House
  - 4.9.6: John Quincy Adams Ward, The Freedman
  - 4.9.7: Anna Pottery, Snake jug
  - 4.9.8: Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave
  - 4.9.9: William Wetmore Story, Cleopatra
  - 4.9.10: Thomas Crawford, George Washington Equestrian Monument
  - 4.9.11: Slave Burial Ground, University of Alabama
  - 4.9.12: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York
  - 4.9.13: Olmsted and Vaux, Central Park
  - 4.9.14: William Howard (attributed), Writing desk
  - 4.9.15: Herter Brothers, Mark Hopkins House Side Chair
  - 4.9.16: Robert Mills and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument
  - 4.9.17: The light of democracy — examining the Statue of Liberty
  - 4.9.18: Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause
  - 4.9.19: Defeated, heroized, dismantled- Richmond’s Robert E. Lee Monument
  - 4.9.20: Shrady and Casey, Ulysses S. Grant Memorial
  - 4.9.22: Louis Sullivan
    - 13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building
    - 4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building

5: Canada in the 19th Century

- 13.5.1: “A Cheap Farm House,” c. 1864–onward
- 13.5.2: William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal
- 13.5.3: Frances Jones (Bannerman), In the Conservatory

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Detailed Licensing

Licensing

*A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Native North American art, c. 1500 – today

“Native American art” generally refers to peoples in what is today the United States and Canada.

c. 1500 - present

1.1: Terms and Issues in Native American Art
1.2: About geography and chronological periods in Native American art
1.3: East
1.3.1: Global trade and an 18th-century Anishinaabe outfit
1.3.2: Anishinaabe shoulder bag
1.3.3: The bandolier bag
1.3.4: Bandolier Bag
1.3.5: Codex Canadensis
1.4: West
1.4.1: Juana Basilia Sitmelelene, Presentation Basket (Chumash)
1.4.2: Bear Claw Necklace (Pawnee)
1.4.3: Eastern Shoshone- Hide Painting of the Sun Dance, attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody)
1.4.4: Feathered war bonnet
1.4.5: Headdress (Cheyenne or Lakota)
1.4.6: Paukeigope (Kiowa), Cradleboard
1.4.7: Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), Battle of Little Bighorn
1.4.8: War Shirt (Upper Missouri River)
1.4.9: Nellie Two Bear Gates, Suitcase
1.4.10: Henry Oscar One Bull, Custer’s War
1.4.11: Carrie Bethel (Mono Lake Paiute), Basket bowl
1.4.12: Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Earth Song
1.4.13: Brummett Echohawk (Pawnee), An Island of Redbuds on the Cimarron
1.5: Southwest
1.5.1: Pueblo architecture and its relationship to place
1.5.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo
1.5.3: Acoma polychrome water jar
1.5.4: Hopi- White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure)
1.5.5: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar
1.5.6: Puebloan- Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel
1.5.7: Julian Martinez, Buffalo Dancers
1.5.8: Awa Tsireh (Puebloan), Pottery Makers
1.5.9: The pueblo modernism of Ma Pe Wi
1.6: Northwest coast
1.6.1: Tsimshian shaman’s rattle
1.6.2: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka’wakw)
1.6.3: Transformation masks
1.6.4: North Wind Mask

1.6.5: Arctic clothing
1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan
1.6.7: Haida potlatch pole
1.6.8: Bentwood Boxes of the Northwest Coast peoples
1.6.9: Tlingit mortuary and memorial totem poles
1.6.10: Tlingit Proud Raven totem pole, Saxman Totem Park
1.6.11: Tlingit Oyster Man totem pole, Saxman Totem Park
1.6.12: Dorica Jackson, Diving Whale Chilkat Robe
1.6.13: Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit), Resilience Robe
1.6.14: Northwest Coast Basketry—Woven Traditions
1.7: Contemporary art
1.7.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)
1.7.2: Wendy Red Star, 1880 Crow Peace Delegation
1.8: Contemporary Native American Architecture

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1.1: Terms and Issues in Native American Art

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, the Dakotas, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, Wisconsin, Wyoming—all state names derived from Native American sources. Pontiac, moose, raccoon, pecan, kayak, squash, chipmunk, Winnebago. These common words also derive from different Native words and demonstrate the influence these groups have had on the United States.Pontiac, for instance, was an 18th century Ottawa chief (also called Obwandiyag), who fought against the British in the Great Lakes region. The word "moose," first used in English in the early seventeenth century during colonization, comes from Algonquian languages.

Stereotypes



Figure **1.1.1**: "Balboa and the Indian Princess," 1906, in Frederick A., Ober, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa (New York, Harper, 1906), p. 68

Stereotypes persist when discussing Native American arts and cultures, and sadly many people remain unaware of the complicated and fascinating histories of Native peoples and their art. Too many people still imagine a warrior or chief on horseback wearing a feathered headdress, or a beautiful young "princess" in an animal hide dress (what we now call the Indian Princess). Popular culture and movies perpetuate these images, and homogenize the incredible diversity of Native groups across North America. There are too many different languages, cultural traditions, cosmologies, and ritual practices to adequately make broad statements about the cultures and arts of the indigenous peoples of what is now the United States and Canada.

In the past, the term "primitive" has been used to describe the art of Native tribes and First Nations. This term is deeply problematic—and reveals the distorted lens of colonialism through which these groups have been seen and misunderstood. After contact, Europeans and Euro-Americans often conceived of the Amerindian peoples of North America as noble savages (a primitive, uncivilized, and romanticized "Other"). This legacy has affected the reception and appreciation of Native arts, which is why much of it was initially collected by anthropological (rather than art) museums. Many people viewed Native objects as curiosities or as specimens of "dying" cultures—which in part explains why many objects were stolen or otherwise acquired without approval of Native peoples. Many sacred objects, for example, were removed and put on display for non-Native audiences. While much has changed, this legacy lives on, and it is important to be aware of and overcome the many stereotypes and biases that persist from prior centuries.

Repatriation

One significant step that has been taken to correct some of this colonial legacy has been NAGPRA, or the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1992. This is a U.S. federal law that dictates that "human remains, funerary objects, sacred

objects, and objects of cultural patrimony, referred to collectively in the statute as cultural items" be returned to tribes if they can demonstrate "lineal descent or cultural affiliation." Many museums in the U.S. have been actively trying to repatriate items and human remains. For example, in 2011, a museum returned a wooden box drum, a hide robe, wooden masks, a headdress, a rattle, and a pipe to the Tlingít T'akdeintaan Clan of Hoonah, Alaska. These objects were purchased in 1924 for $500.

In the 19th century, many groups were violently forced from their ancestral homelands onto reservations. This is an important factor to remember when reading the essays and watching the videos in this section because the art changes—sometimes very dramatically—in response to these upheavals. You might read elsewhere that objects created after these transformations are somehow less authentic because of the influence of European or Euro-American materials and subjects on Native art. However, it is crucial that we do not view those artworks as somehow less culturally valuable simply because Native men and women responded to new and sometimes radically changed circumstances.

Many twentieth and twenty-first century artists, including Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Sioux), Alex Janvier (Chipewyan [Dene]) and Robert Davidson (Haida), don't consider themselves to work outside of so-called "traditional arts." In 1958, Howe even wrote a famous letter commenting on his methods when his work was denounced by Philbrook Indian Art Annual Jurors as not being "authentic" Native art:

> ***Who ever said that my paintings are not in the traditional Indian style has poor knowledge of Indian art indeed. There is much more to Indian Art than pretty, stylized pictures. There was also power and strength and individualism (emotional and intellectual insight) in the old Indian paintings. Every bit in my paintings is a true, studied fact of Indian paintings. Are we to be held back forever with one phase of Indian painting, with no right for individualism, dictated to as the Indian has always been, put on reservations and treated like a child, and only the White Man knows what is best for him? Now, even in Art, 'You little child do what we think is best for you, nothing different." Well, I am not going to stand for it. Indian Art can compete with any Art in the world, but not as a suppressed Art….*** [1]

More terms and issues

The word Indian is considered offensive to many peoples. The term derives from the Indies, and was coined after Christopher Columbus bumped into the Caribbean islands in 1492, believing, mistakenly, that he had found India. Other terms are equally problematic or generic. You might encounter many different terms to describe the peoples in North America, such as Native American, American Indian, Amerindian, Aboriginal, Native, Indigenous, First Nations, and First Peoples.

Native American is used here because people are most familiar with this term, yet we must be aware of the problems it raises. The term applies to peoples throughout the Americas, and the Native peoples of North America, from Panama to Alaska and northern Canada, are incredibly diverse. It is therefore important to represent individual cultures as much as we possibly can. The essays here use specific tribal and First Nations names so as not to homogenize or lump peoples together. On SmartHistory, the artworks listed under Native American Art are only those from the United States and Canada, while those in Mexico and Central America are located in other sections.

You might also encounter words like tribes, clans, or bands in relation to the social groups of different Native communities. The United States government refers to an Indigenous group as a "tribe," while the Canadian government uses the term "ban." Many communities in Canada prefer the term "nation."

Identity

In order to be legally classified as an indigenous person in the United States and Canada, an individual must be officially listed as belonging to a specific tribe or band. This issue of identity is obviously a sensitive one, and serves as a reminder of the continuing impact of colonial policy. Many contemporary artists, including James Luna (Pooyukitchum/Luiseño) and Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith (from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation), address the problem of who gets to decide who or what an Indian is in their work.

Luna's *Artifact Piece* (1987) and *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (1993) both confront issues of identity and stereotypes of Native peoples. In *Artifact Piece*, Luna placed himself into a glass vitrine (like the ones we often see in museums) as if he were a static artifact, a relic of the past, accompanied by personal items like pictures of his family. In *Take a Picture with a Real Indian*, Luna asks his audience to come take a picture with him. He changes clothes three times. He wears a loincloth, then a loincloth with a feather and a bone breastplate, and then what we might call "street clothes." Most people choose to take a picture with him in the former two, and so Luna draws attention to the problematic idea that somehow he is less authentically Native when dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.

Even the naming conventions applied to peoples need to be revisited. In the past, the Navajo term "Anasazi" was used to name the ancestors of modern-day Puebloans. Today, "Ancestral Puebloans" is considered more acceptable. Likewise, "Eskimo" designated peoples in the Arctic region, but this word has fallen out of favor because it homogenizes the First Nations in this area. In general, it is always preferable to use a tribe or Nation's specific name when possible, and to do so in its own language.

1. Oscar Howe and the Philbrook Museum of Art, 1958

Additional resources:

Interview with James Luna for the Smithsonian

The National Museum of the American Indian

NAGPRA explained by the NMAI

Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent*, 4th ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005).

David W. Penney, *North American Indian Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

Karen Kramer Russell, ed., *Shapeshifting: Transformations in Native American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

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1.2: About geography and chronological periods in Native American art

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

Typically when people discuss Native American art they are referring to peoples in what is today the United States and Canada. You might sometimes see this referred to as Native North American art, even though Mexico, the Caribbean, and those countries in Central America are typically not included. These areas are commonly included in the arts of Mesoamerica (or Middle America), even though these countries are technically part of North America.

So how do we consider so many groups and of such diverse natures? We tend to treat them geographically: Eastern Woodlands (sometime divided between North and Southeast), Southwest and West (or California), Plains and Great Basin, and Northwest Coast and North (Sub-Arctic and Arctic). While this is by no means a perfect way of addressing the varied tribes and First Nations within these areas, such a map can help to reveal patterns and similarities.



Figure **1.2.1**: Map of North America showing the regions of Native American cultures

Chronology

Chronology (the arrangement of events into specific time periods in order of occurrence) is tricky when discussing Native American or First Nations art. Each geographic region is assigned different names to mark time, which can be confusing to anyone learning about the images, objects, and architecture of these areas for the first time. For instance, for the ancient Eastern Woodlands, you might read about the Late Archaic (c. 3000–1000 B.C.E.), Woodland (c. 1100 BCE–1000 C.E.), Mississippian (c. 900–c. 1500/1600 C.E.), and Fort Ancient (c. 1000–1700) periods. But if we turn to the Southwest, there are alternative terms like Basketmaker (c. 100 B.C.E.–700 C.E.) and Pueblo (700–1400 C.E.). You might also see terms like pre- and post-Contact (before and after contact with Europeans and Euro-Americans) and Reservation Era (late nineteenth century) that are used to separate different moments in time. Some of these terms speak to the colonial legacy of Native peoples because they separate time based on interactions with foreigners. Other terms like Prehistory have fallen out of favor and are problematic since they suggest that Native peoples didn't have a history prior to European contact.

Organization

We arrange Native American and First Nations material prior to c. 1500 in a separate section which includes material about the Ancestral Puebloans, Moundbuilders, and Mississippian peoples. Those objects and buildings created after c. 1500 are in their own

section, which will hopefully highlight the continuing diversity of Native groups as well as the transformations (sometimes violent ones) occurring throughout parts of North America. Artists working after 1914 (or the beginning of WWI) are located in both the Art of the Americas section, and in the modern and contemporary areas.

Additional resources:

Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Brian M. Fagan, *Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent*, 4th ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005).

David W. Penney, *North American Indian Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

Karen Kramer Russell, ed., *Shapeshifting: Transformations in Native American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.3: East

1.3.1: Global trade and an 18th-century Anishinaabe outfit

1.3.2: Anishinaabe shoulder bag

1.3.3: The bandolier bag

1.3.4: Bandolier Bag

1.3.5: Codex Canadensis

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1.3.1: Global trade and an 18th-century Anishinaabe outfit

by DR. DAVID W. PENNEY, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



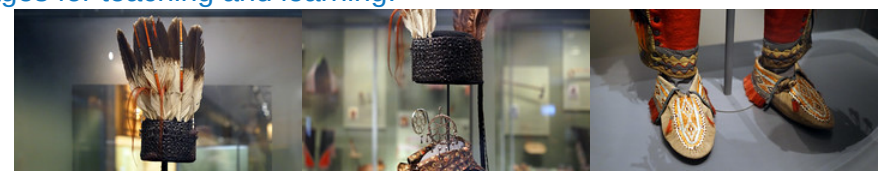
Video **1.3.1.1**: Anishinaabe outfit, c. 1790, collected by Lieutenant Andrew Foster, Fort Michilimackinac (British), Michigan, Birchbark, cotton, linen, wool, feathers, silk, silver brooches, porcupine quills, horsehair, hide, sinew; the moccasins were like made by the Huron–Wendat people (National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution), a Seeing America video

Speakers: Dr. David Penney, Associate Director for Museum Scholarship, Exhibitions, and Public Engagement, National Museum of the American Indian and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

This outfit at the National Museum of the American Indian

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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1.3.2: Anishinaabe shoulder bag

by THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Anishinaabe, possibly Mississauga Ojibwa, Shoulder bag (missing strap), c. 1800, tanned leather, porcupine quills, dye, glass beads, silk ribbon, metal cones, and deer hair, Possibly made in Ontario, Canada; possibly made in Michigan, United States; possibly made in Wisconsin, United States, 30.5 × 22.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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1.3.3: The bandolier bag

by DR. ADRIANA GRECI GREEN and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.3.3.1**: A conversation with Dr. Adriana Greci Green and Dr. Steven Zucker. Shoulder Bag, 1840-1850, Delaware, Lenni Lenape, cotton, wool, silk, glass beads, tinned iron, brass, bone, 29 1/2 inches high (Newark Museum of Art, Purchase 2017 Mr. and Mrs. William V. Griffin Fund 2017.10)

Additional resources:

The Shoulder Bag at the Newark Museum of Art

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1.3.4: Bandolier Bag

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



Figure 1.3.4.1: Bandolier Bag (detail at right), 1880s, Winnebago (?), wool and cotton trade cloth, wool yarn, glass, metal, 34 1/2 x 12″ / 87.6 x 30.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

When looking at photographs of what we today call a Bandolier Bag (in the Ojibwe language they are called *Aazhooningwa'on*, or "worn across the shoulder"), it is nearly impossible to see the thousands of tiny beads strung together that decorate the bag's surface.[1] This is an object that invites close looking to fully appreciate the process by which colorful beads animate the bag, making a dazzling object and showcasing remarkable technical skill.

What is a Bandolier Bag?

Bandolier Bags are based on bags carried by European soldiers armed with rifles, who used the bags to store ammunition cartridges. While Bandolier Bags were made by different tribes and First Nations across the Great Lakes and Prairie regions, they differ in appearance. The stylistic differences are the result of personal preference as much contact with Europeans and Euro-Americans, goods acquired in trade, and travel.



Figure 1.3.4.2: Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in New York City has a wonderful example of a Bandolier Bag, most likely made by a Lenape artist (the Lenape are part of the Delaware tribe or First Nation, who lived along the Delaware River and parts of

what is today New York State).[2]

Bandolier Bags (like this one) are often large in size and decorated with a wide array of colorful beads and ribbons. They are worn as a cross-body bag, with a thick strap crossing a person's chest to allow it to rest on the hip.

These bags were especially popular in the late nineteenth century in the Eastern or Woodlands region, which comprised parts of what is today Canada and the United States. The Woodlands area encompasses the Great Lakes Region and terrain east of the Mississippi River. This enormous geographic area has a long, complex history including the production of objects we today recognize as "art," that date back more than 4,000 years.



Figure **1.3.4.3**: The Eastern Woodlands (on the map above "Northeast" and "Southeast") extended roughly from the Atlantic Ocean to the eastern Great Plains, and from the Great Lakes region to the Gulf of Mexico.

Bandolier Bags were created across this vast expanse of land, and the NMAI has examples from the Upper Great Lakes region and Oklahoma. Due to events and laws like the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (signed by President Andrew Jackson), the Lenape were forcibly removed from these ancestral lands and relocated to areas of Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada. Despite these traumatic relocations, tribes like the Lenape continued to create objects as they had in ancestral lands. Bandolier bags are one example of this continued artistic production.

Material and design



Figure **1.3.4.4**: Chief Cloud Wearing a Bandolier Bag (source: **Wisconsin Historical Society**)

While men most commonly wore these bags, women created them. Initially, Bandolier Bags did not have a pocket, but were intended to complement men's ceremonial outfits. Men even wore more than one bag on occasion, dressing themselves in a rainbow of colors and patterns. Even those bags with pockets weren't necessarily always used to hold objects.

Women typically produced Bandolier Bags using trade cloth, made from cotton or wool. It is often possible to see the exposed unembroidered trade cloth underneath the cross-body strap. The NMAI bag (above) uses animal hide in addition to the cotton cloth, combining materials that had long been used among these groups (animal hides) with new materials (cotton trade cloth).

Beads and other materials were embroidered on the trade cloth and hide. The tiny glass beads, called seed beads, were acquired from European traders, and they were prized for their brilliant colors. Glass beads replaced porcupine quillwork, which had a longstanding history in this area. Before the use of glass beads, porcupine quills were acquired (carefully!), softened and dyed. Once they were malleable enough to bend, the quills were woven onto the surfaces of objects (especially clothing or other cloth goods like bags). Quillwork required different working techniques than embroidering with beads, so people adopted new methods for decorating the surfaces of bags, clothing, and other goods.



Figure 1.3.4.5: Silk ribbons (detail), Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

In addition to glass beads, the NMAI bag is decorated with silk ribbons—also procured via trade with Europeans. Much like the glass beads, silk ribbons offered a new material with a greater variety of color choices. Looking at the NMAI bag, we can see that the artists attached strips of yellow, blue, red, and green ribbons, like tassels, to the ends of the straps, as well as longer orange ribbons that fall below the bottom of the bag. Before the introduction of ribbons, women would paint the surface of hides in addition to decorating the bags with quillwork. Ribbons afforded women the opportunity to produce more textural variation, and to expand the surface of the bags in new ways. Imagine wearing this bag: the bright colors would attract attention and the sparkle of the beads would reflect sunlight as the ribbons fluttered in the wind or moved as one walked.

Further animating the surface of the NMAI Bandolier Bag is a red wool fringe, capped with metal cones that attach to the bag's rectangular pouch. Like the ribbons and beads, the fringe and metal offered more colors and textures to the bag's surface.



Figure 1.3.4.6: Fringe (detail), Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

The designs on the bag are abstracted and symmetrical. White beads act as contour lines to help make the designs more visible to the naked eye. On the cross-body strap, we see a design that branches in four directions. Yet notice how the artist has actually made each side slightly different. The left portion of the strap displays a light blue background, and the repeating form is more rounded, with softer edges. On the right side of the strap, the blue is darker, the framing pink and green is varied, and the repeating form displays more straight lines. The small size of seed beads allowed for more curvilinear designs than quillwork.



Figure **1.3.4.7**: Strap (detail), Bandolier Bag, Lenape (Delaware tribe, Oklahoma), c. 1850 C.E., hide, cotton cloth, silk ribbon, glass beads, wool yarn, metal cones, 68 x 47 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

It is possible that the contrasting colors represent the Celestial/Sky and Underworld realms. The abstracted designs on the sash may also be read in relation to the cosmos because they branch into four directions, which might relate to the four cardinal directions (north, south, east, and west) and the division of the terrestrial (earthly) realm into four quadrants.

Prairie Style

The NMAI Bandolier Bag relates to a broader array of objects that demonstrate the Prairie Style. The artist of the NMAI Bandolier Bag borrowed from older Delaware traditions, as well as those of other native peoples after they were forcibly relocated. Another Bandolier bag in the NMAI collection (below), by an Anishnaabe artist, demonstrates the “Prairie Style” clearly in the upper section where a floral motif floats against a dark ground.



Figure **1.3.4.8**: Bandolier Bag, Anishnaabe (Chippewa/Ojibwe), c. 1870, Upper Great Lakes, wool, cotton cloth, and glass beads. 87 x 26 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)



Figure **1.3.4.9**: Sac and Fox man's breechcloth, c. 1880, Oklahoma, wool cloth, cotton, glass bead/beads, cotton thread, 135 x 45 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, New York)

The Prairie Style used colorful glass beads fashioned in floral patterns. The patterns could be either naturalistic flowers or abstract floral designs. A Sac and Fox breechcloth in the NMAI collection (left) is a clear example of the more abstract Prairie Style because the floral designs do not closely resemble flowers that you might see in nature (the Sacs or Sauks are an Eastern Woodlands group, the Fox tribe is closely related to them, and they are both centered in Oklahoma today, though there are Sac and Fox tribes in Iowa and Kansas as well).

The Prairie Style is the result of peoples coming into contact with one another, particularly in the wake of removal from their ancestral homelands. Floral forms, combined with the use of ribbons and colorful glass beads, not only attest to the transformations in artistic production, but also testifies to the creativity of people as they adapted to new situations. Bandolier Bags, as well as other objects and clothing, helped to express group identities and social status. In the wake of forced removals and threats to traditional ways of life, objects like the NMAI Bandolier Bag demonstrate the resilience and continued creativity of groups like the Lenape.

Today

Bandolier Bags are still made and worn today—attesting to their rich and complex history and their continuing ceremonial and cultural functions. For example, when the NMAI opened a new museum in Washington, D.C., in 2004, Ojibwe men wore colorful Bandolier Bags during the opening festivities and ceremonies. Artists continue to innovate by creating new interpretations of Bandolier Bags. Maria Hupfield, who belongs to the Wasauksing First Nation in Ontario, Canada, and currently lives in Brooklyn, made a Bandolier Bag from gray felt—an industrial material transformed into something beautiful and historically significant.

1. Anishnaabe is the name for the ethnic group that comprises the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi First Nations around the Great Lakes. Due to relocations of the nineteenth century, many other groups like the Delaware and Dakota currently live on the same lands.

2. In the United States, it is more common to see the term "Native American," "Native," or "Indigenous," whereas "First Nations" used more frequently in Canada.

Additional resources:

Lenape Bandolier Bag in the National Museum of the American Indian

Sac and Fox man's breechcloth in the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)

Anishinaabe bandolier bag in the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)

"Beadwork Masterpieces: Native American Bandolier Bags of the Prairies and Lakes" from the Nebraska State Historical Society

The NMAI blog on Maria Hupfield

David W. Penny, North American Indian Art, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, Native North American Art, 2 ed. Oxford History of Art series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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1.3.5: Codex Canadensis

by JENNY KELLER and DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



Codex Canadensis, c. 1700, ink on paper, 33.7 x 21.6 cm (Gilcrease Museum)
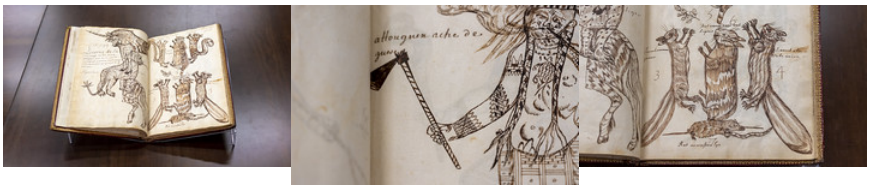
Additional resources

This work at the Gilcrease Museum

Smarthistory images for teaching and learning:



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1.4: West

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1.4.1: Juana Basilia Sitmelelene, Presentation Basket (Chumash)

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.4.1.1**: Juana Basilia Sitmelelene, Coin (Presentation) Basket, Chumash, Mission San Buenaventura, c. 1815-22, sumac, juncus textilis, mud dye, 9 x 48 cm (National Museum of the American Indian).Speakers: Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank and Dr. Steven Zucker

Learn about this beautiful basket—a luxury item made by a Chumash woman in California (then, New Spain) at the time of the Mexican War of Independence from Spain—with motifs derived from Spanish coins.

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1.4.2: Bear Claw Necklace (Pawnee)

by DR. JOHN P. LUKAVIC, DENVER ART MUSEUM and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.4.2.1**: Bear Claw Necklace (Pawnee), before 1870, grizzly bear claws and hide, otter pelt, beads, cedar, tobacco and other materials (Denver Art Museum), a SmartHistory Seeing America video

Speakers: Dr. John Lukavic, curator of Native Arts, Denver Art Museum and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional historical narratives:

Matt Reed
Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Cultural Resource Division of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma notes that:

When the Lakota attacked, Sky Chief put the necklace and the family's sacred bundle on his young daughter, put her on his horse, and told her to run. She made it to safety. Sky Chief died right after he killed his own little boy to prevent the child's capture, torture, and death by the Sioux. When Sky Chief's daughter eventually got back to Genoa, Nebraska (then the Pawnee Reservation), the little girl, now an orphan, was taken in by Bluehawk (Matt Reed's grandfather), who raised her as his own. She grew up, married, and in 1987, her granddaughter, Elizabeth, gave the sacred bundle to the Earthlodge Museum in Republic, Kansas. More information on the bundle can be found here.

Roger Echo-Hawk
Pawnee tribal historian, notes that:

Stacy Matlock, a Chaui Pawnee chief, was said to have worn this necklace in 1925 during a visit to the Lakota when they formally apologized for the 1873 attack at Massacre Canyon. The Denver Art Museum acquired the necklace in 1973.

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



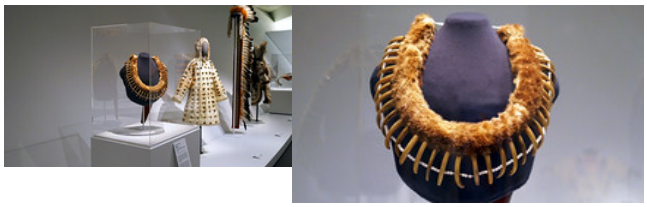
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1.4.3: Eastern Shoshone- Hide Painting of the Sun Dance, attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody)

by *DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK*



Figure **1.4.3.1**: Attributed to Cotsiogo, *Hide Painting of the Sun Dance*, c. 1890-1900, Eastern Shoshone (Wind River Reservation, WY), painted elk hide (Indian Arts Research Center, School for Advanced Research, Santa Fe, NM)

Animal hide painting

Painting on animal hides is a longstanding tradition of the Great Basin and Great Plains people of the United States, including the Kiowa, Lakota, Shoshone, Blackfeet, Crow, Dakota, and Osage. While the earliest surviving hide paintings date to around 1800, this tradition was undoubtedly practiced much earlier along with other forms of painting like petroglyphs (rock engravings).



Figure **1.4.3.2**: Attributed to Cotsiogo, *Hide painting of the Sun Dance*, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately. 81 x 78 inches (**Brooklyn Museum**)

Painting, in tandem with oral traditions, functioned to record history. Often artists like Cotsiogo (Eastern Shoshone; pronounced “co SEE ko”), who is also known by his Euro-American name, Cadzi Cody, painted on elk, deer, or buffalo hides using natural pigments like red ochre and chalk, and eventually paints and dyes obtained through trade. Usually, artists decorated the hides with geometric or figural motifs. By the later nineteenth century certain hide artists like Cotsiogo began depicting subject matter that “affirmed native identity” and appealed to tourists. The imagery placed on the hide was likely done with a combination of free-hand painting and stenciling.

Men and women both painted on hides, but men usually produced the scenes on tipis (tepees), clothing, and shields. Many of these scenes celebrated battles and other biographical details. The Brooklyn Museum’s hide painting by Cotsiogo may have functioned as

a wall hanging and has also been classified as a robe.



Figure **1.4.3.3**: Map with Wind River Reservation, Wyoming © Google Earth

The artist

Cotsiogo (also Codsiogo, Katsikodi or Cadzi Cody), a member of the Eastern Shoshone tribe, painted many hides in addition to the two shown above. They represent his experiences during a period of immense change for the Shoshone people. During his lifetime, Cotsiogo was placed on the Wind River Reservation in central western Wyoming.



Figure **1.4.3.4**: Wind River Canyon, Wind River Indian Reservation, Wyoming (photo: **J. Stephen Conn**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The Wind River Reservation is the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined and had been established by the Fort Bridger Treaty of 1868. Prior to their placement on the Wind River Reservation, the Shoshone moved with the seasons and the availability of natural resources. Many Shoshone traversed the geographic regions we now call the Great Plains and Plateau regions.

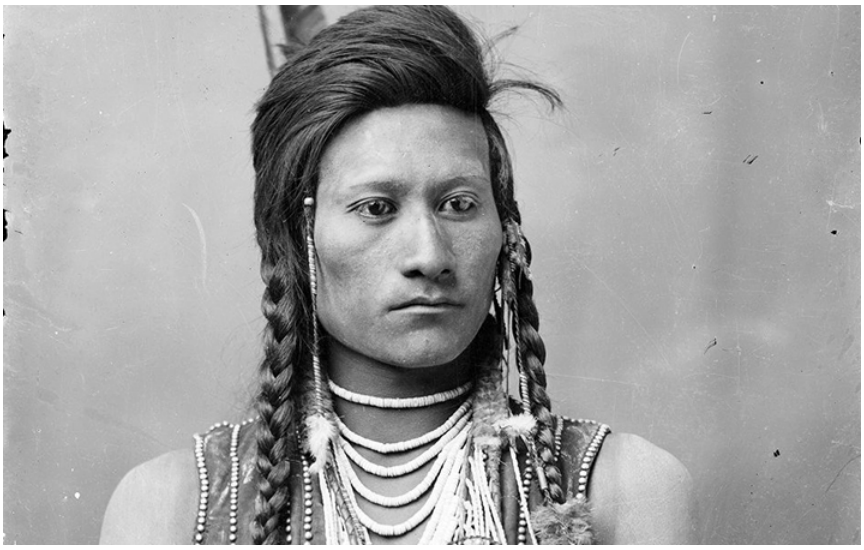


Figure 1.4.3.5: Charles S. Baker and Eli Johnston, Portrait of Codsiogo (detail), before 1898, photograph (American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming)

Cotsiogo likely created the Brooklyn Museum hide painting (above) for Euro-American tourists who visited the reservation. It might explain why there is a scene of buffalo hunting, a scene which was thought to be desirable to tourists. Its production helped to support him after the Shoshone were moved to the reservation. With newly established trade markets and the influx of new materials, artists like Cotsiogo sometimes produced work that helped support themselves and their families.

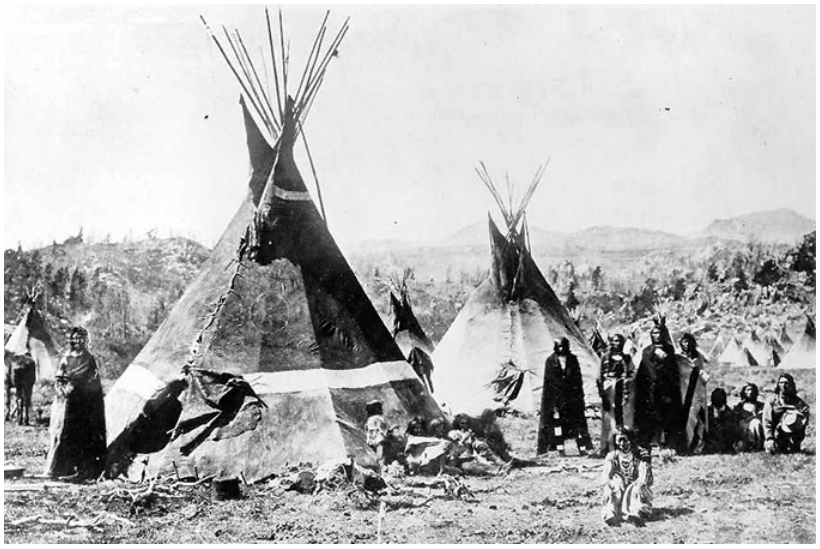


Figure 1.4.3.6: A Shoshone encampment in the Wind River Mountains, Wyoming, 1870 (photo: W. H. Jackson, Smithsonian Institution)

Subject matter

Cotsiogo's Brooklyn Museum hide painting combines history with the contemporary moment. It displays elements of several different dances, including the important and sacred Sun Dance and non-religious Wolf Dance (*tdsayuge* or *tásayùge*). The Sun Dance surrounds a not-yet-raised buffalo head between two poles (or a split tree), with an eagle above it. Men dressed in feather bustles and headdresses—not to be confused with feathered war bonnets—dance around the poles, which represents the Grass Dance. With their arms akimbo and their bodies bent, Cotsiogo shows these men in motion. Men participating in this sacred, social ceremony refrained from eating or drinking.



Figure **1.4.3.7**: Sun and Wolf Dances (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, *Hide painting of the Sun Dance*, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (**Brooklyn Museum**)

The Sun Dance was intended to honor the Creator Deity for the earth's bounty and to ensure this bounty continued. It was a sacred ceremony that tourists and anthropologists often witnessed. However, the United States government deemed it unacceptable and forbid it. The U.S. government outlawed the Sun Dance until 1935, in an effort to compel Native Americans to abandon their traditional ways. Cotsiogo likely included references to the Sun Dance because he knew tourist consumers would find the scene attractive; but he modified the scene combining it with the acceptable Wolf Dance, perhaps to avoid potential ramifications. The Wolf Dance eventually transformed into the Grass Dance which is performed today during pow wows (ceremonial gatherings).



Figure **1.4.3.8**: Women rest near a fire (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, *Hide painting of the Sun Dance*, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (**Brooklyn Museum**)

The hide painting also shows activities of daily life. Surrounding the Sun Dance, women rest near a fire and more men on horses hunt buffaloes. Warriors on horses are also shown returning to camp, which was celebrated with the Wolf Dance. Two tipis represent the camp, with the warriors appearing between them. Some of the warriors wear feathered war bonnets made of eagle feathers. These headdresses communicated a warrior acted bravely in battle, and so they functioned as symbols of honor and power. Not just anyone could wear a feathered war bonnet!



Figure 1.4.3.9: Warriors returning to camp (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, *Hide painting of the Sun Dance*, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (**Brooklyn Museum**)

Cotsiogo shows the warriors hunting with bows and arrows while riding, but in reality Shoshone men had used rifles for some time. Horses were introduced to the Southwest by Spaniards. Horses made their way to some Plains nations through trade with others like the Ute, Navajo, and Apache. By the mid-eighteenth century, horses had become an important part of Plains culture.



Figure 1.4.3.10: Preparing a buffalo (detail), Attributed to Cotsiogo, Hide painting of the Sun Dance, c. 1890–1900, Eastern Shoshone, elk hide and pigment, approximately 81 x 78″ (**Brooklyn Museum**)

Buffaloes were sacred to the Plains people because the animals were essential to their livelihood. Some scenes display individuals skinning buffaloes and separating the animals' body parts into piles. All parts of the buffalo were used, as it was considered a way of honoring this sacred animal. At the time Cotsiogo painted this hide, most buffalo had either been killed or displaced. Buffaloes had largely disappeared from this area by the 1880s. Cotsiogo's hide thus marks past events and deeds rather than events occurring at the time it was created.

> ***Editor's note on the contemporary situation on the Wind River Reservation :***
>
> ***According to The New York Times, the 14,000 current residents of the Wind River Reservation suffer a crime rate more than five times the national average, a life expectancy of only 49 years, and an unemployment rate that may be above 80 percent.***

Additional resources:

Information on Cotsiogo, University of Wyoming

Hide with history of Eastern Shoshone Chief Washakie's combats

A Song of the Horse Nation: Horses in Native American Cultures, an exhibit at the NMAI

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1.4.4: Feathered war bonnet

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK

More than an accessory (way more)



Figure **1.4.4.1**: George Catlin, *Máh-to-tóh-pa, Four Bears, Second Chief, in Full Dress*, 1832, oil on canvas (Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.)

Today it might be fairly common to see feathered headdresses worn at outdoor music festivals as an attractive or visually powerful accessory. However, feathered headdress replicas in this context misuse important cultural and spiritual objects of the Native tribes of the Great Plains. These objects have become so popular in our contemporary cultural imagination (like in many Western movies) that we often assume that the feathered headdress was a prevalent item of Plains dress (and all First Nations and indigenous groups) —especially as they were envisioned by nineteenth-century Euro-American artists such as Karl Bodmer or George Catlin.

Catlin's *Máh-to-tóh-pa* ("*Four Bears*," painted 1832), for instance, shows the Mandan chief standing in a war shirt with leggings and festooned with a feathered headdress that frames his head and extends down the length of his back.[1] Works like this one were often sent around North America to introduce unfamiliar people to Native peoples of the Great Plains, causing many to assume that such headdresses were commonplace items.



Figure **1.4.4.2**: Sioux or Cheyenne Artist, Feathered War Bonnet (Pawhuska, Oklahoma), late 19th-early 20th c., feathers, beads, pigment, hide, dyed horsehair, 174 x 21.5 cm (The Brooklyn Museum)

However, feathered headdresses, or more correctly, eagle-feather war bonnets, were and are objects of great significance for peoples of the Plains tribes. As described in a White River Sioux story about Chief Roman Nose, "He had the fierce, proud face of

a hawk, and his deeds were legendary. He always rode into battle with a long warbonnet trailing behind him. It was thick with eagle feathers, and each stood for a brave deed, a coup counted on the enemy."[1]

A male warrior had to earn the privilege of wearing a war bonnet, like the Cheyenne or Sioux war bonnet in the Brooklyn Museum's collection (left). This item of adornment, along with the warrior's clothing, communicated his rank in a given warrior society. Someone could not just decide to wear one–it was decidedly *not* a fashion accessory. In fact, to acquire a war bonnet a warrior had to display great bravery in battle. On those occasions that a warrior accomplished great deeds or battle coups, he received an eagle feather. For this reason, feathers also recalled specific moments in time. When worn into battle, a warrior could not surrender his war bonnet, and so it acquired associations with bravery and valiancy. Warriors who had elaborate bonnets clearly possessed these desirable qualities in great quantities.



Figure **1.4.4.3**: Antonio Zeno Shindler, *Portrait of Deloria or Ceca Hinna (Chief with the Big War Bonnet) or Delaurier (Half-Breed) in Native Dress with Headdress and Holding Pipe Tomahawk*, 1867 (Dakota Yankton/Hunkpapa), photograph (BAE GN 03547 06594600, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

Only important chiefs and warriors could don a war bonnet, and they were typically worn during ceremonies; certain types of war bonnets would have been difficult to wear into battle, especially those that trailed down the length of the back. Regardless of when they were worn, imagine a warrior on horseback wearing a war bonnet: he would seem to be moving, as if he were a bird in flight —a striking and intimidating appearance. War bonnet feathers could take several different forms, they might stand straight-up, create a halo around the face, or trail down the back.



Figure **1.4.4.4**: Sioux or Cheyenne Artist, Feathered War Bonnet (Pawhuska, Oklahoma), late 19th-early 20th c., feathers, beads, pigment, hide, dyed horsehair, 174 x 21.5cm (The Brooklyn Museum)

From the front, the Brooklyn Museum's war bonnet fanned outwards and framed an individual's head, almost like the rays of the sun. Eagle feathers—actually the tail feathers of golden eagles—rise upwards and outwards from a hide band decorated with colored glass beads. The beads, common on many mid-to late nineteenth-century war bonnets, were acquired from European and Euro-American traders, often replacing quillwork decoration (decorative element made with porcupine quills). Colorful and easy to manipulate, glass beads were used to create intricate decorative patterns on a variety of objects, including clothes. The Brooklyn Museum's war bonnet shows a stepped-fret pattern that alternates between red and blue, with all the forms picked out by a thick contour line. These bead colors paired with the white and grey eagle feathers, yellow-dyed horse hair, and tiny red-pink downy tufts create a beautiful, colorful object, one that is also remarkable for the different textures presented to the eye. The materials of this object betray its date of creation in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Earlier war bonnets did not have the pink fluff, but would have had only horsehair at the tips.



Figure **1.4.4.5**: Sioux or Cheyenne Artist, Feathered War Bonnet (Pawhuska, Oklahoma), late 19th-early 20th c., feathers, beads, pigment, hide, dyed horsehair, 174 x 21.5cm (The Brooklyn Museum)

This particular war bonnet was clearly for someone of great importance. This is evident because of the numerous feathers in the bonnet itself and because of the feathers that run down the length of the body. Women did not traditionally wear war bonnets, although occasionally after battle, when their male family members—say their husbands—returned, they might don the war bonnet while dancing to celebrate.

Warrior dress

It is important not to think of the feathered war bonnet alone or as the only dress item that demonstrated a warrior's status and accomplishments. A warrior would also be wearing a war shirt, breastplate, and leggings to complete his outfit. Similar to the way in which a feather was earned for brave deeds, the stripes on a warrior's leggings could designate specific exploits. War shirts also communicated a warrior's status because locks of hair (horse or human) could be attached to a shirt to showcase accomplishments such as combat or capturing horses. Designs on war shirts, too, could note such accomplishments.



Figure **1.4.4.6**: Lakota War Shirt, associated with Tashunca-uitco (Crazy Horse, Ogala Lakota), c. 1870s (South Dakota), hide, human- and horsehair, quill, pigment, woodpecker feathers, arrowhead, cocoon (NMAI, NYC)

Tipi liners

Besides dress, other objects related triumphs in battle including narrative tipi liners (hides used to decorate the interior of a tipi, also teepee) or buffalo-hide robes. While the tipi itself would be fashioned by women, tipi liners with narrative scenes were created by men. These autobiographical and historical narrative scenes often depicted battle scenes that commemorated brave deeds in battle.

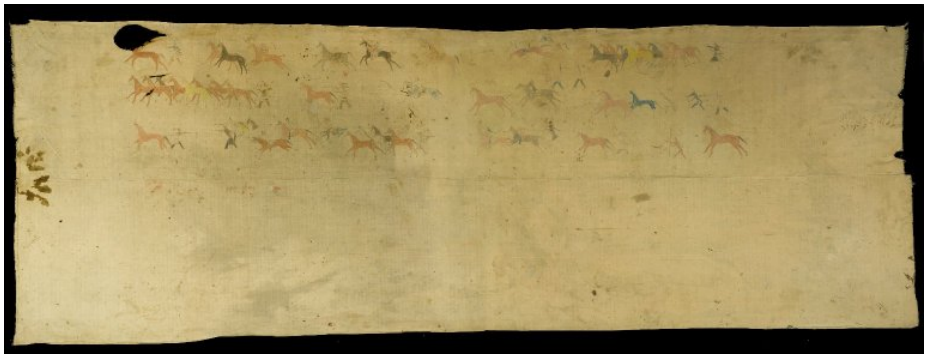


Figure **1.4.4.7**: Rain-In-The-Face (Hunkpapa, Lakota, Sioux), Tipi Liner, 1850-1889, cotton, pigment, crayon, pencil, 512.9 x 171.9 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

A muslin tipi liner in the Brooklyn Museum's collection (above, and detail below), created during the early Reservation period (1880–1920) shows the battle exploits of the Lakota warrior Rain-In The-Face (Ité Omága˘zu, who lived on the Standing Rock reservation in North Dakota) at a time when life for many people living on the Great Plains had been violently disrupted by Euro-American soldiers. Native peoples had been forcibly removed from their homes and lands and placed on reservations, and so their previous ways of life were in a moment of crisis and transition. As a result, prior deeds and acts of battle coups became important to remember as a source of cultural, historical, and ceremonial pride. Rain-In-The-Face's tipi liner draws on earlier traditions commemorating a warrior's battle exploits—in this case his own—but does so in a new medium (muslin, crayon and pencil rather than painted hide) and in a new context—living on the reservation. In some scenes on the liner, Rain-In-The-Face is shown on horseback, holding weapons and a shield and riding in battle.



Figure 1.4.4.8: Detail, Rain-In-The-Face (Hunkpapa, Lakota, Sioux), Tipi Liner, 1850-1889, cotton, pigment, crayon, pencil, 512.9 x 171.9 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Today people do not earn war bonnets from great battle accomplishments, but by helping a given community in some way. A war bonnet might also commemorate one's deeds in the U.S. military, a different way to remember one's strength and courage (versus the battles of the nineteenth century and earlier).

The war bonnet in popular culture

While the feathered headdress is common at many outdoor music festivals and makes a regular appearance in many popular culture films, images, and objects, there have been sustained attempts by many Native groups to end this appropriation for the problematic stereotypes and misunderstanding it conveys. In particular, the misconception that all Native American peoples wore and still wear feathered headdresses, rather than the male warriors and chiefs of the Great Plains who earned the right to wear them. The war bonnet as a contemporary fashion accessory perpetuates a lack of understanding of the postcolonial fate of Native groups across North America.

1. "Chief Roman Nose Loses His Medicine," in American Indian Myths and Legends, edited by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 256.

Additional resources:

The war bonnet in the Brooklyn Museum

The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas (for more on George Catlin)

The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky

Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Plains Indian Museum

Blog post from Native Appropriations, "But Why Can't I Wear a Hipster Headdress?"

Max Carocci, Ritual and Honour: Warriors of the North American Plains (London: British Museum Press, 2011).

Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, Native North American Art, 2 ed. Oxford History of Art series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

David W. Penny, North American Indian Art, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004).

Nancy Rosoff and Susan Kennedy Zeller, eds. Tipi: Heritage of the Great Plains (University of Washington Press, 2010).

Gaylord Torrence, The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky (Skira, 2014).

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1.4.5: Headdress (Cheyenne or Lakota)

by **MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART**



Headdress, late 19th–Early 20th century, Tsitsistas (Cheyenne) or Lakota Artist, bald eagle and other feathers, wool, buffalo and cow hide, horse hair, beads and pigments (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

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1.4.6: Paukeigope (Kiowa), Cradleboard

by DR. CHELSEA HERR and DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



Paukeigope (Kiowa), cradleboard, late 19th century, wood, hide, glass, metal, cloth, 25.4 x 113 cm (Gilcrease Museum)

Additional resources

This cradleboard at the Gilcrease Museum

Learn more about Kiowa cradleboards from the Gilcrease Museum

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1.4.7: Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), Battle of Little Bighorn



Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), *Battle of Little Bighorn*, c. 1920, pencil, ink, and watercolor on muslin, 91.4 × 268 cm, made in Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota, United States (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

This page titled 1.4.7: Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), Battle of Little Bighorn is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

1.4.8: War Shirt (Upper Missouri River)

R. JOHN P. LUKAVIC, DENVER ART MUSEUM



Figure 1.4.8.1: Quilled war shirt (front), c. 1800-1820. Native tanned hide, porcupine and possibly bird quills, plant material, red trade cloth, dyes, and sinew. 34 x 43 inches (Denver Art Museum)

Studying art during a pandemic

As many of us find ourselves working and studying from home while social distancing during the world-wide spread of COVID-19, let us think about the impact other pandemics and epidemics have had on world populations and their arts. Visual records open a window into such events, as we see in depictions of leprosy in European **medieval illuminated manuscripts** or in pictographic accounts of smallpox epidemics that spread across the Great Plains of North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[1] Northern plains groups experienced 36 epidemics between 1714 and 1919, which were documented in chronological order in winter counts.[2] A winter count depicted the most important events that occurred in any given year. Community elders would meet each year to discuss what had occurred since winter started (denoted by the first snowfall), and would select the most important event to name the year, after which a symbol (or pictograph) would be created and added to a hide painting.



Figure 1.4.8.2

One example is the 1837–38 smallpox epidemic which was catastrophic for the Mandan Nation.[3] According to historian Clay Jenkinson “In two waves of smallpox on the Upper Missouri, separated by 56 years, the Mandan had been reduced from a proud nation of more than 15,000 individuals to a pathetic remnant of 145.”[4] With so much loss we must consider the dramatic impact such events had on the transmission of Indigenous knowledge, but also celebrate these communities’ perseverance, and ability to adapt. Today the population of the Three Affiliated Tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara) have again risen to around 15,000 citizens who live on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota.[5]

Understanding this history of pandemic and loss provides us with a lens through which to see artworks from the upper Missouri River region. The scarcity of existing objects, and as a result, limited visual references create significant challenges in making specific attributions and comparisons from this region and period of time.

Still, some of the defining features of northern plains groups (at the time of contact) formed as a response to disease and the resulting loss of life. One scholar notes that “The social fluidity whereby tribes or divisions of tribes split apart and regrouped may have developed as a means of coping with catastrophic population loss.”[6] Epidemics affected all aspects of life for plains groups. For example, warriors could not train and military technology could not be developed if the group was sick and dying.[7]



Figure 1.4.8.3: Assiniboine artist, Shirt, c. 1830. Leather, beads, quills, paint, human hair, and horse hair, 60 x 75 in. (Denver Art Museum)

Museum collections and the paintings of Catlin and Bodmer

We see evidence of the enormous population loss in men's shirts from this time period. In this context, men's shirts refer to a shirt worn by a **warrior** into battle or during festivals (so not daily use), and which are decorated with hair fringes (human and horse), ermine tails, quillwork, and beadwork. While we may know they were made by artists from this region, assigning an attribution to a particular community is difficult for several reasons. Few pre-1850 arts by Indigenous artists from any region exist in U.S. museums, although some can be found in international museums (including in the Paul Kane collection in the Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg and the collections of Prince Maximiliam of Wied in museums located in Berne, Berlin, and Stuttgart). Some collections exist from Lewis and Clark's expedition from 1804–1806, but William Clark's personal collection, once housed in his home in St. Louis until his death in 1838, went missing around this time and its whereabouts remains unknown to this day.[8] The total number of works of American Indian arts from the Plains before 1850 remains quite small.

When you narrow down these early nineteenth-century arts to shirts, and those exclusively from the upper Missouri River region, there are few examples with which to compare, and even fewer with documentation. Of the 40 shirts in the collection of the Denver Art Museum from the Plains and Plateau regions, only two date to around 1830 or before. One is attributed to an Assiniboine artist and the other is dated to 1800–20, and is the focus of this discussion.



Figure **1.4.8.4**: Left: George Catlin, *Stu-mick-o-súcks, Buffalo Bull's Back Fat, the Head Chief of the Blood Tribe* (Blackfoot), 1832, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 60.9 cm (**Smithsonian American Art Museum**); right: George Catlin, *Peh-tó-pe-kiss, Eagle's Ribs* (Blackfoot), 1832, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 60.9 cm (**Smithsonian American Art Museum**)

With limited examples, great losses in the continuity of Indigenous knowledge, and works that predate photography by decades, the main way to identify these shirts is through the written reports of fur traders and explorers, as well as the paintings of George Catlin and Karl Bodmer who traveled in the region in the 1830s.



Figure **1.4.8.5**: Two Assiniboine men. Left: Karl Bodmer, partially completed portrait of Noapeh (Troop of Soldiers), 1833, watercolor; right: Karl Bodmer, an unidentified Assiniboine man, 1833, watercolor

Interpreting what the shirt says about the man who wore it

In December of 2019 the Denver Art Museum received two shirts from the Upper Missouri region of the Plains as gifts from a private collector: one dating to around 1800–20 and the other to around 1855. The earlier of these two shirts is without question the

single most significant work to come into DAM's Native arts collection in decades.



Figure **1.4.8.6**: Quilled war shirt (front), c. 1800-1820. Native tanned hide, porcupine and possibly bird quills, plant material, red trade cloth, dyes, and sinew. 34 x 43 inches (Denver Art Museum)

It is exceedingly rare and among the earliest shirts from the Upper Missouri River region in existence. The shirt's lack of beadwork, minimal use of Bayetta trade wool, and quilled design elements point to its early creation date and connection to this region.

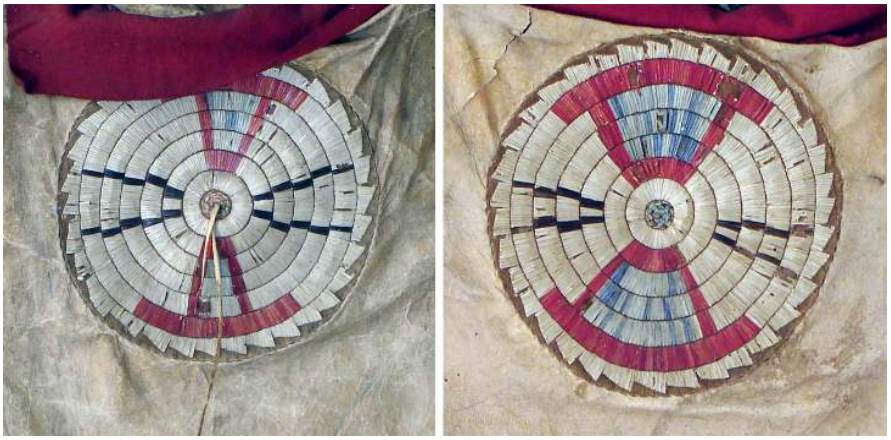


Figure **1.4.8.7**: Detail of the front and back rosettes, quilled war shirt (front), c. 1800-1820. Native tanned hide, porcupine and possibly bird quills, plant material, red trade cloth, dyes, and sinew. 34 x 43 inches (Denver Art Museum)

This fringed "poncho" style shirt with red trade wool rectangular "bibs" was made using Native tanned mountain sheep hides and sewn using sinew (animal tendons or ligaments used as thread). On both the front and back of the shirt are saw-tooth edged medallions (rosettes) and over each shoulder and along each sleeve are three quilled lanes with geometric patterning.



Figure 1.4.8.8: Detail of a sleeve, quilled war shirt, c. 1800-1820. Native tanned hide, porcupine and possibly bird quills, plant material, red trade cloth, dyes, and sinew. 34 x 43 inches (Denver Art Museum)

While little was recorded about the meanings of such elements, the medallions are commonly considered representations of forces of nature, such as the sun or powerful winds. It has also been suggested that the designs on medallions, such as those seen on this shirt and many others from this region, may represent the wings of a Thunderbird, a sacred being for many Plains tribes.

The central medallions are made from porcupine quills, likely plant material, and possibly also bird quills. Porcupine quillwork is a technique Indigenous to North America and was prevalent prior to the trade of European manufactured glass trade beads. Today this technique is experiencing a resurgence among many Native artists. The materials used on this shirt (as well as materials *not* used, such as glass beads) suggest it was made just as trade between fur trappers and Native people began in the central part of North America.



Figure 1.4.8.9: Detail of faces, coup sticks, and bear claws, quilled war shirt (back), c. 1800-1820. Native tanned hide, porcupine and possibly bird quills, plant material, red trade cloth, dyes, and sinew. 34 x 43 inches (Denver Art Museum)

What is among the most exciting elements of this shirt are a series of pictographic and geometric drawings found on either side. If you look closely you will see faint indigo drawings of six heads, above which are floating lines. Below the heads is a row of four bear paws, and to the right are three pipes. The exact meaning of these elements was not recorded; however, based on Indigenous knowledge and with the help of Dr. Timothy McCleary, a colleague from Little Bighorn Tribal College at Crow Agency in Montana, we believe we know what they mean.

The heads with floating lines likely refer to counting coup, or striking an enemy with a stick. When a warrior touched his enemy with his coup stick, it was regarded as an act of extreme bravery because he had to get close to his opponent. The pipes may suggest how many times the shirt's owner led successful war parties. The bear paws show how many Plains grizzlies the owner of

the shirt had killed. Drawings and explanations in American ethnologist Garrick Mallery's 1889 publication *Picture Writing of the American Indians* demonstrates how widespread such imagery was among Plains artists in the late nineteenth century. Mallery's text reproduces a drawing and accompanying explanation by an Oglala Lakota man that explains the meaning of pipes depicted similarly to what we see in the shirt, as well as other design elements recorded on it.



Figure **1.4.8.10**: Detail of quilled war shirt (front), c. 1800-1820. Native tanned hide, porcupine and possibly bird quills, plant material, red trade cloth, dyes, and sinew. 34 x 43 inches (Denver Art Museum)

The designs on the front of the shirt tell even more specific stories about the owner. Here, we find drawings of five X-like forms arranged below the medallion. These are war honor marks. From left to right, we can read these to recount the original owner's achievements in war. The first shows that the warrior was the third person to touch a live enemy in battle (counting coup). The next shows that after he had dismounted an enemy, the owner of the shirt captured the enemy's horse. The next two Xs show he was the fourth person to count coup on an enemy during battle. Then the last shows that he was again the third to count coup on an enemy. Mallery recorded variations of these designs and meanings as told to him by Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara consultants.

These marks were common ways to record war deeds among the Native people of the Upper Missouri River region and are found on clothing, tipis, and in rock art. The Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Crow people are well known for their use of this X to represent an enemy. While a few other tribes also used this imagery, this form with the associated hash marks (denoting the number of coups) and horse hoof prints are all from one of the Upper Missouri River tribes.

Ongoing challenges

Indigenous people have faced countless challenges to their ways of life since the arrival of settler-colonial people. Sickness and disease took its toll, but so did forced relocation, land allotment that broke up clan and society structures, prohibitions against ceremonies and religions, traumatic boarding school experiences, broken treaties, and institutional and structural racism, to name a few. Each of these created seemingly insurmountable hurdles for Indigenous people to overcome.

Many of these challenges still exist. The Navajo Nation has been hit hard by COVID-19. Two Lakota reservations are under attack from the governor of South Dakota for the medical checkpoints they put up on their own roads to protect their citizens from the spread of this disease. Generational trauma from past experiences warns them to protect themselves. Elders are the keepers of knowledge and they are most at risk. The transmission of intergenerational knowledge of all forms, visual arts included, is difficult during such times. But this knowledge still exists in communities. These art forms are still being created by brilliant and innovative Indigenous youth. And this should give us hope for the future.

Notes:

[1] Linea Sundstrom, “Smallpox Used Them up: References to Epidemic Disease in Northern Plains Winter Counts, 1714–1920,” *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 2 (Spring, 1997), pp. 305–343

[2] Sundstrom, “Smallpox Used Them up,” p. 308

[3] It has been suggested that the Mandans, Arikaras, and Hidatsas from the upper Missouri River region lost a combined 70% of their populations. Donald J. Lehmer, “Epidemics among the Indians of the Upper Missouri,” in *Selected Writings of Donald J. Lehmer*, ed. W. Raymond Wood, Reprints in Anthropology no. 8 (I977), pp. 105–11

[4] Clay Jenkinson, “Smallpox and Indians: When Pandemic Warnings Go Unheeded,” in *Governing*, April 22, 2020, https://www.governing.com/context/Smallpox-and-Indians-When-Pandemic-Warnings-Go-Unheeded.html

[5] Jenkinson, “Smallpox and Indians”

[6] Sundstrom, “Smallpox Used Them up,” p. 325

[7] Sundstrom, “Smallpox Used Them up,” p. 325.

[8] Norman Feder, *American Indian Art Before 1850*, Denver Art Museum Summer Quarterly (1965), p. 5; National Park Service, Department of the Interior, “William Clark’s Indian Museum: A Tradition Continued,” in *The Museum Gazette* (October 1997), p. 5

Additional resources

Learn more about the Denver Art Museum’s collection of Indigenous Arts of North America

Learn about Lakota Winter Counts in this Smithsonian video

Learn more about narrative art of the Plains from the National Museum of the American Indian

Colin Taylor, “Analysis and Classification of the Plains Indian Ceremonial Shirt: John C. Ewers Influence on a Plains Material Culture Project,” in *Fifth Annual Plains Indian Seminar in Honor of Dr. John C. Ewers*, ed. George P. Horse Capture and Gene Ball (Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, 1980)

David W. Penney, *Art of the American Frontier: The Chandler-Pohrt Collection* (Detroit Institute of Arts, 1992)

George Horse Capture and Joseph D. Horse Capture, *Beauty, Honor and Tradition: The Legacy of Plains Indian Shirts* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001)

Colin F. Taylor, *Buckskin & Buffalo: The Artistry of the Plains Indians* (New York: Rizzoli, 1998)

George Catlin and His Indian Gallery (Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2002)

David C. Hunt and Marsha V. Gallagher, *Karl Bodmer’s America* (Joslyn Art Museum, 1984)

Emma I. Hansen, *Memory and Vision: Arts, Cultures and Lives of Plains Indian Peoples* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007)

Garrick Mallery, *Picture Writing of the American Indians, Volume I* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972). A reprint of the paper “Picture Writing of the American Indians,” in the *Tenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1888-89*, by J. W. Powell, Director, published by the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. in 1893

Norman Feder, “Plains Pictographic Painting and Quilled Rosettes,” in *American Indian Art Magazine*, Vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 54–62

Colin F. Taylor, *Saam: The Symbolic Content of Early Northern Plains Ceremonial Regalia*, (Verlag Fur Amerikanistik, 1993)

Norman Feder, *Two Hundred Years of North American Indian Art* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971)

John F. Taylor , I977, “Sociocultural Effects of Epidemics on the Northern Plains: 1734–1850,” *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 7 (4): pp. 55–81

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1.4.9: Nellie Two Bear Gates, Suitcase

by DR. JILL AHLBERG YOHE, MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART and DR. BETH HARRIS



Video **1.4.9.1**: Nellie Two Bear Gates, Suitcase, 1880-1910, beads, hide, metal, oilcloth, thread (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

Additional resources:

This work at the Minneapolis Institute of Art

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1.4.10: Henry Oscar One Bull, Custer's War

by DR. JILL AHLBERG YOHE, MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.4.10.1**: Henry Oscar One Bull/Tȟatȟáŋka Waŋžíla (Hunkpapa Lakota), *Custer's War*, c. 1900, 39 x 69 inches (irregular), pigments, ink on muslin (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

Additional resources:

This painting at Mia

Statements by Henry Oscar One Bull, University of Oklahoma Library

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



Click on image for larger picture (External link to flickr)



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1.4.11: Carrie Bethel (Mono Lake Paiute), Basket bowl



Carrie Bethel (Mono Lake Paiute), Basket bowl, 1929, willow shoots, sedge root, redbud shoots, and dyed bracken root, made in Mono Lake, California, United States, 22.9 × 49.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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1.4.12: Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Earth Song



Chiricahua Apache artist Allan Houser's *Earth Song* is the signature sculpture on display at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ. Created in 1979 from Alabama marble, it depicts an Apache man singing a song of respect, a prayer to Mother Earth. Houser is considered the Grandfather of Contemporary Native American Sculpture for creating works that are grounded in a respect for all indigenous cultures. Discover more reasons why *Earth Song* is a masterpiece with David Roche, Dickey Family Director and CEO of the Heard Museum.

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1.4.13: Brummett Echohawk (Pawnee), An Island of Redbuds on the Cimarron



Brummett Echohawk (Pawnee), *An Island of Redbuds on the Cimarron*, 1968, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 116.4 cm (Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa)

Additional resources

This work at the Gilcrease Museum

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.5: Southwest

1.5.1: Pueblo architecture and its relationship to place

1.5.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo

1.5.3: Acoma polychrome water jar

1.5.4: Hopi- White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure)

1.5.5: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar

1.5.6: Puebloan- Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel

1.5.7: Julian Martinez, Buffalo Dancers

1.5.8: Awa Tsireh (Puebloan), Pottery Makers

1.5.9: The pueblo modernism of Ma Pe Wi

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1.5.1: Pueblo architecture and its relationship to place

by CASSANDRA SMITH



Figure 1.5.1.1: Mission San Agustín de la Isleta and houses, Isleta Pueblo (photo: MARELBU, CC BY 3.0)

Until relatively recently, houses at the Southern Tiwa Pueblo of Isleta in New Mexico were replastered every year using a mixture that contained mica from a culturally significant site in the southwestern United States. In the bright sunlight of the southwest, mica's natural shimmer adds a reflective, lustrous quality to these homes. Yet using the mica to create this shimmering quality was not done simply because it is pleasing to look at, but because its appearance paralleled the transformative qualities that feature so prominently in Pueblo stories and songs. It is one of the many ways that Pueblo architecture reveals a close connection to the surrounding landscape and to Pueblo culture.

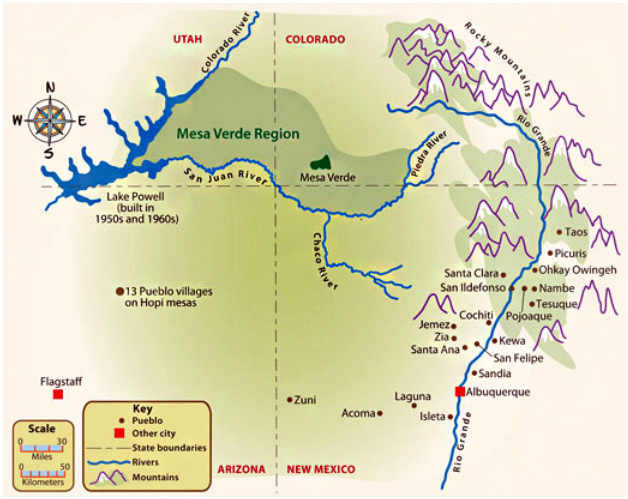


Figure 1.5.1.2: Map of modern Pueblo villages (image: Crow Canyon Archaeological Center)

Pueblo people

The Pueblo people are one of many Native American cultural groups living in the southwestern United States. Contemporary Pueblo villages are located throughout the north-central and western regions of New Mexico and in northeastern Arizona and are

often broadly divided into two distinct geographical groups. These include:

- **the Eastern (or Rio Grande) pueblos** of Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Nambe, Ohkay Owingeh, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, and Zia; and
- **the Western pueblos** of Acoma, Laguna, Zuni, and villages of the Hopi Mesas.

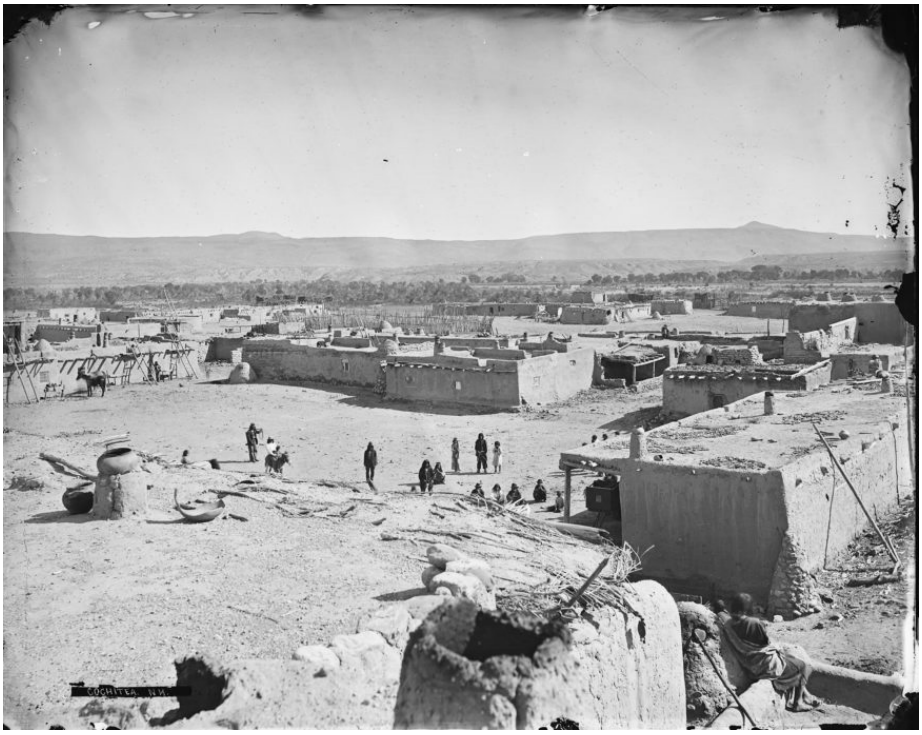


Figure **1.5.1.3**: Cochiti pueblo, c. 1871–1907, photo by John K. Hillers, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology (National Archives at College Park)

In addition to referring to the Pueblo people, the word “pueblo” is Spanish and means “town.” In this context it refers to the shared architectural style that early **Spanish colonists** encountered in many of the villages in the region (after they began colonizing the area after the late 16th century). While people living in Pueblo villages share a common form of architecture and communal life, as well as overlapping ancestries, they are also quite diverse—culturally, ethnically, and linguistically. Although interrelated, distinct customs and forms of social organization are found within the various Pueblo villages. Individuals’ participation in various social groups may reflect familial ties, ceremonial responsibilities, access to ritual knowledge, gender affiliations, and differences in migration histories and relationships to place. Throughout their lifetimes, Pueblo community members are affiliated with various social and ritual groups, frequently spanning across multiple villages.



Figure **1.5.1.4**: Rock art at Petroglyph National Monument, New Mexico (photo: Mobilus In Mobili, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Some contemporary Pueblo villages have been occupied continuously for a period of 1,000 years or longer. Ancestral Pueblo occupation within the larger region extends back even further. We know this through both Puebloan oral tradition and archaeological sites—better referred to as "footprints"—that dot the landscape throughout the region. Examples of such "footprints" include rock art sites and ancestral villages that are no longer actively occupied but embody traces of the ancestors who came before.



Figure **1.5.1.5**: Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon, New Mexico (photo: Paul Williams, CC BY-NC 2.0)

A powerful example of such a “footprint” is the ancestral site of Pueblo Bonito, one of the “Great Houses” of the Chaco Canyon cultural area in northwestern New Mexico. Construction began on Pueblo Bonito in approximately 850 C.E. and continued, in stages, until approximately 1150 C.E. The sheer enormity of Pueblo Bonito and the richness of the archaeological record at the site indicate that it was an important ceremonial center for a period of approximately three hundred years, and it remains a culturally and spiritually significant site for Pueblo people today.

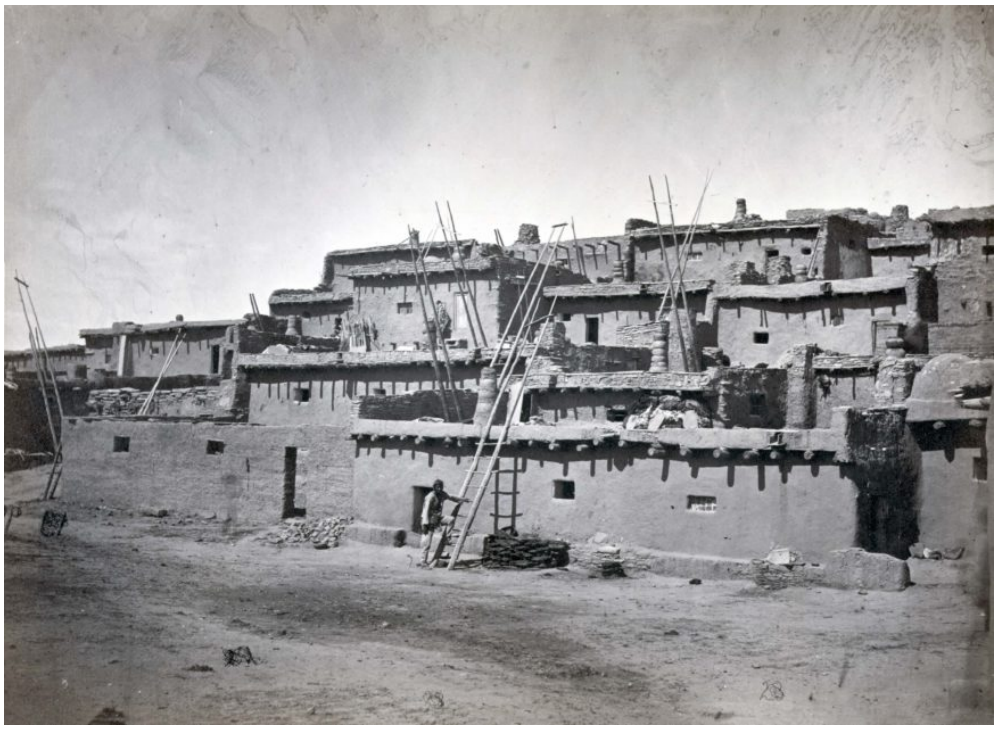


Figure **1.5.1.6**: Large multi-level buildings of the south side of Zuni Pueblo, c. 1873, photograph by Timothy O’Sullivan (Library of Congress)

Main characteristics of Pueblo architecture

Characteristics of Pueblo architecture include large multi-level buildings, numerous contiguous rooms (rooms that touch one another or share a boundary wall), terraced design, and open-air plazas. Traditional Pueblo architectural design did not include doors, and in traditional buildings, each level was accessible by exterior and interior rooftop ladders. Contemporary Pueblo villages incorporate modern architectural elements and infrastructure (such as electricity, plumbing, glass windows, and exterior doors).



Figure **1.5.1.7**: Terraced design at Taos Pueblo, 1880, photograph by Johannes Karl Hillers (Pitt Rivers Museum)

Late 19th-century photographs of Zuni and Taos Pueblos show many ladders raised against the walls of multi-leveled adobe buildings, as well as ladders emerging from interior rooms. We see the same design feature today at Acoma Pueblo.



Figure **1.5.1.8**: Acoma Pueblo street with contiguous rooms in adobe buildings and ladders that lead to the upper story entrances to kivas (sacred ceremonial spaces; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Contiguous rooms have many different uses, both public and private, and they are easily accessed via the ladders. Outer rooms, terraces, and other accessible rooms were used as common living spaces. Lower levels, interior rooms, and other more difficult-to-reach rooms were used for food storage and ceremonial purposes.



Figure **1.5.1.9**: Open-air plaza at Acoma Pueblo (photo: osseous, CC BY 2.0)



Figure **1.5.1.10**: Fall harvest at Santa Clara Pueblo, c. 1910 (American Museum of Natural History)

Plazas and kivas

Open-air plazas and terraces are significant architectural components in Pueblo villages. They served as sites for participation in public ritual and also facilitated multiple forms of daily household and village activities, such as harvest storage (as we see in the photograph of Santa Clara Pueblo), food preparation, and ceramics production.



Figure 1.5.1.11: Acoma Pueblo street ladders that lead to the upper story entrances to kivas (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-SA 2.0)

In each Pueblo, various groups are responsible for the performance of culturally significant activities in accordance with the ceremonial calendar. Activities include public components such as songs and dances that take place in the village plazas and private components that take place within the kivas. Kivas are ceremonial structures, usually located in close proximity to the open-air plazas. Access to *kivas* is restricted to community members with the appropriate cultural and ritual authority to enter those spaces. Although many modern *kivas* may be built into the architecture of the contiguous surface room blocks or as free-standing structures, many ancestral *kivas* were built as subterranean or semi-subterranean spaces.

In the Pueblo world, a sense of place is connected to emergence and movement, an idea that Pueblo architectural forms embody. For example, rooftop entrances to *kivas* reinforce Pueblo cosmological ideas (or a knowledge system that explains the origin, development, and structure of the universe) about emergence and return. During special ceremonial performances, audience members can watch performances unfold from the terraces above rooms where kivas are located, yet performers may also emerge from upper-level terraces onto the plaza below. Similarly, the dances that are performed in the village plazas may reference movement and migration across the ancestral landscape.

Movement and the search for the middle place

Origin stories emphasize a long tradition of movement as the ancestors emerged from the underworld and searched for their "middle place," the place where they were destined to live and perpetuate their cultural teachings. Mobility was characteristic of early Pueblo cultures as families and other small groups moved across the landscape, over the course of many generations. Santa Clara Pueblo scholar Tessie Naranjo writes that "the old people moved continuously, and that was the way it was." Movement within fixed boundaries is a fundamental element of Pueblo thought and being and, she continues, "even these specific boundaries are not the important elements because as the people moved, their mountain boundaries also moved. The idea was to have boundaries to create a place—to fix a place—temporarily within a larger idea of movement." [1]



Figure 1.5.1.12: Hopi Pueblo of Walapi (or Walpai) on mesa, c. 1901, photo by Charles C. Pierce (USC Libraries Special Collections)

The Tewa speak of two groups moving for many years along two mountain ranges before joining together to form one village. The Zuni speak of building villages in which to live for a period of four days and four nights, a phrase that may mean four years, four hundred years, or four thousand years. The Hopi speak of an ancestral promise to make footprints on their way to becoming Hopi. Pueblo ancestors carried a sense of cosmological place and situated-ness with them wherever they went on their path to the "middle place."

Construction materials



Figure 1.5.1.13: WPA workers make adobe bricks, Santa Fe, New Mexico, June 1940 (National Archives and the New Deal Network)

Materials used in the construction of Pueblo architectural forms include clay, sand and silt, grasses and reeds, water, stone, and timber. Although building materials are often locally sourced, some materials travel great distances.

Depending upon availability, Pueblo room blocks are built using either sun-dried adobe or stone masonry, and sometimes both. Adobe is made from a mixture of clay, sand or silt, straw, and water, and is often formed into bricks that are held in place with a clay-based mortar. Stone masonry technology also employs mortar.



Figure 1.5.1.14: Core-and-veneer stone masonry technique of multistoried rooms, Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon, New Mexico (photo: (photo: Jacqueline Poggi, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0); right: detail of the masonry (photo: Lars Hammar, CC BY-NC 2.0)

The Ancestral Pueblo sites of Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl at Chaco Canyon were built using a highly refined core-and-veneer stone masonry technique in which coarsely cut stones form the interior (or core) of a wall and finely shaped and fitted stones form the exterior (or veneer) of a wall. Extraordinary surface patterns are also made possible with such a technique. The stone walls built during the period of Chaco's cultural heyday were covered in plaster.



Figure 1.5.1.15: Annual replastering of an adobe structure at Chamisal, New Mexico, 1940, photo by Russel Lee

Structures built using traditional Pueblo techniques are replastered each year to maintain their structural integrity. In a 1940 photograph of Chamisal we see a group of people in the process of replastering a wall.



Figure 1.5.1.16: Buildings with vigas projecting outwards, Acoma Pueblo (photo: Beyond My Ken, CC BY-SA 4.0)

While adobe and stone are used to build the vertical walls of Pueblo rooms, long lengths of timber known as *vigas* provide the horizontal stability necessary to support a room's ceiling and multi-level construction. Spaced at regular intervals, *vigas* span a roomblock front to back and are visible from the exterior of the building, such as we see at Acoma Pueblo. Wooden slats called *latillas* are placed in a crosswise layer above the *vigas*, and together these components form the foundation for the floor or terrace above and transfer the weight to the outer load-bearing walls. In the arid climate of the Pueblo landscape, transporting trees over long distances is quite laborious, and the archaeological record reveals evidence of *viga* re-use as well.

Lumber is often not the only material to travel great distances. Family and clan lineages often develop special "recipes" for paint, plaster, adobe, and other components, and individuals may travel great distances to collect the necessary materials. A particular material may be important because of its association with an origin or migration story. Similarly, the materials found at a particular place in the landscape could be understood to have transformative or otherwise powerful qualities. Incorporation of these materials into Pueblo architectural forms imbues structures with their particular powers.

Mica, quartz, feldspar, and selenite are minerals that appear in ancient rocky outcroppings and other sites throughout the Puebloan cultural landscape. Highly reflective in nature and often appearing to shimmer and move in the abundant sunlight of the Southwest, such minerals are highly valued within a Pueblo cultural context for their transformative qualities—qualities that also describe many of the doings in Pueblo stories and songs. Customarily, only individuals with the appropriate knowledge and permission may collect and process such powerful and "lively" materials for use in special clay, paint, and plaster recipes.

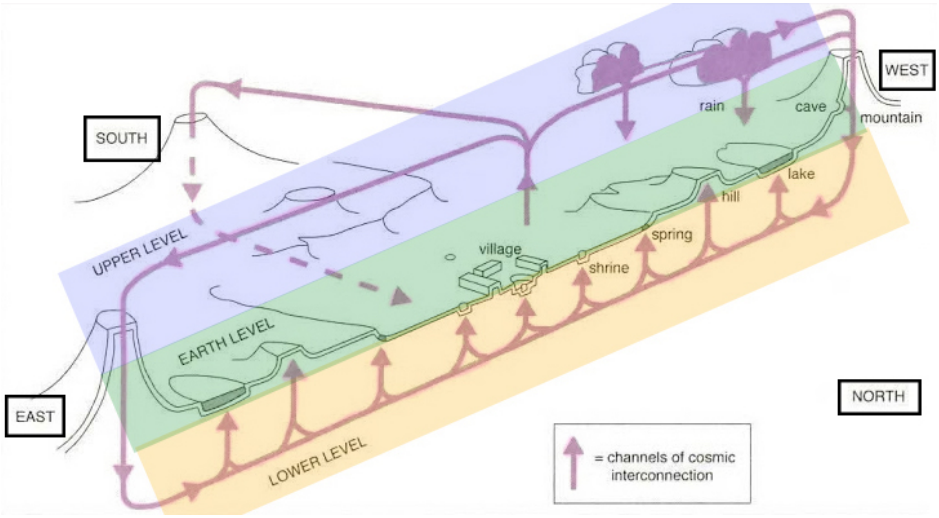


Figure 1.5.1.17: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

Depiction of the Pueblo cosmos showing its interconnectedness. Diagram modified from Severin M. Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings: Secularism and the Study of Pueblo Religion* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2013), Figure 5.12 (adapted from Saile 1990, based on Ortiz 1969)

A conceptual understanding of a Pueblo village

Metaphor is fundamental to Pueblo thought and being, and an understanding of the universe as a web of lively, dynamic, and interconnected beings are vital components of Pueblo architectural forms. The lower half of the Pueblo cosmos is often envisioned as a terraced bowl (the earth) with another bowl (the sky) inverted atop it. Together, the two bowls form the sphere of the universe within which all activity transpires. Naranjo writes:

> ***All existence swirls around the center. The houses of the people, the hills, and mountains are in concentric circles around the center place. The sky and earth define the sphere within which the center is crucial to the orientation of the whole. The breath of the universe passes through this center place as did our people when they emerged into this level of life. [3]***

The spatial organization of a typical Pueblo village is arranged to reflect the structure of the universe and to symbolize the ancestral search for the middle place. Located within the central village plaza is a small hole, or "earth navel," that is considered to be the "true center of the village." (Photographs are not permitted). Although often quite inconspicuous visually, the plaza earth navel functions as the site of the *axis mundi*—a sacred site of both emergence and return that joins the underworld, the middle place, and the upper world.

Connecting the village with the surrounding landscape, the plaza earth navel is nested within a landscape marked by other earth navels. Each earth navel designates a sacred shrine, hilltop, or mountaintop that corresponds to one of the four cardinal directions. Marked by a loose arrangement of stones forming an open keyhole shape pointing toward the village, these earth navels direct blessings inward, toward the village. Blessings arrive in the form of rain and a bountiful harvest. The village earth navel, on the other hand, is marked by a loose arrangement of stones forming a circle open on all sides to the earth navels surrounding the village, directing blessings outward and thereby ensuring that all sacred energy remains within the landscape. [4] Just as each village's point of emergence is considered to be the true place of origin, so, too, is each village considered to be the true middle place. Rather than contradicting one another, however, Pueblo stories of emergence and migration both honor and reiterate the idea of multiple centers.

Notes:

[1] Tessie Naranjo, "Thoughts on Migration by Santa Clara Pueblo," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 14 (1995), 247–249.

[2] Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B. Phillips, *Native North American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 28.

[3] Tessie Naranjo, Wall text from the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture exhibition, “Here, Now, and Always,” 2018.

[4] Alfonzo Ortiz, *The Tewa World: Space, Time, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 19–21.



Additional resources

Read more about Pueblo architecture from the New Mexico Museum of Art

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1.5.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**



Figure **1.5.2.1**: View of Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico

Stunning and dramatic, Acoma Pueblo is magnificent to visit not only for its spectacular location, but also because it is home to one of the best-preserved early mission churches in the United States. Standing on the edge of Acoma Pueblo (referred to as Sky City), one can see vast panoramas of the New Mexican landscape.

Acoma sits on a mesa—a flat-topped hill with steep sides—about 360 feet above sea level, and until the mid-20th century, the only access to the **Pueblo** was via a narrow stone staircase carved into the mesa itself (pueblo is the Spanish word for a town or village). The location of the Pueblo is imposing and impressive, and it is easy to grasp why so many described it as impregnable. In the past, its elevated location aided in protecting it from invaders. Acoma Pueblo is believed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the United States.



Figure 1.5.2.2: Acoma Pueblo street with adobe buildings and ladders that lead to the upper story entrances to kivas (sacred ceremonial spaces)

A city in the sky

The Pueblo is filled with dwellings ranging from one to two stories, all fashioned in adobe (mud-brick). The tallest and largest structure is the mission church of San Esteban del Rey, built between 1629 and 1642. A Spanish Franciscan friar named Juan Ramirez directed the construction of the church in 1629. The Franciscans are mendicant friars that helped to convert the peoples of modern-day New Mexico beginning in the sixteenth century. The practice of building missions for the purpose of conversion began soon after Spaniards defeated the **Mexica** (often called the Aztecs) in their capital city of **Tenochtitlan** (what is today Mexico City) in 1521. The Spanish established the **viceroyalty of New Spain**, which eventually comprised parts of the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central America, Spain's Caribbean colonies, and the Philippines. What is a viceroy and a viceroyalty?



Figure **1.5.2.3**: Mission Church of San Esteban del Rey, 1629, Acoma Pueblo

The church of San Esteban del Rey is based on missionary churches found in Colonial Mexico, but combines local Indigenous techniques and architectural elements. Because it was the first mission built in New Mexico, it became the model for many others erected in this area.

It is a single nave church—it has no transept (or crossing), and is approximately 150 feet long and 40 feet wide. Typical of other mission churches of this era in the Spanish viceroyalty, it has a cloister (a covered walkway surrounding an open space) that may have been used to instruct Indigenous converts, an atrium (an open courtyard in front of the church), and an elevated open-balcony chapel. The walled atrium yard also functions as a cemetery, called a campo santo, in front of, and to the side of, the church.



Figure 1.5.2.4: Elevated open-balcony chapel, Mission Church of San Esteban del Rey, 1629, Acoma Pueblo

The Spanish in New Mexico

Spaniards had two primary interests for desiring missions like the one at Acoma in New Mexico—to convert peoples to Christianity and to protect mines in northern Mexico. Led by Francisco Vazquez de Coronado, the Spanish arrived in the area around 1540. In 1542, New Mexico and Arizona were claimed for Spain, but the geographic regions remained largely unsettled because of the harsh conditions and lack of water. The Spanish king, Philip II, officially authorized settlement of New Mexico in 1583, but it was not until 1598 that Juan Perez de Oñate officially claimed this region for Spain.

Franciscans arrived at Acoma in 1598. At first, the peoples of Acoma defeated the Spaniards, but in 1599 the Spaniards were successful after a strategic attack. They claimed St. James (Santiago), appeared on horseback brandishing a sword and intervened to help them conquer Acoma.



Figure 1.5.2.5: Façade, Mission Church of San Esteban del Rey, 1629, Acoma Pueblo

The façade of San Esteban del Rey



Figure 1.5.2.6: Façade of church and cloister of San Miguel Arcangel in Huejotzingo, c. 1520s–30s, Puebla, Mexico (photo: Alejandro Linares Garcia, CC BY-SA 4.0)

The church's unadorned adobe façade is stark and austere, which is different from other Franciscan mission churches such as San Miguel in Huejotzingo, Mexico (in the state of Puebla). San Esteban del Rey has two bell-towers framing a rectangular central area and an elevated open balcony chapel above the main entrance. This elevated space allowed friars to preach to people in the atrium outside the church, and so provided both practical and spiritual functions. Any priest in the open chapel stood higher than any new converts, suggesting he was closer to God and to Heaven.

San Esteban del Rey's massive adobe walls—bricks made from a mix of clay and straw—need continuous maintenance. In places the walls are seven feet thick, keeping the interior cool during the hot New Mexican summer, but also warm when the temperature drops. The heavy adobe construction limits the number of windows in the church structure. Small windows appear high above the ground, allowing little light into the church interior. The thick adobe walls and dark interior add a sense of awe and mystery to the space, especially as you pass through the main door from outside. You immediately know you have entered a holy space.



Figure 1.5.2.7: View of adobe wall (note that straw is visible to the right), Acoma Pueblo

The thick unadorned walls, interrupted by only a few windows, gives the façade an imposing quality. Some scholars describe it as having a militaristic or defensive appearance, yet there are no crenellations or other militaristic motifs like the ones we find on Central Mexican mission churches such as Huejotzingo. It is unclear whether San Esteban del Rey actually functioned as a fortress or if this impression was intended to symbolically convey the impression that the church was the stronghold of God.

To build the church, people gathered materials and then transported them up to the top of the mesa. The vigas (wooden beams), for instance, were brought from the San Mateo Mountains—some of which were considered sacred—and which are about thirty miles north of Acoma. This demonstrates the substantial labor required to construct the church.



Figure **1.5.2.8**: View from Acoma Pueblo

Church interior

The church's interior is simple like the outside. You'll need to imagine what it looks like because interior photos are forbidden. There are no arches, domes, or stoneworking; instead, there are flat ceilings with vigas over forty feet long. The nave is narrow, due in part due to the use of adobe since it can't hold as much weight as stone.

Packed earth covers the floor. A raised sanctuary demarcates the holiest space within the church. Some of the windows shine light on the altar, literally highlighting its importance. An altarpiece stands in the church's raised sanctuary. Originally the interior was painted with frescoes, which were repainted often. Today sacred symbols like rainbows, clouds, and corn are visible. These symbols attest to the syncretic Catholicism practiced at Acoma, the result of Puebloan and Christian sacred ideas and practices becoming entangled over time.

The original interior frescoes were whitewashed likely as a result of the **Pueblo Revolt** (1680–92), a period during which many missions were destroyed and missionaries like the Franciscans killed or expelled. Yet San Esteban del Rey survived and it remains a stunning testament to the events that shaped this area during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

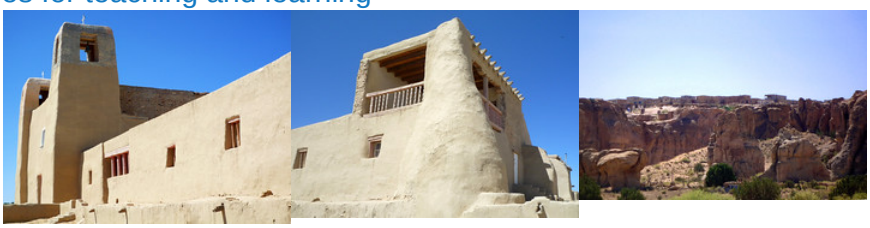
Additional resources:

Most of the photographs in this essay were taken by Dr. Steven Zucker and can be found **here**.

Edward Proctor Hunt, *The Origin Myth of Acoma Pueblo* (Penguin Classics, 2015)

Ward Alan Minge and Simon Ortiz, *Acoma: Pueblo in the Sky* (University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

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1.5.3: Acoma polychrome water jar

by **THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**



Acoma polychrome water jar, c. 1890, from Acoma, clay and pigment, 25.1 x 29.8 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art); speaker: Brian Vallo, Director, Indian Arts Research Center School for Advanced Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico

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1.5.4: Hopi- White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure)

by **THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**



Hopi, *White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure)*, c. 1900, cottonwood, pigment, cotton cloth, tanned leather, and metal, made in Arizona, United States, 47 × 15.2 × 17.8 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art); speaker: Brian Vallo, Director, Indian Arts Research Center School for Advanced Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico

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1.5.5: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar

by DR. DAVID W. PENNEY, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.5.5.1**: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar, c. 1930s, clay and pigment, 13 x 21 cm (National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution), a Seeing America video

Speakers: Dr. David Penney, Associate Director for Museum Scholarship, Exhibitions, and Public Engagement, National Museum of the American Indian and Dr. Steven Zucker

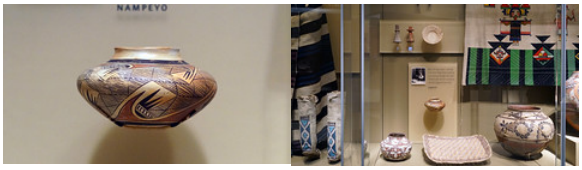
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This jar at the National Museum of the American Indian

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- **11.3: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (I)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

1.5.6: Puebloan- Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel

by DR. SUZANNE NEWMAN FRICKE

Born Maria Antonia Montoya, Maria Martinez became one of the best-known Native potters of the twentieth century due to her excellence as a ceramist and her connections with a larger, predominantly non-Native audience. Though she lived at the Pueblo of San Ildefonso, about 20 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, from her birth in 1887 until her death in 1980, her work and her life had a wide reaching importance to the Native art world by reframing Native ceramics as a fine art. Before the arrival of the railroad to the area in the 1880s, pots were used in the Pueblos for food storage, cooking, and ceremonies. But with inexpensive pots appearing along the rail line, these practices were in decline. By the 1910s, Ms. Martinez found a way to continue the art by selling her pots to a non-Native audience where they were purchased as something beautiful to look at rather than as utilitarian objects.



Figure **1.5.6.1**: Maria Martinez shown with physicist Enrico Fermi, c. 1948 (public domain; photo by U.S. Government employee made for U.S. Government)

Her mastery as a ceramist was noted in her village while she was still young. She learned the ceramic techniques that were used in the Southwest for several millennia by watching potters from San Ildefonso, especially her aunt Nicholasa as well as potters (including Margaret Tafoya from Santa Clara), from other nearby Pueblos. All the raw materials had to be gathered and processed carefully or the final vessel would not fire properly. The clay was found locally. To make the pottery stronger it had to be mixed with a temper made from sherds of broken pots that had been pounded into a powder or volcanic ash. When mixed with water, the elasticity of the clay and the strength of the temper could be formed into different shapes, including a rounded pot (known as an *olla*) or a flat plate, using only the artist's hands as the potting wheel was not used. The dried vessel needed to be scraped, sanded, smoothed, then covered with a slip (a thin solution of clay and water). The slip was polished by rubbing a smooth stone over the surface to flatten the clay and create a shiny finish—a difficult and time-consuming process. Over the polished slip the pot was covered with designs painted with an iron-rich solution using either pulverized iron ore or a reduction of wild plants called guaco. These would be dried but required a high temperature firing to change the brittle clay to hard ceramics. Even without kilns, the ceramists were able to create a fire hot enough to transform the pot by using manure.

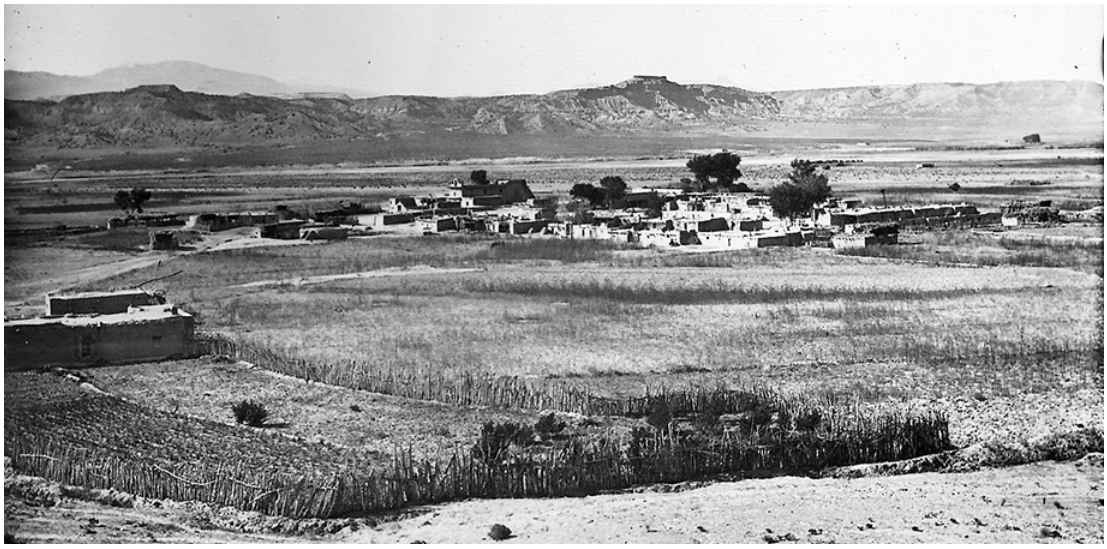


Figure 1.5.6.2: John K. Hillers, San Ildefonso (detail), New Mexico, c. 1871 – 1907 (photo: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, National Archives and Records Administration #523752)

Making ceramics in the Pueblo was considered a communal activity, where different steps in the process were often shared. The potters helped each other with the arduous tasks such as mixing the paints and polishing the slip. Ms. Martinez would form the perfectly symmetrical vessels by hand and leave the decorating to others. Throughout her career, she worked with different family members, including her husband Julian, her son Adam and his wife Santana, and her son Popovi Da. As the pots moved into a fine art market, Ms. Martinez was encouraged to sign her name on the bottom of her pots. Though this denied the communal nature of the art, she began to do so as it resulted in more money per pot. To help other potters in the Pueblo, Ms. Martinez was known to have signed the pots of others, lending her name to help the community. Helping her Pueblo was of paramount importance to Ms. Martinez. She lived as a proper Pueblo woman, avoiding self-aggrandizement and insisting to scholars that she was just a wife and mother even as her reputation in the outside world increased.



Figure 1.5.6.3: Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel, c. 1939, blackware ceramic, 11 1/8 x 13″, Tewa, Puebloan, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico (National Museum of Women in the Arts)

Maria and Julian Martinez pioneered a style of applying a matte-black design over polished-black. Similar to the pot pictured here, the design was based on pottery sherds found on an Ancestral Pueblo dig site dating to the twelfth to seventeenth centuries at what is now known as Bandelier National Monument. The Martinezes worked at the site, with Julian helping the archaeologists at the dig and Maria helping at the campsite. Julian Martinez spent time drawing and painting the designs found on the walls and on the sherds of pottery into his notebooks, designs he later recreated on pots. In the 1910s, Maria and Julian worked together to recreate the black-on-black ware they found at the dig, experimenting with clay from different areas and using different firing techniques. Taking a cue from Santa Clara pots, they discovered that smothering the fire with powdered manure removed the oxygen while

retaining the heat and resulted in a pot that was blackened. This resulted in a pot that was less hard and not entirely watertight, which worked for the new market that prized decorative use over utilitarian value. The areas that were burnished had a shiny black surface and the areas painted with guaco were matte designs based on natural phenomena, such as rain clouds, bird feathers, rows of planted corn, and the flow of rivers.



Figure 1.5.6.4: Detail, Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel, c. 1939, blackware ceramic, 11 1/8 x 13″, Tewa, Puebloan, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico (National Museum of Women in the Arts)

The olla pictured above features two design bands, one across the widest part of the pot and the other around the neck. The elements inside are abstract but suggest a bird in flight with rain clouds above, perhaps a prayer for rain that could be flown up to the sky. These designs are exaggerated due to the low rounded shapes of the pot, which are bulbous around the shoulder then narrow at the top. The shape, color, and designs fit the contemporary Art Deco movement, which was popular between the two World Wars and emphasized bold, geometric forms and colors. With its dramatic shape and the high polish of surface, this pot exemplifies Maria Martinez's skill in transforming a utilitarian object into a fine art.

The work of Maria Martinez marks an important point in the long history of Pueblo pottery. Ceramics from the Southwest trace a connection from the Ancestral Pueblo to the modern Pueblo eras. Given the absence of written records, tracing the changes in the shapes, materials, and designs on the long-lasting sherds found across the area allow scholars to see connections and innovations. Maria Martinez brought the distinctive Pueblo style into a wider context, allowing Native and non-Native audiences to appreciate the art form.

Additional resources:

This pot at the National Museum of Women in the Arts

The Art, Life and Legacy of Maria Martinez

Maria Martinez Pottery – San Ildefonso Pueblo

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1.5.7: Julian Martinez, Buffalo Dancers

DR. SUZANNE NEWMAN FRICKE



Figure **1.5.7.1**: Maria and Julian Martínez, pot with *avanyu* design, 1934-43, 21.7 x 26.7 cm (National Museum of the American Indian)

Famous Pueblo pottery

As an artist, Julian Martínez from **San Ildefonso Pueblo** is best known for the ceramics he made with his wife, Maria Martínez. Together, they produced the matte-black on polished-black pottery for which they and their Pueblo colleagues gained international fame.

Maria formed the pots into elegant shapes and Julian painted the designs, both geometric and figurative, including historic motifs such as the feather pattern from Mimbres pottery and the *avanyu*, the horned serpent similar the Mesoamerican deity **Quetzalcoatl**.

Julian Martínez also worked at the Museum of New Mexico, where he took advantage of the opportunity to study the Museum's collection of Southwestern pottery, and he learned more during the summers when he worked at the field school at the Pajarito Plateau (later renamed Bandelier National Monument). In addition to his work on pottery, Martínez drew on paper; he always kept a notebook where he sketched ideas and recorded what he had seen. Though most of his images were painted on paper, he created a few murals on walls and, on rare occasions, he painted on hide, as he did for his *Buffalo Dancers* from about 1930, now in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City (below).



Figure Extra close brace or missing open brace: Awa Tsireh (Alfonso Roybal), *Girl Holding Kachina*, c. 1920-30, watercolor and pencil on paper (Smithsonian American Art Museum)

Pueblo painting

Painting has long been part of Pueblo life; it can be found on the walls of the *kivas* (the round ceremonial structures usually partially underground) and on dance regalia such as wands, *tablitas* (ceremonial headdresses), clothing, and other items. A thriving art community developed around 1900 during a difficult time in Pueblo history: due to illness and outward migration, the

population was reduced to less than 200. When the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railway extended its track to the area in 1880, the economy of the Pueblo was transformed as more outside goods were purchased and more items, especially ceramics and paintings on paper, were made to sell to tourists traveling to the area.

An important group of Pueblo artists called the San Ildefonso Self-Taught Group, active from around 1900 to around 1930, included Julian Martínez, Tonita Peña, Crescencio Martínez, and Awa Tsireh (Alfonso Roybal). Most of their work depicted scenes common to Pueblo life, mainly ceremonial dances and genre scenes.

The Buffalo Dance

Martínez was elected governor of San Ildefonso in 1925 and he served as a leader in ceremonies. Like other Pueblo painters, he refrained from depicting ritual objects, sites, and altars that were considered private, and focused instead on dances that were open to the public. The Buffalo Dance is one of the most commonly represented of all Pueblo dances by the Self-Taught Group. Art historian J.J. Brody described it as one of the most "comprehensible to outsiders of all public ritual dances of the Pueblo people." [1] Performed annually on January 23rd to honor the Pueblo patron saint, San Ildefonso, the Buffalo Dance enacts a hunting scene, with three dancers playing the roles of a hunter, buffalo, and a buffalo maiden (or buffalo mother) who has the power to induce the animals to sacrifice themselves to provide food and hide.

Early twentieth-century Pueblo paintings by artists including Tsireh, Peña, and Martínez all depict the Buffalo Dance in the same way, with the three figures in profile, facing the same direction as they would be during the dance. The men wear a buffalo headdress and dance kilts with depictions of *avanyu* (a horned serpent), and their skin is painted black. The buffalo maiden wears an embroidered one-shouldered *manta*, or dress.



Figure **1.5.7.3**: Julian Martínez, *Buffalo Dancers*, c. 1930s, hide and paint, 79 x 61 cm (National Museum of the American Indian)

In this hide painting, Martínez gave all three figures the same facial features, focusing instead on varying details in their clothing and regalia. There is no sense of space; the figures lack **modeling** and do not cast shadows. The flatness of the figures and the lack of a background suggest the influence of early Modernist abstraction. The empty space might also symbolize an area that is sacred —unbound by place or time. Paintings of such dances might even portray a space where the viewers themselves also participate in the dance, because, as anthropologist Alfonso Ortiz from Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo has observed, everyone in the community dances in ceremonies.[2]

Though Martínez painted several versions of the Buffalo Dance, the NMAI version is unusual for its material: animal hide. More commonly used in art from the **Plains**, hide is stronger and suppler than paper as a base. This particular hide has small holes on

along three of its sides, suggesting that it was used to cover a portfolio or large book, with a string or leather cord run through the holes to attach it over a group of drawings.[3] Later, the image may have been unlaced and cut along one side, accounting for the smooth edge.

Pueblo painting continues

With its bright colors and strong forms, Julian Martínez's *Buffalo Dancers* exemplifies the early period of Pueblo painting. In 1932, the Santa Fe Indian School (whose painting program became known as "The Studio School") started teaching art, and developed the Santa Fe Indian School Style. This new style retained the earlier emphasis on dance and genre scenes with the same flatness and lack of modeling, but the work became more decorative and lost the intimacy of the earlier works.

During Martínez's his life, local artists, anthropologists, and ethnographers expressed their appreciation for his work, noting his radiant colors, technical skill, and mastery of form. Martínez's *Buffalo Dancers*, like other paintings produced by the San Ildefonso Self-Taught Group, conveys a sense of movement and energy in its figures and shares the joy of the ceremonies.

[1] J.J. Brody, *Pueblo Indian Painting: Tradition and Modernism in New Mexico* (School for Advanced Research Press, 1997).

[2] Alfonzo Ortiz, *The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being and Becoming in a Pueblo Society* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).

[3] I am indebted to Dr. Jonathon Batkin and Dr. Bruce Bernstein for sharing this idea.

Additional resources:

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1.5.8: Awa Tsireh (Puebloan), Pottery Makers

by RYUICHI NAKAYAMA



Figure **1.5.8.1**: Awa Tsireh, *Pottery Makers*, c. 1930, ink and watercolor, 33.02 x 54.29 cm (Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio)

Two Pueblo women sit and decorate pottery with brushes made of yucca leaves. Beside them, finished vessels in white, black, and red are arranged in a horizontal line. Except for delicate shadows cast on the right side of the women and vessels, the background is left blank and we do not know where these women are working. This painting, known as *Pottery Makers*, is one of many that the artist Awa Tsireh (Cattail Bird, Spanish name Alfonso Roybal) created about Pueblo cultures, including images of ceremonial dances and pottery designs. The Pueblo people are one of many Native American cultural groups living in the southwestern United States.

Increasing contact

Awa Tsireh was a painter and metalsmith from San Ildefonso Pueblo, a Tewa-speaking Indigenous group in New Mexico. Awa Tsireh (and other contemporaneous Pueblo artists) used commercial artistic media, such as ink and watercolor, and their paintings were sold to primarily non-Native audiences. As the result of Pueblo communities' increased contact with U.S. settler-colonial society in the first decades of the twentieth century, Pueblo pottery and Pueblo paintings depicting pottery-making scenes attracted urban middle- and upper-middle-class white audiences (mostly from the urban East coast) some of whom felt that mainstream U.S. culture had lost its harmonious balance between nature and civilization. Other Pueblo painters such as Ma-Pe-Wi (Velino Shije Herrera, Zia Pueblo) and Quah Ah (Tonita Peña, a San Ildefonso female painter who lived in Cochiti Pueblo) also produced paintings of the same subject matter. *Pottery Makers* demonstrates how Awa Tsireh's interactions with an emerging community of non-Native cultural elites (including artists, writers, philanthropists, art collectors, and scholars) living in or visiting Santa Fe and Taos in New Mexico shaped how he depicted scenes of Pueblo pottery making.

Art and ethnography

In the late 1910s, non-Native cultural elites in Santa Fe, such as Edgar Lee Hewett, founder of the Museum of New Mexico (MNM), and Elizabeth DeHuff, wife of then superintendent of the Santa Fe Indian School began to recognize Pueblo paintings not only as ethnographic documents that described Pueblo ceremonial dances and life at villages, but also as fine art. Early advocates of Pueblo paintings encouraged artists to create art based on their own cultures. However, this does not mean Awa Tsireh passively produced ethnographic depictions of Pueblo culture at the behest of white anthropologists. It is important to emphasize that Pueblo artists like Awa Tsireh had room for negotiation and artistic ingenuity, such as we see in *Pottery Makers*.



Figure 1.5.8.2: Awa Tsireh, *Pottery Makers* (detail), c. 1930, ink and watercolor, 33.02 x 54.29 cm (Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio)

The pottery in the painting



Figure 1.5.8.3: Unidentified San Ildefonso artist, Jar, c. 1890s, clay and paint , 31.75 cm in diameter (Denver Art Museum)

All but one of the vessels in *Pottery Makers* are globular in shape with a short neck. They look like actual vessels made with black designs on white slip (watery clay paint) and a red band at the bottom as well as on the inside below the rim. Their color palette resembles black-on-cream wares from the late nineteenth century, such as a storage jar made in the 1890s that uses only black color for abstract motifs on the white field and has an undecorated red band at the bottom and on the rim.



Figure 1.5.8.4: Unknown San Ildefonso Artist, Jar, c. 1900 (courtesy of School for Advanced Research; photo: Lynn Lown)

However, by the turn of the twentieth century, black-on-cream ware was gradually replaced by new styles, such as polychrome ware that showed colorful abstract motifs using reddish brown pigments.

By the time Awa Tsireh produced this painting around 1930, Julian and Maria Martinez had achieved national success with their now iconic monochrome black-on-black polished ware. Importantly, the ceramic style depicted in *Pottery Makers* does not follow the trend at San Ildefonso Pueblo at that time, which means that Awa Tsireh's paintings are not exact depictions of life in San Ildefonso Pueblo—despite his use of a naturalistic approach. The artist's choice to use this style of pottery helps us to understand the complex thought process of a Pueblo artist in the early twentieth century.



Figure 1.5.8.5666666666666: "Indian work room, Indian Building, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Navaho Indians among them Elle, the most famous weaver among the Navahos, and Tom of Ganado, her husband, and Indians from other tribes—Santo Domingo, Isleta, Laguna, and San Felipi," a postcard from the Fred Harvey series, c. 1900–09 (Newberry Library)

The significant stylistic change from black-on-cream wares in San Ildefonso pottery around the turn of the twentieth century, and the invention of polished black-on-black wares in the late 1910s, were the result of Pueblo communities' increased contact with U.S. settler-colonial society. As the result of railroad tourism in the American Southwest from the 1890s, Pueblo pottery became widely popular among white urban middle- and upper-middle-class individuals. Along with the railroad run by Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe (AT & SF) Railway, Fred Harvey Company's hotels sold Indigenous hand-made objects and set up demonstrations of ceremonial dances as well as the making of Indigenous arts like Pueblo pottery and Diné (Navajo) weavings.

Sales

Meanwhile, Pueblo communities needed to earn cash due to the reduction of the land available for agriculture and hunting due to the encroachment of Anglo and Hispanic ranchers seeking to increase their production of beef as well as the increased presence of a cash economy after New Mexico was annexed by the U.S. in 1848 as a result of the Mexican-American War. The sales of Indigenous hand-made objects for the non-Native market helped Pueblos to survive economically. These sales also created room for Pueblo cultural expression in the face of the forced assimilation policy by the U.S. federal government, which included sending Pueblo youths to boarding schools as well as attacks against ceremonial practices that culminated in a series of documents issued in the early 1920s (by Commissioner of the Office of Indian Affairs Charles Burke) restricting many of them.

At this time, Pueblo potters—mostly women—began to produce less elaborate small pottery vessels and figurines so that they could maximize their sales to tourists. Early tourists preferred small inexpensive vessels as souvenirs and cared less about quality. At the same time, Pueblo potters began to experiment with non-conventional shapes and designs (such as ashtrays, vases with handles, or figurines). They also created pseudo-ceremonial vessels that appealed to tourists' and anthropologists' curiosity about Indigenous esoteric materials, despite the fact that they had no ceremonial function within the Pueblo communities, and were a tactic to protect ceremonial objects from outsiders.

Questions of authenticity

Not all of these changes in the production of Pueblo pottery were favorable in the eyes of white cultural elites who were concerned about the impact of tourism and assimilation policies on Pueblo cultural traditions. Some were concerned that changes to these objects made them less "authentic," a perception that was shaped by the myth of a vanishing race—a pervasive assumption among non-Natives that Indigenous peoples and their cultural distinctiveness would completely disappear in the face of modernization and settler-colonial practices. Herbert J. Spinden, a curator at the American Museum of Natural History, praised San Ildefonso pottery as "decorative art" while expressing his concerns over the destructive impact of "the commercializing American contact" on "the remains of the native culture." [1] In collectors' and scholars' imaginations, Native traditions were on the verge of extinction.

While museums tried to collect what they regarded as pottery vessels free from the negative impact of tourism, Kenneth Chapman, curator of the MNM, encouraged Pueblo potters to study older vessels to revive earlier traditions. Awa Tsireh referenced black-on-

cream wares for *Pottery Makers*—the style widely used in San Ildefonso Pueblo before the expansion of tourism in the Southwest that had caused radical changes in Pueblo pottery-making—and was surely aware of the special value attached to older vessels by educated non-Native audiences.



Figure **1.5.8.6**: Photographs showing the "olla maiden trope" were common in the late 19th-century U.S. *Pueblo Women Carrying Water*, c. 1870–98, from *Stereoscopic views of the Indians of New Mexico*, c. 1870–1908, albumen photoprint (The New York Public Library)

Women in the painting

Interestingly, Awa Tsireh's pottery-making scenes rarely include male figures (even though pottery-making is traditionally women's work among Pueblo people, men also participated in the production of pottery—and the artist himself decorated vessels). Representations of Pueblo women carrying an *olla* on their head ("*olla*" is a Spanish word meaning "cooking pot" but often used as "water jar" in this context) were ubiquitous in dominant U.S. visual culture including in photographs, advertisements, and artworks.

The trope of the "olla maiden" is a romanticized image of Pueblo culture, especially women. White intellectuals in the late nineteenth century saw over-packed urban spaces and machine-made commodities as causing human alienation as well as physical and moral degeneration (especially among white males). The olla maiden became a symbol of an attempt to restore what they felt had been lost: a harmonious balance between nature and civilization. For them, traditional Native handmade objects made by women from natural materials, such as basketry and pottery vessels, provided symbolic connections to nature and a romanticized past. In his pottery-making scenes, Awa Tsireh aligned his pottery-making scenes with the popular "olla maiden" trope by showing only women and adding more globular-shaped jars that referred to earlier types of vessels rather than a diversity of vessels including plates, different types of bowls, canteens, and so forth.



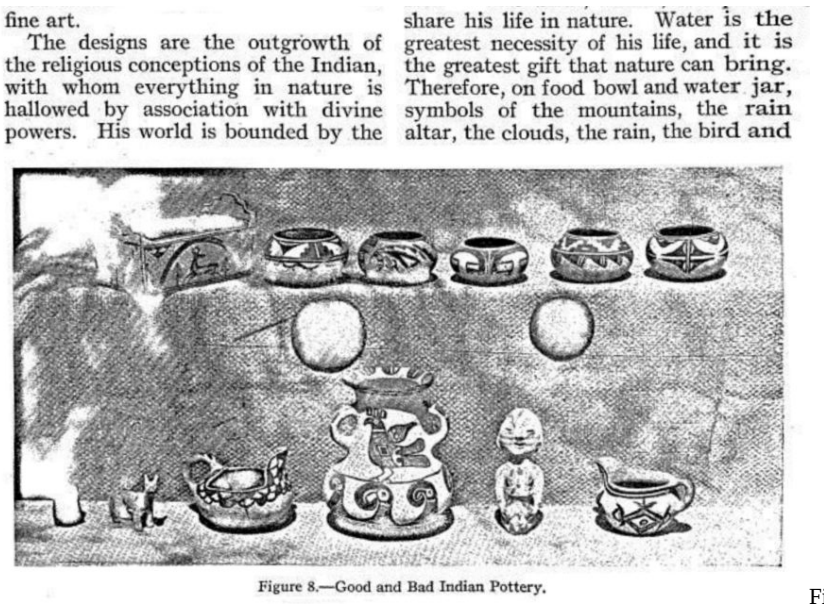
Figure 1.5.8.7: Photographer unknown, *Dolorita Vigil: Dressmaker and Potter*, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico, c. 1915 (Palace of the Governors Photo Archives Collection)

Awa Tsireh's pottery-making scenes reference an even more specific variation of the "olla maiden" trope—images of Pueblo women making pottery. A staged photograph that shows this subject includes Dolorita Vigil, from San Ildefonso; she squats on her heels, holds a water jar, and is surrounded by three other water jars. She holds a brush made out of a yucca leaf in her right hand as if she is decorating the jar. The brick-paved ground and the wall behind her suggest that she is probably in the courtyard of the Palace of Governors in Santa Fe where Kenneth Chapman had invited San Ildefonso potters to perform demonstrations for white middle- and upper-middle-class visitors.

This staged photograph derives from popular demonstrations of Indigenous art being made at tourist sites. Tourist interest in these hand-made objects was so great that they sought to observe ceramic production by the hands of Indigenous artists. The artificiality of this photograph's setting reveals that the focus was on reproducing images of a Pueblo woman with her water jar, even if it was outside the Pueblo context. Awa Tsireh was surely aware that the "olla maiden" trope provided a frame of reference to strengthen the notion of "authenticity" projected onto Pueblo pottery.

Documenting production

Although photographers had produced images of Pueblo pottery-making since the late nineteenth century, a renewed interest in documenting production emerged in the early decades of the twentieth century. Non-Native specialists studied techniques and design principles for different types of pottery as a way of establishing criteria to discern the quality of Pueblo pottery. They believed this could help to elevate the status of Pueblo pottery to fine art.



fine art.
The designs are the outgrowth of the religious conceptions of the Indian, with whom everything in nature is hallowed by association with divine powers. His world is bounded by the

share his life in nature. Water is the greatest necessity of his life, and it is the greatest gift that nature can bring. Therefore, on food bowl and water jar, symbols of the mountains, the rain altar, the clouds, the rain, the bird and

Figure 8.—Good and Bad Indian Pottery.

Figure 1.5.8.8: Illustration of the Pueblo pottery arranged according to what was considered "good" (the row on top) and "bad" (the bottom row) by collectors. from Olive W. Wilson, "The Survival of an Ancient Art," *Art & Archaeology* (January 1920): 28.

Illustration of the Pueblo pottery arranged according to what was considered "good" (the row on top) and "bad" (the bottom row) by collectors. from Olive W. Wilson, "The Survival of an Ancient Art," *Art & Archaeology* (January 1920): 28.

An essay in *Art and Archaeology* by Olive Wilson, "The Survival of an Ancient Art" (1920) illustrated the processes of pottery-making with photographs and text. It also includes a photograph showing Pueblo pottery arranged horizontally, similar to what we see in Awa Tsireh's *Pottery Makers*—he was likely referencing this type of photographic representation of Pueblo culture. The photograph in Wilson's essay contrasts what the author regarded as "good" pottery on the top row (namely globular-shaped jars with refined shapes and meticulous details and a traditional rectangular corn-meal bowl) and "bad" pottery on the row below (here there are types of vessels invented and sold for tourists, such as clay figurines and non-conventional-shaped vessels decorated with less elaborate designs).

This photograph also shows pottery vessels from a consistent angle, and arranges them isolated from the surrounding environment. This type of neatly arranged photographic image resonated with emerging research on designs of Indigenous artifacts. It shows a marked difference from the cluttered souvenirs commonly found in home decoration that became widely popular among US white middle- and upper-middle classes around the turn of the twentieth century. A trend where Indigenous artifacts from different cultures were promiscuously displayed among artworks and books about Indigenous peoples in dens, alcoves, and hallways. This fashion became possible when department stores and world fairs brought Indigenous art to their clientele, and reflected the value that Indigenous hand-made objects had for some urban white elites. Displays at "Indian corners" framed Indigenous hand-made objects as "souvenirs" and "curios" rather than as "fine arts" or "ethnographic specimens."

The photographic representation of Pueblo pottery employed by anthropologists and curators, could dictate to viewers how these wares should be viewed and what constituted "good" or "bad" pottery as "fine art." Awa Tsireh drew on the authority tied to this photographic format for Indigenous work, in part, perhaps, because of its appeal to white audiences.



Figure **1.5.8.9**: Awa Tsireh, *Pottery Makers*, c. 1930, ink and watercolor, 33.02 x 54.29 cm (Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio)

Unique representations

Awa Tsireh's choice to incorporate older styles into his painting may have resonated with his predominantly white, educated, non-Native audiences, who had access to books and articles about Pueblo pottery. He chose to appeal to their particular interest in older vessels from the late nineteenth century rather than those produced by contemporary potters. Awa Tsireh's *Pottery Makers* tacitly confirms his non-Native audience's understanding of ideally good Pueblo pottery, and gives his painting an aura of authenticity that would have appealed to his audience. Meanwhile, the artist reinforced his audiences' romanticized image of Pueblo culture by referencing the "olla maiden" trope. Because of decades of interactions with non-Native intellectuals, artists at San Ildefonso Pueblo—like Awa Tsireh—were aware of the interest in describing Native techniques and analyzing designs.

Pottery Makers demonstrates that Awa Tsireh created his own unique representation of Pueblo women and pottery by integrating different modes of representations of Pueblo people and culture found in settler-colonial U.S. visual culture into his pottery-making scenes. These ranged from the popular "olla maiden" trope to anthropological photographs studying pottery design. By aligning his artworks with his audiences' desire for authenticity, Awa Tsireh found a means to solidify his external reputation as an outstanding Pueblo artist. At the same time, Awa Tsireh visualized his understanding of contemporary Pueblo communities interacting with outsiders (tourists and anthropologists alike). This created a complex dynamic where his own culture was Othered by the very outsiders he references in his artwork. In this way, Awa Tsireh disrupted the uneven power relationship between the colonizer as observer, and the colonized peoples as the observed.

**At the beginning of this project, the author consulted with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) of San Ildefonso Pueblo in order to make sure another essay did not violate protocols of religious matter from the perspectives of cultural specialists. Out of respect to the decision made by the board member, the author decided to write about this topic instead of the original plan. I express my gratitude to the members of the advisory board who reviewed my proposal, and Mike Bremer, officer of THPO. Western academic institutions have tended to regard Indigenous communities as the subject of research and excluded from the decision-making processes related to research projects. Tribal consultation is an important approach to redress structural problems of academic research about Indigenous cultures. Although just a consultation is not enough to redesign research to better reflect interests of Indigenous communities, this essay seeks to introduce such issues to a broader public by using a platform like Smarthistory.*

Notes:

[1] Spinden discussed this in his article “The Making of Pottery at San Ildefonso” (1911)

Additional resources:

Babcock, Barbara A. “Pueblo Cultural Bodies.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 107, no. 423 (Winter 1994): pp. 40–54.

Bernstein, Bruce. *Santa Fe Indian Market: A History of Native Arts and the Marketplace*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2012.

Brody, J.J. *Pueblo Indian Painting: Tradition and Modernism in New Mexico, 1900–1930*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1997.

Hutchinson, Elizabeth. *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009.

Scott, Sascha. “Awa Tsireh and the Art of Subtle Resistance.” *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 4 (2013): 597–622.

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1.5.9: The pueblo modernism of Ma Pe Wi

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.6: Northwest coast

1.6.1: Tsimshian shaman's rattle

1.6.2: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw)

1.6.3: Transformation masks

1.6.4: North Wind Mask

1.6.5: Arctic clothing

1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan

1.6.7: Haida potlatch pole

1.6.8: Bentwood Boxes of the Northwest Coast peoples

1.6.9: Tlingit mortuary and memorial totem poles

1.6.10: Tlingit Proud Raven totem pole, Saxman Totem Park

1.6.11: Tlingit Oyster Man totem pole, Saxman Totem Park

1.6.12: Dorica Jackson, Diving Whale Chilkat Robe

1.6.13: Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit), Resilience Robe

1.6.14: Northwest Coast Basketry—Woven Traditions

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1.6.1: Tsimshian shaman’s rattle

by **THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**



Tsimshian, shaman’s rattle, c. 1750–80, birch, bone, hair, pigment, and metal pins, made in British Columbia, Canada, 35.6 × 22.9 × 11.4 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art); speaker: Gaylord Torrence, Fred and Virginia Merrill Senior Curator of American Indian Art, The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art

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1.6.2: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw)

by DR. AARON GLASS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.6.2.1**: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw), late 19th century, wood, cotton, paint, and iron (Field Museum, Chicago), an ARCHES video. Special thanks to Aaron Glass, the Bard Graduate Center, the U'mista Cultural Centre, and Corrine Hunt

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1.6.3: Transformation masks

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



Figure **1.6.3.1**: Kwakwaka'wakw artist, *Eagle Mask closed*, late 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar wood, feathers, sinew, cord, bird skin, hide, plant fibers, cotton, iron, pigments, 37 x 57 x 49 cm (American Museum of Natural History)

Transformation

Imagine a man standing before a large fire wearing the heavy eagle mask shown above and a long cedar bark costume on his body. He begins to dance, the firelight flickers and the feathers rustle as he moves about the room in front of hundreds of people. Now, imagine him pulling the string that opens the mask, he is transformed into something else entirely—what a powerful and dramatic moment!

Northwest Coast transformation masks manifest transformation, usually an animal changing into a mythical being or one animal becoming another. Masks are worn by dancers during ceremonies, they pull strings to open and move the mask—in effect, animating it. In the Eagle mask shown above from the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, you can see the wooden frame and netting that held the mask on the dancer's head. When the cords are pulled, the eagle's face and beak split down the center, and the bottom of the beak opens downwards, giving the impression of a bird spreading its wings (see image below). Transformed, the mask reveals the face of an ancestor.



Figure 1.6.3.2: Kwakwaka'wakw artist, *Eagle Mask open*, late 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar wood, feathers, sinew, cord, bird skin, hide, plant fibers, cotton, iron, pigments, 37 x 57 x 49 cm (American Museum of Natural History)

A Transformation Mask at the Brooklyn Museum (below) shows a Thunderbird, but when opened it reveals a human face flanked on either side by two lightning snakes called sisiutl, and with another bird below it and a small figure in black above it.



Figure 1.6.3.3: 'Namgis artist (of the Kwakwaka'wakw), *Thunderbird Mask open*, 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar, pigment, leather, nails, metal plate, 78.7 x 114.3 x 119.4 cm open; 52.1 x 43.2 x 74.9 cm closed (Brooklyn Museum)



Figure 1.6.3.4: 'Namgis artist (of the Kwakwaka'wakw), *Thunderbird Mask closed*, 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar, pigment, leather, nails, metal plate, 78.7 x 114.3 x 119.4 cm open; 52.1 x 43.2 x 74.9 cm closed (Brooklyn Museum)

A whale transformation mask, such as the one in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (below), gives the impression that the whale is swimming. The mouth opens and closes, the tail moves upwards and downwards, and the flippers extend outwards but also retract inwards.



Figure 1.6.3.5: Kwakwaka'wakw artist, *Whale Mask*, 19th c., from Alert Bay, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, cedar wood, cord, metal, leather, denim, pigments, 58 x 36.5 x 161.3 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Transformation masks, like those belonging to the Kwakwaka'wakw (pronounced Kwak-wak-ah-wak, a Pacific Northwest Coast indigenous people) and illustrated here, are worn during a potlatch, a ceremony where the host displayed his status, in part by giving away gifts to those in attendance. These masks were only one part of a costume that also included a cloak made of red cedar bark. During a potlatch, Kwakwaka'wakw dancers perform wearing the mask and costume. The masks conveyed social position (only those with a certain status could wear them) and also helped to portray a family's genealogy by displaying (family) crest symbols.

The Kwakwaka'wakw

Masks are not the same across the First Nations of the Northwest Coastal areas; here we focus solely on Kwakwaka'wakw transformation masks.

The Kwakwaka'wakw ("Kwak'wala speaking tribes") are generally called Kwakiutl by non-Native peoples. They are one of many indigenous groups that live on the western coast of British Columbia, Canada. The mythology and cosmology of different Kwakwaka'wakw Nations (such as the Kwagu'ɬ (Kwakiutl) or 'Namgis) is extremely diverse, although there are commonalities. For instance, many groups relate that deceased ancestors roamed the world, transforming themselves in the process (this might entail removing their animal skins or masks to reveal their human selves within).

Kwakwaka'wakw bands are arranged into four clans (Killer Whale, Eagle, Raven, and Wolf clans). The clans are divided into *numayn* (or *'na'mina*), which can be loosely translated as "group of fellows of the same kind" (essentially groups that shared a

common ancestor). *Numayns* were responsible for safe-guarding crest symbols and for conveying their specific rights—which might include access to natural resources (like salmon fishing areas) and rights to sacred names and dances that related to a *numayn's* ancestor or the group's origins. The *numayn* were ranked, and typically only one person could fill a spot at any given moment in time. Each rank entailed specific rights, including ceremonial privileges—like the right to wear a mask such as the Brooklyn Museum's Thunderbird transformation mask. Animal transformation masks contained crests for a given *numayn*. Ancestral entities and supernatural forces temporarily embody dancers wearing these masks and other ceremonial regalia.

Animals and myths



Figure **1.6.3.6**: Transformation Mask, Kwakiutl population, British Columbia, Canada, wood paint, graphite, cedar, cloth, string, 34 X 53 cm closed, 130 cm open (Quai Branly Museum). "This transformation mask opens into two sections. Closed, it represents a crow or an eagle; when spread out, a human face appears. It was associated with initiation rites that took place during the winter. During these ceremonies, both religious and theatrical, the spirit of the ancestors was supposed to enter into men."

Many myths relate moments of transformation often involving trickster supernaturals (a trickster is a god, goddess, spirit, man, woman, or anthropomorphic animal who exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobey normal rules and conventional behavior). Raven, for instance, is known as a consummate trickster—he often changes into other creatures, and helps humans by providing them with a variety of useful things such as the sun, moon, fire, and salmon. Thunderbird (*Kwankwanxwalige'*), who was a mythical ancestor of the Kwakwaka'wakw, also figures prominently in mythology. He is believed to cause thunder when he beats his wings, and lightning comes from his eyes. He lives in the celestial realm, and he can remove his bird skin to assume human form.

Design and materials

The masks illustrated here display a variety of brightly colored surfaces filled with complex forms. These masks use elements of the formline style, a term coined in 1965 to describe the characteristics of Northwest Coast visual culture. The Brooklyn Museum mask provides a clear example of what constitutes the formline style. For instance, The Brooklyn Museum mask (when open) displays a color palette of mostly red, blue-green, and black, which is consistent with other formline objects like a Tlingit Raven Screen (a house partition screen) attributed to Kadyisdu.axch' (detail below). The masks, whether opened or closed, are bilaterally symmetrical. Typical of the formline style is the use of an undulating, calligraphic line. Also, note how the pupils of the eyes on the exterior of the Brooklyn Museum mask are ovoid shapes, similar to the figures and forms found on the interior surfaces of many masks. This ovoid shape, along with s- and u-forms, are common features of the formline style.



Figure 1.6.3.7: Detail, *Tlingit Raven Screen* or *Yéil X'eenh*, attributed to Kadyisdu.axch', Tlingit, Kiks.ádi clan, active late 18th – early 19th century (Photo: **Joe Mabel**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The American Museum of Natural History and Brooklyn Museum masks are carved of red cedar wood, an important and common material used for many Northwest Coast objects and buildings. Masks take months, sometimes years, to create. Because they are made of wood and other organic materials that quickly decay, most masks date to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (even though we know that the practice extends much farther into the past). In fact, the artistic style of many transformation masks it thought to have emerged over a thousand years ago.

With the introduction and enforcement of Christianity and as a result of colonization in the nineteenth century, masking practices changed among peoples of the Northwest Coast. Prior to contact with Russians, Europeans, and Euro-Americans, masks like the Brooklyn Museum's Thunderbird Transformation Mask, were not carved using metal tools. After iron tools were introduced along with other materials and equipment, masks demonstrate different carving techniques. Earlier masks used natural (plant and mineral based) pigments, post-contact, brighter and more durable synthetic colors were introduced. The open mask from the American Museum of Natural History, for example, displays bright red, yellow, and blue.

Ceremonies and potlatches

Masks passed between family members of a specific clan (they could be inherited or gifted). They were just one sign of a person's status and rank, which were important to demonstrate within Kwakwaka'wakw society—especially during a potlatch. Franz Boas, an anthropologist who worked in this area between 1885 and 1930, noted that "The acquisition of a high position and the maintenance of its dignity require correct marriages and wealth—wealth accumulated by industry and by loaning out property at interest—dissipated at the proper time, albeit with the understanding that each recipient of a gift has to return it with interest at a time when he is dissipating his wealth. This is the general principle underlying the potlatch…."[1]



Figure 1.6.3.8: Edward S. Curtis, Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch, c. 1914

Potlatches were banned in 1885 until the 1950s because they were considered immoral by Christian missionaries who believed cannibalism occurred (for its part, the Canadian Government thought potlatches hindered economic development because people ceased work during these ritual celebrations). With the prohibition of potlatches, many masks were confiscated. Those that weren't destroyed often made their way into museums or private collections. When the ban against potlatches was removed by the Canadian government, many First Nations have attempted to regain possession of the masks and other objects that had been taken from them. Potlatches are still practiced today among Northwest Coast peoples.

Editor Note: In the United States, it is more common to see the term "Native American," "Native," or "Indigenous," whereas "First Nations" used more frequently in Canada.

1. Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 51. It is important to mention that Boas is a controversial figure for many, especially because of his active acquisition of objects and skeletons belonging to different First Nations. Much of what he collected is today in the American Museum of Natural History in NYC.

Additional resources:

Kwakiutl Ethnography from the Milwaukee Public Museum

American Indian History from the Smithsonian

Repatriation of a British Museum mask (UNESCO)

Whale Transformation Mask at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Bill Holm, *Northwest Coast Indian Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965).

Alice B. Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992).

Bruce Greenville, "Introduction," in *Down from the Shimmering Sky: Masks of the Northwest Coast*, Peter Macnair, et al, 14–16 (Vancouver, BC, Seattle: Douglas & McIntyre and University of Washington Press, 1998).

Aldona Jonaitis, *Art of the Northwest Coast* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

Edward Malin, *A World of Faces: Masks of the Northwest Coast Indians* (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1978).

Judith Ostrowitz, *Privileging the Past: Reconstructing History in Northwest Coast Art* (Vancouver, BC: Univdrsity of British Columbia Press, 1999).

Stanley Walens, "'The Potlatch Era,'" in *Kwakiutl, Indians of North America* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992 [Updated 2008]).

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1.6.4: North Wind Mask

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



Figure **1.6.4.1**: North Wind Mask (Negakfok), Alaska, Yu'pik, early 20th century, wood and feathers (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Bering Sea, on the western coast of Alaska, is home to the Yup'ik peoples. This area has one of the world's coldest climates, making for very challenging living conditions. Yup'ik men carved and painted masks to occupy them while indoors during the long dark winter months (when temperatures could fall to -48 degrees Fahrenheit).

These masks played important social and ceremonial functions during dances, actively participating in the communal, spiritual life of the Yup'ik. Masked dances celebrated spiritual transformation, but were also intended to herald the coming of springtime or to bring good fortune to an upcoming hunt.

The Yup'ik

The Yup'ik, or Yupik ("Real People"), people come from Alaska (comprised of the Central Yup'ik and the Alutiiq). They are related to other indigenous groups or First Nations including the Inuit in Canada, the Yuiit or Siberian Yupik (also referred to as Chukchi in Siberia) and Iñupiat in Alaska, who have all been incorrectly lumped together as "Eskimos."

Prior to contact with foreigners (such as Russians, Europeans, and Euro-Americans), the Yup'ik turned to the ocean for their livelihood. They fished and hunted sea mammals, and often moved with the seasons to follow these sources of food. Many Yup'ik communities still live along the Alaskan coast—and continue to draw on these natural resources.



Figure 1.6.4.2: Edward S. Curtis, A man wearing a ceremonial mask of the Nunivak style (Nunivak is an island in the Bering Sea), c. 1929, photograph (Edward S. Curtis Collection, Library of Congress)

Making Masks

Masking practices formed a vital component of Yup'ik culture. Masks were often made in pairs, and after they were used, the masks were typically discarded or destroyed. Only the most important—often those made and worn by the ritual specialist—might be kept and reused.



Figure 1.6.4.3: Yup´ik mask, c. 1910, Good News Bay, Alaska, driftwood, baleen, feathers, paint, cotton twine, 49 x 39 cm (National Museum of the American Indian)

Young men learned to carve by observing their family members producing masks. Ritual or spiritual specialists (frequently referred to today as "shamans") often oversaw the carving of masks, but artists also added their own touches to them. No two masks were

identical, and each had its own story.

Many different materials were used to create Yup'ik masks. In a wonderful, animated mask from around 1910 now in the National Museum of the American Indian in New York (left), a Yupik carver used driftwood, baleen, feathers, paint, and cotton twine to create a mask representing a grinning face.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's early twentieth-century mask (image at the top of the page) uses fewer materials—wood, paint, and feathers—and it shows Negakfok, or the North Wind (also called "the spirit that likes cold and stormy weather"). Imagine that when someone participated in a ceremony and wore this mask, the dangling wood pieces collided making noise—evoking not only the movement of wind, but also the noise it makes. The white spots may symbolize snowflakes. It calls to mind the experience of an icy wind whipping up snow—evoking the cold winters of western Alaska.



Figure **1.6.4.4**: Shaman healing a sick boy, c. 1900-1930, **Library of Congress**

Masking Ceremonies

Making masks and participating in performances helped to forge social bonds and to engage with beings in the spirit world. These beings were not only people, but also animals, and elements of the environment, and sometimes even hybrids. Spirits could be embodied by living creatures as well as objects like hunting tools, so it was crucial to respect the environment in which one lived. During ceremonies, masks transformed the individual wearing it into a spirit made manifest in the material world. This element of transformation is evident in the appearance of many masks that combine animal and human elements with others that relate to the environment. Men typically wore these masks during ceremonies, while women might use finger masks to animate their hands. Ritual specialists usually directed dances and selected which males would be masked participants.

Beyond wearing the masks, hand drums were often used during the dances. Ceremonial clothing further animated dances and worked with the masks to transform an individual into a channel for a spirit. Think of these ceremonies as a form of storytelling, with the music and masked dancing as the primary means of conveying a narrative and making contact with the spirits that aided people living in a challenging natural environment. All of these events, including the carving and painting of masks, occurred in the communal men's house, called a *qasgiq*.

Changes in Yup'ik Traditions



Figure **1.6.4.5**: Fish mask of the Yupi'k people, wood, Yukon/Kuskokwim region (Alaska), early 20th century (Louvre, formerly in the collection of André Breton; on deposit from the Musée du quai Branly)

As the Yupik came into contact with Russians, Euro-Americans, and Europeans during the nineteenth century, they began to trade with groups beyond those who lived near by. As a result of increased contact with outsiders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century however, some Yup'ik lifeways were altered, especially with attempts to Christianize them. One of the major changes that occured was the banning of masked dancing performances.

Masked dances were forbidden when outsiders deemed these rituals an impediment to Christian evangelization. Some masks were confiscated. Other masks entered private collections in the early twentieth century after they were discarded after use.

In the early twentieth century, Surrealist artists and writers collected Yup'ik masks because of their extraordinary appearance and the Surrealist interest in transformation. For instance, Andre Breton, the founder of the Surrealists, was known to have owned masks—finding inspiration in their conceptual nature. Enrico Donati, another surrealist artist, bought a mask in 1945 that recently sold in 2011 for more than two million dollars. Many of these masks were acquired from Julius Carlebach, a dealer in New York City who had sold masks to the Surrealists, and who had himself received many objects from George Gustav Heye whose collection forms the basis for the Museum of the American Indian (located in New York City and Washington, D.C.).

Additional resources:

Negakfok mask at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Yup'ik Dance Clothes at the National Museum of the American Indian

Yup'ik Mask at the National Museum of the American Indian (NY)

Information about Arctic/Subarctic Peoples from the National Museum of the American Indian

Janet Catherine Berlo and Ruth B Phillips, *Native North American Art*, 2 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Igor Krupnik, *Yupik Transitions: Change and Survival at Bering Strait, 1900–1960* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2013)

"Agayuliyararput Our Way of Making Prayer," *Arctic Studies Center of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History*

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1.6.5: Arctic clothing

by THE BRITISH MUSEUM



Figure 1.6.5.1: Girl's caribou-skin parka, early 19th century C.E., Inuit, 76 cm, West Greenland © Trustees of the British Museum. The parka may have been collected in the early nineteenth century during the search for the Northwest Passage. It is one of the first woman's parkas to be collected in Greenland, and is similar in design to those, discovered with mummies at Qilatiksoq in 1972-8, dating to about 1475.

Clothing

In the Arctic, where temperatures are below freezing for most of the year, warm clothing is of great importance. It is vital for hunters who spend many hours outside fishing or hunting seals, walrus, whales and caribou. Traditional Inuit skin clothing is well suited to this purpose because it provides excellent insulation.

In winter, two layers of clothes were worn when hunting or traveling. The inner layer has the fur turned inwards towards the body, while the fur of the outer layer is turned outwards. Warm air is trapped between the two layers of clothing and the body, providing excellent insulation against the cold.

Today traditional skin clothing remains important to Inuit. Not only are certain kinds of traditional clothing still preferred over manufactured garments, but the making and use of clothing plays a significant role in keeping Inuit cultural values and knowledge alive. Clothing both sustains and expresses Inuit identity.

Woman’s amauti of sealskin



Figure 1.6.5.1: Woman’s amauti of sealskin, Inuit of Labrador or Nunavik, 19th century © Trustees of the British Museum

Unfortunately, there is no documentation on this beautiful woman’s outer parka. However, the design of the costume, particularly the shape of the back flap and the decoration on the garment’s edges, indicate that it was made in Nunavik or Labrador. The back flap is narrow, curving slightly inwards below the waist, and ending in a rounded tip. The decoration with bands of contrasting white and dark stripes of sealskin at the edges of the garment are characteristic of costumes from this part of the eastern Canadian Arctic.

Traditional Arctic clothing consists of two layers of caribou skin garments. Caribou skin is used because the hollow hair follicles contain an air bubble; they also trap insulating air. The inner layer has the fur turned inwards towards the skin, while the outer layer has the fur turned outwards. A pocket of insulating air is caught between the body and the two layers of clothing.

Amauti of this style were used by the Inuit of Labrador until their costume changed through the influence of missionaries in the eighteenth century. Thus, it is possible that the amauti dates to the very first years of contact. It may have been worn by one of the Inuit women brought to England by British explorers, who often brought back inhabitants to prove their discoveries. Many of these captured Inuit were painted by European artists, and the paintings – although varying in accuracy of representation – remain valuable documents of Inuit clothing from that time.

Alternatively, the amauti could have been made somewhat later by Inuit of Nunavik. It is very similar to an amauti now in the McCord Museum, Canada that was collected by Dr William Wakeham in 1897, probably on the southern shores of Hudson Strait. This amauti may have been made around the same time in that area.



Figure **1.6.5.3**: Kamleika, 19th century C.E., Aleut, 168 cm, sea mammal gut, Alaska © Trustees of the British Museum

Kamleikas are outer garments made of sea mammal gut, an extremely light, tough, and waterproof material. They were sewn with grass or sinew threads which expanded when soaked, making the garment waterproof. Among the Aleut, hooded kamleikas were worn as protection against wind and rain over a birdskin or fur parka. These rather sparsely decorated everyday garments usually had drawstrings around the hood and at the cuffs. Although strong, gut can tear, and of course wears out with frequent use. Aleut men, who used their kamleikas almost daily, needed about three new garments each year. Each would take about a month to make.

The Aleut also made beautiful kamleikas for festive or ceremonial occasions. These were hoodless, with a high collar and decorative bands of colored skin at the collar, cuffs, and hem. Such parkas, like this example from the nineteenth century, were extremely valuable status symbols and articles for trading. After contact, they were given as gifts or sold to visiting Europeans and Russian officials, who appreciated them for their beauty and usefulness.

Conserving a gutskin parka

The gut used to make these kamleikas only stays flexible as long as it is saturated with water. In use, gut parkas were stored by rolling when damp, and were again dampened before unrolling. By the time they are brought to the Museum, they have usually become stiff, brittle and misshapen. Therefore, before display, the hardened gut of this kamleika was relaxed using water vapor. As the garment regained flexibility, it was gradually cleaned and reshaped into its original form. Holes, tears and loose elements of the decorative bands were then secured and supported with an adhesive and tinted Japanese tissue paper.

Suggested readings:

J.C.H. King, *First peoples, first contacts* (London, The British Museum Press, 1999).

B.K. Issenman, *Sinew of survival: the living* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1997).

J.E. Oakes and R. Riewe, *Our boots: an Inuit womans art*(New York, Thames and Hudson, 1996).

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1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and TERESA DEWITT, TOTEM HERITAGE CENTER MUSEUM ATTENDANT



Haida Totem Pole, 19th century, from Old Kasaan, Alaska (Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan, Alaska); speakers: Teresa DeWitt and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank

Terms to know:

- clan crest
- totem pole
- Northwest Coastal peoples (Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian)
- Thunderbird
- bentwood box
- Chilkat weaving

Additional resources:

Learn more about the Totem Heritage Center

Read more about totem poles from The Bill Reid Centre at Simon Fraser University

Learn about the **Northwest Coast Village Project**

This page titled 1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

1.6.7: Haida potlatch pole

by TERESA DEWITT and DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



A conversation between Teresa DeWitt and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank in front of a Haida potlatch pole, 19th century, from the village of Old Kasaan, exact dimensions unknown (Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan, Alaska)

Additional resources:

Learn more about the Totem Heritage Center

Read more about totem poles from The Bill Reid Centre at Simon Fraser University

Learn about the Northwest Coast Village Project

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1.6.8: Bentwood Boxes of the Northwest Coast peoples

by TERESA DEWITT, TOTEM HERITAGE CENTER MUSEUM ATTENDANT and DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



Three Bentwood Boxes (Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan, Alaska): Bentwood box (Tlingit), 19th century, 15.69 x 15 x 19.75 inches (box), 16.94 x 16 x 4.19 inches (lid); Bentwood box (Haida), 19th century, 17.75 x 16.3 x 23.4 inches (box), Hydaburg, Alaska; Bentwood box (Haida), 19th century, 18.13 x 17.38 x 23. 65 inches (box), 19.88 x 17.88 x 4 inches (lid) Kasaan, Alaska

Terms to know:

- bentwood box
- Northwest Coast peoples (Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian)
- *at.óowu*

Additional resources:

Learn more about the Totem Heritage Center

Learn about the **Northwest Coast Village Project**

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1.6.9: Tlingit mortuary and memorial totem poles

by TERESA DEWITT and DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK



A conversation between Teresa DeWitt and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank in front of a Mortuary Pole, Tlingit origin, 19th century, from Village Island, 16 x 2 ft. (Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan, Alaska); and a Bear/Killer Whale Pole (memorial pole), Tlingit origin, 19th century, Village Island, 27 x 2 ft. (Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan, Alaska)

Terms to know:

- Tlingit
- Totem pole
- Tongass tribe
- memorial vs. mortuary
- Northwest Coastal peoples (Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian)
- bentwood box
- clan crest

Additional resources:

Learn more about the Totem Heritage Center

Read more about totem poles from The Bill Reid Centre at Simon Fraser University

Learn about the **Northwest Coast Village Project**

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1.6.10: Tlingit Proud Raven totem pole, Saxman Totem Park

by DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK and DR. EMILY MOORE



Proud Raven Totem Pole of the Taant'a kwáan Gaanax.ádi clan of the Raven moiety, first carved in the 1880s, recarved c. 1940 as part of a CCC project, Saxman Totem Park, Saxman, Alaska. A Seeing America video; speakers: Dr. Emily Moore and Dr. Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank. Gunalchéesh (thank you) to Joel Buchanan, clan leader of the Taant'a kwáan Gaanax.ádi Tlingit, for permitting us to share his clan's story. Thank you to the City of Saxman for permitting us to record in the Saxman Totem Park.

This totem pole has long been known as the "Lincoln Pole" because of the likeness of Abraham Lincoln at the top; however, according to most Tlingit elders, it was a depiction of the first white man seen in Tlingit territory in the 18th century. A century later, in the 1880s, a man from the Gaanax.ádi Raven clan of the Tongass Tlingit commissioned the pole to commemorate his ancestor's pride to have seen this first white man (which had become a Gaanax.ádi crest), using a photograph of Abraham Lincoln as the model for a generic white man. It is important not only for these various readings of the crests but also because it claims Gaanax.ádi clan territory before the first white men came to their shores—territory that Tlingit men who were recarving the pole in the 1940s were trying to assert to the U.S. government as their sovereign lands.

Additional resources:

Saxman Totem Park

New Deal projects in Saxman

Emily Moore, *Proud Raven, Painting Wolf:* Carving Alaska's New Deal Totem Parks (University of Washington Press, 2020).

William Paul, "The True Story of the Lincoln Pole." *Alaska Journal* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1971): pp. 2–16.

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1.6.11: Tlingit Oyster Man totem pole, Saxman Totem Park

by **TERESA DEWITT** and **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**



A conversation between Teresa DeWitt and Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank in front of the Oyster Man Totem Pole (sometimes referred to as “Giant Rock Oyster Totem”), originally carved in the 19th century, recarved c. 1940 (Saxman Totem Park, Saxman, Alaska)

Additional resources

Saxman Totem Park

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1.6.12: Dorica Jackson, Diving Whale Chilkat Robe

by **DORICA JACKSON** and **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**



A conversation between Dorica Jackson and Lauren Kilroy-Ewbank in front of Dorica Jackson, *Diving Whale Chilkat Robe*, 2002–18, design from *The Basketry of the Tlingit and the Chilkat Blanket* by George Emmons, Merino wool and yellow cedar bark (Totem Heritage Center, Ketchikan, Alaska)

Additional resources

Learn more about the Totem Heritage Center

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1.6.13: Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit), Resilience Robe

by **DR. BETH HARRIS** and **LILY HOPE AT PORTLAND ART MUSEUM**



Clarissa Rizal, *Resilience Robe*, 2014, merino wool, 64 x 53 inches (Portland Art Museum); speakers Lily Hope and Dr. Beth Harris

Terms to know:

- Chilkat weaving
- Tlingit
- formline
- Northwest Coast
- resilience

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1.6.14: Northwest Coast Basketry—Woven Traditions

by **AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**



The American Museum of Natural History is updating, restoring, and conserving the historic Northwest Coast Hall, including more than 800 Northwest Coast collections pieces, in consultation with several Pacific Northwest Coast communities. Suquamish elder and master weaver Ed Carriere has traveled to the Museum to offer guidance on caring for woven baskets, and last summer, Associate Conservator Amy Tjiong headed to Washington State to learn about materials and techniques that will help the Museum care for the Northwest Coast baskets in its collections.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.7: Contemporary art

1.7.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)

1.7.2: Wendy Red Star, 1880 Crow Peace Delegation

This page titled 1.7: Contemporary art is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

1.7.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)

by DR. SUZANNE NEWMAN FRICKE



Figure 1.7.1.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992, oil paint and mixed media, collage, objects, canvas, 152.4 x 431.8 cm (Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia) © Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

A Non-Celebration

As a response to the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in North America in 1992, the artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Nation, created a large mixed-media canvas called *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*. *Trade*, part of the series "The Quincentenary Non-Celebration," illustrates historical and contemporary inequities between Native Americans and the United States government.

Trade references the role of trade goods in allegorical stories like the acquisition of the island of Manhattan by Dutch colonists in 1626 from unnamed Native Americans in exchange for goods worth 60 guilders or $24.00. Though more apocryphal than true, this story has become part of American lore, suggesting that Native Americans had been lured off their lands by inexpensive trade goods. The fundamental misunderstanding between the Native and non-Native worlds—especially the notion of private ownership of land—underlies *Trade*. Smith stated that if *Trade* could speak, it might say: "Why won't you consider trading the land we handed over to you for these silly trinkets that so honor us? Sound like a bad deal? Well, that's the deal you gave us."[1]



Figure 1.7.1.2: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, canoe (detail), *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992, oil paint and mixed media, collage, objects, canvas, 152.4 x 431.8 cm (Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia) © Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

For *Trade*, Smith layered images, paint, and objects on the surface of the canvas, suggesting layers of history and complexity. Divided into three large panels, the triptych (three part) arrangement is reminiscent of a medieval altarpiece. Smith covered the canvas in collage, with newspaper articles about Native life cut out from her tribal paper *Char-Koosta*, photos, comics, tobacco and gum wrappers, fruit carton labels, ads, and pages from comic books, all of which feature stereotypical images of Native Americans. She mixed the collaged text with photos of deer, buffalo, and Native men in historic dress holding pipes with feathers in their hair, and an image of Ken Plenty Horses—a character from one of Smith's earlier pieces, the *Paper Dolls for a Post Columbian World with Ensembles Contributed by US Government* from 1991-92.



Figure **1.7.1.3**: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, toys and souvenirs (detail), *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992, oil paint and mixed media, collage, objects, canvas, 152.4 x 431.8 cm (Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia) © Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

She applied blocks of white, yellow, green, and especially red paint over the layer of collaged materials. The color red had multiple meanings for Smith, referring to her Native heritage as well as to blood, warfare, anger, and sacrifice. With the emphasis on prominent brushstrokes and the dripping blocks of paint, Smith cited the Abstract Expressionist movement from the 1940s and 50s with raw brushstrokes describing deep emotions and social chaos. For a final layer, she painted the outline of an almost life-sized canoe. Canoes were used by Native Americans as well as non-Native explorers and traders in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century to travel along the waterways of North America. The canoe suggests the possibility of trade and cultural connections—though this empty canoe is stuck, unable to move.



Figure **1.7.1.4**: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, toys and souvenirs (detail), *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)*, 1992, oil paint and mixed media, collage, objects, canvas, 152.4 x 431.8 cm (Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia) © Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

Above the canvas, Smith strung a clothesline from which she dangled a variety of Native-themed toys and souvenirs, especially from sports teams with Native American mascots. The items include toy tomahawks, a child's headdress with brightly dyed feathers, Red Man chewing tobacco, a Washington Redskins cap and license plate, a Florida State Seminoles bumper sticker, a

Cleveland Indian pennant and cap, an Atlanta Braves license plate, a beaded belt, a toy quiver with an arrow, and a plastic Indian doll. Smith offers these cheap goods in exchange for the lands that were lost, reversing the historic sale of land for trinkets. These items also serve as reminders of how Native life has been commodified, turning Native cultural objects into cheap items sold without a true understanding of what the original meanings were.

The Artist

The artist was born on January 15, 1940, at the St. Ignatius Jesuit Missionary on the Reservation of the Flathead Nation. Raised by her father, a rodeo rider and horse trader, Smith was one of eleven children. Her first name comes from the French word for "yellow" (jaune), a reminder of her French-Cree ancestors. Her middle name "Quick-to-See" was not a reference to her eyesight but was given by her Shoshone grandmother as a sign of her ability to grasp things readily. From an early age Smith wanted to be an artist; as a child, she had herself photographed while dressed as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Though her father was not literate, education was important to Smith.



Figure **1.7.1.5**: National Bison Range (near St. Ignatius, Flathead Reservation) (photo: **Jaix Chaix**, Check All Home Inspection Corp., CC BY-SA 2.0)

She received a bachelor of arts from Framingham State College in Massachusetts in 1976 in art education rather than in studio art because her instructors told her that no woman could have a career as an artist, though they acknowledged that she was more skilled than the men in her class. In 1980 she received a master of fine arts from the University of New Mexico. She was inspired by both Native and non-Native sources, including petroglyphs, Plains ledger art, Diné saddle blankets, early Charles Russell prints of western landscapes, and paintings by twentieth-century artists such as Paul Klee, Joan Miró, Willem DeKooning, Jasper Johns, and especially Kurt Schwitters and Robert Rauschenberg (see image below). Both Schwitters and Rauschenberg brought objects from the quotidian world into their work, such as tickets, cigarette wrappers, and string.



Figure 1.7.1.6: Robert Rauschenberg, *Canyon*, 1959, oil, pencil, paper, metal, photograph, fabric, wood, canvas, buttons, mirror, taxidermied eagle, cardboard, pillow, paint tube and other materials, 207.6 x 177.8 x 61 cm (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) © 2014 Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

In addition to her work as an artist, Smith has curated over thirty exhibitions to promote and highlight the art of other Native artists. She has also lectured extensively, been an artist-in-residence at numerous universities, and has taught art at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico the only four-year university dedicated to teaching Native youth across North America. In her years as an artist, Smith has received many honors, including an Eitelijorg Fellowship in 2007, a grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation to create a comprehensive archive of her work, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women's Caucus for the Arts, the College Art Association's Committee on Women in the Arts award, the 2005 New Mexico Governor's award for excellence in the arts, as well as four honorary doctorate degrees.

Smith's art shares her view of the world, offering her personal perspective as an artist, a Native American, and a woman. Her work creates a dialogue between the art and its viewers and explores issues of Native identity as it is seen by both Native Americans and non-Natives. *Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People)* restates the standard narratives of the history of the United States, specifically the desire to expand beyond "sea to shining sea," as encompassed in the ideology of Manifest Destiny (the belief in the destiny of Western expansion), and raises the issue of contemporary inequities that are rooted in colonial experience.

1. Arlene Hirschfelder, *Artists and Craftspeople, American Indian Lives*, New York: Facts On File, 1994, page 115.

Additional resources:

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

"Smith, Jaune Quick-to-See" in American Indian History Online

Lawrence Abbot, *I Stand in the Center of the Good: Interviews with Contemporary Native American Artists*, University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1994.

Carolyn Kastner, *Jaune Quick-to-See Smith: An American Modernist*, University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque, 2013.

Melanie Herzog, "Building Bridges Across Canada: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith." *School Arts* (October 1992): 31–34.

Tricia Hurst, "Crossing Bridges: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Helen Hardin, Jean Bales." *Southwest Art*, April 1981, 82–91.

Tricia Hurst, "Jaune Quick-to-See Smith," January 17–March 14, 1993. Norfolk, Virginia: Chrysler Museum, 1993.

Joni L. Murphy, "Beyond Sweetgrass: The Life and Art of Jaune Quick-To-See Smith." Ph.D. dissertation. University of Kansas, 2008.

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- **11.3: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (I)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

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1.7.2: Wendy Red Star, 1880 Crow Peace Delegation

by WENDY RED STAR AT PORTLAND ART MUSEUM and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Video **1.7.2.1**: Wendy Red Star, *1880 Crow Peace Delegation: Peelatchiwaaxpáash/Medicine Crow (Raven), Peelatchixaaliash/Old Crow (Raven), Déaxitchish/Pretty Eagle, Bia Eélisaash/Large Stomach Woman (Pregnant Woman) aka Two Belly, Alaxchiiaahush/Many War Achievements or Plenty Coups aka Chíilaphuchissaaleesh/Buffalo Bull Facing The Wind*, 2014, 10 inket prints and red ink on paper, 16 15/16 x 11 15/16 inches (each) © Wendy Red Star (Portland Art Museum)

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- **11.3: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (I)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

1.8: Contemporary Native American Architecture

by DR. CAROL HERSELLE KRINSKY



Figure 1.8.1: Fountain (detail), Douglas Cardinal, Louis Weller with GBQC and Polshek Partners, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC, 2004 (photo: **Gryffindor**)

Design and heritage

You are a member of one of the midwestern nations of Native Americans. Your ancestors had no permanent architecture because they were nomadic hunter-gatherers (see photo below). But now you live on a reservation in South Dakota, or near the Twin Cities in Minnesota. You and your relatives want to establish a cultural center, or a day care, or health clinic for your people.



Figure 1.8.2: Cass Lake Health Clinic (Indian Health Service), Leech Lake Reservation (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe), Minnesota

Do you want it to look like the local museum or clinic (image left) built by the Federal or State government? Probably not, because in the post-modern era since about 1965, various groups have proclaimed their specific ethnic identity. Native Americans now reinforce cultural memory despite the near-eradication of their cultures by European-American governments and individual prejudice. This emphasis is now common among other minority and religious groups that have suffered under dominant cultures here and abroad.

Your native nation will seek an architect perhaps not of Native American ancestry; that will depend upon available talent and sensitivity to your culture, although increasing numbers of Native Americans have studied architecture. You will want the design to suggest something appropriate to your heritage.



Figure **1.8.3**: Edward S. Curtis, *Moving camp* (detail), c. November 19, 1908, photographic print, Atsina on horses with travois behind them, tipis in background, Montana (**Library of Congress**)

Midwest

In the Midwest, the result might reflect local types of lodges, tipis, and ceremonial buildings of the past, but made of practical and accessible modern materials since an original tipi made of animal hides would be impermanent and lightweight. When the original hides no longer kept out the weather, they were easily replaced with new ones, but people today want durable materials and have time and funds for less frequent maintenance. The tipi has inspired versions in concrete, the **Shakopee Mdewakanton Community Hall** (1989) by Johnson, Sheldon, Sorensen, in glass, the Southern Ute Cultural Center (2011), by Jones & Jones* (see image below) and in rough stone with wood beams as in the **Chief Gall Inn** (1972) designed by Harrison Bagg at the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota.

The **Four Winds School** (1983) at Fort Totten on the Spirit Lake Reservation in North Dakota by Charles Archambault, Denby Deegan* and Neil McCaleb,* has the overall round shape of a ceremonial lodge or tipi but in order to accommodate classrooms, a gymnasium and cafeteria, the interior is divided into rooms around a circular core containing a tipi for counseling sessions.



Figure **1.8.4**: Jones & Jones, Southern Ute Cultural Center, 2011 (photo: **NorthShore Productions**, **Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum**)

Northwest coast

Along the Northwest coast, the building will probably be a rectangle of logs or milled wood with a pitched roof, evoking ancestral longhouses made from trees in the dense local forests. Retaining the traditional long shape while using some reinforced concrete

for the sake of permanence, the Makah nation in Washington State created a cultural center in Neah Bay (1979 by Fred Bassetti architects) that has cedar cladding to harmonize with older buildings on the reservation. The Native American student center at Oregon State University uses logs and the longhouse form to accommodate members of several Native nations, without imitating buildings of one group (image below). The longhouse is a traditional form of architecture for several Native American nations in the coastal Northwest and was built to house extended families and community functions.



Figure **1.8.5**: Jones & Jones*, Native American Longhouse (student center), 2013, Oregon State University (photo: **Theresa Hogue**, CC BY-SA 2.0)

At least one individual, Lawrence Joe,* of the Upper Skagit reservation in Washington has built a **longhouse** (1986) for therapeutic activities intended to accustom delinquent or disturbed youths to better ways of living according to traditional ethical standards. Northeastern forests, too, have provided logs for construction since ancient times, and various wood-covered buildings have been erected there for tribal offices, a student center at Cornell University (1991, by Flynn Battaglia, see detail below), museums and cultural centers. If there is insufficient money for a properly insulated wooden construction, a group may decorate a simpler building made of industrial materials with appropriate historically-based ornament, as in the **Takopi Indian Health Center** in Tacoma, WA (2002, by Mulvanny G2) or the **Seneca-Iroquois National Museum** in Salamanca NY (by Lloyd Barnwell,* designs by Carson Waterman*).

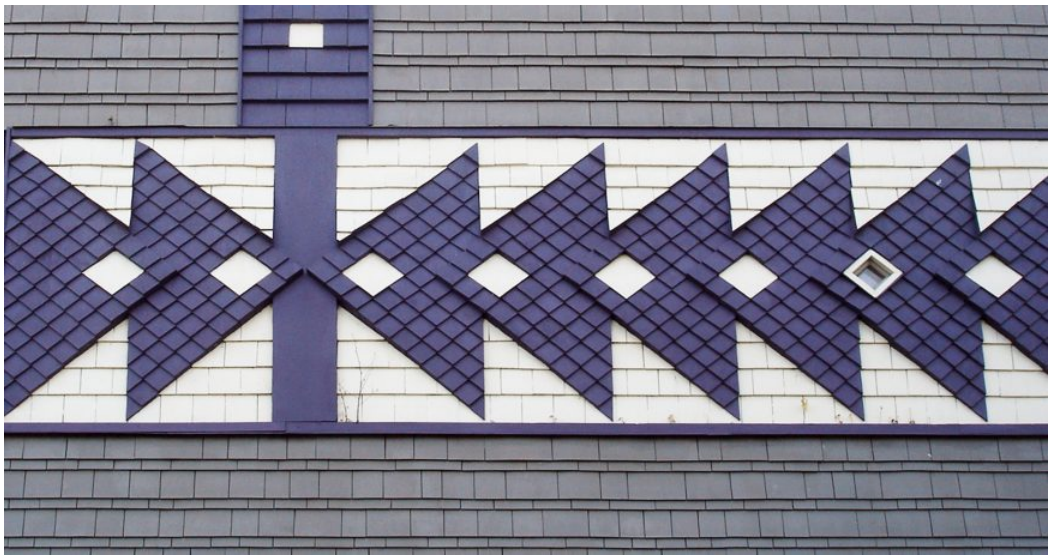


Figure 1.8.6: Haudenosaunee wampum belt design on exterior shingles (detail), Flynn & Battaglia, Akwe:kon (“all of us” in Mohawk), 1991, student residence and community center, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Southwest

In the southwest, a structure might be made of adobe (earthen brick structures made of sand, silt, clay, and straw), with thick walls and small windows to moderate heat during the warm months. Adobe requires frequent maintenance, however, so new buildings are often made of reinforced concrete, a durable material that can be colored to match the local earth of which adobe is composed. The San Felipe Pueblo school in New Mexico (image below) has geometric forms, close to those of an adobe building but with larger windows to admit more natural light and with subtle colors to enhance the appeal of the building to its young users.



Figure 1.8.7: Michael Doody supervised by Robert Montoya,* The San Felipe Pueblo School, 1982, San Felipe Pueblo, New Mexico (photo: courtesy of the author)

A southwestern building may also be built primarily of other natural materials, such as stone or wood, roughly hewn as the ancestors would have left it. The Pojoaque Pueblo Council Chambers, a seriously impressive building of modest size, is one example. A stone post barely altered from its natural state supports the sapling ceiling of the principal room in a thick-walled adobe structure. The building owes its form to two designers, the pueblo’s own governor, George Rivera* (also a sculptor) and Joel McHorse, Jr., as well as to its own construction organization—rather than to an imported designer. Along the highway entrance to

the pueblo, Rivera* also designed a museum and cultural center using the solid, massive geometric forms customary in adobe building (see image below).



Figure 1.8.8: George Rivera with early assistance from Dennis Holloway, Poeh Cultural Center and Museum, 2012, Pojoaque (Po'su wae geh), New Mexico (photo: Howard Lifshitz, CC BY 2.0)

Urban centers

It is less easy to imagine an urban center where members of several native nations come together despite their varied cultural and architectural traditions. Whose culture will dominate? When it is impossible to find a site and funds for a new building, members must rent space in existing buildings that can be decorated inside with art or objects pertinent to the cultures in the area. The Minneapolis American Indian Center is a purpose-built center (see image below). The design connects the inside to nature through large glass windows. Woven wood designs by George Morrison* cover large parts of the outside. A ceremonial circle with stepped seating forms part of the entrance plaza. Inside, events take place below a ramp that replaces stairs or banked seating, to accommodate the customary ways of observing events—in small groups, spaced comfortably apart from one another. This building expresses Native life ways even though it does not imitate an indigenous building type.



Figure 1.8.9: Hodne-Stageberg Partners with Denby Deegan* and Dennis Sun Rhodes ,* exterior wooden design at right by George Morrison,* Minneapolis American Indian Center, 1972 (photo: Bill Forbes, by permission, all rights reserved)

Natural forms

Several buildings for Native groups specifically evoke natural forms revered by the members of the nation. The Oneida in Wisconsin built a school with a plan in the form of a turtle (below left), and the same animal, sacred to the Iroquois confederacy, inspired the plan of a now-closed cultural center in Niagara Falls (below right).



Figure 1.8.10: Left: Aerial view, Richard Thern, Oneida Nation Elementary School, 1995, Oneida, Wisconsin (photo: ©Google). Right: Hodne-Stageberg with Dennis Sun Rhodes,* Iroquois Confederacy Cultural Center (closed), 1981, Niagara Falls, New York (photo: TC Fenstermaker, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., opened in 2004, is the result of collaboration, first with Douglas Cardinal* and GBQC, then with a consortium headed by Louis Weller* and Polshek Partners. Donna House,* an ethnobotanist and others also contributed to the result. Unlike smooth white buildings on the Mall, this one has a rough yellow stone surface, and is surrounded by landscaping of only indigenous ornamental or food-yielding plants. The boldly contoured facade confronts the neoclassical design of the Capitol. Inside and out, curving lines dominate because some Native American design participants claimed that these contours were natural and indigenous; they saw rigid straight lines as imports from abroad. A domed rotunda just inside the entrance accommodates ceremonies that can be viewed both at ground level and from surrounding balconies. As a building in the nation's capital, the Museum reflects its position within the largely neoclassical context of the straight-sided Mall while accommodating various indigenous traditions.



Figure 1.8.11: Douglas Cardinal*, Louis Weller* with GBQC and Polshek Partners, National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC, 2004

The variety of native traditions, available materials, and architectural expertise has therefore given our continent new and culturally sensitive architectural forms during the last two generations.

*denotes Native American ancestry

Additional resources

Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Contemporary Native American Architecture*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996

Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka, *New Architecture on Indigenous Lands*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013

Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, *Native American Architecture*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1990

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Colonial period

2.1: Theodore de Bry’s Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies

2.2: Portraits of John and Elizabeth Freake (and their baby)

2.3: Puritan court cupboard

2.4: African Burial Ground, New York City

2.5: John Smibert, The Bermuda Group

2.6: Gerardus Duyckinck I (attributed), Six portraits of the Levy-Franks family, c. 1735

2.7: Silver sugar bowl

2.8: Benjamin West

- 2.8.1: Benjamin West, The Death of General Wolfe
- 2.8.2: Benjamin West, Penn’s Treaty with the Indians

2.9: John Singleton Copley

- 2.9.1: John Singleton Copley, A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)
- 2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris)
- 2.9.3: John Singleton Copley, Paul Revere
- 2.9.4: John Singleton Copley, The Copley Family
- 2.9.5: Watson and the Shark

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2.1: Theodore de Bry's Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies

Page ID
165060

In the center of a print image we see a finely-dressed Christopher Columbus with two soldiers. Columbus stands confidently, his left foot forward with his pike planted firmly in the ground, signaling his claim over the land. Behind him to the left, three Spaniards raise a cross in the landscape, symbolizing a declaration of the land for both the Spanish monarchs and for the Christian God.



Figure **2.1.1**: Theodore de Bry, Christopher Columbus arrives in America, 1594, engraving, 18.6 c 19.6 cm, from *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies (Collectiones peregrinationum in Indiam occidentalem)*, vol. 4: Girolamo Benzoni, *Americae pars quarta. Sive, Insignis & admiranda historia de primera occidentali India à Christophoro Columbo* (Frankfurt am Main: T. de Bry, 1594) (**Rijksmuseum**)

Unclothed Taínos, the Indigenous peoples of the island of Ayiti (better known by the later Spanish name, Hispaniola), walk toward Columbus bringing gifts of necklaces and other precious objects. Further in the background, on the right side of the print, other Taínos, with arms raised and twisting bodies, flee in fear from the Spanish ships anchored offshore.

This print from 1592, by the engraver Theodore de Bry, presents Columbus and his men as the harbingers of European civilization and faith, and juxtaposes them with Tainos, who are presented as uncivilized, unclothed, and pagan. This print, along with hundreds of others de Bry made for his 27 volume series, published over more than forty years, *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies* (1590–1634), affirm and assert a sense of European superiority, as well as invent for Europeans what America—both its land and its people—was like.

Though de Bry is most famous for his engravings of European voyages to the Americas (and Africa, and Asia), he never actually traveled across the Atlantic. It is not surprising then that de Bry's depiction of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas was a combination of the work of other artists who had accompanied Europeans to the Americas (artists were often brought on journeys in order to document the lands and peoples of the Americas for a European audience) as well as his own artistic inventions. For instance, he adapted (without credit) some of the images created by Johannes Stradanus, a well-known illustrator who created early images of the Americas. In his *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies*, de Bry republished (and translated into multiple languages) the accounts of others who had spent time traveling around the globe, and created more than 600 engravings to illustrate the volumes. The engraving above of Columbus and the Taínos comes from volume 4 of the *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies*. This volume reprinted the accounts of the Milanese traveler Girolamo Benzoni, who himself had drawn on the accounts of Columbus in his own writings.

The volumes of the *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies* that treat the voyages across the Atlantic to the Americas are known as the *Grands Voyages*, while the *Petit Voyages* (small voyages), were those to Africa and Asia.

Documenting America

De Bry's **copperplate engravings** were among the first images that Europeans encountered about the peoples, places, and things of the Americas, even if he began making them almost a century after Columbus's initial voyage. In the engraving with Columbus on the shoreline, the barely clothed Taínos resemble Greco-Roman sculptures, especially their poses and musculature. De Bry apparently had no interest in documenting the actual appearance of the Taínos.



Figure **2.1.2**: Left: Apollo Belvedere, c. 150 C.E., Roman copy of an original bronze statue of 330-320 B.C.E. (Vatican Museums) (photo: **Tetraktys**, CC BY-SA 3.0); right: detail. Theodore de Bry, *Christopher Columbus arrives in America*, 1594, etching and text in letterpress, 18.6 c 19.6 cm (Rijksmuseum)

De Bry's *Collected travels* belongs to the genre of travel literature, which had been popular since the Middle Ages. Accounts of the Americas became wildly popular after Columbus's first voyage. For example, **Columbus's 1493 letter** to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel (who had helped finance the voyage) was published in seventeen editions by 1497, and often included woodcuts depicting select moments of his voyage.

De Bry and his audiences

De Bry was a Protestant, and fled Liège (today in Belgium) where he was born to avoid persecution. He made his way to Frankfurt, which is where he started work on *Grands Voyages*. After his death in 1598, his family continued his work and finished the remaining volumes in 1634. Interestingly, different versions of the *Grands Voyages* catered to different Christian confessional groups. The volumes in German were geared towards Protestants, while those in Latin appealed to Catholics. De Bry created images that he could market to either audience, but he made changes to the texts to appeal more to either Catholics or Protestants. Psalms that Calvinists felt encapsulated their beliefs or longer passages criticizing Catholic beliefs or colonial practices were omitted from Latin versions, which were often filled in with more engravings duplicated from other parts of the text.

General subjects of the *Grands Voyages* engravings



Figure **2.1.3**: Theodore de Bry, Indians pour liquid gold into the mouth of a Spaniard, 1594, from *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies (Collectiones peregrinationum in Indiam occidentalem)*

While some of de Bry's prints in *Grands Voyages* focus on the exploits of famed European navigators like Columbus, others show Indigenous groups and their customs. Some of these images display the atrocities that occurred in the wake of Europeans' arrival, violent conquest, and colonization. Indigenous peoples are fed to dogs, hanged, or butchered. Still others depict native responses to the European invasion, such as drowning Spaniards in the ocean or pouring liquid gold into invaders' mouths.



Figure **2.1.4**: John White, *The town of Secoton* (bird's-eye view of town with houses, lake at the top, fire, fields and ceremony), 1585-1593, watercolour over graphite, heightened with white (**British Museum**)

Travels to Virginia

The *Grands Voyages* (the section on cross-Atlantic voyages) begins with a reprint of an earlier text by the English colonist Thomas Hariot, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590). It also includes translations of this text into Latin,

German, and French. De Bry's accompanying engravings were based on watercolors by John White, who had settled on Roanoke Island, North Carolina in 1585 and who had created paintings while there. His watercolors document clothing, dwellings, and rituals of the eastern Algonquian peoples.

Even though Virginia and North Carolina were colonized by Europeans after they had seized other areas in the Americas, de Bry placed them in the first volume of his *Grands Voyages*. This may be because he had visited London just after Hariot's book was published in 1588, and was given both that text and the watercolors of White. De Bry was clearly not interested in a providing a chronological account of European exploration and colonization.

One of White's paintings represents the town of Secoton, with people going about their daily life activities. In the right foreground people dance in a circle. Corn grows in neat rows. Dwellings line a road. In his engraving, de Bry made several changes to White's watercolor. He expanded the village and removed the textual inscriptions that identified important features of the village (instead incorporating a separate key).



Figure **2.1.5**: Theodore de Bry, Bird's-eye view of a native American village (Secoton), 1590, engraving (after the watercolor by John White above) for volume 1 of *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies* which reprinted Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia, of the commodities and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitant*s (**British Library**)

For his engravings, de Bry also transformed watercolors White had created of Scottish Picts (an ancient pagan Indigenous peoples of Scotland who lived in a loose confederation of groups and who painted their bodies). But why include a discussion of Picts in a book on the Americas?



Figure **2.1.6**: Theodore de Bry, *A Young Daughter of the Picts*, 1590, engraving (after **a watercolor by Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues** — originally attributed to John White) for *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies* which reprints Thomas Hariot, *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia, of the commodities and of the nature and manners of the naturall inhabitants* (**British Library**)

Hariot's text states that "Some picture of the Picts which in the old time did inhabit one part of the great Britain," which according to him "show how that the inhabitants of the great Britain have been in times past as savage as those of Virginia."[1] White compares them to the Algonquian peoples to suggest that Europe has its own history of uncivilized, pagan people. Despite attempting to reconcile the Algonquian peoples with the Picts in Europe, the manner in which he compares them—as savages—speaks to a presumed European superiority.



Figure **2.1.7**: Theodore de Bry, *Indians worship the column in honor of the French king*, 1591, engraving for *Collectiones peregrinationum in Indiam occidentalem*, vol. 2: René de Laudonnière, *Brevis narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae provincia Gallis acciderunt* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Wechelus, 1591) (**Rijksmuseum**)



Figure **2.1.8**: Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, *Laudonnierus et rex athore ante columnam a praefecto prima navigatione locatam quamque venerantur floridenses*, gouache (**New York Public Library**)

Travels to Florida

Volume 2, published in 1591, focused on French voyages to Florida, and was based on the accounts of the French colonist René Goulaine de Laudonnière. De Bry created engravings based on the watercolors of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, who was part of the French expeditions to Florida that were headed by Jean Ribault in 1562 and Laudonnière in 1564. One of the engravings adapted from Le Moyne's watercolors shows the Timucua worshipping a column that had supposedly been erected by Ribault. The most prominent figure, identified as chief Athore, stands next to Laudonnière, who has followed him to see the sight. The other Timucua kneel, while raising their arms in gestures of reverence in the direction of the column, itself decorated with garlands. Before it, offerings of food and vegetables abound. De Bry made several notable changes to the print, such as adjusting Athore's features to look more European, with raised cheekbones and an aquiline nose. Le Moyne's earlier watercolor had also Europeanized the Timucua peoples: he paints them with the same complexion as Laudonnière, but with even blonder hair.



Figure **2.1.9**: Theodore de Bry, engraving depicting cannibalism in Brazil for volume 3 of *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies* which reprinted Hans Staden's account of his experiences in Brazil, 1594 (**British Library**)

Cannibalism was (and remains) commonly associated with certain Indigenous peoples of the Americas. In de Bry's series, his third volume recounted Hans Staden's experiences of cannibalism in Brazil. De Bry's engravings for this volume were among the most well-known in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, in large part because of their gruesome and sensationalistic character. Note that de Bry's print, "Indians pour liquid gold into the mouth of a Spaniard," may also depict cannibalism among the figures shown in the background.



Figure **2.1.10**: Theodore de Bry, engraving depicting cannibalism in Brazil for volume 3 of *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies* which reprinted Hans Staden's account of his experiences in Brazil, 1594 (**British Library**)

Staden, a German soldier who traveled to South America, had been captured in 1553 by the Tupinambá, an Indigenous group in Brazil. After his return to Europe in 1557, he wrote about Tupinambá customs, family life, and cannibalism, describing how the Tupinambá practiced it ceremonially, especially eating their enemies. Staden's initial book included simple woodcuts, but de Bry's updated engravings proved far more popular and enduring in the European cultural imagination. Perceptions of Indigenous Brazilians were shaped by these images, and reinforced the notion that the Tupinambá, and others like them, were depraved, primitive, and sinful.

One of his images depicts naked adults and children drinking a broth made from a human head and intestines, visible on plates amidst the gathering of people. Another depiction of the Tupinamba shows a fire below a grill, upon which body parts are roasted. Figures surround the grill, eating. In the back is a bearded figure, most likely intended to be Staden. Hand-colored versions of de Bry's prints emphasize the disturbing subject of the images even more.

Cannibalism would come to be closely associated with peoples of the Americas. De Bry would even use images of cannibals to serve as the engraved frontispiece to volume 3. Showing the Tupinambá eating human flesh exoticized them, and justified European control.

Other volumes and the legacy of de Bry

The fourth, fifth, and sixth volumes of the set focus on Girolamo Benzoni's accounts, such as *Historia Mondo Nuovo*, with part 6 discussing the atrocities committed against the Indigenous population of Peru. Parts 7 to 12 incorporated the travel accounts of Ulricus Faber, Sir Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh, José de Acosta, Amerigo Vespucci, John Smith, and Antonio de Herrera among others. Like the volumes that came before them, de Bry provided numerous images to increase readers understanding of the narratives.

The *Grands Voyages*, and the entire *Collected Travels*, relate more generally to the forms of knowledge and collecting popular at the time. Like a **cabinet of curiosity**, de Bry's project organized information in text and images so that readers could come to know the Americas. The volumes seek to provide encyclopedic knowledge about the Americas, much as the objects did in a curiosity cabinet. De Bry's many prints were important resources for Europeans who sought to better understand the Americas. It allowed readers to take possession of these distant lands and peoples, where they could become participants in the colonial projects then underway, allowing them to feel a sense of dominance over the peoples and lands across the Atlantic—lands which many in Europe would never see firsthand. These often inaccurate images and narratives supported a sense of superiority, with Europeans positioned as more civilized and advanced, and the American "others" as less so. De Bry's images of America would cement for Europeans a vision of what America was like for centuries to come.

[1] "Some Pictvre of the Pictes which in the olde tyme dyd habite one part of the great Bretainne," which according to him "showe how that the inhabitants of the great Bretainne haue been in times past as sauuage as those of Virginia." 67. Thomas Hariot, with illustrations by John White, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1590).

Additional resources:

Early Images of Virginia Indians: The William W. Cole Collection at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture

Picturing the New World: The Hand-Colored de Bry Engravings of 1590

White Watercolors and de Bry engravings, on Virtual Jamestown

De Bry engravings of the Timucua, on Florida Memory

Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493

Kim Sloan, ed., *European Visions, American Voices*, British Museum Research Publication 172 (2009).

Bernadette Bucher, Icon and Conquest: A Structural Analysis of the Illustrations of de Bry's Great Voyages (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1981).

Michael Gaudio, Engraving the Savage: The New World and Techniques of Civilization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

Stephen Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1991).

Michiel van Groesen, "The de Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634): Early America reconsidered," Journal of Early Modern History 12 (2008): 1–24.

Michael van Groesen, Representations of the Overseas World in the de Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634) (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

Maureen Quilligan, "Theodore de Bry's Voyages to the New and Old Worlds," Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies 41, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 1–12.

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2.2: Portraits of John and Elizabeth Freake (and their baby)

Page ID

165061



Figure **2.2.1**: Robert W. Weir, *Embarkation of the Pilgrims*, 1843, oil on canvas, 12 x 18 feet (Rotunda, U.S. Capitol)

Elementary school history books in the United States might give young students a slightly misleading impression of what the earliest Puritans in North America—those who history calls the Pilgrims—were really like. If images in these texts are to be believed, the men wore black pants and matching waistcoats that were embellished with plain rectangular lace collars. When feeling particularly formal, these Puritans would often wear a plain black hat that was only decorated with an inexplicable buckle in the front. Puritan women dressed in similarly austere attire, seldom straying from dark, somber clothing.

Mr. Freake

While this may have been true for the earliest Puritans in North America, it is significantly less accurate for the Puritans who came to live in the northeast as the seventeenth century moved onwards. This fallacy is visually demonstrated by portraits completed about 1670 by an unidentified artist called the Freake Painter, an artist so named because of his most well known sitters—members of the Freake family. These two paintings, both begun in 1671, depict John Freake in the first portrait, and his wife Elizabeth and their daughter Mary in the second. In many ways, these pendant portraits eloquently speak as to what it meant to be part of the upper-middle-class elite in Colonial New England during the final decades of the seventeenth century.



Figure **2.2.2**: Unknown artist (known as Freake painter), *John Freake*, c. 1671 and 1674, oil on canvas, 42 x 36 3/4 inches / 108 x 93.3 cm (Worcester Art Museum)

We can learn much about John Freake (1631-1674), his perception of self, and his place within society through a careful analysis of his portrait. Born in England, Freake immigrated to Boston in 1658 when in his mid twenties and became a merchant and attorney of significant wealth. Indeed, before his death he owned two homes, a mill and brew house, and profitable shares in six mercantile ships. Clearly, he was a man of assets and wealth, and this is reflected in his attire. To begin, Freake wears a fine velvet coat that is

dark brown in color rather than the more stereotypical black most of his Puritan brethren may have worn 50 years before. In addition, his coat is decorated with more than two-dozen silver buttons, both along the front of the jacket and atop the pocket flaps. The tailor—either one in colonial Boston or, more likely, one across the Atlantic in England—embellished each buttonhole with expensive silver thread.

Freake's expensive coat is but one indicator of his elevated social and economic status. In addition, Freake wears a fashionable white muslin shirt with puffed sleeves and elaborate crenulated cuffs. His collar is not the plain, rectangular one we might expect on the basis of our elementary school history books, and is instead a highly decorated and elaborate lace collar imported from Europe, likely from Venice, Italy. Rather than descend from his throat to his sternum, this coll)ar instead circles his neck and stretches across both of Freake's shoulders. The ornate silver broach Freake touches with his left hand and the gloves he holds with his right—in addition to the ring he wears on the pinky of his left hand—all speak to his wealth and his status as a gentleman.

Roundhead or Cavalier? Look at the hair!

Thus, Freake's clothing announces something important about his prosperity. Likewise, his hair comments on his sense of religious identity. During the end of the seventeenth century, there were two distinct hairstyles that helped identify those who wore them. If one were to wear their hair in short manner, they announced themselves to be a Roundhead, a visual representation of Puritan austerity. In contrast, long hair—or, the wearing of a wig—announced the man as one who was a morally questionable Cavalier. With these two extremes in mind—the Puritanical Roundhead and the suspicious Cavalier—John Freake comfortably resides in the middle. Neither too short nor too long, Freake's hair—and it is that, rather than an artificial wig—announces his morality and religiosity squarely in the middle, a kind of hirsute *juste milieu* (middle ground).

Thus, Freake's clothing and hair does much to identify him during the end of the seventeenth century. His attire is fashionable, but not overly extravagant. Freake was among those who believed that his prosperity in life was due to God's blessing, and as that was the case, it was not inappropriate to dress in a way that highlighted that divine favor. Likewise, his hair identifies him as religiously moderate; neither excessively devout nor liturgically loose.



Figure **2.2.3**: Freake painter, *Elizabeth Clarke Freake (Mrs. John Freake) and Baby Mary*, c. 1671 and 1674, oil on canvas, 42 1/2 x 36 3/4 inches / 108 x 93.3 cm (Worcester Art Museum)

Mrs. Freake

Similarly, the artist has depicted John's wife, Elizabeth, in a way that highlights her appropriate wealth—and thus her favorable position within the eye's of God—and her religious moderateness. Like her husband, Elizabeth wears unexpectedly fine attire. A small amount of blond hair is visible underneath her white lace hood. That hood, tied nearly underneath a slightly protruding chin, brings visual attention to the white collar and the striking white lace that covers most of the bodice of her silver taffeta dress. Underneath her skirt is a striking red-orange velvet underskirt that is embroidered with a gold, lace-like pattern. She wears a white blouse that features lace cuffs on the sleeves, while red and black bows provide a visual splash of color and contrast against an otherwise somewhat achromatic ensemble.

Like her husband, Elizabeth's portrait is filled with baubles that speak to their affluence and to the family's growth. She wears a triple-stranded string of pearls about her neck, a gold ring on her finger and a beautiful four-stranded garnet bracelet can be seen on

her left thumb and wrist. She sits on a fashionable chair, and a Turkey-work rug can be seen resting on the back of the chair. Although Elizabeth currently holds her infant Mary, radiograph x-ray photography shows that she originally held a fan. That the painting has been modified—fan out, new baby who wears a fashionable dress in—tells us much about the extravagant cost of having one's portrait commissioned in the seventeenth century. It was more practical to have your daughter painted into an old portrait than to pay for a new one.

Displays of wealth

A twenty-first-century audience might scoff at these images, thinking them, perhaps, too flat, too inanimate, and too serious for our own particular aesthetics. However, this pair of images powerfully speaks to the Freakes' understanding of their place in their world while at the same time dismissing our mistaken stereotypes of seventeenth-century Puritans. The Freakes are not an austere couple, entirely clad in black. Instead, they display their wealth—both in dress and in accessories—in a moderate and acceptable way that suggests divine blessing. In addition, while we might dismiss this artist as an unaccomplished limner (an artist with no or little formal training), he was instead a talented portraitist who was working within a rich tradition of Elizabethan painting. His images helped situate his sitters within a distinguished and rich traditional of English court portraiture.

Additional resources:

Elizabeth Clarke Freake at the Worcester Art Museum

John Freake at the Worcester Art Museum

Art and Identity in the British North American Colonies, 1700–1776 on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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2.3: Puritan court cupboard

Page ID

165062



Video **2.3.1**: Court Cupboard, 1665-73, red oak with cedar and maple (moldings), northern white cedar and white pine, 142.6 x 129.5 x 55.3 cm (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art)

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2.4: African Burial Ground, New York City

Page ID
165063



Video **2.4.1**: Rodney Leon, African Burial Ground National Monument, 2006, New York City, an ARCHES video, speakers Dr. Renée Ater and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

African Burial Ground National Monument, National Park Service

Rodney Leon Architects

Establishment of the African Burial Ground National Monument, Federal Register

Research findings, Cobb Laboratory, Howard University

Mapping the African American Past, Columbia University

This page titled 2.4: African Burial Ground, New York City is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Renée Ater and Dr. Steven Zucker, "African Burial Ground, New York City," in SmartHistory, August 1, 2020, accessed November 16, 2020, https://SmartHistory.org/african-burial-ground-new-york/..

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2.5: John Smibert, The Bermuda Group

by **DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT**

Page ID
165259



Figure **2.5.1**: John Smibert, *The Bermuda Group*, 1728, reworked 1739, oil on canvas, 176.5 x 236.2 cm (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven)

Small beginnings



Figure **2.5.2**: Self-portrait (detail), John Smibert, *The Bermuda Group*, 1728, reworked 1739, oil on canvas, 176.5 x 236.2 cm (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven)

Big things can have small beginnings. If the “big thing” in this instance is American art, then one could argue that one of the most profound “small beginnings” was the arrival of John Smibert in Boston in 1729. Indeed, Smibert’s artistic influence in the American colonies extended far beyond the scope of his own life, and the argument can be made that he was the most important painter in the colonial period. This prominence is not for the art that he himself completed, but for the inspiration he provided to generations of artists to come.

Smibert was born in Edinburgh, Scotland; his father was a moderately successful wool dyer. Unfortunately for Smibert, Scotland had little fine arts training available. Rather than immediately pursue instruction as a portraitist, in 1702 Smibert instead began a

seven-year apprenticeship with Walter Melville—a house painter and plasterer who often painted heraldic shields. This somewhat lowly form of artistic production was a common chore for painters in Scotland during the early eighteenth century. In fact, there was little need for professional portraitists in Edinburgh, as those who had the discretionary money to afford such a luxury—like members of Parliament—would have consistent cause to visit London and could seek out a skilled portrait painter there.

Edinburgh to London and back again

The ambitious Smibert completed his apprenticeship with Melville in April 1709 and departed for London less than two months later. In doing so, he moved from a town of less than 40,000 inhabitants to a thriving and bustling city of more than 500,000. As the economic, political, and cultural center of Great Britain, London teemed with talented portraitists. Many of these artists were influenced by a triad of foreign-born portraitists: the German Sir Godfrey Kneller, the Dutchman Sir Peter Lely, and the Flemish Sir **Anthony van Dyck**. All three were knighted by a British monarch and all three ended their career—and, in fact died—in London. Upon his arrival in London, Smibert worked for a time as a coach painter and copied paintings by the "Old Masters" for local art dealers. In 1711, he began a three-year course of study at the London Academy, an institution that Kneller headed, and that placed a particular emphasis, like the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, on drawing.



Figure **2.5.3**: John Smibert, Portrait of Sir Francis Grant and His Family, 1718, oil on canvas, 127 x 1041.4 inches (**SCAD Museum of Art**)

At the end of his time studying at the London Academy, Smibert might have pursued a formal apprenticeship with a portraitist. Instead, the aspiring painter returned to Edinburgh. There he met Sir Francis Grant, Baronet of Monymusk, a well-to-do lawyer. Grant commissioned five portraits from Smibert, the most ambitious of which is *Sir Francis Grant and His Family*. This image

contains 14 likenesses—two of which are of deceased members of the Grant family who are represented as painted portraits on the back wall—and if the 26-year-old Smibert lacked in compositional creativity, he more than made up for this in scale, the monumental group portrait measures in excess of 8 x10 feet. This painting may have been just good enough for Grant to believe Smibert could do something better. But to do something better, Smibert would need to see better art. This was an impossible chore in Scotland in the early eighteenth century, so Smibert—perhaps aided by Grant—departed for a Grand Tour of the continent in the summer of 1719.

A Grand Tour



Figure 2.5.4: John Smibert, *George Berkeley*, c. 1727, oil on canvas, 756 x 1022 cm (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian)

This was a period of great learning for Smibert. He spent a month in Paris, almost a year in Florence, and more than six months in Rome. Florence in particular was fruitful for the artist. Smibert purchased more than 300 works of art while there: 45 paintings, 250 drawings, 6 pastels, and at least one cartoon (not a comic, but a full-size study for a painting). It was also in Florence that the artist met the Irish philosopher George Berkeley. In fact, this fortuitous meeting would echo throughout the majority of Smibert's life to come.

Smibert returned to London in 1722, overflowing with confidence. His time abroad had been wonderfully fruitful; he had immersed himself in the art of Italy and had met many Britons on their own Grand Tour who would be in a position to aid his portrait career upon returning to Great Britain. For a period of six years—that is, from the summer of 1722 until fall of 1728, Smibert experienced modest success as a London portraitist. He was a moderately talented painter working in a city teeming with exceptionally talented artists. And so, hoping to be the only fish in a miniscule pond (rather than a small fish in a enormous pond), Smibert took a remarkable leap of faith. George Berkeley was there to provide the nudge that led Smibert from his London studio to the relative wilderness of the Americas.

And on to Bermuda (via Newport)

The years had been kind to Berkeley since he had first met Smibert in Florence. In 1724, Berkeley had been appointed Dean of Derry in Ireland, a religious post that provided an affluent salary of £1,500 per year (in contrast, Smibert earned £345 as a full time portraitist in 1725, and only £233 the following year). It was about this time when Berkeley began to plan on beginning a college on the island of Bermuda. In 1726 Berkeley was in London securing funding for this enterprise when he met Smibert, commissioned a portrait, and convinced the artist to join his "New World" adventure of starting a college in Bermuda. Smibert agreed, and was charged with lecturing on painting and architecture—subjects uncommon in eighteenth-century college curricula. Berkeley and Smibert departed on September 5th, 1728. They were joined by four other adventurous people: John James and Richard Dalton—who presumably were to teach and were described as "Men of Fortune" and "gentlemen of substance"—and Anne Forster (Berkeley's new wife) and her traveling companion, a Miss Handcock.

The group arrived at their first destination, Newport, Rhode Island, in January 1729 and stayed there awaiting the £20,000 Parliament promised for the move to Bermuda and to begin the college. Unfortunately—or, perhaps, fortunately for Smibert—the funding from Parliament never came. Thus, rather than spending time in Bermuda—truly a distant outpost—Smibert instead went to Boston. Although small by European standards with a population of about 13,000, Boston was as bright and vibrant of a colonial

town as there was during the first half of the eighteenth century. And Smibert was the most talented portraitist in Boston the moment he entered the city.

Finally . . . Boston and *The Bermuda Group*

Smibert immediately began to paint the economic and political elite of Boston, and his cosmopolitan style—particularly for a colonial audience—was unlike anything his clients had ever seen. His most famous painting—*The Bermuda Group*—was likely begun during his early time in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, and although it was supposed to return to England, it remained in Boston throughout Smibert's career and served as an example of Smibert's skill and ability as a portraitist. Although it may seem to be hyperbole to twenty-first-century readers, there was simply nothing else like it in the American colonies.



Figure **2.5.56**: Peter Paul Rubens, The Four Philosophers, c. 1611–12, oil on canvas (Palazzo Pitti, Florence; photo: The Yorck Project)

To begin, *The Bermuda Group*—which is sometimes called *The Berkeley Entourage*—is, for colonial New England if not Europe, a composition as immense as it is ambitious, and many suggest that Smibert had Peter Paul Rubens's *The Four Philosophers* in mind—a painting Smibert would have seen in Florence.

Both paintings depict a group sitting around a table. Both show books and writing implements. Both have landscape visible in the background. While it is unlikely that many of Smibert's potential patrons would have understood this visual reference, it does indicate that Smibert was pulling out all the stops for this blockbuster work. Few (if any) limners in New England could claim the pedigree of having studied Rubens' paintings in Florence. In doing so, Smibert clearly claimed to be different from his more provincial competition.

And how different this image is. Measuring nearly 6 x 8 feet, it contains eight nearly full-sized figures, something unseen in colonial Boston. Six of these figures are those who landed in Newport. Two others—the seated John Wainwright on the left and the infant Henry Berkeley—complete the figural group. They stand in front of a colonnade and an Arcadian landscape unseen around the Boston area. Although anachronistic—that is, this scene could have never existed in real life—this portrait was meant to commemorate a bold, although ultimately unsuccessful enterprise.



Figure **2.5.6**: Dean Berkeley (detail), John Smibert, *The Bermuda Group*, 1728, reworked 1739, oil on canvas, 176.5 x 236.2 cm (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven)

There are five men present. Dean Berkeley has been given the most prominent position in the composition. Standing to the side of the table rather than behind it, he wears the full-length black cassock of an Anglican priest, and the wide, dual-banded white clerical collar popular during the eighteenth century. He looks heavenward as if for inspiration, and his face has an expression of thoughtfulness. His right hand rests on an upright leather-bound book, a symbol for both his own education and the scholarship for which he was famous.

Whereas Berkeley wears his clerical attire, the other gentlemen wear garments of the highest London fashion—something that would have dazzled Smibert's colonial audience. John Smibert can be seen on the opposite side of the composition. As is typical of an artist who includes their own image in a group portrait—see Raphael in *The School of Athens* or Diego Velázquez in *Las Meninas*—Smibert looks directly out of the picture at the viewer. He wears a fashionable brown jacket and white cravat, and wisps of grey hair speak to his age. He holds a rolled up sketch and paintbrush in his right hand.

The man who stands in front of him—identified as either John James or Richard Dalton—is also fashionably dressed. He wears a powdered wig, an unbuttoned grey jacket, and a white cravat. He looks downward to observe the seated John Wainwright. This figure is an interesting addition, for Wainwright was never a part of Berkeley Entourage. Instead, he was the patron who commissioned this portrait. As such, Smibert places him close to the picture plane, unobstructed by the table. He is shown in profile and seated facing Dean Berkeley, writing in an open book as if taking dictation. The fifth gentleman stands behind the two women and can be identified as either John James or Richard Dalton. He casually leans on the back of the chair and looks towards the left edge of the painting.



Figure **2.5.7**: The artist (left) and John James or Richard Dalton (detail), John Smibert, *The Bermuda Group*, 1728, reworked 1739, oil on canvas, 176.5 x 236.2 cm (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven)

The women

The two women—Berkeley's wife Anne Foster and her companion, Miss Handcock—sit behind a table that is covered with a beautifully rendered Turkish carpet (these objects, sometimes called Turkey work, were so expensive that they were seldom placed on the floor as rugs are today). Like their male counterparts, they wear fashionable garments with—for the time, at least—scandalously plunging necklines. The yellow and blue velvets they wear shimmer and radiate light. Foster looks at the viewer while holding her infant son Henry, and Handcock gestures with her left hand to the left side of the painting, while she herself looks to the right. Indeed, the gestures and glances of all the characters in this stage-like painting leads the viewer's eye across the composition.



Figure **2.5.8**: John Wainwright, Anne Foster and Miss Handcock (detail), John Smibert, *The Bermuda Group*, 1728, reworked 1739, oil on canvas, 176.5 x 236.2 cm (Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven)

Comparing Smibert's *Bermuda Group* with a near contemporary painting demonstrates why Smibert found such favor among the Boston elite. Robert Feke is most famous today for his portrait, *Isaac Royall and Family*, a composition that is visually indebted to Smibert's earlier work. But whereas Smibert's painting is lively, loose, and dynamic, Feke (an artist with little formal art instruction), can do little more than mimic a compositional device—a group gathered around a table covered with a Turkish rug. In London, Smibert's works would have been compared with those completed by Britain's most talented portraitists. In Boston, he was compared with artists akin to Feke.



Figure **2.5.9**: Robert Feke, *Isaac Royall and Family*, 1741, oil on canvas, 56 3/16 x 77 ¾ inches (Harvard Law School Library, Cambridge)

Influence

Although this image was never intended to remain in Boston, it stayed in the artist's Boston studio and served as the cornerstone for what many consider to be that city's first museum. Indeed, this painting, when combined with the copies of the Old Masters Smibert painted on the continent and the works he purchased in Florence, provided people in Boston with a fine arts viewing experience unmatched in the Americas. Smibert even ran a kind of art supply store where he sold pigments, paintbrushes, and mezzotints from England and all over Europe. This brought European art into the homes of the well to do in colonial Boston. Visiting Smibert's painting room became a kind of right of passage for aspiring painters. John Singleton Copley, John Trumbull, Charles Willson Peale, and Washington Allston were all influenced by the works they saw in Smibert's studio long after the artist had died. In this regard, *The Bermuda Group* is as important for who saw it as it is for what it in fact is.

Additional resources

This painting at the Yale University Art Gallery.

Read a chapter in our textbook, *Reframing Art History*, about **Art in American Colonies and the United States, c. 1600–1860.**

Smibert on the Google Arts & Culture.

Art and Identity in the British North American Colonies, 1700–1776 on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.

Smibert on ArtUK.

Smibert at the Smithsonian Learning Lab.

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2.6: Gerardus Duyckinck I (attributed), Six portraits of the Levy-Franks family, c. 1735



Video **2.6.1**: Gerardus Duyckinck I (attributed), six portraits of the Levy-Franks family (*Franks Children with Bird*, *Franks Children with Lamb*, *Jacob Franks*, *Moses Levy*, *Mrs. Jacob Franks (Abigaill Levy)*, *and Ricka Franks)*, c. 1735, oil on canvas (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art) A conversation with Dr. Mindy Besaw, Curator of American Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources:

The portraits at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

Mrs. Jacob Franks (Abigaill Levy)

Moses Levy

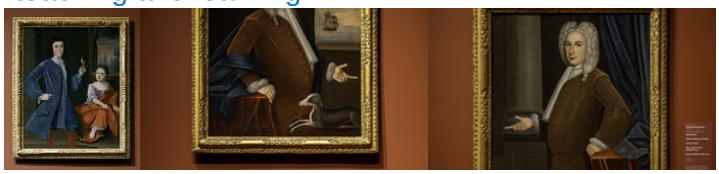
Richa Franks

Jacob Franks

Franks Children with Bird

Franks Children with Lamb

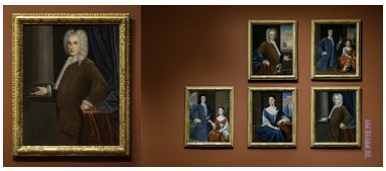
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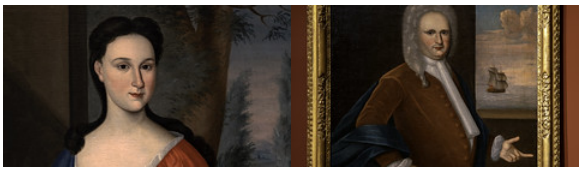
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2.7: Silver sugar bowl

Page ID

165065



Video **2.7.1**: Covered sugar bowl, c. 1745, silver, 11.5 x 9.1 cm (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art)

This object at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.8: Benjamin West

2.8.1: Benjamin West, The Death of General Wolfe

2.8.2: Benjamin West, Penn's Treaty with the Indians

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2.8.1: Benjamin West, The Death of General Wolfe

Page ID
165067

Benjamin West has always been a difficult artist to classify. American historians generally claim him as an American artist as he was born in what would become the state of Pennsylvania. West's earliest paintings date from his fifteenth year, and if his own attempts at myth making are to be believed—they should be taken with the proverbial grain of salt—he was mostly self taught.



Figure **2.8.1.1**: Detail, Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm (National Gallery of Canada)

In 1760, two wealthy Philadelphian families paid for the young artist's passage to Italy so he could learn from the great European artistic tradition. He was only 21 years old. He arrived in the port of Livorno during the middle of April and was in Rome no later than 10 July. West remained in Italy for several years and moved to London in August of 1763. He found quick success in England and was a founding member of the Royal Academy of Art when it was established in 1768. West was clearly intoxicated by the cosmopolitan London and never returned to his native Pennsylvania. West's fame and importance today rest on two important areas:

West as teacher

West taught two successive generations of American artists. All of these men traveled to his London studio and the most returned to the United States. Indeed, a list of those who searched out his instruction comprises a "who's who" list of early American artists and includes names such as Charles Willson Peale, Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull, Thomas Sully, and Samuel F. B. Morse.

West as history painter

If his role as a teacher was the first avenue to West's fame, surely his history painting is the second. Of the many he completed, *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) is certainly the most celebrated.



Figure **2.8.1.2**: Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm (National Gallery of Canada)

In this painting, West departed from conventions in two important regards. Generally, history paintings were reserved for narratives from the Bible or stories from the classical past. Instead, however, West depicted a near-contemporary event, one that occurred only seven years before. *The Death of General Wolfe* depicts an event from the Seven Years' War (known as the French and Indian War in North America), the moment when Major-General James Wolfe was mortally wounded on the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec.

Secondly, many—including Sir Joshua Reynolds and West's patron, Archbishop Drummond—strongly urged West to avoid painting Wolfe and others in modern costume, which was thought to detract from the timeless heroism of the event. They urged him to instead paint the figures wearing togas. West refused, writing, "the same truth that guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil [paintbrush] of the artist."



Figure **2.8.1.3**: Lieutenant Henry Browne holding the flag against the St. Lawrence River (detail), Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm (National Gallery of Canada)

Artistic license

Yet despite West's interest in "truth," there is little to be found in The Death of General Wolfe. Without doubt, the dying General Wolfe is the focus of the composition. West paints Wolfe lying down at the moment of his death wearing the red uniform of a British officer. A circle of identifiable men attend to their dying commander. Historians know that only one—Lieutenant Henry Browne, who holds the British flag above Wolfe—was present at the General's death.

Clearly, West took artistic license in creating a dramatic composition, from the theatrical clouds to the messenger approaching on the left side of the painting to announce the British victory over the Marquis de Montcalm and his French army in this decisive battle. Previous artists, such as James Barry, painted this same event in a more documentary, true-to-life style. In contrast, West deliberately painted this composition as a dramatic blockbuster.



Figure **2.8.1.4**: Native American at left (detail), Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm (National Gallery of Canada)

This sense of spectacle is also enhanced by other elements, and West was keenly interested in giving his viewers a unique view of this North American scene. This was partly achieved through landscape and architecture. The St. Lawrence River appears on the right side of the composition and the steeple represents the cathedral in the city of Quebec. In addition to the landscape, West also depicts a tattooed Native American on the left side of the painting. Shown in what is now the universal pose of contemplation, the Native American firmly situates this as an event from the New World, making the composition all the more exciting to a largely English audience.

Wolfe as Christ

Perhaps most important is the way West portrayed the painting's protagonist as Christ-like. West was clearly influenced by the innumerable images of the dead Christ in Lamentation and Depositions paintings that he would have seen during his time in Italy. This deliberate visual association between the dying General Wolfe and the dead Christ underscores the British officer's admirable qualities. If Christ was innocent, pure, and died for a worthwhile cause—that is, the salvation of mankind—then Wolfe too was innocent, pure, and died for a worthwhile cause; the advancement of the British position in North America. Indeed, West transforms Wolfe from a simple war hero to a deified martyr for the British cause. This message was further enhanced by the thousands of engravings that soon flooded the art market, both in England and abroad.



Figure 2.8.1.5: Detail, Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm (National Gallery of Canada)

Historical significance

Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* justifiably retains a position as a landmark painting in the history of American art. In it, West reinterprets the rules of what a history painting could be—both in regard to period depicted and the attire the figures wore—and at the same time followed a visual language that would have been familiar to its eighteenth-century audience. This composition set the stage for the many 'contemporary' history paintings that John Singleton Copley and John Trumbull painted throughout the rest of the eighteenth century.

Additional resources:

This painting in the National Gallery of Canada

Biography of West from The J. Paul Getty Museum

Video from the National Gallery of Canada

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2.8.2: Benjamin West, Penn's Treaty with the Indians

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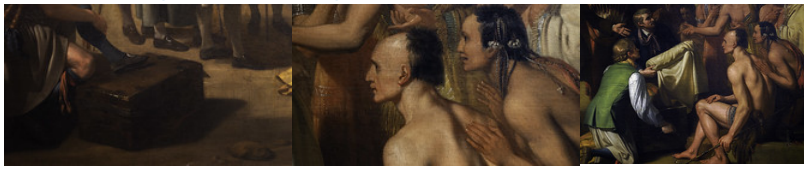


Video **2.8.2.1**: Benjamin West, *Penn's Treaty with the Indians*, 1771-72, oil on canvas, 191.8 x 273.7 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts), A Seeing America video A conversation with Monica Zimmerman. Vice President of Public Education and Engagement, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Beth Harris

Additional resources

This painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

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SECTION OVERVIEW

2.9: John Singleton Copley

2.9.1: John Singleton Copley, A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)

2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris)

2.9.3: John Singleton Copley, Paul Revere

2.9.4: John Singleton Copley, The Copley Family

2.9.5: Watson and the Shark

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2.9.1: John Singleton Copley, A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)

Page ID
165070



Video **2.9.1.1**: John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, 77.15 x 63.82 cm (30-3/8 x 25-1/8 inches) (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Figure **2.9.1.1**: John Singleton Copley, *Self-Portrait*, 1780-84, oil on canvas, 32 x 32 cm (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian)

Some background

John Singleton Copley is commonly considered the greatest portrait painter in the history of the American colonies, and yet despite this sterling reputation, his life began at somewhat of a disadvantage. He was born in Boston to Richard and Mary, who presumably had recently emigrated from Ireland. Copley's father, a tobacco merchant, died around the time of his son's birth, leaving Mary a widow and suddenly in charge of the tobacco business. She must have been a shrewd businessperson, however, for ten years later, on 12 July 1748, she ran an advertisement in the Boston Gazette promoting her tobacco shop:

> ***Mrs. Mary Pelham, (formerly the Widow Copley, on the Lang Wharf, Tabacconist) is remov'd into Lindel's Row, against the Quaker's Meeting House, near the upper End of King Street, Boston, where she continues to sell the best Virginia Tobacco, Cut, Pigtail and spun, of all Sorts, by Wholesale or Retail, at the cheapest Rates.***

Interestingly, the man Mary Copley married was Peter Pelham, a London-trained engraver who specialized in mezzotints. Pelham emigrated from England to Boston around 1728, an arrival that roughly coincided with that of the portraitist **John Smibert** whose own entry into Boston was during the following year. For some years, Pelham engraved the portraits that Smibert had painted. In addition to his own art, Pelham also owned an extensive print collection from his time working in London. This was the environment in which the young John Singleton Copley lived; a home that was as filled with paintings and engravings as one could find in colonial Boston during the first half of the eighteenth century. What is mezzotint?

Painting portraits

Like Smibert before him, Copley's painting output while in Boston (and, more broadly, when he traveled to New York City, too) consisted almost exclusively of portraits, for this was the only kind of painting for which there was a market in the American colonies. Early on, Copley based his compositions on the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century British engravings he likely saw in his stepfather's print collection. His 1760 portrait of Epes Sargent is but one example (below, right). Sargent leans to his right, his elbow resting on a circular plinth. This same pose and plinth can be seen in an engraving Peter Pelham made in 1726 after an earlier Hans Hysing portrait of the architect James Gibbs. Much like one today might flip through a fashion magazine to search out a new outfit or hairstyle, Copley was utilizing preexisting compositions for his Bostonian clients.



Figure **2.9.1.2**: Left: *James Gibbs*, mezzotint by Peter Pelham, after a painting by Hans Hysing, (National Portrait Gallery); right: John Singleton Copley, *Epes Sargent*, c. 1760, oil on canvas, 126.6 x 101.7 cm (National Gallery of Art)

To be certain, Boston was as lively as a colonial city as there was during the middle of the eighteenth century, and as such, it had become the home to several prominent portraitists. John Smibert and **Robert Feke** had been active there during the first half of the century, and by the time the 1750s had arrived, Joseph Badger and Joseph Blackburn were also actively accepting portrait commissions. Unfortunately for these two artists, the 1750s also announced the arrival of John Singleton Copley, teenage portrait painter. In short order, both Badger and Blackburn found themselves in sincere want for work. Blackburn left Boston in 1758 for Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and Badger's artist output slowed to a trickle before his death in Boston in May of 1765.

A brief comparison of roughly contemporary portraits by Badger, Blackburn, and Copley easily explains why Copley quickly found himself atop the Boston portraiture world. Badger's portrait of John Haskins (1759) and Blackburn's likeness of Colonel Theodore Atkins (1760) are competently painted images, and are as good of a portrait as one was likely to have seen in Boston by any artist other than Smibert, a painter with the prestigious pedigree of European training. The faces are somber, and more stiff than lively. Their bodies appear heavily cloaked by the clothing they wear, and there is no real sense that an actual body exists underneath these garments. In short, they are competent, yet uninspired.



Figure **2.9.1.3**: Right: Joseph badger, *John Haskins*, 1759, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 68.9 cm (The Brooklyn Museum); left: Joseph Blackburn, *Colonel Theodore Atkinson*, 1760, oil on canvas, 125.7 x 101.6 cm (Worcester Art Museum)

To compare these two portraits with one Copley painted in 1758—that of Mary and Elizabeth Royall (below)—is to understand why Copley so quickly put other portraitists out of business. These young daughters of Isaac Royall (a much younger Mary can be seen in Robert Feke's 1741 portrait of Isaac Royall and Family—more info about the family **here**) wear shimmering velvet gowns, Copley has painted their faces to show not only what they looked like, but to display a sense of their personality, too. Mary displays a hummingbird that is perched on her finger, while the younger Elizabeth pets a King Charles spaniel. Their gowns, the curtain and column in the background, and the inclusion of rare (a hummingbird) and royal (the King Charles spaniel) animals makes this a compositionally daring and visually interesting image. And Copley was then only 20 years old.



Figure **2.9.1.4**: John Singleton Copley, *Mary and Elizabeth Royall*, c. 1758, oil on canvas, 145.73 x 122.24 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Boy with a Squirrel

As Copley matured as an artist, however, he became even more compositionally inventive. A great example of this is an early masterpiece, *Boy with a Squirrel*, a portrait of the artist's half-brother, Henry Pelham. While it is, of course, a portrait, it would be more accurate to consider this painting as a tangible demonstration of the artist's skill. Indeed, from the beginning, Copley intended this painting not for a wall in a Boston parlor, but instead for the wall of a London exhibition space. It is, as such, as much about what Copley could do as an artist as it is about the likeness of Henry Pelham.



Figure **2.9.1.5**: John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, oil on canvas, 77.15 x 63.82 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

And yet, what a portrait! Copley has painted Pelham in profile—something exceedingly rare in his pre-London oeuvre. He looks to left side of the composition as if dreamily lost in thought. The first thing a viewer might notice is that Copley has beautifully framed his half-brother's face in front of a vibrant red curtain. Pelham wears a dark frock coat that is embellished with a pink satin collar. The yellow vest underneath his coat largely obscures his white shirt, although the collar and cuffs brilliantly contrast with the pink and dark blue of his coat. Copley has taken particular care to show the play of light and shadow across these garments. Note the ruffles in his cuffs, the ripples across his pink collar, and the shadows underneath the vest's buttonholes. Clearly Copley was pulling out all of the artistic stops for this composition.



Figure 2.9.1.6: Hands, chain and squirrel (detail), John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, oil on canvas, 77.15 x 63.82 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

But it is not only the likeness that shows Copley's interest in creating a showstopper. If the viewer's eye begins at Pelham's face and then moves downward along his right shoulder and arm, they would next notice Pelham's brightly illuminated (particularly against the dark base of the column) right hand that delicately holds a meticulously painted gold chain. Pelham grasps it between his thumb and index finger, and it runs atop his hand, falling to the underside of his palm, and then is delicately laid atop his pinky. The oval of the end of the chain mirrors the ovals present in the glass of water underneath his hand. And this gold chain leads the eyes rightward towards a pet flying squirrel that nibbles on the meat of a recently cracked nut.



Figure 2.9.1.7: Hand and chain (detail), John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, oil on canvas, 77.15 x 63.82 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Copley has taken particular care in the painting of this small mammal: large obsidian eyes, dark whiskers, grey and black topside with a snowy-white belly and a bushy tail. The most impressive element in this painting, however, may be the beautifully rendered and highly polished mahogany table. In some ways, this piece of furniture serves as a vehicle for Copley to demonstrate his ability to paint reflections of material objects. Reflections of the glass of water, the cracked nut, the squirrel's belly, and Pelham's white cuffs can all be seen on the polished tabletop. These elements—chain, glass, squirrel, table—make *Boy with a Squirrel* as much about things in the painting as it is about the person depicted within it.



Figure 2.9.1.8: Squirrel (detail), John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, oil on canvas, 77.15 x 63.82 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Sent to London for feedback

The portrait was sent to London for the 1766 exhibition of the Society of Artists. Copley received feedback from his contemporary expatriate Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds, perhaps the most authoritative voices on British art at the time. Captain R.G. Bruce, Copley's friend, took *Boy with a Squirrel* to London and returned with Reynolds's assessment: "in any Collection of Painting it will pass for an excellent Picture, but considering the Disadvantages…you had labored under, that it was a very wonderfull Performance." The "disadvantages" to which Reynolds refers to are likely those that involve Copley's location (Boston, the very fringe of the British empire) and his opportunity for formal artistic instruction there (none).

West agreed when he wrote to Copley on 4 August 1766. In his particular brand of creative spelling, West wrote, "while it was Excibited to View the Criticizems was, that at first Sight the Pictures struck the Eye as being to liney, which was judgd to have arose from there being so much neetness in the lines, which indeed as fare as I was Capable of judgeing was some what the Case."

Although somewhat critical of Copley's work, West was clearly impressed, and encouraged his colonial counterpart to send a composition to the Society of Artist's April 1767 exhibition. "I advise you to Paint a Picture of a half figure or two in one Piec, of a Boy and Girle, or any other subject you may fancy," West wrote. "And be shure take your subjects from Nature as you did in your last Piec…let it be Painted in oil." West ended his letter by informing Copley that a three or four year visit to Europe studying the Old Masters would greatly improve his skill. In closing, West, ever the giving teacher, offered his mentorship, something for which his fame still rests today: "if ever you should make a viset to Europe you may depend on my friendship in eny way thats in my Power to Sarve."

A move to London?

Prior to 1766, Copley must have wondered if he had the talent and skill to move to London and become a successful portraitist. By the close of that year, the positive feedback that he had received from both Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West—the current and future presidents of the Royal Academy of Arts—must have put the painter at ease. Rather than wondering if he could make it in London, Copley instead was forced to ponder if it would be financially prudent to relocate to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, as he was becoming increasingly more wealthy painting in Boston. Copley did eventually move to London to seek future fortunes, but it was the brewing political turmoil that brought about this change in location as much as any desire to increase his

finances. This was still eight years away in 1766. Until 1774 when he departed, Copley continued to paint the social and economic elite in colonial Boston: lawyers, merchants, politicians, and even an accomplished silversmith.

Additional resources:

Copley's *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Copley's Mary and Elizabeth Royall at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

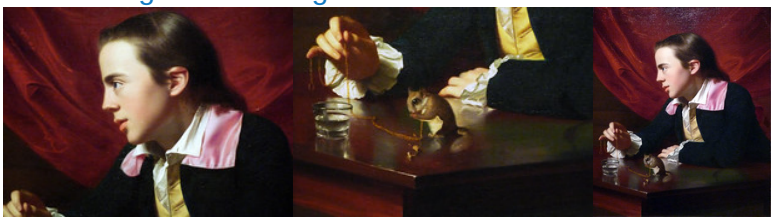
Badger's *Portrait of John Haskins* at the Brooklyn Museum

Blackburn's Colonel Theodore Atkinson at the Worcester Art Museum

Copley on The Metropoltian Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Portrait Painting in England, 1600–1800 on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris)



Video **2.9.2.1**: John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris)*, 1773, oil on ticking, 156.5 × 121.9 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art). A conversation with Dr. Kathleen A. Foster, The Robert L. McNeil, Jr., Senior Curator of American Art, and Director, Center for American Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Dr. Beth Harris

A **Seeing America** video

This page titled 2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris) is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

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2.9.3: John Singleton Copley, Paul Revere

The fame of Paul Revere

Page ID
165072

Listen, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April in Seventy-Five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.
He said to his friend, –"If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North-Church-tower, as a signal-light—
One if by land and two if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country-folk to be up and to arm.
—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Thus begins Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous poem "Paul Revere's Ride," a work that was first published in the January 1861 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. Although Paul Revere is now famous as one of the Massachusetts Minutemen—a local militia who would defend the colony against the British army at a moment's notice—he was hardly a public figure during his own lifetime. History tells us that he did ride from Boston's Old North Church to warn of the approach of the British, but he was never elected to public office and he was only tangentially involved with Revolutionary politics. Indeed, Revere's limited fame in his own day stems from his considerable talents as a silversmith. His fame during the second half of the nineteenth century comes from his appearance in Longfellow's poem. Revere's fame today, however, can be attributed—in part at least—to the remarkable portrait John Singleton Copley painted of the artisan in 1768.

Copley's beginnings

Copley had extensive access to early eighteenth century prints, and he often incorporated poses and clothing from older images into his portraits of Bostonians (his mother married Peter Pelham, an engraver who specialized in mezzotints after his father died). At the age of 15, for example, Copley painted the portrait of Mrs. Joseph Mann (Bethia Torrey). Her pose—holding a sting of pearls—and attire of a scoop-neckline dress with white trim—were directly taken from a mezzotint of Princess Anne. In today's world, we might look at such "borrowing" as a kind of visual plagiarism. But this was the vein in which eighteenth-century artists worked and learned. It was expected that one could become great through the attentive copying of the Old Masters.



Figure 2.9.3.1: Left: *Queen Anne when Princess of Denmark* by Isaac Beckett, after William Wissing, mezzotint, 1683-1688, 32.6 x 25 cm (National Portrait Gallery, London); right: John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Joseph Mann (Bethia Torrey)*, 1753, oil on canvas, 91.44 x 71.75 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



Figure 2.9.3.2: John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, oil on canvas, 77.15 x 63.82 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

As Copley matured as an artist, however, he became more compositionally inventive. A great example of this is an early masterpiece, *Boy with a Squirrel*, a portrait of the artist's half-brother, Henry Pelham. Copley sent this portrait to London for the 1766 exhibition of the Society of Artists. Copley received feedback from his contemporary expatriate Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds—perhaps the most authoritative voice on British art at the time. Captain R.G. Bruce, Copley's friend, took *Boy with a Squirrel* to London and returned with Reynolds's assessment: "in any Collection of Painting it will pass for an excellent

Picture, but considering the Disadvantages…you had labored under, that it was a very wonderfull Performance." The "disadvantages" to which Reynolds refers to are likely those that involve Copley's location (Boston, the very fringe of the British empire) and his opportunity for formal artistic instruction there (none).

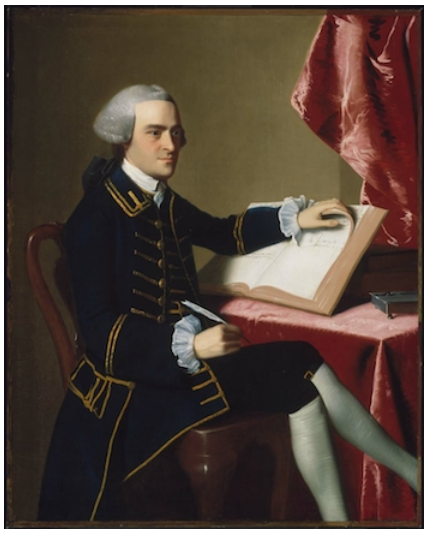


Figure **2.9.3.3**: John Singleton Copley, *John Hancock*, 1765, oil on canvas, 124.8 x 100 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

And yet despite these disadvantages (although some scholars of American art believe that it was because of them), Copley quickly became the most sought after portrait painter in the colonies. By the middle of the 1760s, he was painting the economic and political elite of his city, and had become a rather wealthy man himself. Before the 1760s were done, Copley had married into a wealthy family and had purchased a 20-acre farm with three houses on it. This estate placed Copley next door to John Hancock, one of the wealthiest merchants in Boston (and future president of the Continental Congress and governor of Massachusetts) when Copley painted him in 1765 (left).

But it was not only the wealthy and political elite who Copley painted. Indeed, during a politically tumultuous time, Copley painted both sides of this vitriolic divide, both Whigs (those in favor of a break with Great Britain) and Tories (those who wished to remain a part of the Empire).

It seems that Copley's only requisite was that the sitter had the finances to pay for the likeness. It is also possible that Copley would paint a sitter for exchange for past or future goods or services. Paul Revere, a silversmith with modest if not affluent means, might just be one such case.

The portrait of Paul Revere

Copley's portrait of Paul Revere is striking in many ways. To begin, Revere sits behind a high polished wooden table. Rather than wear his "Sunday's Best" clothing, as sitters for portraits (and elementary school pictures) so commonly did (and still do), Revere instead wears simple working attire, a decision that underscores his artisan, middle-class status. His open collared shirt is made from plain white linen, and the lack of cravat—a kind of formal neckwear—lends to the informal nature of the portrait. What looks to be an undershirt peeks from underneath his linen shirt, and a wool (or perhaps a dull silk) waistcoat is likewise unbuttoned (although decorated with two gold buttons, features that were not likely present in Revere's work vest). He does not wear a jacket or coat, and even his wig—something almost every male would have worn if they could to afford to do so—is missing. We can compare what Revere wears to men's attire from the twenty-first century. Imagine a man wearing a three-piece suit (blazer, vest, buttoned white dress shirt, and a tie). If you were to remove the jacket and tie and unbutton the shirt and vest, you would have an idea of the informality present in Copley's eighteenth-century portrait of Revere.



Figure 2.9.3.4: John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere*, 1768, oil on canvas, 89.22 x 72.39 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Indeed, comparing Copley's portrait of the silversmith with that of Copley's neighbor, John Hancock, makes the differences all the more obvious. Both seem to be at work in some ways—Revere on his teapot and Hancock at his ledger—but there the similarities end. Even though Hancock is not dressed as ostentatiously as he could have been, he still wears a dark blue coat that is embellished and trimmed with golden braid and buttons. White cuffs extend beyond his sleeves, and a silken cravat is tied around his neck. His breeches have golden buckles and silk stockings cover his lower legs. A modest powered wig sits upon his head. This modest attire —modest for Hancock, at least—demonstrates the uniqueness of Copley painting Revere while wearing what amounts to working clothes. Indeed, this is the only completed portrait Copley painted of an artisan wearing less than formal attire.



Figure **2.9.3.5**: Face (detail), John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere*, 1768, oil on canvas, 89.22 x 72.39 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

But it is not only what Revere is wearing, it is also what he is doing. The sitter looks at the viewer, as if we have momentarily distracted him from his work. The edge of the table in the foreground suggests that the table he sits behind is parallel to the picture plane. Few would claim that this table is his workbench, for the surface is far too polished and pristine to have been used in the daily activity of his trade. The surface of the table reflects Revere's white shirt, and the tools in front of him, his engraver's burins. With his right hand, Revere seems to support his head—and as a corollary, his brain—the source of his artistic ingenuity. His left hand holds the product of that mind, a nearly completed silver teapot, a vessel that has been polished to such a high sheen that Revere's hand beautifully reflects on its surface.



Figure **2.9.3.6**: Tabletop and teapot (detail), John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere*, 1768, oil on canvas, 89.22 x 72.39 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

As a silversmith, Revere made many kinds of objects; spoons, bowls, shoe buckles, dentistry tools, beer tankards, creamers, coffee pots, and sugar tongs. That he should be shown with a teapot was an overtly political decision. By the end of the 1760s, Great Britain was nearing financial ruin after the conclusion of the Seven Years' War (the North American component of this conflict is called the French and Indian War; the most famous depiction of this war is Benjamin West's 1770 painting *The Death of General Wolfe*). In order to increase the revenue in the crown's coffers in 1767 the British Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which placed a tax on the colonials' use of tea (among other imported goods). Paul Revere was clearly engaged in this political issue, for his signature appears on an October 1767 Non-importation agreement. Clearly tea was becoming a politicizing good and it is interesting that Revere chose to be shown holding an object so tied to a commodity that became a divisive symbol. Indeed, this political thread reached a climax with the so-called Boston Tea Party on 16 December 1773 when a collection of colonials—some disguised as Native Americas—raided a merchant vessel in Boston Harbor and threw the tea overboard. Interestingly, the owner of that boat was Richard Clarke, John Singleton Copley's father-in-law.

Copley, Revere and the Boston Massacre

One other facet of the portrait of Paul Revere is worth exploring, that of its date of completion, for the artist seldom dated or signed his portraits. Copley and Revere had been acquainted since at least 1763 when Revere's account book notes that Copley had ordered a gold bracelet. Revere also subsequently made sliver frames for Copley's miniature portraits, and it has been suggested that this portrait might have served as a kind of payment from Copley to Revere for past services rendered and goods received. Clearly, Revere and Copley had a professional relationship. However, this relationship did not likely extend beyond the first half of 1770.

One of the most pivotal movements leading up to the American Revolutionary War was the so-called Boston Massacre. On 5 March 1770, a group of British soldiers fired at an unarmed group of protesters who were throwing snowballs (loaded with rocks) and other objects at the infantrymen. The crowd also repeatedly yelled "Fire!" at Captain Preston, the commanding officer on duty, daring him to order his soldiers to fire their muskets into the crowd. Eventually, the British army obliged their tormentors; five men were mortally wounded and another six were wounded. The soldiers were arrested and stood trial, accused of murder. Their lawyer was future President John Adams, achieved six acquittals and two reduced charges of manslaughter.

This event was instantly politically divisive, and both Whigs and Tories began to use visual propaganda as a way to bring those who were neutral in regards to declaring independence from Great Britain onto their side. In short time, Henry Pelham, Copley's half-brother completed one such attempt at depicting the events of the Boston Massacre. Pelham finished his engraving immediately following the events of 5 March and then lent a copy to Paul Revere. The silversmith, who had been engraving political cartoons since at least 1765, and ever the entrepreneur, then faithfully copied Pelham's print and placed an advertisement for its sale no later than 26 March, just three weeks after the event and a week prior to Pelham's own print being available for purchase.



Figure 2.9.3.7: Left: Henry Pelham, Boston Massacre; right: Paul Revere, Boston Massacre

When seen side by side, it is clear that Revere plagiarized Pelham's then unpublished work; the same arrangement of dead and injured bodies on the left, the same organization of the British soldiers on right, the same dog, the same framing architecture. Although the crescent moon is placed in the same part of the print—the upper left-hand corner—the biggest difference between these two images could be that Pelham's moon is open on its right side whereas Revere's is open to the left. This egregious affront against a family member likely brought an end to John Singleton Copley's relationship with Paul Revere.

It is ironic that Revere is most known today because of Longfellow's poem, a work that does not mention his more famous artisanal career. Copley's portrait of the silversmith, likewise as famous, was hidden in a descendant's attic for most of the nineteenth century and was not publicly displayed until 1928. Since that time, however, the image has contributed to the sitter's prestige, and the sitter's fame has likewise contributed to the painting's fame.

Additional resources:

Copley's *Paul Revere* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Copley's *Boy with a Flying Squirrel* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Copley's *Epes Sargent* at the National Gallery of Art

The Printed Image in the West: Mezzotint on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Biography of Copley from the Worcester Art Museum

The Boston Massacre from the Gilder Lehrmann Institute of American History

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



Figure 2.9.3.8: More SmartHistory images…

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2.9.4: John Singleton Copley, The Copley Family

Page ID
165073

Invitations to visit Europe

By the time the 1770s arrived, John Singleton Copley was the undisputed king of portraiture in the American colonies. Yet despite this fact, he had longed to visit the Old World, and he had, in fact, received much encouragement to permanently move to London. Copley's early masterwork *Boy with a Squirrel*, a portrait of his half brother Henry Pelham, had been shown at the 1766 Society of Artists exhibition. Many artists, particularly Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds, had been suitably impressed with the artistic virtuosity of the New World wunderkind. West, himself a colonial, wrote to Copley on 4 August 1766 to encourage him embark on a Grand Tour of Europe. With his creative spelling, West urged Copley to make a "viset to Europe for this Porpase for three or four years, you would find yourself then in Possession of what will be highly valuable" (this and all quotes use the 18th century spelling).

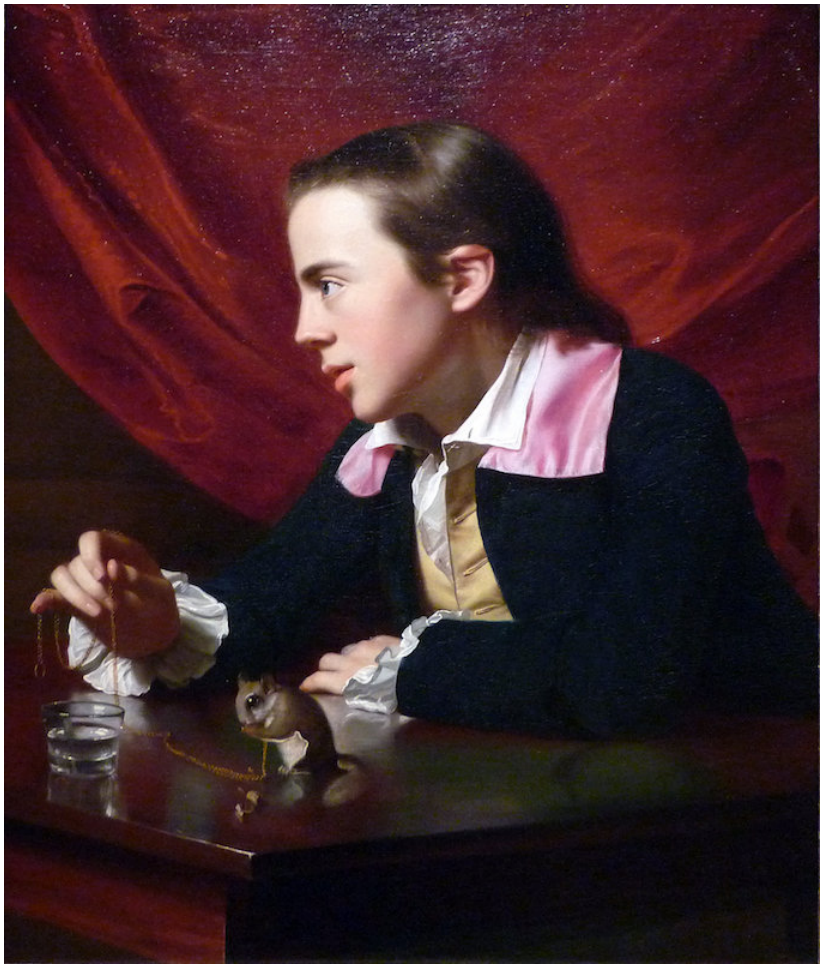


Figure **2.9.4.1**: John Singleton Copley, *A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham)*, 1765, 77.15 x 63.82 cm / 30-3/8 x 25-1/8 inches (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Copley, ever the prudent businessman, was seldom rash or spontaneous. Although West provided rather constant motivation, Copley remained unconvinced that he would have a more affluent life in London than the one he then had in Boston. On 17 June 1768, for example, Copley wrote to the West that, "I should be glad to go to Europe, but cannot think of it without a very good prospect of doing as well there as I can here. You are sensable that 300 Guineas a Year, which is my present income, is a pretty living in America." Copley continued in this letter to make it clear that he had family obligations to consider: "And what ever my ambition may be to excel in our noble Art, I cannot think of doing it at the expence of not only my own happyness, but that of a Tender Mother and a Young Brother whose dependance is intirely upon me."

Several years later—in January 1772—John Trumbull, the future painter of the *Declaration of Independence*, was travelling from his home in Connecticut to Cambridge, Massachusetts in order to enroll at Harvard College. Although Trumbull wanted to be an artist, his father, the former governor of Connecticut, wished for his son to receive a college education and to pursue a more socially prestigious vocation. Although Trumbull was unenthusiastic about the prospect of being a college student, he was excited about visiting Copley, an encounter made possible through a mutual friend. Writing his autobiography nearly fifty years later, Trumbull still recalled this first brush—get it? Brush!—with artistic fame:

> ***We found Mr. Copley dressed to receive a party of friends at dinner. I remember his dress and appearance—an elegant looking man, dressed in a fine maroon cloth, with gilt buttons—this was dazzling to my unpracticed eye! —but his paintings, the first I had ever seen deserving the name, riveted, absorbed my attention, and renewed all my desire to enter upon such a pursuit.***

Copley leaves for London (as political tensions rise) and goes on the Grand Tour



Figure **2.9.4.2**: John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Colonel George Watson*, 1768, oil on canvas, 58 3/4 x 48 7/8 (New Orleans Museum of Art)

In a city—Boston—that was becoming increasingly more divided between the Tories and the Whigs (those who preferred loyalty to Britain and those who wished for independence, respectively), Copley remained as apolitical as he could. Indeed, a look at his Boston patronage indicates that he painted sitters on both sides of the growing vitriolic political divide.

But as the 1770s progressed, Copley's life became more and more uncomfortable. Most of his wife's family were strident Loyalists. His father-in-law Richard Clarke, for example, was the owner of the tea that provoked the Boston Tea Party on 16 December 1773. Several months later—April of 1774—an angry mob arrived at Copley's home looking for Colonel George Watson, a Tory lawyer Copley had painted in 1768.

This unruly event frightened Copley and helped him realize that the political climate was beginning to get out of hand. "What a spirit!" Copley wrote on 26 April. "What if Mr. Watson had stayed (as I pressed him to) to spend the night. I must either have given up a friend to the insult of a Mob or had my house pulled down and perhaps my family murthered." Fearful for his own safety, Copley sailed for London in June 1774, just seven weeks later. His family—wife, children, mother, and half-brothers—remained in Boston.

Copley's passage across the Atlantic lasted until the second week of July, and he wasted little time in visiting Benjamin West, Joshua Reynolds, and the Royal Academy of Art. After some time in London, Copley began his continental Grand Tour, an eighteenth-century staple of art education for an aspiring painter. He first visited Paris—writing to his wife on 2 September—then

made his way to Rome via Genoa. Copley arrived in Rome on 26 October and spent the next seven months viewing art and architecture and copying the Old Masters. He also made several side trips to Naples, Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Paestum.

A letter Copley wrote to his mother from Parma on 25 June 1775 states that he had finally left Rome for London on 4 June 1775; he had already visited Florence on his way north. Still in Parma on 22 August, Copley wrote a lengthy letter to his half-brother and stated that, “I propose going from this [Parma] to Venice and through the Tirole, Germany, and Flanders, which is the shortest way to England and a different Rout from that I took in coming to Italy. I shall not return to Parris as I intended.”

In just fifteen months—that is from his departure from Boston to his return to London from the continent in October 1775—Copley had received nothing short of an art education unavailable to anyone in North America. He was primed to open a painting studio in London. By the time he returned to London, his wife and three of their (then) four children were awaiting his return (the youngest, Clarke Copley, born in 1775, did not travel with the rest of the family and died the following year). Copley thusly flipped the page to a new chapter—the English Chapter—in his professional life.



Figure **2.9.4.3**: Copley, John Singleton, *The Copley Family*, 1776-77, oil on canvas, 184.1 x 229.2 cm (National Gallery of Art)

The Copley Family

Copley painted an immense group portrait, *The Copley Family*, in order to celebrate—and announce—this new chapter in his professional development. This painting accomplished several independent goals at the same time. To begin, it serves as a kind of visual testament to his love and devotion to his family. During their nearly 15 months apart, Copley’s correspondence—primarily to his own mother, his half-brother Henry, and his wife Suzanna who he affectionately referred to as Sukey—is filled with references to both missing his family and his fear for their safety in the increasingly tenuous city of Boston. Writing from Lyon on 15-16 September 1774, for example, Copley stated, “I am very Ancious for you, my Dear, and our Children, for I know not what state you are in, in Boston; but I pray God to preserve you and them.” In closing, he sends affectionate tidings: “give my blessing to my Dear Babys, and a thousand Kisses. tell my Dear Betsey not to forget he[r] Papa.”

The Copley Family shows the six members of the artist's clan as it existed at the beginning of 1777. Copley has shown three adults —the artist, his wife, and her father—and his four children. As was typical with group portraits that included a self-portrait—see Raphael in ***The School of Athens*** and Smibert's self representation in ***The Bermuda Group***, both of which Copley would have seen—the artist looks directly at the viewer, a look of inquisitiveness on his visage. He holds a set of drawings and leans on a classical plinth. His father-in-law, Richard Clarke, looks to the viewer's right, seemingly unaware that the youngest daughter, Susanna, is attempting to climb onto his lap. Sukey, shown in profile, lovingly nuzzles John Singleton, Jr., their only son, while Mary, on the far right, attempts to capture her mother's attention. The only other sitter who seems alerted to the viewer is the oldest, Elizabeth, who stands seemingly unaware of the happenings behind her.



Figure **2.9.4.4**: Copley's wife and three children (detail), John Singleton, *The Copley Family*, 1776-77, oil on canvas, 184.1 x 229.2 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Although Clarke seems more aloof than loving, the rest of the participants in this stage-like setting seem to express tenderness and love for one another. Children play and vie for motherly affection. Sukey plays the maternal role of a loving and tender parent. Elizabeth, the oldest, suspiciously stares at the viewer as if facing a stranger. Copley demonstrates—as he had so consistently in Boston—a keen ability to paint psychologically rich and complex compositions. These are not only accurate likenesses of those who he most loved. Indeed, Copley is able to tell us, through visual means, a bit about who they are.

However, this portrait was not only intended to accurately record who the Copley family was and what the Copley family looked like at a particular moment in time. Instead, Copley completed this work as a way of both advertising his talents and abilities as a painter, but also to announce his family's formal arrival into fashionable London society. Copley and his wife wear clothing then at the height of fashion, and this attire, in addition to the drapery on the left of the painting and the extravagant furniture and beautifully rendered carpet, dually speaks to the artist's affluent wealth and his ability at painting fabrics. The drawing he holds, the vase behind his hands—identified as a copy of the Medici Vase Copley would have seen in the Uffizi while in Florence—and the Italianate landscape in the distance that appears as if borrowed from a Raphael Madonna and Child painting all proclaim his Grand Tour pedigree.

Available for hire

In size (6' x 7.5'), composition, and in artistic references, Copley intended for this group portrait to eloquently advertise that his newly arrived services were available for hire to the London portrait-seeking public. Copley exhibited this work at the 1777 Royal Academy show to nearly universal acclaim. In a career that would extend for almost another forty years, this painting is the only one he formally exhibited with his own likeness within it. Clearly, the work is not only about what it is, but also who made it. The artist achieved his goal. One critic remarked, "Mr. Copley, from the size of his family piece, is likely to be as much the subject of observation in the rooms as any artist who has exhibited…" Years later, in 1792, Copley had achieved such fame that he was set to rival his former advocate, Benjamin West, for the presidency of the Royal Academy of Art. Between *The Copley Family* in 1777

and the end of his career, the artist shifted his attention from portraiture—which had been his only focus in the American colonies—to that of the more prestigious and ambitious history paintings.

Additional resources:

This painting at the National Gallery of Art

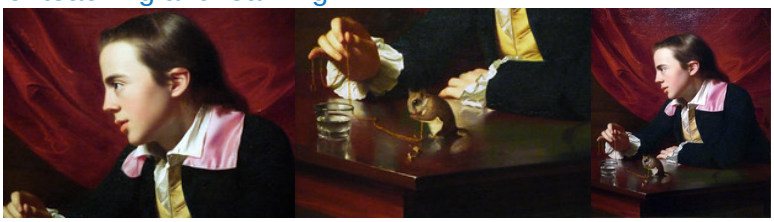
Copley at the National Gallery of Art

John Smibert's The Bermuda Group at Yale University Art Gallery

Copley on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Portrait Painting in England on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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2.9.5: Watson and the Shark

by **DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT**

Page ID
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The career of John Singleton Copley is a story that can be told in two distinct chapters. The first part, which extends until 1774, tells the story of his American career, one that primarily unfolds in Boston (with a productive side trip to New York). But when political concerns became too unpredictable for a painter who wished to remain as neutral as the situation would allow, Copley sailed from Boston to London. This departure opened the second chapter in Copley's career, that which takes place in London after a tour of the Continent. This change in locale, from the New World to the Old World, necessitated that Copley reassess who and what he painted.



Figure **2.9.5.1**: John Singleton Copley, *Gulian Verplanck*, 1771, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 71.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Portraits!

Indeed, an examination of Copley's oeuvre prior to his departure from Boston indicates that the overwhelming majority of his paintings were portraits. The reason for this artistic output is rather simple: the only real market for art in the American colonies was for portraiture, and Copley, ever the businessman, was willing to provide the art seekers around him exactly what they wanted. His clientele while in Boston comprises the political and economic elite of his day: powerful politicians, elite lawyers, wealthy merchants, and commanding officers amongst many others.

Once relocated to London, however, Copley began to appreciate how different the art market was in England compared to Boston. To be certain, there was a market for portraiture in London. However, the artistic elite in Britain (and elsewhere in Europe) at the end of the eighteenth century no longer wished to paint simple portraits—pictures that recorded what a person looked like—but instead aspired to paint large-scale history paintings. While these often-immense compositions could, of course, be filled with likenesses, there was the higher, more elevated goal of delivering a morally uplifting message to those who viewed them. Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) is but one example. Painted several years before Copley arrived in London, West not only shows what people looked like—and the image is, in fact, filled with recognizable portraits—he also painted a scene that elevates a British general to a nearly Christ-like level.



Figure **2.9.5.2**: Benjamin West, *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, oil on canvas, 152.6 x 214.5 cm (National Gallery of Canada)

There was no such market for paintings such as these when Copley lived in Boston. But when setting up his London painting studio, Copley was immediately aware that if he aspired to be a great painter, he would be required to turn his artistic talents towards historical compositions. To be certain, Copley completed the occasional portrait during the remainder of his career. When compared to historical compositions, portraits were more quickly painted and could provide the artist with quick access to funds. However, the artist preferred to focus his energies on large-scale history paintings during the remainder of his career. His 1778 masterwork *Watson and the Shark* is but one example of this change in his oeuvre. Painted less than three years after his arrival in London, *Watson and the Shark* demonstrates the ways in which Copley had quickly assimilated artistic lessons from his European Grand Tour.



Figure **2.9.5.3**: John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778, oil on canvas, 182.1 x 229.7 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Brook Watson—and the Shark

The Watson of the painting's title was Brook Watson, a one-time orphan who eventually became Lord Mayor of London. Watson was born in 1735 in Plymouth, England. He was eventually sent to Boston, presumably after the death of his parents, to live with a merchant named Levens, a man who was likely a distant relative. Levens was actively engaged in trade around with the West Indies, and by time Watson was a teenager, he was actively employed as a member of the crew in one of Levens's ships. Life changed in 1749, however, when the then fourteen-year-old Watson decided to take a swim while the ship was at anchor in Havana's harbor. Having discarded his sailor's woolen garments—clothing that would have been very heavy when wet and impractical when swimming—Watson entered the warm water. Shortly thereafter he was attacked by a shark. Watson's own account, written in the third person in April of 1778 (when Copley's painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy), stated that the shark struck three times. "In the first attack, all the flesh was stripped off the bone from the calf downwards; in the second, the foot was divided from the leg by the ancle. " Watson further stated, "at the very instant he was about to be seized the third time, the shark was struck with the boat hook and driven from his prey." This is the precise moment Copley depicts in Watson and the Shark. Given what we know about Watson and his future life, it is a moment when we know the youth will live, but are surprised that it can be so.



Figure **2.9.5.4**: The shark attacks (detail), John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778, oil on canvas, 182.1 x 229.7 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Indeed, it is a painting filled with drama and action. The composition contains ten figures and a tiger shark, a carnivorous fish so large that its body extends beyond the confines of the painting. Clearly, the main figure of the composition is the fair-haired Watson. He passively floats in the foreground, his feet towards the edge of the painting, his head towards the middle. His left arm is alongside his body while he uses his right arm to reach towards the men in the boat who attempt to rescue him. His left leg kicks towards the surface, while the right leg—already dismembered below the knee—seems to disappear downwards in the water. He looks upwards towards the boat filled with his rescuers in the middle ground, unaware, it seems of the imminent approach of the shark from the right.



Figure **2.9.5.5**: Fighting warrior, known as the *Borghese Gladiator*, c. 100 B.C.E., 199 cm (Louvre) (photo: Carole Raddato, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Although subtle, the figure of Watson demonstrates the ways in which Copley was incorporating artistic references into his own compositions. If Watson were to stand up, his body would have the same overall position as that of the *Borghese Gladiator*—one of the most famous of classical works in the eighteenth century (the version Copley likely saw in the Louvre in Paris is a first-century

Roman copy after a third-century B.C.E. Greek original). It is also similar to a figure within Raphael's *Transfiguration* (1516-1520), a painting Copley saw at the Vatican. In a letter to his wife, Copley stated that this painting was "allowed to be the greatest picture in the world." Moreover, Watson's head, which Copley has painted in profile, is a nearly identical copy of the head of one of the sons in the famous *Laocöon* statue, a work Copley saw while visiting the Vatican. In fact, Copley so admired this famous work the he own a small cast of it.

But it is not only Watson that demonstrates Copley's ability to cull from the famous art made before him. Indeed, this composition is filled with artistic references that his audience would have recognized—and most of these references are taken from paintings that are religious in subject. This is not surprising when one considers that one of the themes of Watson's own life was that of the salvation that can follow a tragic event.

In regards to imagery, for example, the two men on the left side of boat each extend their right arms downwards to rescue Watson. Copley seems to have borrowed this particular pose from Raphael's *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1515-16), a large-scale preparatory drawing that was then in London (and is now in the collection the Victoria and Albert Museum). Copley seems to have liked this religious narrative, for he also owned an engraving after Peter Paul Rubens's own *Miraculous Draught of Fishes* (1618-19). The standing figure in the boat, the sailor who wears the naval pea coat and is set to strike the shark with the boathook, looks similar to various versions of St. George (who kills a dragon) or St. Michael (who casts Satan from heaven). Raphael's *St. George and The Dragon* (1504-06) and Guido Reni's *St. Michael the Archangel* (1636, below) are but two possible influences.



Figure 2.9.5.6: Guido Reni, *St. Michael Slaying the Devil*, c. 1636 (Santa Maria della Concezione, Rome)

Clearly, *Watson and the Shark* is an energetic and emotional work. In order to enhance the emotional drama of this event, Copley referenced a well-known treatise of facial expressions. Charles le Brun is most remembered today for his *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions* (1698), a posthumously published artistic treatise that explored how emotions manifest upon the human visage. Even a century later, artists referred to le Brun's work to more accurately convey ideas about human emotions.

When applied to Copley's *Watson and the Shark*, for example, we can see that the figure at the prow of the boat with the weapon contains the facial expression that le Brun assigns to "Attention." The sailor at the far left with his furrowed brow and downward turned mouth mirrors that for le Bruns's "Horrour." Likewise, the other standing figure in the boat—the man of African descent who holds the coiled rope—conveys le Bruns's idea of "Compassion."

Looking at the faces of the men in the boat, we can see that we have a variety of different kinds or types of people. The young are present, so too are the more elderly. We can say the same about them in regards to wealth. Some seem to be simply dressed sailors. The man standing with the boat hook, however, is dressed in a more affluent way. Note his leather shoes with metal buckles, his silk stockings, and his new navy coat.



Figure **2.9.5.7**: Man with boat hook and African American figure (detail), John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778, oil on canvas, 182.1 x 229.7 cm (National Gallery of Art)

The inclusion of the man of African descent standing next to him is an interesting inclusion. Copley has giving this figure a place of particular compositional importance, and he alone holds the rope that links the victim to the boat. Clearly, this is a sympathetic likeness, and whoever the sitter was, Copley seems to have had a particular fondness for him. Indeed, Copley painted him twice. Entitled, quite simply, *Head of a Negro* (1778) when it was sold after the death of Copley's oldest son, it was described as *Head of a Favourite Negro*. When compared with other eighteenth-century (and, to be fair, nineteenth-century) images of Africans, Copley's paintings seem both honest and dignified.

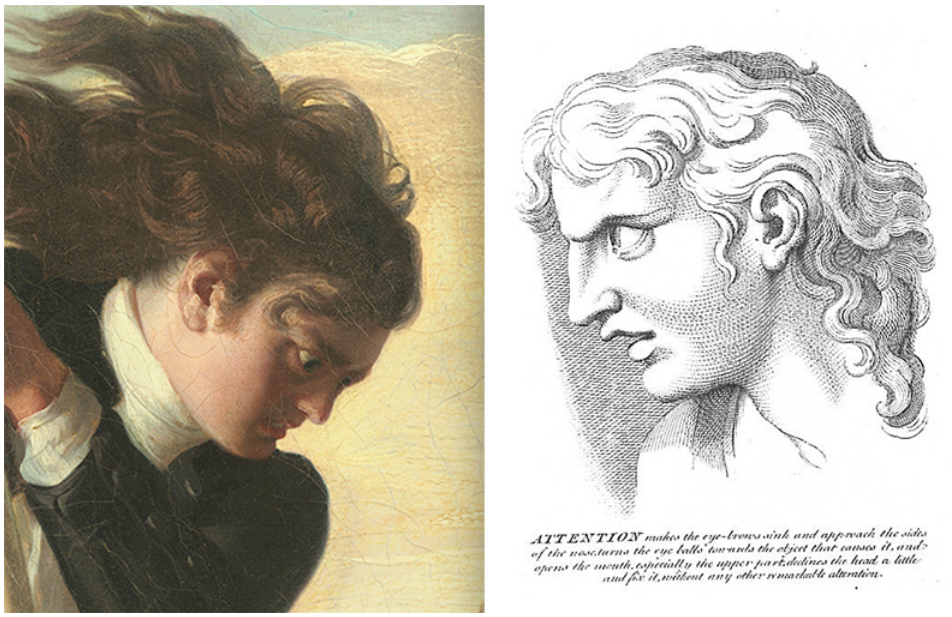


Figure **2.9.5.8**: Left: figure with boathook (detail), John Singleton Copley, *Watson and the Shark*, 1778, oil on canvas, 182.1 x 229.7 cm (National Gallery of Art); right: illustration of "Attention" from The Compleat Drawing Master, After Charles LeBrun, engraving (London, 1763)

Watson must have approved of this depiction, for records suggest that Watson himself had commissioned the work. His will, written in 1803, stipulated that the painting was to be donated to "the Governors of Christs Hospital…as a testimony of the high estimation in which I hold that most Excellent Charity and that they will allow it to be hung up in the Hall of their Hospital as holding out a most usefull Lesson to Youth." That lesson was clear. Watson, a former orphan himself, had not only prospered, he had become an immensely wealthy man of significant political importance. And he had done all of this on a wooden leg. His story —as pictorially represented by Copley's painting—was to serve as a kind of visual inspiration for the orphans at Christ's Hospital.

To this end, *Watson and the Shark* is similar in some ways to Benjamin West's earlier painting *The Death of General Wolfe*. Both were ambitious paintings of a recent event that aspired to morally instruct by the example of a great man. And like West's painting, Copley's composition is part fact with some artistic invention. Indeed, although Copley took great care with this painting, it would be inaccurate to say that it depicts a kind of absolute truth. Copley, a transplanted Bostonian living in London, had never visited Cuba, and he was forced to base his depiction of the Havana harbor on engraved prints—not all of which were accurate. Likewise, he had likely never seen a tiger shark, and there are inaccuracies in the ways it is painted. But despite these shortcomings, the painting achieves its goal in requiring the viewer to emotionally respond to a (nearly) tragic event.

As such, *Watson and the Shark* retains a special place within the history of late-eighteenth-century English Romanticism. In many ways, *Watson and the Shark* made Copley's fame in London. Already an Associate of the Royal Academy of Arts when it was exhibited at the annual salon in the spring of 1778, he was elected to full membership less than a year later. It also represents the Copley's "London-ification" as he moved away from the portraiture that had made his fame in Boston to ambitious historical compositions that more fully embraced the British art market.

Additional resources:

This painting at the National Gallery of Art

Second version at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Early Republic

3.1: John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence

3.2: Jean-Antoine Houdon, George Washington

3.3: Gilbert Stuart

3.3.1: Gilbert Stuart, The Skater

3.3.2: Lansdowne Portrait

3.4: Thomas Jefferson

3.4.1: Monticello

3.4.2: Rotunda, University of Virginia

3.5: Charles Willson Peale

3.5.1: An African Muslim among the founding fathers, Charles Willson Peale’s Yarrow Mamout

3.5.2: Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale)

3.5.3: The Artist in His Museum

3.6: John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos

3.7: Thomas Birch

3.7.1: Perry's Victory on Lake Erie

3.7.2: Fairmount Water Works

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3.1: John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence

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Figure **3.1.1**: John Trumbull, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, 1786–1820, oil on canvas, 20 7/8 x 31 inches / 53 x 78.7 cm (Yale University Art Gallery)

Like many artists of the early-Federal period (c. 1789-1801), the name John Trumbull is not one immediately recognized by most Americans. Yet despite this fact, the majority of Americans are well aware of many of Trumbull's most famous paintings. Trumbull's portrait of the first Secretary of the Treasury , Alexander Hamilton, has long graced the ten-dollar bill. Although Trumbull made a career as a portraitist, his real ambition lay in the painting of larger, more ambitious historical compositions. Without doubt, the one that is most frequently reproduced in elementary school history textbooks is *The Declaration of Independence*, a painting that exists in two versions. The first is smaller in size and is part of the Yale University Art Gallery (above) while the second is the monumental version currently on display in the Capitol Rotunda (below).

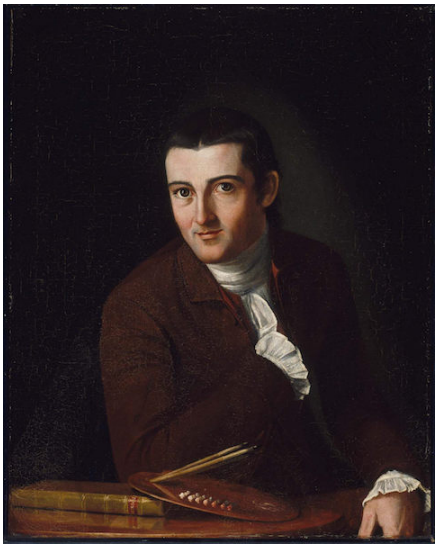


Figure **3.1.2**: John Trumbull, *Self-portrait*, 1777, oil on canvas, 76.83 x 61.28 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Family history

Yet to understand this composition, one must first grapple with Trumbull's complicated history and personality. He was the sixth and youngest child of Jonathan Trumbull and Faith Robinson. If there was an aristocracy in colonial New England, Trumbull was born into it. His Harvard-educated father was a representative to the Connecticut General Assembly. Later he served as the Governor of Connecticut Colony (1769-1776) and then after the War of American Independence, as the Governor of the state of Connecticut (1776-1784). The artist's mother was a direct descendant of John Robinson, the so-called "Pastor to the Pilgrim-Fathers" before they sailed on the Mayflower for the New World. Given his prestigious family legacy, Trumbull the Elder had little interest in allowing Trumbull the Younger to pursue a career as a painter. Instead, Governor Trumbull sent the artist-to-be to Harvard College so that his son could find a more useful vocation in either the law or the ministry.

However, in 1772, Trumbull made a social call to the artist John Singleton Copley who was then still in Boston—just a short distance from Cambridge. When writing his autobiography almost half a century later—in 1841—Trumbull still remembered this meeting with great clarity:

> ***We found Mr. Copley dressed to receive a party of friends at dinner. I remember his dress and appearance—an elegant looking man, dressed in a fine maroon cloth, with gilt buttons—this was dazzling to my unpracticed eye!—but his paintings, the first I had ever seen deserving the name, riveted, absorbed my attention, and renewed all my desire to enter upon such a pursuit. But my destiny was fixed, and the next day I went to Cambridge, passed my examination in fro, and was readily admitted to the Junior class.***

There was, of course, no art major at Harvard during the eighteenth century, so Trumbull studied art in his free time, copying and sketching works of art that hung on the college's walls. He also learned from books he was able to borrow from the college's library. He graduated in 1773 and became one of the few artists in the history of early American art to complete a college education.

The army

Trumbull's graduation from Harvard took place during a tumultuous period in American history, and Trumbull wished to secure a commission as an officer in the Continental Army. His brother, Joseph, was the Commissary General of the Army, and likely suggested that his younger brother draw a plan of the British army's position at Boston Neck to present to General Washington as a way of introduction. Shortly thereafter, Washington appointed Trumbull as an aide-de-camp (a confidential assistant to a senior officer). The following year, in the spring of 1776, Major General Horatio Gates appointed Trumbull deputy adjutant-general (military chief administrative officer) at the rank of Colonel. Alas, Trumbull resigned his commission less than a year later because of a minor squabble with Congress as to the date of the commission. Yet despite being Colonel John Trumbull for little more than a year, the artist carried the honorific title of Colonel for the remainder of his life. His 1841 autobiography, for example, was entitled —not immodestly—*The Autobiography of Colonel John Trumbull*.

However, it was because of his (admittedly, very limited) military experience that John Trumbull believed that he was uniquely qualified to pictorially depict the major events of the American Revolutionary War. His first step, was to seek out some artistic training, and in this endeavor, he followed in the footsteps of many artists before him (and, for that matter, after him): he sailed for London and Benjamin West's studio (West was an American artist with a successful career in London). The year was 1780, and the War of Independence was still in full swing, although nearing its completion. It must have caused suspicion that a former officer in the Continental Army has arrived in London to study painting, particularly because Benjamin West, as the official history painter to the court, had the ear and confidence of King George.

Politics

In West's studio, Trumbull met Gilbert Stuart, who was perhaps West's most accomplished pupil. But Stuart and Trumbull differed in some key ways. First, Stuart always knew that portraiture would occupy most of his artistic efforts when he returned across the Atlantic Ocean, while Trumbull had the higher aspiration to paint historical compositions. More importantly, perhaps, Stuart largely

kept his political beliefs during this vitriolic period to himself, while Trumbull—both in letters home and in his personal interactions about London—was decidedly anti-British. People began to notice, and on 20 November 1780, Colonel John Trumbull was arrested and charged with treason. He was imprisoned for more than 8 months and released only after powerful friends—Benjamin West and the statesman Edmund Burke among others—appealed to the Privy Council for the artist's release. This was granted on 12 June 1781, and Trumbull was given 30 days to exit Great Britain.

Connecticut and back to London

Trumbull returned to Connecticut for two years, and during that time his father again attempted to convince him to pursue another more profitable vocation. Undeterred, Trumbull returned to London and the warmth of West's studio in January of 1784. West set forth a rigorous course of study. Trumbull woke at five o'clock in the morning to study human anatomy. After breakfast several hours later, he painted for the rest of the day. His evening was capped by studying at the Royal Academy of Art. The aspiring artist made quick and steady progress. When writing to his brother Jonathan in September of 1784, for example, Trumbull remarked, "I have the pleasure to find that my labour is not in vain, & to hear Judges of the Art declare that I have made a more rapid progress in the few months I have been here than they have before known."



Figure **3.1.3**: John Trumbull, *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill*, 17 June, 1775, after 1815-before 1831, oil on canvas, 50.16 x 75.56 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

The history of our country

Growing in confidence, Trumbull was determined to return to the newly formed United States with paintings that would commemorate the recent victory over Great Britain. Writing to his father—whose approval, it seems, he still sought—Trumbull explained in March of 1785,

> ***the great object of my wishes…is to take up the History of Our Country, and paint the principal Events particular of the late War.***

By the end of the year, Trumbull had already begun work on two paintings of the series, images known to generations of American elementary school students because of their inclusion in history textbooks: *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775* (above) and *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec, December 31 1775* (below). In 1786, Trumbull began to plan three other Revolutionary War paintings: *The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, January*

3, 1777, *The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton, December 26, 1776*, and *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, October 19, 1781*. Interestingly, all five of these compositions are, essentially, scenes of battlefields.



Figure **3.1.4**: John Trumbull, *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec, December 31, 1775*, 1786, oil on canvas, 62.5 x 94 cm (Yale University Art Gallery)

The Declaration of Independence

In July of 1786, however, Trumbull accepted Thomas Jefferson's invitation to visit Paris, and he brought *Bunker's Hill* and the *Attack on Quebec* with him. Jefferson, then the United States Ambassador to France, and a bit of artist himself, managed to convince Trumbull that he should turn his artistic talents towards a scene involving the Declaration of Independence. While in Paris, Trumbull began to sketch out the composition, taking into account Jefferson's memory of the event and the [diplomat's own sketch](http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/2805) of the Assembly Room in the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia where the Declaration of Independence was first presented to Congress and subsequently signed.



Figure 3.1.5: John Trumbull, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, 1818 (placed 1826), oil on canvas, 12′ x 18′ (Rotunda, U.S. Capitol)

The painting that resulted from this collaboration between artist and politician has become one of the most famous images in the history of American art. It can be found on the back of the (seldom used) $2 bill, and has graced American postage stamps. And yet, what the painting depicts is often misunderstood. Trumbull himself called this painting *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*. However, this is inaccurate; this painting depicts not the signing of the document, but instead the presentation of a draft of it to Congress on 28 June 1776. Our attention begins with the five men standing in the middle of the painting, the so-called Committee of Five that was primarily responsible for the written document. They are—from left to right—John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Robert R. Livingston of New York, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania. Clearly, the red-headed Jefferson is the most important, for he alone holds the document that he presents to John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress, who sits behind the desk.



Figure 3.1.6: The so-called Committee of Five, from left to right—John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Robert R. Livingston of New York, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania (detail), John Trumbull, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776*, 1786–1820, oil on canvas, 20 7/8 x 31 inches / 53 x 78.7 cm (Yale University Art Gallery)

Of the five men standing, Trumbull was able to paint three of them—Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin—from life and directly onto the canvas prior to departing from Europe. When the artist returned to the United States in 1789, he spent several years traveling up and down the eastern seaboard so that he could paint portraits from life. This was not always possible, however, and in 1817—some 27 years later, Trumbull was still at work on what would become his most famous image. He wrote to Jefferson that year to inform the former president as to the progress he had made on this relatively small—21" x 31"—image:

> ***The picture will contain Portraits of at least Forty Seven Members:—for the faithful resemblance of Thirty Six I am responsible, as they were done by myself from the Life, being all who survived in the year 1791. Of the Remainder, Nine are from Pictures done by others:—one Gen[era]l Whipple of New Hampshire is from Memory: and one Mr. Ben. Harrison of Virginia is from description, aided by memory.***

To compare this image to those Trumbull began at the same time—the battle paintings of the Revolutionary War Series—is interesting, for while some of those are dynamic and filled with drama, T*he Declaration of Independence* is, at its essence, a static—some might claim pictorially boring—image of a group of seated men looking at a group of standing men. Indeed, other artists—Jacques-Louis David comes to mind—were able to conceive a way to depict a similar event in a visually engaging way. David's sketch for the *Oath of the Tennis Court* (below, depicting one of the first events of the French Revolution), for example, is far more dynamic and dramatic than is Trumbull's painting.

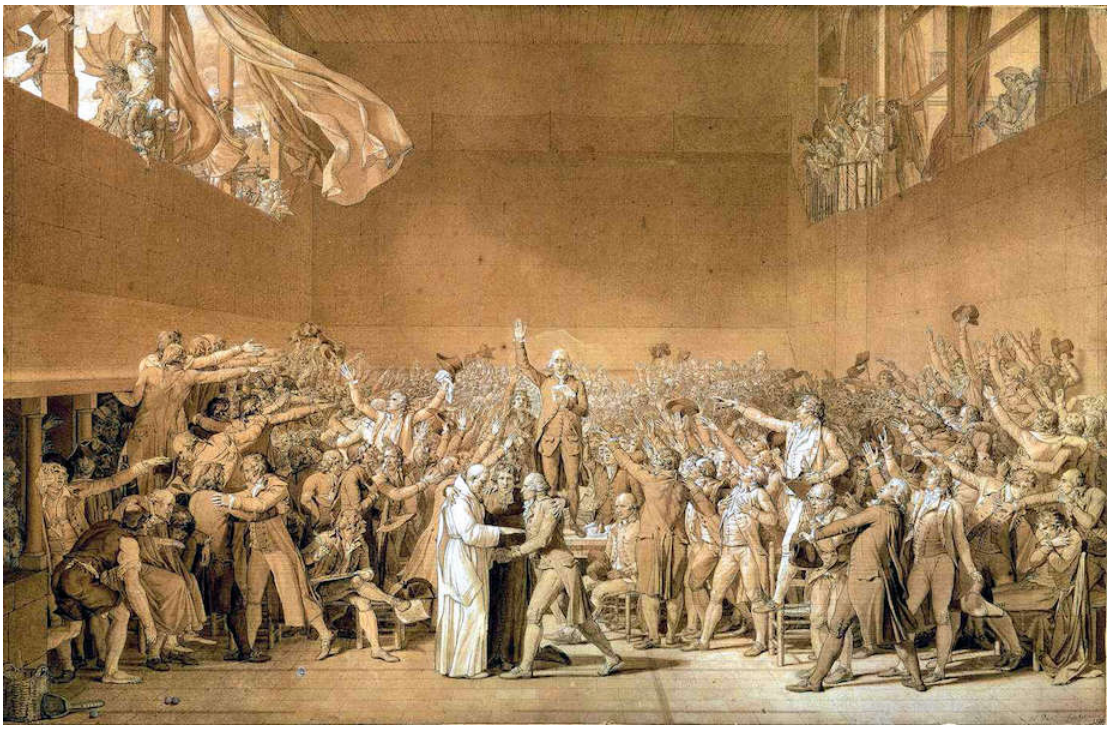


Figure **3.1.7**: Jacques Louis David, *The Oath of the Tennis Court*, 1791, pen and brown ink, brown wash with white highlights, 66 x 101 cm (Palace of Versailles)

But this seemed not to matter to Trumbull, nor did it bother many members of Congress, for on 17 January 1817 they approved—by an overwhelming 150-50 majority—a proposal to commission Trumbull to complete four paintings for the Great Rotunda of the as yet uncompleted Capitol Building. Increasing the size of *The Declaration of Independence* to 12'x18' did little to enhance its dynamism. In 1828, for example, John Randolph of Virginia wrote,

> ***the Declaration of Independence [ought] to be called the Shin-piece, for surely never was there before such a collection of legs submitted to the eyes of man.***

Still others criticized the lack of accuracy in the room and furnishings, and, as importantly, as to who was actually present when the document was presented.

But these concerns were of little bother to Trumbull, who had become one of the most powerful voices—if not one of the more skilled paintbrushes—in American art during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, Trumbull served as the President of the conservative American Academy of Fine Arts from 1817 until 1836. Without doubt, this position helped him receive the prestigious congressional commission in 1817 and allowed him to exert considerable influence over the direction of American art during the end of his career. Moreover, his autobiography—written just two years prior to his death—provided the opportunity to explain his (perhaps exaggerated) importance within American art. While the *Declaration of Independence* might not be the most interesting work within the history of American painting, it certainly is one of the most recognizable. Trumbull, no doubt, would approve of this.

Additional resources:

This painting at the Yale Art Gallery

This painting at the U.S. Capitol

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3.2: Jean-Antoine Houdon, George Washington

An American hero sculpted by a foreigner

Page ID

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Figure **3.2.1**: Jean-Antoine Houdon, *George Washington*, 1788-92, marble, 6′ 2″ high (State Capitol, Richmond, Virginia)

After the successful conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, many state governments turned to public art to commemorate the occasion. Given his critical role in both Virginia and the colonial cause, it is unsurprising that the Virginia General Assembly desired a statue of George Washington for display in a public space.

And so, in 1784, the Governor of Virginia asked Thomas Jefferson (another Virginian who was then in Paris as the American Minister to France) to select an appropriate artist to sculpt Washington. Seeking a European sculptor—and for Jefferson, whose Francophile sympathies were clear, preferably one who was French—was a logical decision given the lack of artistic talent then available in the United States. Through basic necessity, this portrait of an American hero needed to be made by a foreigner.

Jefferson knew just the artist for this task: Jean-Antoine Houdon. Trained at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1761 when only twenty years of age, Houdon was, by the middle of the 1780s, the most famous and accomplished **Neoclassical** sculptor in France.

Jefferson commissioned Houdon to complete a monumental statue of Washington. Given Houdon's skill and ambition, the sculptor likely hoped to cast a larger-than-life-sized bronze statue of General Washington on horseback, a format appropriate for a victorious field commander. However, the final product, delivered more than a decade later, was a comparatively simple standing marble.

Evidence suggests that Houdon was supposed to remain in Paris and sculpt Washington from a drawing by **Charles Willson Peale**. Uncomfortable with carving in three dimensions what Peale had rendered in only two, Houdon made plans to visit Washington in person. Houdon departed for the United States in July 1785 and was joined by Benjamin Franklin—who he had sculpted in 1778—and two assistants. The group sailed into Philadelphia about seven weeks later and Houdon and his assistants arrived at Mount Vernon (Washington's home in Virginia) by early October. There they took detailed measurements of Washington's body and sculpted a life mask of the future president's face.

Contemporary clothing (and not a toga)

While in Virginia, Houdon created a slightly idealized and classicized bust portrait of the future first president. But Washington disliked this classicized aesthetic and insisted on being shown wearing contemporary attire rather than the garments of a hero from ancient Greece or Rome. With clear instructions from the sitter to be depicted in contemporary dress, Houdon returned to Paris in December 1785 and set to work on a standing full-length statue carved from Carrara marble. Although Houdon dated the statue

1788, he did not finish it until about four years later. The statue was delivered to the State of Virginia in May of 1796, when the Rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol was finally completed.

"Nothing in bronze or stone could be a more perfect image…"

In time, this statue of George Washington has become one of the most recognized and copied of images of the first president of the United States. Houdon did not just perfectly capture Washington's likeness (John Marshal, the second Chief Justice of the Supreme Court later wrote, "Nothing in bronze or stone could be a more perfect image than this statue of the living Washington"). Houdon also captured the essential duality of Washington: the private citizen and the public solider.



Figure **3.2.2**: Washington looking to his left in his military uniform (detail), Jean-Antoine Houdon, *George Washington*, 1788-92, marble, 6′ 2″ high, State Capitol, Richmond, Virginia, (photo: **Holley St. Germain**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Washington stands and looks slightly to his left; his facial expression could best be described as fatherly. He wears not a toga or other classically inspired garment, but his military uniform. His stance mimics that of the **contrapposto** seen in Polykleitos's classical sculpture of ***Doryphoros***. Washington's left leg is slightly bent and positioned half a stride forward, while his right leg is weight bearing. His right arm hangs by his side and rests atop a gentleman's walking stick.

His left arm—bent at the elbow—rests atop a *fasces*: a bundle of thirteen rods that symbolize not only the power of a ruler but also the strength found through unity. This visually represents the concept of *E Pluribus Unum*—"Out of Many, One"—a congressionally approved motto of the United States from 1782 until 1956.

Washington's officer's sword, a symbol of military might and authority, benignly hangs on the outside of the fasces, just beyond his immediate grasp. This surrendering of military power is further reinforced by the presence of the plow behind him. This refers to the story of Cincinnatus, a Roman dictator who resigned his absolute power when his leadership was no longer needed so that he could return to his farm. Like this Roman, Washington resigned his power and returned to his farm to live a peaceful, civilian life.

Washington as soldier and private citizen

The statue, still on view in the Rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol, is a near perfect representation of the first president of the United States of America. In it, Houdon captured not only what George Washington looked like, but more importantly, who Washington was, both as a soldier and as a private citizen.

The enormously talented Houdon wisely accepted Washington's advice. Indeed, Washington knew it was better to be subtly compared to Cincinnatus than to be overtly linked to Caesar, another Roman who, unlike Cincinnatus, did not surrender his power.

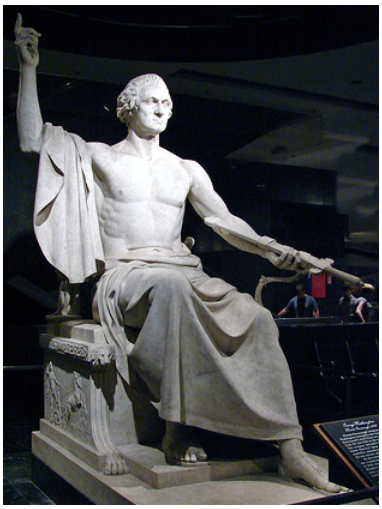


Figure **3.2.3**: Horatio Greenough, *George Washington*, 1840, marble, 136 x 102 inches, National Museum of American History (photo: **Steve Fernie**, CC BY-NC 2.0)

To compare Houdon's statue to Horatio Greenough's 1840 statue of Washington only makes this salient point more clear. With the sitter's urging, Houdon opted for subtlety, whereas Greenough decided two generations later to fully embrace a neoclassical aesthetic. As a result, Houdon's statue celebrates Washington the man, whereas Greenough deified Washington as a god.

Additional resources:

Houdon on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Neo-Classicism on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Houdon (Mount Vernon site)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.3: Gilbert Stuart

3.3.1: Gilbert Stuart, The Skater

3.3.2: Lansdowne Portrait

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3.3.1: Gilbert Stuart, The Skater

Page ID

165078



Figure **3.3.1.1**: Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington*, begun 1795, oil on canvas, 76.8 x 64.1 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The fame of Gilbert Stuart today rests on the dozens of portraits he painted of George Washington, the first president of the United States. Indeed, Stuart painted so many likenesses of the first president between arriving in Philadelphia in 1795 and his death more than thirty years later that he often joked that the act of painting Washington's face was akin to painting a $100—his normal fee. Yet Stuart's story begins long before Philadelphia and long before he met President Washington.

The Colonies, Scotland and back again

Stuart's story begins in the American colonies. He was born just outside Newport, Rhode Island in 1755. At a young age he demonstrated an artistic proficiency—a talent that was aided when Cosmo Alexander arrived in Newport. Alexander was a Scottish-born and Italian-trained itinerant artist who was then working his way northward along the eastern seaboard. He possessed knowledge of European art largely unmatched in the American colonies. Alexander was clearly enchanted by the fourteen-year-old and provided Stuart with painting and drawing lessons. Then, in 1771, offered to continue the youngster's education in Scotland. Unfortunately for Stuart—and, for that matter, Alexander himself—the older artist died not long after the pair crossed the Atlantic. Although Stuart attempted to pursue a career as a portraitist in Scotland, he lacked the credentials, connections, skill, and training to make a successful go of it.



Figure **3.3.1.2**: Gilbert Stuart, *Benjamin Waterhouse*, 1775, oil on canvas, (Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, Rhode Island)

And so, no doubt with more than a small amount of shame, Stuart returned to Newport in 1773. Embarrassed though he may have been at his failed attempt to be a portraitist in the Old World, Stuart was productive once he returned to the New World. Some of the portraits he completed between 1773 and 1775 are accomplished likenesses for a portraitist with little formal artistic education. For example, Stuart's painted a close friend, Benjamin Waterhouse (left). When Stuart painted this portrait in January 1775, Waterhouse was already planning to pursue medical training in London. Stuart hoped to join him there, but by the time Stuart

departed for London in November 1775, his friend had already relocated to Scotland to study at the University of Edinburgh Medical School.

London and an appeal to Benjamin West

Thus, Stuart arrived in London with no friends or social connections, and he lacked a formal letter of introduction to the North American born Benjamin West—then the toast of the London art community. Instead, Stuart found employment at St. Catherine's Church as on organist, receiving a modest salary of 150 pounds per year. About a year later—mid-December 1776—Stuart seemed to have hit rock bottom. He arrived at Benjamin West's studio at 14 Newman Street with letter written to his countryman begging for assistance. Filled with Stuart's creative grammar, punctuation, and spelling, it is worth quoting at length:

> ***Pitty me Good Sir I've just arriv'd at the age of 21 an age when most young men have done something worthy of notice & find myself Ignorant with Business of Friends, without the necessarys of life so far that for some time I have been reduced to one miserable meal a day & frequently not even that, destitute of the means of acquiring knowledge, my hopes from home Blasted & incapable of returning tither, pitching headlong into misery I have this only hope I pray that it may not be too great, to life & learn without being a Burthen Should Mr West in has abundant kindness think of ought for me.***

Not surprisingly, West took pity on Stuart. Shortly thereafter—January 1777 is likely—West hired Stuart as a resident assistant. West provided Stuart with room and board and paid him one-half guinea a week to paint draperies within his teacher's portraits. West's charity and recognition of Stuart's talent and potential was a pivotal moment in the younger artist's career.

Although West had made his fame as painter of historical compositions, he was content to allow Stuart to focus on portraiture, the genre of art Stuart knew would dominate his artistic output whenever he returned to his homeland. By all accounts, Stuart was a quick study and an attentive pupil. In five years—that is from 1777 until 1782—he absorbed, and some might say mastered, the painterly mode of portraiture that was fashionable in London during the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Skater



Figure **3.3.1.3**: Gilbert Stuart, *The Skater (Portrait of William Grant)*, 1782, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 147.4 cm (National Gallery of Art)

No painting announces Gilbert Stuart's coming of age as an portraitist quite like that of his likeness of William Grant, an image now affectionately called *The Skater*. Stuart displayed this painting at the 1782 exhibition of the Royal Academy of Art. During the

1780s, one might find hundreds of bust-length portraits on the walls of this annual show. However, Stuart's portrait of Grant was what was then called an exhibition piece—an ambitiously sized full-length portrait that often explored not only what a sitter looked like, but also who a sitter was. Artists aspired for grand paintings such as *The Skater* to be hung "on the line," a place reserved for large compositions that the artist intended to be seen from a certain distance. Measuring more than eight feet tall and almost five feet across, Stuart believed *The Skater* would advertise his artistic maturity and his transition from Benjamin West's student to Benjamin West's protégé.

Rather than identify the sitter by name, the exhibition catalog listed the title only as *Portrait of a gentleman skating*. And, indeed, Stuart was deliberate in the ways in which he accentuated Grant's social status through the use of attire. Grant wears white, grey, and black, then the preferred clothing for the social elite. His suit is made from fine black silk velvet, and his knee-length frock coat is accentuated with fashionable grey fur lapels. His black beaver hat—round and broad—was likewise of the most recent fashion. Grant's winter-inspired florid cheeks represent the only dash of color in the painting's foreground.



Figure **3.3.1.4**: Background with Westminster Abbey towers (detail), Gilbert Stuart, T*he Skater (Portrait of William Grant)*, 1782, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 147.4 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Although painted almost 90 years prior to James Abbot McNeil Whistler's portrait of his mother—the so-called ***Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1***—Stuart's *The Skater* is likewise a harmonious composition that largely involves value (light and dark) rather than color. Stuart renders the sky, the frozen Serpentine River in Hyde Park, and the recognizable twin towers of Westminster Abbey along the horizon line on left of the composition all in shades of grey (left).

Skating

Grant's skating pose may seem unusual to a twenty-first audience, but it was one instantly recognizable to the visitors to the 1782 Royal Academy exhibition. His weight-bearing left leg and slightly bent right leg is a near mirror image of the lower body of the ***Apollo Belvedere**, perhaps the most famous of classical Greek sculptures in the eighteenth century, and a cast of which stood in the corner of West's studio. Grant's upper body—his arms folded across his chest—was a pose typical to ice skaters of the eighteenth century, for its nonchalance accentuated the effortlessness of skater's movement. In fact, the motion Stuart shows is one reason why *The Skater* was so novel. Full-length Grand Manner portraits of the eighteenth century generally showed the subject standing still.

What was the "grand manner"?

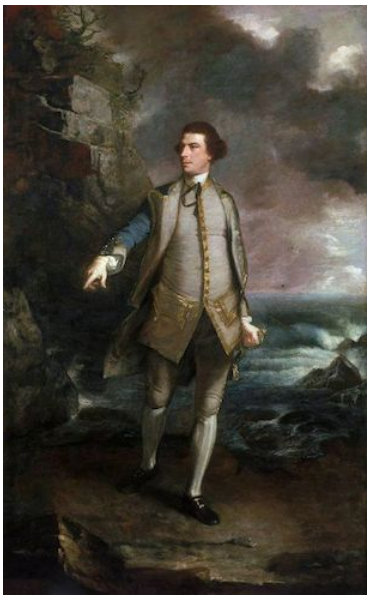


Figure **3.3.1.5**: Joshua Reynolds, *Captain the Honourable Augustus Keppel*, 1752-53, oil on canvas, 239 x 147.5 cm (National Maritime Museum)

Rarely, portraitists depicted their subject striding forwards as if to walk. For example, in his *Portrait of Admiral Augustus Keppel* (left), Joshua Reynolds—recently returned from Italy—also referenced the pose of the *Apollo Belvedere* to suggest the young naval commander moving ashore. However, showing the sitter (think about that word; the sitter!) in motion—let alone rapidly moving as one does when ice-skating—was unique. The normally light-on-the-praise Horace Walpole wrote "very good" in the margin next to Stuart's entry in the Exhibition Catalogue. Indeed, Gilbert Stuart's *The Skater* was one of the most discussed portraits of the 1782 Royal Academy exhibition, and this work of art launched him to an extraordinarily successful career as a London portraitist. Twelve years—and a stopover in Dublin—later, Stuart was again on North American shores and set to paint his most famous images, those of President Washington.

Additional resources:

This painting at the National Gallery of Art

Gilbert Stuart at the National Gallery of Art

National Gallery online exhibition on Stuart

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3.3.2: Lansdowne Portrait

by **DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT**

Page ID
165079



Figure **3.3.2.1**: Gilbert Stuart, *Lansdowne Portrait of George Washington*, 1796, oil on canvas, 96 × 60″ / 243.8 × 152.4 cm (National Portrait Gallery)

A well known image

While the name Gilbert Stuart may be one unknown to most Americans, practically every American is aware of at least one of his paintings. Art historians formally call it the *Athenaeum Portrait.* Most everyone is familiar with it as the engraved image of George Washington that graces the front of the one-dollar bill. This is one of the dozens of portraits that Stuart painted of our first president. Another, a full-length likeness, is called the *Lansdowne Portrait*. Although not as famous as its bust-length counterpart, the *Lansdowne Portrait* retains a place of special significance within the history of American art.

Expat education



Figure **3.3.2.2**: Hyacinthe Rigaud, *King Louis XIV*, 1702, oil on canvas, 313 x 205 cm (Versailles)

On the brink of the American Revolutionary War, Stuart decided it was time to pursue serious artistic instruction, and so, in 1775, he sailed for London and the studio of Benjamin West, whose generosity to his colonial brethren was seemingly endless.

Stuart remained in London for almost twelve years and then relocated to Ireland. He clearly had aspirations of making American versions of European Grand Manner portraits such as the likeness Hyacinthe Rigaud painted of Louis XIV in 1701. After acquiring

debts sufficient to necessitate a hasty departure from the Emerald Isle, the artist told a friend about his short-term plans for Ireland and about his anticipated return to the United States:

> ***When I can net a sum sufficient to take me to America, I shall be off to my native soil. There I expect to make a fortune by [portraits of] Washington alone. I calculate upon making a plurality of his portraits, whole lengths, what will enable me to realize; and if I should be fortunate, I will repay my English and Irish creditors. To Ireland and English I shall be adieu.***

This was a task easier said than done. Stuart did not personally know the recently elected president, and the artist had been away from his homeland for 18 years.

Letter of introduction

Rather than return to Rhode Island, the state of his birth, he instead sailed for New York City, the home of John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a close political confidant to George Washington. Stuart first met Jay in 1782 when the politician was in London negotiating the Treaty of Paris, the accord that officially ended the American Revolutionary War. Stuart arrived in New York City in early May of 1793, and a visit to Jay, one of the few people the painter could have known in Manhattan, must have been amongst Stuart's first social calls. He painted Jay several times during the months that followed and the politician provided a letter of introduction for the relatively unknown artist to meet the president. Stuart departed New York City for Philadelphia in November 1794.

Philadephia

If painting images of George Washington was the primary reason Stuart returned to the United States, then Philadelphia was certainly the place to be. Stuart wasted little time in calling on Washington, and painted three different kinds of portraits of the president (with dozens of subsequent copies) in the years that followed. In the decades immediately preceding the invention of photography, the myriad of portraits of Washington that Stuart painted created an image Americans accepted as the portrait of their first president. The "Vaughan Type" shows Washington facing slightly to his left, the "Athenaeum Type" shows the first president facing to his right, and the "Lansdowne Type" is a full-length portrait.

Stuart painted six full-length portraits of Washington. The "Lansdowne Type" acquired its name from the owner of the first full-length portrait Stuart painted, William Petty, the first Marquis of Lansdowne. The portrait was a gift from William Bingham, a wealthy Philadelphian merchant and was intended to thank Lord Lansdowne for his financial support of the colonial cause during the American Revolutionary War.

Civilian commander



Figure **3.3.2.3**: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

Washington (detail), Gilbert Stuart, *Lansdowne Portrait of George Washington*, 1796, oil on canvas, 96 × 60″ / 243.8 × 152.4 cm (National Portrait Gallery)

Given his European training, Stuart was well suited to execute a Grand Manner portrait of America's first president. However, whereas previous artists such as John Trumbull and Charles Willson Peale emphasized Washington's position as an officer in the Revolutionary Army, Stuart stressed Washington's position as a civilian commander in chief. In the *Lansdowne Portrait*, Washington does not hold a scepter, wear a crown, or sit on a throne. Instead, Stuart filled the eight-foot tall composition with elements symbolic to the new republic. He wears an American made black velvet suit, one similar in fabric, cut, and color to one he frequently wore on public occasions. Washington raises his right arm in a classically inspired oratorical pose, while his left hand grasps a ceremonial sword. The President stands before a portico-like space, complete with two pairs of columns and a red curtain that has been pulled aside to reveal a background of open sky.



Figure **3.3.2.4**: Copy and Paste Caption here. (Copyright; author via source)

Medallion, eagles and books (detail), Gilbert Stuart, *Lansdowne Portrait of George Washington*, 1796, oil on canvas, 96 × 60″ / 243.8 × 152.4 cm (White House version)

In addition to the architectural setting and the sitter's pose, other elements within the composition transform the *Lansdowne Portrait* from a simple likeness of Washington into an official state portrait. The Neo-Classical chair on the right side of the painting contains elements from the Great Seal of the United States. A small oval medallion on the top of the chair is divided in half. The top half contains thirteen white stars in a blue field, and thirteen alternating red and white stripes appear underneath. Two erect eagles are visible on top of the leg of the table, each of which grasps a bundle of arrows, symbols of readiness for war. Underneath the table are several books, titled, *General Orders*, *American Revolution*, and *Constitution & Laws of the United States* that indicate Washington's past military and political accomplishments. More books, Federalist and Journal of Congress, stand upright on top of the table. A silver inkwell, quill, and several sheets of blank paper can be seen immediately underneath Washington's outstretched right hand.

Representing the office of the presidency

Without question, Gilbert Stuart's *Lansdowne Portrait of George Washington* is far more than a portrait of the first president of the United States of America. It is instead a painting that represents not only Washington's likeness, but also the aesthetic and political trappings of the office of the presidency and of the New Republic. Utilizing all of the traditions of European Grand Manner portraiture, it became the standard full-length political likeness of Washington throughout the Federalist period.

Additional resources:

This portrait at the National Portrait Gallery

***The Landsdowne Portrait* on the Google Art Project**

Interactive on the painting from the Smithsonian

Information and lesson plan from Picturing America

Gilbert Stuart, *The Athenaeum Portrait*

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.4: Thomas Jefferson

3.4.1: Monticello

3.4.2: Rotunda, University of Virginia

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3.4.1: Monticello

by DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT

Page ID
165082



Figure **3.4.1.1**: Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1770–1806 (photo: Corkythehornetfan, CC BY-SA 3.0)

A gentleman architect

In an undated note, Thomas Jefferson left clear instructions about what he wanted engraved upon his burial marker:

> ***Here was buried***
> ***Thomas Jefferson***
> ***Author of the Declaration of American Independence***
> ***of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom***
> ***Father of the University of Virginia***

Jefferson explained, "because by these, as testimonials that I have lived, I wish most to be remembered." To be certain, there are important achievements Jefferson neglected. He was also the Governor of Virginia, American minister to France, the first Secretary of State, the third president of the United States, and one of the most accomplished gentleman architects in American history. To quote William Pierson, an architectural historian, "In spite of the fact that his training and resources were those of an amateur, he was able to perform with all the insight and boldness of a high professional."

Indeed, even had he never entered political life, Jefferson would be remembered today as one of the earliest proponents of neoclassical architecture in the United States. Jefferson believed art was a powerful tool; it could elicit social change, could inspire the public to seek education, and could bring about a general sense of enlightenment for the American public. If Cicero believed that the goals of a skilled orator were to Teach, to Delight, and To Move, Jefferson believed that the scale and public nature of architecture could fulfill these same aspirations.



Figure **3.4.1.2**: Thomas Jefferson, Monticello (view from the north), Charlottesville, Virginia, 1770–1806 (photo: William Avery Hudson, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Return to the classical

Jefferson arrived at the College of William and Mary in 1760 and took an immediate interest in the architecture of the college's campus and of Williamsburg more broadly. A lifelong book lover, Jefferson began his architectural collection while a student. His first two purchases were James Leoni's *The Architecture of A. Palladio* (1715–20) and James Gibbs' *Rules for Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture* (1732).

Although never formally trained as an architect, Jefferson, both while a student and then later in life, expressed dissatisfaction with the architecture that surrounded him in Williamsburg, believing that the Wren-Baroque aesthetic common in colonial Virginia was too British for a North American audience. In an oft-quoted passage from Notes on Virginia (1782), Jefferson critically wrote of the architecture of Williamsburg:

"The College and Hospital are rude, mis-shapen piles, which, but that they have roofs, would be taken for brick-kilns. There are no other public buildings but churches and court-houses, in which no attempts are made at elegance."

Thus, when Jefferson began to design his own home, he turned not to the architecture then in vogue around the Williamsburg area, but instead to the classically inspired architecture of Antonio Palladio and James Gibbs. Rather than place his plantation house along the bank of a river—as was the norm for Virginia's landed gentry during the eighteenth century—Jefferson decided instead to place his home, which he named Monticello (Italian for "little mountain") atop a solitary hill just outside Charlottesville, Virginia.

French Neo-Classicism for an American audience

Construction began in 1768 when the hilltop was first cleared and leveled, and Jefferson moved into the completed South Pavilion two years later. The early phase of Monticello's construction was largely completed by 1771. Jefferson left both Monticello and the United States in 1784 when he accepted an appointment as America Minister to France. Over the next five years, that is, until September 1789 when Jefferson returned to the United States to serve as Secretary of State under newly elected President Washington, Jefferson had the opportunity to visit Classical and Neoclassical architecture in France.



Figure **3.4.1.3**: Thomas Jefferson, Rotunda, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1819–26 (photo: Michael Hebb, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

This time abroad had an enormous effect on Jefferson's architectural designs. The Virginia State Capitol (1785–89) is a modified version of the **Maison Carrée** (16 B.C.E.), a Roman temple Jefferson saw during a visit to Nîmes, France. And although Jefferson never went so far as Rome, the influence that the **Pantheon** (125 C.E.) had over his **Rotunda** (begun 1817) at the University of Virginia is so evident it hardly need be mentioned.

Politics largely consumed Jefferson from his return to the United States until the last day of 1793 when he formally resigned from Washington's cabinet. From this year until 1809, Jefferson diligently redesigned and rebuilt his home, creating in time one of the most recognized private homes in the history of the United States. In it, Jefferson fully integrated the ideals of French neoclassical architecture for an American audience.

In this later construction period, Jefferson fundamentally changed the proportions of Monticello. If the early construction gave the impression of a Palladian two-story pavilion, Jefferson's later remodeling, based in part on the Hôtel de Salm (1782–87) in Paris, gives the impression of a symmetrical single-story brick home under an austere **Doric** entablature. The west garden façade—the view that is once again featured on the American nickel—shows Monticello's most recognized architectural features. The two-column deep extended portico contains Doric columns that support a triangular pediment that is decorated by a semicircular window. Although the short octagonal drum and shallow dome provide Monticello a sense of verticality, the wooden balustrade that circles the roofline provides a powerful sense of horizontality. From the bottom of the building to its top, Monticello is a striking example of French Neoclassical architecture in the United States.

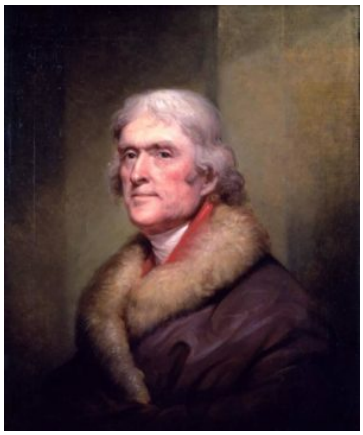


Figure 3.4.1.4: Rembrandt Peale, *Thomas Jefferson*, 1805, oil on linen, 28 x 23 1/2″ (New-York Historical Society)

Jefferson changed political parties and was a Democratic-Republican by the time he was elected president. He believed the young United States needed to forge a strong diplomatic relationship with France, a country Jefferson and his political brethren believed were our revolutionary brothers in arms. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that Jefferson designed his own home after the neoclassicism then popular in France, a mode of architecture that was distinct from the style then fashionable in Great Britain. This neoclassicism—with roots in the architecture of ancient Rome—was something Jefferson was able to visit while abroad.

Failing to live up to his own democratic ideals

By helping to introduce classical architecture to the United States, Jefferson intended to reinforce the ideals behind the classical past: democracy, education, rationality, civic responsibility. Because he detested the English, Jefferson continually rejected British architectural precedents for those from France. In doing so, Jefferson reinforced the symbolic nature of architecture. Jefferson did not just design a building; he designed a building that eloquently spoke to the democratic ideals of the United States. This is clearly seen in the Virginia State Capitol, in the Rotunda at the University of Virginia, and especially in his own home, Monticello.

In many regards, Thomas Jefferson remains an exceedingly complicated historical figure. On the one hand, we can justifiably laud his significant civic and architectural achievements, for his accomplishments in the political realm are unmatched in American history and the buildings he designed—Monticello, the Virginia State Capitol, and the Rotunda at the University of Virginia—places him at the forefront of the gentlemen architects of the early Federal period. Yet on the other hand, we need to wrestle with the truth that Jefferson was—as were the majority of the Founding Fathers from the southern colonies, men such as George Washington, James Madison, and James Monroe—a slaveholder who owned more than 600 men, women, and children during the course of his life.

So when we look at Monticello—a building in part constructed by the enslaved people Jefferson owned—we are right to feel a kind of conflict. Although he helped to introduce classical architecture to the United States and used architectural language to reinforce the ideals behind the classical past—elements such as democracy, education, rationality, civic responsibility—those very virtues were actively denied to many. Because Jefferson so detested the English, he continually rejected British architectural precedents for those from France. In doing so, Jefferson reinforced the symbolic nature of architecture. Jefferson did not just design a building; he designed a building that eloquently spoke to the democratic ideals the United States should aspire to, even if in practice these democratic ideals were intentionally withheld from the enslaved people Jefferson owned.

Additional resources

Monticello and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, UNESCO

Monticello Explorer (click 'text-based version of the site')

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3.4.2: Rotunda, University of Virginia

by **DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT**

Page ID
165081



Figure **3.4.2.1**: Rotunda, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia (photo: Brian Jeffery Beggerly, CC BY 2.0)

A joke with a kernel of truth

The College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia is the second oldest university in the United States and was founded in 1693 (only Harvard, founded in 1636, is older). There is a longstanding joke amongst graduates of this institution:

> ***Question: Why did Thomas Jefferson found the University of Virginia?***
>
> ***Answer: His kids could not get into the College of William & Mary.***

To be fair, there is some truth to this joke, and then again, there is some misdirection. Thomas Jefferson did, in fact, found the University of Virginia—an achievement of which he was so proud that it is mentioned on his tombstone (whereas he omitted the fact that he was the third president of the United States). But the other part of the joke—that his children could not have been admitted to his alma mater—is a bit misleading. Jefferson's wife, Martha Wayles, died in 1782. During their ten years of marriage, she bore him six children, only two of whom lived to adulthood. Both of these were women, and as the College of William & Mary did not formally admit female students until 1918, it would have been impossible for Jefferson's children (those who survived and were legitimate, at least) to enroll in the institution that had educated their father.



Figure **3.4.2.2**: Wren building (West side), William and Mary College, 1695-1700 (photo: Smash the Iron Cage, CC BY-SA 4.0)

American universities have traditionally begun with a single building and then expanded over time. This was the case of the College of William & Mary; the so-called Wren Building (above) is the oldest surviving university building in the United States. Although originally called simply "The College" or "The Main Building," it has subsequently come to be named after Sir Christopher Wren, the English baroque architect. In fact, Hugh Jones, the college's first professor of mathematics wrote in 1722 that Wren himself was the architect: "the building is beautiful and commodious, being first modeled by Sir Christopher Wren…" However, architectural historians do not currently believe that the most accomplished architect in the English-speaking world at the end of the seventeenth century would have made time to design a building on the very fringes of the British Empire.



Figure **3.4.2.3**: Sir Christopher Wren, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, 1692 (photo: stu smith, CC BY-ND 2.0)

A preference for the French (over the English)

Althogh it is unlikely that Wren designed this building at William and Mary College, there can be no doubt that whoever did was strongly influenced by Wren's Royal Hospital at Chelsea (above). Both buildings have architectural elements that are indicative of late Renaissance and Baroque architecture in England. Both are horizontal in nature with a central pediment and cupola. Moreover,

they share a similar fenestration (window) arrangement, and nearly identical dormer windows (windows that project from a sloping roof). For Thomas Jefferson, the Wren Building at the College of William & Mary was a prototype example of English architecture.



Figure **3.4.2.4**: Thomas Jefferson and Charles-Louis Clérisseau, Virginia State Capitol, completed 1792 (photo: Mr.TinDC, CC BY-ND 2.0)

And if the political history of the United States tell us anything, it is that Thomas Jefferson did not much care for the English. This is but one of the reasons why his own architectural projects—notably his ancestral home at Monticello and the Virginia State Capitol (left)—were inspired not by English architectural antecedents, but instead by buildings from the classical past. Indeed, the Virginal State Capitol looks much like the Maison Carrée in Nîmes (France), an ancient Roman building Jefferson saw while serving as the American ambassador to France. His own home has a variety of classical (and neoclassical) architectural influences. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the neoclassical style was strongly linked with France—and Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican and strident Francophile, therefore approved.

University of Virginia: an "academical village"

At the conclusion of his political career, Jefferson turned his considerable energies towards two related enterprises: the founding of a university for the state of Virginia, and designing buildings for that institution. Jefferson very much believed in the crucial importance of education. Although an oft-repeated quotation—"An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people."—never seems to have come from his pen, it very much encapsulates Jefferson's views on education. When he set in planning the University of Virginia—an institution founded in 1819 and began to instruct its first class in March 1825—he did so in a revolutionary way. Rather than begin as a single building and expand as needed, Jefferson envisioned—to use his phrase—an entire "academical village" where students and professor lived and learn side by side.

Jefferson designed the initial phase of the university on a symmetrical north-south axis. The longitudinal axes on the east and west sides contain pavilions for the professors, dormitories for the students, and expansive lawns. Indeed, the word "campus"—a word so commonly used to describe the grounds and buildings of a college or university—comes from the Latin word that means field. In this way, what Jefferson designed was one of the first true college campuses, complete with buildings and intentional exterior spaces.

The Rotunda (and the Pantheon)

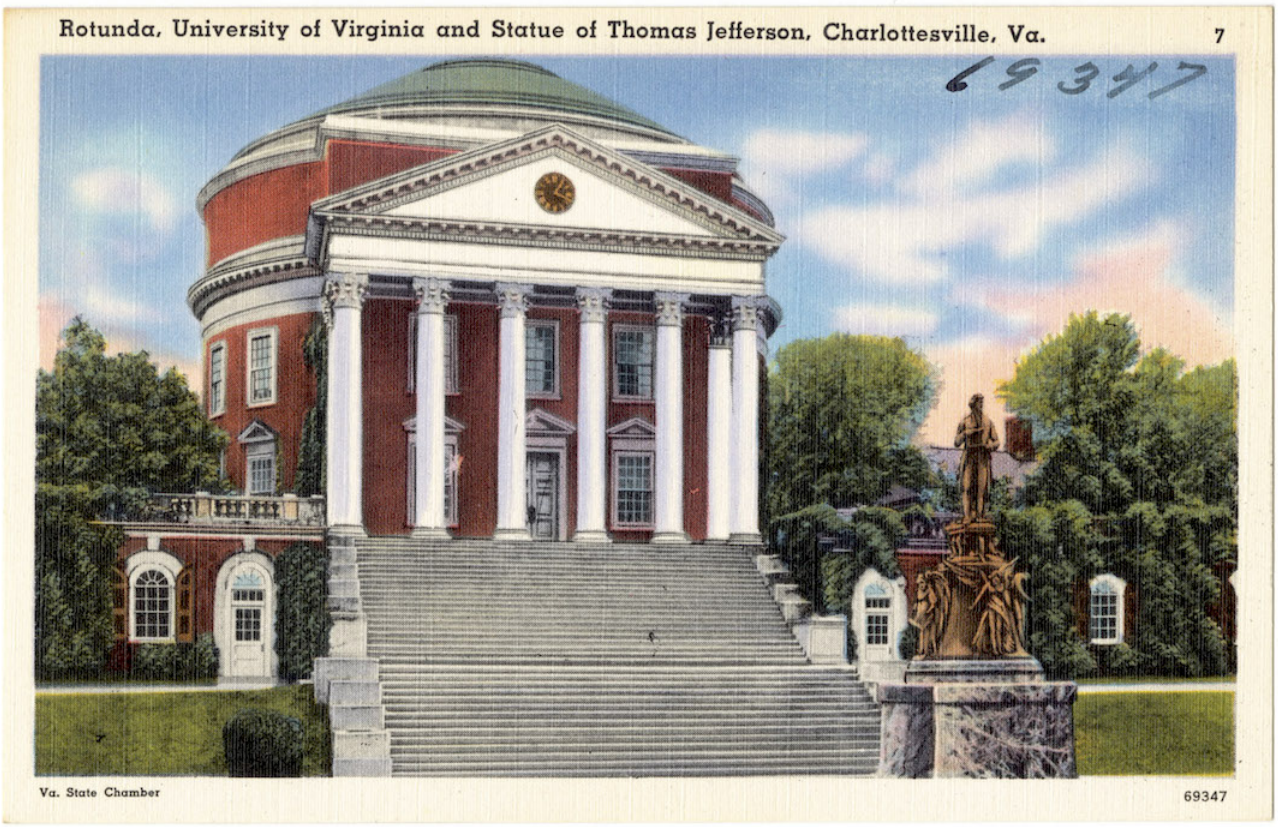


Figure 3.4.2.5: Thomas Jefferson, Rotunda, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1817-26 (postcard c. 1930-45, Boston Public Library, CC BY 2.0)

The crowing architectural achievement of the "academical village" at the University of Virginia can be seen at the north end of the campus. Called the Rotunda, it should look immediately familiar to anyone with even a passing knowledge of Western architecture, as Jefferson designed it as a half-sized version of the **ancient Roman Pantheon** (below). A religious building devoted to all the Roman gods, the Pantheon demonstrates the ways in which Roman architects could take a Classical Greek idea—note the Greek temple front—and combine it with elements that were so spectacularly new that it made the Pantheon architecturally unique for nearly two millennia. Indeed, that uniqueness derives from the innovative "dome on a drum" construction that is so neatly hidden—when viewed from its ideal angle—by the Greek temple front that Roman architects so admired. Moreover, this dome, which opens into a vast interior space crowned by a singular window (or oculus) was made possible through a particularly Roman invention: concrete.



Figure **3.4.2.6**: The Pantheon, Rome, c. 125 (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Yet Jefferson knew that his Rotunda was going to serve a different function than the building on which it was based. So, although these two buildings (The Pantheon in Rome and the Rotunda at the University of Virginia) look strikingly similar if you merely look at the architectural forms, they become quite different if one moves beyond initial appearance. Whereas the Pantheon is a religious building—a temple for all the Roman gods when it was created (and subsequently a Catholic church when it was consecrated in 609), Jefferson's Rotunda has a strictly secular nature. As a member of the Enlightenment, Jefferson's religious views leaned towards Deism, a belief system that generally acknowledged a Divine Maker, but rejected a belief in revelation. In fact, one of the reasons why Jefferson was keen on founding the University of Virginia was to provide his home state with a secular educational option to the religiously-oriented College of William & Mary. The materials were clearly different as well. While the expansive interior space of the Pantheon was made possible through the perfection of poured concrete, Jefferson used the wood and brick that was so indicative of mid-Atlantic architecture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Two final differences involve the plans of the building on the ways in which light works. Whereas the Pantheon is essentially one enclosed space that is illuminated by only two sources—the oculus at the peak of the dome and the door at the building's entrance—Jefferson's Rotunda is a multistoried building that is illuminated by windows that circle the drum of the dome.

One might wonder why an architect in nineteenth-century America would model a library after an ancient Roman temple. But Neoclassical architecture surrounds us to this day (Neoclassical means "new classicism"—this is a style that developed in Europe at the end of the 18th century). Government buildings, colleges and universities, libraries, museums, and banks have all frequently used the architecture of the classical past as a way of giving the establishments they represent a sense of gravitas. In utilizing classical (ancient Greek and Roman) architectural forms for his library, Jefferson was expressing his admiration of the ideas set forth from the classical past: democracy, learning, and permanence. And, to make it more emphatic, the

Rotunda was far removed from anything that could be considered British.

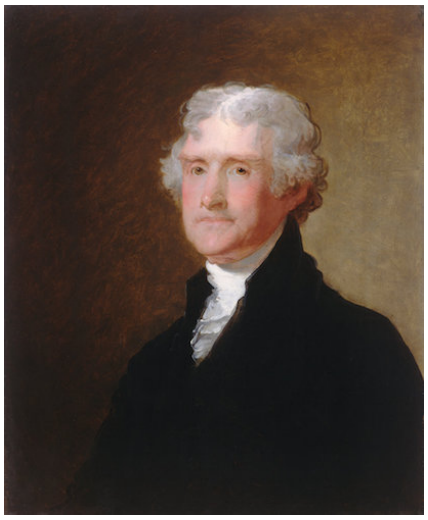


Figure **3.4.2.7**: Gilbert Stuart, *Thomas Jefferson*, c. 1821, oil on wood, 66 x 54.5 cm (National Gallery of Art)

Influence

Thomas Jefferson's resume is unmatched in the history of American politics. He was the third president of the United States (1801-09), the second vice president of the United States (1797-1801), and the first Secretary of State of the United States (1790-93). He served as the Minister to France (1785-89), a Delegate to the Congress of the Confederation (1783-84), as the governor of Virginia (1779-81), and Delegate to the Continental Congress (1775-1776). He also wrote the State of Virginia's A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (1777) and was the primary author of what many believe to be one of the most perfect political documents ever written, The Declaration of Independence (1776). And yet, had Jefferson been and written none of these things, he would still be remembered today as one of the most influential architects in the history of the United States. In many ways, the Rotunda is the cardinal architectural achievement on what Jefferson thought was one of his most profound accomplishments, the founding of the University of Virginia.

Additional resources:

Thomas Jefferson: The Architect of a Nation

Monticello and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville from UNESCO

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SECTION OVERVIEW

3.5: Charles Willson Peale

3.5.1: An African Muslim among the founding fathers, Charles Willson Peale's Yarrow Mamout

3.5.2: Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale)

3.5.3: The Artist in His Museum

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3.5.1: An African Muslim among the founding fathers, Charles Willson Peale's Yarrow Mamout

by **DR. CAROL EATON SOLTIS, PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**



Charles Willson Peale, *Portrait of Yarrow Mamout (Muhammad Yaro)*, 1819, oil on canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

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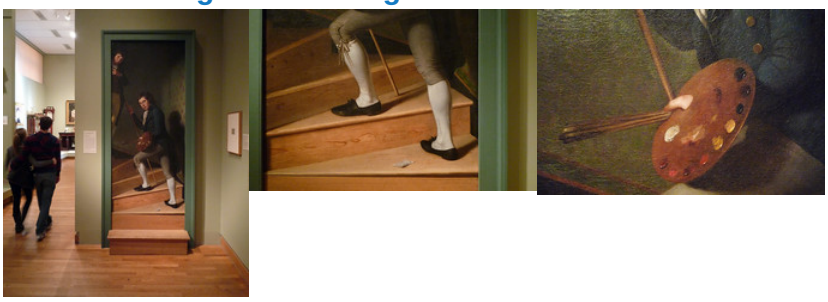
3.5.2: Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale)

by DR. BETH HARRIS and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER



Charles Willson Peale, *Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale)*, 1795, oil on canvas, 89-1/2 x 39-3/8 inches / 227.3 x 100 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

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3.5.3: The Artist in His Museum

by **DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT**

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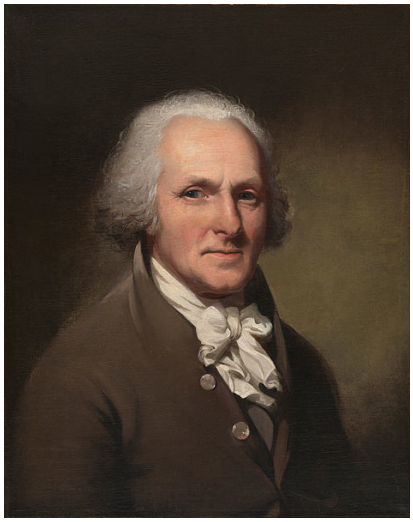


Figure **3.5.3.1**: Charles Wilson Peale, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1791, oil on canvas, 84.8 x 72.1 cm framed (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution)

Saddle maker, officer, artist, museum founder

He began as a saddle maker, taught dancing lessons in Colonial America, completed mezzotints in London, and served as an officer in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. He also became one of the most prolific artists of his era. Yet despite this background, the name Charles Willson Peale is not one immediately familiar to those outside the circles of American art history. However, it would be difficult to overstate his artistic prominence in the United States during the decades surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century. Without doubt, Peale rests in the pantheon of American portraitists. He painted the social, political, and economic elite of his day: these sitters included scientists, presidents, and prominent merchants.

Even had he never picked up a paintbrush, Peale would be remembered today for founding the first museum of natural history in the United States. This museum officially opened on 18 July 1786, and collecting, classifying, and exhibiting objects occupied nearly the entire Peale family for many a decade to follow. Without doubt, art and nature were Charles Willson Peale's great passions in life. Peale went so far as to name children after prominent artists and famous scientists. These names include Raphaelle, Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Angelica Kauffmann, Linnaeus, and Franklin.



Figure **3.5.3.2**: Charles Wilson Peale, *The Peale Family*, 1773, oil on canvas, 143.5 x 227.3 cm (New York Historical Society)

The age of Enlightenment

For Peale and other Enlightenment-era thinkers, the human mind was able to both learn and understand the world around them through observation of the natural world. In many ways, this approach was antithetical to the religious views of the day that asked followers to accept facts on faith rather than verifiable proof. Enlightenment thinkers often attempted to explain the world in a way that removed the word "God" from the equation (or, at the very least, in a way that reduced the Divine Almighty's direct role).

One example should suffice. For millennia, the appearance of a comet in the night sky—something both easily noticeable in the pre-streetlight world and something of uncommon occurrence—was cause for great concern and wonderment, and people often had a variety of explanations for these celestial events. For example, in 1378, a comet appeared at the moment a great pestilence swept through Germany. That same year, the Great Schism ripped the Roman Catholic Church in two, creating a papacy in Avignon, France in addition to the one at St. Peter's in Rome. The appearance of this unknown object in the nighttime sky was seen as an indication that God was not happy, and the disastrous events that followed reaffirmed this belief.



Figure **3.5.3.3**: Scene 32, "These people marvel at the star" (detail), *Bayeux Tapestry*, c. 1070, embroidered wool on linen, 20 inches high (Bayeux Museum)

Interestingly, 312 years earlier, a similar object appeared in the nighttime sky. The year was 1066, a date in history that is most well known for the year when William the Conqueror of Normandy crossed the English Channel and successfully seized the English throne. To commemorate his great victory, William commissioned the great Bayeux Tapestry, a 230-foot-long embroidered cloth that chronicled his army's campaign.

One of the more famous scenes from this immense work of art shows a comet flying overhead of the soon-to-be deposed King Harold (image left). The Latin inscription above the six men who point heavenward reads, “They find the star.” This star means bad news for Harold, but, more importantly, it means good news—and a kind of Divine favor—for William.

Science tells us now that this was no star. Moreover, it was not a sign that God was angry (pestilence upon you!), or that God was happy (I would be pleased if you were to sail across the English Channel and take over the English throne!). Instead, this was the same hunk of cosmic ice that returned to Earth every 76 years (give or take). We call it Halley’s Comet after Sir Edmund Halley, the man who correctly predicted its return. Rather than believe the comet was a sign of divine approval or reproach, Halley instead applied the celestial mechanics of another Enlightenment thinker, Sir Isaac Newton, to predict the comet’s reappearance. Alas, Halley died in 1742 and the comet that would be named for him did not make its way back to Earth until 1759.

The Artist in his Museum



Figure 3.5.3.4: Charles Willson Peale, *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822, oil on canvas, 263.5 x 202.9 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

Although a three-paragraph digression, it is through this lens that we must consider Charles Willson Peale’s most famous—and some might suggest, his most ambitious—work, The *Artist in His Museum*. Painted towards the end of his life—Peale turned 81 years old the year it was completed—this monumental canvas is a kind of life story for the artist, and identifies him not only as the artist who made the painting, but, as importantly, the scientist who founded the museum that bears his name. Like most artist’s self portraits, this likeness speaks for what Peale believes was important about himself and what was important about his life’s work.

Peale stands in the foreground, smartly dressed in a black velvet suit and white cravat. A dusting of powder from his hair—he does not wear a wig—can be seen on his left shoulder. He alertly stares at the viewer and with his right arm he lifts up the red Grand Manner drapery to reveal the museum behind him. What was the “Grand Manner”?

With his left hand he seemingly gestures to the objects in the foreground. These objects tell us much about Peale himself. They include a stuffed turkey—which Benjamin Franklin believed should be the national bird of the United States—and the taxidermist tools used to preserve it. Atop the table on the right side of the painting rests a painter’s palette and several paintbrushes. Large fossilized bones from a mastodon (a jawbone, and a femur, perhaps) can also be seen on the right side. These objects—stuffed bird, painting tools, and excavated mastodon—serve as a kind of visual representation of Peale himself.



Figure **3.5.3.5**: Left: The Long Room, Second Floor at Independence Hall, January 8, 1924. Warren A. McCullough, Photographer; right: Charles Wilson Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale, *The Long Room, Interior of the Front Room in Peale's Museum*, 1822, watercolor over graphite on pencil, 35.6 x 52.7 (Detroit Institute of Arts)

The room behind Peale is no ordinary room in Philadelphia. It is, in fact, the famous Long Room of what we now call Independence Hall, and it is filled with elements that announce Peale's commitment to the Enlightenment. The left hand wall and that in the back of the room are filled with stuffed birds that Peale has organized according to the Linnaean classification system. Portraits of eminent men—many of whom were Peale's friends and correspondents—can be seen near the ceiling. Clearly, this natural history museum provides an opportunity for learning about nature. A top-hat wearing gentleman walks with his young son and gestures to a display in front of them. Another man stands towards the back of the room with crossed arms and thoughtfully examines a specimen.



Figure **3.5.3.6**: Detail, Charles Willson Peale, *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822, oil on canvas, 263.5 x 202.9 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts)

The fifth person in this painting—a woman who wears a dress and a Quaker bonnet—stands in the left middle ground. She faces the right side of the painting and her facial expression and gesture reveal a sense of wonderment. What has caught her amazement is not immediately apparent, as Peale has concealed it behind the curtain. On closer inspection, however, it is clear that in the middle of the room is the mastodon skeleton Peale and his family excavated and reconstructed earlier in the nineteenth century. Her reaction indicates that nature can not only teach, it can also provide awe.

There is no doubt that Peale was an artist, but he believed that his artistic endeavors were only one part of his long professional life. His *The Artist in His Museum*, painted near the end of his life, is a kind of visual epitaph for his life. The Baroque architect Sir Christopher Wren is buried in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, his most famous project. His epitaph reads, "Si monumentum

requires, circumspice”—If you seek his monument, look around. The same is true of Peale’s most famous painting. At the end of his life, he used this painting to announce his position as portraitist, naturalist, museum curator, and an important member of the American Enlightenment. It is, in a fashion, a monument not only to the man, but to an outlook that was shaped by the Enlightenment.

Additional resources:

***The Artist in His Museum* at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts**

Peale’s *Self-Portrait* at the National Portrait Gallery

The Long Room at Independence Hall

***The Peale Family* at the New York Historical Society**

Art and Society of the New Republic, 1776–1800 on the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

A biography of Peale from the Worcester Art Museum

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3.6: John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos

by **DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT**

Page ID
165279



Figure **3.6.1**: John Vanderlyn, *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*, 1809–14, oil on canvas, 174.0 x 221.0 cm (The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Unusual training for an American

John Vanderlyn is different from most of his American-art peers.

For more than forty years, nearly every American who aspired to be an artist sailed eastward across the Atlantic Ocean to study in the London studio of the Pennsylvania-born painter Benjamin West. Indeed, the artists whom West either taught or professionally advised comprises a 'who's who' of colonial and early Federal art, and include famous names such as John Singleton Copley, Charles Willson Peale, Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull, and Thomas Sully. The reason for this need for transatlantic travel was simple; whereas London had the Royal Academy of Art and Paris had the École des Beaux-Arts, North America had little other than a few undistinguished art academies and even fewer public collections of art. Aspiring artists had to go where the art and artists were. For those from North America, that had meant London.

But Vanderlyn did not go to London to search out West's advice or instruction. While a teenager, Vanderlyn moved from his home in Kingston, New York to New York City, and then later studied with Gilbert Stuart, the portraitist, who had recently returned to American shores after 18 years in London and Dublin. Stuart provided art lessons and allowed his pupil to copy portraits.

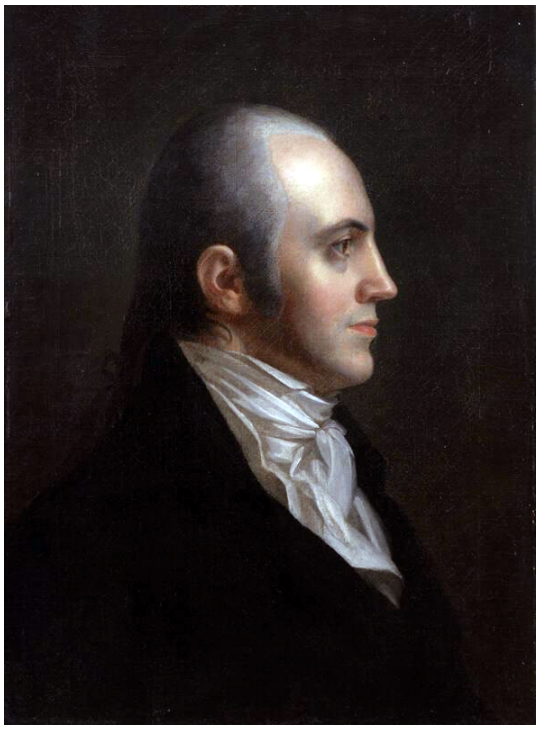


Figure \(\
PageIndex
{2}\):
John Vanderlyn,
Aaron Burr
, 1802, oil on canvas, 56.5 x 41.9 cm (
New York Historical Society
)

One such image Vanderlyn copied was Stuart's portrait of Aaron Burr, New York's Democratic-Republican senator (and later vice president under Thomas Jefferson). This brought the younger artist to the attention of the ambitious politician, and Vanderlyn became a kind of protégé to Burr, living for a spell of time in his residence just outside New York City, Richmond Hill. There can be no doubt that Stuart would have encouraged Vanderlyn to study with his former teacher, Benjamin West. When considering Burr's strong anti-English and Francophile sentiments, however, Burr instead paid for Vanderlyn to study and train in Paris, thus breaking West's near monopoly in the instruction of American artists.



Figure **3.6.3**: François-André Vincent, *Germanicus Calms Sedition in his Camp*, 1768, oil on canvas, 119.5 x 145 cm (Beaux-Arts de Paris, France; photo: VladoubidoOo)

Paris and Neoclassicism

When in Paris, Vanderlyn was the first American to study at the Académie de Peinture at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and studied with François-André Vincent, a winner of the prestigious Prix de Rome and somewhat of an artistic rival to the more famous Jacques-Louis David. In doing so and over time, Vanderlyn fully embraced and absorbed the Neoclassical style that was then flourishing on the continent.

No painting better demonstrates Vanderlyn's commitment to French Neolassicism in regards to form and content better than his masterwork *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*.



Figure **3.6.4**: John Vanderlyn, *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*, 1809–14, oil on canvas, 174.0 x 221.0 cm (The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Adiadne abandoned

Painted in Paris and shown at the 1812 annual Salon (the name of the official exhibitions), Vanderlyn depicts a narrative from the classical past. Princess Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos of Crete, assisted Theseus in slaying the Minotaur that lived under the palace. As a reward for his victory, Ariadne and Theseus eloped and sailed for Athens, Theseus's home. After a sexual encounter on the island of Naxos, Theseus abandoned his new bride. Lest we feel sorry for her, she is later rescued by Dionysus who marries her and places her crown in the heavens as the constellation Corona Borealis.

The moment Vanderlyn depicted in his monumental canvas was the point when Theseus was reaching his boat to make his getaway. Ariadne, nude, and in what appears to be a post-coital slumber, lies upon a red drapery, her arms raised to her head. In a painting largely filled with muted earth tones, this red blanket gathers the visual attention of the viewer. A white sheet wraps around upper thigh. It both conceals and at the same time brings attention to her nudity. Her body—which Vanderlyn has painted a pale milky-white value—contrasts with the North American-like landscape in which she reclines. In the right middle ground one can see the minutely painted boat Theseus boards in order to abandon Ariadne.

Neoclassicism

Certainly, this image depicts a narrative taken from the classical past, and as such, it fits well under the broad umbrella of Neoclassicism in regards to subject. However, it is also Neoclassical in form when compared to the romantic works painted at about the same time.



Figure **3.6.5**: Francisco Goya, *The Third of May*, 1808 in Madrid, 1808, 1814–15, oil on canvas, 8′ 9″ x 13′ 4″ (Museo del Prado, Madrid; photo: Botaurus)

Indeed, one need only compare Ariadne with, for example, Goya's *The Third of May, 1808*, painted just two years later, to appreciate the differences between these two different styles. Whereas Vanderlyn's composition is linear, concise, and has a somewhat muted palette, Goya's painting is painterly, loosely composed, with an energetic use of color.

Vanderlyn's composition was favorably received when he exhibited it in Paris. This can be partially explained by the still popular Neoclassical style and the ways in which it referenced back to the great reclining nudes of the Renaissance—Titian's famous *Venus of Urbino* is but one example. Moreover, Vanderlyn's painting also anticipates many famous examples that would come later in the nineteenth century.



Figure **3.6.6**: Alexandre Cabanel, *Birth of Venus*, 1863, oil on canvas, 130 x 225 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

Indeed, one can see echoes of Vanderlyn's Ariadne in many paintings to follow. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' ***Grande Odalisque***, Édouard Manet's ***Olympia***, and Alexandre Cabanel's *Birth of Venus* are but three well-known examples. Clearly, Europe had an appetite for paintings of the reclining female nude.

An unpopular image at home

But the audience in Europe was very different from the one Vanderlyn found when he returned to New York to exhibit Ariadne in the United States. Although he had found encouragement in Paris, the more puritanical mindset of his home country combined with the lack of tradition of the female nude in American art made this an unpopular image. Vanderlyn had hoped to return to the United States and paint large-scale Neoclassical history paintings. Instead, he placed his Neoclassical efforts into portrait painting, a genre he had hoped to avoid (in the hierarchy of subject matter determined by the academies, portrait painting ranked lower than history paintings). He died at the age of 76 in near poverty. It was not until after his death that his French training or his Neoclassical style were recognized as being key contributions to the very beginnings of art in the United States.

Additional resources

Read more about this painting in our *Reframing Art History* chapter—**"Art in American Colonies and the United States, c. 1600–1860."**

A biography of the artist from the Worcester Art Museum.

Post-Revolutionary America: 1800–1840 from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.

This page titled 3.6: John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Bryan Zygmont, "John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos," in Smarthistory, August 9, 2015, accessed October 29, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/vanderlyn-ariadne-asleep-on-the-island-of-naxos/..

SECTION OVERVIEW

3.7: Thomas Birch

3.7.1: Perry's Victory on Lake Erie

3.7.2: Fairmount Water Works

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3.7.1: Perry's Victory on Lake Erie

by DR. ANNA O. MARLEY and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID
165283



Thomas Birch, *Perry's Victory on Lake Erie*, c. 1814, oil on canvas, 167.64 x 245.11 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts), a Seeing America video speakers: Dr. Anna O. Marley, Curator of Historical American Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

This painting at PAFA
National Park Service resource

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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3.7.2: Fairmount Water Works

by **DR. ANNA O. MARLEY** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

Page ID

165284



Thomas Birch, *Fairmount Water Works*, 1821, oil on canvas, 51.1 x 76.3 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts), a Seeing America video Speakers: Dr. Anna O. Marley, Curator of Historical American Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

This painting at PAFA

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: United States in the 19th century

Artists began to develop their own styles and approaches.

c. 1800 - 1900

- 4.1: Beginner's guide—American art in context
  - 4.1.1: The Mexican-American War- 19th-century American art in context
  - 4.1.2: John Brown’s “tragic prelude” to the U.S. Civil War
  - 4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon
  - 4.1.4: Nativism, immigration, and the Know-Nothing party
- 4.2: The 1893 Chicago World's Fair
  - 4.2.1: The World’s Columbian Exposition- Introduction
  - 4.2.2: The White City and fairgrounds
  - 4.2.3: The Midway
- 4.3: Romanticism
  - 4.3.1: Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert
  - 4.3.2: Thomas Cole
    - 4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden
    - 4.3.2.2: The Oxbow
    - 4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream
    - 4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return
  - 4.3.3: Hicks’s The Peaceable Kingdom as Pennsylvania parable
  - 4.3.4: George Catlin, The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas
  - 4.3.5: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze
    - 4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware
    - 4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way
  - 4.3.6: Rothermel, De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi
  - 4.3.7: Jasper Francis Cropsey, Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains
  - 4.3.8: Frederic Edwin Church
    - 4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes
    - 4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi
    - 4.3.8.3: The Iceberg
  - 4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl’s Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine
  - 4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California
  - 4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
- 4.4: The U.S. Civil War in Art
  - 4.4.1: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War in Art
  - 4.4.2: “The Immediate Cause of the Civil War,” an introduction
  - 4.4.3: The problem of picturing slavery
  - 4.4.4: Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology
  - 4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug
  - 4.4.6: Images in a divided world

4.4.7: Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery
4.4.8: Memory and commemoration of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction
4.4.9: Experiences of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction
4.4.10: Refugees, prisoners, and displacement
4.4.11: Homes and families
4.5: Realism
4.5.1: Francis Guy, Winter Scene in Brooklyn
4.5.2: John Wesley Jarvis, Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder
4.5.3: William Sidney Mount, Bargaining for a Horse
4.5.4: John James Audubon, The Wild Turkey
4.5.5: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico
4.5.6: George Caleb Bingham, Country Politician
4.5.7: George Caleb Bingham, The County Election
4.5.8: Frederic Church, The Natural Bridge, Virginia
4.5.9: Blythe, Justice
4.5.10: Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown
4.5.11: Eastman Johnson, A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves
4.5.12: Lilly Martin Spencer, The Home of the Red, White, and Blue
4.5.13: Samuel Colman, Jr., Ships Unloading, New York
4.5.14: Thomas Eakins
4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)
4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub
4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic
4.5.15: Winslow Homer
4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer
4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters
4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher
4.5.15.4: The Life Line
4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing)
4.5.15.6: Northeaster
4.5.16: Grafton Tyler Brown, View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
4.6: Western art
4.6.1: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
4.6.2: The end of an era- Remington's The Fall of the Cowboy
4.7: Aestheticism and the Gilded Age
4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler
4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl
4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket
4.7.2: John Singer Sargent
4.7.2.1: El Jaleo
4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit
4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)
4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose
4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent

4.7.3: Childe Hassam
4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square
4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago
4.8: Photography
4.8.1: Carleton Watkins
4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River
4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins
4.8.2: Timothy O'Sullivan
4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death
4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle
4.8.3: Jacob Riis, "Knee-Pants" at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater's Shop, from How the Other Half Lives
4.9: Sculpture and architecture
13.4.9.21: Burnham and Root
4.9.21.1: The Monadnock Building
4.9.21.2: Reliance Building
13.4.9.23: Carrère and Hastings, The New York Public Library
4.9.1: The Alamo (and Mission San Antonio de Valero)
4.9.2: Inventing America, Colt's Experimental Pocket Pistol
4.9.3: Cultures and slavery in the American south- a Face Jug from Edgefield county
4.9.4: David Drake, Double-handled jug
4.9.5: Little Round House
4.9.6: John Quincy Adams Ward, The Freedman
4.9.7: Anna Pottery, Snake jug
4.9.8: Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave
4.9.9: William Wetmore Story, Cleopatra
4.9.10: Thomas Crawford, George Washington Equestrian Monument
4.9.11: Slave Burial Ground, University of Alabama
4.9.12: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York
4.9.13: Olmsted and Vaux, Central Park
4.9.14: William Howard (attributed), Writing desk
4.9.15: Herter Brothers, Mark Hopkins House Side Chair
4.9.16: Robert Mills and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument
4.9.17: The light of democracy — examining the Statue of Liberty
4.9.18: Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause
4.9.19: Defeated, heroized, dismantled- Richmond's Robert E. Lee Monument
4.9.20: Shrady and Casey, Ulysses S. Grant Memorial
4.9.22: Louis Sullivan
13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building
4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.1: Beginner's guide—American art in context

4.1.1: The Mexican-American War- 19th-century American art in context

4.1.2: John Brown’s “tragic prelude” to the U.S. Civil War

4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon

4.1.4: Nativism, immigration, and the Know-Nothing party

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4.1.1: The Mexican-American War- 19th-century American art in context

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

Page ID
165287



Figure **4.1.1.1**: Opinion on the war was with Mexico was divided and Woodville therefore depicted a range of responses among the figures reading the latest news in a Western outpost. Detail, Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art). Watch the video.

A forgotten war with unforgettable consequences

A tourist visiting the National Mall in Washington, D.C. today is likely to see monuments commemorating American involvement in several foreign wars, including the striking Vietnam Memorial, with its reflective surface naming the war dead, or the squadron of stainless steel soldiers honoring veterans of the Korean War. That same tourist might be surprised to learn that the United States had fought another foreign war whose toll on the American population was greater than either of those conflicts: the Mexican-American War (1846–1848). [1]



Figure **4.1.1.2**: Maya Lin, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 1982, granite, National Mall, Washington, D.C. (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

There is no memorial to the Mexican-American War in Washington, D.C., and only about 30 monuments across the whole of the United States pay tribute to a war in which more than 15,000 American soldiers lost their lives. By comparison, there are at least 13,000 historical markers commemorating the U.S. Civil War. [2] In fact, the Mexican-American War has been overlooked in both U.S. and Mexican popular culture. The war is rarely depicted in film, and no images of the War of Northern Invasion (as the war is named in Mexico) were made by Mexican artists. A war of conquest conducted by a land-hungry U.S. government against ill-supplied Mexican soldiers did not generate much pride for either nation.

Timeline of significant events



Nevertheless, the Mexican-American War had far-reaching consequences for both the United States, Mexico, and the Indigenous peoples whose land both nations claimed. First among these was the cession of about one third of Mexico's territory to the United States, a landmass of over 338,000,000 acres. Redrawing the border added to American economic prosperity at Mexico's expense. The war also contributed to the outbreak of later civil wars in both countries: the Civil War in the United States (1861–1865) and the War of Reform in Mexico (1857–1860).

Lastly, the war's outcome left many residents of the ceded territory worse off than they had been under Mexican rule, which had guaranteed people of African and Indigenous descent some rights and protections. Not only did the U.S. government permit slavery (which had been outlawed in Mexico for years) but the annexation of these lands sent large numbers of white American settlers west, where they displaced and often killed Indigenous people.

Comparing Mexican and American societies before the war

Both the United States and Mexico were young republics that had recently gained independence after centuries of European colonization. The process had been considerably easier for the United States, which had had French aid in defeating Great Britain, as well as bountiful natural resources to fuel its economy. In the early nineteenth century, the people of the United States were awash in patriotism, Protestant religious fervor, and enthusiasm for rapid expansion. Jacksonian Democracy, ushered in by the presidency of Andrew Jackson, extolled the virtues of the "common man," extending the franchise to all white men regardless of their social standing.



Figure **4.1.1.3**:George Caleb Bingham portrayed the Missouri election in which he was running as a candidate for state legislature (he depicts himself at center, seated on the wooden steps). Bingham seems both to celebrate and critique the enthusiastic exercise of mid-nineteenth century U.S. democracy, depicting the white male voters with equal dignity, although he shows some men who are clearly inebriated. George Caleb Bingham, *The County Election*, 1852, oil on canvas, 38 x 52 in. (96.5 x 132.1 cm) (Saint Louis Art Museum).

But citizenship in the United States became more entwined with constructions around racial difference at the same time it became less tied to class. The "white man's republic" championed by Jacksonian Democrats categorically excluded women and people of color from the body politic. This was particularly evident in Jackson's policy of "Indian Removal": where once white Americans had committed to christianize and assimilate Indigenous people for their own good, many now declared Indigenous people savages who must either be expelled to distant western lands or face extinction.

By contrast, Mexico had won independence after 300 years of Spanish colonization without outside help, but the conflict had left the nation in a difficult economic state, with its mining, industrial, and agricultural capacity significantly reduced. The Mexican government was unstable, with 50 different governments in the 30 years after independence, most installed by military coup. Conservatives wanted to maintain a version of the colonial system that privileged social elites, the army, and the Catholic Church, while Liberals wanted to implement republican reforms.

Although Mexican society did make sharp distinctions of race and class in the years leading up to the war, nonwhites had more political power and social mobility than in the United States. Centuries of racial and cultural mixing between the descendants of Spanish settlers, enslaved Africans, Indigenous inhabitants, and Asian immigrants of the region had created a diverse populace. After independence from Spain, the Mexican government removed racial identifiers from official documents to promote equality in the new republic, and in 1829 abolished slavery altogether.

Cotton, Texas, and Manifest Destiny

Many Americans believed that the key to their prosperity was relentless expansion. The U.S. government had purchased the Louisiana Territory in 1803, and newspaper editors spread the idea that it was the "Manifest Destiny" of the United States to possess North America from the Atlantic to Pacific Ocean. The ideology of Manifest Destiny justified U.S. imperialism by claiming that the nation had a divine mission to spread democracy and Protestant Christianity across the continent.

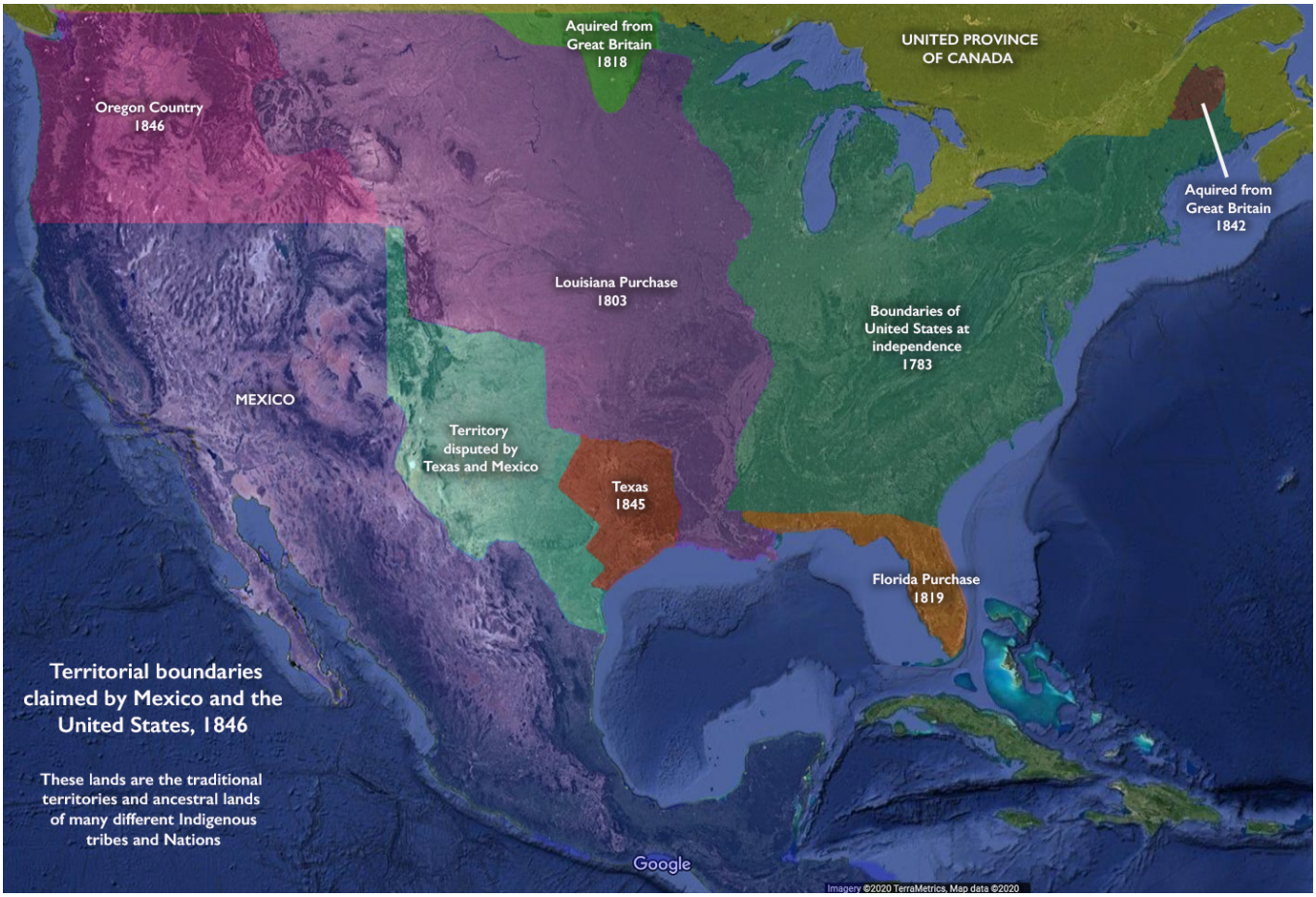


Figure **4.1.1.4**: Before: Map depicting U.S. territorial expansion from 1783 through 1846. Note the Oregon Territory (top left) and the disputed territory between Texas and Mexico (center) (underlying map © Google)

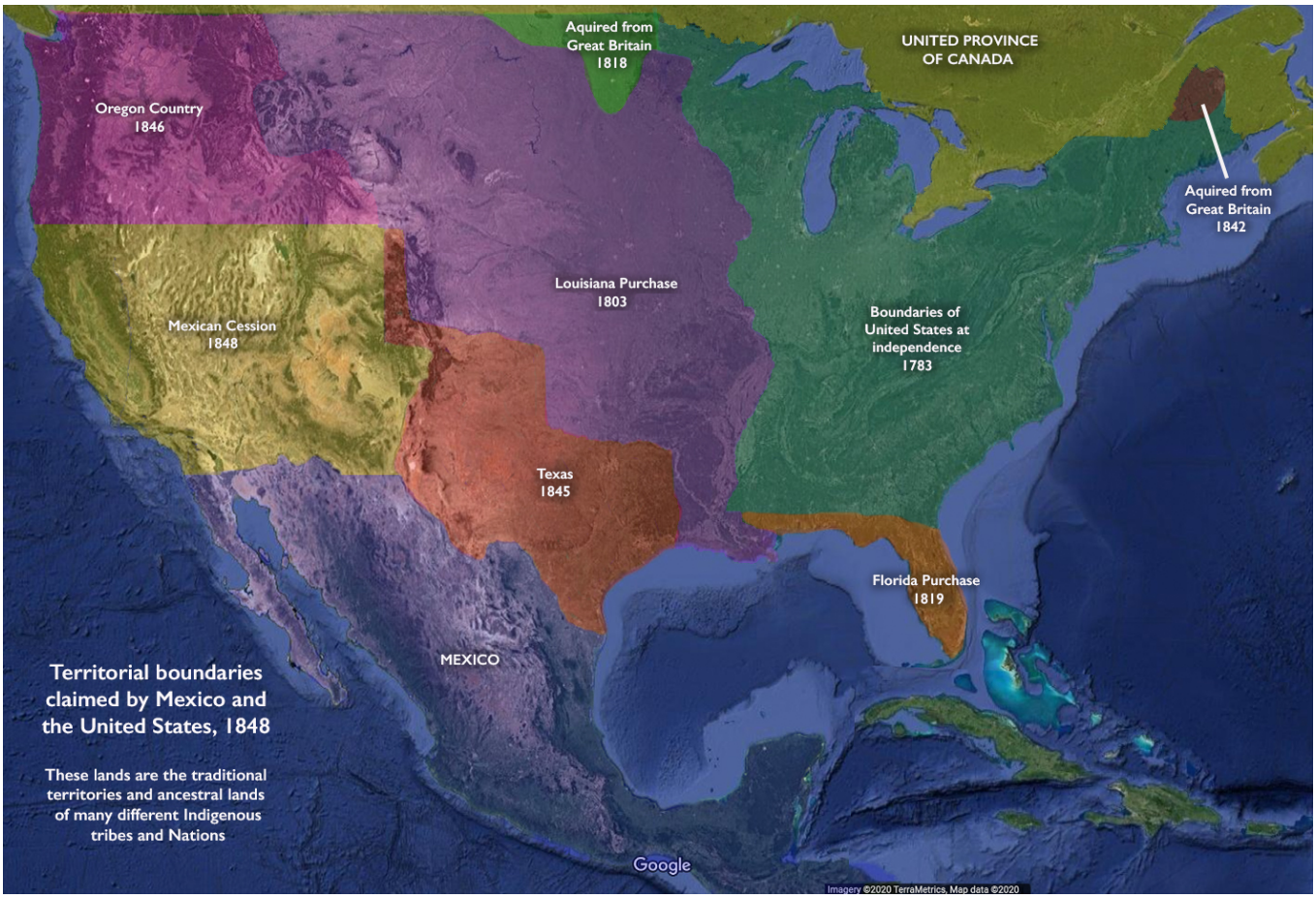


Figure 4.1.1.5: After: Map depicting the territorial changes following the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. The Treaty recognized Texas's claim to the disputed territory and ceded northern Mexico to the United States (underlying map © Google)

Expansion was particularly crucial for the cotton planters who dominated the southern United States. Cultivating cotton quickly depleted soil, and plantation owners were eager to obtain more fertile land. They relied on the forced labor of enslaved people of African descent, and sought to expand slavery along with the borders of the American south. Many cotton planters crossed the border into the Mexican territory of Coahuila y Tejas, where they were initially welcomed as a stabilizing force that would help to repel raids from the powerful Comanche (N~~u~~m~~u~~n~~uu~~) nation. But the Mexican government soon grew frustrated with the American settlers, who disregarded the ban on slavery and showed no intention of assimilating into Mexican society.

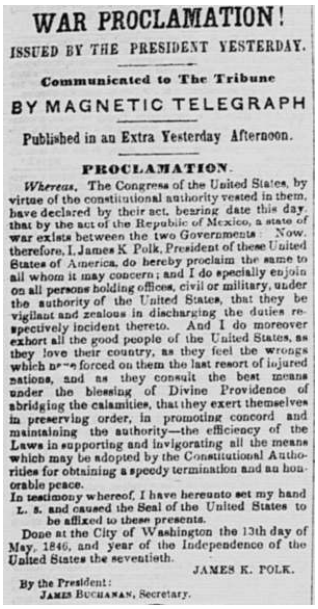
The war begins

In 1836, American and Mexican residents who wanted to introduce enslaved laborers to the area to farm cotton took advantage of the Mexican government's tenuous hold on the country's periphery by declaring Texas an independent republic. The Texians triumphed, despite their storied defeat at The Alamo, a Spanish mission (San Antonio de Valero) that had been converted into a fortress. But the Mexican government did not accept the treaty granting Texas independence since it had been signed under duress. For nearly ten years, the Mexican government considered Texas a rebel territory, while the United States recognized it as a sovereign nation.

In fact, Texians wanted to join the United States and applied for annexation shortly after the rebellion. But the U.S. Congress, unwilling to upset the delicate balance between states that permitted slavery ("slave states") and states that did not ("free states"), declined to consider the matter. All of that changed when James K. Polk was elected president in 1844. Polk was a Democrat, closely tied to Andrew Jackson, and he favored territorial expansion. Consequently, the United States annexed Texas in 1845 (leading Mexico to sever diplomatic relations), and Polk negotiated with Britain for a portion of the Oregon Territory in 1846.

Polk also sent an envoy to Mexico to offer to purchase California, then coveted for its Pacific ports and fertile farmland, but the Mexican government refused. Finally, in April 1846, Polk sent U.S. soldiers under the command of General Zachary Taylor to

disputed territory south of the Nueces River, hoping to provoke conflict.



WAR PROCLAMATION!

ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENT YESTERDAY.

Communicated to The Tribune

BY MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH

Published in an Extra Yesterday Afternoon.

PROCLAMATION.

Whereas, The Congress of the United States, by virtue of the constitutional authority vested in them, have declared by their act, bearing date this day, that by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between the two Governments: Now, therefore, I, James K Polk, President of these United States of America, do hereby proclaim the same to all whom it may concern; and I do specially enjoin on all persons holding offices, civil or military, under the authority of the United States, that they be vigilant and zealous in discharging the duties respectively incident thereto. And I do moreover exhort all the good people of the United States, as they love their country, as they feel the wrongs which have forced on them the last resort of injured nations, and as they consult the best means under the blessing of Divine Providence of abridging the calamities, that they exert themselves in preserving order, in promoting concord and maintaining the authority—the efficiency of the Laws in supporting and invigorating all the means which may be adopted by the Constitutional Authorities for obtaining a speedy termination and an honorable peace.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand L. S. and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed to these presents.

Done at the City of Washington the 13th day of May, 1846, and year of the Independence of the United States the seventieth.

JAMES K. POLK.

By the President:
JAMES BUCHANAN, Secretary.

Figure **4.1.1.6**: Text of Polk's war proclamation in the New-York Daily Tribune (Library of Congress).

The progress of the war

Polk's gamble paid off; after a U.S. patrol marched into the disputed territory, a Mexican cavalry unit attacked, killing 11 American soldiers. When news reached Washington, D.C. two weeks later, Polk went to Congress to ask for a declaration of war, claiming that Mexico had shed "American blood on the American soil." Many U.S. lawmakers, especially those of the opposition Whig party, were suspicious of Polk's claims—Abraham Lincoln, then a young Congressman, would later ask the president for evidence of the exact "spot" where the hostilities had begun—but conscious that fighting was already underway, the Whigs ultimately voted to support the war.



Figure **4.1.1.7**: Detail of map below, showing land and naval campaigns during the Mexican-American War, including Monterrey and Buena Vista.

General Taylor commanded just one of many American military forces in what would become a two-year-long, multi-front war. In northern Mexico, Taylor fought inland to Monterrey and secured the region for the United States in the Battle of Buena Vista.

Farther north (see map below), the U.S. army captured Santa Fe, in what is now New Mexico, without firing a shot (although Mexican and Indigenous Puebloan residents later rebelled against U.S. occupation in the Taos Revolt). Naval campaigns targeted the west coast of Mexico from Mazatlán to Yerba Buena (present-day San Francisco), and wrested control of the ports and pueblos of California along with several ground units.



Figure **4.1.1.8**: Map of land and naval campaigns during the Mexican-American War. The inset depicts General Winfield Scott's route from Veracruz to Mexico City (map: Kaidor, CC-BY-SA 3.0).

The most devastating campaign, however, was in southeastern Mexico (see inset in map above). In 1847, U.S. General Winfield Scott conveyed a force of more than 13,000 men by sea to Veracruz. He deliberately followed the same path of conquest to Mexico City that Hernán Cortés had taken more than 300 years earlier to the Mexica capital of Tenochtitlan (which became Mexico City). In September 1847, the U.S. army invaded the nation's capital, Mexico City. Despite months of guerrilla warfare, Mexicans could not expel the occupying army.

In February 1848, the two nations negotiated the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to end the war. The treaty's terms gave the United States most of what is now the southwestern United States, including the modern-day states of Texas, California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, and portions of Colorado and Wyoming, in exchange for $15 million and the forgiveness of Mexican debts to American citizens. Mexicans who chose to remain in the territory would receive American citizenship.

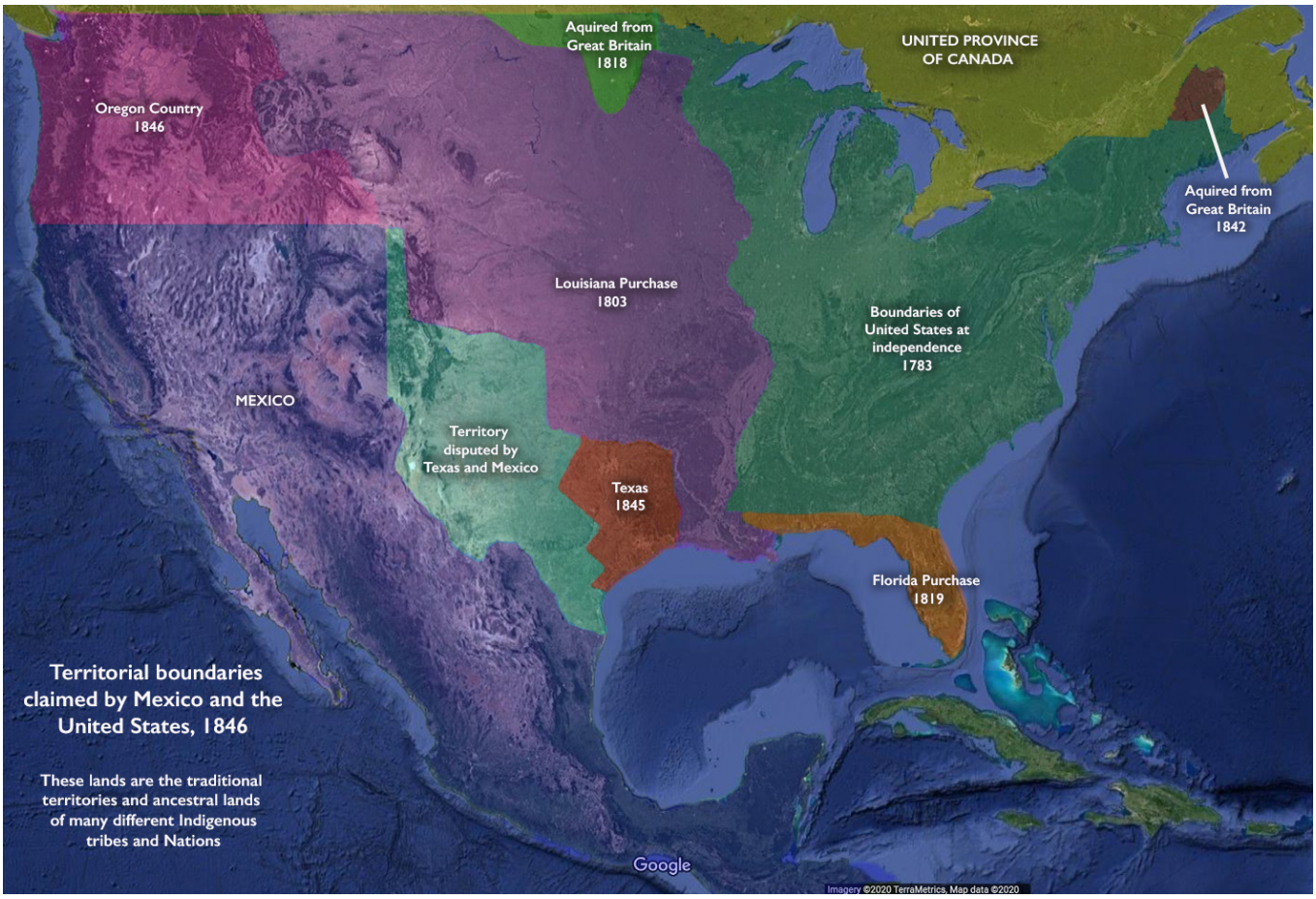


Figure 4.1.1.9: Before: Map depicting U.S. territorial expansion from 1783 through 1846. Note the Oregon Territory (top left) and the disputed territory between Texas and Mexico (center) (underlying map © Google)

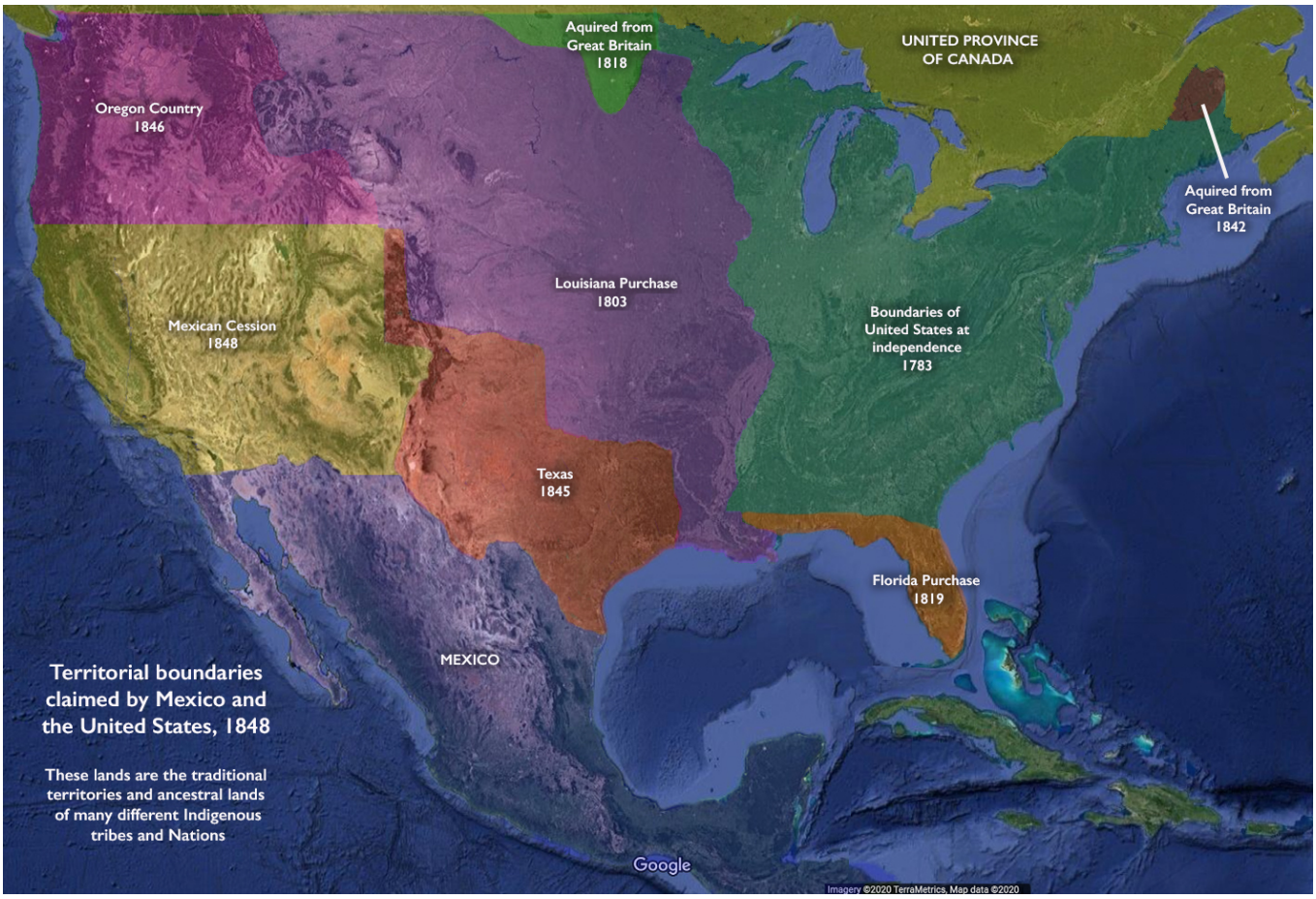


Figure 4.1.1.10: After: Map depicting the territorial changes following the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. The Treaty recognized Texas's claim to the disputed territory and ceded northern Mexico to the United States (underlying map © Google)

"A wicked war"

> ***"I do not think there was ever a more wicked war than that waged by the United States on Mexico."—Ulysses S. Grant, 1879***

Ulysses S. Grant, who would go on to command the victorious forces in the Civil War nearly twenty years later, not to mention serve as president of the United States, was a 24-year-old lieutenant during the Mexican-American War. Grant believed that in the Mexican-American War, a stronger nation had unjustly made war on a weaker one. [3] Indeed, the United States government had expected a quick win against an inferior opponent, and the extent of Mexican resistance came as a surprise. Racial and religious prejudice influenced American attitudes toward Mexicans. Officers wrote about the depredations committed by volunteers, who frequently stole from and sometimes killed Mexican civilians.

Most American soldiers and volunteers were Protestants, rife with anti-Catholic prejudice, and they disdained Mexican religiosity as superstition and ignorance. In some cases, American soldiers deliberately defiled churches or religious objects. Their behavior so disgusted German and Irish Catholic volunteers that several hundred switched sides and fought for the Mexicans as the St. Patrick's Battalion, or San Patricios.

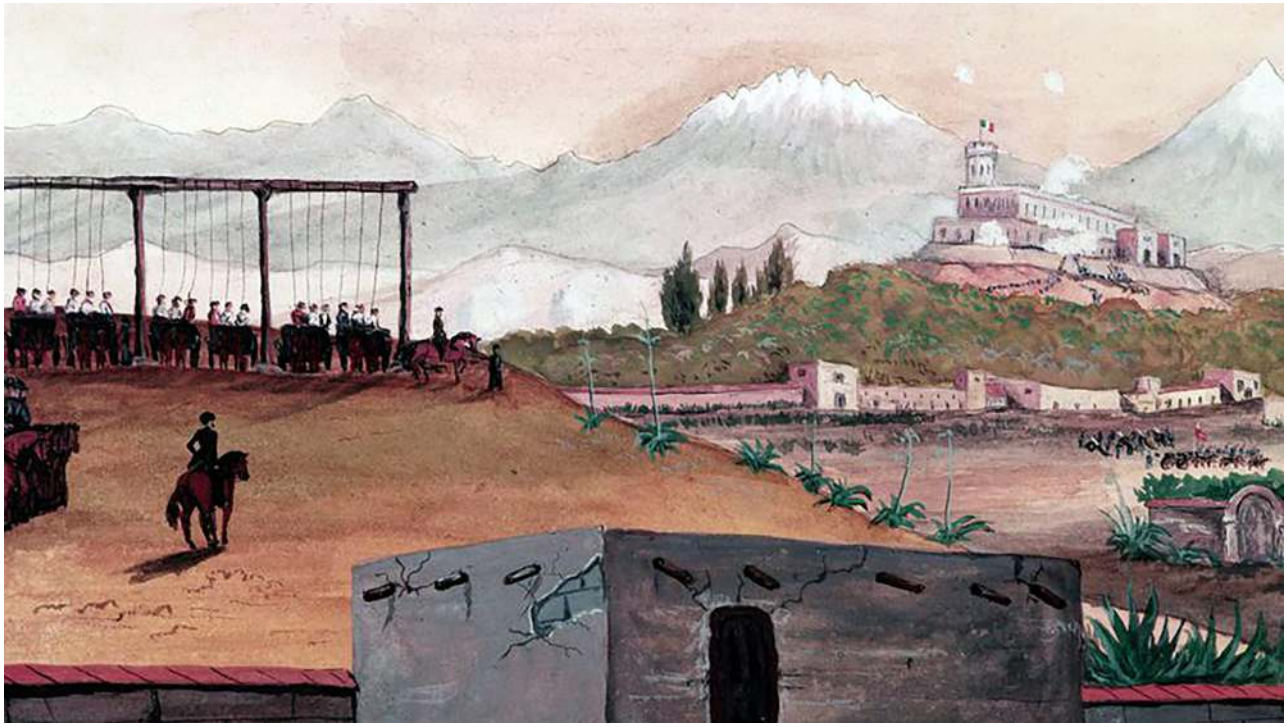


Figure 4.1.1.11: The San Patricios were U.S. soldiers who switched sides to fight with the Mexican army. Many were captured and executed in the battles leading up to the occupation of Mexico City. Samuel Chamberlain, who was a private in the U.S. army during the 1847 mass execution, illustrated the event in his memoirs twenty years later. Chamberlain likely made sketches on site (suggested by the recognizable volcanoes in the Valley of Mexico and Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City at right) and worked them into finished watercolors at a later time. The hanging scene's distance from the viewer, and the lack of visible emotion with which Chamberlain portrays it, suggests that he saw the San Patricios as traitors. Samuel Chamberlain, *Hanging of the San Patricios following the Battle of Chapultepec*, c. 1867, watercolor (Smithsonian Magazine).



Figure 4.1.1.12: Unknown photographer, *General Wool and staff in the Calle Real, Saltillo, Mexico*, c. 1847 (Amon Carter Museum of American Art)

New technologies of communication and representation brought news of the war home to civilians faster and more vividly than ever before. The first photographs of war anywhere in the world emerged from this conflict: a series of 50 daguerreotypes, now housed at the Amon Carter Museum, which were created in 1847 by an unknown photographer in Saltillo, Mexico. Daguerreotypists followed the U.S. troops, taking portraits of officers, landmarks, and grave sites as souvenirs. [4] The Mexican-American War was also the first war in which U.S. journalists accompanied the army as foreign correspondents, and the updates they sent home to newspapers by telegraph generated great interest and patriotism among the public.



Figure **4.1.1.13**: Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

But the war and its expansionist aims did not enjoy universal support in the United States. Just three months into the conflict anti-slavery politicians introduced a bill into Congress, the **Wilmot Proviso**, that would outlaw slavery in any territory that might be gained from Mexico.

In addition, the first anti-war movement in the United States arose in response to the conflict; many northeastern intellectuals protested what they saw as an unprincipled land-grab aimed at increasing the power of slaveholders. Henry David Thoreau, a leading Transcendentalist writer, was jailed for refusing to pay taxes to support the war. His essay on the duty of citizens to refuse to cooperate with immoral government actions, "Civil Disobedience," inspired the nonviolent resistance tactics of later civil rights leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Consequences of the Mexican-American War

The war's human cost is difficult to quantify. Historians estimate that 25,000 Mexican soldiers died, as well as 15,000 American soldiers. The vast majority of American men died from disease, not battlefield injuries, as the volunteer soldiers failed to implement necessary measures for sanitation. As many had feared, the addition of land suitable for cotton farming meant the extension of slavery, along with the human misery of the enslaved men and women who cleared and farmed the land. White settlers who moved to the west did not respect the rights of the Indigenous people or Mexican-Americans (those who had received U.S. citizenship at the war's end) living there, often forcibly removing them from their land.

The political and social consequences of the war are easier to see. For Mexico, the defeat demonstrated the weakness of the country. Debates over the proper role of the army and the Catholic Church in politics led to the Reform War, and later the installation of a French emperor in Mexico. For the United States, the acquisition of western lands proved both a blessing and a curse. Their rich resources, including the gold discovered in California just weeks before the end of the war, contributed to growing American economic power. But the addition of new territory upset the fragile balance of power that had kept free and slave states bound together in an uneasy union. In 1861, the tensions over the expansion of slavery into the west led to the U.S. Civil War.

Notes:

1. War dead as a percentage of total U.S. population. .057% of the U.S. population died as a result of the Mexican-American War.
2. See the **Historical Marker Database** for estimates.
3. For Grant's quote concerning the "wicked war," see John Russell Young, *Around the World with General Grant* (New York: American News, 1879), 2:447–48.
4. James Oles, *Art and Architecture in Mexico* (Thames and Hudson, 2013), 155.

Additional resources:

View the text of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo at the Library of Congress

See more Mexican-American War daguerreotypes from Google Arts & Culture

Political cartoons and prints relating to the Mexican-American War at the Library of Congress

Samuel Chamberlain's Mexican-American War watercolors at the San Jacinto Museum

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4.1.2: John Brown's "tragic prelude" to the U.S. Civil War

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

Page ID
165288



Figure 4.1.2.1: Thomas Hovenden, *The Last Moments of John Brown*, c. 1884, oil on canvas, 117.2 x 96.8 cm (de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; photo: Steven Zucker, CC NY-NC-SA 2.0)

> ***"I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood."—John Brown, shortly before his execution, 1859***

Who was John Brown?

Martyr. Murderer. Prophet. Madman. All of these words have been used to describe John Brown, the fiery abolitionist who led violent attacks against supporters of slavery in the years before the U.S. Civil War. A white man born into a deeply religious family of Connecticut abolitionists in 1800, Brown dedicated his life to a holy war against slavery. He scorned the tactic of moral suasion then in vogue among northern abolitionists, believing that only armed uprising could counter the evil of slavery. In 1859, he and a group of followers attempted to seize the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) and distribute weapons to enslaved people so they could rise up against slaveholders. The plan failed and Brown was captured, tried, and executed amidst a media frenzy.



Figure **4.1.2.2**: Daguerreotype depicting John Brown c. 1846.

Daguerreotype depicting John Brown c. 1846. Brown was not, at this time, a well known figure, although he was active in abolitionist circles. Here, Brown poses with a determined look, holding up his left hand (photographic images such as this **daguerreotype** did not reverse images, so in order to appear that he was holding up his right hand in the finished image he had to hold up his left hand in reality) as though he is making an oath. In his right hand, he holds a flag believed to represent the "Subterranean Pass-Way," a strategic initiative Brown envisioned that would transport enslaved people to freedom on a grand scale. The daguerreotypist, Augustus Washington, was an African American photographer with a studio in Hartford, Connecticut. Washington later emigrated to Liberia. Augustus Washington, *John Brown*, daguerreotype, 4 1/2 x 7 3/4 x 7/16 in. (11.4 x 19.7 x 1.1cm), Hartford, Connecticut (**National Portrait Gallery**)

From some perspectives, Brown could be considered a failure: his plan to bring about a massive uprising of enslaved people never came to fruition, and he was hanged for treason years before the Thirteenth Amendment outlawed slavery. But from other perspectives, Brown succeeded beyond his wildest dreams: his execution elevated him to the level of an abolitionist martyr, garnering sympathy for the cause he was willing to die for. His actions contributed to such paranoia among slaveholders about the future of slavery in the United States that slave states seceded when anti-slavery candidate Abraham Lincoln was elected president, putting in motion the events that ultimately would lead to slavery's downfall.



Figure **4.1.2.3**: John Steuart Curry, *Tragic Prelude* (detail), 1937–42, oil and egg tempera 11′ 6″ x 31 feet (Kansas statehouse, Topeka)

This mural, in the Kansas State Capitol building, depicts John Brown as a fanatic, Moses-like figure, striding forward as clouds part in the sky (not unlike the parting of the Red Sea), in a composition reminiscent of Delacroix's ***Liberty Leading the People***. He holds a rifle (the so-called "Beecher's Bible" rifle sent to abolitionists fighting in the Kansas Territory) and an actual Bible featuring the Greek letters alpha and omega (a reference to Christ in the Book of Revelation, describing the Apocalypse). In the distance, covered wagons move right to left (westward). Behind Brown are figures holding the flag of the United States and the battle flag of the Confederacy. In the foreground, men wearing the uniforms of soldiers on each side of the Civil War lay dead at Brown's feet. Beside his left knee we can make out soldiers violently assaulting a Black family. Curry depicts John Brown's role in Bleeding Kansas as a "tragic prelude" to the Civil War, with tornadoes and prairie fires in the background representing the coming destruction. Curry did not revere Brown, describing him as a "bloodthirsty, god-fearing maniac." [1]

The growing sectional divide of the 1850s

In the first half of the 19th century, the U.S. government worked to maintain the balance of political power between free and slave states by ensuring that their numbers remained equal. But, as the country expanded west to territories across the Mississippi River, with American settlers displacing the Indigenous inhabitants and forming new states, that balance began to falter. Several events in the 1850s contributed to a growing belief among anti-slavery activists that the "Slave Power," as they called it, had gained control of the U.S. government: the introduction of a brutal Fugitive Slave Law (1850) required northern citizens to assist in the capture of enslaved people who had escaped; the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854) repealed an earlier ban on slavery in new territories north of the Missouri Compromise line; and the Supreme Court decision in Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857) ruled that Black Americans were not U.S. citizens.



Figure **4.1.2.4**: Detail, John Steuart Curry, *Tragic Prelude* , 1937–42, oil and egg tempera 11′ 6″ x 31 feet (Kansas statehouse, Topeka)

John Brown first became a nationally known figure in 1856 through his actions in the Kansas Territory, three years before the raid on Harpers Ferry. Kansas was then the site of a territorial civil war known as Bleeding Kansas, the result of the Kansas-Nebraska Act's provision allowing the residents of the territory to vote on whether to allow slavery. Pro- and anti-slavery settlers attempting to sway the vote flooded the region, and quickly came to blows. Among the ranks of "Free-Staters" were John Brown and five of his sons, who had come to Kansas to take up arms in defense of abolition.

In May 1856, Brown led his sons and three other men in what came to be known as the Pottawatomie Massacre, a three-day rampage during which they murdered five members of the pro-slavery territorial district court in front of their families, hacking them to death with broadswords. Brown was enraged by two recent attacks on abolitionists by pro-slavery forces—the violent attack on the town of Lawrence, Kansas, then an abolitionist center, and the caning of abolitionist Charles Sumner on the Senate floor.The Pottawatomie Massacre escalated the violence in Kansas to a fever pitch, drawing federal troops to the territory. Brown and his allies engaged in battle with pro-slavery forces throughout the summer of 1856, becoming a ruthless leader whom southern slaveholders feared and northern abolitionists admired.

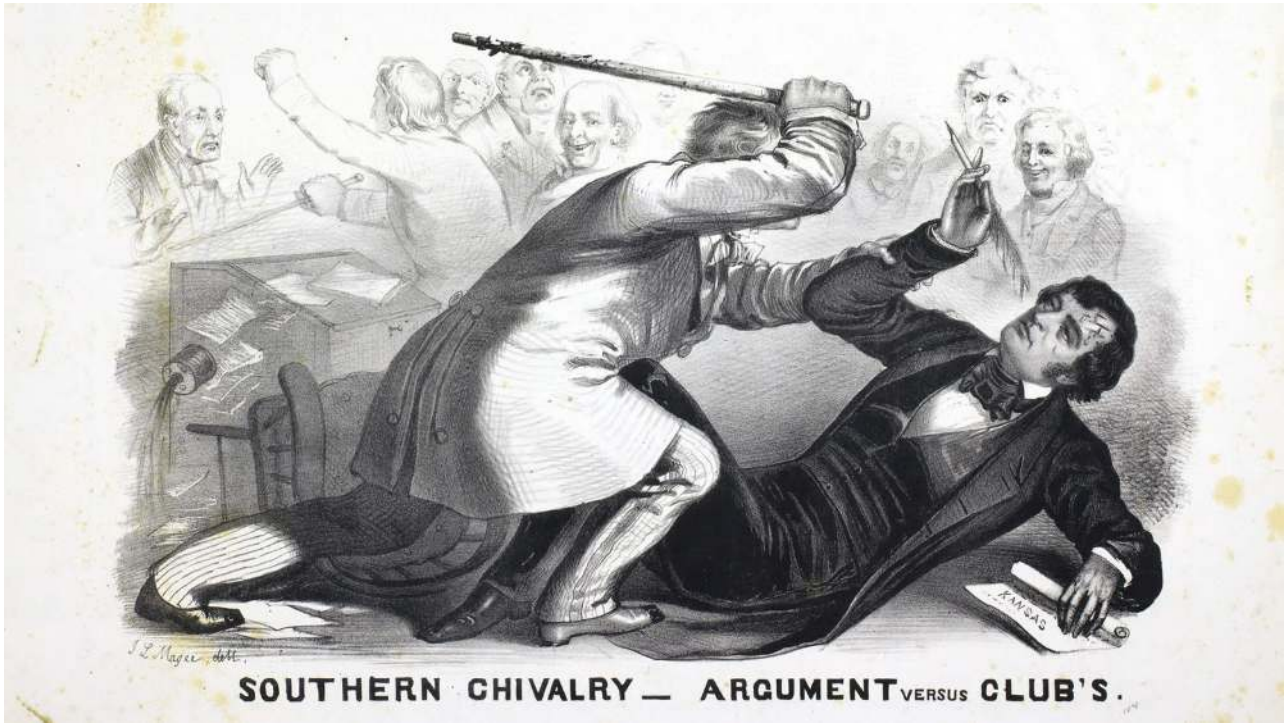


Figure **4.1.2.5**: This political cartoon depicts the pro-slavery congressman Preston Brooks attacking the anti-slavery Senator Charles Sumner with a cane on the Senate floor. The title, "Southern Chivalry — argument versus club's" ironically mocks this attack as "southern chivalry" since Sumner had criticized Brooks's uncle as a lover of slavery in a recent speech (the "Crime Against Kansas" speech, which Sumner holds in his left hand). Here, Sumner is depicted bleeding, pen in hand, with a dignified expression while Brooks (whose face is blocked by his arm) raises a mangled cane to strike him again. John Brown was enraged by the attack on Sumner, which motivated his actions at Pottawatomie. John L. Magee, *Southern chivalry – argument versus club's*, 1856, lithograph, 13.23 x 19 in. (The Library Company of Philadelphia)

The raid at Harpers Ferry

Although he was under indictment for the Pottawatomie murders, Brown managed to evade capture and make his way to the northeast, where he was received enthusiastically by abolitionists. Brown had long cherished the idea of leading a large-scale rebellion of enslaved people, like the Haitian Revolution or Nat Turner's rebellion, and he spent several years traveling through New England and Canada, raising money, gathering weapons, and preparing for battle.

Brown eventually determined that he would lead a team of men to the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, distributing its weapons as he marched south to liberate enslaved Black people from plantations. Harpers Ferry was a strategic location not only because of its firearms cache but also for its position as a major rail and river junction (railroads and rivers were then the easiest ways to transport people and goods long distances). Brown believed that he would grow an ever larger army as the freed people joined him. He consulted with notable Black abolitionists about his plan, including Frederick Douglass—who counseled him against the action—and Harriet Tubman, who helped him recruit participants.

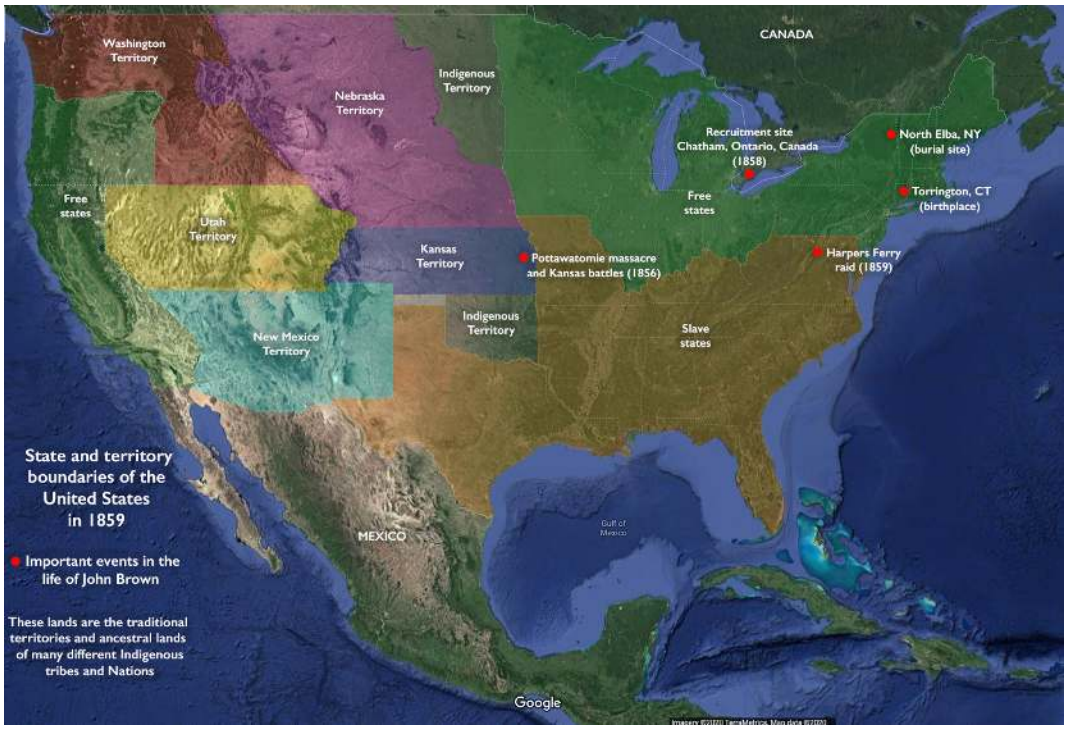


Figure **4.1.2.6**: Map depicting U.S. state and territory boundaries in 1859, featuring the location of important events in the life of John Brown (underlying map © Google)

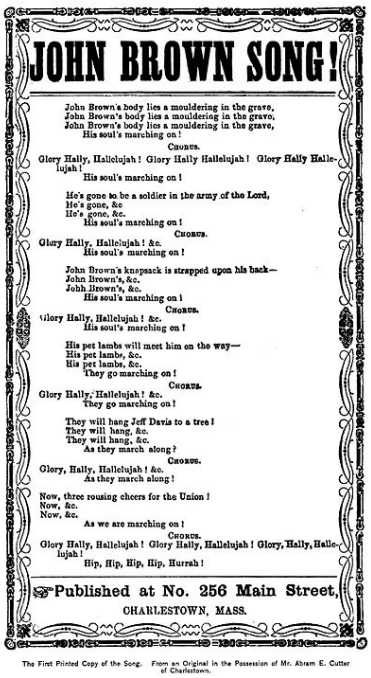
In October 1859, Brown and a group of twenty-one Black and white men captured the armory and took hostages, alerting the enslaved residents nearby of their plan. However, most of the enslaved people near Harpers Ferry were loath to trust an unknown white man, and to Brown's surprise, the massive uprising that he had predicted failed to materialize. A train conductor raised the alarm, local militias pinned Brown and his men inside the armory, and by the following day U.S. Marines under the command of Robert E. Lee (the future Confederate general) arrived and demanded their surrender. Brown refused, and the Marines stormed the armory, wounded Brown, and took him and his seven remaining men (the others had died or escaped) prisoner.



Figure **4.1.2.7**: Map depicting Harpers Ferry, a strategic location at the junction of railroads and rivers. Although Harpers Ferry was located in the slave state of Virginia, it was quite close to the free state of Pennsylvania (underlying map © Google)

The subsequent trial of Brown and his men for murder, inciting slave rebellion, and treason was widely reported in the national press. His speech upon conviction, in which he proclaimed that "if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!" was printed in 50 newspapers, including on the front page of *The New York Times*.

John Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859. The story that he paused to kiss a Black infant on his way to the gallows was first circulated by Brown's friend and supporter, journalist James Redpath, in a biography published just months after the execution to raise money for Brown's widow and children.



JOHN BROWN SONG!

John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave,
His soul's marching on!

CHORUS.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally Hallelujah! Glory Hally Hallelujah!
His soul's marching on!

He's gone to be a soldier in the army of the Lord,
He's gone, &c
He's gone, &c.
His soul's marching on!

CHORUS.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! &c.
His soul's marching on!

John Brown's knapsack is strapped upon his back—
John Brown's, &c.
John Brown's, &c.
His soul's marching on!

CHORUS.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! &c.
His soul's marching on!

His pet lambs will meet him on the way—
His pet lambs, &c.
His pet lambs, &c.
They go marching on!

CHORUS.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! &c.
They go marching on!

They will hang Jeff Davis to a tree!
They will hang, &c.
They will hang, &c.
As they march along!

CHORUS.

Glory, Hally, Hallelujah! &c.
As they march along!

Now, three rousing cheers for the Union!
Now, &c.
Now, &c.
As we are marching on!

CHORUS.

Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory Hally, Hallelujah! Glory, Hally, Hallelujah!
Hip, Hip, Hip, Hip, Hurrah!

☞Published at No. 256 Main Street,
CHARLESTOWN, MASS.

The First Printed Copy of the Song. From an Original in the Possession of Mr. Abram E. Cutter of Charlestown.

Figure 4.1.2.8: Songsheet featuring the lyrics of the "John Brown Song," later called "John Brown's Body." Julia Ward Howe wrote new lyrics for the melody, producing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," which became the anthem of U.S. forces during the Civil War. James E. Greenleaf, et. al., "John Brown Song!", 1861.

John Brown in American memory

Although abolitionists praised Brown, many Republican politicians—including Abraham Lincoln—sought to distance themselves from him. [2] But once the Civil War was underway, Brown's courageous fight against slavery took on new resonance. The song "John Brown's Body," a Civil War marching song, provided the inspiration for "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Brown's complex legacy has been viewed in different lights in the century and a half since his death. Frederick Douglass, who had to flee to England to escape possible retribution for his knowledge of Brown's plans, later gave a speech praising him, saying that "If John Brown did not end the war that ended slavery, he did at least begin the war that ended slavery." [3] During the Jim Crow era, when mainstream American memory of the Civil War downplayed the importance of emancipation, many white historians portrayed Brown as a zealot and a madman, although Black intellectuals and artists, like W.E.B. DuBois and Jacob Lawrence, portrayed him sympathetically. Controversy over John Brown's actions, and whether it's acceptable to use violence to challenge social injustice, remains with us today.

Notes:

1. Quoted in R. Blakeslee Gilpin, *John Brown Still Lives!: America's Long Reckoning with Violence, Equality, & Change* (UNC Press, 2011), 154.
2. Lincoln denied that Republicans supported Brown in his speech at Cooper Union in New York City on February 27, 1860: "You charge that we stir up insurrections among your slaves. We deny it; and what is your proof? Harpers Ferry! John Brown! John Brown was no Republican; and you have failed to implicate a single Republican in his Harper's Ferry enterprise."
3. Frederick Douglass, "John Brown: An Address," Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, May 30, 1881.

Additional resources:

Read about Augustus Washington's daguerreotype of John Brown in Smithsonian Magazine

See Jacob Lawrence's Legend of John Brown series at the Detroit Art Institute

Learn about John Brown's "Holy War" from the American Experience on PBS

Hear the evolution of the John Brown song at Teachinghistory.org

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4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**

Page ID

165289



Thomas Nast, “The Union As It Was—Worse Than Slavery,” 1874, wood engraving, illustration in Harper’s Weekly (October 24, 1874, Library of Congress) A conversation between Dr. Kimberly Kutz Elliott and Dr. Beth Harris

Warning: this video includes violent and racist imagery

This page titled 4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Kimberly Kutz Elliott, "Nast & Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon," in Smarthistory, March 17, 2021, accessed October 29, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/nast-reconstruction-political-cartoon/..

4.1.4: Nativism, immigration, and the Know-Nothing party

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**

Page ID
165290



Figure **4.1.4.1**: David Gilmour Blythe, *Justice* (detail), c. 1860, oil on canvas, 51.1 x 61.3 cm (**Fine Art Museums of San Francisco**)

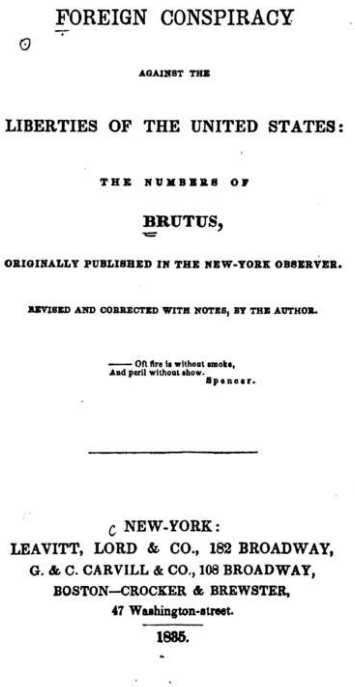
From the birth of the United States through the mid-nineteenth century, a small but steady stream of European immigrants flowed into the young nation. Most newcomers to the country in these early years—apart from the kidnapped Africans forced to immigrate before the international slave trade was banned in 1808—were comfortable both financially and culturally. They spoke English, hailed from Protestant nations, and were quickly welcomed into the American body politic. The Naturalization Act of 1790 permitted any “free white person” to become a U.S. citizen after two years of residency, and in some states male European immigrants had the right to vote as soon as they arrived. [1]



Figure 4.1.4.2: 1850s political cartoon, likely penned by political cartoonist John H. Goater, showing caricatures representing Irish and German voters "stealing an election." The man at center left is carrying a club and wearing a barrel labeled "Irish Whiskey," with a wild expression on his face. Next to him stands a man wearing a barrel labeled Lager Bier (intended to parody German beer) and carrying a pipe. Between them, they carry away a ballot box while a mob scene ensues at the building labeled "Election Day Polls" behind them. The cartoonist expresses a fear that immigrant voters have too much political power (New York Public Library Research Collections).

By the 1850s, however, that small stream of immigrants had grown into a mighty river: famine and revolution in Europe drove unprecedented numbers of immigrants to American shores. More than five times as many people immigrated to the United States in 1854 than in 1844, and most of the new immigrants were poor, Catholic laborers from Ireland or Germany. By 1860, more than 13% of U.S. inhabitants had been born elsewhere. Because the new immigrants were disproportionately young adults, their impact on the ballot box was even more pronounced. [2] Some native-born Americans began to fear that the existing laws governing naturalization and voting rights were too generous toward newcomers. A political cartoon from the 1850s expressed the sentiment that these new immigrants—considered too drunken and violent to wield political power wisely—were poised to "steal" American elections, depicting caricatures of Irish and German men carrying away the ballot box.

In northern cities, which had the largest immigrant populations, nativism—a set of beliefs favoring the interests of established inhabitants against those of immigrants—emerged in the 1830s but grew to a fever pitch by the late 1840s. White, native-born Americans felt threatened by immigrants on nearly every front. Economically, immigrants desperate for work might undercut wages for native-born laborers and artisans; politically, immigrants were a tempting bloc of voters whose fast-growing influence might eclipse that of native-born men. But the most insidious aspect of the new immigrants, in the eyes of nativists, was their Catholic faith.



FOREIGN CONSPIRACY

AGAINST THE

LIBERTIES OF THE UNITED STATES:

THE NUMBERS OF

BRUTUS,

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE NEW-YORK OBSERVER.

REVISED AND CORRECTED WITH NOTES, BY THE AUTHOR.

—— Of fire is without smoke,
And peril without show.
Spencer.

NEW-YORK:
LEAVITT, LORD & CO., 182 BROADWAY,
G. & C. CARVILL & CO., 108 BROADWAY,
BOSTON—CROCKER & BREWSTER,
47 Washington-street.
1835.

Figure **4.1.4.3**: Frontispiece of Samuel F. B. Morse's nativist tract "Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States" (Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835). Morse, who is most famous for inventing the telegraph and Morse code, was also a well-known painter. He was strongly anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant, and ran for mayor of New York City in 1836 as a member of the Nativist Party, the forerunner of the Know-Nothing Party.

Although the United States had no established church, it maintained a strong Protestant tradition. Despite a few pockets of Catholic toleration (notably Maryland), most states extended religious tolerance only to a few Protestant denominations. Many Protestant Americans saw the United States as carrying on the mission of its Puritan founders, and they tended to view Catholicism with suspicion. Because the Pope claimed authority from God, and answered to no earthly power, Americans saw him as the archenemy of democracy.

Nativists feared that Catholic immigrants would serve the interests of the Pope rather than those of the United States. Samuel F.B. Morse, most famous today as the inventor of the telegraph and Morse Code, was also a strident nativist who wrote pamphlets warning of the dangers of immigrants. In his 1835 polemic "Foreign conspiracy against the liberties of the United States," Morse alleged that immigrants "are not fitted to act with judgment in the political affairs of their new country, like native citizens educated from their infancy in the principles and habits of our institutions. Most of them are too ignorant to act at all for themselves, and expect to be guided wholly by others. . . . [T]hey are but obedient instruments in the hands of their more knowing leaders to accomplish the designs of their foreign masters." [3] Such conspiracy theories, which held that Catholics were scheming to place the United States under the thrall of the Vatican, abounded in nineteenth-century American print culture.

In northern cities, nativists began to form secret societies, like the "Order of United Americans" and the "Order of the Star-Spangled Banner," whose members vowed to vote only for native-born candidates for elected office and to oppose Catholic "aggressions" such as efforts to secure public funding for parochial schools. By 1854, hundreds of lodges for these societies dotted the country, drawing their membership primarily from young clerks, artisans, and laborers. When outsiders asked them about these societies, they were instructed to answer "I know nothing." [4]

The Know-Nothing Party

Although their secretive nature precludes an accurate count of their numbers, historians estimate that about a million people belonged to these nativist societies in the 1850s. They emerged as a political force in the form of the Know-Nothing Party (officially, the American Party, but the secret society catchphrase stuck). From relative obscurity, the Know-Nothing Party became a powerful movement practically overnight.

In 1854, Know-Nothings swept the Massachusetts state legislature (all but three of its new members belonged to the party) and also captured the mayor's office in cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco. In Baltimore, nativist gangs like the Blood Tubs and Plug Uglies made sure that voters cast their ballots for the Know-Nothings—or else. The party quickly came to dominate state legislatures in New England and won seats in Maryland, Tennessee, and Kentucky.



Figure **4.1.4.4**: David Gilmour Blythe, *Justice*, c. 1860, oil on canvas, 51.1 x 61.3 cm (Fine Art Museums of San Francisco).

A poster referencing the Blood Tubs, a Baltimore gang supporting the Know-Nothings, is fixed to the bench below the judge at bottom left. In the center, a police constable leads a disheveled man into the courtroom, gesturing with a nightstick. The central figure has a bleary expression and rosy cheeks, suggesting he may be drunk, and the figures behind him seem to be poor working people, likely recent immigrants. At the top left sits a stern judge, and below him a member of the press whose face is hidden from view. Sitting on a bench in the dim right side of the composition is a Black man holding a banjo, beneath a classical bust on a plinth. The dark colors and slanting light of the painting give it an uneasy feeling, as if all involved know that justice is not going to be done in this courtroom. Blythe was known to harbor nativist sentiments, and his unsympathetic rendering of this painting's subjects suggests he viewed immigrants as criminal.

The major issue of the Know-Nothing platform was limiting the political power of foreign-born men. Because Know-Nothings operated at the state and local level, their precise policy initiatives differed from region to region, but they did share some common elements. Know-Nothings championed voter suppression laws, such as increasing the naturalization waiting period to 21 years, imposing a further waiting period after naturalization before new citizens could vote, and restricting officeholding to native-born citizens. They opposed public funding for religious schools. Some Know-Nothings also favored temperance measures, which would outlaw the sale of alcohol (including, not coincidentally, the sacramental wine important to Catholic worship).

How did the Know-Nothing Party gain such influence in such a short time? In large part, they owed their success to the collapse of the Second Party System, a twenty-six year era during which the two major U.S. political parties were the Democrats and the Whigs. But when the Whig party—hopelessly split over slavery—disintegrated in the early 1850s, a period of political realignment ensued. Two new parties emerged to vie for the votes of former Whigs: the anti-slavery Republican Party, and the anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party. In the mid-1850s, which of these would ultimately become the major-party opponent to the Democrats was anybody's guess.

Each new party had something to tempt former Whigs. The Know-Nothings' nativist stance promised them a way to limit the political power of their old foes, the Democrats, who attracted the votes of new immigrants. Therefore, nativist policies that disenfranchised immigrants would help to keep the Democratic Party in check. In addition, the Know-Nothings adopted some of

the Protestant moral reforms, such as temperance, that Whigs had long seen as beneficial to the advancement of society. On the slavery issue, the national Know-Nothings were neutral, which offered a haven in the south for Whigs—and moderate Democrats—turned off by the southern Democrats' increasingly strident pro-slavery rhetoric.

The Republicans, by contrast, promised a firm commitment to anti-slavery policies, having come together in opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The Republicans also incorporated Whig economic ideas, favoring the expansion of banking, railroads, and access to western land for white farmers.

The only question was whether nativism and anti-slavery were compatible ideas; that is, could you be against immigrant rights and in favor of containing slavery at the same time? On this, opinion among both Know-Nothings and Republicans was divided. Some northern Know-Nothings saw slavery and Catholicism as twin evils, two powerful institutions bent on oppressing liberty. For them, there was no contradiction between opposing the institution of slavery and opposing the political power of Catholic immigrants. Likewise, some Republicans courted nativists, hoping to take advantage of their votes to further anti-slavery aims once elected. But other Republicans were dismayed by the surge in nativist sentiment, which they considered a distraction from the all-important issue of slavery. Furthermore, they viewed attempts to degrade immigrants as fundamentally at odds with efforts to improve the status of Black people.

In spite of these inconsistencies, the Know-Nothings were quite successful for a new party. At the height of their influence between 1854 and 1856, the Know-Nothings controlled 52 seats in the House of Representatives, including the Speakership, 6 seats in the Senate, and fielded a presidential candidate (Millard Fillmore) who won 21% of the popular vote.



Figure **4.1.4.5**: Know-Nothing Party flag, c. 1860.

In this context, "Native Americans" refers to native-born citizens of the United States (white non-immigrants), not Indigenous peoples of North America. An earlier incarnation of the Know-Nothing Party was called the Native American Party. The members of nativist secret societies sometimes wore faux "Indian" dress and referred to their leaders as chiefs or sachems. Some nativists did support the rights of Indigenous peoples, arguing that they had a greater claim to American citizenship than immigrants. [5] (image in the **public domain**)

But the Know-Nothings' star fell nearly as fast as it rose. At their first national convention in 1855, northern anti-slavery delegates bolted after southerners and conservatives approved the **Kansas-Nebraska Act**, signaling their support for the westward expansion of slavery. Anti-slavery Know-Nothings then joined the Republican Party. The Know-Nothing Speaker of the House, Nathaniel

Banks, soon aligned with the Republicans too. By the late 1850s it was clear that voters saw slavery, not immigration, as the most critical issue facing the nation, and that the Republican Party would replace the Whigs as the main opponent to the Democrats.

By 1860, the Know-Nothing Party was no longer a major contender for national office.

Nativism as a lasting political force

The end of the Know-Nothings did not spell the end of nativism or anti-Catholicism as a rallying cry in American politics. After the Civil War, Republicans in the north continued to attack the Irish and the Catholic Church, which were—as they saw it—inextricably linked with the corrupt Democratic party.

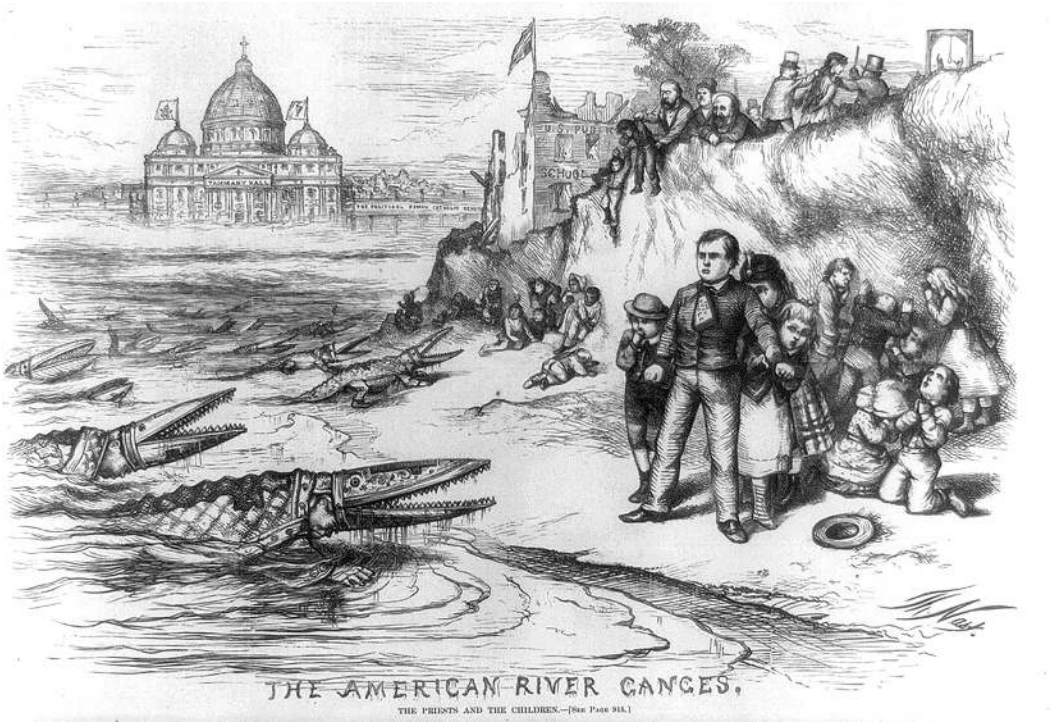


Figure **4.1.4.6**: Thomas Nast, "The American River Ganges, The Priests and the Children," *Harper's Weekly*, 1871.

In this political cartoon, the children on American shores are beset by "crocodiles," or bishops whose miters resemble crocodiles, protected by a lone Protestant man with a bible tucked into his shirt. In the background, Tammany Hall (the Democratic political machine in New York City) stands triumphant; its leader, Boss Tweed, stands at the top of the bluff (immediately above the man protecting the children) while his associates drop children into danger. A U.S. public school is crumbling, with the American flag turned upside down in distress. At the top right corner, Columbia—a female allegorical figure representing the United States—is being led to the gallows. (**Library of Congress**)

Political cartoonist Thomas Nast expressed his support for the rights of formerly-enslaved Black people at the same time as he skewered Catholics. His 1871 political cartoon "The American River Ganges" depicted Catholic bishops as crocodiles who were intent on gobbling up American children. The leaders of Tammany Hall—New York City's Democratic political machine, rendered as a twin of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in the cartoon—were throwing children down to them. Nast alternated cartoons like these with others, like 1874's "**The Union As It Was**" that sought the viewer's sympathy for the persecution of newly-free African Americans in the south.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, nativism reared its head once again as immigration to the United States reached new heights. Italians and Eastern Europeans fleeing poverty and religious persecution became **the "new" immigrants** as Irish and Germans became "white." Congress enacted laws banning Chinese and Japanese immigrants altogether during this period, and eventually passed sweeping measures limiting the stream of immigrants to a trickle. Fear of the "other" has remained a potent force in American society ever since.

Notes:

1. On voting for non-citizens see Alexander Keyssar, “The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States,” (Basic Books, 2009), pp. 27–28. Note that although the international slave trade was outlawed in 1808, some smugglers did continue to import human captives from outside the United States, and the internal slave trade continued to force people of African descent to migrate and labor against their will.
2. See **Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945**, Chapter B—Population Characteristics and Migration (Supplement to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, U.S. Census Bureau, 1949). Because immigrants were more likely to be adults, they constituted a greater percentage of the pool of eligible voters than of the population as a whole.
3. Samuel F.B. Morse, ***Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States***, (Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), p. 58.
4. See James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Ballantine Books, 1988), p. 135.
5. See Dale T. Knobel, “Know-Nothings and Indians: Strange Bedfellows?” *Western Historical Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April, 1984), 175-198.

Additional resources:

David Gilmore Blythe at the Google Art Project

Know-Nothing research guide at the Library of Congress

Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism & Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

Villanova University Library exhibit on the Know-Nothings

Digital Public Library of America’s exhibit, Political Outsiders in U.S. Presidential Elections

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.2: The 1893 Chicago World's Fair

4.2.1: The World’s Columbian Exposition- Introduction

4.2.2: The White City and fairgrounds

4.2.3: The Midway

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4.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition- Introduction

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

Page ID
165292



Figure 4.2.1.1: Thomas Moran's watercolor of the Administration Building at the Chicago World's Fair shows a radiant sunset illuminating its golden dome and the building façades of the "White City." Viewers of Moran's landscape look west, just as the Fair's organizers promoted the westward march of civilization. Thomas Moran, *Chicago World's Fair*, 1894, watercolor on paper (Brooklyn Museum).

Old and new frontiers at the Chicago World's Fair

> ***Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. . . . And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.—FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER [1]***

For six months, during the summer and fall of 1893, the city of Chicago hosted a World's Fair that drew more than 27 million visitors from all over the world. The official reason for the Fair was to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas, but unofficially, it served as an opportunity to reflect on the state of the nation. In the three decades after its deadly civil war, the United States had seen rapid social and economic changes. Workers had moved from farms to factories and from country to city; European immigrants had flocked to American manufacturing centers; telephones had connected distant cities made artificially bright by electric lighting.

Within little more than a generation, the United States had become the world's leading industrial power, while its government systematically dispossessed Indigenous peoples, deployed state power against striking laborers, and abandoned efforts to ensure Black equality in favor of acquiescing to Jim Crow segregation. What had the United States become by the end of the nineteenth century, and where was it heading in the twentieth? Those who planned, built, and visited the Fair used it as an opportunity to assert their vision of the national character and global power of the United States at the height of the Gilded Age.



Figure 4.2.1.2: View of the Great Exhibition in London in 1851—the first major world's fair. This view showcases Britain's imperial possessions (note the stalls proclaiming "silks" and "India" at the left foreground). White, classical-style sculptures were displayed on the floor and the barrel-vaulted ceiling soared so high that full-sized trees had ample room. The design of the hall (called the Crystal Palace) suggested that the people and resources of the world were products in a grand department store arranged for the judgement and selection of British citizens. Ackermann & Co, *The transept from the Grand Entrance. Souvenir of the Great Exhibition*, lithograph, 1851 (Victorian and Albert Museum).

World's fairs and the spectacle of colonialism

In the second half of the nineteenth century, grand exhibitions were all the rage among the imperial nations of the world. A world's fair was a place to exhibit products, inventions, arts, and cultures, and holding one was a way for a country to lay claim to the authority to label, organize, and own the peoples and resources of the world. In 1851, the United Kingdom had hosted the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace near London; in 1889, the Eiffel Tower crowned France's World's Fair commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution. The Parisian fair included an ethnological exhibit displaying people who lived in France's overseas colonies that both touted the reach of the French empire and implied that these "less evolved" peoples were incapable of self-rule.

Although the United States had celebrated its own revolutionary origins with the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, near the end of the century, U.S. civic leaders sought to bring international attention to its growing role as a world power. Why not another exposition, celebrating Columbus's arrival in the Americas? That Columbus was Italian, and had never set foot on soil claimed by the United States, was immaterial. (Perhaps fittingly, delays prevented the Fair from opening in 1892 as originally planned, and so the commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival was on neither the anniversary nor the site of his arrival). It was more to the point that the United States was, in the eyes of the Fair's promoters, the fulfillment of the historic process set in motion by Columbus: the domination of Indigenous and Black peoples by white Euro-Americans, the westward march of "civilization." Like those of the United Kingdom and France before it, the organizers of the 1893 World's Fair intended to showcase the growing power of the United States in the world and assert that the coming century would be the "American century."

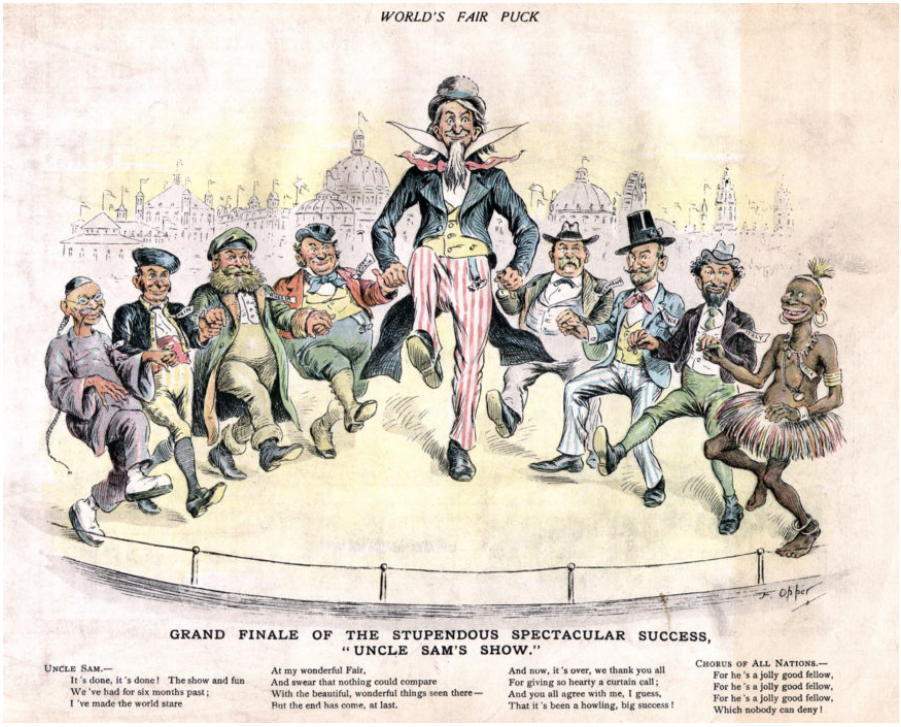


Figure **4.2.1.3**: Cartoon depicting a "grand finale" song and dance number, with racist caricatures representing various countries and continents of the world. Uncle Sam, at center, is the largest figure, literally "head and shoulders" above the rest. On either side are figures labeled with the names of European nations in descending order of perceived level of "civilization": on the left, from center out: Great Britain, Russia, and Spain, and on the right, from center out: Germany, France, and Italy. On the far left is a racist caricature representing "Asia" rather than a specific country, and on the far right, a racist caricature representing "Africa" rather than a specific country. The cartoon places the United States as the foremost nation in a world defined by racial hierarchy. J. Opper, *World's Fair Puck*, 1893.

Suffused with the contemporary racist pseudoscience of Social Darwinism—which claimed that white people with northern European ancestry were the most "evolved" race—the World's Fair cast other races and cultures as the living relatives of white people's distant ancestors. In its treatment of Indigenous Americans, the Fair's organizers openly celebrated imperialism and genocide as part of the "civilizing" force at work in this process, with exhibits showing how whites "educated" Indigenous children in boarding schools or conquered them in Wild West battle reenactments.

The defining event of its age

Conveniently for historians, the Fair's organizers were convinced that it would be the defining event of its age, thoroughly documenting their every decision and publishing guide books with explanations of how visitors should understand and experience the Fair. For that reason, the 1893 World's Fair is itself a kind of primary document about American society and culture at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition to its physical exhibits—which included buildings dedicated to exhibitions of the arts and sciences, pavilions where the nations of the world as well as U.S. states could entice tourists and trade, and a carnival midway with cheap amusements and exoticized entertainments—the Fair also served as a site for intellectual discussions. The World's Congress Auxiliary was a series of more than 200 international meetings, hosted at the newly-built Art Institute of Chicago, on topics ranging from women's progress to dentistry.

It was at a special meeting of the American Historical Association as part of the World's Congress that U.S. historian Frederick Jackson Turner articulated his famous "Frontier Thesis." The American national character of rugged individualism and democratic virtue, Turner claimed, had been formed from white settlers' ongoing experiences of "taming" a frontier that moved ever westward. But the 1890 census had delivered the startling news that white American settlement now stretched to the Pacific Ocean, and there was no more frontier to be found on the North American continent. What was to become of American culture?

The Chicago World's Fair answered that question through every aspect of its design. Its exhibits (and the exhibits that organizers rejected); the paintings displayed in the Fine Arts Building; the site plan and architectural style of its exhibit halls; the racial othering of the Midway Plaisance: all of these contributed to an argument that white Americans, and middle-class white cultural

norms, represented the crowning achievement of the progress of the human race. Consequently, it was only right that American culture should expand its influence beyond its borders, finding new frontiers overseas.

This essay will provide a brief history of the planning and construction of the Fair, and the two that follow will focus on the Fair's two main areas: the White City, and the Midway Plaisance.

Origins and construction of the Fair

In the early 1880s, eager to recreate the cultural and commercial success of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, American civic and business leaders seized upon the upcoming anniversary of Columbus's voyage as a reason to hold another world's fair. The U.S. Congress invited bids from cities to host the fair, and New York and Chicago vied until the last moment to win the right to host. Chicago triumphed, thanks to generous boosters who raised an additional $10 million of capital in twenty-four hours. The Fair ultimately cost over $25 million to build, or more than $735 million in 2021 dollars. [2]

The Fair's directors—a who's-who of Chicago's Gilded Age magnates and financiers, including department store owner Marshall Field, mechanical reaper inventor Cyrus McCormick, railroad baron George Pullman, and banker Lyman Gage—were determined to put on an exhibition that reflected the height of American sophistication. To design and supervise the building project, they hired Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, whose Montauk Building had been the first skyscraper built in Chicago.

Despite Chicago's emerging reputation as a mecca of modern architecture, Burnham hired mainly New York architects trained in the French Beaux-Arts style to design the Fair's exhibition halls. The Beaux-Arts style combined ancient Greek and Roman architecture with elements of Gothic and Renaissance styles to create opulent, often symmetrical buildings on a grand scale. Beaux-Arts architects believed these forms would inspire social harmony and moral uplift in communities, a theme taken up by the City Beautiful movement the Chicago World's Fair helped to inspire. With the exception of Adler & Sullivan's Transportation Building, the Fair's buildings were uniformly white and Beaux-Arts in style. Louis Sullivan (of Adler and Sullivan) would later gripe that the Fair directors' rejection of contemporary forms set American architecture back by fifty years. [3]



Figure 4.2.1.4: Frederick Law Olmsted, "Map of Jackson Park, showing location of proposed improvements by the World's Columbian Exposition Co.," 1891. Olmsted Papers (Library of Congress).

The responsibility for selecting and designing the site of the Fair was assigned to Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect who designed Central Park. Olmsted chose Jackson Park, seven miles south of downtown Chicago, as the site for the Fair, due to its beautiful view of Lake Michigan and easy access to rail. His design for the 690-acre site featured a central "Court of Honor"

surrounding a Grand Basin, as well as canals, a lagoon, and a man-made “Wooded Isle.” Olmsted believed that beautiful vistas and contact with nature would promote moral and civic virtue among city dwellers.

The steps of progress and civilization

Every decision about who and what to exhibit at the Fair was hard fought. The Smithsonian’s assistant secretary, G. Brown Goode, devised the scheme for organizing the Fair’s exhibitions. He proposed not only to showcase industrial and scientific achievements, but rather “the steps of the progress of civilization and its arts in successive centuries, and in all lands up to the present time and their present condition; to be, in fact, *an illustrated encyclopedia of civilization*.” [4]

To Goode, and the anthropologists who worked in his department, the process of becoming civilized was the process of attaining the contemporary beliefs and practices of white men. Unsurprisingly, women and people of color did not figure in this scheme, at least, not as representatives of civilization as it was understood. Although Congress created a Board of Lady Managers after prominent white women complained about their exclusion, every effort on the behalf of Black citizens to celebrate their achievements was rebuffed. (Read more about representation at the Fair in the White City article).



Figure **4.2.1.5**: Map of the World’s Columbian Exposition showing its major zones. Hermann Heinze, Souvenir map of the World’s Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, published by A. Zeese & Co., 1893 (Library of Congress).

As Burnham and Goode designed it, the Fair would have two main zones: the main fairgrounds, with 14 exhibition buildings dedicated to modern achievements in arts and industry, along with pavilions representing the 46 U.S. states and countries of the world that chose to participate; and the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long carnival of amusements and exhibits drawn from the “uncivilized” regions of the world. Burnham explained how visitors should interpret the these zones in the guidebook:

> ***Those about the Grand Basin [in the Court of Honor]…—the Administration, Manufactures, Agriculture, Machinery, Electricity, Mines, and also the Art Building—are essentially dignified in style; those lying farther to the north—the Horticultural, Transportation, and Fisheries—being less formal, blend readily with the more or less homelike headquarters buildings of the States and foreign governments, which are grouped among the trees of the extreme northern portion of the grounds. Upon the Midway Plaisance no distinct order is followed, it being instead a most unusual***

> ***collection of almost every type of architecture known to man—oriental villages, Chinese bazaars, and reproductions of ancient cities. All these are combined to form the lighter and more fantastic side of the Fair.—Daniel Burnham [5]***

Although the Fair's organizers had originally balked at including such "low" entertainments in their splendid city of progress, the popularity of the recent Paris Exposition's "ethnological villages," in which representatives from French colonies in Asia and Africa demonstrated their dress, culture, and dwellings, convinced them to include a similar area. Guides to the Fair instructed visitors to see the White City first, and then head to the Midway Plaisance to gawk at the Javanese and Dahomean villages, so they could gain a true understanding of how far humanity had progressed. [6] Indigenous Americans appeared in both zones: as anthropological exhibits in the fairgrounds, and as savage curiosities on the Midway. (**Read more about these exhibits in the Midway Plaisance article.**)

Construction of the Fair began in 1891. Laborers dug lagoons and canals and filled them with water from Lake Michigan. The exhibition buildings (intended to be temporary, they were essentially were steel-framed warehouses with intricate façades made of staff—a mixture of cement, plaster, and jute that could be poured into molds and quickly dried). Once assembled, the buildings were whitewashed, lending the attraction the nickname "The White City." Covered with electric bulbs, and three gargantuan spotlights, the Fair shone at night. The Fair opened to visitors on May 1, 1893.

Visit the Fair: The White City and fairgrounds

Visit the Fair: The Midway Plaisance

Notes:

1. Frederick Jackson Turner, "**The Significance of the Frontier in American History**," 1893.
2. Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition* (Arcadia, 2008), p. 10.
3. Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (Dover, 1956), p. 325.
4. G. Brown Goode, "**First Draft of a System of Classification for the World's Columbian Exposition**," 1891.
5. Daniel Burnham, quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 213.
6. Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876–1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 64–66.

Additional resources:

Read the Official Guide Book to the World's Columbian Exposition

View the Official Photographs of the Fair

See colorized photos of the Fair

Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984).

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4.2.2: The White City and fairgrounds

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

Page ID
165293



Figure 4.2.2.1: View of the Grand Basin in the middle of the Court of Honor, looking west toward the Administration Building. The statue in the foreground is *The Republic* by Daniel Chester French, an allegorical figure of the United States which held an eagle perching on top of a globe in its right hand (suggesting the nation's supremacy) and a staff topped by a Phrygian cap (an ancient Greek and Roman symbol of liberty) in its left hand. The Beaux-Arts style buildings that surrounded the Court of Honor exhibited the products and innovations of most "advanced" domains of science and manufacturing according to the Fair's organizers: mines, electricity, machinery, agriculture, and manufactures. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Looking West from Peristyle, in Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.

> ***Look here, old fellow, do you realize that this is the greatest meeting of artists since the Fifteenth Century?***
> ***—AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS, ARTISTIC ADVISOR TO THE WORLD'S FAIR [1]***

A visit to the World's Fair



Figure **4.2.2.2**: Major buildings and areas in the main fairgrounds of the World's Columbian Exposition. Numbers correspond to the fictional visitor's path in this essay. Hermann Heinze, Souvenir map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, published by A. Zeese & Co., 1893 (Library of Congress).

In the summer of 1893, there was no more exciting destination in the United States than the World's Columbian Exposition. Conceived as a celebration of the anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas, the Chicago World's Fair was a trade show, art gallery, lecture series, and museum exhibit rolled into one. **(Learn more about the ideas behind and construction of the World's Fair in this introductory essay.)** Author Hamlin Garland famously wrote to his parents to "Sell the cookstove if necessary and come. You *must* see the fair." [2] Everywhere the Fair was touted as a symbol of the "new era in the onward march of civilization" that heralded the ascendance of the United States in world events. Two articles of American patriotic practice emerged from the Fair: Francis J. Bellamy (cousin to Edward Bellamy, the socialist novelist quoted above who was considerably less enamored with the Fair) composed the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States for school children to recite across the country in honor of the occasion, and Katharine Lee Bates composed the song "America the Beautiful" after a western trip that included a stop at the Fair (one of its later verses includes a reference to the "alabaster" White City gleaming). [3]

The Fair consisted of two main zones: the main fairgrounds, which included the White City, and the Midway Plaisance, an adjacent carnival area. **This essay will focus on the visitor experience within the main fairgrounds; you can read about the Midway Plaisance in this essay.**

The White City

If a visitor arrived at the Fair by rail, she would step off the platform looking east toward Lake Michigan, with the golden-domed Administration Building immediately in front of her. To her left, the soaring archways of the Mines and Electricity Buildings welcomed her inside, while a seemingly endless row of columns decorated the front of the Machinery Building. If she walked on, she would arrive at the western end of the Grand Basin, a 1,000 foot long man-made pool that was separated from the lake by a columned peristyle. The Grand Basin and the buildings surrounding it were officially designated as the "Court of Honor," which the Fair's Director of Works, Daniel Burnham, cast as the "most dignified" region of the Fair, but their uniformly whitewashed façades lent them the popular name "The White City." (Although the buildings' exteriors were painted white to resemble marble, they were in fact made out of staff, a plaster substitute for stone that could be poured into a molded and quickly dried).



Figure **4.2.2.3**: View of the Court of Honor looking east toward Lake Michigan. The MacMonnies sculpture *Columbia in her Grand Barge of State* is in the right foreground. The Grand Basin ended in a columned peristyle (horizontal at center) before which stood Daniel Chester French's statue The Republic. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *World's Columbian Exposition, 1893*, gelatin silver print, 1893 (**Library of Congress**).

All of the buildings on the Court of Honor, as well as almost every other major exposition hall, had Beaux-Arts style façades; the leading architects of the era had trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the style was employed for many of the public buildings commissioned during the Gilded Age. Beaux-Arts architects combined elements of Greek and Roman architecture with Italian Renaissance styles to produce buildings that were imposing, symmetrical, and ornate. The World's Fair architects found this style particularly appropriate for their buildings because the United States was in the midst of an era of renewed nationalism after its 1876 centennial, with cultural critics declaring that the nation was the modern heir to Greek democracy, Roman law, and Renaissance humanism.

The exhibition halls of the Court of Honor were dedicated to the disciplines Burnham considered the pinnacle of human achievement (it could be argued that these are the ones most closely associated with white men: Mines, Electricity, Machinery, Agriculture, and Manufacturing). Each was an enormous steel-framed warehouse with a staff façade, designed by one of the leading architects of the era: Charles McKim, of McKim, Meade & White (of **Pennsylvania Station** and Columbia University fame) designed the Agricultural Building, while Richard Morris Hunt (designer of the entrance façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the pedestal of the **Statue of Liberty**) designed the Administration Building. Taken together, the white, Beaux-Arts buildings dedicated to sciences stood as a declaration that the center of the world's innovation and influence had moved west from Europe to the United States; and it was and ought to be under the exclusive control of white men.



Figure 4.2.2.4: Photograph of the Columbian Fountain by Frederick MacMonnies. The statuary group, made of plaster and staff, represents Columbia, an allegorical figure of the United States, in a triumphal barge. A winged figure representing Fame holds a trumpet (to herald her coming) and a laurel wreath (to crown her with victory). Figures representing the arts and sciences row with oars, and a winged male figure representing Time guides the rudder. The references to ancient Roman sculpture associate the United States with empire.

If our visitor walked on, she could gaze on the Columbian Fountain, featuring Frederick MacMonnies's sculpture *Columbia in her Grand Barge of State*. Electrified and illuminated at night, the fountain's sculpture (which does not survive) represented a number of allegorical figures, "an apotheosis of modern liberty—Columbia enthroned on a triumphal barge guided by Time, heralded by Fame, and rowed by eight standing figures, representing on one side the Arts, and on the other Science, Industry, Agriculture, and Commerce," according to the Fair's official guidebook. [4] A protégé of the Fair's artistic advisor, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, MacMonnies was an emerging American sculptor who had been trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. On the far side of the Basin stood Daniel Chester French's statue *The Republic*, an allegorical figure of the United States (illustrated at the top of this page), which stood more than 65 feet tall, holding an eagle perching on top of a globe in one hand, and a staff topped by a Phrygian cap in the other. Though the official guide to the Fair called these symbols an "invitation of liberty to the nations of the earth," the eagle (the national bird of the United States) on top of the globe sent a message that all the earth was U.S. domain. [5]

Our visitor may have walked down the southern length of the Grand Basin, stopping to see the Machinery and Agricultural Buildings, the latter topped by an enormous glass dome and Augustus Saint-Gaudens's statue of Diana, goddess of the hunt, holding a bow (it was intended for the Women's Building but prominent women organizers objected to the statue's nudity). If our visitor crossed through the peristyle she may have chosen to ride a moving sidewalk nearly half a mile into Lake Michigan (an innovative people-mover which helped visitors arriving by steamboat to cross the long distance to the Fair), or she may have turned back and strolled along the northern side of the Grand Basin. There, she could browse the largest building of the Fair, with more than 40 acres of floor space: the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, in which nations of the world displayed their finest products, and institutions trumpeted their achievements in science, medicine, education, journalism, and more.

To complete her loop of the White City, our visitor could stop by the Mines Building to see rare gems amidst the displays of coal and crude oil, and the Electricity building to see the newest inventions from Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, and the Bell Telephone Company. The Fair was illuminated at night thanks to the new technology of electrification, and the scientific contributions of these corporations argued for their central role in U.S. society.

The Transportation Building, Horticultural Building, and Palace of Fine Arts

The Court of Honor was perhaps the most prominent section, but there was a great deal more to see on the grounds of the World's Fair. As Burnham described the Fair's layout, exhibition halls "lying farther to the north—the Horticultural, Transportation, and Fisheries—being less formal, blend readily with the more or less homelike headquarters buildings of the States and foreign governments, which are grouped among the trees of the extreme northern portion of the grounds." [6]



Figure 4.2.2.5: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893, oil on canvas 18-1/2 x 26-1/4 inches / 47.0 x 66.7 cm (Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1999.67)



Figure 4.2.2.6: Frank Russell Green,) *Golden Doorway of the Transportation Building: World's Columbian Exposition, 1893*, 1893, oil on canvas. (45.7 x 66 cm (Chicago History Museum)

If our visitor turned north after visiting the Court of Honor, she would encounter the lagoon, which was surrounded by these “less formal” exhibition halls: the Horticultural Building, whose great glass dome allowed in sunlight in order to sustain fruits, vegetables, and flowers from all over the world, and the Transportation Building, with its celebration of railroads and steamships. Designed by Sullivan & Adler, the Transportation Building was the only exhibition hall that departed from the white, Beaux-Arts scheme: with its red walls, arched windows, and Golden Door (composed of a gold-painted quintuple arch decorated with a botanical motif) the building showcased Sullivan’s search for an new, organic American style matching form to function: an exhibition hall dedicated to transportation symbolized by a door opening to the world and arches recalling a train station.

Beyond the lagoon and north pond stood the Palace of Fine Arts (one of the only Fair buildings still extant, today it houses Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry). Fine arts comprised painting and sculpture: works produced solely for their aesthetic value, rather than practical function. A boat dock allowed weary visitors to take advantage of the services of a gondolier to reach it, the northernmost exhibition hall. The gondolas, which cruised around the lagoon and Grand Basin, reinforced the sense that the main fairgrounds were a dream city of the Italian Renaissance, featuring not just the architectural styles but also the transportation of Venice.

Within the Palace, every available inch of wall space was crowded with pictures. Still smarting from American art’s poorly received showing at the Paris Exposition of 1889, the Palace’s curators determined to include more than a thousand works showing the history and progress of American painting and sculpture. The selection of the head of the Department of Fine Arts and the members of various juries was highly contentious; bitter rivalries between the art establishments of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, the artists of eastern and western American cities, and those trained in Europe and those trained in the United States soured the process of choosing which works to exhibit. Well-known American artists, including Winslow Homer, John Singer Sargent, and James McNeill Whistler exhibited the most paintings, with curators hoping that their all-star team would prove that U.S. artists were finally capable of competing head to head with the French.



Figure **4.2.2.7**: Thomas Hovenden, *Breaking Home Ties*, 1890, oil on canvas, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Hovenden’s painting of a young man leaving home, clasped by his mother and surrounded by several generations of family, was the most popular painting at the Fair among visitors. The American subject matter and simple narrative of an important moment in family life was seen as proof that—despite industrialization, urbanization, and commercialism—the essential American character remained honest and kind. [7]

Critics gushed about the technical mastery of works like Sargent’s *Portrait of Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* and Whistler’s *Lady with the Yellow Buskin*, although many complained that American artists relied too heavily on European subjects, like Dutch tulip fields or the coast of Brittany. [8] Thomas Hovenden’s picture of a young man striking out on his own, *Breaking Home Ties*, was

purported to be the most popular picture among visitors to the Fair, who appreciated its simple, “homely” sentiment. Philadelphians selected no fewer than 10 paintings by Thomas Eakins to exhibit at the Fair, among them *The Gross Clinic* (which had been painted for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition but rejected for its depiction of gore). [9]

The Women’s Building



Figure **4.2.2.8**: Madeline Lemaire, illustration in *Art and Handicraft in the Woman’s Building*, lithograph, 1893. This frontispiece to a guide detailing the Woman’s Building shows a well-dressed, conventionally beautiful white woman holding a brush and palette amid objects representing art and craftwork. Sophia Hayden’s design for the Italian-Renaissance style palazzo forms the backdrop. The objects in the foreground suggest particularly feminine forms in art: a draped female marble statue gazes toward the building, while below it, a vase with a curvilinear profile suggests the female body. A spinning wheel below the main figure connects fiber arts with other pursuits, including reading, writing, and drafting. The poster casts the Women’s Building and women’s art as the delicate and refined work of upper-class white women.

If our visitor had not yet collapsed from exhaustion, she may have turned toward the Women’s Building, the Fair’s second-smallest building, situated at the intersection between the White City and the Midway Plaisance. Despite a petition to name some women to the Fair’s governing body, Congress instead created a “Board of Lady Managers.” [10] They hoped to steer the Fair away from giving visitors the impression that the progress of civilization was entirely the work of men. Led by Bertha Palmer, a savvy businesswoman and wife of real estate magnate Potter Palmer, the Lady Managers attempted to secure exhibits from women in all of the Fair’s exhibition halls. Nearly all their applications for space, however, met with rejection. (Pressed to appoint women to judge submissions of fine art, the male directors deliberately appointed female artists who were either living abroad or lacking money to travel, thus preventing their participation.) [11] Eventually, the Lady Managers consigned themselves to exhibiting only in a dedicated Women’s Building.

The Women’s Building was the only one in the Fair whose design was open to competition, as professional women architects were just beginning to enter the field. The winning design, an Italian-Renaissance style palazzo, was the work of Chilean-American architect Sophia Hayden, the first female graduate of MIT’s four-year architecture program. Hayden’s design echoed those of the other exhibition halls in celebrating the styles of Italy as the highest form of architecture, but contemporaries, like the *New York Times*, remarked on the building’s “soft and soothing atmosphere of womanliness” and the evidence within that women’s achievements were the “more refined avenues of effort which culminate in the home, the hospital, the church, and in personal adornment.” [12] Within the structure, murals by women artists depicted the mythical progress of women over the centuries: the two largest, on either end of the building, were the murals by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (painter and wife of Frederick), “Primitive Woman,” showing women carrying jugs of water on their heads and welcoming men back from the hunt, and Mary Cassatt, whose “Modern Woman” featured a triptych of young women pursuing fame, knowledge, and dance.

Despite their own frustrations with a Fair that sequestered women’s contributions, the Lady Managers nevertheless strongly supported its narrative of triumphant white civilization. They vociferously opposed appointing even a single Black woman to the Board, choosing instead to appoint a white woman to represent Black women’s interests. The only acknowledgement of the work

of women of color in the Women's Building was in a display of African, Asian, and Indigenous women's crafts: baskets, netting, and blankets. Although they were made by contemporary artists, the exhibit suggested that they were the work of white women's evolutionary ancestors: displays of what women's arts had been like in the distant past, before modern white women had been able to devote themselves to the fine arts of painting and sculpture. [13]



Figure 4.2.2.9: Ho-o-den, the Japanese national pavilion, was situated on the Wooded Isle. Designed by Masamichi Kuru, the pavilion showcased Japanese history and aimed to strengthen the relationship between Japan and the United States. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, The Japanese Ho-o-den, in Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.

Naval power and new horizons

Having left the Women's Building, our visitor may have chosen to browse some of the state and country pavilions at the north end of the fairgrounds, perhaps refreshing herself at the tea house at Ho-o-den, the beautiful Japanese pavilion situated on the Wooded Isle. Ho-o-den (the Phoenix Palace) was an authentic Japanese Pavilion designed by Masamichi Kuru, a Japanese architect who had studied western architecture. Situated within the main fairgrounds, but near the margin between the "civilized" and "uncivilized" worlds demarcated by the boundary leading to the Women's Building and the Midway beyond, the position of the Japanese national pavilion symbolized its developing trade and cultural relationship with the United States. Or perhaps she would have stepped out to breathe some fresh air from Lake Michigan, seeing the display of emergent U.S. naval might in the concrete-and-wood replica of a U.S. battleship in the north harbor, a stark contrast to the replica of a diminutive Viking ship docked next to it. The Viking ship was built in Norway and sailed to the World's Fair by way of the Atlantic, Hudson River, Erie Canal, and Great Lakes.

These were not the only ships at the Fair; if our visitor walked down the eastern border of the Fair past the Peristyle, she could marvel at exact reproductions of the three ships from Columbus's voyage: the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria. Docked in the South Inlet, the Agricultural Building dwarfed the small caravels, which had been constructed in Spain and sailed to the Fair.

Indigenous Americans at the Fair

If our visitor continued into the southeastern corner of the Fair, she may have been greeted by a few unusual sights: a set of Penobscot bark tipis from the Northern Woodlands region of Maine and Quebec, a Kwakwaka'wakw village, a simulated mountain cliff dwelling of the southwest, plaster casts of Maya ruins, and a model boarding school for Indigenous children set up by the U.S. Office of Indian Affairs. Perhaps among this diverse and ersatz display of Indigenous cultures she may even have seen Indigenous men in elaborate Plains war dress: members of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show (set up just outside the Midway) touring the main fairgrounds in costume as "free advertising" for the spectacle. [14] What was she to make of these contrasts?



Figure 4.2.2.10: Totem poles in front of the Kwakwaka'wakw village at the World's Fair. At right, the "Cliff Dwelling" exhibit is visible (topped by a flag). C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Houses and Totem Poles of Alaskan Indians, in Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.

Just a few short years after the U.S. army massacre of Lakota Sioux men, women, and children at Wounded Knee, the Chicago World's Fair was a site of contestation over the future of Indigenous people in the Americas. With the model boarding school—a working version of the schools that U.S. officials forced Indigenous children to attend in order to make them abandon Indigenous cultural practices and adopt white attitudes—the U.S. government made its commitment to exterminating Indigenous people and cultures clear. It was at the World's Fair that many non-native peoples formed their impressions of Indigenous cultures, from the notion that they constituted a "vanishing race," to the symbols of the feathered war-bonnet and the totem pole.

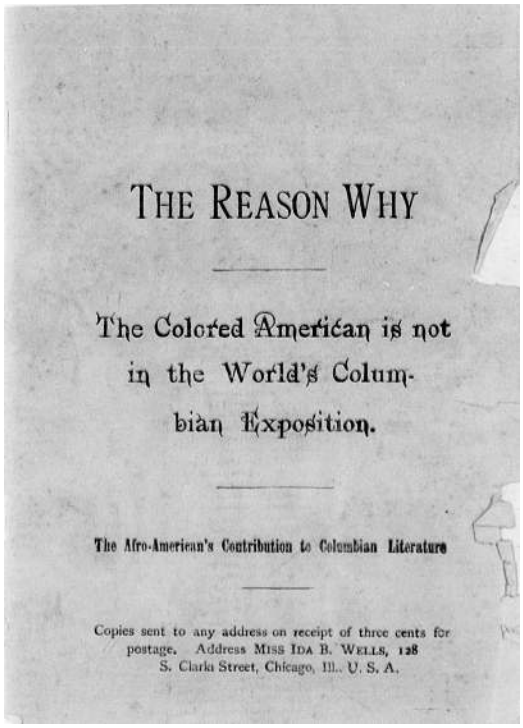
The Kwakwaka'wakw village was the work of the Department of Anthropology at the Fair. Directed by Frederic Putnam, with the help of his young assistant Franz Boas (who, as a professor at Columbia University, later became the "father of modern anthropology"), the Department of Anthropology enticed fourteen members of the Kwakwaka'wakw nation of British Columbia to live in a simulated village on the fairgrounds for the duration of the exposition and demonstrate their lifeways. Boas and other anthropologists also collected artifacts from Indigenous cultures across North America for display—the Smithsonian's exhibit deployed these objects in museum dioramas featuring mannequins engaged in various handicrafts.

The anthropologists believed that Indigenous people were a dying race whose culture and objects must be preserved before they were either exterminated or made inauthentic by the influence of Euroamerican culture. The objects they collected for the Fair—along with the dioramas—would go on to form the basis of the collections at Chicago's Field Museum. Indeed, anthropology as an academic discipline "came of age" at the Fair: the exhibits organized by the Smithsonian and the Peabody Museum introduced fairgoers to the nascent field, and museums across the country copied the geographically-arranged dioramas introduced there. [15]

But while the boarding school exhibit prescribed their extermination and the anthropological exhibits undertook to preserve objects that whites perceived as remnants that needed saving, Indigenous people themselves worked for their own benefit at the Fair, taking advantage of opportunities to earn money and resist repression. Kwakwaka'wakws performed ritual ceremonies, including the potlatch, which the Canadian government had outlawed. Even Buffalo Bill's performers had found a way to earn a living through their traditional cultural practices. [16]

Left out of the Fair: Black Americans and protest

Within the main fairgrounds, our visitor would have had few if any opportunities to appreciate the contributions of Black Americans to the United States. Historians have characterized this era as the “nadir” of American race relations. Jim Crow laws received the stamp of constitutionality from the U.S. Supreme Court. The year 1893 had the greatest number of lynchings on record between 1882 and 1940. [17]


THE REASON WHY

The Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition.

The Afro-American's Contribution to Columbian Literature

Copies sent to any address on receipt of three cents for postage. Address MISS IDA B. WELLS, 128 S. Clarke Street, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

Figure **4.2.2.11**: Frontispiece to Ida B. Wells’s pamphlet, *The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World’s Columbian Exposition.* Wells and Frederick Douglass led an effort at the Chicago World’s Fair to distribute more than 10,000 copies of the pamphlet, which detailed racial discrimination in the United States, especially lynching, alongside the achievements of Black Americans that the Fair ignored (Library of Congress).

At first, the Black press promoted the World’s Fair as an opportunity to showcase the great accomplishments that Black Americans had made just one generation removed from slavery. But soon it became clear that Black citizens were faced with obstacles in every attempt they made to participate in the Fair. President Benjamin Harrison refused to appoint a Black representative to the organizing commission, and Black workers found there were only menial roles available to them in the construction and operation of the Fair. Decisions about the state pavilions were made by state legislatures and organizing commissions, which excluded Black participants and ignored Black contributions to society. Even a proposal for a segregated Colored Exhibit was denied. In short, the White City was a thoroughly and deliberately segregated space.

To protest the exclusion of Black Americans from the World’s Fair, anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells and famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass (who had been appointed as a delegate for Haiti, not the United States) circulated 10,000 copies of a pamphlet at the Fair entitled *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World’s Columbian Exposition*. With its introduction translated into French and German in order to reach a broad audience, the pamphlet explained the history of slavery, the ever-growing horrors of lynching, and contrasted those with the achievements Black citizens had made in business, education, science, and the arts. The pamphlet went on to expose how each effort made to participate in the Fair had been rebuffed, making plain the discrimination operating at every level.

Douglass wrote, furious, that the only real representation of Black people at the Fair were the Dahomeans, “here to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage.” [18] Although he employed the same rhetoric of savagery as white observers, he was right to identify the unique problems that the Fair’s racial narrative posed for Black Americans. “Perhaps one of the most striking lessons which the Columbian Exposition taught was that African slavery in America had not, after all, been an unmixed evil,” concluded one 1894

book dedicated to the Fair, “for of a truth, the advanced social conditions of American Africans over that of their barbarous countrymen is most encouraging and wonderful.” [19]

Conclusion

On July 5, 1894, more than eight months after the official close of the Fair, a massive fire destroyed all that remained of the White City. It was the fourth and largest fire that had taken place on the fairgrounds, and the only one set deliberately: strikers from the nearby factory town of Pullman set it ablaze. [20] Despite its triumphant narrative of cultural and scientific supremacy, the World’s Columbian Exposition arrived in the midst of a grim economy and an increasingly vocal working class. The Panic of 1893 led to the greatest economic depression the country had yet experienced, and the Great Strike of 1894 showed that beautiful architecture did not ensure a compliant labor force, not when their wages were slashed and rents increased.

But if the Fair’s ideas about art and capitalism failed to take hold, its messages about race and empire were widely embraced. In 1896, the Supreme Court permitted “separate but equal” public accommodations for white and Black citizens in its *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, and in 1903 ruled that Congress did not have to honor treaties made with Indigenous nations. The numbers of Indigenous people living in the United States reached a “demographic nadir” of between 200,000 and 300,000 individuals around 1900, or less than 10% than had lived in North America before the arrival of Columbus. [21] And—although debates about the proper extent of U.S. imperialism abroad continued for several years—by the end of the century the U.S. government had taken possession of Hawai’i, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

The World’s Columbian Exposition both reflected the dominant white theories of race and evolution of its day and reproduced them as spectacle, suggesting to its 27 million visitors that all the people of the world were on a continuum of civilization. But, to accomplish this, the White City had to exist in a constant state of comparison with the “uncivilized” portion of the Fair: the Midway.

Notes:

1. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 217.
2. Hamlin Garland in a letter to his parents, 1893. See A History of the Fair.
3. See Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 46. This early version of the pledge was shorter: “I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” The Catholic fraternal order, the Knights of Columbus, urged Congress to add “under God” to the pledge in the 1950s. On America the Beautiful, see Chaim M. Rosenberg, *America at the Fair: Chicago’s 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition* (Arcadia, 2008), p. 10.
4. John J. Flinn, Official Guide to the World’s Columbian Exposition (The Columbian Guide Company, 1893), p. 39.
5. Flinn, p. 40.
6. Quoted in Trachtenberg, p. 213.
7. Carolyn Kinder Carr, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 2893 World’s Fair* (National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, 1993), p. 178.
8. Carr, p. 178.
9. Carr, p. 100-102.
10. Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 33.
11. Carr, pp. 81-82.
12. Quoted in Bederman, p. 34.
13. Bederman, p. 38.
14. David R. M. Beck, *Unfair Labor? American Indians and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019), p. 39.
15. See Curtis M. Hinsley and David R. Wilcox, eds., *Coming of Age in Chicago : The 1893 World’s Fair and the Coalescence of American Anthropology* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016).
16. Beck, p. xvii.

17. See Charles Seguin and David Rigby, "National Crimes: A New National Data Set of Lynchings in the United States, 1883 to 1941," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, May 6, 2019.
18. Ida B. Wells and Frederick Douglass, The Reason Why The Colored American is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.
19. Quoted in Rydell, p. 53.
20. Trachtenberg, p. 209.
21. Douglas H. Ubelaker, "North American Indian population size, A.D. 1500 to 1985," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, vol. 77, no. 3 (Nov. 1988), pp. 389-294.

Additional resources

Learn more about the architecture of the Court of Honor

Watch a lecture on the anthropology exhibits at the White City

See an interactive map of the Fair from the Harvard Worldmap Platform

Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, 1982).

Carolyn Kinder Carr, *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 2893 World's Fair* (National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, 1993).

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4.2.3: The Midway

by DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT

Page ID
165294



Figure 4.2.3.1: View of the Midway Plaisance during the Chicago World's Fair, looking east. The Ferris Wheel, at center right, was the towering attraction of the Midway, built to rival the Eiffel Tower. Also visible here is the captive balloon, a hot-air balloon that would rise and descend in place, and the pagoda-like tower of the Chinese theatre just to the left of the base of the Ferris wheel. C.D. Arnold, "World's Columbian Exposition, Midway Plaisance," from *World's Fair: General Views and Midway*, 1893 (Art Institute of Chicago).

This essay focuses on the experience of a visitor to the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long carnival area adjacent to the main fairgrounds, featuring carnival rides, performances, food stalls, and inhabited "villages" purporting to display architecture and customs from around the world.

A human curiosity shop

> ***The Midway Plaisance is a sort of curiosity-shop, in which the curiosities are mainly men and manners.***
> ***—Julian Hawthorne [1]***

When the Fair's boosters originally conceived of the World's Columbian Exposition, they did not intend to set aside any space for a side show, where popular amusements and "exotic" exhibits could titillate spectators. The fair was to be what they considered "high culture" (the ideas and achievements of white westerners) without any "low-brow" (a recently coined term borrowed from phrenology, which popularized the racist idea that non-whites were less evolved, or closer to heavy-browed neanderthals) entertainments.

But the popularity of the ethnological exhibits at the 1889 Paris Exposition—not to mention its handsome profits—convinced the Chicago Fair directors to include such a space. For this purpose, they decided to reserve the Midway Plaisance, a mile-long shady pleasure drive ("plaisance") that connected Jackson Park with nearby Washington Park. In this way, the pre-existing name, Midway

Plaisance, was shortened to “midway” and entered the English lexicon as a term denoting any carnival area with games, rides, and vendors.

To give the Midway the sheen of educational value, the directors put Frederic Putnam, the head of the Fair’s Department of Ethnology and Archaeology, in charge. Putnam and his associates hired impresario Sol Bloom to plan the Midway’s exhibits, explaining its curious mix of spectacle and “education.” Consequently, visitors were encouraged to see the Midway not just as a carnival but as a kind of living museum of human evolution, as imagined in the racist theory of Social Darwinism then prevalent among anthropologists. At the far end of the strip were exhibits from those the Fair directors considered the “least evolved” peoples of the world (the Dahomeans and the Indigenous Americans), near the center were the “half-civilized” (Middle Easterners and Pacific Islanders), and closest to the fairgrounds were those most nearly approaching the evolutionary heights of white Americans (the Japanese, Irish, and Germans). In reality, space constraints and some turnover in attractions over the course of the Fair meant that the exhibit areas could not be so easily categorized, but the implication of the scheme was not lost on visitors. The Chicago Tribune reported that on the Midway, “an opportunity was here afforded to the scientific mind to descend the spiral of evolution, tracing humanity in its highest phases down almost to its animalistic origins.” [2]

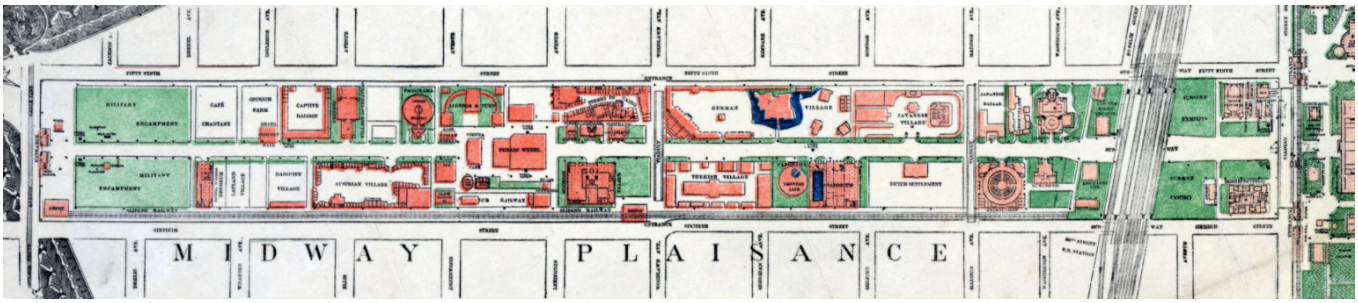


Figure **4.2.3.2**: Detail of the map of the World’s Fair, featuring the Midway Plaisance. The entrance to main fairgrounds was located on the right side. Hermann Heinze, Souvenir map of the World’s Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, published by A. Zeese & Co., 1893 (Library of Congress).

A visit to the Midway

If a visitor arrived at the Midway, perhaps on the day after her trip to the White City, she might be overwhelmed by the variety of sights and sounds. Unlike the white Beaux-Arts buildings of the Court of Honor, the Midway was deliberately diverse in its landscape: from the west entrance alone she may have spied an ostrich farm from California, the towers of the Chinese Theatre, a mock Bedouin encampment, and painted reindeer adorning the entrance to Lapland village. A mile long and six hundred feet wide, the Midway included popular amusements along with pavilions constructed by national delegations. Most shows and exhibits charged an additional entrance fee, as opposed to the White City exhibitions, which were free with an entrance ticket.

For many visitors, the Midway was the real attraction of the World’s Fair. Those looking for thrills could ride the 264-foot high Ferris wheel (the first ever engineered on such a scale, built by George Washington Gale Ferris himself), ascend in a captive hot air balloon, or zoom around on the refrigerated “ice railway” (toboggan roller coaster). The Midway also offered an education (of questionable accuracy) in world cultures, with food, exhibits, and performances from countries that both were, and were not, officially represented within the White City. Several nations sent delegations to inhabit “villages” where they would exhibit their homes, style of dress, and customs to visitors, while selling food and merchandise.

The western end of the Midway: The Wild West, the Wild East, and Dahomey village



Figure **4.2.3.3**: Exterior of the Sitting Bull exhibit, topped by a stuffed buffalo. The paintings on the exterior depict both "Custer's Last Stand" at the Battle of Greasy Grass and the death of Sitting Bull outside his cabin. "Entrance to Sitting Bull's Log Cabin, Midway Plaisance," 1893 (Chicago00).

It's possible that our visitor may have come to the Midway after taking in a performance at Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World, a touring rodeo of cowboys, Indigenous Americans, and sharpshooters that was unaffiliated with the World's Columbian Exposition but located a few blocks away from the Fair. The showman and entrepreneur Buffalo Bill had originally intended to exhibit at the Midway but balked when the Fair's organizers demanded 50% of his profits. They would bitterly regret their decision not to negotiate a smaller cut after the Wild West show's six-month run reportedly raked in a million dollars, the equivalent of $30 million in 2021 dollars. [3] Among other acts, the Wild West show offered reenactments of famous battles of the Indian Wars, which cast Plains peoples as savages whose attacks on white settlers and the U.S. military must be avenged by white frontiersmen.

Within the Midway, exhibitors tried to capitalize on the popularity of the Wild West show by adding both a "Wild East Show" (featuring trick riders from North Africa and the Middle East) and a display of Sitting Bull's Log Cabin. The cabin—disassembled and transported from its South Dakota location after Sitting Bull's death at the hands of police—reinforced the idea that Indigenous Americans had been conquered, along with the frontier, and what had been theirs was now the property and even plaything of white Americans. The parade of symbols showing defeated Indigenous people reinforced the Fair's overall message that Manifest Destiny in North America was complete.

If our visitor progressed, the next most notable exhibit she would encounter was the Dahomean village, where more than 100 Fon people from the Kingdom of Dahomey demonstrated music, dance, and religious rituals. Amid the Second Franco-Dahomean War, a French impresario named Pené brought the Dahomeans as an exhibit to Chicago. Known for their fierce female warriors—often called 'Amazons' in popular culture—and for their rumored cannibalism, the ethnology department felt that the Dahomeans would serve as an example of the state of nature from which humanity had arisen. The Chicago press portrayed the Fon as savages, "blacker than buried midnight and as degraded as the animals which prowl the jungles of their dark land," and they were frequent targets of racist caricature, depicted as the least-evolved people at the World's Fair. [4] At the far end of the Midway, billed as a carnival attraction, the Dahomeans were cast as the antithesis of everything that the White City represented.



Figure **4.2.3.4**: Exterior view of the Dahomey Village, with painted advertisements depicting Dahomean men and women wielding weapons. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, Dahomey Village—On the Midway, in Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.



Figure **4.2.3.5**: Two Dahomean men. The man on the left is dressed in an American flag and jacket, while the man on the right wears traditional clothing. "From Far Away Dahomey," 1893 (Friends of the White City).

The center of the Midway: rides and orientalist spectacles



Figure **4.2.3.6**: The Ferris wheel was the monumental attraction of the Chicago World's Fair. Standing 264 feet tall, its cars could each hold up to 60 people at a time. Approximately 38,000 passengers rode the Ferris wheel each day it operated. Also visible in this photograph is the ice railway in the right foreground, the dome of the Moorish Palace, and some of the minarets of Cairo Street. C.D. Arnold and H.D. Higinbotham, The Ferris Wheel, in **Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition**, 1893.

Not everything on the Midway was intended to be an object lesson in Social Darwinism. Past the Dahomey village our visitor could see a panorama of the eruption of Kilauea (the U.S.-backed coup of the Hawaiian throne in January 1893, still being contested that summer, had increased white Americans' interested in the island nation), ride the enormous Ferris wheel or the ice railway, or stop into the Zoopraxigraphical Hall, the world's first commercial motion picture theater, where **Eadweard Muybridge** gave lectures on locomotion and demonstrated moving pictures on his "zoopraxiscope."

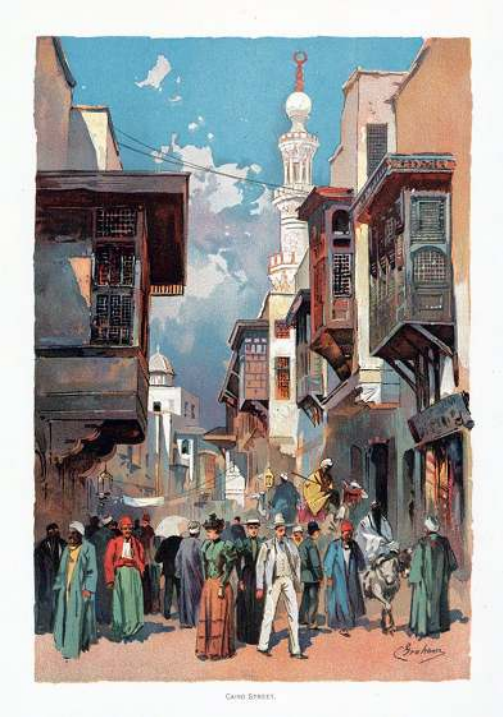


Figure 4.2.3.7: Charles S. Graham, *Cairo Street*, plate in *The World's Fair in Water Colors*, Springfield, 1893.

But this central part of the Midway was also devoted to North Africa and the Middle East, with an Algerian and Tunisian village, a Moorish Palace, and Egypt's popular Midway attraction, Cairo Street. Cairo Street aimed to immerse visitors in an Egyptian streetscape featuring houses, shops, a Temple of Luxor replica, and a mosque topped with a minaret (thought to be one of the first mosques in the United States, it was a site of worship for the Muslim citizens who worked at the Fair in addition to a landmark). Visitors could ride camels, see a simulated wedding procession, and view a belly dancer called "Little Egypt," whose "hootchy-kootchy" dance became an international sensation. These exhibits contrasted an **orientalist** view of the east as exotic, sexualized, unchanging, and superstitious, against the rational, chaste, developed, and pious West exemplified by the White City.

The eastern end of the Midway: Pacific and European connections

As our visitor drew closer to the White City, there were villages celebrating Europe: a German village and an Irish village featuring a replica of Blarney Castle. These were interspersed with a Javanese village, a Samoan village, and a Japanese bazaar. Unlike the Dahomeans, the Javanese were lauded in the American press as friendly and hardworking, but childlike. (Japan, like its European counterparts, had both an official national pavilion in the main fairgrounds and a village on the Midway thanks to its early and enthusiastic participation in the Fair; China, whose government understandably resented the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, had refused to participate, and the Chinese village on the Midway was operated by Chinese Chicagoans who saw the Fair as an opportunity to promote cultural understanding). [5] The incorporation of Japan reflected U.S. interests in the newly open nation, while the positive, if patronizing, images of the Samoans in the American press helped to lay the groundwork for popular support of annexing American Samoa in 1899.



Figure 4.2.3.8: Samoan performers singing in front of a dwelling. (Friends of the White City)

There was a certain logic to this combination of European and Pacific nations: the former—especially the Irish and Germans—were the most recently assimilated ethnicities in the American body politic. The latter were among the nations with whom the U.S. government was most keen to open trade relationships, and whom they eyed as potential imperial subjects. Each was next door to the grand celebration of American cultural and industrial might that was the White City, but remained separate.

Conclusion: "The World as Plaything"

Julian Hawthorne, son of Nathaniel and keen cultural critic, claimed that the Midway should be named "The World as Plaything," a set of humans, landscapes, and objects that invited American visitors to view them as toys. [6] Although the Fair's promoters had not originally intended to include the Midway attractions, they were integral to the narrative of evolution and empire at the Chicago World's Fair. Within the main fairgrounds was the "civilized" world, capped by the homogenous order of the Court of Honor, which represented what the Fair directors considered the highest achievements of men and whose architecture looked back to ancient Greece and Rome to claim the heritage of western civilization. Outside was the deliberately disordered Midway, with its carnival barkers, jumble of architectural styles, and exoticized cultures. And all of it was for sale, or there for the taking, encouraging white visitors to view the resources and lands of Asia, Africa, and the Americas as theirs for the taking.

Just five years after the World's Fair and the Midway closed in 1893, the United States expanded its empire outside the bounds of North America, formally annexing Hawai'i (after staging a coup that deposed Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani in 1893) and taking possession of former Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific after its victory in the Spanish-American War. Was it a coincidence that the United States, having claimed ownership of Christopher Columbus's mantle with its World's Columbian Exposition, now claimed the lands his voyages had brought into the Spanish empire? Or that the people of Cuba, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Philippines found themselves part of an American empire that would cast them as members of a permanent sideshow, adjacent to but never able to enter the white city of Washington, D.C.? Perhaps, but the Chicago World's Fair certainly primed white Americans to think in these terms as it transitioned from one frontier to the next.

Notes

1. Julian Hawthorne, "The Lady of the Lake," *Lippincott's Magazine*, Aug 1893.
2. "Through the looking Glass" Chicago Tribune 1 Nov 1893, 9, quoted in Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 65
3. Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (Hill and Wang, 2000), p. 129.

4. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* p. 66.
5. Huping Ling, *Chinese Chicago: Race, Transnational Migration, and Community since 1870* (Stanford University Press, 2021), p. 63.
6. Hawthorne, "Foreign Folk at the Fair," Cosmopolitan Magazine, 15 (1893), pp. 569- 570, quoted in Rydell, *All the World's a Fair,* p. 64.

Additional resources

Walk down the Midway with the Chicago 00 Project

Read the autobiography of Sol Bloom

See more images of the Midway at Friends of the White City

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.3: Romanticism

Romanticism in the United States took up themes of nature and spirituality in uniquely American ways.

c. 1800 - 1860

4.3.1: Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert

4.3.2: Thomas Cole

- 4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden
- 4.3.2.2: The Oxbow
- 4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream
- 4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return

4.3.3: Hicks's The Peaceable Kingdom as Pennsylvania parable

4.3.4: George Catlin, The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas

4.3.5: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze

- 4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware
- 4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way

4.3.6: Rothermel, De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi

4.3.7: Jasper Francis Cropsey, Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains

4.3.8: Frederic Edwin Church

- 4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes
- 4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi
- 4.3.8.3: The Iceberg

4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine

4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California

4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

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4.3.1: Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert

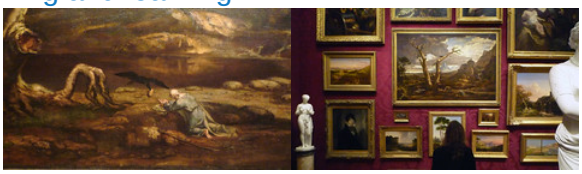
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Video **4.3.1.1**: Washington Allston, *Elijah in the Desert*, 1818, oil on canvas, 125.09 x 184.78 cm / 49 1/4 x 72 3/4 inches (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.3.2: Thomas Cole

4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden

4.3.2.2: The Oxbow

4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream

4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return

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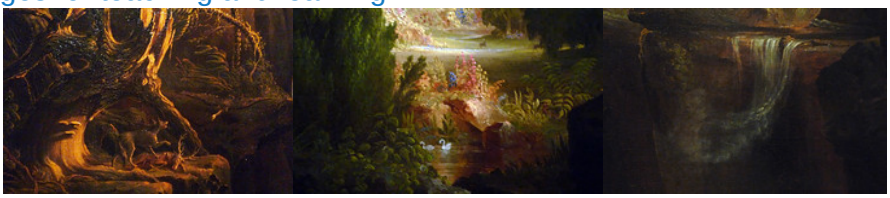
4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden

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Video 4.3.2.1.1: Thomas Cole, *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, 1828, oil on canvas, 100.96 x 138.43 cm (39-3/4 x 54-1/2 inches) (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

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4.3.2.2: The Oxbow

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Video **4.3.2.2.1**: Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm — The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76″ / 130.8 x 193 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City)

An American painter born in England

During the nineteenth century—an expanse of time that saw the elevation of landscape painting to a point of national pride—Thomas Cole reigned supreme as the undisputed leader of the Hudson River School of landscape painters (not an actual school, but a group of New York city-based landscape painters). It is ironic, however, that the person who most embodies the beauty and grandeur of the American wilderness during the first half of the nineteenth century was not originally from the United States, but was instead born and lived the first seventeen years of his life in Great Britain. Originally from Bolton-le-Moor in Lancashire (England), the Cole family immigrated to the United States in 1818, first settling in Philadelphia before eventually moving to Steubenville, Ohio, a locale then on the edge of wilderness of the American west.



Figure **4.3.2.2.2**: At The Metropolitan Museum of Art, looking at Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, 130.8 x 193 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Early years

Cole worked briefly in Ohio as an itinerant portraitist, but returned to Philadelphia in 1823 at the age of 22 to pursue art instruction that was then unavailable in Ohio. Two years later, Cole moved to New York City where he exchanged his aspirations of painting large-scale historical compositions for the more reasonable artistic goal of completing landscapes. For instruction, Cole turned to a book, William Oram's *Precepts and Observations on the Art of Colouring in Landscaping* (1810), an instructional text that had a profound effect on Cole for the remainder of his artistic career.

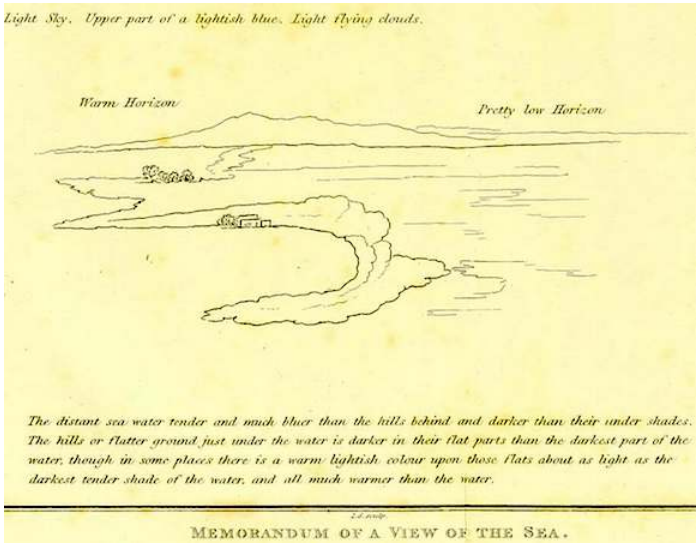


Figure 4.3.2.2.3: William Oram, *Precepts and observations on the art of colouring in landscape painting* (Charles Clarke, 1810)

An important ally and an influential patron

Cole found quick success in New York City. In the year of his arrival, 1825, John Trumbull, the patriarch of American portraiture and history painting, and the president of the American Academy of Design "discovered" Cole, and the older artist made it an immediate goal to promote the talented landscape painter. In the months to follow, Trumbull introduced Cole to many of the wealthy and prominent men who would become his most influential patrons in the decades to follow. One such man was Luman Reed, an affluent merchant who, in 1836, commissioned Cole to paint the five-canvas series *The Course of Empire*.



Figure 4.3.2.2.4: Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: Destruction*, 1833-36, oil on canvas, 39 ½ × 63 ½" (The New-York Historical Society)

Landscapes imbued with a moral message

It is in this series—and in many of the paintings to follow—that Thomas Cole found the aesthetic voice to lift the genre of landscape painting to a level that approached history painting. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, great artists aspired to complete large-scale historical compositions, paintings that often had an instructive moral message. Landscape paintings, in contrast, were often though more imitative than innovative. But in *The Course of Empire*, Cole was able to take the American landscape and imbue it with a moral message, as was often found in history paintings. Indeed, the landscapes Cole began to paint in the 1830s were not entirely about the land. In these works, Cole used the land as a way to say something important about the United States.

The Oxbow: More than a bend in the Connecticut River

A wonderful illustration of this is Cole's 1836 masterwork, *A View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm*, a painting that is generally (and mercifully) known as *The Oxbow*. At first glance this painting may seem to be nothing more than an interesting view of a recognizable bend in the Connecticut River. But when viewed through the lens of nineteenth-century political ideology, this painting eloquently speaks about the widely discussed topic of westward expansion.



Figure **4.3.2.2.5**: Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76″ / 130.8 x 193 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

When looking at The Oxbow, the viewer can clearly see that Cole used a diagonal line from the lower right to the upper left to divide the composition into two unequal halves. The left-hand side of the painting depicts a sublime view of the land, a perspective that elicits feelings of danger and even fear. This is enhanced by the gloomy storm clouds that seem to pummel the not-too-distant middle ground with rain. This part of the painting depicts a virginal landscape, nature created by God and untouched by man. It is wild, unruly, and untamed.



Figure **4.3.2.2.6**: Blasted Tree (detail), *Thomas Cole, View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm —The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76″ / 130.8 x 193 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Within the construction of American landscape painting, American artists often visually represented the notion of the untamed wilderness through the "Blasted Tree, a motif Cole paints into the lower left corner. That such a formidable tree could be obliterated in such a way suggests the herculean power of Nature.



Figure 4.3.2.2.7: Pastoral landscape (detail), Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76″ / 130.8 x 193 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

If the left side of this painting is sublime in tenor, on the right side of the composition we can observe a peaceful, pastoral landscape that humankind has subjugated to their will. The land, which was once as disorderly as that on the left side of the painting, has now been overtaken by the order and regulation of agriculture. Animals graze. Crops grow. Smoke billows from chimneys. Boats sail upon the river. What was once wild has been tamed. The thunderstorm, which threatens the left side of the painting, has left the land on the right refreshed and no worse for the wear. The sun shines brightly, filling the right side of the painting with the golden glow of a fresh afternoon.

Manifest Destiny

When viewed together, the right side of the painting—the view to the east—and that of the left—the west—clearly speak to the ideology of Manifest Destiny. During the nineteenth century, discussions of westward expansion dominated political discourse. The Louisiana Purchase of 1804 essentially doubled the size of the United States, and many believed that it was a divinely ordained obligation of Americans to settle this westward territory. In *The Oxbow,* Cole visually shows the benefits of this process. The land to the east is ordered, productive, and useful. In contrast, the land to the west remains unbridled. Further westward expansion—a change that is destined to happen—is shown to positively alter the land.



Figure 4.3.2.2.8: Self-Portrait (detail), Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 76″ / 130.8 x 193 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



Figure **4.3.2.2.9**: Charles Wilson Peale, *The Artist in His Museum*, 1822, oil on canvas, 263.5 x 202.9 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Although Cole was the most influential landscape artist of the first half of the nineteenth century, he was not completely adverse to figure painting. Indeed, a close look at *The Oxbow*, reveals an easily overlooked self-portrait in the lower part of the painting. Cole wears a coat and hat and stands before a stretched canvas placed on an easel, paintbrush in hand. The artist pauses, as if in the middle of the brushstroke, to engage the viewer. This work, then, in a kind of "artist in his studio" self-portrait—is akin, in many ways, to Charles Willson Peale's 1822 work *The Artist in His Museum.* In each, the artist depicts himself in his own setting. For Peale, this was his natural history museum in Philadelphia. For Cole, this was the nature he is most well known for painting.

Lasting influence



Figure **4.3.2.2.10**: Frederic Edwin Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, oil on canvas, 168 x 302.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Although he only formally accepted one pupil for instruction—this was, of course, Frederic Edwin Church—Thomas Cole exerted a powerful influence on the course of landscape painting in the United States during the nineteenth century. Not content to merely paint the land, Cole elevated the landscape genre to approach the status of historical painting. The landscape painters who followed during the middle of the nineteenth century—Church, Durand, Bierstadt, and others—would often follow the trail that Cole had blazed.

Additional resources:

This painting at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Cedar Grove, The Thomas Cole National Historic Site

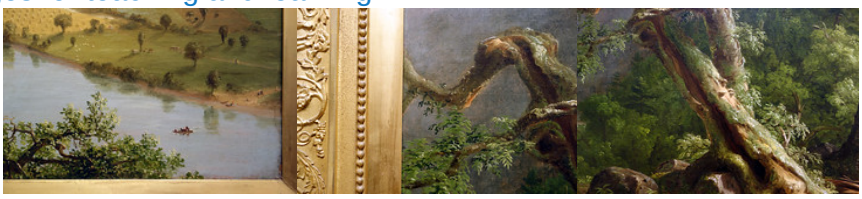
Hudson River School on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Thomas Cole on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

On Cole's The Course of Empire

Carl Pfluger, The Views and Visions of Thomas Cole, The Hudson River Review, vol. 47, no. 4 (Winter 1995), pp. 629-35

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4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream

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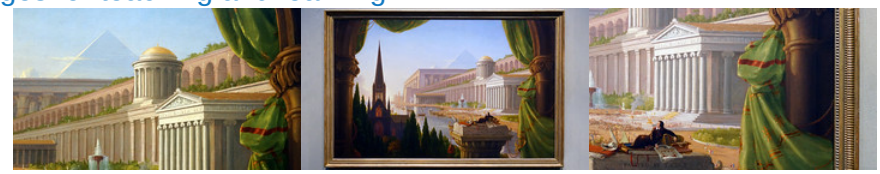


Video **4.3.2.3.7**: Thomas Cole, *The Architect's Dream*, 1840, oil on canvas, 134.7 x 213.6 cm (Toledo Museum of Art)

Additional resources

This painting at the Toledo Museum of Art

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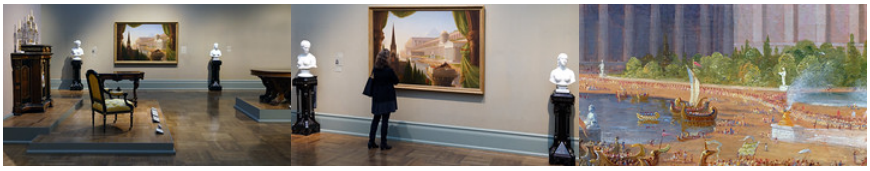
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4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return

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165301



Video **4.3.2.4.1**: Thomas Cole, *The Hunter's Return*, 1845, oil on canvas (Amon Carter Museum of American Art). Speakers: Dr. Maggie Adler, Curator, Amon Carter Museum of American Art and Dr. Beth Harris

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4.3.3: Hicks's The Peaceable Kingdom as Pennsylvania parable



Video **4.3.3.1**: Edward Hicks, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 1826, oil on canvas, 83.5 x 106 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art) Speakers: Barbara Bassett, Curator of Education, School and Teacher Programs at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Beth Harris A Seeing America video

Additional resources:

This painting at The Philadelphia Museum of Art

A version of The Peaceable Kingdom at The Brooklyn Museum

A version of The Peaceable Kingdom at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Holland Cotter ART REVIEW; Finding Endless Conflict Hidden in a Peaceable Kingdom (June 16, 2000)

Biography of the artist from The National Gallery of Art

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4.3.4: George Catlin, The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas

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Figure **4.3.4.1**: George Catlin, *The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas*, 1844-45, oil on canvas, 71 x 58 cm (National Gallery of Art, Washington)

> ***Robed in his most splendid costume, his face gleaming with precious vermillion paint, he sits, like the prince he is, among his proud acolytes, solemnly smoking his pipe. [He is] a modern Jason.[1]***

This is what the nineteenth century French novelist and critic George Sand said when she first saw this striking portrait of the head chief of the Iowas, The White Cloud, or "Mew-hu-she-kaw," painted by the American artist, explorer, and ethnographer, George Catlin. This painting, along with a series of other portraits of American Indians by Catlin, was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1846 (the Salon was the official exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in France). They stunned and titillated bourgeois Parisians with the spectacle and strangeness of the vast American wilderness and its "noble savages."

Vanishing heroes



Figure **4.3.4.2**: Charles Bird King, *Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees*, 1821, oil on canvas, 71.1 x 91.8 cm. (Smithsonian American Art Museum)

The comparison to the Greek mythological seafarer Jason is not unusual; the tendency to link the diminishing American Indian population to a vanished race of classical heroes was popular among Europeans and Americans in the nineteenth century. In 1821

the American artist Charles Bird King caused a sensation when he painted a group of Plains Indian chiefs in profile as dignified and as stately as Roman statues.

But rhapsodizing over the Indian's innate nobility was easy to do in the face of his near extinction. By the mid-nineteenth century the popular image of the terrifying Indian who threatened Western expansion and Manifest Destiny (the widely held belief in the United States that American settlers were destined to expand throughout the continent) gave way to a more dignified, but defeated figure as the numbers of Indians across the country fell due to diseases, forced relocation, and poverty. By 1750, the American Indian population east of the Mississippi River fell by approximately 250,000 while the Caucasian and African-American population rose from around 250,000 in 1700 to nearly 1.25 million by 1750.[2]

Catlin painted this portrait of The White Cloud around 1844, twenty years after the Iowa tribes were forced by the U.S. government to move from Iowa to small reservations in Kansas and Nebraska. The displacement from their ancestral and spiritual homeland left the dwindling Iowa people in a fragile state. Only thirteen years before Catlin's painting, American Indians endured one of their most traumatic collective experiences, "The Trail of Tears." As part of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the government forced many of the southeastern tribes, the Cherokee, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw, to leave their homes and move west to designated Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Hundreds of thousands died along the grueling journey from disease, exposure, and starvation.

A dignified portrayal

Catlin met The White Cloud, not in the U.S., but in Victorian London, when the Indian chief and his family were touring Europe as part of P.T. Barnum's traveling circus from 1843 to 1845. The dancing Indians were a featured act in Barnum's "Greatest Show on Earth" which showcased what Barnum believed to be rare cultural curiosities from all over the world.



Figure **4.3.4.3**: William Fisk, *George Catlin*, 1849, oil on canvas. 62.5 x 52.5″ (National Portrait Gallery, Washington)

By 1844, George Catlin was already something of a celebrity in America and in Europe with his Indian portraits. Catlin exaggerated his rustic backwoods character by occasionally wearing fur and moccasins to entrance his eager European audience who were hungry for an undiluted taste of the American wilderness (Catlin had grown up in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania).

The exotic plumage of traditional Indian dress appealed to Catlin at a fundamental level. It connected him to another culture and to the roots of American identity and the land.

In his journals he describes their beauty in detail:

> ***I love the Indians for their dignity, which is natural and noble. Vanity is the same all the world over. Good looks in portraiture and fashions, whatever they are—crinoline of the lip or crinoline of the waist (and one is as beautiful and reasonable as the other), or rings in the nose or rings in the ears, they are all the same.[3]***

However, Catlin's portrayal of The White Cloud, in his resplendent warrior regalia, stands in sharp contrast to the squalid way in which Barnum treated him. Indian performers during the nineteenth century, whether they were with Buffalo Bill's "Wild West Show" or P.T. Barnum's circus, were by and large cruelly exploited. In an 1843 letter to the collector and cultural historian Moses Kimball, founder of the Boston Museum, Barnum writes of the challenges of including Indians in his act while denigrating them:

> ***Dear Moses:***
>
> ***The Indians arrived and danced [last] night…They dance very well but do not [look] so fine as those last winter. They rowed, or rather paddled, another [race] last Saturday at Camden. I hired them out for the occasion for $100 and their board.***
>
> ***You must either get a [building] near the museum for the Indians to sleep and cook their own victuals [in] or else let them sleep in the museum on their skins & have victuals sent them from Sweeny shop. I boil up ham & potatoes, corn, beef, &c. at home& send them at each meal. The interpreter is a kind of half-breed and a decent chap; he must have common private board. The lazy devils want to be lying down nearly all the time, and as it looks so bad for them to be lying about the Museum, I have them stretched out in the workshop all day, some of them occasionally strolling about the Museum. D—n Indians anyhow. They are a lazy, shiftless set of brutes—though they will draw [in a crowd].***[4]

Barnum's view of the Indians in his employ is the opposite of Catlin's portrayal of The White Cloud, which brings out this man's inherent grace and dignity.

Traditional dress



Figure **4.3.4.4**: Face painting and headdress (detail), George Catlin, *The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas*, 1844-45, oil on canvas, 71 x 58 cm. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

The White Cloud wears the traditional costume of the Iowa chieftain, indicative of his strengths as a warrior and hunter.

His face is painted in glowing vermillion with a green a handprint across his cheeks, a sign that he was skilled in hand-to-hand combat. He wears a headdress of two eagle feathers and deer's tail (also dyed vermillion) and a black band across his forehead made of otter fur. His earrings are made of carved conch shells. White wolf skin covers his shoulders over his deerskin robe and he wears a necklace made of grizzly bear claws, which testifies to his superior skill as a hunter.



Figure 4.3.4.5: Necklace (detail), George Catlin, *The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas*, 1844-45, oil on canvas, 71 x 58 cm. (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.)

The necklace is the costume's pièce de résistance, the aspect that signifies that The White Cloud is indeed the chief of his tribe. Catlin added the hazy blue sky in the background from his own imagination—the portrait was actually painted indoors in a draughty studio in London.

Catlin's portrayal of Indian chiefs galvanized the imagination of a generation of European writers such as George Sand, Charles Baudelaire, and J.M. Barrie, whose Indians in Peter Pan are derived in part from Catlin's portraits. Yet underneath the images of plumed warriors and braves there was a sense of underlying sadness and determination to document a vanishing way of life. "We travel to see the perishable and the perishing," Catlin wrote in his journal in the 1830s. "To see them before they fall."[5]

Catlin's portraits today

It is difficult to look at Catlin's *The White Cloud* today without overlaying our knowledge of the oppression and violence Indian peoples suffered over hundreds of years. Nevertheless, it's important to remember that during Catlin's time, painting was an important means that Europeans used to record and preserve the changing status of Native Americans. The cultural historian Richard Slotkin said, "Catlin tried to deal with the ephemeral quality of the wilderness—the fact that white men were destroying it as they were trying to appropriate it."[6] The Indian, to Catlin, represented a beautiful, primordial aspect of America endangered in the face of industrialization and westward expansion.

George Catlin's paintings of the American Indians remain an enduring window onto the Old West, one of the most fascinating and contentious periods of American history. In certain aspects the art of the Old West shows us what the art historian Bryan J. Wolf calls, "the eternal last act in an imperial drama that began, as it ended, not just with territorial expansion but with cultural conquest as well."[7] Catlin's paintings and illustrations, free of sanctimony or fabrication, show us the Indian not as a noble savage, as the European audiences often saw him, or as a demonic figure in the view of many nineteenth-century settlers, but as a real person in a real, though exotic, setting.

1. Benita Eisler, *The Red Man's Bones: George Catlin, Artist and Showman* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), p. 328

2. Encyclopedia of American Indian History. Ed. Bruce Johansen. (ABC-CLIO, 2007), p. 115

3. George Catlin, Episodes from "Life among the Indians" and "Last Rambles," (New York: Dover Publications: 1997), p. 251

4. **Iowa Indians at the American Museum**, The Lost Museum (American Social History Productions, Inc., 2002-2006)

5. George Catlin, Episodes from "Life among the Indians" and "Last Rambles," (New York: Dover Publications: 1997) p. 73

6. Robert Hughes, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America (*New York: Knopf, 1999)

7. Bryan J. Wolf. "How the West Was Hung, Or, When I Hear the Word 'Culture' I Take Out My Checkbook: The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Sep., 1992), p. 423

Additional resources:

This painting at the National Gallery of Art

George Catlin and his Indian Gallery from the Smithsonian American Art Museum

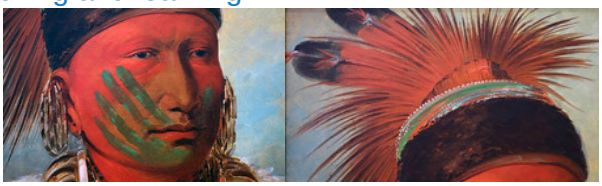
Biography of the artist from the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Charles Bird King, Young Omahaw, War Eagle, Little Missouri, and Pawnees at the museum

Susanna Reich, *Painting the Wild Frontier: The Art and Adventures of George Catlin*, (New York: Clarion), p. 77

An Eye for Art: Focusing on Great Artists and Their Work. National Gallery of Art, (Chicago Review Press: 2013), p. 40

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Figure **4.3.4.48**: More SmartHistory images…

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.3.5: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze

4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware

4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way

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4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware

Page ID

165305



Video **4.3.5.1.1**: Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*,1851, oil on canvas, 379 x 648 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

An American icon (made in Germany)

Washington Crossing the Delaware is one of the most recognizable images in the history of American art. You might be surprised, however, to learn that it was not painted by an American artist at work in the United States, but was instead completed by Emanuel Leutze, an artist born in Germany, and that it was painted in Düsseldorf during the middle of the nineteenth century.

Leutze painted two versions of this painting. He began the first in 1849 immediately following the failure of Germany's own revolution. This initial canvas was eventually destroyed during an Allied bombing raid in World War II. The artist began the second version of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* in 1850. This later painting was transported to New York where it was exhibited in a gallery in October 1851. Two years later, Marshall O. Roberts, a wealthy capitalist, purchased the work for the then-staggering price of $10,000. It was donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1897. It remained there until 1950 when long held curatorial concerns about its bombastic, crowd-pleasing qualities led the museum to send it to Dallas and eventually to a site near the actual river crossing. The painting returned to New York in 1970.



Figure **4.3.5.1.1**: Washington (detail), Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, oil on canvas, 378.5 x 647.7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Although Emanuel Leutze was born in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, his family immigrated to the United States before he turned ten years of age. His first art instruction came in 1834 when he studied drawing and portraiture with John Rubens Smith, a London-born artist who worked in the United States during the first half of the 19th Century. Wealthy Philadelphian patrons recognized Leutze's talent and sponsored the young artist to study at the Königliche Kunstacademie in Düsseldorf. While there, Leutze came to know many American artists who were then studying in Germany. These artists included Worthington Whittredge, Albert Bierstadt, Charles Wilmar, and Eastman Johnson.

Although he was active in portraiture, Leutze's fame today rests upon his history paintings, and among these, *Washington Crossing the Delaware* is the most recognizable and ambitious. It is, in one word, colossal, both in scale and patriotic zeal.

Brilliance and desperation on a vast scale

Little can prepare a viewer for the experience of standing before a painting that measures more than 12 x 21 feet. The monumental scale of the composition is matched by the importance of the historical event Leutze painted. Without doubt, Leutze took his subject from one of the turning points in the American Revolutionary War.



Figure 4.3.5.1.2: Rowers breaking up the ice as they cross the river on Christmas Day (detail), Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, oil on canvas, 378.5 x 647.7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The Colonial cause appeared exceptionally bleak as the year 1776 came to a close. In a military move that navigated the fine line between brilliance and desperation, George Washington led the Colonial army across the Delaware River shortly after nightfall on 25 December in order to attack the Hessian encampment outside Trenton, New Jersey. Washington and his army achieved an unprecedented tactical surprise and delivered a much-needed military and moral victory. Washington's army killed 22 Hessian soldiers, wounded 98 more, and captured more than 1,000 (Hessians were Germans soldiers hired by the British Empire). The Colonial Army had less than ten combined dead and wounded soldiers. After many military setbacks in the North, Washington's bold move on Christmas night 1776 helped provide a sense of hope for the Colonial cause.



Figure 4.3.5.1.3: Farmers huddled against cold at middle of boat (detail) Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, oil on canvas, 378.5 x 647.7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In addition to General Washington, Leutze has filled the boat with a variety of 'types' of soldiers. Washington and his two officers are distinguished by their blue coats, the trademark attire of a Continental officer.

The remaining nine men appear to be members of the militia. Three men row at the bow of the boat. One is an African American, another wears the checkerboard bonnet of a Scotsman, and the third wears a coonskin cap.

Two farmers, distinguished by their broad-brimmed hats, huddle against the frigid cold in the middle of the boat, while the man at the stern wears the moccasins, pants, and hat of a Native American. This collection of people suggests the all-inclusive nature of the Colonial cause in the American Revolutionary War.



Figure **4.3.5.1.4**: Native American at back of boat (detail), Emanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851, oil on canvas, 378.5 x 647.7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Despite Leutze's interest in history, there is little historical accuracy to be found within the painting. First, the "Stars and Stripes" flag shown in the painting was not in use until September 1777, and the size of the boat is far too small to accommodate the twelve men who occupy it.

And although this event happened in the middle of the night, Leutze shows the crossing occurring at the break of dawn. Rather than depict the Delaware River, a waterway that was rather narrow where Washington and the Continental Army crossed, Leutze paints what appears to be a river with the breadth and ice formation of the Rhine. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, Leuzte paints Washington standing upright, an unlikely and precarious posture for anyone in a short-walled rowboat.

It is clear then that *Washington Crossing the Delaware*'s strength is not in the correct rendering of an historical event. Leutze's primary goal was to create a work of art that deliberately glorified General Washington, the Colonial-American cause, and commemorated a military action of particular significance. In doing so, Leutze created one of the most iconic images in the history of American art.

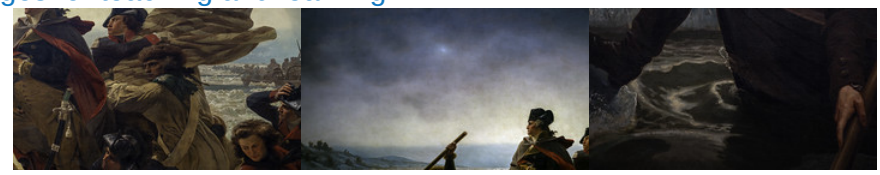
Additional resources:

This painting at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

"George Washington, Man, Myth, Monument" on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Corey Kilgannon, "Crossing the Delaware, More Accurately", *New York Times* (December 2011)

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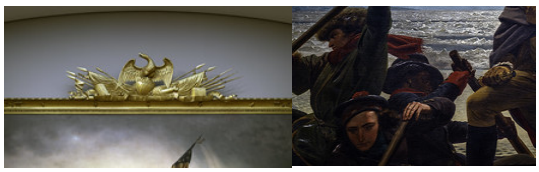
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4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way

Page ID
165306



Video **4.3.5.2.1**: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* (mural study for the United States Capitol building), 1861, oil on canvas, 84.5 x 110.1 cm (Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of Sara Carr Upton, 1931.6.1)

Additional resources:

America's Manifest Destiny – American Experience in the Classroom (The Smithsonian American Art Museum)

Teaching poster on Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* (The Smithsonian American Art Museum)

TEDEd lesson: Reading a History Painting (The Smithsonian American Art Museum)

Detail of cartoon for Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* (The Smithsonian American Art Museum)

See Leutze's mural at the U.S. Capitol

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center on Leutze's mural

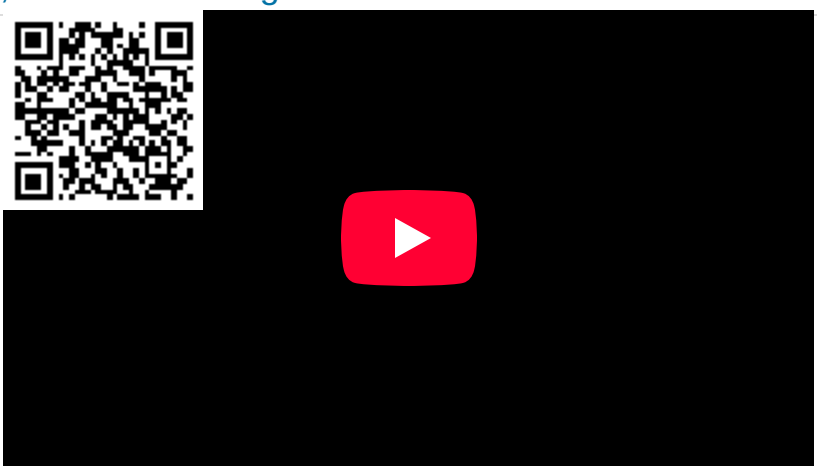
Digital Public Library of America on Leutze's mural

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4.3.6: Rothermel, De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi

Page ID
165307



Video **4.3.6.12**: Peter Frederick Rothermel, *De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi*, 1851, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 127 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, funds provided by the Henry C. Gibson Fund and Mrs. Elliott R. Detchon, 1987.31), a Seeing America video Speakers: Dr. Anna O. Marley, Curator of Historical American Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional Resources

This painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Historic rotunda paintings, Architect of the Capitol

History of Hernando de Soto's expedition, Chickasaw Nation

Excavation, de Soto's cross(?), Arkansas Archaeological Survey

Excavation, de Soto's cross(?), Archaeological Conservancy

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4.3.7: Jasper Francis Cropsey, Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains

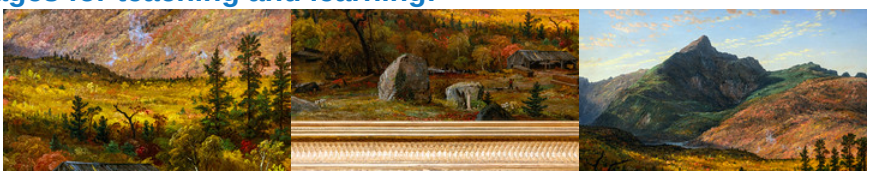
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Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains*, 1857, oil on canvas, 80.01 x 125.73 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.3.8: Frederic Edwin Church

4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes

4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi

4.3.8.3: The Iceberg

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4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes

Page ID
165310



Figure **4.3.8.1.1**: Frederic Edwin Church, *Niagara*, 1857, oil on canvas, 106.5 x 229.9 cm (National Gallery of Art)

A precise depiction of nature

If Thomas Cole represents the first generation of the Hudson River School of painters, then Frederic Edwin Church, the only pupil Cole ever instructed, certainly represents the generation that followed. Yet despite the teacher/student relationship that they shared, they differed in the ways in which they conceived of the American landscape. For Cole, landscape painting was a pictorial device in which to reach allegorical or narrative ends. While Church at first followed his teacher's instruction in this regard, the younger artist set allegory and narrative aside in favor of a more focused and precise depiction of nature.

A teacher's praise: "The finest eye of drawing in the world"

Church was born in Hartford, Connecticut, to a wealthy family; his father was a prosperous silversmith and watchmaker. Daniel Wadsworth, one of the most influential art patrons of his time and the founder of the oldest public art museum in the United States —the Wadsworth Atheneum—introduced Church to Cole in 1844. Although still but a teenager, Cole remarked that Church possessed 'the finest eye of drawing in the world.' Church's immense skill is demonstrated by his election as an Associate of the National Academy of Design in May of 1844. Just barely 24 years of age, Church was the youngest artist so honored. But one year later his status was to that of Academician. Clearly, his career was off to a meteoric beginning.

Blockbuster landscapes

Today, Church is most famous for his large, blockbuster-sized landscapes. Among the many he painted, *Niagara* (1857) and *The Heart of the Andes* (1863) are justifiably the most famous. Together, these two paintings vaulted Church to the position of the most famous painter in the United States.

Although Church was not the first artist to depict the Great Falls of Niagara—John Vanderlyn, John Trumbull, and Cole had made attempts earlier in the nineteenth century—he was the first to somehow capture the roaring essence of what many then considered to be the greatest natural treasure in the United States. In contrast to earlier painters, however, Church placed the viewer close to the falls and suspends them immediately above the ledge from which the water thrillingly descends. Even the panorama-like horizontal format and the colossal size (106.5 x 229.9 cm) accentuate the sublime nature of the composition.

An American image

Even though Church depicted the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, this image became wildly popular, both in the United States and in Europe, and has, over time, become a uniquely "American" image. When completed in 1857, Church exhibited this work at a one-painting show at the New York commercial art gallery of Williams, Stevens, and Williams. Within two weeks of the exhibition's opening, more than 100,000 visitors had paid twenty-five cents each to view Church's masterwork. The art-loving public was clearly fascinated and enchanted by this image. Many used opera glasses to discern the minute details that were only

visible upon close inspection. Church, ever the businessman, generated additional revenue through the sale of chromolithographs of the painting.

After a successful exhibit in New York, Church then toured *Niagara* to various cites on the east coast, and eventually even took the image to London and Paris. In all, Niagara made Church both a wealthy man and amongst the most famous of American painters.

Return to South America

If 1857 marks the year of Church completed *Niagara*, it also marks his return to South America, a location the artist had visited just four years prior. Cyrus Field, a wealthy New York businessman who was to become one of Church's most reliable patrons, financed both of these adventures. Church spent more than two months in South America—most of this in Ecuador—and became keenly interested in Alexander von Humboldt, the Prussian naturalist and acclaimed author of *Kosmos*. This two-volume study of geology and natural history was published in Germany in 1845 and 1847. English translations followed shortly thereafter, and Humboltdt's theories had an immense impact on Church's views of the natural world. When the artist returned to his New York studio, he arrived with countless preparatory drawings and watercolors from which to base a monumental composition.



Figure **4.3.8.1.2**: Frederic Edwin Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, oil on canvas, 168 x 302.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Not just a painting—an experience

And complete a monumental composition Church did, not only in size (168 x 302.9 cm), but also in visual scope. Church unveiled the painting at Lyrique Hall on 27 April 1859, and was moved to the Tenth Street Studio Building two days later. Like *Niagara*, *The Heart of the Andes* was more for contemporary viewers than just a painting; countless writers agreed that seeing the painting was an experience. Church placed the painting in a darkened room and dramatically illuminated it through the use of gas lamps. An enormous frame that resembled window molding only increased the painting's visual impact. As with *Niagara*, the twenty-five cent ticket price for *The Heart of the Andes* entitled viewers to borrow a pair of opera glasses and a set of pamphlets that explained the composition through the geographical ideas von Humboldt wrote of in his *Kosmos*.



Figure **4.3.8.1.3**: Waterfall and geologic formations (detail), Frederic Edwin Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, oil on canvas, 168 x 302.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Praise from Mark Twain

Indeed, if *Niagara* was a depiction of a singular scene, *The Heart of the Andes* is instead a pictorial composite view of Humboldt's theories. The public was once again smitten with Church's efforts, and more than 12,000 visitors paid the quarter admission charge. After New York, Church sent *The Heart of the Andes* on tour to both domestic and foreign locations. Mark Twain saw it when it arrived in St. Louis in 1860 and wrote to this brother:

> ***Pamela and I have just returned from a visit to the most wonderfully beautiful painting which this city has ever seen–Church's "Heart of the Andes"–which represents a lovely valley with its rich vegetation in all the bloom and glory of a tropical summer–dotted with birds and flowers of all colors and shades of color, and sunny slopes, and shady corners, and twilight groves, and cool cascades–all grandly set off with a majestic mountain in the background with its gleaming summit clothed in everlasting ice and snow! I have seen it several times, but it is always a new picture–totally new–you seem to see nothing the second time which you saw the first. We took the opera glass, and examined its beauties minutely, for the naked eye cannot discern the little wayside flowers, and soft shadows and patches of sunshine, and half-hidden bunches of grass and jets of water which form some of its most enchanting features…You will never get tired of looking at the picture, but your reflections –your efforts to grasp an intelligible Something–you hardly know what –will grow so painful that you will have to go away from the thing, in order to obtain relief. You may find relief, but you cannot banish the picture–It remains with you still. It is in my mind now–and the smallest feature could not be removed without my detecting it.***

The composition



Figure **4.3.8.1.4**: Minute detail of flowers, wind, and seasons (detail), Frederic Edwin Church, *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, oil on canvas, 168 x 302.9 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

If Church had ever read Twain's remarks, there can be little doubt the artist would have been delighted. Church aspired to take many different components and assemble them into a cohesive and believable whole. The monumental snow-capped mountain in the deep background is Mt. Chimborazo, one of the highest peaks in South America. Moving to the foreground, Church leads the viewer through a variety of topographical zones which all contain unique flora and fauna. There is but a little human presence in

this vast depiction of space.A colonial Spanish hacienda appears in the central middle ground, resting on the banks of a river. This waterway flows to the viewer's right, eventually arriving at a waterfall—a Niagara in miniature—on the right side of the painting. A well-traveled footpath in the left foreground leads the eye to a pair of people who worship before a simple wooden cross. Beyond these 'major' elements, the composition is filled with minute details unobservable in any reproduction. Flowers bloom, birds flutter, water flows, and wind seems to blow.

A nineteenth-century artistic entrepreneur

Niagara and *The Heart of the Andes* are only two paintings from a long and productive professional career that spanned North and South America, Europe, and the Middle East. However, they stand as excellent examples of Frederic Church's extensive oeuvre and his practices as a nineteenth-century artistic entrepreneur. Whereas Thomas Cole, Church's artistic mentor, used the landscape as a visual tool on the path towards allegory and narrative, Church instead placed great artistic focus on exactitude and specificity in regards to flora, fauna, and geological formations. The huge size, panoramic views, and incredible detail vaulted him into the highest ranks of nineteenth century American landscapists.

Additional resources:

Church's *Niagara* at the National Gallery of Art

Church's *Heart of the Andes* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Frederic Edwin Church on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

The Hudson River School on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Olana, Church's fabulous home on the Hudson River

New York Times Topic page: Frederic Edwin Church

Wadsworth Athenaeum

This page titled 4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Bryan Zygmont, "Frederic Edwin Church, Niagara and Heart of the Andes," in SmartHistory, August 9, 2015, accessed November 17, 2020, SmartHistory.org/church-niagara-and-heart-of-the-andes/.

- **11.4: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (II)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi

- by **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID

165311



Frederic Edwin Church, *Cotopaxi*, 1862, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 215.9 cm (Detroit Institute of Arts) A conversation with Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris

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4.3.8.3: The Iceberg



Video **4.3.8.3.1**: Frederic Edwin Church, *The Iceberg*, c. 1875, oil on canvas, 55.9 x 68.6 cm (Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1993.6), a Seeing America video speakers: Dr. Peter John Brownlee, Curator, Terra Foundation for American Art and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional Resources

This painting at the Terra Foundation for American Art

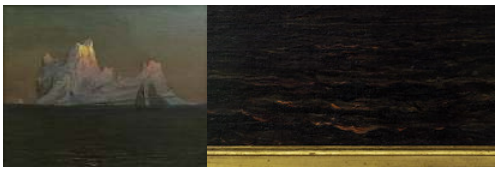
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4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine

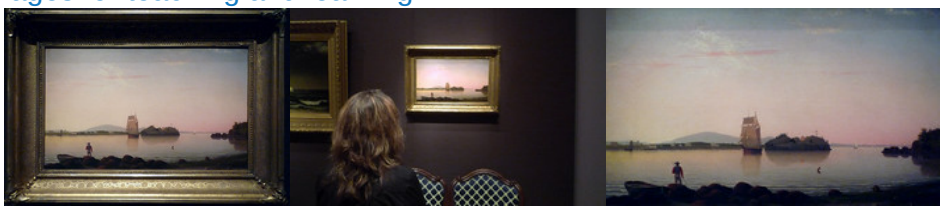
Page ID

165313



Video **4.3.9.11**: Fitz Henry Lane, *Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine*, 1862, oil on canvas, 40 x 66.36 cm (15-3/4 x 26-1/8 inches) (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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This page titled 4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Steven Zucker and Dr. Beth Harris, "Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine," in SmartHistory, December 4, 2015, accessed November 17, 2020, SmartHistory.org/fitz-henry-lane-owls-head-penobscot-bay-maine/.

- **11.4: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (II)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California

Page ID

165314



Video **4.3.10.1**: Albert Bierstadt, *Hetch Hetchy Valley, California*, c. 1874-80, oil on canvas, 94.8 x 148.2 cm (Bequest of Laura M. Lyman, in memory of her husband Theodore Lyman, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art)

Additional resources:

This work at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

This page titled 4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Erin Monroe, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and Dr. Beth Harris, "Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California," in SmartHistory, December 21, 2018, accessed November 17, 2020, https://SmartHistory.org/bierstadt-hetch-hetchy-valley/.

- **11.4: North America c. 1500 - 1900 (II)** by Smarthistory is licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

by DR. ELEANOR JONES HARVEY and DR. BETH HARRIS

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165315



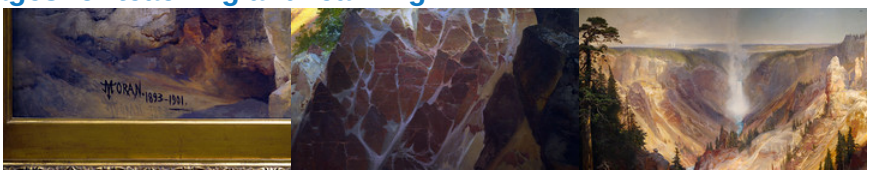
Thomas Moran, *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas mounted on aluminum, 213 x 266.3 cm (Smithsonian American Art Museum) Speakers: Dr. Eleanor Jones Harvey, Senior Curator, Smithsonian American Art Museum and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources

This painting at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone – American Experience in the Classroom (The Smithsonian American Art Museum)

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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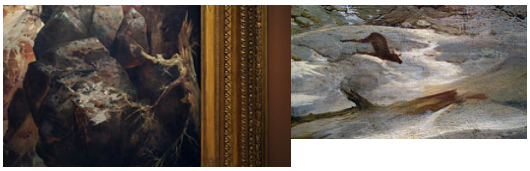
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This page titled 4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Eleanor Jones Harvey and Dr. Beth Harris, "Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone," in Smarthistory, February 26, 2020, accessed October 30, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/moran-yellowstone/.

SECTION OVERVIEW

4.4: The U.S. Civil War in Art

4.4.1: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War in Art

4.4.2: “The Immediate Cause of the Civil War,” an introduction

4.4.3: The problem of picturing slavery

4.4.4: Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology

4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug

4.4.6: Images in a divided world

4.4.7: Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery

4.4.8: Memory and commemoration of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction

4.4.9: Experiences of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction

4.4.10: Refugees, prisoners, and displacement

4.4.11: Homes and families

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4.4.1: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War in Art

- Preface to a collection of essays and videos about art and the Civil War

Page ID 180073

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**



Figure **4.4.1.1**: Kara Walker, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863*, 2008, wool tapestry and felt, 175.3 x 248.9 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) © Kara Walker

A large, striking tapestry in shades of black, white, and gray with an unusual subject matter: a scene of a burning building, a murderous mob, and in front of it all, the silhouette of a hanged young woman. The gentleness evoked by contemporary artist Kara Walker's softly draped hand-woven wool tapestry, plush felt, and the title, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863*, is violently at odds with the image it portrays: the burning of an asylum for Black orphans in New York City in the midst of the U.S. Civil War (1861–65). How can we begin to understand this image and the stories it tells?



Figure **4.4.1.2**: Kara Walker, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863* (detail with flames), 2008, wool tapestry and felt, 175.3 x 248.9 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) © Kara Walker

With this tapestry, Walker invites us to confront a legacy of the Civil War that—despite the myriad ways it has shaped the United States into the 21st century—has never been fully acknowledged. To interpret this image, we must turn to histories that predate the Civil War and expose its causes; the experiences of those who lived through the war; and finally, to the legacy of the war—how it has been both remembered and forgotten.



Figure **4.4.1.3**: Kara Walker, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863* (detail with looters), 2008, wool tapestry and felt, 175.3 x 248.9 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) © Kara Walker

This work of art recounts the terror of the New York City Draft Riots and the burning of the Colored Orphan Asylum in July 1863—a murderous four-day rampage fueled by bigotry and inequity. To interpret this powerful image, the histories reviewed must include more than the written word and explore visual culture: the paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, and visual ephemera of the United States in the years before, during, and since the war.

It's important to ask why the Civil War (and its visual legacy) have become such an important touchpoint today and why so many contemporary artists have drawn from its history.

Because this legacy is so important, historians and art historians have worked together to develop this project, The Civil War in Art, offering both historical and art-historical pathways to understanding not only the stories unfolding in Kara Walker's art, but also the powerful and contested symbolism found in public monuments and so many other images today—a century and a half after the end of the war.



Figure 4.4.1.4: Map of the United States on the Eve of the Civil War in 1861. The lands represented were home to many Native peoples and nations not represented by the state and territorial boundaries seen here.

The U.S. Civil War

In 1861, after years of internal political strife concerning the institution of slavery and its expansion into new territories, the United States erupted in civil war. Eleven states in the U.S. South rebelled against the government and attempted to form a separate nation where slavery would be constitutionally protected, called the Confederate States of America. The U.S. government (sometimes called “the North” since the states of “the South” had rebelled, but it included all of the states in the country that had not seceded as well as the western territories controlled by the United States) sought to put down this rebellion.

Over the next four years, the United States and the Confederate rebels fought a bloody war, which remains the deadliest war in U.S. history to date. The war also had important social consequences: by 1865, when U.S. forces defeated the rebels, emancipating enslaved Black people had become an important war aim of the U.S. government, and in the years immediately following the war constitutional amendments guaranteed citizenship rights to Black people. The end of slavery and the expansion of the U.S. federal government undertaken to wage war on such a large scale transformed the society, politics, and economy of the United States, paving the way for its emergence as a major industrial and imperial power in the American West and Pacific.

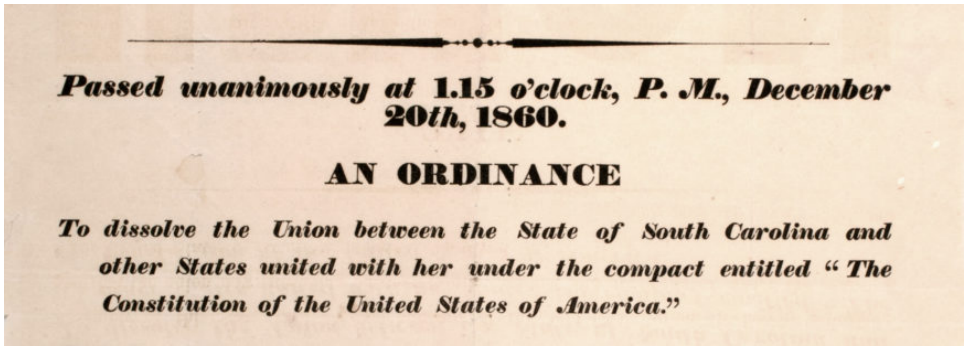


Figure 4.4.1.5: Left: Great Seal of the United States (counterdie made from the 1841 seal in 1866); right: Great Seal of the Confederate States of America, 1864, bronze (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

By the numbers, the impact of the Civil War is staggering in scale: between 1861 and 1865, 4 million enslaved people won their freedom, 3 million soldiers went to war, and approximately 750,000 people died—more than 2% of the total population of the United States. [1] It was virtually impossible to have lived through this era without having been touched by the war in some way.

The war's place in U.S. history is so central that most U.S. history survey classes use the Civil War as its dividing line: U.S. history before the Civil War and U.S. history after the Civil War. As a result, the war itself can sometimes seem like an afterthought, with the victory of U.S. forces assured and the end of slavery a foregone conclusion. But for the people who lived through the war, day by day, nothing was certain. In the 2020s, living through a pandemic without knowing what will come next or when it will truly be over, we are perhaps better able to understand what it felt like to be in the midst of such an historic event taking place over a span of several years: the anxieties, the possibilities, the losses, and the surprises that someday may appear as a single chapter in a U.S. history textbook.

The U.S. Civil War in Art is a collection of essays and videos that strives to recapture the immediacy of the war, engaging with the paintings, popular prints, photography, and material culture that reflect the experiences of those who lived through the war. We also explore how visual culture influenced public opinion. This project looks beyond the war years of 1861–65, since the war's causes stretch back to the earliest European settlements in the Americas, and its consequences continue to resound to the present day. For this reason, the essays address not only art representing the war itself but the visual culture that has shaped our understanding of the war ever since.


Passed unanimously at 1.15 o'clock, P. M., December 20th, 1860.

AN ORDINANCE

To dissolve the Union between the State of South Carolina and other States united with her under the compact entitled "The Constitution of the United States of America."

Figure 4.4.1.6: Charleston Mercury Extra Broadside (detail), Charleston Mercury Office, 1860, 54 x 29 cm (American Antiquarian Society)

A note on language

The terms used to discuss the people and actions of the past affect how we understand this history. For many years, language around slavery and the Civil War was romanticized, obscuring the brutality of slavery and ennobling those who fought to preserve

it. In this series of essays and videos, we employ terminology that both better represents the experiences of the people we describe and reflects current academic usage. For example, we do not use “slave” but rather “enslaved person,” to emphasize that enslavement was not a person’s natural condition—it was a role that some people actively forced onto others. We also use “enslaver” rather than “master.” In referring to military entities, we refer to the forces of the United States as the “U.S. Army” rather than the “Union Army,” a term which some scholars argue supports the Confederate view that the United States had collapsed. [2] We have provided hover definitions for terms throughout the essays to support readers.

A note of thanks

We wish to thank the Terra Foundation for American Art for giving Smarthistory the opportunity to develop this suite of resources as well as the many curators, educators, historians, and art historians who have generously contributed their expertise, and especially our esteemed board of advisors:

- Renée Ater, Ph.D., Provost Visiting Associate Professor, Africana Studies, Brown University
- Sarah Beetham, Ph.D., Chair of Liberal Arts and Assistant Professor of Art History, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
- Kirsten Pai Buick, Ph.D., professor of Art History, Associate Dean of Equity and Excellence, Special Assistant to the Dean of Arts & Sciences, and Director of Africana Studies, University of New Mexico
- Adam H. Domby, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, Auburn University
- Alejandro de la Fuente, Ph.D., Professor of Latin American History and Economics, Professor of African and African American Studies and of History, Director, Afro-Latin American Research Institute, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University
- Aston Gonzales, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History, Salisbury University
- Hilary Green, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History in the Department of Gender and Race Studies and serves as the co-program director of the African American Studies program with an additional partial appointment in American Studies, University of Alabama
- Tyler Green, historian, critic, author, as well as producer and host of The Modern Art Notes Podcast
- Megan Kate Nelson, Ph.D., writer, historian, and cultural critic
- Holly Pinheiro, Ph.D., Jr. Assistant Professor, History, Furman University
- Mark Pohlad, Ph.D., Associate Professor, History of Art and Architecture, DePaul University
- Margaret Storey, Ph.D., Professor and Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, DePaul University

Notes:

[1] J. David Hacker, “Recounting the Dead,” *The New York Times*, September 20, 2011.

[2] Several scholars, including Paul Finkelman, P. Gabrielle Foreman, and Michael Landis have written on language. See P. Gabrielle Foreman, et al. “Writing about Slavery/Teaching About Slavery: This Might Help” (community-sourced document); and Michael Todd Landis, “These Are Words Scholars Should No Longer Use to Describe Slavery and the Civil War,” *History News Network*, September 4, 2015.

Additional resources

Learn more about Kara Walker

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4.4.2: “The Immediate Cause of the Civil War,” an introduction

- Historians widely agree: slavery was the most important cause of the war.

Page ID 180074

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**

> ***African slavery as it exists amongst us . . . [is] the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. . . . Our new government[’s] . . . corner-stone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.Alexander Stephens, Vice President of the Confederate States of America, March 21, 1861 [1]***

Historians today widely agree that slavery was the single most important cause of the Civil War. There is an abundance of textual evidence to support this, perhaps most famously an address given by Alexander Stephens known as the “Cornerstone Speech.” Stephens, the Vice President of the newly formed Confederate States of America (also known as the Confederacy) delivered the address to a crowd in Savannah, Georgia, at a critical moment: March 1861, just weeks after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States. Georgia was one of seven southern states that had recently seceded (separated) from the United States with the intent of forming a new nation. Called to remark on the Confederacy’s new constitution, Stephens bluntly outlined the reasons that southern states had seceded and what they hoped to achieve as an independent nation: the preservation of slavery and perpetuation of white supremacy.

A “positive good”

Stephens was far from the only person to voice this reasoning. “Secession commissioners” who urged southern states to secede by speaking at legislatures and state conventions repeatedly cited their desire to protect slavery. [2] In fact, white southerners were not ashamed that millions of Black people were enslaved in their states; they proudly proclaimed that slavery was a “positive good.” [3] Although Abraham Lincoln—an antislavery Republican—had disavowed any intent to interfere with slavery where it already existed, slaveholders seized the opportunity of his election to break with the U.S. government and create a new nation where slavery could be protected forever. [4]

Thanks to the new technologies of **lithography** and **photography** (lithography was invented in 1796, and the first photograph was taken in 1826), we have images of the inauguration of Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens (both slaveholders), as president and vice president respectively, of the rebel break-away states. These images remind us of the importance of new technologies in disseminating images in the second half of the 19th century, but they also remind us that all images (even photographs) adopt a point of view and therefore must be approached critically.



Figure 4.4.2.1: Left: A. C. McIntyre, *First inauguration of Jefferson Davis as President of the Confederate States of America at Montgomery, Alabama, February 18, 1861*, photographic print, 19.9 x 14.7 cm (Boston Athenaeum); right: *The starting point of the great war between the states: the inauguration of Jefferson Davis*, 1878, chromolithograph, 76.6 x 60.8 cm (Library of Congress)

If we consider these two images of the inauguration—one a photograph and the other a color lithograph—we see people of all ages including some Black figures gathered around the Capitol building in Montgomery, Alabama. Davis and Stephens stand in the center of the podium facing the crowd. The chromolithograph on the right, made more than a decade after the end of the war, was based on the earlier photograph (left), but collapses the middle ground and narrows the composition to consolidate the crowd and focus on the grand portico, its balconies and the clock tower. We also see more clearly the faces of the figures and their interactions than we do in the early photograph. For these reasons, the lithograph condenses and heightens the importance of this moment. Which image is true? The answer is both and neither.



Figure 4.4.2.2: Alabama State Capitol Building photographed December 2021; statue at left noted in red: Frederick Cleveland Hibbard, *Jefferson Davis*, dedicated 1940; inset photo of star embedded in paving at the top of the steps where Davis stood during his inauguration as the President of the Confederacy (photos: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The power of these images and the moment they depict has echoed to the present day. A star embedded in the paving at the top of the steps of the Alabama State Capitol marks the location where Jefferson Davis stood during his inauguration as the President of

the Confederacy, and a statue of him still stands nearby.

The war begins at Fort Sumter

A month or so after the inauguration, and just three weeks after Stephens delivered his Cornerstone Speech, the U.S. Civil War began at Fort Sumter in South Carolina (the first state to secede from the Union).



Figure **4.4.2.3**: The Evacuation of Fort Sumter, April 1861, albumen silver print from glass negative, 12.6 x 9.4 x 2.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



Figure **4.4.2.4**: Gutzon Borglum, *Alexander Hamilton Stephens*, given 1927, National Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol (photo: Architect of the Capitol, U.S. government work)

When it became clear that the United States intended to hold the fort despite the secession of South Carolina, Confederate forces attacked it. This was the first military action of the Civil War. Confederate forces reduced the fort to a ruin, and U.S. soldiers evacuated. The photographs of the aftermath of the battle at Fort Sumter stressed the destruction of the site and helped to strengthen the resolve of the Confederacy. This image, and others like it became powerful symbols—here was photographic evidence of the Confederacy's strength.

By end of the war, the United States had defeated the Confederacy, more than 750,000 Americans had died, and slavery had been banned everywhere in the United States through a Constitutional amendment. [5]

Denial and the Lost Cause

After the war, white southerners fashioned a narrative (often referred to as the Lost Cause) that denied that slavery had any role in bringing about the Civil War, despite the evidence to the contrary. In the decades that followed Reconstruction and into the 20th century, memorials were erected to Confederate leaders, many of which still stand despite recent calls for their removal.

Memorials to Stephens, who had said the Confederacy's "corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man" still stand in public and civic spaces, including one in the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., erected in 1927 during the Jim Crow era. The impressive space of National Statuary Hall in the Capitol, under a dome and surrounded by marble columns, was set aside in 1864 to serve as a hall to honor those who were "illustrious for their historic renown or for distinguished civic or military services such as each State may deem to be worthy of this national commemoration." [6]

The artist who created the sculpture of Stephens, Gutzon Borglum, also worked on the enormous memorial celebrating the Confederacy carved on the side of Stone Mountain and the carving at Mount Rushmore. But the sculpture of Stephens may not remain in the U.S. Capitol for much longer. In an open letter to the Governor of Georgia in 2017, Stephens's descendants wrote: "Confederate monuments need to come down. Put them in museums where people will learn about the context of their creation, but remove them from public spaces so that the descendants of enslaved people no longer walk beneath them at work and on campus." [7] In June 2021, the House of Representatives voted to remove statues that honor Confederate leaders.

The causes of the Civil War in art

What do works of art reveal about the deep divisions that led to the Civil War? The collections of museums and archives, as well as public monuments, show us how artists captured the many issues that divided the nation in the years leading up to the Civil War, from the abolitionist movement to westward expansion, in photography, painting, sculpture, and popular prints. Visual arguments for and against slavery proliferated in 19th-century America, as defenders and opponents of human bondage sought to sway the opinions of the broader public. The new medium of photography, capable of capturing the visible world as never before, proved a valuable tool in this.



Figure **4.4.2.56**: Frederic Edwin Church, *The Meteor of 1860*, 1860, oil on canvas, 10 x 17.5 inches (private collection)

Paintings, too, often addressed the issues of both prewar and wartime emotion using landscape as a metaphor—as the art historian Eleanor Harvey put it, "American audiences seemed eager to ascribe patriotic sentiments to the landscape as a means of channeling wartime emotions." [8] For example, Frederic Church's 1860 painting, *The Meteor of 1860*, depicts a meteor streaking through the night sky and its reflection in water below. Critics at the time saw the double fireball of the meteor as akin to shots being fired from artillery, and saw it and other atmospheric phenomena that appeared in the sky that year, through the lens of a war that was seeming more and more unavoidable.

When we examine the visual record of the Civil War, it is best to immediately ask who an image was made for, who made it, what it aimed to achieve, how it was understood at the time it was made, and how its meaning has changed. We must also consider what

the visual record does *not* contain. For example, enslaved people rarely had an opportunity to create images; what they did create (such as textiles, baskets, carvings, dolls, and pottery) was less likely to be preserved than the works of free artists.



Figure **4.4.2.6**: Elizabeth Keckley, Mary Lincoln dress, 1861, velvet, satin, and mother-of-pearl, 152.4 cm x 121.92 cm (National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution)

Extraordinary exceptions however do exist. Elizabeth Keckley overcame her brutal enslavement in Virginia, North Carolina, and Missouri, and became the dressmaker to First Lady Mary Todd Lincoln. She was able to purchase her own freedom and that of her son in 1852 using $1,200 she earned from her sewing and that she was able to borrow from her wealthy clientele. [9] Her 1861 purple velvet dress with satin piping and mother-of-pearl buttons was made for Mrs. Lincoln to convey that she was both "dignified and competent," characteristics that had important political and diplomatic functions in the early months of the Civil War (the gown was worn in late 1861–early 1862).

The essays in this section

The essays in this section follow the thread of slavery in art as it was sewn through ideas about freedom, westward expansion, and the political landscape, from the founding of the nation to the start of the Civil War.

The first essay, "The problem of picturing slavery," focuses on the experience of enslaved men and women living in a slave society in the first half of the 19th century. What visual and material evidence did they leave behind that helps us to learn about their lives? What can't we learn from the visual record?

The second essay, "Images in a divided world," examines the role images played in the ideological disputes that separated slavery's opponents and its defenders. Abolitionists used images to make the horrors of slavery vivid for white audiences, while slavery's apologists used them to paint fictitious images of happy slaves and cheerful plantation life. Both sides used the fledgling "science" of photography to advance arguments for and against Black humanity and citizenship.

The third essay, "Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery," discusses the visions of the West in art, and the effect these visions had on U.S. politics, as white Americans projected their aspirations and fears onto the future of the nation, heedless of its Indigenous and Hispanic residents.

Although the path from the founding of the United States in 1776 to its war of disunion 85 years later was tortuous, slavery—its past, present, and particularly its future—was at the heart of the conflict at every turn.

Notes:

[1] "Speech of Hon. A.H. Stephens," *Southern Confederacy* (March 25, 1861).

[2] Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002).

[3] John C. Calhoun, "Slavery as a Positive Good," 1837. See a teaching resource for the primary text at the Bill of Rights Institute.

[4] In his first inaugural address, Lincoln said "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Read the full text of the address.

[5] This estimate of the Civil War dead derives from a census study comparing the male survival rates from 1860 to 1870. See J. David Hacker, "Recounting the Dead," *The New York Times*, September 20, 2011.

[6] Alexander Hamilton Stephens Statue, Architect of the Capitol.

[7] Alexander M. Stephens and Brendan A. Stephens, "Georgia's paean to Confederacy at U.S. capitol must go," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, August 25, 2017.

[8] Eleanor Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2012), p. 35.

[9] Lisa Farrington, *African American Art: A Visual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 50–52.

Additional resources

Learn more about Alexander H. Stephens' "Cornerstone" Speech.

Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (1868).

Frederic Edwin Church at The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.

Matthew Fox-Amato, *Exposing Slavery: Photography, Human Bondage, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

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4.4.3: The problem of picturing slavery

- What can and can't we learn from the visual and material record of slavery?

Page ID 180233

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**



Figure **4.4.3.1**: Leg shackles used to restrict the movement of enslaved people, 19th century, iron (Museum of the Civil War, Richmond; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

> ***Slavery has never been represented; Slavery never can be represented. . . . I may try to represent to you Slavery as it is; another may follow me and try to represent the condition of the Slave; we may all represent it as we think it is and yet we shall all fail to represent the real condition of the Slave.***
>
> ***William Wells Brown, From A Lecture Delivered before the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Salem, November 14, 1847***

This quote, from William Wells Brown—who escaped from slavery in 1834—testifies to the impossibility of representing the experience of enslavement, even by someone who was enslaved. Artifacts often encountered in museum settings, such as shackles that once bound enslaved people, provide some tangible evidence, but also feel profoundly inadequate as records of the lives of so many human beings who were enslaved.

Not surprisingly, few, if any, images made or commissioned by enslaved people that address their lived experience survive. We do have enticing records of three enormous “moving panoramas” (a popular form of entertainment) that were commissioned by three African American men in the 1850s (Henry Box Brown, William Wells Brown, and James Presley Ball) specifically to arouse the sympathy of viewers and persuade them of slavery’s evils. All three were abolitionists, and Box Brown and Wells Brown both escaped enslavement.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of printed, painted, and sculpted images about slavery in the United States were created by white people to persuade other white people, and therefore tell us little about the actual lived experience of enslaved people.

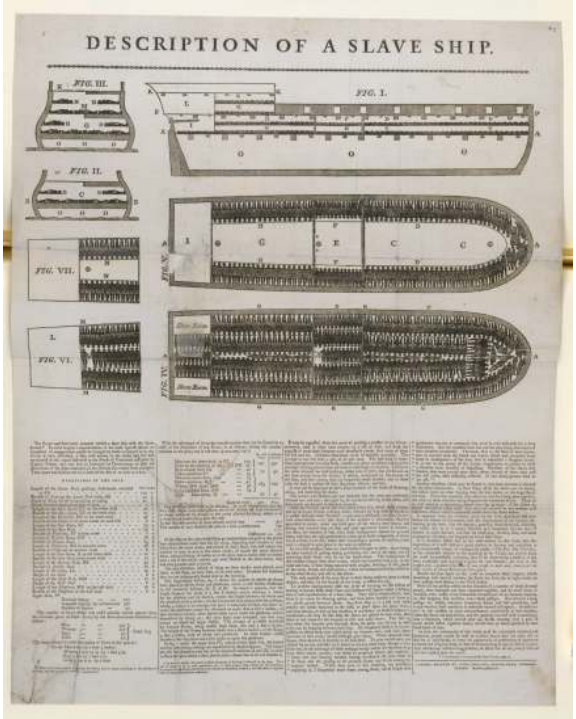


Figure 4.4.3.2: From *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, London, 1808 (British Library). The image dates to 1787, but it circulated later in many different versions.

The lasting power of slave ship diagram

One image, however, stands out for its power and longevity: a schematic diagram of the interior of the slave ship "Brookes," created in 1788 in England by an organization seeking to abolish slavery. [1] This diagram (and the text that accompanied it) revealed how tightly enslavers packed human cargo in the lower decks of the ship (allotting six feet for men, less for women and children). With this image we see at a glance how hundreds of enslaved people were chained together without room to move and sailed across the Atlantic. In the case of this particular ship, 454 people were crammed into the hold after a stop on the west coast of Africa, after which it sailed to islands in the Caribbean (most slave ships from Africa sailed to South America and the Caribbean). Out of the 12 million people who were forced into slavery during the years that the Atlantic slave trade operated, approximately one third died before leaving Africa or during this "Middle Passage" by boat. [2]

Of the thousands of images made in the 18th and 19th centuries regarding slavery, the slave ship diagram has had particular resonance. For more than 200 years it has moved viewers, aided teachers, and inspired artists to repurpose it.



Figure **4.4.3.3**: Betye Saar, *I'll Bend But I Will Not Break*, 1998, mixed media including vintage ironing board, flat iron, chain, white bedsheet, wood clothespins, and rope, 203.2 x 243.8 x 91.4 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) © Betye Saar

For example, in *I'll Bend but I will not Break*, contemporary artist Betye Saar created a poignant image not of slavery per se, but of the experience of remembering the trauma of slavery. She combined an ironing board imprinted with the 18th-century diagram of the slave ship beside a 19th-century image of a "Mammy" figure (a racist caricature of an enslaved Black woman who cooked meals and cared for white children).



Figure **4.4.3.4**: Ironing board (detail), Betye Saar, *I'll Bend But I Will Not Break*, 1998 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) © Betye Saar

Behind, the letters "KKK" (for Ku Klux Klan—a white supremacist terrorist organization that threatened and murdered Black people and their political allies) are barely visible on the sheet in the background, which has been pinned to a laundry line hung across the corner of a room. A chain keeps the iron attached to the ironing board. This image joins references to the beginnings of enslavement to the oppression and violence suffered by Black people in the United States in the 20th century, and serves to, as Saar put it, "jab the memory—to remind people of their history." [3]

Let's take a moment to recount that history.

The Middle Passage

Beginning in 1492, Europeans began to seize land in North America (including the Caribbean islands) and in South America. Forced labor, diseases carried by Europeans, and enslavement in some areas devastated Indigenous populations.

At the same time, Europeans discovered the huge profits possible in the cultivation of sugar, mining, and other industries and rapidly began to expand their conquest of land and people. Africans—whom the Portuguese had begun forcibly enslaving to work in sugar colonies off the coast of Africa in the late 1400s—quickly became the target of an immense international slave trade to support the sugar plantations of the Western Hemisphere. Slave traders in the ports of West Africa sold people who had been kidnapped or taken as prisoners of war farther inland, practices which escalated as Europeans looking to extract resources from the Americas drove up the demand for enslaved laborers. As a result of centuries of exchange with Europe and Asia, Africans had developed immunity to the diseases that had devastated the Indigenous populations in the Americas. Enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas in ever increasing numbers between the 16th and early 19th centuries. Africans came to make up the overwhelming share of enslaved people.

Slavery and Blackness

In the British colonies (what would become the United States), bondage and skin color were not at first inextricably tied together: free people of color, white indentured servants, and people with Indigenous ancestry complicate the notion that all white people were free and all Black people were enslaved. But over time colonial governments enacted laws that codified slavery and tied it to Blackness.

By 1640, Black people in Virginia colony, for example, were being held as slaves for life, and by the 1660s, the colony's laws defined slavery as a status that passed through the mother. By 1680, Blackness had become synonymous with enslavement throughout much of the British colonies, and liberty the province of whiteness.

By the late 17th century, slavery in the thirteen British colonies in North America had several unique characteristics compared to slavery in other times and places. First, slavery was for life: enslaved people had no possibility of becoming free except by escape, self-purchase (which was rare), or by voluntary manumission. Second, it was heritable: an enslaved woman's children were also enslaved for life, regardless of the status of their father. Lastly, and most importantly, slavery became race-based: Africans or Afrodescendants were subject to enslavement, and white people were not.



Figure 4.4.3.5: Badges worn by people of African descent in Charleston, South Carolina. The badge on the left was issued to a free person of color during the 1780s. The badge on the right was issued to an enslaved person ("servant" was a euphemism for slave) in 1824. Left: Free badge, 1783–89, copper, 1.457 x 1.614 inches; right: Slave badge, 1825, copper, 2.717 x 2.559 inches (both, The Charleston Museum)

Enslaved people commonly worked directly for their owners but might also be hired out or rented for a fee. In Charleston, slaveholders forced enslaved people who were hired out to wear a ticket or metal badge (issued by the city) in a visible place. [4] For a brief time in the 1780s, Charleston even issued badges for its free Black population, an expression of the surveillance and control whites exercised over all Black people in the city. The copper badge on the left dates to this period. The badge features a pileus cap, a hat worn by ancient Roman slaves upon receiving their freedom. The copper badge on the right dates to decades later (1824) and was worn by an enslaved person. The badge is typical in that it is stamped with the year of issue, a number, and an occupational category. “Lafar” (on the bottom) identifies the silversmith who made it, but the wearer is only identified as “servant” (a euphemism for slave). It is likely that the person forced to wear it worked in a city household as a domestic servant.

It is important to note, however, that slavery did not only exist in the territories then controlled by the United States. In what is today New Mexico and elsewhere, there were Native peoples who in some cases had their own traditions of enslaving war captives known as *genízaros* which began with **Spanish colonists** in this region during the 16th century.

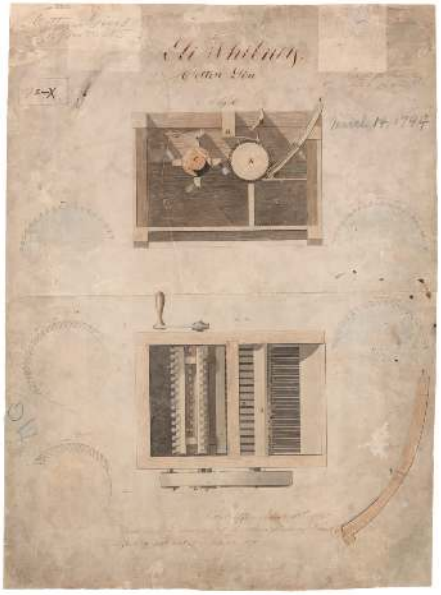


Figure **4.4.3.6**: Eli Whitney patent for the cotton gin, March 14, 1794 (Records of the Patent and Trademark Office; Record Group 241, **National Archives**)

Cotton and slavery

For a variety of reasons, slavery’s profits in the United States grew slimmer in the late 18th century, leading some contemporary observers to predict its gradual extinction. But the 1794 invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney changed all that. The cotton gin (“gin” was a short form of “engine”) was a machine that removed seeds from cotton fiber, specifically from short-staple cotton—a significant advance over earlier devices. Whitney’s gin made the crop profitable, pushing plantation owners to expand well into the interior of the South, fueling the demand for land and enslaved laborers.

At the same time, demand for cotton increased with the growth of textile factories in the northern United States and in England. Instead of dying out, the institution of slavery expanded throughout the first half of the 19th century, both in the total number of people who were enslaved (which more than quadrupled) and the amount of territory where slavery was practiced. [5] This growth occurred despite the fact that Congress banned the international slave trade in 1808.

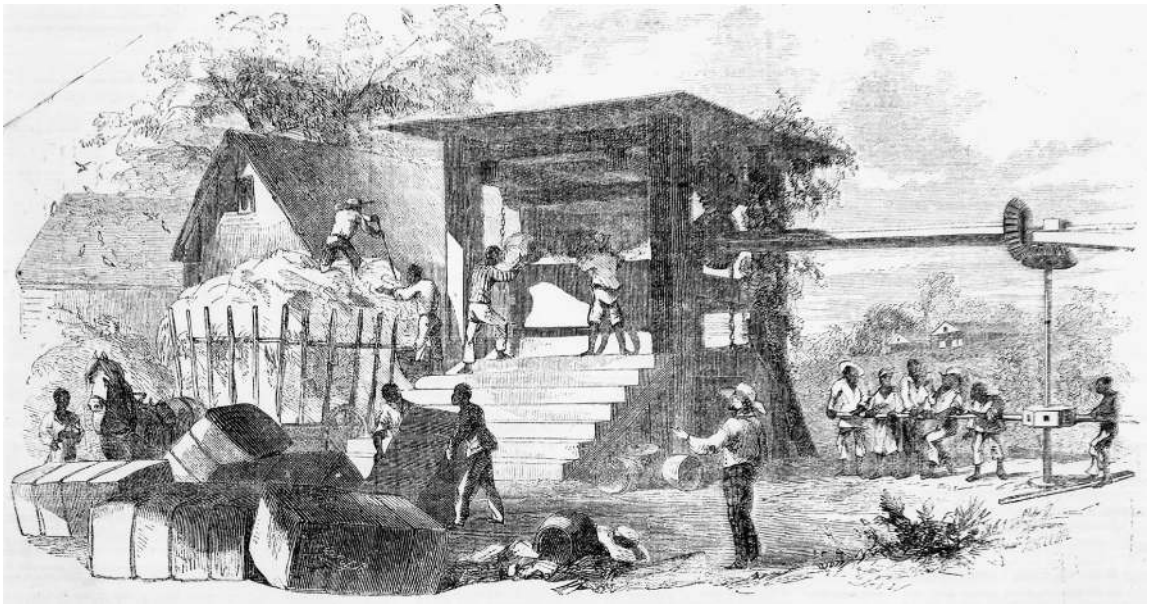


Figure **4.4.3.7**: William J. Pierce and A. Hill, "Cotton Pressing in Louisiana," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, no. 15, April 12, 1856, p. 236.

The process of growing cotton and preparing it for sale involved many steps and significant labor. This image, made for a Boston-based periodical on the eve of the Civil War, illustrates the stages of work involved in pressing cotton into bales. The enslaved men working at the cart on the left move cotton into the press. At the right, others walk in a circle providing power to the press. In the foreground, enslaved men move the finished bales down from the press. A white overseer (center right, wearing a large-brimmed hat and with a rifle at his feet) supervises the work, his arm outstretched.

The engraving (and the text that accompanies it) employs vicious racist stereotypes that were common in both northern and southern periodicals of the time. Here, the only white figure is depicted managing the complex process. His graceful stance contrasts with the disarray of the line of enslaved laborers at the right. The text points out that the enslaved man in the center of this group is shown mocking the overseer, drawing on racist stereotypes of Black people as reckless and foolish. Innovations like the cotton gin and press, along with the economic boons realized from enslaved labor, enabled some white southerners to become incredibly wealthy. In contrast, the enslaved people who worked the cotton fields did not profit from their labor.



Figure 4.4.3.8: Huge cotton bales can be seen in the right foreground, likely headed for textile mills in the north of England. Samuel Colman, Jr., *Ships Unloading, New York*, 1868, oil on canvas, 105 x 76 cm (The Terra Foundation for American Art)

Cotton was the most valuable export from the United States, and it supplied the majority of the world's cotton at this time. Few white southerners could envision a future where cotton did not rule their economy.

A slave society

Slavery was an economic system based on white supremacy where whites enslaved Black people to make use of their forced labor, often under harsh conditions. This system reduced people to commodities bought and sold for profit. An enslaved woman's owner also owned any children she bore, so the owner's "investment" grew along with her offspring. In a letter to a young relative, Thomas Jefferson (author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States) wrote of the people he enslaved, "I consider a woman who brings a child every two years as more profitable than the best man of the farm. What she produces is an addition to the capital, while his labors disappear in mere consumption." [6] The South's "capital" in enslaved people was its single most valuable asset—in fact, enslaved people were the most valuable asset in all of the United States, more valuable than all manufacturing and railroads combined. [7]

Although three quarters of white southerners did not own any enslaved people themselves, they overwhelmingly supported slavery. Poor white farmers perceived themselves as sharing a racial identity with the "great planters," who owned hundreds of enslaved people and dominated politics. This outweighed any economic commonality they may have shared with enslaved or free Black people. Assured that they would never be at the bottom of the social ladder, poor whites helped to uphold slavery and often aspired to one day own enslaved people themselves. [8]

We can divide the economic history of U.S. slavery into two periods. The first period ends in 1808, when the U.S. government banned the transatlantic slave trade. The second period, from 1808 through the end of the Civil War in 1865, saw the development of a slave trade within the United States. As the need for enslaved labor expanded across the South, planters purchased enslaved people from places like Shokoe Bottom in Richmond, Virginia. They were then forced to march, often chained together in a coffle, to locations further south or west.



Figure **4.4.3.9**: Lewis Miller, *Slave Trader, Sold to Tennessee*, page from Sketchbook of Landscapes in the State of Virginia, 1853, watercolor and ink on paper (Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation)

We have a mid-19th-century image of this common sight from Lewis Miller, a Pennsylvania carpenter who traveled widely and kept journals in the form of watercolor sketchbooks. We see twenty enslaved men, women, and children purchased in Staunton, Virginia, being taken in a coffle to Tennessee. Though barefoot, the figures appear neat and orderly, and the composition is framed by the tree on the right, and the figure on horseback on the left. The hill in the center helps to visually unify the group of enslaved men, women and children. Two armed white figures on horseback ensure that no one escapes. The artist wrote down the words he heard sung by the enslaved people, and included them in the upper right:

> ***Arise! Arise! And weep no more***
> ***Dry up your tears, we shall part***
> ***No more, come rose we go to Tennessee,***
> ***That happy Shore, to old Virginia***
> ***Never-never-return.as quoted in Maurie D. McInnis, Slaves Waiting for Sale (2011), p. 151***

Though these words may at first appear to be hopeful, they embodied a double meaning. The thinker and abolitionist Frederick Douglass noted, “Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears.” We should understand the lyrics Miller recorded on the page as deeply mournful. [9]

The experiences of the enslaved

Slavery varied greatly from region to region, from city to country, from estate to estate. Although many enslaved people did live on plantations in the Deep South and worked in cotton fields, enslavement was integrated into all aspects of southern life. Universities owned slaves, and students at universities—usually the sons of wealthy slaveowners—brought enslaved personal servants with them to campus. In cities, enslaved people may have worked as maids, on the docks, as laundresses, or as carpenters. Some enslaved people were skilled artisans, like potter David Drake of Edgefield, South Carolina.



Figure **4.4.3.10**: David Drake, *Doubled-handled Jug* (Lewis J. Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, South Carolina), 1840, stoneware with alkaline glaze, 44.13 x 35.24 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

This expertly made large double-handled jug is inscribed on one side with the artist's own name, "Dave" (for David Drake) as well as the name of his enslaver, "L Miles" (for Lewis J. Miles).

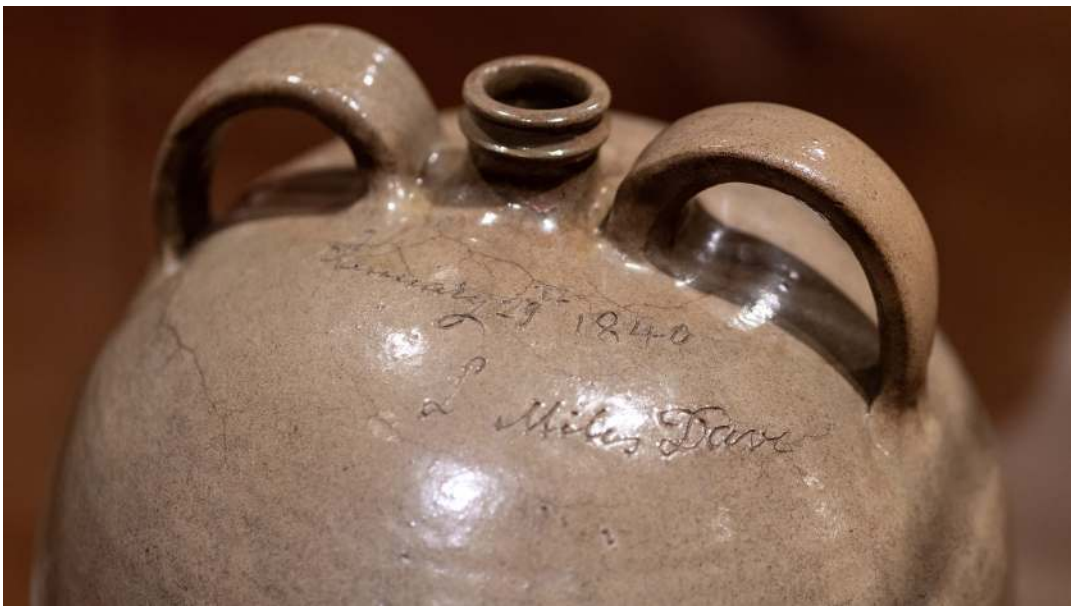


Figure **4.4.3.11**: Names and date (detail), David Drake, *Doubled-handled Jug* (Lewis J. Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, South Carolina), 1840, stoneware with alkaline glaze, 44.13 x 35.24 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The opposite side of the shoulder of the vessel is inscribed with a poem,

> ***Ladys & gentlemens Shoes***
> ***Sell all you can: & nothing you'll loose.David Drake***

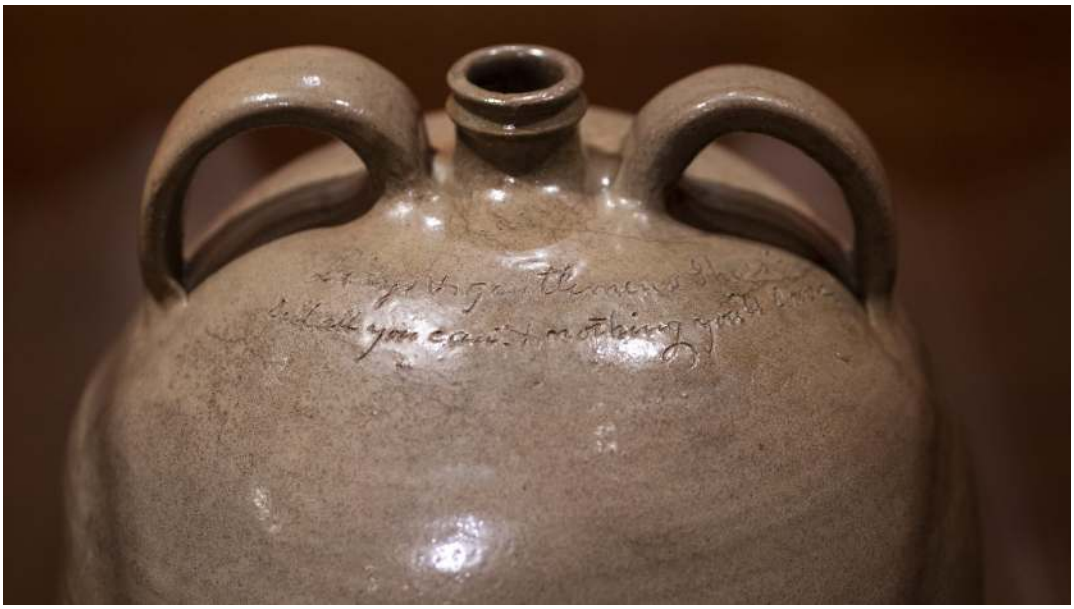


Figure **4.4.3.12**: Poem detail, David Drake, *Doubled-handled Jug* (Lewis J. Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, South Carolina), 1840, stoneware with alkaline glaze, 44.13 x 35.24 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Works by David Drake are extremely rare examples of objects produced by enslaved people that can be identified with a particular maker. Even more uncommon is the fact that this pot is inscribed with text written by the artist at a time when literacy was illegal for the enslaved in South Carolina, where this was produced.

Violence and threats were the main methods of coercion that enslavers used on enslaved people. Whippings, along with other forms of physical torture, were commonplace. Enslavers also sold Black children away from their parents or enslaved spouses away from each other when it was financially advantageous to them, or threatened to do so if an enslaved person did not meet certain demands.

For enslaved women and girls, the threat of sexual assault was constant. In addition to the near-limitless power slaveowners exercised over women's bodies, the rape of enslaved women was incentivized as any children that women bore would become valuable property. The sexual exploitation of enslaved women was an open secret in the South. Mary Chesnut, a white enslaver in South Carolina, observed that in gossip among white women, "every lady tells you who is the father of all the [mixed-race] children in everybody [else]'s household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or pretends so to think." [10] Harriet Jacobs, who published a memoir of her life in slavery, was relentlessly pursued by her enslaver and feared that his wife would kill her out of jealousy. [11]

Resistance and uprisings

It was extremely difficult for an enslaved person to fight back against the slave society of the South, where they were oppressed by laws, individuals, and even the landscape, as some plantations were so rural as to make each "a little nation of its own," in the words of one formerly enslaved man. [12] The tie between Blackness and slavery aided whites in constantly monitoring people of color to prevent attempted rebellion or escape. But enslaved people did fight back, in ways both big and small. Everyday resistance could take the form of breaking tools, feigning sickness, or slowing the pace of work. Some enslaved people, especially skilled workers like smiths or seamstresses, negotiated with their enslavers to purchase themselves or their family members by hiring out their labor and putting a portion of their wages toward freedom.

Some enslaved people escaped to northern states, Canada, or after 1837, Mexico, where slavery was illegal. Enslaved people who lived in a border state or near a body of water (as boats provided the fastest means of transportation at the time), had the best chances of escape. Tens of thousands of enslaved people in the first half of the 19th century also escaped through the "Underground Railroad," a network of abolitionists (both whites and free people of color) who sheltered refugees on their way to freedom. The most famous Underground Railroad "conductor" was Harriet Tubman, who escaped from slavery in Maryland in 1849 and then returned to the South more than a dozen times in the decade that followed to assist others in escaping. [13]

Enslaved people also resisted through coordinated uprisings, which occurred with regularity. Southern whites were terrified of uprisings and tried to suppress news of rebellion from reaching enslaved people, but often failed. News of the successful Haitian Revolution ending slavery in 1804 inspired several uprisings in the United States.

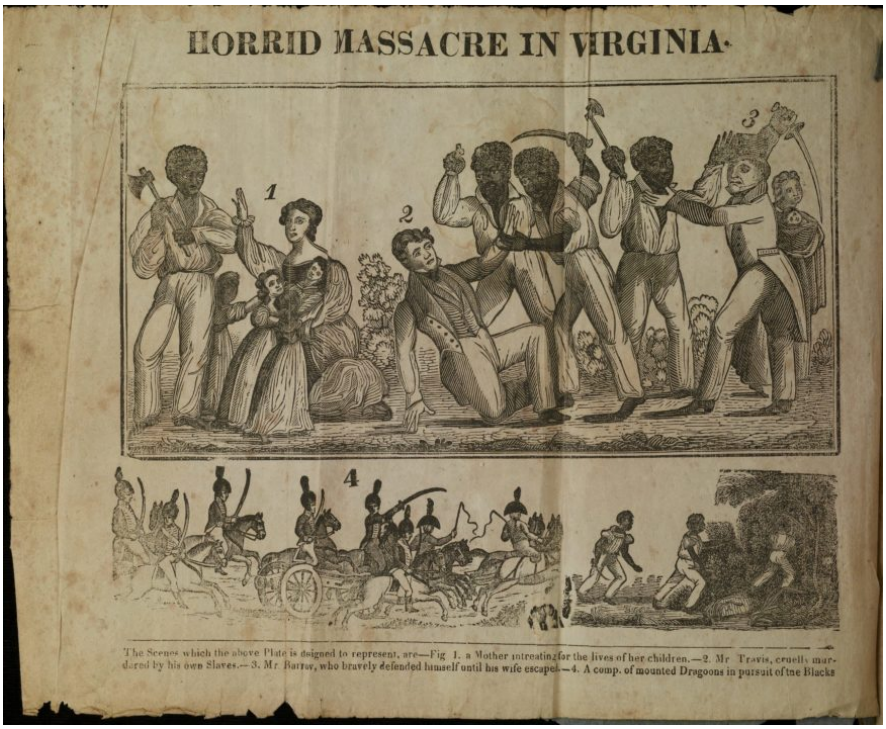


Figure **4.4.3.13**: Woodcut depicting Nat Turner's uprising, 1831 (University of Virginia Special Collections)

In 1831 Nat Turner led a group of enslaved people in a rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia, which resulted in the deaths of 60 white people and widespread fear and retribution (approximately double that number of Black people were killed by militias and mobs). This event prompted the General Assembly of Virginia to debate whether to abolish slavery through gradual emancipation, attempt a colonization scheme (freeing enslaved people but forcing them to emigrate to Africa), or continue with slavery as it existed. After six weeks of debate, the General Assembly decided not to pursue any steps toward emancipation, instead cracking down on gatherings of free and enslaved Black people. [14] One wonders how the rest of the century might have unfolded had Virginia abolished slavery in the 1830s.

With whites creating and distributing most imagery, uprisings were depicted as savage murders of innocents rather than defensive responses by enslaved people to ongoing violence and oppression. In the woodcut above, for example, we see two registers, clearly labeled for maximum legibility. At the top, and up close, the first figure we encounter is a Black man wielding an axe as a woman and four children plead for mercy. In the second scene, a white man falls to the ground as he is outnumbered and assaulted by two Black men who tower above him, one of whom wields a sword. In the final scene on the right, a standing white man with a sword engages in a fight with an axe, while a white woman carrying an infant wrapped in her cloak, moves to the right. Along the bottom, we see a more expansive view of white soldiers on horseback pursuing Black figures. The woodcut, intended for a white audience, tells a story that moves from violence against white women and children to a reassuring scene of the Black culprits of the rebellion (just three men are shown) being chased and punished.

Absence and presence

The visual record of slavery is severely limited, yet it tells us a great deal. We read as much from its absences as from its presences. Much of what was made has likely been lost to time, discarded by the same people who worked to preserve the houses, furnishings, and papers of wealthy enslavers. Instead we must imagine the hearts behind copper badges worn around necks, and conjecture what the hands that were forced into manacles would have made had they been able to make whatever they chose.

Notes:

[1] See Cheryl Finley, *Committed to Memory, the Art of the Slave Ship Icon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[2] Thomas Clarkson, **Diagram of the Brookes Slave Ship**, in *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 1787 (British Library). For the most recent Middle Passage statistics, see the **Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database**.

[3] Finley, *Committed to Memory*, p. 206.

[4] Ethan J. Kytle and Blain Roberts, *Denmark Vesey's Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy* (New York: The New Press, 2018), p. 37.

[5] See the Seventh Census of the United States, 1850.

[6] Thomas Jefferson, **letter to John Wayles Eppes** (June 30, 1820).

[7] See Matthew Desmond, "In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation," *The New York Times Magazine*, 2019.

[8] Slaveowning data from Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, AP 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017), pp. 394–395.

[9] Phillip D. Troutman, "A 'Sorrowful Cavalcade': Enslaved Migration through Appalachian Virginia," *The Smithfield Review*, no. 1 (2001): pp. 23–45.

[10] See C. Vann Woodward, ed. *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 29.

[11] Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl* (Boston: Thayer & Eldridge, 1861).

[12] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Auburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), p. 64.

[13] See Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2004).

[14] **The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831–1832.**

Additional resources

Learn about the lives of individuals who were enslaved, owned slaves, or participated in the historical trade on **enslaved.org**.

Watch a video about Samuel Colman, Jr., ***Ships Unloading, New York*** (1868).

Cheryl Finley, *Committed to Memory, the Art of the Slave Ship Icon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

Aston Gonzalez, *Visualizing Equality: African American Rights and Visual Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

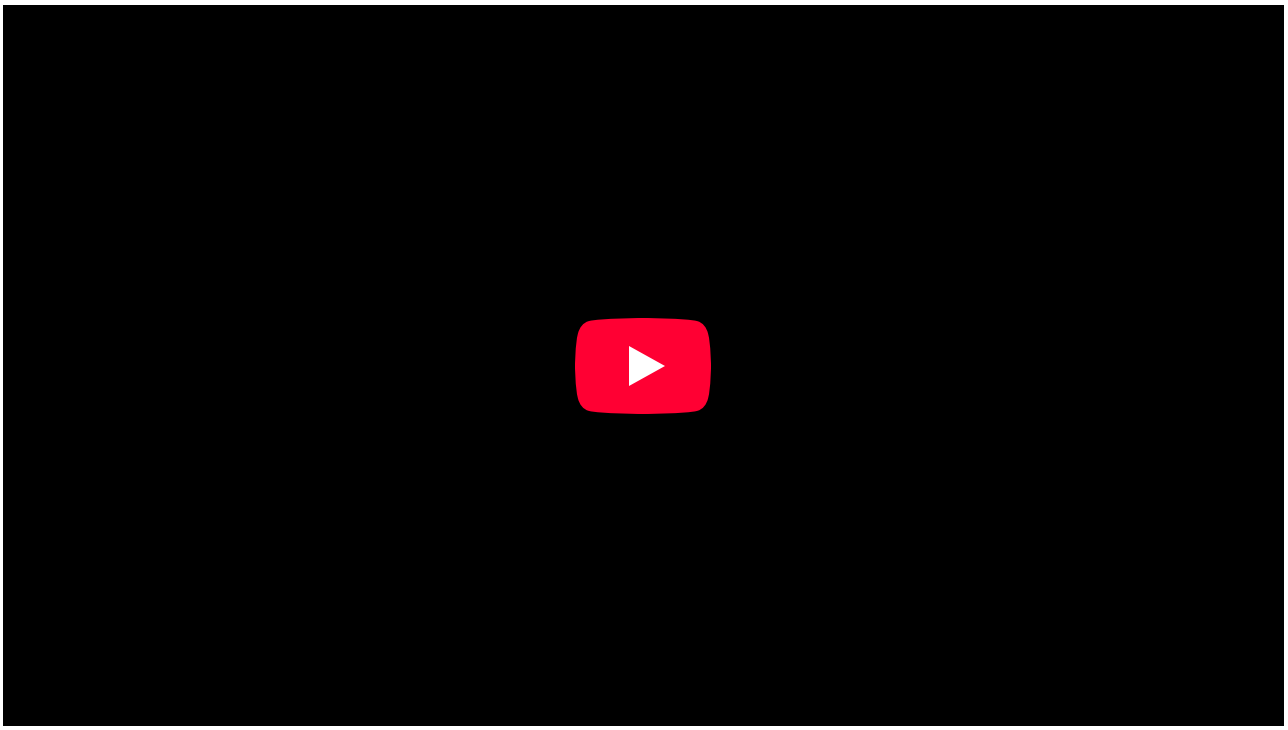
Learn more about artist Betye Saar at MoMa.

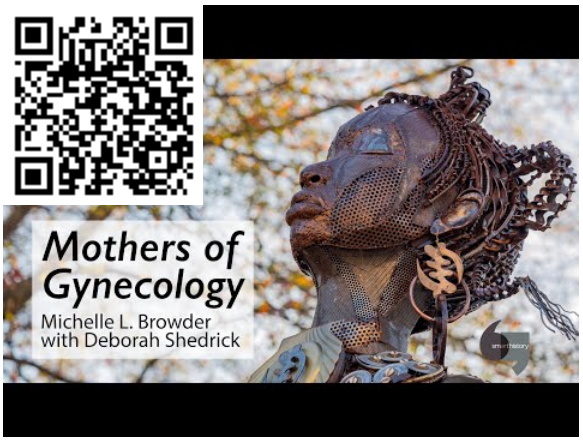
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4.4.4: Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology

by **MICHELLE L. BROWDER** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID
180076





Michelle L. Browder (with Deborah Shedrick), *Mothers of Gynecology*, 2021, found metal objects and other media, roughly 15 feet high (Mission for More Up campus Montgomery, Alabama, © Michelle L. Browder)

warning: this video discusses racial violence

Key points

- Artist and activist Michelle Browder's monument reclaims the history of the enslaved Black women who underwent non-anesthetized medical experimentation by Dr. James Marion Sims in the late 1840s in Montgomery, Alabama. The monument includes a sculptural group that portrays the only three enslaved women whose names were recorded in Dr. Sims' documentation of his experiments: Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy. The identities of other enslaved women who suffered under Dr. Sims, whose names he did not record, are unknown.

- Dr. James Marion Sims has long been celebrated as the father of gynecology for, among other things, developing a procedure to remedy vesicovaginal fistulas. The excruciating and repeated experimentation on enslaved Black women that led him to perfect this procedure, however, reflects the racist devaluation of Black humanity and prevailing perception of Black people as property in the mid-19th century. Sims justified these experiments in part because he, along with many other white people at the time, believed that Black people didn't feel as much pain as white people (a racist belief which still impacts medical treatment for Black people today).
- Browder's monument includes larger-than-life-sized figures of the three women and the displaced womb of Anarcha. The bodies and womb are made from discarded metal materials that reference their inhumane treatment by Dr. Sims and other whites who perpetuated slavery. The women's postures, hair, and adornments, however, serve to reinstate their identities and celebrate the power and resilience of Black women.

Go deeper

Learn more about the Mothers of Gynecology park at The More Up Campus

"'Father Of Gynecology', Who Experimented on Slaves, No Longer On Pedestal In NYC", from National Public Radio (April 17, 2018)

Linda Matchan, "The statue of a doctor who experimented on enslaved women still stands in Alabama. But now there's also a monument to his victims." *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2021

"**Remembering Anarcha, Lucy, and Betsey: The Mothers of Modern Gynecology", episode of The Hidden Brain podcast, episode 20 (2016)**

"'The Mothers of Gynecology' remembered in Montgomery monument," from *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* (February 20, 2022)

Deirdre Cooper Owens, *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* (University of Georgia Press, 2017)

More to think about

A 2017 Alabama law, enacted to safeguard Confederate monuments, states that no monuments erected on public property for more than 40 years may be removed. With her ability to advocate for the removal of a 1939 sculpture of Dr. Sims in the city of Montgomery restricted, Michelle Browder chose to make a new monument to reclaim the history of the women upon whom Dr. Sims experimented. Discuss the impact of retaining monuments to individuals who perpetuated harm verses removing them. How can Michelle Browder's new monument function in relation to the older monument to Sims*? Consider the choices Browder made in materials, size, and composition.

**The Sims monument is discussed and shown in the Mothers of Gynecology video.*

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4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug

by DR. SUSAN J. RAWLES and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID
180077





David Drake (Lewis J. Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, South Carolina), 1840, stoneware with alkaline glaze, 44.13 x 35.24 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Key points

- In the 19th century, the Edgefield District of South Carolina was home to ceramic manufactories that produced large numbers of utilitarian wares out of the abundant local clay. These manufactories, or potteries, were part of the industrial slavery complex in the United States (as opposed to that of agricultural slavery). Enslaved laborers would dig, transport, and prepare clay for the production of commercially sold vessels. Some of the enslaved workers were also trained as potters who built, glazed, and fired vessels.

- David Drake was one of these artisans. His work is known today because he signed some of his pieces. He also inscribed short poetic couplets or phrases on a number of his vessels, addressing serious as well as humorous topics.
- David Drake was an accomplished potter and writer. His ceramic wares display skill in using a pottery wheel, attention to symmetry and overall form, and sensitivity in the application of alkaline glazes to create rich, glossy surfaces. His poetry reflects a grasp of language that allowed for wit and playfulness as well as poignancy and subtle critique.
- Anti-literacy laws enacted in South Carolina and throughout the South in the 18th century were instituted specifically to restrict enslaved people. In the early 19th century, the laws became stricter and eventually came to impact both free and enslaved Black people alike as whites grew more and more fearful in the wake of slave uprisings. In this context, David Drake's choice to publicly display his literacy through writing on his ceramics was a courageous act of defiance.

Go deeper

A face jug from Edgefield county, a video by Smarthistory

Causes of the U.S. Civil War: The problem of picturing slavery, from "The U.S. Civil War in Art" by Smarthistory

Jori Finkel, "The Enslaved Artist Whose Pottery Was an Act of Resistance," *The New York Times*, 17 June 2021.

Robert Hunter and Oliver Mueller Heubach, "Visualizing the Stoneware Potteries of William Rogers of Yorktown and Abner Landrum of Pottersville," *Ceramics in America* (2019).

Arthur F. Goldberg and James Witkowski, "Beneath his Magic Touch: The Dated Vessels of the African-American Slave Potter Dave," *Ceramics in America* (2006).

Jill B. Koverman, *I Made This Jar: The Life and Works of the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave* (McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1998).

Leonard Todd, *Carolina Clay: The Life and Legend of the Slave Potter Dave* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2008). (Note: Leonard Todd's ancestors were among Drake's enslavers and some scholars have suggested that his book portrays them too sympathetically.)

More to think about

Consider some of the questions that art museums, which have been more rapidly acquiring and displaying vessels by David Drake in recent years, are grappling with:

- How do we balance appreciation of the artistry of this work with the history that it represents? How do we account for our own biases in exploring this question?
- What does it mean for museums to acquire, interpret, and exhibit a work by an enslaved person who did not receive financial compensation for their labor?
- Who benefits from the purchase and display of these works in museums? (Note: as of winter, 2022, the living descendants of David Drake have not received or requested any funds from the sale of his works to museums.)

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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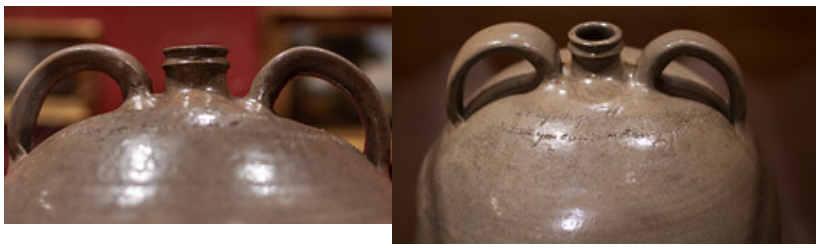
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This page titled 4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Susan J. Rawles and Dr. Steven Zucker, "Literacy and slavery: David Drake, Double-handled jug," in Smarthistory, March 21, 2022, accessed October 30, 2022.

4.4.6: Images in a divided world

- Images were used on both sides of the argument: should slavery continue?

Page ID 180234

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**

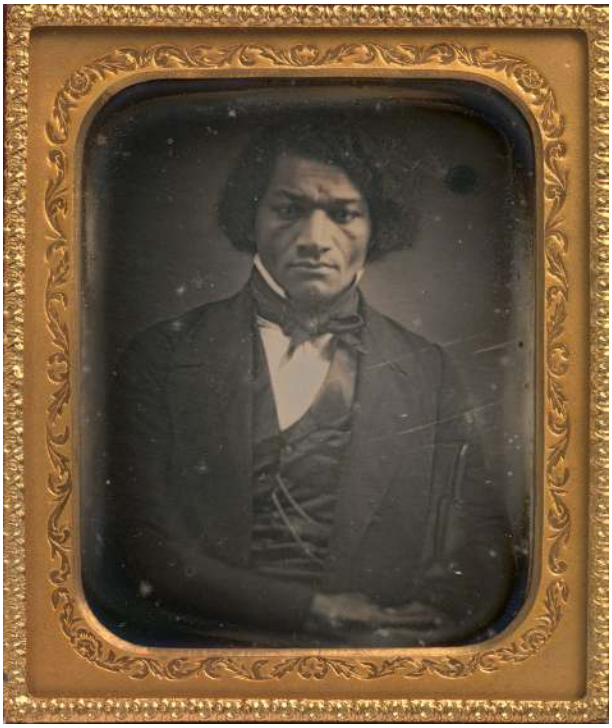


Figure **4.4.6.1**: Frederick Douglass, c. 1850, photograph, 6.6 x 5.3 cm (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution)

> ***It is evident that the great cheapness and universality of pictures must exert a powerful, though silent, influence upon the ideas and sentiment of present and future generations.Frederick Douglass, Lecture on Pictures, Boston (December 3, 1861) [1]***

Images played a central role in the debates over slavery and Black citizenship that consumed the United States in the years leading up to the Civil War. For example, Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist, writer, publisher, and thinker, who escaped from slavery as a young man, was an ardent admirer of Louis Daguerre, the inventor of the daguerreotype, an early form of photography. Douglass celebrated photography as a democratic art, and he saw portraits as a tool in the battle for abolition and citizenship, at a time when popular, widely circulated images depicted racist stereotypes of Black people. During his travels, he sought out photographic studios, and sat for numerous photographs over decades, always consciously attired in the clothes of a gentleman. This was part of his effort to represent himself, especially his self-possession, dignity, and character—his full humanity, and therefore by extension, the humanity and rights of all Black people to freedom and citizenship. Through this project, Douglass became the most photographed man of the 19th century. [2]

Art is always a register of the historical era in which it was made. It expresses, consciously or not, the concerns, prejudices, and assumptions of its cultural moment. In an era when cultural assumptions were at loggerheads, images can reveal, sometimes in stark relief, the clash of ideas and ideologies.

For example, when we consider images of slavery, we are usually looking at either images that sought to rally sympathy for enslaved people and motivate political advocacy for change, or we are looking at imagery that softened the brutal reality of slavery to make it appear as a beneficial institution for all. Much as we would like an objective window into the past, there are no neutral images that can tell us about the realities of life as an enslaved person. All images, including drawings and even photographs, require contextualization.

We have to ask, who took the photograph or picked up the paint brush? What was their motive? What can the image itself tell us about the point of view of its creator? Where was the image circulated? Who was its intended audience? What is the relationship of the image to other images of the same subject?

Two photographs

Let's begin with two photographs of Black men taken in the 1850s, not long after photography's invention. Photography was celebrated for its astonishing ability to accurately portray the world, but in the images here we see the ways that photography could be used to further both pro- and anti-slavery positions.



Figure **4.4.6.2**: Left: Frederick Douglass, c. 1855, daguerreotype, 8.3 x 7 cm (Metropolitan Museum of Art); right: Joseph T. Zealy, daguerreotype of Renty Taylor, 1850 (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University; photo: Unibond)

On the left is another portrait of Douglass wearing an impeccable suit, as he turns to present a three-quarter profile and looks directly at the viewer with a confident, even challenging expression. The other, an older man, is stripped to the waist, his sinews and scars suggest a long life of labor. He too is looking directly at the viewer, but his expression is harder to read: resigned, defiant, entreating?

Despite the similarities in media, subject, and era, the circumstances and purpose of these photographs could not be more different. On the right is Renty Taylor, an enslaved man who was born in central Africa in the late 18th century. He posed for the photograph not of his own volition but at the direction of Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz.

Agassiz was a Harvard professor and regent of the Smithsonian Institution and helped to found the National Academy of Science. He was a naturalist, but also an opponent of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Agassiz turned to photography to support the racist pseudo-scientific theory of polygenesis, which posited that the races had separate origins, and therefore racial difference—both white supremacy and Black inferiority—were immutable scientific facts. [3]

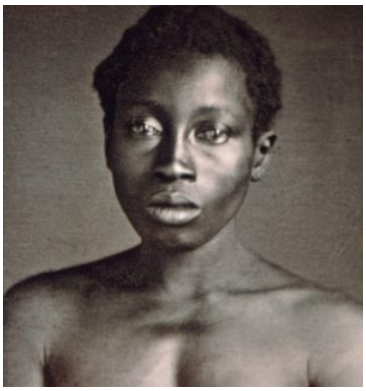


Figure **4.4.6.3**: Joseph T. Zealy, daguerreotype of Delia Taylor (cropped), 1850 (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University; photo: Hannolans)

Agassiz commissioned daguerreotypes of enslaved men and women and their adult children living in South Carolina, believing that the photographs would demonstrate Black people had innate physical differences. Delia, who was Renty Taylor's daughter, was also forced to pose, stripped to the waist, for a daguerreotype taken by Joseph T. Zealy. As an enslaved Black woman, Delia was not afforded the protection of modesty that white women of her era could command. Agassiz also had Renty Taylor and numerous other Black men and women photographed nude.

Agassiz used his interpretation of their physical features to argue (incorrectly) that Black people had been created separately from whites. As Douglass used photography as a tool to humanize Black people born into slavery, Agassiz used the camera as a weapon to dehumanize his subjects, reducing human beings to specimens.

In the end, Agassiz's photographs are not evidence of the inferiority of one race in comparison to another, but of the brutality of white supremacy and slavery, and the physical harm and humiliation it caused. The photographs of Delia and Renty document people exposed against their will, but also represent the many millions whose identities have been lost to history, who were bought and sold and who labored so that their white owners might prosper.

Promoting abolition

In the North, free Black people, including Douglass, formed a vital part of the abolitionist movement. Along with white abolitionists, they were active in raising money and helping enslaved people escape to free territory. They published narratives of their experiences in slavery and freedom, printed abolitionist newspapers, and lectured to audiences in the Canada, United States, and Europe.



Figure 4.4.6.4: Eyre Crowe, *After the Sale: Slaves Going South from Richmond*, 1853, oil on canvas, 27 x 36 inches (Chicago History Museum)

Many of the images produced to support abolition, however, were created by white artists. Take, for example, the 1853 painting by the British artist Eyre Crowe entitled *After the Sale: Slaves Going South from Richmond*, which was exhibited in London in 1854. Crowe was inspired to learn more about slavery in the United States after reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (the best-selling antislavery novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe). Crowe made several paintings of this subject, all based on sketches made from life at Shockoe Bottom, in Richmond, Virginia. It was at Shockoe Bottom where enslavers bought and sold men, women, and children, forcibly separated families, and procured slave labor for whites across the American South. Crowe was clearly sympathetic to the abolitionist cause, and intended to use the painting (and others he made on the subject) to expose the brutality of slavery. He also wanted his paintings to be well received when exhibited.

Crowe's painting is full of specific details that seek to convince the viewer of the authenticity of what we're seeing. We see the Richmond skyline in the distance. Just beside the top of the train car we can see the state capitol building designed by Thomas Jefferson in the style of an ancient Greek temple—a reference to the origins of democracy and ideals of justice and equality. Below can be seen a rocky creek in the foreground, a railway car clearly labeled with its destination, a dog nipping at a girl, and sacks of clothing on the ground. At the far left, enslaved people are marched in—likely from a jail where they were kept after being sold, and are headed toward the railway car. On the far right, we see two disreputable white figures engaged in a transaction that we assume has something to do with the enslaved figures. Above them, a Black man (perhaps enslaved to the railroad), holds a chain and an open lock in front of the doorway leading into the train car. An American flag flutters behind and above him.



Figure **4.4.6.5**: Eyre Crowe, *After the Sale: Slaves Going South from Richmond* (detail), 1853, oil on canvas, 27 x 36 inches (Chicago History Museum)

The most important action though, takes place in the center, where we see a young woman in a wagon handing a child (hers, we assume), to a man. We presume this family is being torn apart because the woman has been sold. Another woman in a white cap located behind and between the mother and child seems to gasp and hold her hand to her mouth. In the center foreground a dog nips at the skirt of a woman holding a baby, recalling how those who escaped from slavery were often pursued by bloodhounds. Taken together with the state capitol building in the distance, we can see that Crowe has carefully crafted his painting to underscore the great distance between the ideal of democracy and the abomination of American slavery.



Figure **4.4.6.6**: Left: Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Birth of St. John the Baptist* (detail), 1486–90, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, Florence; Right: Eyre Crowe, *After the Sale: Slaves Going South from Richmond* (detail), 1853, oil on canvas, 27 x 36 inches (Chicago History Museum)

Crowe described the “sense of horror” he felt when he visited the slave market, and yet, as cultural historian Maurie D. McInnis has pointed out, this image, and others Crowe made of slavery, hardly seem that brutal at all. [4] The figures exchange meaningful glances (for example, the upright figure in the carriage and the man holding chains), but their expressions do not match the emotional turmoil of the scene.

The artist used a number of pictorial strategies to make the work palatable for viewers, including drawing on the history of art. [5] Take for instance the woman in the orange dress striding forward who looks out (perhaps to implicate us?) carrying a basket on her head. Her graceful stance and the way her dress moves even as it clings to her body looks back to Italian Renaissance art.

Defending slavery

At a time of dire poverty for many workers (both Black and white), slavery’s defenders argued (untruthfully) that slavery was a superior system, where owners cared for enslaved people from birth until death, whereas factory owners abandoned white laborers the moment they could no longer work. An 1841 lithograph by Edward Williams Clay (a northern artist who created many prints

advocating for white supremacy) contrasted the "happy" slaves of the American South with the abused wage laborers of English factories. Clay's print includes stereotypical images that would have been familiar to popular audiences.

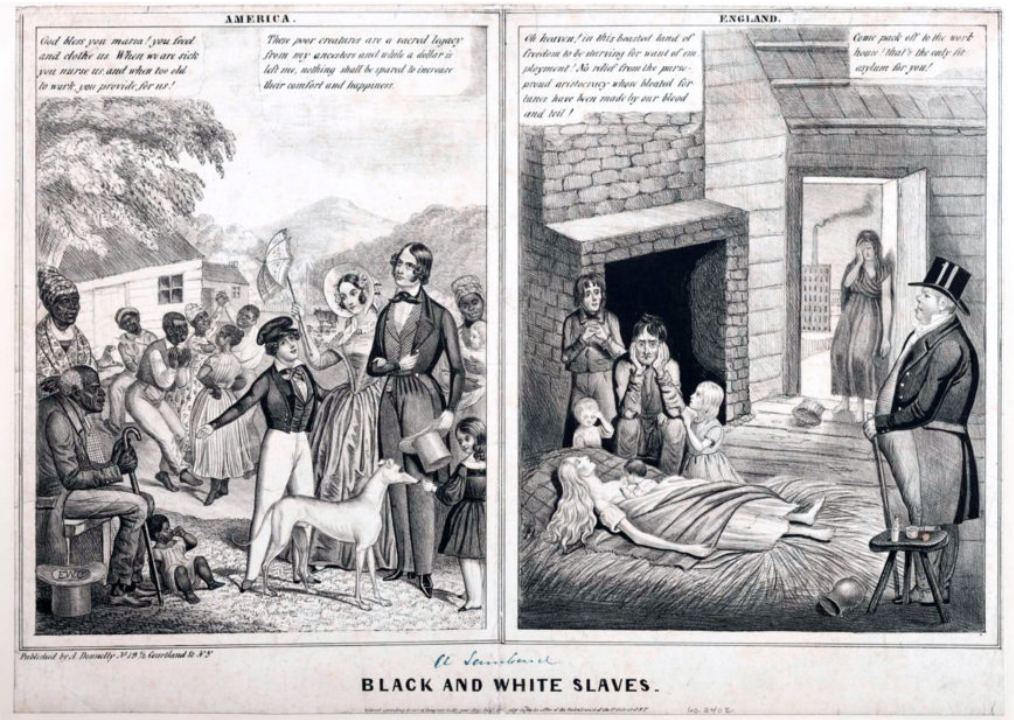


Figure **4.4.6.7**: This cartoon contrasts the "happy, well cared-for" enslaved Black people of the American South with the "wage slaves" of England's factories. Edward Williams Clay, *America (Black and White Slaves)*, c. 1841, lithograph published by A. Donnelly, 31.43 x 48.26 cm (Smithsonian National Museum of American History)

On the left, Clay offers the slave quarters on a plantation with dancing Black figures. In the foreground, the enslaved of all ages appear content and well cared for by a young, fashionably dressed white family. The captions are even less subtle. Here, the enslaved are given the degrading words, "God bless you massa! You feed and clothe us." The white man calls the Black family "poor creatures" and vows to "spare nothing to increase their comfort and happiness." The image underscores the paternalistic premise that white owners generously provided for the enslaved (the way a father cares for his children).

In opposition, the image on the right depicts figures distinguished by economic and social class rather than race. A white mother lays dying as her family mourns and a wealthy landowner evicts them from their home. In the distance, a factory emits smoke from its chimney. While the two images purport to contrast a harmonious view of southern plantation life with destructive industrialization in Britain, many viewers would have understood that it also referenced the abuses of the more industrialized economy of the northern United States. Clay's lesson is clear: the southern way of life (the enslavement of Black people) is moral and just and superior to the barbarous inhumanity of industrialization.

Images at the forefront

Images were at the forefront of arguments for and against slavery in the 19th century and helped to inform contemporary opinions about slavery and the status of Black people in the United States. The new medium of photography was an especially potent weapon in this debate—employed both by abolitionists to counter racist stereotypes of Black people and by white supremacists in support of slavery. But photography's "truth" was no more objective than the scenes conjured in paintings and prints: all such images were ammunition in a larger battle over the future of the nation.

Notes:

[1] Opening Douglass quote from his "Lecture on Pictures" (also called "Pictures and Progress") in Boston's Tremont Temple, 1861. See also John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015).

[2] See John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015).

[3] Douglass addressed this pseudoscience in **"The claims of the Negro, ethnologically considered: an address before the literary societies of Western Reserve College," at commencement, July 12, 1854**.

[4] Eyre Crowe, "**Sketches in the Free and Slave States of America**," *The Illustrated London News*, September 27, 1856, p. 314.

[5] For a full discussion, see Maurie D. McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale, Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), chapter 6.

Additional resources

Ilisa Barbash, Molly Rogers, and Deborah Willis, eds., *To Make Their Own Way in the World: The Enduring Legacy of the Zealy Daguerreotypes* (New Haven and Reading, Pennsylvania: Peabody Museum Press and Aperture Press, 2020).

Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, eds., *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

John Stauffer et. al., *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015).

Learn more about Eyre Crowe's images of the slave trade at Encyclopedia Virginia.

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4.4.7: Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery

- Americans' stance on slavery colored their visions of the West.

Page ID 180235

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**



Figure 4.4.7.1: Asher B. Durand, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)*, 1853, oil on canvas, 58 7/16 x 82 1/4 x 4 3/8 inches (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Lush vegetation, broad rivers, rich farmland, spectacular mountains. In the 19th century, the western part of what is now the United States held the imagination of U.S. citizens as a place of almost limitless possibility. This vision of the West's abundant opportunity is celebrated in Asher B. Durand's painting *Progress*—commissioned by a railroad baron (whose own fortunes were tied up with westward expansion). [1]



Figure 4.4.7.2: Train (detail), Asher B. Durand, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)*, 1853, oil on canvas, 58 7/16 x 82 1/4 x 4 3/8 inches (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

In the painting, we see canals, railroads, and steamships crisscross the landscape, and towns, and churches spring up, all bathed in the light of the sun. In the shadowed foreground on the left, a small group of Indigenous Americans, set in a dark primeval forest, look out at the gleaming promise of Euro-American progress. At the lower right, white settlers are shown having built a homestead —beginning the process of taming the wilderness.



Figure **4.4.7.3**: Left: Indigenous people look on (detail), right: Settler homestead (detail); Asher B. Durand, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)*, 1853, oil on canvas, 58 7/16 x 82 1/4 x 4 3/8 inches (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photos: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

This was the essence of the once-broadly-held concept of **Manifest Destiny**: that the United States had a divine, "manifest" (self-evident) mission to create a nation that stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, spreading the light of democracy and the word of God.



Figure **4.4.7.4**: Divine providence as symbolized by the sun (detail), Asher B. Durand, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)*, 1853, oil on canvas, 58 7/16 x 82 1/4 x 4 3/8 inches (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Indigenous peoples, slavery, and the politics of geography

Even before the term Manifest Destiny was coined, the British colonists wanted to move west. In fact, they sought independence in part because of their frustration with Britain's intent to honor its treaties with Indigenous allies (that barred British subjects from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains). [2]

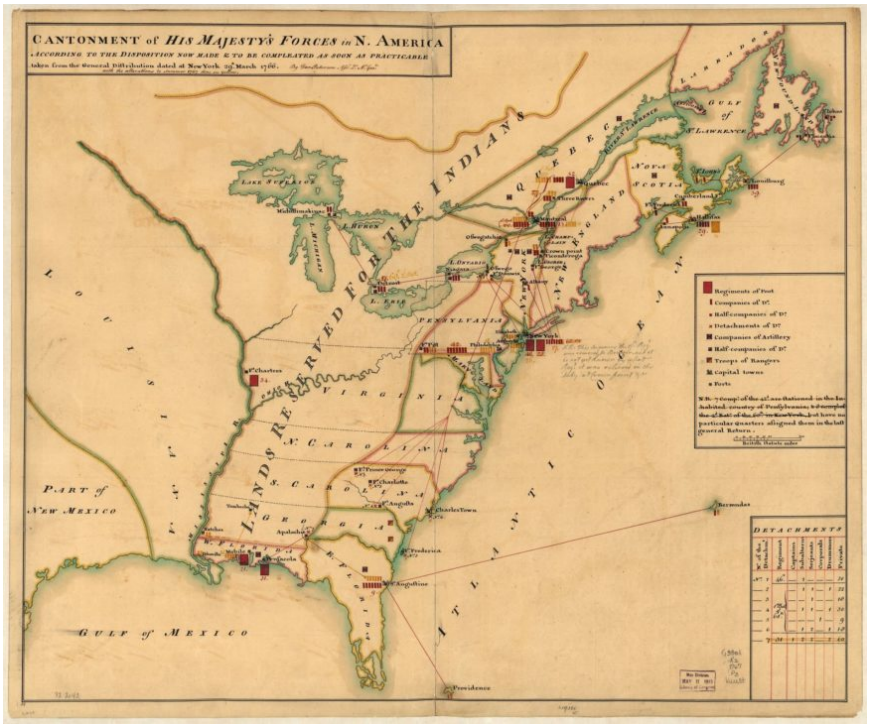


Figure 4.4.7.5: A 1767 map of the placement of British military forces in North America. Daniel Paterson, *Cantonment of His Majesty's forces in N. America according to the disposition now made & to be completed as soon as practicable taken from the general distribution dated at New York, 29th. March, 1767* (Library of Congress)

A map of the placement of British military forces in North America from 1767 directed that lands between the British colonies on the eastern seaboard and the inland French territory of Louisiana were "reserved for the Indians." Victory in the American Revolution gave citizens of the new United States license, as they saw it, to invade western lands and remove the Indigenous peoples there.

But what kind of nation would it be? At the same time that the United States was laying claim to enormous new territories—from the 1803 Louisiana Purchase to the 1848 Mexican Cession—the citizens of its existing states were becoming increasingly divided by region on the issue of slavery.

Slavery had existed in the 13 British colonies that would become the United States, but during the late 18th and early 19th centuries the geography of slavery began to shift. Northern states gradually outlawed slavery, often citing incompatibility with the principles of freedom and democracy espoused in support of the American Revolution.



Figure 4.4.7.6: Susan Anne Livingston Ridley Sedgwick, miniature portrait of Elizabeth Freeman (Mumbet), 1811, watercolor on ivory, 7.5 cm x 5.5 cm (Massachusetts Historical Society)

As an example, Elizabeth Freeman successfully sued for her own freedom (in the case *Brom and Bett v. Ashley*, 1781) arguing that the state's Bill of Rights guaranteed her freedom and equality. As a result, Massachusetts became the only state in the Union to end slavery because it was declared unconstitutional by a court. Here we see Freeman portrayed in watercolor on a precious piece of ivory. She looks directly at the viewer with a gently critical gaze. Her hair, just visible under her bonnet, has turned white, and her age is also expressed through the lines on her face. This fierce advocate for the abolition of slavery appears both alert and riveting.

Southern states, by contrast, passed laws further restricting the lives of enslaved people after the American Revolution. For example, numerous southern states passed **anti-literacy laws** that made it illegal for enslaved people to read or write (an enslaved person who was literate was perceived as more threatening). These repressive measures were taken just as white citizens became more and more dependent on enslaved people as laborers and as capital. It is important to note, however, that the northern states also profited from slavery. As late as the 1850s, the labor of the enslaved powered profitable northern textile mills and the New York Cotton Exchange. Nevertheless, by the mid-19th century, opinions on slavery in northern states and southern states had largely diverged.

The promise of the "West" crystallized these competing views. In the white imagination, the "West" encompassed any land beyond the Appalachian mountains (not limited to the present-day borders of the United States). White farmers from northern states feared that wealthy slaveholders would dominate the West and limit their opportunities there. Enslavers, on the other hand, feared that if slavery was barred in the West, their profitable system and the culture built upon it would soon wither and die. Neither side spared much thought for the people who already lived on the lands such as Indigenous people, Mexican Americans, or Californios, onto which these white people projected these hopes and fears.

Over the course of the 19th century, westward migration and the establishment of American settlements with and without slavery pushed Indigenous and Hispanic peoples off of their lands, and fueled the flames that would erupt in the Civil War.

Slavery and westward expansion

Who moved west, and why, differed by region. White northerners (who were increasingly less likely to own enslaved people as the 19th century progressed) moved westward to establish small farms. White southerners also moved westward in search of new land that might support ranching or large-scale agriculture—for example, cotton cultivation. Those southerners who owned enslaved people often sent them ahead to clear this new land, and to extend the plantation system westward.

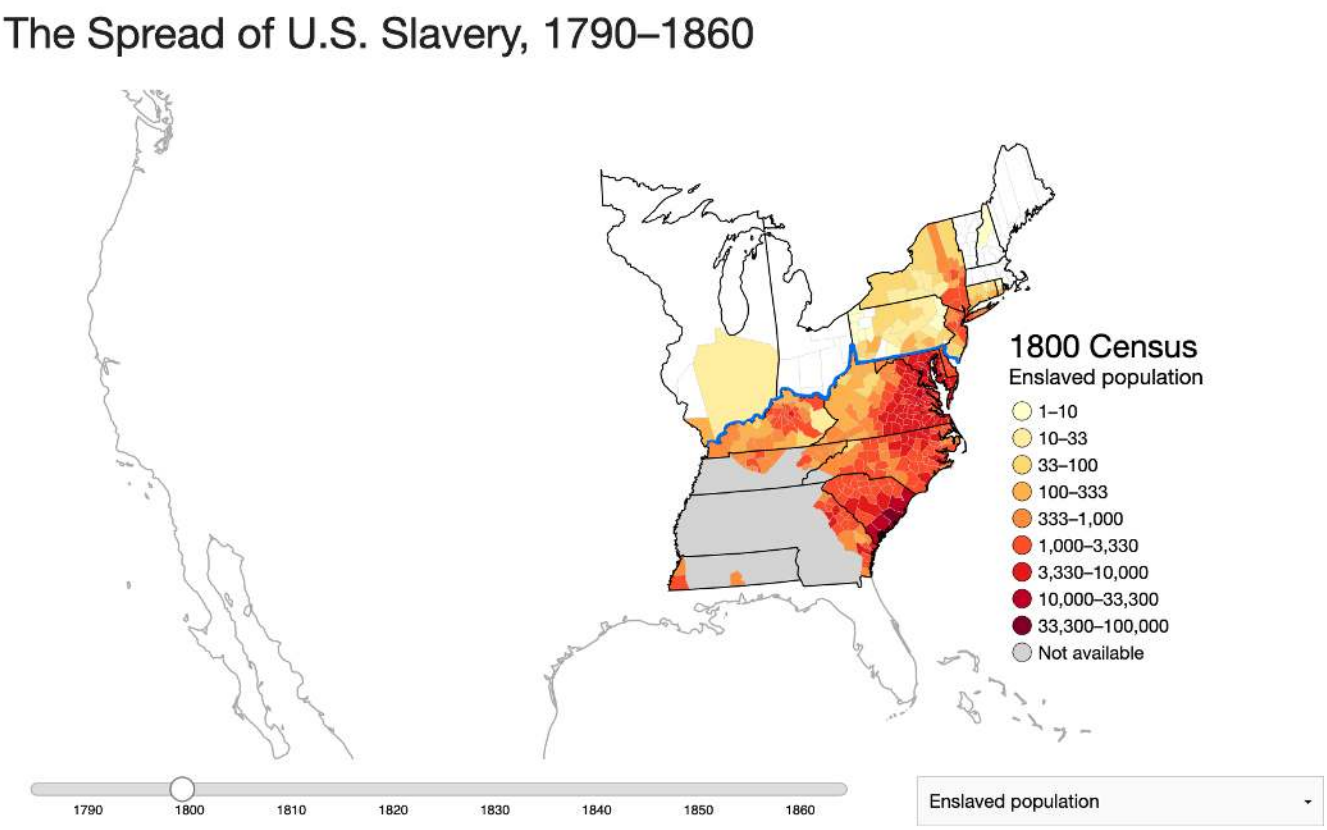


Figure 4.4.7.7: Enslaved population by county, 1800

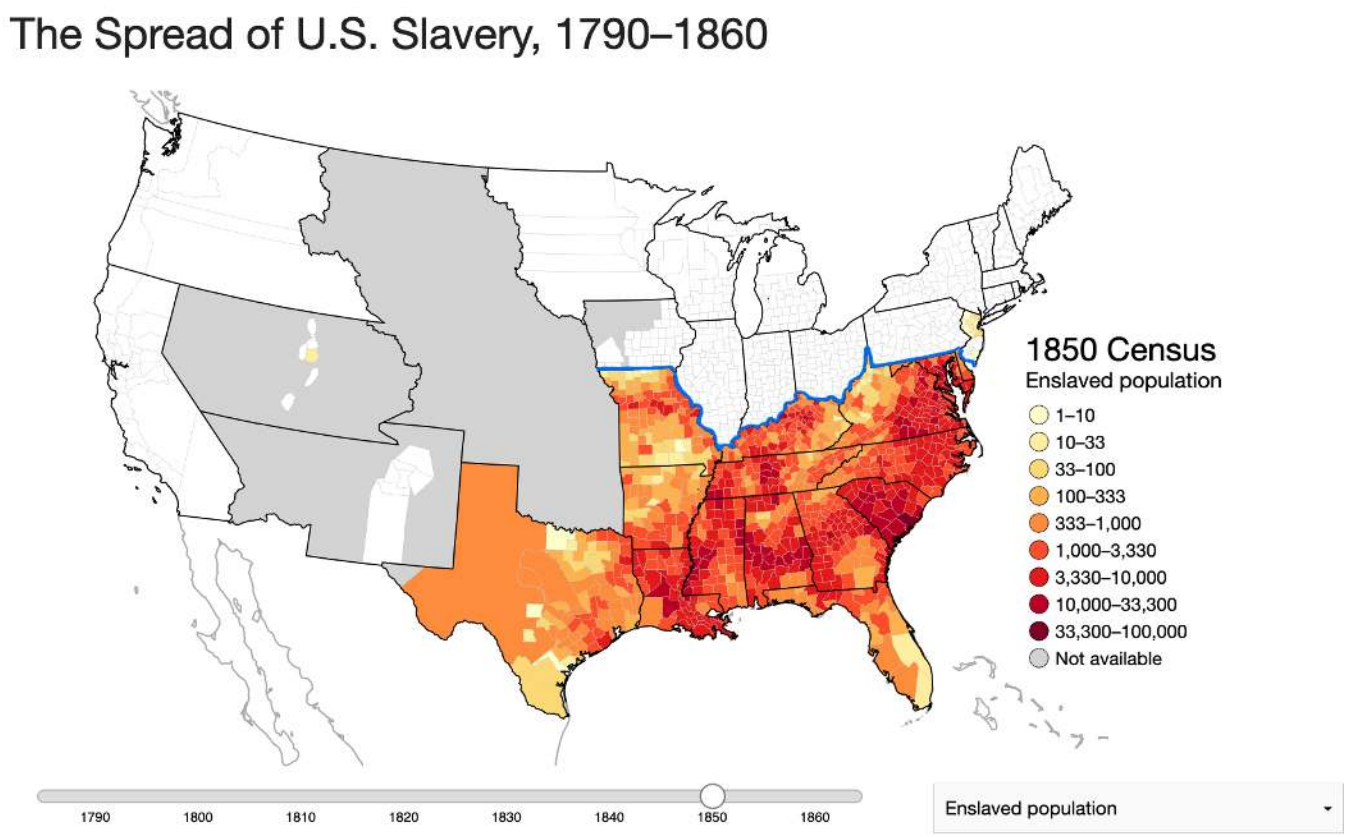


Figure **4.4.7.8**: Enslaved population by county, 1850

Maps credit: Lincoln Mullen, "The Spread of U.S. Slavery, 1790–1860," interactive map, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.9825, Minnesota Population Center, *National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2011). Note that census data is incomplete and likely underestimates the enslaved population (along with the population as a whole).

The two maps above illustrate how slavery changed over time as the United States expanded westward: in 1800, there was a significant population of enslaved people in northern states (those above the blue line) and an even larger enslaved population concentrated along the coasts of the southern states. By 1850, slavery was nearly gone in northern states (including the new states to their west). In contrast, the number of enslaved people both increased and spread in the southern states (including the new states to their west).

Free states, slave states

The political imperatives of slavery were baked into the very framework of the United States. After much debate, the framers of the Constitution agreed to allow states to count three-fifths of their enslaved population toward their total population, even though enslaved people lacked citizenship rights. This was important because representation (and therefore voting power) in the legislative branch of the U.S. government was tied to the number of states and the size of their populations. New states got equal voting power with existing states in the upper house of the legislature (the Senate), and states with higher populations had more votes in the lower house (the House of Representatives). Therefore the question of whether new states would permit slavery was highly charged as it would permanently alter the balance of power between free and slave states.

With the Louisiana Purchase in 1804, the United States nearly doubled in size. Less than two decades later, and as a result, the question of slavery in states carved out of new territories became one with lasting political consequences. More states where slavery was permitted meant more pro-slavery senators, perhaps eventually enough to control the government and make slavery

legal everywhere. The opposite was also true: if abolitionist sentiment grew along with the northern population and the number of free states, anti-slavery politicians might gain control of government and strip enslavers of their valuable human property.

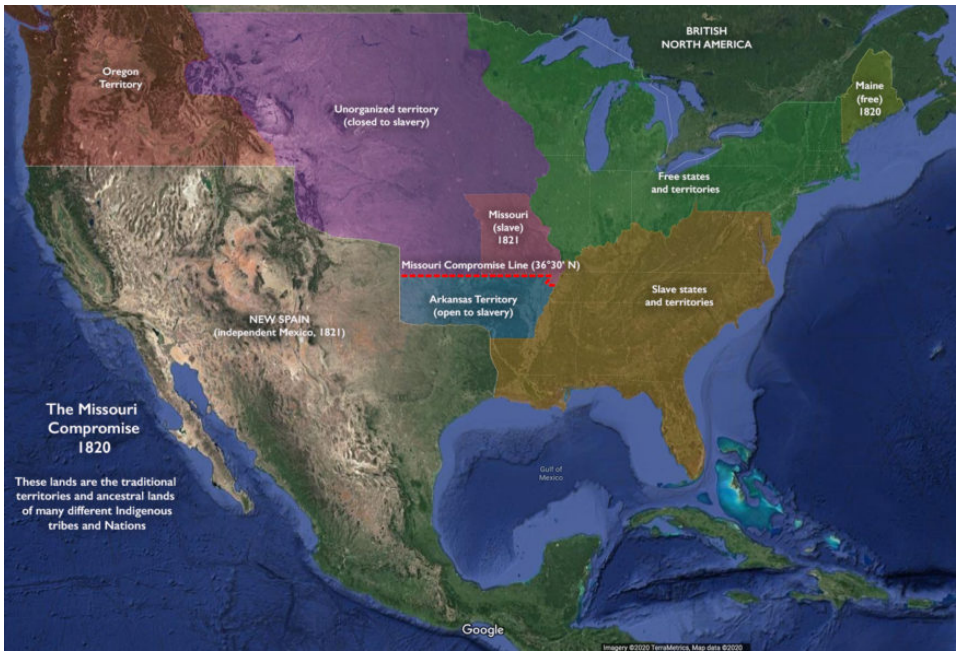


Figure **4.4.7.9**: Map depicting U.S. states and territories in 1820. The Missouri Compromise admitted Maine as a free state, and then permitted Missouri to organize as a slave state, drawing a line across Missouri's southern border above which slavery would not be permitted in the unorganized territory (underlying map © Google)

Expansion, crisis, and war

With so much riding on the balance of power, there were several crisis points in the 19th century as new states joined the Union. The first was the Missouri Crisis of 1819, when the residents of the territory of Missouri (formed on land gained in the Louisiana Purchase) requested an enabling bill from Congress to begin the process of statehood. A House representative from New York proposed an amendment that would provide for gradual emancipation in Missouri, but southern representatives reacted angrily to the amendment, threatening secession. It took months for Congress to work out the "Missouri Compromise": that Missouri would enter the Union as a slave state at the same time that Maine entered as a free state, and slavery would be banned in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase territory north of Missouri's southern border.

But the Missouri Compromise did nothing to solve the underlying problem, and slavery continued, with the nation bitterly divided over its future. To avoid repeating the crisis, new "free" and "slave" states were admitted more or less in pairs in the succeeding decades: Arkansas and Michigan, Florida and Iowa. Congress sat on the Republic of Texas's request for annexation for nearly a decade to avoid stirring up sectional tensions. It was only after the ardent expansionist and slaveholder James K. Polk took office as president in 1845 that the United States moved forward with claiming Texas. The U.S. also provoked a war with Mexico in 1846 in an effort to gain Mexican territory and the valuable Pacific ports of California.



Figure 4.4.7.10: George Caleb Bingham, *Country Politician*, 1849, oil on canvas, 51.8 x 61cm (de Young Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

As with the Missouri Compromise, a firestorm erupted in Congress early in the Mexican-American War when David Wilmot, an anti-slavery Democrat from Pennsylvania, introduced an amendment to a military appropriations bill in Congress. This "proviso" proposed to outlaw slavery in any territory that might be gained from Mexico in the ongoing war. George Caleb Bingham was a painter, a Whig, and a member of the Missouri House of Representatives. His canvas, *Country Politician* was first exhibited as Congress debated Wilmot's amendment. Bingham depicts a politician (at right) earnestly addressing an older voter (at left), perhaps to persuade him to support the Wilmot Proviso. The artist here focuses on the political choices that citizens faced, including slavery and its future.

During the 1850s, disputes over the fate of slavery in the new western territories raged in Congress and among the general public. The Gold Rush in California in 1849 hastened immigration to the West. The most serious political conflicts over slavery, however, took place in the Great Plains region. Violence erupted when the existing ban on slavery north of the Missouri Compromise line (see map above) was overturned in favor of the doctrine of "popular sovereignty," which allowed territories to decide for themselves whether or not to allow slavery. This resulted from the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which also stripped the Indigenous residents of their land rights and opened the territory to settlers. Thousands of armed pro- and anti-slavery settlers poured into the Kansas Territory to influence whether it would be free or would allow slavery. Dozens died in the skirmishes that followed, a period known as Bleeding Kansas.

Opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act brought anti-slavery members of the Democratic and Whig parties together to form a major new national party, the Republican Party, which opposed the extension of slavery into the West. When Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election in November of 1860, slaveholders feared that their enemies had secured the political power to defeat them at last. In December of 1860, slave states in the deep South began to secede in anticipation of potential legislation to limit slavery. The Civil War began shortly thereafter.

What was it about the West that so captivated white Americans that they went so far as to shed blood to determine its future? All sides envisioned using the West's resources—fertile land for farming and grazing, abundant forests for timbering and trapping, rich mines for extracting mineral wealth—for their own gain.



Figure 4.4.7.11: William S. Jewett, *The Promised Land—The Grayson Family*, 1850, oil on canvas, 50 3/4 x 64 inches (Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection)

Andrew Jackson Grayson, whose family was among the earliest U.S. settlers to move to California in 1846, commissioned this painting of their arrival in 1850. Grayson dictated many of the painting's details to the artist, William S. Jewett, including the clothing and the site in the Sierra Nevadas, where he claimed that they had first laid eyes on the plains of California. The painting's Biblical overtones—its name, *The Promised Land*, recalling the prophet Moses, and its richly dressed family of three evoking the Holy Family—reinforced the Manifest Destiny notion that God sanctioned white settlement of the West (where a diverse population of Indigenous and Hispanic people already lived). The painting depicts California empty of people, erasing the region's inhabitants whom white settlers persecuted and murdered as they sought control of the land. Grayson himself joined the fighting in the Mexican-American War (which would wrest California from Mexico), as part of the California Battalion, led by the explorer and army officer John C. Frémont.



Figure 4.4.7.12: Meade Brothers Studio, John Charles Frémont, c. 1856, photograph, 9.2 x 5.7 cm (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution)

Frémont and violence against Native Americans

Frémont would become California's first Senator. He held an anti-slavery position, but also had a near total disregard for Indigenous people and their cultures, typical of white people at this time. He led several massacres against Indigenous people, including the Sacramento River Massacre (1846), in which he and his men killed at least 120 Wintu men, women, and children (with some estimates of the dead as high as 700). Frémont directly supported the ideology of Manifest Destiny—through his violence against the Native populations of California, and by encouraging settlers in California to revolt against the Mexican government. In 1846, whites did in fact briefly establish the California Republic (in a move similar to the Texas Revolution a

decade earlier), eventually ceding control of the region to U.S. Army forces. Despite his aggression toward Native Americans and the Spanish, Frémont was a fierce anti-slavery politician, and in 1856, he became the first Republican presidential candidate.



Figure 4.4.7.13: Solomon Nunes Carvalho, [View of a Cheyenne village at Big Timbers, in present-day Colorado, with four large tipis standing at the edge of a wooded area. Frame with pemmican or hides hanging at the right; two figures, facing camera, standing to the left of center], between 1853 and 1860, daguerreotype (Library of Congress)

In 1853, Frémont led an expedition to explore a possible route across the Rocky Mountains for a proposed rail line. The expedition included painter and photographer Solomon Nunes Carvalho, who produced hundreds of daguerreotypes of the people, landscape, and animals they encountered in Kansas, Utah, and Colorado. Carvalho's image, badly damaged, of the Cheyenne village at Big Timbers is the only image known to have survived from the expedition. It shows two Cheyenne people (left of center) standing in front of a tepee (tepi) with animal hides or pemmican drying on wooden structures at the right. This early photograph, a daguerreotype, has suffered over time and now offers only a ghostly view of a history that is also often obscured.

Beyond the West: Latin America and the quest for new slave states

Proslavery expansionists also attempted the military takeover (called filibustering) of some Latin American countries, whose warm climates were suitable for plantation agriculture. Some of the regions already had systems of slavery, making them excellent candidates for an expansion of U.S. slavery.

For example, in the early 1850s, U.S. citizen William Walker led an illegal war with Mexico to create independent slaveholding republics, including the Republic of Lower California in what is today northern Mexico. An American jury acquitted Walker for violating the Neutrality Act of 1794, which barred American citizens from waging war against any country at peace with the United States. In 1856, Walker launched an invasion of Nicaragua, and took control of the country for nearly a year before a coalition of Central American armies removed him from office.



Figure 4.4.7.14: Narciso López, *Gefe de los Piratas Invasores (Leader of the Invading Pirates)*, *19 de Mayo de 1850*, 1850; color lithograph by Marq, lithographer; Víctor Patricio de Landaluze, draftsman (The Historic New Orleans Collection).

This lithograph was part of a series depicting López's attempt to invade Cardenás, Cuba, as part of a scheme of U.S. annexation.



Figure 4.4.7.15: Flag of Cuba

Similarly, between 1848 and 1851 Cuban exile Narciso López, who was financed by U.S. sugar growers (an industry reliant on slave labor), organized several filibustering expeditions to Cuba, which was then controlled by Spain. He aimed to expand U.S. sugar production to Cuba, where slavery was legal, and to add Cuba to the U.S. as yet another slave state. In the lithograph above, López is depicted leading a group of armed men in the Cuban town of Cardenás. They are flying a flag that independent Cuba would adopt as its own in 1902. During López's final Cuban campaign, he was captured and executed along with dozens of U.S. citizens who had attempted to take the island from the Spanish.

The expansionist mindset

Although the stories of the failed states that William Walker and Narciso López pursued may seem like a detour from the story of U.S. westward expansion, they illustrate the breadth of the expansionist mindset. Today, the territorial boundaries of the greater United States (as well as those of the individual states within it) may seem inevitable and fixed, but when U.S. citizens looked beyond their established borders in the mid-19th century, they saw possibility in many directions. There could be many dozens of new states west of the Appalachian Mountains and south of Texas. There could be—and eventually would be—American territories and states on Pacific islands, Caribbean islands, and the far north. The whole western hemisphere might be up for grabs.

With these wild opportunities came fears on both sides. Each new state in the Union meant one side or the other accrued more power in government and more influence on the future of American society. It was only in 1860, when the election of an antislavery president demonstrated that enslavers had lost the game of states for good, that they turned to warfare.

Notes:

[1] Rebecca Bedell, "Asher Durand's Progress Reconsidered," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art*, no. 1 (Spring 2019).

[2] This was the Proclamation of 1763.

Additional resources

Learn more about Asher B. Durand at The Met.

See lesson plans about Manifest Destiny at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Amy S. Greenberg, *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

Learn more about Solomon Nunes Carvalho's expedition photographs at the Library of Congress.

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4.4.8: Memory and commemoration of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction

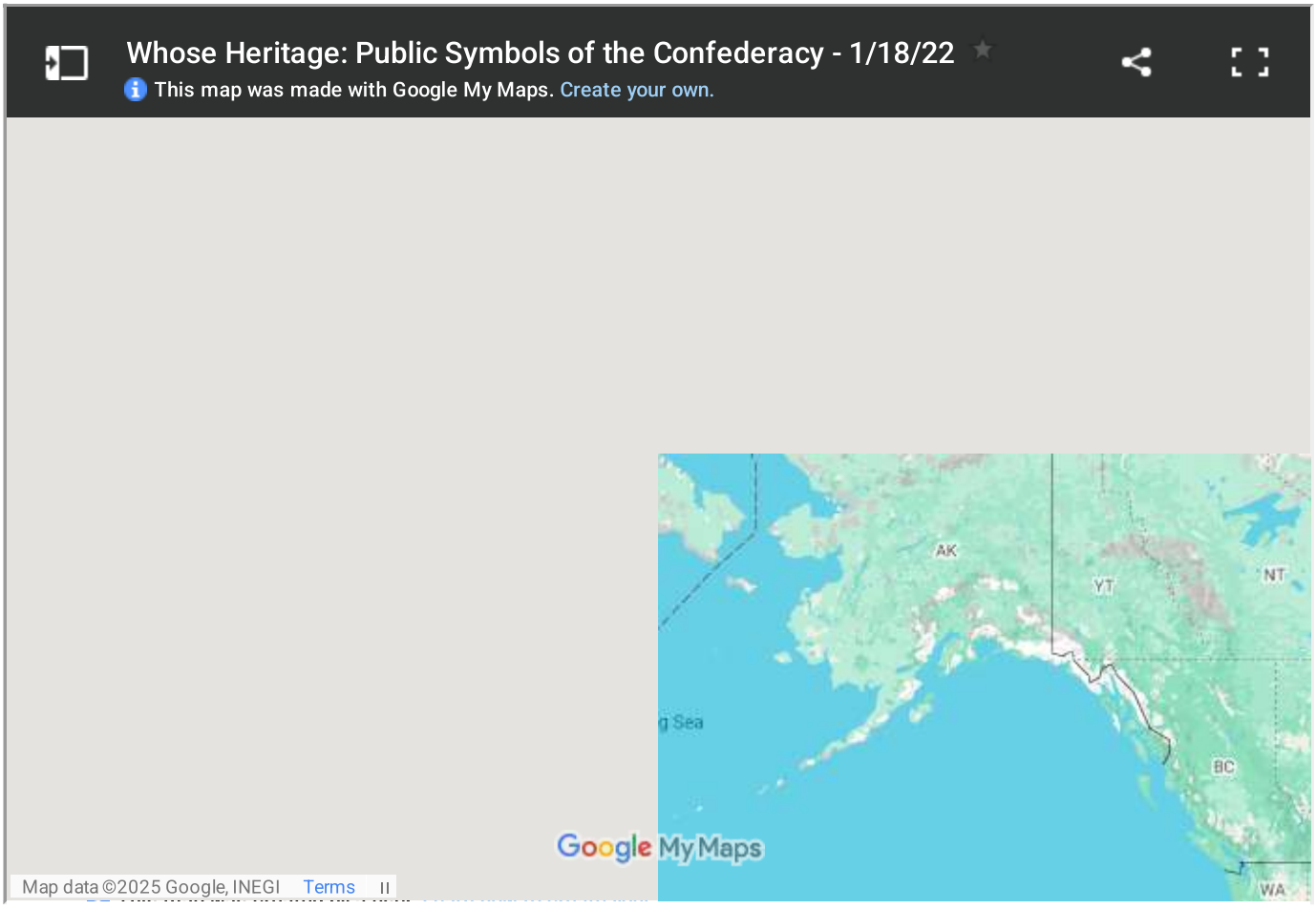
- What happened after the war? What influences how we remember it today?

Page ID 180075

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**

> ***The most terrible thing about War, I am convinced, is its monuments, — the awful things we are compelled to build in order to remember the victims. In the South, particularly, human ingenuity has been put to it to explain on its war monuments, the Confederacy. Of course, the plain truth of the matter would be an inscription something like this: 'Sacred to the memory of those who fought to Perpetuate Human Slavery.'***
>
> ***W.E.B. Dubois [1]***

W.E.B. DuBois, the prominent Black intellectual who co-founded the NAACP (among his many other achievements) was in his early sixties when he took a vacation traveling through the southern United States in 1931. Everywhere he went, he encountered racism: segregated train stations and rail cars, segregated schools and universities. Reminders of the Civil War dotted the landscape; he was particularly frustrated by the ubiquitous Confederate monuments—public structures built to commemorate the people who fought to secede from the United States to protect the institution of slavery—with inscriptions praising these generals and politicians for their dedication to "liberty." He knew well that it was not the love of liberty but the desire to continue enslaving Black people that led southern states to seek independence.



Map of Public Symbols of the Confederacy. Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy," 2021.

Coming to terms with monuments

DuBois had reason to complain about symbols honoring the Confederacy: they were everywhere in the South, and they still are. At least 1,700 schools, roads, buildings, municipalities, and monuments have been named after or dedicated to Confederates since the Civil War. Of these, about 800 are monuments: physical structures specially constructed for the purpose of remembering and honoring people or events, including statues, arches, obelisks, and other forms of public memorial art. Most were put up after 1900 (at least fifty years after the conflict ended), and relatively few have come down, despite the recent outcry over the monuments in the wake of White supremacist violence and the Black Lives Matter movement. Between 2015 and 2021 fewer than 40 Confederate monuments were removed. The vast majority of sites "sacred to the memory of those who fought to perpetuate human slavery" remain in place. [2]

But it is not only Confederate monuments that deserve scrutiny; the history written in stone and bronze by the victorious United States deserves as much critical analysis as that of the defeated Confederacy. For example, several prominent U.S. Army generals who have been honored with monuments for their actions in the Civil War and during Reconstruction pursued genocidal wars against Indigenous peoples (both those nations that were allied with the Confederacy and those that were not) in the American West during those same eras. Should these monuments remain in place?



Figure 4.4.8.1:Left: Thomas Ball, *Emancipation Group* (recasting of *Freedmen's Memorial*), Park Square, Boston, Massachusetts, c. 1877–95, albumen print (Boston Public Library); right: removal of the statue from Park Square, Boston in December 2020 (courtesy Boston City TV). The image of the Freed Slave was based on Archer Alexander, who was emancipated in September 1863 in recognition of his service to the United States and the disloyalty of his enslaver under the terms of the Confiscation Acts.

Statues of Abraham Lincoln have also been sites of recent controversy, both because of Lincoln's actions towards Indigenous peoples and because many Lincoln statues seem to depict him "granting" emancipation to passive Black people. In fact, U.S. Army and northern monuments as a whole tended to minimize or erase the role of Black people in the war and the importance of emancipation to U.S. victory, focusing instead on the efforts of white generals and white common soldiers.



Figure 4.4.8.2: Martin Milmore (sculptor) and Ames Manufacturing Company (founder), *Roxbury Soldier Monument*, Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, 1867 (photo: Sarah Beetham, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Both white northerners and southerners erected monuments that concentrated on the common white soldier at the expense of other participants in the war. The most common Civil War monument is the "citizen soldier" monument, an image of a single white volunteer soldier in a relaxed pose, rifle at ease, standing atop a column or pedestal, such as this monument to the soldiers of Roxbury, Massachusetts. [3] Depicting one enlisted soldier pensively leaning against his upturned rifle, Roxbury's monument was not unique; in fact, there were at least seven casts made of this statue in order to provide similar monuments for the dead or veterans of other northern towns. [4]

These monuments appeared in large numbers across the country—in cities and small towns, and in both the North and the South (in fact, often the only thing that separates Union and Confederate figures are the uniforms and inscriptions). These lone figures were so popular that they were mass produced in both bronze and stone, and even sold through catalogs. These broke with European military monument tradition since they were dedicated not to the extraordinary achievements of a military or political leader, but to the common soldier. This soldier was almost always white, however—even though Black and white soldiers had both fought and died in the war, and thousands of Indigenous men fought on both sides of the conflict. These memorials satisfied a need to come to terms with the astounding numbers of dead on both sides, but they also created a standardized image of a soldier willing to sacrifice his life for his country—and that soldier was decidedly white.



Figure 4.4.8.3: Henry Mosler, *The Lost Cause*, 1868, oil on canvas, 91.44 cm x 121.92 cm (The Johnson Collection)

Art and Civil War memory

After the Civil War, both sides took pains to craft their own narratives of the conflict: why it happened, what had happened, and what it all meant. These narratives helped the public make sense of the physical and psychological wounds inflicted by war, helping those who had lost limbs or loved ones justify their sacrifice in the service of a higher purpose. Former Confederates in particular sought explanations for their defeat, and found them in a book by Virginia journalist Edward A. Pollard called *The Lost Cause: A New Southern History of the War of the Confederates*. Published in 1866, just one year after the end of the war, Pollard's book began to articulate what would come to be known as "The Lost Cause:" a mythology that rewrote the causes of the Civil War to erase the role of slavery and to instead emphasize the heroism of white southern combatants. The painter Henry Mosler's melancholy 1868 image of a veteran stooped over his rifle standing before the ruin of a modest house, presumably his former home, became a popular expression of a lost past in the years following the war.



Figure 4.4.8.4: The First South Carolina Volunteers' color guard addressing a joyful crowd of African Americans after the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. "'Emancipation Day in South Carolina'—the Color-Sergeant of the 1st South Carolina (Colored) Volunteers addressing the regiment, after having been presented with the Stars and Stripes, at Smith's plantation, Port Royal Island, January 1 / From a sketch by our special artist.," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 24, 1863, wood engraving, 40 x 27 cm (Library of Congress)

The Lost Cause was more than wistful nostalgia. With it came efforts to quash southern Black celebrations of Confederate defeat and the end of slavery, like parades and dances held on the Fourth of July and on Emancipation Day. [5] The victorious white northerners also focused their attention on some aspects of the war and not others, downplaying emancipation and eventually coming to accept many facets of the Lost Cause as truth. Neither side acknowledged the service of Indigenous soldiers, thousands of whom fought on behalf of the United States or the Confederacy.

Visual culture was central to the creation and dissemination of these narratives. Public monuments celebrated the achievements of some individuals and not others (notably, white women and people of color, but also certain politicians and generals for reasons not always connected with their wartime service). Popular imagery of the war that circulated in prints and paintings promoted some emotional and political responses to the war, but not others (grief and gratitude for emancipation, but not anger or demands for citizenship). Notably, both the narratives of the war and the art representing it in popular culture changed over time, as politics evolved and generations shifted.

To understand the political and social landscapes that shaped Civil War memory—the environment in which commemorative art was created—we must first examine the events following the end of the war.

The end of the Civil War

Scholars traditionally date the end of the Civil War to April 9, 1865, when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to U.S. Army General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. In fact, the end of the war was a slow, sporadic process riddled with chaos and confusion. It took months before every soldier and sailor put down their weapons, as news of Lee's surrender and U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's assassination spread slowly across the country and the world. The last land battle of the war took place more than a month after Appomattox. Not until June 19, 1865, did word of the Emancipation Proclamation reach the enslaved residents of Galveston, Texas; Black Americans have celebrated the anniversary of this date each year as "Juneteenth," which was recognized as a federal holiday in 2021. The Indigenous allies of the Confederacy, led by Cherokee Chief and Brigadier-General Stand Watie, surrendered in late June. The last Confederate ship surrendered in late November, when it made port in Liverpool, England.

The political and social ramifications of the war's end were equally unclear. By the end of 1865, the rebellion had been defeated and the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had outlawed slavery for good. But what would happen to the four million formerly enslaved Black people who were navigating freedom after being denied property, wages, access to family, and education? What would become of the members and the lands of the "Five Civilized Tribes" (Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles, now more commonly known as the Five Tribes of Oklahoma or simply Five Tribes), who had allied with the Confederacy? How would the U.S. government reintegrate the South's white population—that had so recently taken up arms against it—into the American body politic? Would power and wealth be distributed more equitably now that slavery was gone, or would the old hierarchies of race and class simply continue?

The twelve years following the Civil War are called the Reconstruction era, when both the infrastructure and the society of the South were rebuilt. Reconstruction was a complex process that changed over time: just like any major policy initiative in the United States today, its details were negotiated at the local, state, and national levels, and its contours altered as power changed hands in Congress and the White House. Scholars have filled thousands of books with analysis of this period, making it difficult to summarize, nevertheless we include a brief overview here so that readers can compare the outline of historical events to the commemoration processes that accompanied them.

A brief history of Reconstruction and its aftermath

Immediately after the war's end in 1865, southern state governments resumed many aspects of Black surveillance and policing that had characterized life under slavery, passing Black Codes that restricted the movement of Black people and punished men convicted of "vagrancy" with unpaid "apprenticeships" (essentially a return to slavery). Members of the U.S. Congress, however, were incensed by these flagrant attempts to reverse the Thirteenth Amendment. They put forward a new Constitutional amendment guaranteeing the citizenship of Black people, the Fourteenth Amendment, and placed nearly all of the South under military occupation until each state ratified both the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. In addition, Congress put forward the Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, which guaranteed the right to vote for Black men.

With access to political power at last, Black citizens of the South voted into office politicians who represented their interests. More than 600 Black men were elected to state and national office during Reconstruction, including two senators.

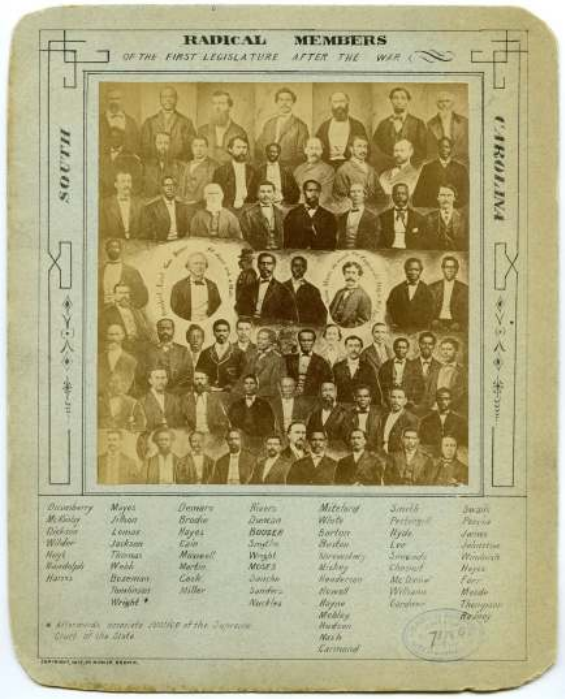


Figure 4.4.8.5: Photomontage inscribed with the names of members of the first South Carolina legislature following the Civil War, which was circulated by Confederate sympathizers. *Radical members of the first legislature after the war, South Carolina*, c. 1876, photomontage (Library of Congress)

The image above, entitled “Radical Members,” is a photomontage of portraits of members of the 1868 South Carolina legislature—the first to be elected after South Carolina was readmitted to the United States following the Civil War. This image (and others like it, showing newly elected Black and white officials), was widely circulated to stoke fears among South Carolina’s white population. The word “Radical” in the title was pejorative and was used by Confederate sympathizers to undermine efforts to foster racial equality. Two white men are singled out near the center of the composition. Each is given extra space and is framed by an inscription. On the left the handwritten words read, “President, Lieut Gov Boozer—40 Acres and a Mule.”

Lemuel Boozer, a Republican, was Lieutenant Governor from 1868–70 and is here linked to promises of land redistribution that many whites opposed. To the right is a portrait of Franklin Moses, Jr., famous for lowering the U.S. flag at Fort Sumter following the Confederate attack that began the war. Whether or not Moses did this, he was later seen as a scalawag, which then meant a white southerner who supported Reconstruction. Here the framing text reads, “Judas Moses. Who raised the Confederate Flag on Fort Sumter!!” The addition of the name Judas is a reference to Franklin Moses’s perceived treachery for supporting Reconstruction just as the apostle Judas betrayed Christ. It was also an anti-Semitic attack (Moses’s father was Jewish).



=Figure **4.4.8.6**: Hubbard & Mix, *Freedmen and teachers in front of the Beaufort Library* (detail from stereograph), c. 1862, albumen silver print, 8 x 17 cm (**Library of Congress**)

The Freedmen's Bureau, a governmental agency dedicated to aiding ex-slaves, opened schools to teach **literacy** to the formerly enslaved (who had been forbidden to learn to read and write under slavery) and worked to reunite families separated during slavery. In the photograph above, a large number of Black children pose in front of white adults before the Neoclassical porch of the Beaufort Library on the South Carolina coast. White plantation owners and their families abandoned the town in 1861 after the battle of Port Royal, leaving behind thousands of enslaved people including an estimated 2,100 children.



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Figure **4.4.8.7**: Charles Milton Bell, *Studio portrait of Charlotte L. Forten Grimke*, c. 1870–79, carte-de-visite, 9 x 6.5 cm (**Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library**)

By March 1862 the first white missionary teachers, who can be seen in the photograph above standing beside white U.S. Army officers (right center), arrived. Within one year, Charlotte Forten, then a 25-year-old Black missionary teacher and poet from Philadelphia, began to teach freed Black children.

Despite these advances, white supremacists in the South mounted intense opposition to Black civil rights. White supremacist paramilitary organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and the White League, which frequently included Confederate veterans, terrorized Black citizens and their white allies. They sought to prevent Black people from obtaining political, social, or economic power, asserting that while slavery had ended, the racial hierarchy remained. Although the federal government attempted to intervene by prosecuting Klan members in the early 1870s, by the end of the decade the federal government had agreed to remove the remaining U.S. troops from the former Confederacy.

In the west, the Indigenous peoples who had allied with the Confederacy, either directly (like the Five Tribes) or indirectly (like Apaches and Kiowas who had agreed to raid U.S. territory and U.S. Army supplies rather than those of the Confederates) also had to negotiate their defeat with the U.S. government. They were forced to sign new treaties promising to free any Black people they enslaved and permit railroad companies to build through their territories, in addition to ceding land and moving to reservations. But even these concessions proved inadequate for land-hungry white settlers, who soon encroached upon Indigenous lands and applied for protection from the U.S. Army when Indigenous people resisted.

After the U.S. Army departed from the South, its commanders turned west. William Tecumseh Sherman—famous for his 1864 March to the Sea that played a key role in defeating the Confederates—became Commanding General of the U.S. Army in 1869 and advocated wholesale genocide of Native peoples. The same men who had attempted to protect formerly enslaved Black people from the Klan drove Indigenous people onto reservations and killed those who resisted the theft of their lands.

By the 1890s, southern states reversed the advances of Reconstruction, reinstated white supremacist governments, and introduced voter suppression tactics barring Black people from participating in the political process. The white American population as a whole (North and South) generally rejected the notion that non-white peoples deserved equal rights. The U.S. Supreme Court permitted southern towns and businesses to segregate public facilities, ruling that "separate but equal" schools, transportation, and hospitals did not violate the 14th Amendment. Although civil rights activists never stopped challenging these provisions, it was not until the mid-20th century that major victories in the courts and Congress restored Reconstruction-era voting rights and outlawed segregation.

The essays

The two essays in this section examine the role of art in commemorating the Civil War: how that art contributed to northern and southern narratives of the war's causes and significance and the ways that both Black and Indigenous activists have pushed back against those narratives.

The first essay, "The Lost Cause and Confederate memory," examines how monuments, paintings, and popular prints contributed to the mythology of white southern valor and created hostile public spaces dedicated to reinforcing white supremacy.

The second essay, "Abraham Lincoln and northern memory," looks at how images of emancipation and Black military contributions were erased in favor of a reassertion of white racial supremacy.

Notes:

[1] W.E.B. DuBois, "The Perfect Vacation," *The Crisis* 40, no. 8 (August 1931), p. 279.

[2] Data from the Southern Poverty Law Center, "Whose Heritage: Public Symbols of the Confederacy," 2021. See also Karen Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2021), pp. 6–8; and Hilary Green, Confederate Monument Removal mapping project.

[3] For a full discussion of the citizen soldier monuments, see Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Sarah Beetham, "'An Army of Bronze Simulacra': The Copied Soldier Monument and the American Civil War," *Nierika: Revista de Estudios de Arte* 4, no. 7 (January–June 2015), pp. 34–45.

[4] Beetham, "An Army of Bronze Simulacra," p. 36.

[5] Ethan J. Kytle and Blaine Roberts, *Denmark Vesey's Garden: Slavery and Memory in the Cradle of the Confederacy* (New York: The New Press, 2018), pp. 28–35.

Additional resources

Read more about the remarkable life of Archer Alexander.

Read the national monument audit from The Monuments Lab.

Read selections from the journal of Charlotte Forten.

W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1935).

Explore the National Museum of African American History & Culture's exhibition "**Make Good the Promises: Reconstruction and Its Legacies.**"

Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, updated edition (New York: Harper, 2014).

Learn more about W.E.B. DuBois's efforts to visualize institutionalized racism with infographics.

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4.4.9: Experiences of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction

- There were as many experiences of the war as people who lived through it.

Page ID 180078

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**



Figure **4.4.9.1**: Left: Joel Emmons Whitney, Sioux woman and child at the prison camp at Fort Snelling, carte-de-visite, c. 1862–63, 10.1 x 6.2 cm (Minnesota Historical Society); right: Charles R. Rees, Unidentified woman (possibly Mrs. James Shields), in mourning dress and brooch showing Confederate soldier and holding young boy wearing kepi, c. 1861–65, hand-painted ambrotype in papier-mâché case with mother-of-pearl and hand painting, 8.0 x 6.9 cm (Library of Congress)

Two family portraits from the Civil War era (1861–65) show a seated woman with a young child, gazing straight into the camera. The woman on the left, draped with a blanket and carrying her child on her back, is identified only as a “Sioux Squaw” and her child as a “Pappoose,” racist labels used by whites in that era that dehumanize Indigenous people. This portrait was taken by photographer Joel Emmons Whitney, who wanted to profit from the sale of pictures of the Santee Sioux people after the Dakota War of 1862. This woman and child were living at a concentration camp at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, where more than 1,600 Sioux non-combatants were forced to remain over the winter of 1862–63. In the spring of 1863, the U.S. Congress voted to repeal all treaties with the Dakotas and confiscate their lands, forcing them to move to a reservation. [1]

The image on the right shows a white woman in mourning dress, with a brooch featuring the photograph of a Confederate soldier (presumably her husband and her child’s father) pinned to her dress. Her child wears a kepi, which may have belonged to the deceased soldier. This photograph was taken in a Richmond, Virginia studio, and its hand-colored accents and ornate case suggest the sitter’s wealth.

The format of these photographs draws a contrast between the two families: the carte-de-visite of the Sioux woman and child was intended to be reproduced many times and sold inexpensively as a curiosity to whites interested in seeing people involved with the Dakota War, while the unique ambrotype of the Confederate widow and her child had a closing case designed for private viewing; protected with a latching cover, it was small enough to tuck into a breast pocket.

Both of these families were profoundly affected by the Civil War. They remind us that the Civil War occurred over a vast country and involved a diverse population, so that capturing “the experience of the Civil War” is an impossible task: there were as many experiences as there were people who lived through it. Soldiers fought in deserts, swamps, mountain passes, orchards, and city streets. Families lived in refugee camps, farm houses, wagons, tepis (tepees), and splendid mansions. Workers made cartridges, built bridges, raised money, sawed off limbs, drove mules, and guarded prisons.

The experiences of the Civil War in art

These myriad experiences can be difficult to access through the visual and material record of the war—the images and objects that represented everyday life in wartime. The visual record is slanted heavily toward certain groups and areas: northerners produced many more prints and photographs than southerners, for example, because the South was surrounded by a blockade that limited access to the supplies necessary for image-making. Location and wealth were also factors: although photographs were easier to obtain than ever before, not everyone could go to a studio to sit for their portrait, let alone pay for a painting. Like the Sioux family above, they may have appeared in images but often did not control the terms on which they were depicted. We have also lost a great deal of the war's visual and material culture to time: we can see only what earlier generations decided to preserve, and their ideas of whose art was important enough to save may have differed from our own.



Figure 4.4.9.2: Left: Moore Bro's. Photographic Gallery, Unidentified U.S. sailor in uniform in front of painted backdrop showing walkway and trees, c. 1861–65, albumen print on card (Library of Congress); right: Israel & Co., First Lieutenant Patrick Boyce of Co. F, 8th Regular Army Infantry Regiment in uniform with sword, c. 1861–65 (Library of Congress)

Photographs provide the largest source of visual evidence about the people who lived through the Civil War, including untold numbers of portraits of soldiers. Although a few daguerreotypes were taken during the Mexican-American War, the Civil War was the first major conflict in the United States that took place after photography—which had been invented only 35 years earlier—became widely available, and enlisted men rushed to have their photographs taken in uniform. Scornful of their opponents' abilities, both U.S. and Confederate soldiers believed that the war would be over in a few months, and they did not want to miss their chance to show they had been willing to do their duty.

The cartes-de-visite above, both taken during the war, show how recruits put the medium to use. The sailor had his photograph taken in a studio wearing his uniform, but in front of a generic painted backdrop that mimics a garden-like setting and reminiscent of the background often seen in painted portraits of the previous century. The backdrop hardly evokes life at sea, but in the scramble to take pictures before men set off for war, it provided for a suitably respectable portrait setting. The photograph at right shows U.S. Army Lieutenant Patrick Boyce in his officer's uniform (including tasseled epaulets and sword) standing in front of a blank backdrop; on the back of the card, Boyce scrawled "Votre Amie" ("your friend") and his signature as a token for a friend or sweetheart. Each of these men took advantage of the opportunity to have a photographic portrait made in uniform, representing his military prowess and social standing.



Figure **4.4.9.3**: Unidentified Black U.S. soldier, c. 1861–65, hand-colored tintype with cover glass in black thermoplastic case with brass hinges and red velvet liner (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture)

For Black soldiers, sitting for a photographic portrait was not just a record of their bravery in volunteering to serve, but also a claim to citizenship, which was constantly called into question. In 1857, the Supreme Court had ruled that Black people were not citizens of the United States, and so when Black men enlisted in the U.S. Army during the Civil War they were signing up to fight for a nation that did not recognize them as citizens, hoping that their military service would lead not only to the destruction of slavery but to the recognition of Black citizenship.



Figure **4.4.9.4**: Stamped brass uniform button with American eagle, c. 1861–65 (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture)

The Black soldier pictured above holds a pistol across his chest, his belt buckle proclaims his status as a "US" soldier (the image is reversed, so to the viewer it reads "SU"). The photograph was hand-colored (adding pink to the soldier's cheeks and gold to his buttons and belt buckle) and encased in a frame with numerous symbols of U.S. citizenship and national belonging: an eagle perches above his head, with American flags and bayonets flanking him on each side. Below him is a cannon and a stylized ribbon with the Latin motto found on the Great Seal of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum* ("out of many, one"). A simplified version of the Great Seal was also reproduced on the uniform buttons of U.S. soldiers, one of which is pictured here: a bald eagle with its wings spread behind a shield, grasping an olive branch in one set of talons and arrows in the other. Frederick Douglass, who worked to recruit soldiers for Black regiments, understood the power and symbolism of the army uniform in changing minds, stated, "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S.; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship." [2]



Figure **4.4.9.5**: Winslow Homer, *Reconnaissance in force by General Gorman before Yorktown*, 1862, graphite with brush and gray wash on cream wove paper, 21 x 33.7 cm (**Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**)

Photography was far from the only way of capturing the experience of war. In the 1860s, newspapers could not yet reproduce photographs (the process to do so was not created until 1880), so "special artists" were sent to travel with armies to sketch the action. These artists mailed their drawings to newspaper offices so engravers could interpret them for mass distribution. In the drawing above, the hole where engravers tacked this piece of paper to the wall as a guide for copying is still visible near the top of Winslow Homer's sketch of a scene of officers and enlisted men discussing strategy outside a farmhouse near Yorktown, **later printed** as part of a larger page of scenes illustrating the war. [3]



Figure **4.4.9.6**: "Glorious News!!!!" in "A Few Scenes in the Life of A 'SOJER' in the Mass 44th," 1863, graphite on paper, 10.5 x 20.5 cm (**Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History**)

Some soldier-artists captured their experiences in drawings, completed while in camp or years afterward when recalling the scenes of battle. They used what materials were available to them: ink, watercolors, or even a pencil nub on a lined journal page. One unknown artist, a soldier in the 44th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry stationed in New Bern, North Carolina, drew a series of cartoons in his diary contrasting the northern press's breathless coverage of the war with the far less romantic reality. In "Glorious

News!!!! Destruction of a very Important Bridge in North Carolina!!" the artist showed a wooden plank over a creek being broken by a soldier throwing a rock at it, satirizing the scene with the overblown headline "The REBELS in DESPAIR!!!! Jeff Davis says All is now LOST!!!!!!!!!!" The simple set of panels reveals the humor and playfulness of an ordinary soldier, who wrote that he had to end his sketchbook because he ran out of paper. [4]



Figure **4.4.9.7**: Bandolier bag, likely Delaware, wool, glass beads, cotton, fringe c. 1860 (The American Civil War Museum, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure **4.4.9.8**: Bandolier bag, likely Delaware, wool, glass beads, cotton, fringe c. 1860 (The American Civil War Museum, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Material culture can also tell us about the experience of the Civil War. This bandolier bag, which high-ranking Indigenous men would have worn across their bodies during ceremonies or in battle to carry ammunition, is made of tiny glass beads arranged in abstract floral patterns. This type of decoration is common to bags made in the **Prairie Style**, which flourished in the mid-19th century in Oklahoma, where many Indigenous groups, including Delawares and Cherokees, came into contact with each other after the United States forcibly removed them from their homes in the east in the 1830s. A female Indigenous artist likely made this bag, which was worn into battle by its owner, likely a Delaware soldier who was fighting as part of the U.S.-allied Indian Home Guard. After the owner's death at the Battle of Honey Springs in Oklahoma, Confederate soldiers looted it from the owner's body as a trophy and gave it to Confederate President Jefferson Davis as a gift.

The Battle of Honey Springs—despite the death of this bag's owner—was an important victory for U.S. forces in their quest to gain control of Indian Territory. Indigenous tribes, nations, and bands fought for both the United States and the Confederacy in the Civil War, hoping their alliances would preserve their sovereignty. The bag's creation in Oklahoma and its journey to the capital of the Confederacy hint at the complex story of the Civil War, where the future of **westward expansion**, cultural transformation, and the survival of people and nations were at stake.

The essays in this section grapple with these complex experiences of the war—both on and off the battlefield—through art.

Notes:

[1] See more on The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 from the Minnesota Historical Society.

[2] Frederick Douglass, "Should the Negro Enlist in the Union Army?," speech delivered July 6, 1863, at National Hall, Philadelphia, PA, published in *Douglass' Monthly*, August 1863.

[3] Frank H. Goodyear III and Dana E. Byrd, *Winslow Homer and the Camera: Photography and the Art of Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 10–11.

[4] ***A Few Scenes in the life of A "SOJER" in the Mass 44th***, 1863, graphite on paper, 10.5 x 20.5 cm (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History).

Additional resources

American Indian Removal: What Does It Mean to Remove a People? from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 from the Minnesota Historical Society

The Battle of Honey Springs from the Oklahoma Historical Society

Civil War Soldier Stories from the Library of Congress

The Civil War and American Art from the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Amy Athey McDonald, "**As embedded artist with the Union army, Winslow Homer captured life at the front of the Civil War**," *Yale News*, April 20, 2015.

Lisa Tendrich Frank, *Household War: How Americans Lived and Fought the Civil War* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2020).

James G. Mendez, *A Great Sacrifice: Northern Black Soldiers, Their Families, and the Experience of Civil War* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

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4.4.10: Refugees, prisoners, and displacement

- The experiences of people on the “margins” of the Civil War.

Page ID
180079

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**



Figure **4.4.10.1**: Unknown Diné (Navajo) artist, *Eyedazzler Blanket/Rug*, c. 1885, wool, 71 x 54 inches (**Denver Art Museum**)

The colors of this rug are striking: bold, saturated reds and deep-navy blues, in repeating patterns of diamonds, crosses, and American flags. It’s easy to see why this was called an “eyedazzler”—but less easy to see the unique circumstances that led Diné (Navajo) weavers to begin producing it in the second half of the 19th century. Diné people have a long history of weaving, using the wool of their Churro sheep. However, during the Civil War, the U.S. government interrupted Diné life and traditions, claiming that the Diné who did not move on to a reservation would be viewed as Confederate allies and therefore enemies.

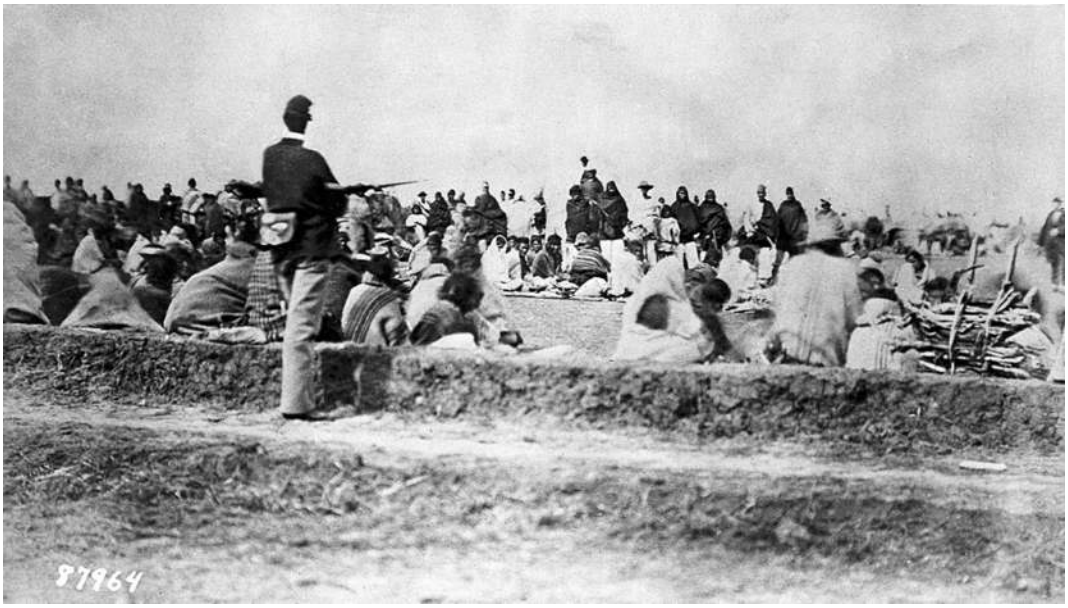


Figure **4.4.10.2**: Diné (Navajo) captives under guard, Fort Sumner, New Mexico, c. 1864–68 (New Mexico History Museum, photo: United States Army Signal Corps)

Western states with U.S. Army regiments often employed them to suppress local Indigenous groups that were resisting the growing incursions into their territory (claiming that any resistance was tantamount to allying with the Confederates). Between 1863 and 1866, the New Mexico Volunteers forced 9,000 Diné to abandon their home centered around Canyon de Chelly in eastern Arizona and march some 400 miles to a concentration camp in Bosque Redondo, New Mexico. (More than 400 Mescalero Apaches were also imprisoned there). As many as 3,000 people died from exposure on the "Long Walk" to internment, or from disease at Bosque Redondo. Because the U.S. government had seized Diné land and livestock during the U.S. Civil War, when the Diné returned in 1868 to a reservation carved out of their traditional lands, they no longer had the sheep that had traditionally been their source of meat and wool.



Figure **4.4.10.3**: Unknown Diné (Navajo) artist, *Eyedazzler Blanket/Rug* (detail), c. 1885, wool, 71 x 54 inches (Denver Art Museum)

The patterns and colors of this rug provide a testament to this history: the serrated diamond shapes echo those of Saltillo blankets, which Diné artists became familiar with when the U.S. government issued them during their forced march to and subsequent internment at Bosque Redondo. The eyedazzler's wool yarn, often called "Germantown" because it was made in Germantown,

Pennsylvania, got its bright colors from synthetic dyes, which imparted a broader range of colors than the natural dyes Diné weavers traditionally used. The U.S. government agreed to provide Germantown wool for weaving blankets and rugs as part of the terms of their peace treaty and annual annuity payments, and so Diné weavers began producing these eyedazzlers for sale—including the American flag symbol that might increase their appeal to non-Indigenous buyers. [1] This striking rug is not just a work of art but also a testament to the forced displacement, violence, hardship, resilience, and transformation that the Diné underwent during and after the Civil War.

The Diné were not the only people who experienced profound change due to displacement during the war. Although we often think of the Civil War in terms of **soldiers on battlefields** and **families on the homefront**, there were other sites and lived experiences that have not traditionally received as much attention. The Civil War prompted people to migrate, both voluntarily (for example, the enslaved people who emancipated themselves) and involuntarily (like the Diné, Apaches, and other Indigenous groups that U.S. officials interned during the war). Prisoners, refugees, and internees may have been at some distance from the battlefield, but their experiences were central to the war's core issues: race, citizenship, and the meaning of freedom.



Figure **4.4.10.4**: Eastman Johnson, ***A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves***, c. 1862, oil on paper board, 55.8 x 66.4 cm (**Brooklyn Museum**)

Contrabands, refugees, and self-emancipation

Displacement had always been part of the experience of slavery: Africans had been kidnapped and forced to cross the ocean in the Atlantic slave trade, and in the 19th century, United States enslavers sold Black men, women, and children whenever it suited their interests, forcing individuals to move to new locations and separating families. Freedom, too, meant movement: enslaved people emancipated themselves by running away to free territory. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, and the U.S. Army began to move through the South, enslaved people quickly realized that "free territory" might be closer than ever before: behind army lines.



Figure **4.4.10.5**: Refugees meeting U.S. Army officers at night and requesting asylum (detail), "Stampede among the Negroes in Virginia—their arrival at Fortress Monroe / from sketches by our Special Artist in Fortress Monroe," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 8, 1861, pp. 56–57, wood engraving, 40.4 x 54.3 cm (Library of Congress)

But escape, as always, was a gamble—especially when the official U.S. government policy was not to interfere with the institution of slavery, to return to their enslavers any self-emancipated Black men or women who arrived at U.S. Army camps. The proximity of the U.S. Army made the journey to freedom shorter, but it also meant that enslavers were close at hand, waiting for an opportunity to reclaim their "property." Refugees displayed incredible bravery and hope when they arrived at U.S. Army lines with nothing but a willingness to do whatever it took to survive.

Some of U.S. President Abraham Lincoln's generals defied the order to return enslaved people, however. **U.S. General John C. Frémont** declared he would emancipate all enslaved people belonging to rebels in Missouri in August 1861, an edict that Lincoln forced him to rescind in order to pacify enslavers in states that had not seceded from the United States.

That same year at Fort Monroe, Virginia (which U.S. forces managed to retain despite Virginia having voted to secede), U.S. Army General Benjamin Butler refused to return self-emancipated people who arrived at his camp to their enslavers. Instead, he claimed them as "contraband" of war—a designation that allowed his army to retain them (since contraband refers to captured enemy property, Butler turned the enslavers' own arguments, that the enslaved were property, against them). The term contraband became widely used to refer to people who escaped from slavery, but today scholars use the term refugee, which better describes their journey toward freedom. Enslaved people flocked to Fort Monroe, and although the designation of "contraband" did not guarantee their freedom, it did, in the words of historian Amy Murrell Taylor, "open space for enslaved people inside the Union army's lines, physical spaces in which to live beyond their owners' reach and to begin imagining the future." [2]

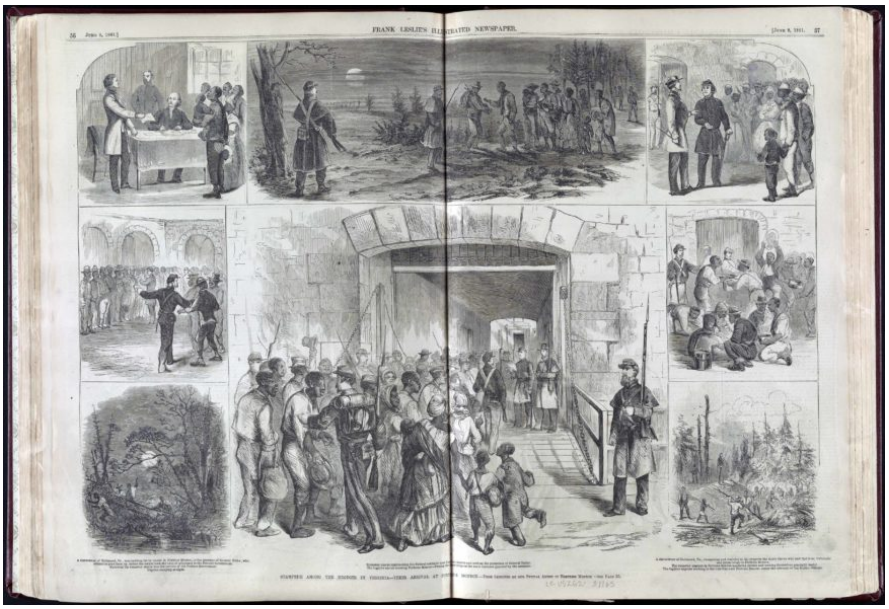


Figure **4.4.10.6**: "Stampede among the Negroes in Virginia—their arrival at Fortress Monroe / from sketches by our Special Artist in Fortress Monroe," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 8, 1861, pp. 56–57, wood engraving, 40.4 x 54.3 cm (Library of Congress)

In the first months of the Civil War, opinions in the North were divided as to whether the conflict ought to be a war to liberate enslaved people or remain confined to the more narrow aim of preserving the Union. This two-page spread printed in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* in 1861 reflects northern ambiguity toward emancipation. A large central image depicts refugees entering the drawbridge at Fort Monroe in Virginia, surrounded by seven vignettes depicting the journeys of refugees. Said to be based on sketches by the newspaper's special artist (although it doesn't seem likely that he would have personally witnessed refugees making a daring nighttime escape) the vignettes show (clockwise from bottom left):

1. refugees crossing a river by moonlight
2. white U.S. Army officers mustering refugees into work detail
3. an enslaver manumitting the refugees he had formerly owned rather than swearing an oath of allegiance to the U.S. government
4. a group of refugees meeting U.S. Army officers at night and requesting asylum
5. a second enslaver identifying refugees who had come to the fort as his property and asking a U.S. officer to remand them
6. a group of refugees preparing and receiving rations from the U.S. Army and
7. refugee men working in the trenches under the direction of white U.S. officers.

The artist alternately depicts refugees as sympathetic (with frightened men, women, and children appealing for protection) and grotesque (with exaggerated, racial stereotypes of Black figures, clearly contrasted against the upright white U.S. soldiers). The title of the image reports that the refugees are on a "stampede," a term commonly used to describe the movement of animals, which dehumanizes the refugees. Although the overall message seems to praise the U.S. Army for taking in refugees, it also suggests that their value is (as one of the captions suggests) in "making themselves generally useful" to the U.S. Army by doing the bidding of its officers rather than enemy officers. [3]

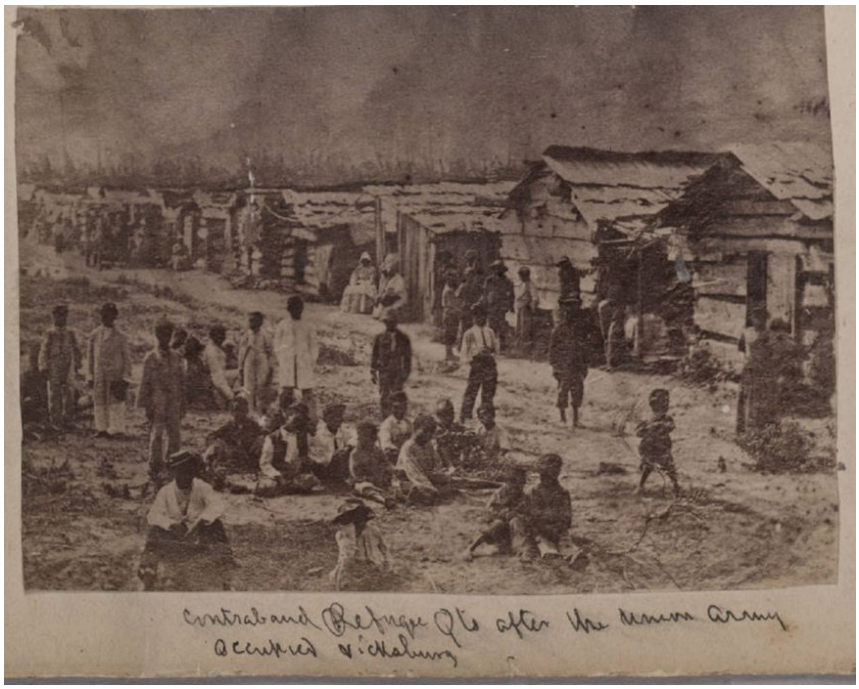


Figure **4.4.10.7**: Contraband Refugee Quarters after the Union Army occupied Vicksburg, 1863–65 (Huntington Library)

Whether or not white northerners supported abolition had no bearing on the actions of enslaved people who were determined to self-emancipate. Historians estimate that one million enslaved people freed themselves between 1861 and 1865, and approximately 500,000 lived in refugee camps (constructed by the U.S. Army or by refugees themselves) as they sought a new life. [4]

There were nearly 300 of these settlements, and the U.S. War Department stepped in to manage refugee affairs, a precursor to the Freedman's Bureau that would assist formerly enslaved people starting in 1865. [5] The photograph above, likely cut from a carte-de-visite, shows refugees in one such camp at Helena, Arkansas. In the foreground, a group of children sits on the ground, looking at the camera, with some more young people standing behind them wearing similar coats (possibly provided by one of the many northern aid societies that sent food, clothing, medicine, doctors, and teachers to the refugee camps). [6] In the middle ground stands a row of shelters, which look to have been built by the refugees themselves with available materials. Adults sit and stand in front of them. The road in front of the houses is muddy, indicating the recent construction and soggy conditions near the Mississippi River, where this camp was located.

Although conditions in the camps were difficult—scant rations, little medical care, and poor sanitation—they served as important hubs for newly free Black people during and after the war. They brought Black people together in a community apart from life on the plantation. Many camps were located near bodies of water to facilitate transportation as refugees searched for the family members whom enslavers had separated from them before the war. Refugee camps were also central points for **recruiting men to serve in the U.S. Army**.

In 1862, the U.S. government authorized both the deployment of Black laborers and the enlistment of Black soldiers in new federal regiments called the United States Colored Troops, or USCT. Men who self-emancipated (in addition to free Black men from the North) were eager to join these regiments, even though they were segregated from white soldiers, led by white officers, and paid less than white men until nearly the end of the war. Many viewed military service as an opportunity to fight for the enduring freedom of Black Americans and to make a claim to citizenship as men who fought for their country.

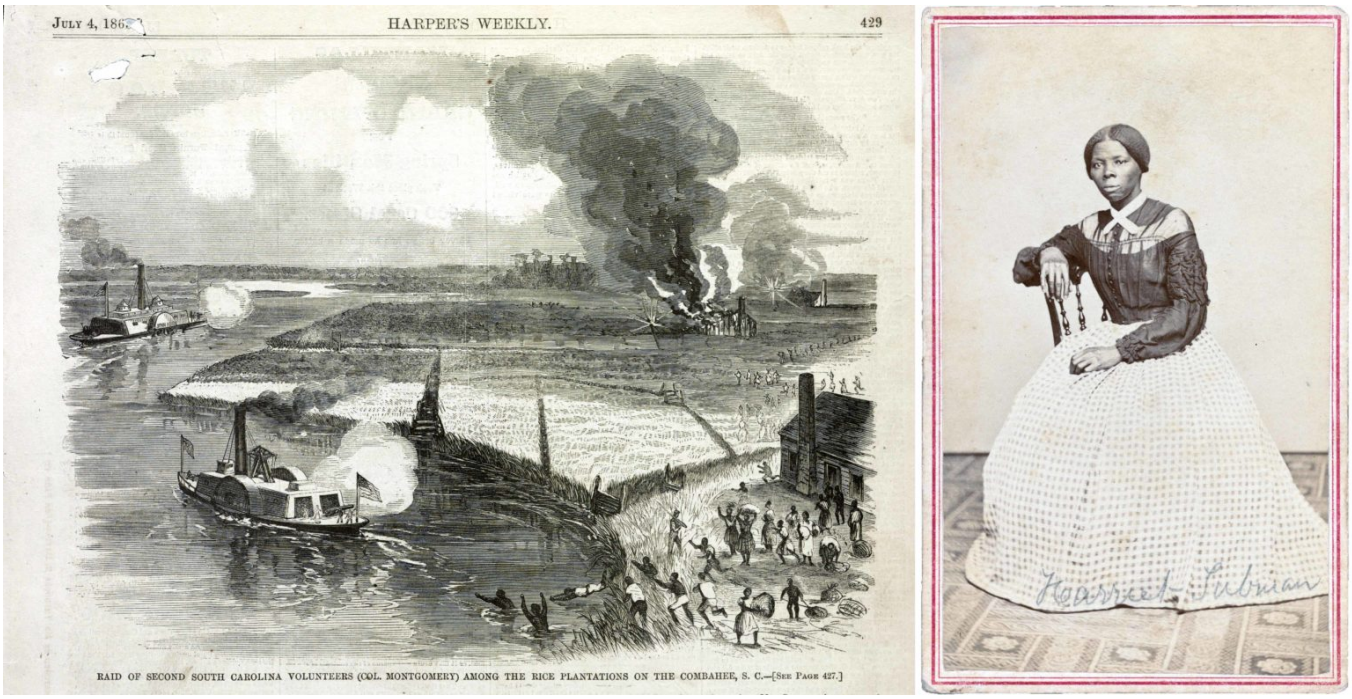


Figure 4.4.10.8: Left: "Raid Of Second South Carolina Volunteers (Col. Montgomery) Among The Rice Plantations On The Combahee, S.C.," *Harper's Weekly*, July 4, 1863, p. 429, wood engraving, 27.6 x 39.5 cm (Library of Congress); right: Benjamin F. Powelson, *Portrait of Harriet Tubman*, c. 1868–69, albumen carte-de-visite, 10 x 6 cm (Library of Congress)

Women were eager to help the U.S. Army as well. Most often they were referred to as "laundresses," though we know that many did much more than that. Refugee women also cooked to help sustain U.S. soldiers, and some served as spies. Harriet Tubman, who had emancipated herself in 1849, became the first woman to lead a major military operation in the United States when she led 150 members of the U.S. 2nd South Carolina Volunteers—a Black regiment with many soldiers drawn from the ranks of self-emancipated men—in a raid on Combahee Ferry in South Carolina. Using three U.S. gunboats, Tubman and the soldiers rescued at least 700 enslaved Black people on the night of June 1, 1863.



Figure **4.4.10.9**: Samuel Willard Bridgham, *Portrait of Susie King Taylor*, 1880s, daguerreotype (Stephen Restelli, private collection)

Susie King Taylor, who was born into slavery in Georgia, and self-emancipated in 1862, performed gun maintenance and worked as a nurse and a teacher. [7] She learned how to read and write as a child in clandestine schools thanks to her grandmother (teaching reading or writing to free or enslaved Blacks had been illegal in Georgia since the 1770s). [8] Taylor later published a memoir of her experiences in the war, Reminiscences of My Life in Camp. In the photograph above, Taylor is seated in profile but her head is turned to look at us. She is enveloped in a voluminous skirt and tight-fitting jacket. The formality of the pose contrasts with the lush foliage behind her. The growing presence of women in public life during the Civil War coincided with the rise of relatively inexpensive portrait photography. However, where most photographs of the period depict their subjects in the studio, this one is set, unusually, outdoors.

Prisoners of war

Prisoners of war from both the United States and the Confederacy comprised another large group of displaced persons. Over the course of the conflict, more than 400,000 men were imprisoned, often in horrific conditions. For the first two years of the war, the two armies exchanged prisoners according to a normal parole system. But prisoner exchanges broke down in 1863 after the U.S. Army enlisted Black soldiers; Confederates refused to return any Black soldiers, instead insisting on either enslaving them or executing them immediately. The U.S. government held firm that all soldiers were to be treated the same in prisoner exchanges and that it would not exchange white soldiers while permitting Black soldiers to be killed or enslaved.



Figure **4.4.10.10**: Andrew Jackson Riddle, *Andersonville Prison, Georgia. South-west view of the stockade Showing the dead line*, August 17, 1864, salted paper print, 11 x 14 cm (**Library of Congress**)

And so from 1863 through early 1865 prisoners of war arrived, and kept arriving, at camps that were not designed for so many men to stay for such a long time. Both U.S. prisons and Confederate prisons were hellish places for soldiers, often lacking adequate food, shelter, and sanitation. Unable to feed and clothe its own soldiers, the Confederacy could hardly spare resources to supply prisoners' needs. As the photograph of Andersonville Prison taken by Georgia photographer Andrew Jackson Riddle shows, U.S. soldiers who languished in Confederate prisons had to make their own improvised shelters. Starvation and disease ravaged the camp. In the summer of 1864 more than 100 men died per day in Andersonville, and nearly a third of its 45,000 inhabitants perished during the 18 months it operated. [9]



Figure **4.4.10.11**: J. W. Jones, *Emaciated Union Soldier Liberated from Andersonville Prison, 1860s*, 1865, albumen silver print from glass negative, 9 x 5.5 cm (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

The release of U.S. soldiers from Confederate prison camps who were starving and often sick or injured occasioned an outcry among northerners who were shocked by men who had become living skeletons. Photographs of U.S. soldiers released from Belle Isle prison in Richmond were reproduced in illustrated newspapers in 1864 and led to calls for retaliation against the Confederate prisoners then held in U.S. camps. The photograph, taken in 1865, documents the horror wrought by starvation at Andersonville

Prison, Georgia. This emaciated former prisoner is starkly contrasted against signifiers of peacetime civilian life. He is seated on a rocking chair with a carpet under his feet. How prisoners were treated in both northern and southern prisons remained a point of contention in U.S. politics and culture after the war. Republicans used these images to wave the bloody shirt in late 19th-century elections, and proponents of the Lost Cause were quick to claim that northern prisons were nearly as bad (but had received less coverage in northern newspapers).

Displacement and internment of Indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples in North America did not escape violence of the U.S. Civil War even though much of the Great Plains, Great Basin, and Southwest was still under Indigenous control. Both the United States and the Confederacy recruited Indigenous nations and tribes as allies and Indigenous men as soldiers; about 3,500 Indigenous men served in the U.S. Army, and at least twice that many served in the Confederate army. As in the earlier Seven Years' War and the American Revolution, Indigenous nations, tribes, and bands split their allegiances for a number of reasons: some practiced slavery, while others despised it; some saw the Confederate government as a welcome alternative to the U.S. government they had myriad reasons to distrust, while others hoped their service might lead the U.S. government to treat them fairly. For Indigenous peoples, participation in the Civil War presented opportunities to win concessions or land guarantees from the dueling governments in the east, and in some cases to use the conflict as a way to gain power within their own governments. But the war also presented substantial dangers, including displacement, loss of sovereignty, and the loss of lands.

The dangers proved to be more numerous than the opportunities. The Civil War intensified population pressures in Indian Territory (where the U.S. government had forced Indigenous peoples from the eastern part of the continent to migrate after U.S. president Andrew Jackson signed the 1830 Indian Removal Act). During the Civil War, Lincoln's Republican Party made good on many of its campaign promises to white voters about securing the West as a place for "free labor" and "free men" by authorizing the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railway Act, both of which appropriated Indigenous lands and greatly accelerated the migration of non-Indigenous people to the West.

The U.S. Army classified any Indigenous people who did not completely cooperate with its political and military objectives during the Civil War as enemies sympathetic with the Confederacy, and relentlessly pursued the internment or extinction of such groups. Like the Diné and Apaches who were forced into the Bosque Redondo concentration camp, the U.S. Army forced more than 1,700 Santee Sioux to leave their homes in Minnesota after the Dakota War of 1862 and march over 100 miles to be held in a concentration camp. Shortly afterward, the U.S. government seized their historical lands in Minnesota and forced the Santee Sioux to move onto a distant reservation.



Figure 4.4.10.12: Ho-na-nist-to (Howling Wolf), Southern Tsétsêhéstâhese/Só'taeo'o (Cheyenne), *At Sand Creek Massacre (1864)*, c. 1874–75, pen, ink, and watercolor on ledger paper, 20 x 31.5 cm (Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College)

Even those people who made peace with the U.S. Army were subject to violence. This ledger drawing was created by Ho-na-nist-to (Howling Wolf, Southern Cheyenne), who one historian refers to as "arguably the single most important Plains artist who worked on paper during the late nineteenth century." [10] It records an event in 1864, when a Colorado militia attacked Cheyennes and Arapahos (who had negotiated peace with the U.S. Army and were flying an American flag and a white flag of truce above their camp). In the drawing, we see the U.S. soldiers and their horses along the left edge firing their weapons as bullets fly past the Cheyenne on horseback who ride toward them. Howling Wolf is the last figure on the right, shown here actively defending his camp (as he actually did during the conflict). Above him is a howling wolf and his name written in blue, important reminders of the power invested in naming. They are also reminders to anyone who might see them of his role in this history. He shoots at the army while his companions look back toward an enemy approaching from the rear. U.S. soldiers killed at least 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho men, women, and children at what became known as the Sand Creek Massacre.



Figure **4.4.10.13**: Ho-na-nist-to (Howling Wolf), Southern Tsétsêhéstâhese/Só'taeo'o (Cheyenne), *At Sand Creek Massacre (1864)* (detail), c. 1874–75, pen, ink, and watercolor on ledger paper, 20 x 31.5 cm (Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College)

Colonel John M. Chivington, who led the attack, was initially hailed as a hero, but members of the U.S. military who had refused to participate in the massacre alerted their superiors, and Congress investigated the incident. Although the U.S. government found Chivington guilty and promised reparations, the Cheyennes and Arapahos were nevertheless driven onto reservations in Oklahoma (and the reparations were never paid). It was only after the Southern Cheyenne surrendered to the U.S. government and Ho-na-nist-to was imprisoned at Fort Marion, Florida, that he recounted his experiences in ledger drawings.

Experiences of displacement and incarceration

The experiences of people on the "margins" of the Civil War—in prison camps, in refugee camps, in concentration camps—can be more difficult to visualize than some Civil War experiences. These were often the people who had the fewest resources and often the least attention from their contemporaries. They rarely had the opportunity to control how they were represented in images. Yet careful attention to the visual and material culture that survives offers access to their wartime experiences as part of the war's broader struggles: for freedom, recognition, and citizenship beyond the battlefield.

Notes:

[1] See *Eyedazzler Blanket/Rug* at the Denver Art Museum.

[2] Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), p. 4.

[3] For an analysis of racial stereotypes of escaped slaves in *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* during the Civil War, see Aston Gonzalez, "Stolen Looks, People Unbound: Picturing Contraband People during the Civil War," *Slavery & Abolition* 40, no. 1 (2019): pp. 28–60.

[4] Thavolia Glymph, "Noncombatant Military Laborers in the Civil War," *OAH Magazine of History* 26, no. 2 (April 2012): pp. 25–29.

[5] Taylor, *Embattled Freedom*, p. 6.

[6] Ryan Jordan, "Contraband Camps aka: Slave Refugee Camps," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, Central Arkansas Library System, 2019.

[7] For more on women's service see Taylor, *Embattled Freedom*, pp. 126–30. For more on Susie King Taylor, see this story map from the Library of Congress, and read *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp* online.

[8] Christopher M. Span, "Learning in Spite of Opposition: African Americans and Their History of Educational Exclusion in Antebellum America," *Counterpoints* 131 (2005), p. 27.

[9] Evan A. Kutzler, *Living by Inches: The Smells, Sounds, Tastes, and Feeling of Captivity in Civil War Prisons* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

[10] Joyce M. Szabo, "Howling Wolf (1849–1927)," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, University of Nebraska—Lincoln, 2011.

Additional resources

The Long Walk from the National Museum of the American Indian

Peter John Brownlee et. al., *Home Front: Daily Life in the Civil War North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

The Contraband Historical Society

Learn more about Bosque Redondo and its historic site

Abigail Cooper, "'Away I Goin' to Find My Mamma': Self-Emancipation, Migration, and Kinship in Refugee Camps in the Civil War Era," *Journal of African American Life and History* 102, no. 4 (Fall 2017): pp. 444–467.

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4.4.11: Homes and families

- The war placed significant new pressures on families.

Page ID 180080

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT**



Figure **4.4.11.1**: Unidentified African American soldier in U.S. Army uniform with wife and two daughters, c. 1863–65, ambrotype, 13.9 x 16.4 cm (with frame) (Library of Congress)

A U.S. soldier, in a kepi and coat, sits next to his wife, with their daughters on either side of the couple. The names of the members of this family have been lost, but we know that this Civil War family portrait photograph must have been taken sometime after 1863, when the U.S. government authorized the first regiments of the U.S. Colored Troops. [1] Posed in a studio or tent, the image gives us a glimpse of not just a Civil War soldier but the people to whom he was connected, both those who relied on him and whom he relied on in turn. The family in this picture was in the midst of an epic struggle for their lives, livelihood, and ability to stay together. We don't know whether any members of this family were enslaved, but we know the specter of slavery must have haunted their lives every day, with a soldier father facing execution if captured by Confederates, and mother and daughters targets for kidnapping. Women's lives were fraught with new uncertainty during the war as well, with the home front and their roles within it transformed.

Today, we use "home front" to describe the experiences of a nation's civilians in wartime: the domestic politics, economics, and morale of the population outside of the battlefield. However, the term "home front" was not coined until World War I, fifty years after the conclusion of the U.S. Civil War. Encoded within it are ideas more suited to U.S. warfare in the 20th century, when popular memory calls to mind soldiers in Europe or Asia and women taking on war production jobs at home. In the 19th century, home and war were not so far apart. Many of the battles of the Civil War took place in the American South, often within a few miles of both the U.S. capitol at Washington, D.C. and the Confederate capitol at Richmond, Virginia. For many people who lived through the Civil War, the home front *was* the battlefront, with soldiers helping themselves to civilians' crops, livestock, and even homes.

But though the concept of a home front would have made little sense to contemporary Americans during the Civil War, the concept of home itself was deeply meaningful. Americans, particularly the white, northern middle class, idealized the home and the family within it as the cornerstone of society. But these were privileged ideas: notions of home and family resonated differently for enslaved people, whose families—including both blood relatives and fictive kin—changed over time as they were brought together in labor camps or torn apart as enslavers sold family members away from each other. The war placed significant new pressures on

families, requiring their members to step outside their accustomed roles to take on new ones that often put them and their families in harm's way.

Women's roles: factory work

The notion of home and family in this era included the ideal that women did not work outside the home; men and women were to occupy "separate spheres" of vulgar industry and genteel domesticity respectively. The need for labor during the war challenged notions of the proper role for women.



Figure **4.4.11.2**: Winslow Homer, "Filling Cartridges at the United States Arsenal at Watertown, Massachusetts," *Harper's Weekly*, July 20, 1861, wood engraving on paper, 10 15/16 x 9 1/4 inches (Newberry Library)

For example, *Harper's Weekly* marveled at the novelty of white women working to fill cartridges at an arsenal in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1861. The women are all young and respectably dressed—their gentility seemingly untouched by this foray into factory life. The white men, notably, work with the gunpowder directly, the more dangerous and dirty job, while a single man in uniform directs the efforts of the women. In fact, working at an arsenal in any capacity was a dangerous job, one often performed by young, immigrant women.



Figure 4.4.11.3: Monument to the victims of the 1864 explosion at the Washington, D.C. arsenal. Left: Lot Flannery, *Grief*, Congressional Cemetery, Washington, D.C., 1865, marble (photo: Allen C. Browne, from HMdb.org); right: detail of the statue's inscriptions (photo: Library of Congress)

In 1864, twenty-one white women died in an explosion at the Washington, D.C. arsenal, fifteen of whom were buried under a monument at the Congressional Cemetery erected just one year later. As the victims were mainly Irish immigrants, the committee that raised money for the monument selected Irish-American sculptor Lot Flannery to create the monument's statue, a young woman clasping her hands and bowing her head, which he titled "Grief." The south side of the monument's base shows the shocking explosion, with smoke rising from the arsenal building in bas-relief. [2] Such incidents made plain the risks women faced during the war, even if most were not on the battlefield itself.

Women's roles: supporting families

Although images of women in northern newspapers focused on the experiences of middle- and upper-class white women, the war caused considerable change in the lives of women from all backgrounds. Hunger and privation were experiences that cut across race and geography. Women and children had more difficulty accessing food, clothing, and shelter during the war, either because their government directed supplies to the army first or because a passing army "bummed" their food and livestock.

Indigenous women and their families who depended on the U.S. government for provisions given in exchange for ceded land—like the Santee Sioux in Minnesota—suffered when the war-focused government failed to make annuity payments as agreed upon in earlier treaties. In Indian Territory, where citizens of the Five Tribes were divided between loyalty to the United States and loyalty to the Confederacy, women and families were under constant threat of robbery and violence from soldiers supporting either side. Ella Coody Robinson, a Cherokee woman whose slave-owning family allied with the Confederacy, remembered that U.S. Army soldiers burned her parents' house in Oklahoma after removing its valuables. She traveled hundreds of miles on horseback with few supplies and a great deal of grief:

> ***We finally reached San Bois Creek in the Choctaw Nation where we stopped because my little half brother, Charles, was taken sick with fever. He died after ten days illness and we buried him there. My brother, Will, had been killed by Union soldiers before we left home. . . . We stayed at San Bois some six weeks to give mother a chance to recover from her grief and loss. . . . While we were on the way and food was such a problem, the***

> ***Confederate troops captured a wagon train of supplies . . . and [we] managed to get a good supply of groceries, including sugar, coffee, rice and flour and tea.Ella Coody Robinson [3]***

In the east, southern homes directly in the path of the largest troop movements were more likely than northern ones to face these strains, not just from enemy soldiers but from the hungry Confederate Army as well. Rampant inflation, drought and trampled crops, cities crowded with refugees, and the U.S. naval blockade of southern ports led to starvation in the South by the spring of 1863. In March and April of that year, hungry and desperate Confederate women, many of whom likely had kin in the Confederate Army in addition to children to feed, led armed bread riots across cities and towns in the South. In Richmond, Confederate president Jefferson Davis and Virginia Governor John Lechter turned out to speak to the rioters, but only the threat of the militia opening fire on the women enticed them to disperse. Dozens were arrested.



Figure 4.4.11.4: "Sowing and reaping, Southern women hounding their men on to rebellion, Southern women feeling the effects of rebellion, and creating bread riots," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 23, 1863, p. 141, wood engraving on paper (Library of Congress)

The northern press mocked these women as reaping what they had sown in a cartoon in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper.* We see (according to the caption) "Southern women hounding their men on to rebellion." This is hardly the usual farewell for sending a male family member off to war. The two women on the far left point their fingers and appear to order the reluctant men to leave, while another encourages her husband down the stairs with her hand on his shoulder as he looks longingly back to her. On the right, we see the same, once-respectable and orderly women who had "hounded" their men to rebellion, now thin and haggard, raising sticks in the air, smashing windows, and looting. If we follow the logic of this image, these Confederate women have now learned their lesson—their "hounding" has led to starvation. The figure in the center, with loose hair, bare feet, and ragged dress has fired a pistol, which she holds downward in the direction of a small Black child who clutches a loaf of bread. The frieze extends beyond the frame, suggesting a large mob. In both images, women have trespassed the bounds of acceptable feminine behavior: they "hound" their men to rebel, and they take to the streets like animals (see the female figure crawling in the right foreground) to steal food.

This image registers the high levels of anxiety caused by changes in the roles of women due to the war in both the North and the South: they were alone without a male head of household, some were refugees, many were working for wages in sometimes dangerous war-related jobs that would otherwise be filled by men, and those who could afford to, did volunteer work (usually

sewing or nursing) for the war effort. As on the battlefield, life at home was precarious. One could endure hunger and homelessness or risk one's life in dangerous work.

Women's roles: nursing

More than 5,000 women worked as nurses in the Civil War, transforming the overwhelmingly male medical establishment. Noted reformer Dorothea Dix was superintendent of female nurses in the U.S. Army. Women served in field hospital tents, buildings, and even ships. They took on related roles of coordinating the production and distribution of medical supplies. Free Black women in the North also mobilized to recruit and support the U.S. Colored Troops, providing supplies and medical care at the U.S.C.T. soldiers' training camps in New York and Philadelphia. [4] Many self-emancipated women, such as Susie King Taylor, also nursed soldiers at field hospitals.

Clara Barton, who was working at a patent office in Washington, D.C. when the war began, personally took up a project to collect donated supplies and bring them to battlefields in addition to service as a nurse. She would later found the American Red Cross. Many women worked to support the U.S. Sanitary Commission, a relief agency dedicated to the support of sick and injured U.S. soldiers. Sanitary Fairs held across northern cities were fundraisers for the commission; works of art and photographs were among the many objects sold or raffled in support of their mission.



Figure 4.4.11.5: Morse's Gallery of the Cumberland, *Anna Bell Stubbs, Civil War nurse, caring for wounded soldiers at No. 1 Nashville Hospital*, 1864, carte-de-visite (Library of Congress)

Photographers from the Sanitary Commission asked nurse Anna Bell Stubbs to pose for this photograph at the hospital where she served in Nashville, Tennessee; they then printed it as a carte-de-visite and sold copies at the Cleveland Sanitary Fair to raise money for U.S. Army hospitals.

In a letter to her mother dated February 15, 1864, Stubbs wrote about posing for the above photograph,

> ***Two weeks ago, some of the Sanitary Commission people came to see me & asked that I would allow an artist to take a hospital scene, that they wanted such a one to sell at the fair at Cleveland. At once I said no, that I could not consent to becoming so public but they said if I did not wish they should not tell my name but only the hospital & what ward—so for the benefit of the soldiers, I consented—and now there is quite a rage for***

> ***the picture, Mrs Harris declares she must have some to sell in Phila, & Huntingdon, but I said they must not go anywhere where I am known. It makes me laugh to think of becoming saleable—and folk's making money out of me, I don't mean that it gives me any pleasure, but makes me feel very strangely.***
> ***Anna Bell Stubbs [5]***

We can easily see why the image was popular—it's reassuring: a well-dressed and poised young woman administers treatment to the wounded. We get a sense that under her motherly care, these men will undoubtedly recover.



Figure **4.4.11.6**: Draft cylinder, c. 1863, used to draw names of men aged 20–45 until a community's quota was reached per the 1863 Enrollment Act (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Men and the draft

Death and deprivation took a toll on people on the home front. Families that had wholeheartedly supported a male breadwinner's decision to enlist in the first years of war sometimes begged him to desert the army in later years, hoping that his labor at home would better meet their financial needs. Waning enthusiasm for the war led to the institution of military drafts in both the North and South in 1862 and 1863, which led to further discontent on the home front.

Accusations that the Civil War was a "rich man's war" and a "poor man's fight" resonated in both the North and the South. In the South, the military draft made exemptions for enslavers who owned more than twenty people, claiming that a white man needed to remain to manage them. As only the wealthiest enslavers fit this profile, the draft exemption rankled poorer white men and their families. Although most southern whites did not question the institution of slavery itself, they resented the privileges of the "great planters" whom they believed had an outsized say in the government yet sacrificed less for the war effort.

In the North, draft riots erupted in New York City. There were several causes. Black men were not U.S. citizens, and so they were exempt from the Enrollment Act that authorized the conscription of white male citizens. In addition, white working class men, many of whom were Irish Democrats, felt threatened by the possibility of newly freed Black workers arriving in the city and competing with them for jobs. In July 1863, white mobs attacked the draft office, homes of wealthy citizens, pro-Republican newspaper offices, and Black neighborhoods. The northern draft also made distinctions according to class, allowing drafted men to pay a substitute or a $300 fee in lieu of service—meaning that the wealthy could buy their way out of military service. The rioters,

mainly Irish immigrants, targeted Black people in the city resulting in gruesome lynchings, and burned the Colored Orphans' Asylum.

The police were unable to put down the riot, and the U.S. government had to deploy the army—diverting thousands of troops from Gettysburg, where they had defeated the Confederate Army days earlier—to restore order. After four days, the mob had killed an estimated 100 people, including many Black men, women, and children, and one seven-year-old boy.



Figure **4.4.11.7**: "The Rioters Burning and Sacking the Colored Orphan Asylum," *Harper's Weekly*, August 1, 1863, p. 943 (The New York Public Library)

Harper's Weekly published a series of illustrations of scenes from the riots making clear the extent of the destruction. As a newspaper sympathetic to the Republican Party and the Lincoln administration, *Harper's* looked upon the rioters with disgust. The largest illustration depicted the mob attacking the Colored Orphan Asylum, a substantial building on Fifth Avenue just above 42nd Street. The image shows flames reaching high in the sky, looters carrying bundles from the building, and in the foreground, the mob chasing and beating children trying to escape. *Harper's* reported that the building was home to between 600 and 800 children and became the target of the mob's fury. According to the minutes of the Asylum's board, written two weeks after the attack, the young charges reached the safety of a nearby police station but not before, "twenty of the orphan children . . . were surrounded by the mob." [6] The newspaper goes on to reassure readers that the children were rescued by the intervention of "a young Irishman, named Paddy M'Caffrey" and firemen who were on the scene.



Figure 4.4.11.8: Kara Walker, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863*, 2008, wool tapestry and felt, 175.3 x 248.9 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) © Kara Walker

Contemporary artist Kara Walker drew on the image from *Harper's* for her 2008 work, *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863*. She made two significant changes to the image: to begin, she enlarged the *Harper's* image, and had it woven into the fabric of a tapestry, and then, she added a black felt silhouette of the distorted body of a hanged young woman. She makes visible the absences and erasures of the *Harper's* image: to see the scene of the asylum burning, you have to be willing to look past the large, brutalized silhouette that appears before it. In this way, Walker reverses the emphasis of the original magazine report, which focused on the heroics of the fireman at the scene. In *A Warm Summer Evening in 1863*, Walker places a lynched female victim of the mob close to us so that she is enormous in comparison to the tapestry, the anonymous flat black form a reminder that every Black person who encountered the mob was in danger, forcing us to imagine the terror of those vulnerable orphans who lived in the asylum. This reframing reminds us of the thousands of lynchings that terrorized innocent Black men, women, and children well into the 20th century and the unending racial violence that sparked the Black Lives Matter protests.

Varied experiences

Although popular prints of women in the Civil War focused on the roles and sacrifices of upper-class white women, the war disrupted family life across class, race, and geography. Many kinds of families experienced the Civil War in different ways. Families whose homes were in the path of soldiers—in the South and in Indian Territory—were subjected to hunger, violence, and displacement. Even those far from the battlefield could still be in danger, with unsafe working conditions and civil unrest bringing the war home.

Images that capture these varied experiences, however, can be difficult to find. Most of the images we do have are mediated in some way, like Anna Bell Stubbs's carefully posed nursing photograph or the vicious political cartoon judging white southern women for urging their men off to war. Still, like Kara Walker, we can look at the visual record with an eye for its absences, putting what was invisible back into view.

Notes:

[1] This may be Samuel Smith, a sergeant in the Third U.S. Colored Cavalry Regiment. See "Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters," Library of Congress.

[2] See Melissa Rae Sheets, "A Memory Forgotten: Representation of Women and the Washington D.C. Arsenal Monument," *Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2011).

[3] Ella Coody Robinson, Interview 13833, vol. 77, Muskogee, Oklahoma, May 6, 1938, 94–127, Indian Pioneer Papers, University of Oklahoma, Western History Collections, in Carolyn Ross Johnston, *Voices of Cherokee Women (Real Voices, Real History)* (Winston-Salem, NC: Blair, 2013), p. 164.

[4] Holly A. Pinheiro, Jr., "Black Women, the Civil War, and United States Colored Troops," *Black Perspectives*, African American Intellectual History Society, 2021.

[5] Letter from Anna Bell Stubbs to her mother, February 15, 1864.

[6] *Harper's Weekly*, August 1, 1863, p. 494.

Additional resources

Learn more about Dorothea Dix from the Smithsonian Institution Archives

Home Front: The Visual Culture of the Civil War North from the Newberry Library

Civil War Draft Records: Exemptions and Enrollments from The National Archives

Learn more about Susie King Taylor from the Library of Congress

Learn more about Kara Walker

Paul H. D. Kaplan, *Contraband Guides: Race, Transatlantic Culture, and the Arts in the Civil War Era* (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020).

Stephanie McCurry, *Women's War: Fighting and Surviving the American Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012)

Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.5: Realism

Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins epitomized the Realist movement in the United States.

1820 - 1895

4.5.1: Francis Guy, Winter Scene in Brooklyn

4.5.2: John Wesley Jarvis, Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder

4.5.3: William Sidney Mount, Bargaining for a Horse

4.5.4: John James Audubon, The Wild Turkey

4.5.5: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico

4.5.6: George Caleb Bingham, Country Politician

4.5.7: George Caleb Bingham, The County Election

4.5.8: Frederic Church, The Natural Bridge, Virginia

4.5.9: Blythe, Justice

4.5.10: Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown

4.5.11: Eastman Johnson, A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves

4.5.12: Lilly Martin Spencer, The Home of the Red, White, and Blue

4.5.13: Samuel Colman, Jr., Ships Unloading, New York

4.5.14: Thomas Eakins

- 4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)
- 4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub
- 4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic

4.5.15: Winslow Homer

- 4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer
- 4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters
- 4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher
- 4.5.15.4: The Life Line
- 4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing)
- 4.5.15.6: Northeaster

4.5.16: Grafton Tyler Brown, View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

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4.5.1: Francis Guy, Winter Scene in Brooklyn

Page ID

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Video **4.5.1.16**: Francis Guy, *Winter Scene in Brooklyn*, 1820, oil on canvas, 147.3 x 260.2 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art). Speakers: Dr. Margaret C. Conrads and Dr. Beth Harris.

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4.5.2: John Wesley Jarvis, Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder

by LAURA F. FRY and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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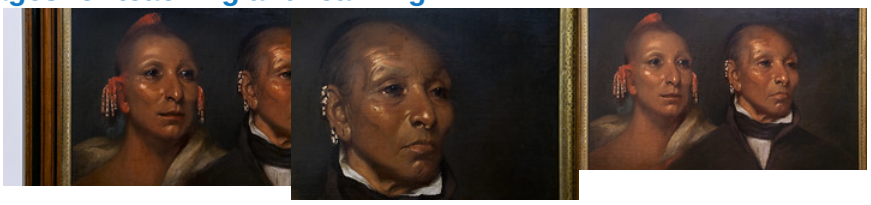


John Wesley Jarvis, *Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder*, 1833, oil on canvas, 75.6 x 91.4 cm (Gilcrease Museum) Note: the Sac and Fox Nation changed the spelling of their name from the 19th-century Sauk.

Additional resources

This work at the Gilcrease Museum.

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4.5.3: William Sidney Mount, Bargaining for a Horse

Page ID

165483



Figure **4.5.3.1**: William Sidney Mount, *Bargaining for a Horse*, 1835, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches (New-York Historical Society)

The New York painter William Sidney Mount painted this intimate, comically vibrant picture in 1835. Along with ***Raffling for the Goose*** and ***Eel Spearing at Setauket***, *Bargaining for a Horse* is one of Mount's great works and a striking example of early nineteenth-century American genre painting at its best.

Mount (and other artists like George Caleb Bingham) captured contemporary scenes of rural American life at the cusp of the country's transition into urbanization and modernity. Mount's childhood home in Long Island, once pastoral and sleepy in its cozy insularity, became—like many parts of America—changed by the presence of expanding railroad networks. Mount's specialty as an artist lay in his ability to document the last remnants of the old Yankee culture of the New York countryside before the Yankee became gentrified and adjusted to the cosmopolitan demands of the nineteenth century (Yankee a refers to people from the northeast—especially those descended from colonial New England settlers).

Mount's ambition to be a history painter

Though a renowned painter of genre scenes, William Sidney Mount had initially set out to be a history painter like Benjamin West. Mount was born into a wealthy land-owning family in Long Island in 1807. When his father died seven years later, Mount was sent to live with his uncle, Micah Hawkins, a successful wholesale grocer. At seventeen, Mount was an apprentice to his brother Henry, a sign painter. He took drawing courses at the National Academy of Design in New York, where he learned to appreciate the work of the Masters of European art and acquired an appreciation of landscapes and history painting. However, Mount's first major work, a biblical scene, *Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus*, received little critical attention when it debuted in 1828.



Figure **4.5.3.2**: William Sidney Mount, *Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus*, 1828, oil on canvas, 46.04 cm x 62.87 cm, (Museums of Stony Brook)

During the 1820s, a wide variety of landscape and genre prints circulated across the United States. Prints of rustic genre scenes by the Scottish painter David Wilkie were particularly popular with contemporary European and American audiences. Wilkie's success convinced Mount to turn his attention to genre painting.



Figure **4.5.3.3**: Sir David Wilkie, *Reading the Will*, 1819, etching, 6.9 x 10.5 cm (Tate)

Bargaining for a Horse

In *Bargaining for a Horse*, we see two farmers, both well-dressed and seemingly prosperous, discussing the price of a chestnut mare that the man in the red waistcoat hopes to sell to the man in yellow. The younger man in yellow wears a battered top hat—indicating that he is perhaps a visitor to the farm. Both men are discussing the price of the horse while they "whittle," or carve sticks of wood with their pocket knives (a popular pastime for men of all ages living in the country). The horse stands at the left tied to the barn door as the shadows stretch into the barn on the right. The demarcation of sunlight across the two men and the horse is a spotlight and creates a stage space for the unfolding comedy. It is likely that someone is going to be short-changed for the horse, but such is the nature of the comedy and the satisfaction within the audience's suspense. Part of the engine of the comedy is the trap that is being set for the unsuspecting patsy. The scene's humor also comes from the fact that the men are bargaining with one another while casually scraping away at wooden sticks, subtly masking their masculine authority and aggression in the guise of a popular childhood pastime.

Though the barn and its surroundings (notice the angled slant of the pitchfork on the right) frame the two "actors," Mount is particular about rooting the scene in the countryside. A woman observes the horse trading from the distant background. She stands behind a split-rail fence underneath several immense trees. In some ways, she is perhaps a stand-in for us, the viewers of the painting. Mount always understood that, like a playwright, he was staging something for an audience, and the placement of the figure in the distance is a sly nod to this realization.

In the nineteenth century, the term "horse-trading" was often a colloquialism for back-room political deals. In the period between 1812 and the Civil War, the dynamic changes in the United States—its urban population growth, the nationwide expansion of railroads and industries, and Westward expansion (the Oregon Trail began in the 1830s)—led to an assertive forcefulness and toughness in the American character, associated in some ways with the presidency of Andrew Jackson and the toughness of the frontier spirit that Jackson exemplified. William Sidney Mount is showing us only a glimpse of this type of personality through the lens of his idea of the rural New Yorker, the New York Yankee so exemplified in the stories of writers such as Washington Irving and the poems of John Pierpont.



Figure **4.5.3.4**: William Sidney Mount, *The Raffle (Raffling for the Goose)*, 1837, oil on mahogany, 43.2 x 58.7 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The resourcefulness of the Yankee merchant or farmer depicted in Mount's paintings such as *Raffling for the Goose* (1837, above) and other similar images, is a reflection of the entrepreneurial drive and energy of many Americans in the 1820s and 1830s. In her book *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*, the art historian Elizabeth Johns describes a character we often see within Mount's paintings—the Long Island Yankee farmer-merchant—as an emblematic figure of American enterprise. With the growth of urbanization across agrarian towns in the 1830s, and the rise of immigration to the United States from countries in Western and Central Europe, this Yankee figure—often a stage caricature in comic plays who went by the name of Jonathan Ploughboy—became a quasi-nativist representation of small-town cunning and ingenuity. As the United States became more multicultural and diverse, its population sought to redefine aspects of the national character. What precisely made an American, "American"? "With the triumph of the Democrats in national politics in 1828 and the intoxicating expansion of the economy in the early 1830s," writes Johns, "enthusiasts envisioned a great harmony of individual enterprise and respect—an official recognition at least of the importance of the common man."

William Sidney Mount's uncle was an actor in the New York theater world in the early 1810s, and theatricality pervades many of Mount's paintings. In *Bargaining for a Horse* and *Raffling for the Goose*, there is an element of playful humor rooted in the art of the swindle. Mount painted *Bargaining for a Horse* for his patron, the New York dry goods magnate Lumen Reed, who he had met in 1834. Reed was a keen collector of contemporary art and had become a patron to Asher Durand and Thomas Cole. The original title of the painting was *Farmers Bargaining*, but Edward Carey changed the title to the more descriptive one we use today when he published an engraving of the image in 1840.

Additional resources:

American Scenes of Everyday Life on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Alfred Frankenstein, *Painter of Rural America, William Sidney Mount, 1807-1868* (The Suffolk Museum at Stony Brook, 1968).

Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (Yale University Press, 1993).

Elizabeth Johns, "The Farmer in the Works of William Sidney Mount," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Summer 1986).

Angela Miller, Janet Berlo, and Bryan Wolf, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Pearson, 2007).

Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy, ed., *Reading American Art* (Yale University Press, 1998).

Barbara Novak, *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism and the American Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

[1] William T. Oedel and Todd S. Gernes, "William Sidney Mount" in *Reading American Art*, ed. Marianne Doezema and Elizabeth Milroy (Yale University Press, 1998) p. 146.

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4.5.4: John James Audubon, The Wild Turkey

by LAURA F. FRY and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

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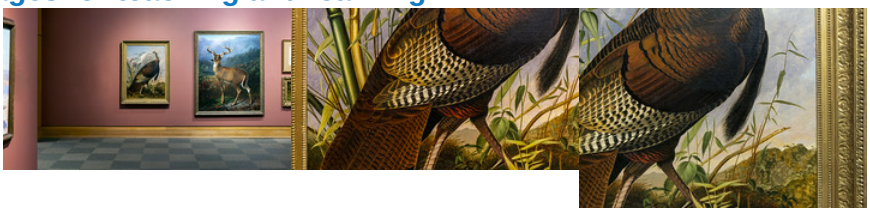


John James Audubon, *The Wild Turkey*, 1845, oil on canvas, 115.6 x 83.2 cm (Gilcrease Museum)

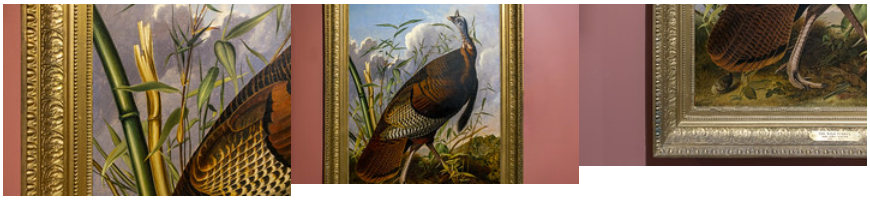
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4.5.5: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico

Page ID
165484



Video **4.5.5.1**: Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas). Speakers: Dr. Mindy Besaw, curator, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and Dr. Steven Zucker



Figure **4.5.5.2**: Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

A crowd gathered for the news

The young man in the center of a crowd in Richard Caton Woodville's *War News From Mexico* (1848) holds open a newspaper with his elbows up, but the paper is low enough that we can see the astonished look on his face.

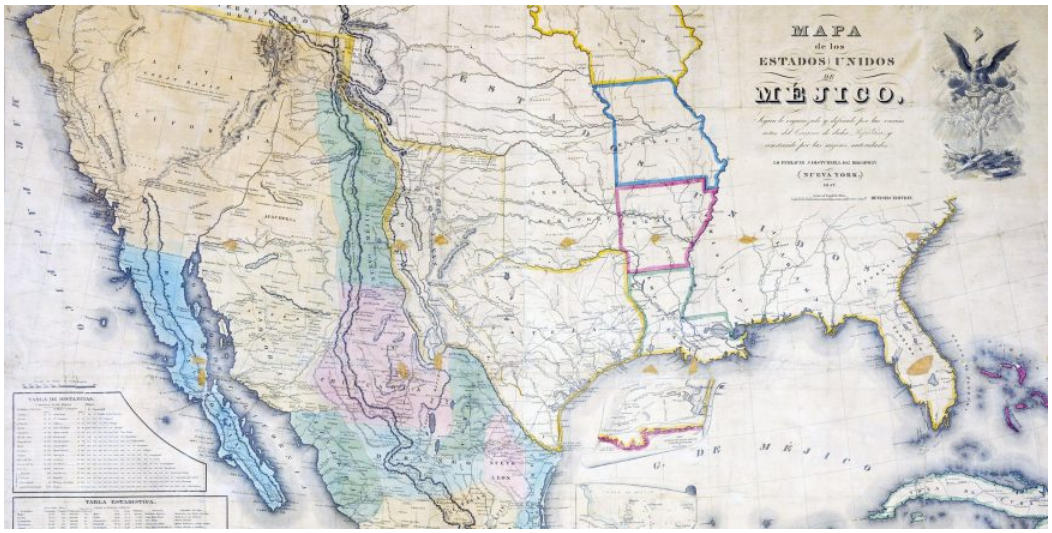


Figure **4.5.5.3**: Map of Mexico, color-filled areas show Mexican territory in 1847. The yellow and green areas at the top left became part of the southwestern United States in 1848.



Figure **4.5.5.4**: Volunteer Flyer (detail), Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

And the news itself? As the title indicates, this is a dispatch from the front of the Mexican-American War. United States troops entered Mexico City in 1848, bringing to an end a war that had begun in 1846 over a territorial dispute involving Texas. In the resulting Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico ceded half its territory to the United States, effectively concluding the U.S. program of westward expansion.

To convey the characteristics of a Western outpost, the men gathered in the painting are shown standing on the porch of a building typical of the kind erected in the American frontier during the rush for territories in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In fact, the building serves multiple functions: it is both an “American Hotel” and post office, as indicated on the signs. While the building emulates in wood the style of stone classical structures found in Philadelphia or New York City, the artist has taken great care with the details to remind the viewer this is on the frontier: the wood is worn, and underneath the “post office” sign is tacked a recruitment notice asking for “Volunteers for Mexico!”

A range of responses

Opinion on the war was divided and Woodville thus depicts a range of responses. An older man in Revolutionary-era clothing just to the right of the standing figure holding the newspaper, strains to hear as another repeats into his ear what is being read. One young man in the background is tossing his hat into the air; he clearly welcomes the news but the seated elder shows far less enthusiasm. His outdated clothing identifies him as part of the generation that fought the Revolutionary War but did not endorse the expansion embraced by the new Jacksonian-era democracy. And what of the inhabitants themselves of the former Spanish colonies in the southwest (Mexico had gained independence from Spain in 1821)? This could only be bad news; the surrendering of territory spelled the loss of cultural identity. A protestant, Anglo-American culture, pushing westward, acquiring new states for the Union,

would seek to eradicate any vestiges of Hispanic-Catholic identity. Mexicans would wake up the day after the treaty was signed and find themselves second-class citizens in a new country.



Figure 4.5.5.5: Porch (detail), Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

Genre scenes

American genre-scene painters during this period typically strove to represent an array of social types in their rapidly modernizing nation, and Woodville's painting is no exception ("genre" paintings depict scenes of everyday life). There were often humorous illustrations of class status or newly immigrant Americans in genre scene paintings but they also betrayed, in equal measure, social anxiety about a shifting demography in a new political environment. There are African-American figures in the painting but they are pushed to the border, outside the framing beams of the hotel's portico—a seated man in a bright orange shirt and a child wearing a tattered white dress. They look on from the bottom right, at the foot of the steps, but their facial expressions seem to register only weariness or perhaps resignation. The question as to whether the new territories would be slave states or free ones was hotly debated—some saw the war as extending the institution of slavery—and Woodville nods to this larger political reality. There is also an elderly woman barely visible in the shadows; she leans out a window and looks in the direction of the group on the porch. These figures are not included within the immediate circle of white men—perhaps suggesting their less central position within society.

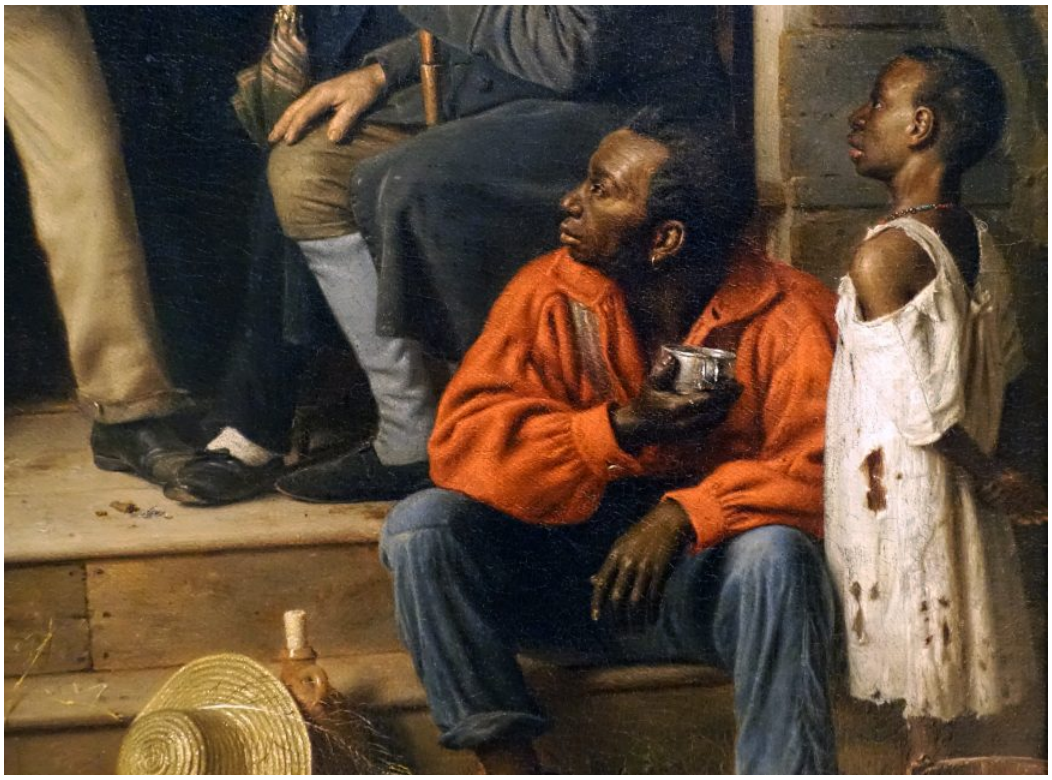


Figure **4.5.5.6**: Man and child, lower right (detail), Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

Images of frontier life were popular in the years leading up to the Civil War and Woodville had great success depicting this kind of everyday subject matter. He specialized in domestic interiors—an important subset of this newly emergent category of genre-scene painting. This subject type was popular in Europe (**particularly during the 17th century in the Dutch Republic**), however it was a relatively new phenomenon in American art—reaching its height of popularity in the period that stretched from the 1830s through the Civil War of 1861-65. Genre scene paintings were aimed at a broadly expanded and increasingly literate middle-class whose tastes ran to familiar scenarios of everyday life, rather than the mythic or historical themes favored by the art academies (the Royal Academies of Europe and the National Academy in the United States). Genre-scene paintings were promoted by organizations like the American Art Union (AAU). The AAU was formed in 1839 to promote American artists and specifically to forge a uniquely American art. Once exhibited under the aegis of the AAU—Woodville's *War News From Mexico* was exhibited in 1849 right after the war ended—paintings were then turned into engravings and sold to AAU members by subscription.



Figure 4.5.5.7: Woman in window (detail), Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

In contrast to the marginalized figures of the woman and the African Americans, the newspaper takes pride of place in this painting. The "penny presses," as they were called, a relatively recent invention, were mass-produced commercial newspapers that emerged in the 1830s during a period of rapid industrialization and modernization. Unlike their more expensive, subscription-based counterparts, the penny presses (so named because they cost mere pennies) reached a broad swath of the American public. Not only was the Mexican-American War one of the very first to be photographed, it was also extensively broadcast through print—through the very type of paper depicted in the painting, with its top banner emblazoned with the words "EXTRA." The newspaper, in fact, functioned as a powerful symbol of the power of the press to bring Americans together and the painting suggests the role of the paper in shaping public opinion.



Figure 4.5.5.8: Newspaper (detail), Richard Caton Woodville, *War News from Mexico*, 1848, oil on canvas, 68.6 × 63.5 cm (Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas)

Genre-scene paintings often conveyed a sense of immediacy and here *War News From Mexico* orients itself towards the viewer in such a way that one feels as if one has just stumbled upon the scene. Notice, for example, how the perspective is tilted to the right of the viewer; this has the effect of positioning us off to the left side as if we have just come around some imaginary corner and the American Hotel, its porch crowded with the town's inhabitants, careens into view.



Figure **4.5.5.9**: Moses (detail) Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, 1862

Manifest Destiny

Despite this seeming spontaneity, *War News from Mexico* is as carefully composed and even as moralizing as the staid history paintings and Neoclassical subjects favored by the academies. Though it was commonplace to view genre-scene paintings as "snapshots" of daily American life without larger purpose, this unfolding scene (meant to indicate some place on the frontier far removed from the military action, but close enough that it mattered), takes place against the backdrop of Manifest Destiny—the theory that drove and justified westward expansion.

The ideology of Manifest Destiny construes Anglo-Americans as God's chosen people who—like the ancient Israelites of the Old Testament—are guided by God to their destiny. This was a subject often depicted in painting. For example, in Emmanuel Leutze's mural for the west stairway of the U.S. Capitol, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, we see American pioneers and their covered wagons looking towards the sunset and the Pacific Ocean while one of the scenes in the lower right border (illustrated left) depicts Moses leading the Israelites through the desert.



Figure **4.5.5.10**: Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, 1862, stereochrome, 6.1 × 9.1 m (United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.)

Beginning with the American Revolution, this American "exceptionalism" (as it also came to be known), rationalized not only the acquisition of land all the way to the Pacific Ocean, but also the subjugation and removal of people from their land—the Indian

Removal Act of 1830 that President Andrew Jackson signed into law strengthened the rapid acquisition of land that went hand in hand with expulsion and extermination.

Woodville makes no overt statement of his politics in *War News from Mexico* but his painting nevertheless encapsulates a larger history than the scale of this relatively small painting (it measures approximately 27 x 25 inches) would seem to allow. If *War News from Mexico* does, however ambiguously, extol the ideology of Manifest Destiny and the inevitability of America's domination of a large part of the continent, it is an ironic fact of history that Woodville's scenes of life in the American West were painted while he lived in Europe. Born in Baltimore, Woodville left for Europe as a young man to train in Düsseldorf, Germany, and remained abroad until his death in London at the age of 30.

Additional resources:

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

A lithograph of this painting, at the Smithsonian

American Scenes of Everyday Life on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.5.6: George Caleb Bingham, Country Politician

by **EMILY JENNINGS, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY PROGRAMS, FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

Page ID
165485



George Caleb Bingham, *Country Politician*, 1849, oil on canvas, 51.8 x 61cm (Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco). Speakers: Emily Jennings, Director of School and Family Programs, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and Steven Zucker A Seeing America video

Additional resources:

This work at The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

American Scenes of Everyday Life, on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.5.7: George Caleb Bingham, The County Election

- by **BANK OF AMERICA**

Page ID

180246



The County Election by Missouri's best-known artist, George Caleb Bingham, is one of a series of three paintings donated by Bank of America that are all valuable records of American history. Today, 170 years after the painting was created, we as a nation continue to grapple with the questions it raises about the fundamental tenets of democracy and the artist's fervent belief that the people, with all their failings, should be the ones to decide critical issues. Learn more about this masterpiece with Min Jung Kim, Barbara B. Taylor Director of the Saint Louis Art Museum.

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4.5.8: Frederic Church, The Natural Bridge, Virginia

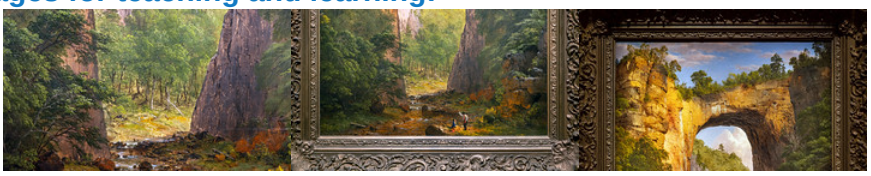
by TYLER GREEN and DR. BETH HARRIS

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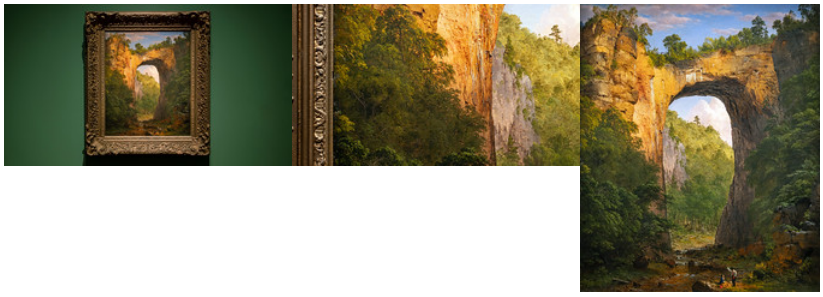


Frederic Church, *The Natural Bridge, Virginia*, 1852, oil on canvas, 28 x 23 inches (The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia)

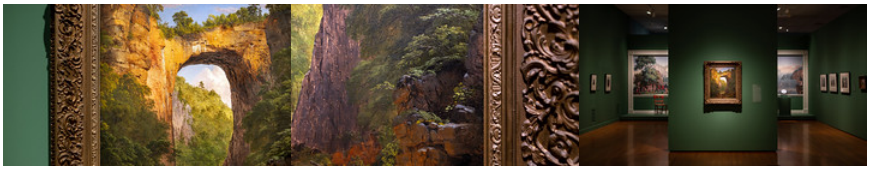
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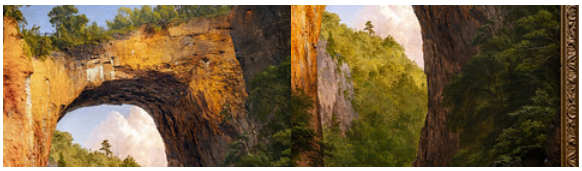
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4.5.9: Blythe, Justice

by **EMILY JENNINGS, DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL AND FAMILY PROGRAMS, FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID
165487



David Gilmour Blythe, *Justice*, c. 1860, oil on canvas, 51.1 x 61.3 cm (Fine Art Museums of San Francisco)

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4.5.10: Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown

by DR. LAUREN PALMOR, FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID

165488

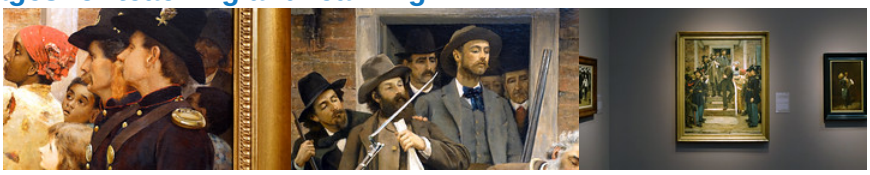


Thomas Hovenden, *The Last Moments of John Brown*, c. 1884, oil on canvas, 117.2 x 96.8 cm (de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco) A Seeing America video

Additional resources

This painting at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

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4.5.11: Eastman Johnson, A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves

by SCOTT MESTAN and DR. BRYAN ZYGMONT

Page ID
165489



Eastman Johnson, *A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves*, c. 1862, oil on paperboard, 55.8 x 66.4 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

At the time of the Civil War

Today, Eastman Johnson is most well known for the small genre paintings he completed during the middle of the nineteenth century. In several of these images—*Old Kentucky Home–Negro Life in the South* (1859) is a good example—Johnson focused on the status of race in the United States right about the time of the American Civil War. If this was the first painting he completed that centered attention on the issues of slavery and race in America, then *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* is perhaps a just as famous second.



Figure **4.5.11.1**: Eastman Johnson, *Old Kentucky Home—Negro Life at the South*, 1859, oil on canvas, 36 x 45.25 inches (New York Historical Society)

Slaves crossing the battlefield

In *A Ride for Liberty*, Johnson recreates an event commonly seen during the American Civil War, that of slaves crossing battlefields from the Confederate South to the Union North in order to escape the horrors of their bondage. In this painting, Johnson depicts three African Americans—presumably a family consisting of a father, mother, and small child— on horseback. The horse gallops

from right to left across the nearly barren battlefield. Each family member looks in a different direction. The father, ahead to the promise of the future, the wife looks back to the hardships of the past, while the child stares downwards at the excitement of the present.



Figure 4.5.11.2: Family (detail), Eastman Johnson, *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves*, c. 1862, oil on paper board, 55.8 x 66.4 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

A comparison

In addition to the directions of their gazes, the placement of the figures on the canvas has importance. Previous artists often depicted African Americans on the edge of the composition as if to marginalize their importance. William Sidney Mount's *The Power of Music* (1847) is but one example. In contrast, Johnson chose instead to focus the composition on the African Americans and their dramatic escape to the free North. The sympathetic depiction and the year in which it was painted—1862—strongly speaks to this image being one that visually speaks to the Union causes in the American Civil War, and more specifically to the abolition of slavery.



Figure 4.5.11.3: William Sidney Mount, *The Power of Music*, 1847, oil on canvas, 67 x 78 cm (The Cleveland Museum of Art)

Seen firsthand

Moreover, Johnson later claimed that this panting was not an artistic flight of fancy, but was instead an accurate rendering of something he saw firsthand. The event he depicted happened on 2 March 1862 on the battlefield in Manassas, Virginia. In the left background, Johnson recreated the Union army, then under the command of General McClellan. As McClellan marched southward, slaves often fled to cross his Union lines and secure their freedom.



Figure **4.5.11.4**: Union army in the background (detail), Eastman Johnson, *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves*, c. 1862, oil on paper board, 55.8 x 66.4 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

White socks?

On close examination, further details emerge. During the time period surrounding the Civil War, horses were often characterized by the number of "white socks" they had. It was then believed that the fewer the number of white socks, the greater a horse's value. Indeed, during the middle of the nineteenth century horse traders believed there was a direct relationship between the amount of white on a horse's lower limbs and its stamina. Thus, a horse having only one—or more preferably, none at all—white sock would increase its potential value. When applying this to Johnson's painting, we can observe that the horse the soon-to-be-free slaves ride has only one white sock, and it is a small one at that. This indicates—for the nineteenth-century viewer, at least—that the horse has been stolen in this noble cause was both valuable and of good breeding.

From Maine to Dusseldorf

Without doubt, Johnson's life experiences impacted the subjects he aspired to paint. He was born in Lovell, Maine—a free state, of course—and later moved to Washington, D.C., a locale with both free and slave populations. Johnson's formal artistic education began at the age of sixteen when he was apprenticed with a Boston lithographer. In 1845, Johnson moved to the nation's capital and began completing portraits, demonstrating nearly equal skill in chalk, crayon, and charcoal. The fact that Johnson could support himself from his art without extensive formal instruction at such an early age is a profound testament to his innate artistic skill.

Since colonial times, artists from North America have traveled abroad in search of artistic instruction. During the 18th century, for example, American artists traveled to London to study in the studio of Benjamin West. John Vanderlyn broke this trend by travelling to Paris and studying at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. During the middle of the nineteenth century, however, artists began to travel further east into the continent in search of innovative artistic instruction. In 1849 Johnson joined other international artists in Germany to study at the Düsseldorf Akademie, an institution that specialized in instruction in genre and landscape painting. During his two-year stay in Germany, Johnson became acquainted with Emanuel Leutze, and both painted small genre paintings. After his tenure at the Düsseldorf Akademie, Johnson continued his international studies at The Hague for three years. His deep admiration and emulation of Dutch painters earned him the nickname of "American Rembrandt."

A sympathetic treatment

However, the subject matter of the Dutch Rembrandt and the American Rembrandt were clearly very different. Indeed, Eastman Johnson's *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slaves* is different from much of the art seen even in antebellum United States. The artistic focus on African Americans during the Civil War was not completely new—Winslow Homer's art from the early 1860s comes to mind—but Eastman's sympathetic treatment was relatively rare. Rather than pushing African Americans to the border of the composition, Johnson instead focuses the composition on their plight. In all, this composition forcefully and clearly speaks to the abolition of slavery and the Union cause in the American Civil War. As such, *A Ride for Liberty—The Fugitive Slave*, maintains a justifiable position in the history of American art.

Additional resources:

[This painting in the Brooklyn Museum]

[American Scenes of Everyday Life in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History]

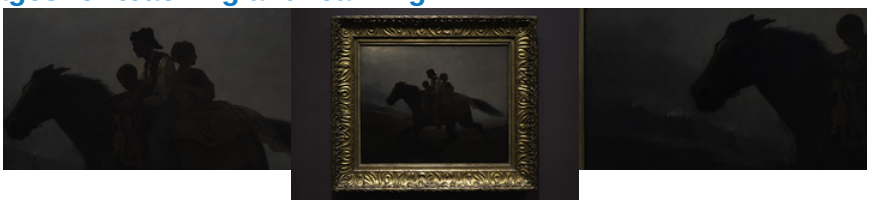
[Photographs of African Americans during the Civil War at the Library of Congress]

[John Davis, "Eastman Johnson's Negro Life in the South and Urban Slavery in Washington D.C." *Art Bulletin*, March 1998]

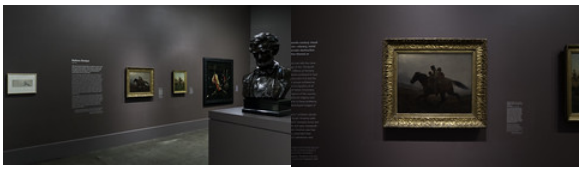
[Eastman Johnson Papers in the Archives of American Art]

[Eastman Johnson in the Google Art Project]

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4.5.12: Lilly Martin Spencer, The Home of the Red, White, and Blue

by TAYLOR L. POULIN and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
165490



Lilly Martin Spencer, *The Home of the Red, White, and Blue*, c. 1867–68, oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches (Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2007.1), a Seeing America video Speakers: Taylor Poulin, Assistant Curator, Terra Foundation for American Art, and Beth Harris

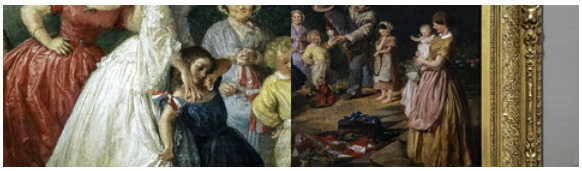
Additional resources

This painting in the collection of the Terra Foundation of American Art

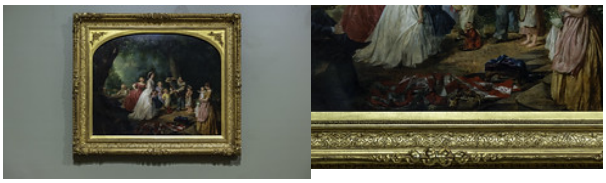
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4.5.13: Samuel Colman, Jr., Ships Unloading, New York

by DR. PETER JOHN BROWNLEE, CURATOR, TERRA FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART and STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID
165491



Samuel Colman, Jr., *Ships Unloading, New York*, 1868, oil on canvas mounted on board, 105 x 76 cm (The Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1984.4), a Seeing America video Speakers: Dr. Peter John Brownlee, Curator, Terra Foundation for American Art and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

This painting at the Terra Foundation for American Art

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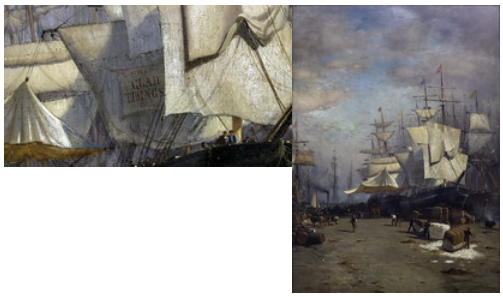
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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.5.14: Thomas Eakins

4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)

4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub

4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic

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4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull)

by **MEG FLORYAN**

Page ID
165493



Figure **4.5.14.1.1**: Thomas Eakins, *The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt In A Single Scull)*, 1871, oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 46 1/4″ (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

More often than not, an art museum is designed to inspire quiet contemplation, encouraging visitors to stand before a painting and reflect on a work's gravity and significance. In these somewhat contradictory private-moments-in-public-settings, many elevate these meditations to a more personal level, relating to the artwork within their own frameworks of experience and aesthetic taste. For these individuals, *The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt In A Single Scull)* serves almost as a mirror, reflecting back a portrait of a man engaged in a similar state of introspection. At its heart, the charm of the painting is the very mood it evokes, one that is tranquil, still, even solemn. Its dimensions are not grandiose (roughly 2.5 by 4 feet), and neither is its atmosphere; this is a calm, placid painting.

The scene's air of quietude could not be more at odds with its true subject matter, as it was meant to commemorate an athlete's impressive victory in a physically taxing amateur rower's race. The artist, Thomas Eakins, chose to portray the local hero not in the height of physical exertion, but instead in an anti-dramatic moment of rest during a late afternoon practice session. A Philadelphia native, Eakins completed *The Champion Single Sculls* upon return to his hometown after studying abroad in Paris, Madrid, and Seville. Blending the influences of his French tutors, Jean-Léon Gérôme and Léon Bonnat, as well as the work of the Spanish Baroque artist, Diego Velázquez, Eakins developed a unique style that was extremely labor-intensive and aspired to a high degree of truth to nature.



Figure 4.5.14.1.2: Self-portrait (detail), Thomas Eakins, *The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt In A Single Scull)*, 1871, oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 46 1/4″ (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The Champion Single Sculls is ultimately a snapshot of Eakins, his environment, and his times. Utilizing the Philadelphia-area Schuylkill River as his backdrop (a landmark he would indirectly visit again in his 1877 portrait of William Rush), Eakins is domesticating an exotic genre, that of Orientalist river scenes by artists such as Gérôme and Frederick Arthur Bridgman. As for the painting's subject, Max Schmitt was a personal friend of Eakins', and the artist included his own self-portrait as a rower in the composition's middle ground.

The theme of rowing plays into Eakins' own love of sports and his tendency toward masculine themes, as well as the contemporary interest in the moral virtues and health benefits of outdoor recreational activities. In an era in which American printmakers were just beginning to take up the rowing craze and memorialize victorious single scullers as gentlemen and regional heroes, Eakins produced nineteen such rowing images.

The Champion Single Sculls debuted to mixed reviews, with one critic noting the "scattered effect" of "dealing so boldly and broadly with the commonplace in nature." Nevertheless, it marked Eakins' first major success by demonstrating his remarkable technical skill. It also exhibits the artist's quirky sense of humor: instead of inscribing his signature in the painting's corner, Eakins subtly included his name and the date on the boat he is shown rowing in the distance.

Additional resources:

This painting at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Americans in Paris – from The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Eakins Rowing Pictures

Eakins letters in the collection of the Archive of American Art (Smithsonian Institution)

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4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub

- by **BANK OF AMERICA**

Page ID

165494



Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (The Gross Clinic) by Thomas Eakins is an oil-on-canvas portrait on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The painting portrays Dr. Samuel D. Gross, one of the most famous surgeons in the world at the time, leading a clinic for medical students while operating on a patient. Eakins completed the painting in 1875 for the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, but was rejected by the Fine Arts Gallery jury, evidently because it was considered too frightening. Discover how it came to be recognized as one of America's greatest paintings with Timothy Rub, Former Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic

by **MEG FLORYAN**

Page ID
165495



Thomas Eakins,
Portrait of Dr. Samuel D. Gross (The Gross Clinic)
, 1875, oil on canvas, 243.8 x 198.1 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art) and Thomas Eakins,
The Agnew Clinic
, 1889, oil on canvas, 214 cm × 300 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art). Speakers: Dr. Kathleen A Foster and Dr. Beth Harris

Thomas Eakins's deep connection to his birthplace remained a theme throughout his career. Perhaps his most well-known and ambitious work for the city of Philadelphia is *The Gross Clinic*, a painting completed in 1875 that spotlights the local physician Samuel David Gross.

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Figure **4.5.14.3.1**: Thomas Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, 1875, oil on canvas (Philadelphia Museum of Art & the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts)

Always a portraitist



Figure **4.5.14.3.2**: Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, 1632, oil on canvas, 169.5 x 216.5 cm, (Mauritshuis, Den Haag)

The scene depicts Gross overseeing a surgery and lecturing to a class of medical students—evoking Rembrandt's art historical precedent *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp* (1632). Much like Rembrandt's version, *The Gross Clinic* documents medical sanitary procedures of its time, but the painting's real focus are living figures. Always a portraitist, Eakins calculated the work as a visual record of all the individuals present in the medical amphitheater.



Figure **4.5.14.3.3**: Dr. Gross (detail), Thomas Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, 1875, oil on canvas (Philadelphia Museum of Art & the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts)



Figure 4.5.14.3.4: Self-portrait (detail), Thomas Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, 1875, oil on canvas (Philadelphia Museum of Art & the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts)

It is not solely a portrait of Dr. Gross; in addition to including the students and the assistants, Eakins inserted his own likeness among the audience – he's the figure at the far right, sketching (one might consider Eakins the Alfred Hitchcock of nineteenth-century American painting). The core of the work is still Dr. Gross, however, as light and composition conspire to attract the eye to the esteemed lecturer.

Completed for the Centennial Exposition, Eakins intended *The Gross Clinic* as a statement of his artistic skill and as a way in which to affirm himself as a hero of Philadelphia. Though the work was rejected, the tactic was overall a success. While some critics lashed out against its gruesome subject matter, seemingly vulgar treatment, and inherent melodrama (note the near-swooning, hysterical woman in the left middle ground), viewers were nonetheless captivated by the work's theatricality. Through his mastery of rendering convincing volume, individual representation, and psychological intensity, Eakins showcases his academic training and—in a style that has been dubbed "scientific realism"—reveals an uncompromising desire to portray honest details of form, depth, and proportion. He was obsessed with accuracy, and was known to project photographs onto canvases in order to laboriously trace figures though also to shift objects for a more harmoniously composed scene.

A Philadelphia painting



Figure 4.5.14.3.5: T*homas Eakins, The Agnew Clinic, 1889, oil on canvas, 214 cm × 300 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art)*

After *The Gross Clinic's* exhibition at the U.S. Army Post Hospital—in a first-aid room meant to introduce viewers to modern medical paraphernalia—the Jefferson Medical College (where Eakins himself had taken anatomy classes) was given the painting

by an alumni. A reproduction now hangs in the school, which sold the original in 2006. The work was considered so central to the history of Philadelphia, however, that the city's two major art museums successfully rallied support to keep the tour de force in town with an ambitious fundraising effort that proved the work's enduring value and underscored the fact that cultural artifacts can ignite complex debates. In closing, it should be noted that *The Gross Clinic* is not the only such medical scene Eakins produced. He later returned to the same popular formula to honor the surgeon David Hayes Agnew in a similarly composed (and equally controversial) work entitled *The Agnew Clini*c (1889), also on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Essay by Meg Floryan

Additional resources:

This painting at the Philadelphia Museum of Art

The Gross Clinic at Jefferson University

The Philadephia Museum of Art's Conservation Project

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.5.15: Winslow Homer

4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer

4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters

4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher

4.5.15.4: The Life Line

4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing)

4.5.15.6: Northeaster

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4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer

by **DR. KIMBERLY KUTZ ELLIOTT** and **SARAH ALVAREZ**

Page ID
165497



Winslow Homer, “The Army of the Potomac—A Sharpshooter on Picket Duty,” 1862, wood engraving, illustration in *Harper’s Weekly* (November 15, 1862, Smithsonian American Art Museum) A conversation between Sarah Alvarez and Dr. Kimberly Kutz Elliott

Additional resources

Learn about how printing worked in this period in Victorian Illustrators: From Sketch to Print

Explore the Winslow Homer Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Read about News and the Civil War at the American Antiquarian Society

Discover how Homer’s work for *Harper’s Weekly* helped shape his later career as a painter

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4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters

- by **DR. CHRISTOPHER OLIVER** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

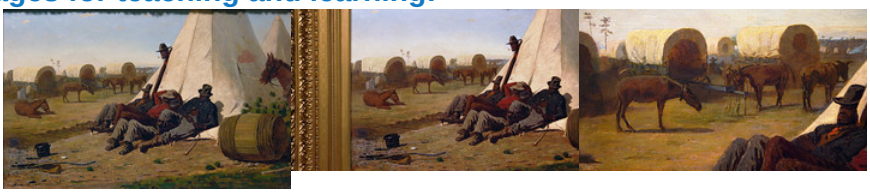
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Winslow Homer, *Army Teamsters*, 1866, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 72.39 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond)

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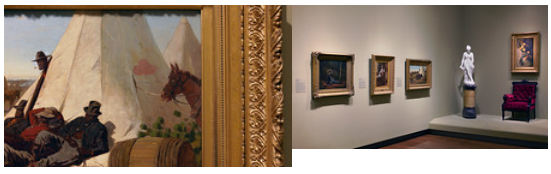
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2022, https://smarthistory.org/winslow-homer-army-teamsters/..

4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher

by DR. JEFFREY RICHMOND-MOLL and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
165499



Winslow Homer, *Taking Sunflower to Teacher*, 1875, watercolor on paper, 7-5/8 x 6-3/16 inches (Georgia Museum of Art)

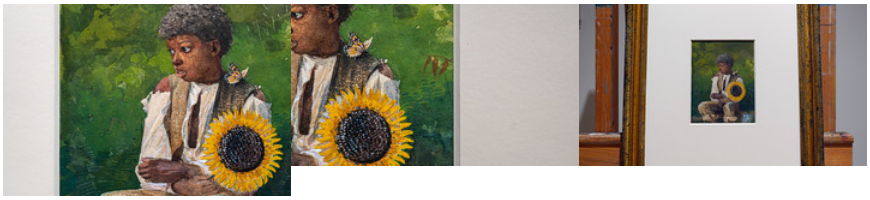
Additional resources

This painting at the Georgia Museum of Art

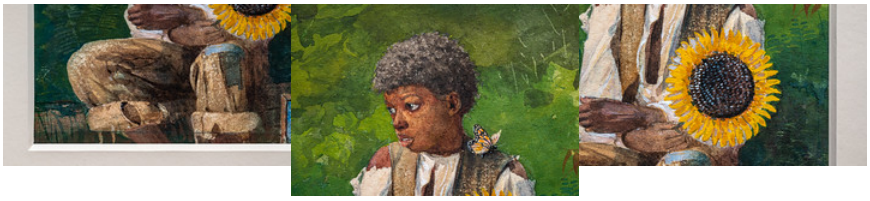
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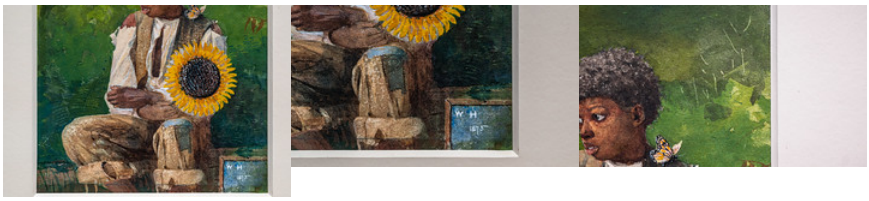
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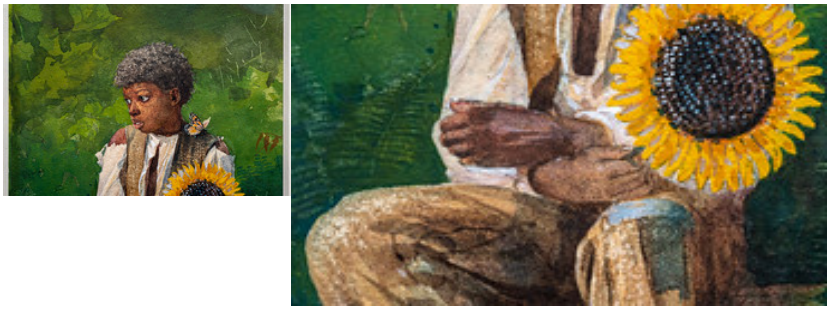
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4.5.15.4: The Life Line

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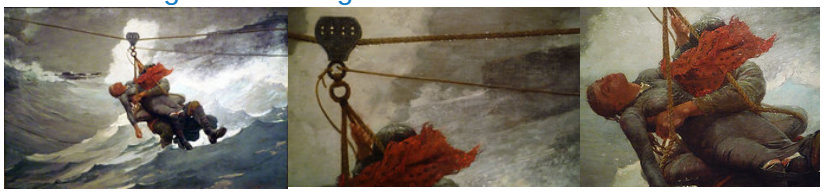
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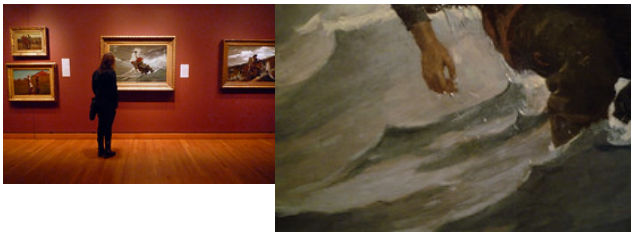


Video 4.5.15.4.1: Winslow Homer, *The Life Line*, 1884, oil on canvas, 28-5/8 x 44-3/4 inches / 72.7 x 113.7 cm (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

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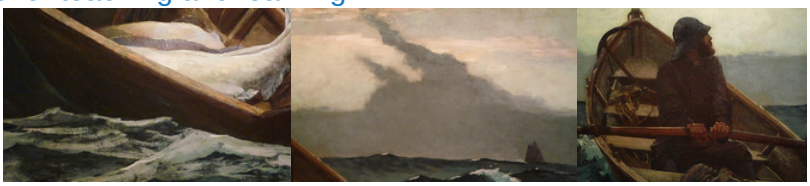
4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing)

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Video 4.5.15.5.1: Winslow Homer, *The Fog Warning* (or *Halibut Fishing*), 1885, oil on canvas, 30-1/4 x 48-1/2 inches / 76.83 x 123.19 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

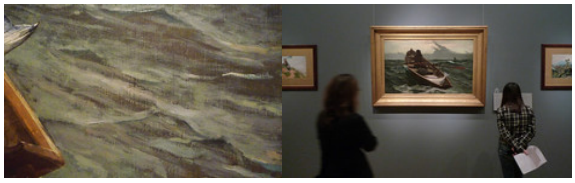
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4.5.15.6: Northeaster

Page ID

165502



Video **4.5.15.6.1**: Winslow Homer, *Northeaster*, 1895, reworked by 1901, oil on canvas, 34 1/2 x 50″ / 87.6 x 127 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Video from **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**. Speaker: Met curator H. Barbara Weinberg.

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4.5.16: Grafton Tyler Brown, View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

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Figure **4.5.16.1**: Grafton Tyler Brown, *View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1890, oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 20 1/8″ / 76.9 x 51.2 cm. (Smithsonian American Art Museum)



Figure **4.5.16.2**: Theodore Roosevelt in Yellowstone National Park, c. 1903 (NPS Photo)

In May of 1903, the twenty-sixth President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, made a visit to the state of Arizona as a part of his Western tour across the country during the first term of his presidency. He had come expressly to see the Grand Canyon, a natural wonder not only particular to America, but to the world one of the nation's crowning glories. In a speech delivered at the canyon on May 6, Roosevelt eloquently articulated what would become the defining mission statement of the conservation movement in America throughout the twentieth century:

> ***"In the Grand Canyon, Arizona has a natural wonder which, so far as I know, is in kind absolutely unparalleled throughout the rest of the world. I want to ask you to do one thing in connection with it in your own interest and in the interest of the country to keep this great wonder of nature as it now is…Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is to keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as***

> ***one of the great sights which every American, if he can travel at all, should see."***
> ***(Theodore Roosevelt, Grand Canyon Speech, May 6, 1903)***

"Leave it as it is." A straightforward plea, but one that was intended to caution a society that had been zealous in its need for industrialization and Westward expansion throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century at the expense of dwindling natural resources.



Figure **4.5.16.3**: Grafton Tyler Brown in his studio, c. 1880 (photo: Smithsonian Institution Archives)

The 1890 painting above of the falls of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone by Grafton Tyler Brown exemplifies the sentiment behind Roosevelt's impassioned speech even as it depicts a different Grand Canyon, the one found at Yellowstone in Wyoming, not Arizona. Grafton Brown, the first African American artist to paint extensive scenes of the West and Pacific Northwest, understood implicitly that he was painting a view of a rare natural monument to preserve for posterity.

When Grafton Brown came to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, the park was officially only 18 years old (President Ulysses Grant had signed its status into law on March 1, 1872). Brown had settled in Portland, Oregon in 1866 after a prolific career as a lithographer and cartographer in San Francisco in the 1860s, nearly a decade after the heady days of the California gold rush. In 1890, Brown traveled to Yosemite and Yellowstone to paint its signature features, its geysers, mountains, canyons, and falls, for audiences who were hungry for the curiosities and wonders of the West.



Figure **4.5.16.4**: Grafton Tyler Brown, *Old Faithful Geyser, Yellowstone National Park*, 1887, oil on canvas, 22 x 3″ / 55.9 x 76.2 cm (Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas)



Figure \(\PageIndex{5\): Tourists at the Grand Geyser, Yellowstone, c. 1912 (photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

The opening of the Northern Pacific Railway in 1883, which linked the states of the Great Lakes to the West towards Montana, facilitated a surge in tourism and travel to the newly appropriated National Parks. When Rudyard Kipling visited Yellowstone in 1889, he wrote in his journals that he encountered "The Wonderland" one has only read about in books. On gazing at the splendor of the falls at the Yellowstone's Grand Canyon, Kipling, recounted his awe:

"All I can say is without warning or preparation, I looked into a gulf 1,700 feet deep with eagles and fish hawks circling far below. The sides of that gulf were one wild welter of color—crimson, emerald, cobalt, ochre, amber, honey splashed with port wine, snow white, vermillion, lemon, and silver gray in wide washes. So far below that no sound of its strife could reach us. Now I know what it is to sit enthroned amid the clouds of sunset."

It is this view that Grafton Tyler Brown shows us in his 1890 painting of the falls. Brown focuses the central image at an upward right angle looking down towards the falls and the canyon so that the viewer experiences a sense of being engulfed in the upward rising of the red cliffs and the surging blue spray. The grandeur and majesty described by Kipling is conveyed in Brown's image through the careful play of dark and light, as the sun spreads across the top half of the falls and canyon in a diagonal sweep covering the pines and the bridge on the left in shadow. Though Brown's image of the falls emphasizes their dramatic beauty, it is different from the familiar paintings of the West's mountains and canyons by artists like Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran with their overt religious symbolism and deeply scaled, dramatic use of light.



Figure **4.5.16.6**: Albert Bierstadt, *Yosemite Valley*, 1868, oil on canvas, 91.44 × 137.16 cm / 36 × 54″ (Oakland Museum of California)

Brown's background as a lithographer and cartographer inclined him towards rendering a more scientific, de-romanticized image of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. The skills that Brown had learned as a cartographer and draftsman in San Francisco in the 1860s gave him an analytical eye with which to draw and paint the Grand Canyon with precision and clarity free from religious or sentimental associations.



Figure 4.5.16.7: Grafton Tyler Brown, *View of Yosemite Valley*, 1886, oil on canvas, 29 3/4 x 17 1/2″ / 75.6 x 44.5 cm (Brooklyn Museum)

Throughout the late nineteenth century, there was palpable anxiety felt by many across America that the country's vast natural resources were being irrevocably diminished and destroyed as the nation industrialized and expanded Westward. The United States census of 1890 contended that with each passing year the development in the name of progress was "redeeming wilderness by the hand of man."* As railroads stretched across the country, Native Americans were systemically driven from their homelands and forced onto reservations. The once vast bison herds were being hunted, forests cut for pasture, and the once abundant passenger pigeon was driven to extinction. The bountiful American Eden seemed to be vanishing. It wouldn't be until the late nineteenth century with the pioneering efforts of conservationists like John Muir, George Bird Grinnell, and Theodore Roosevelt, that Americans would become concerned with safeguarding their land and wildlife.



Figure 4.5.16.8: Buffalo soldiers in the 24th Infantry carrying out patrol duties in Yosemite, c. 1899 (Yosemite Research Library)

Though Grafton Tyler Brown was the first black painter to devote himself to depicting scenes of the Pacific Northwest and the West, the history of African Americans within the National Park system is a rich and varied one. Between 1891 and 1913, the soldiers of the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry, the Buffalo Soldiers, were assigned with protecting Yosemite National Park and Sequoia National Park from poachers and timber thieves. Not only did these first park rangers face the routine challenge of having to assert their authority against those who refused to recognize the protected status of the park's trees and wildlife, but the added burden of racism—so endemic at the time in post-Reconstruction era America—put the Buffalo Soldiers in a dangerous position.

Brown was often the subject of commonplace racial prejudice in San Francisco during the 1860s, a somewhat boisterous coastal boom-town in the aftermath of the Gold Rush that was filled with transplanted Southerners and Midwesterners. Due to his mixed race background, he was often referred to as a "mulatto" or "quadroon," meaning that he perhaps had three Caucasian grandparents. Living and working in the West with its semi-lawless frontier towns and pockets of intolerance must have been a

challenging and emotionally trying experience for a sensitive, educated Eastern-born son of a freedman, but Brown's prolific body of work in the thirty years after he moved to San Francisco exemplify his remarkable talent and endurance as an artist.

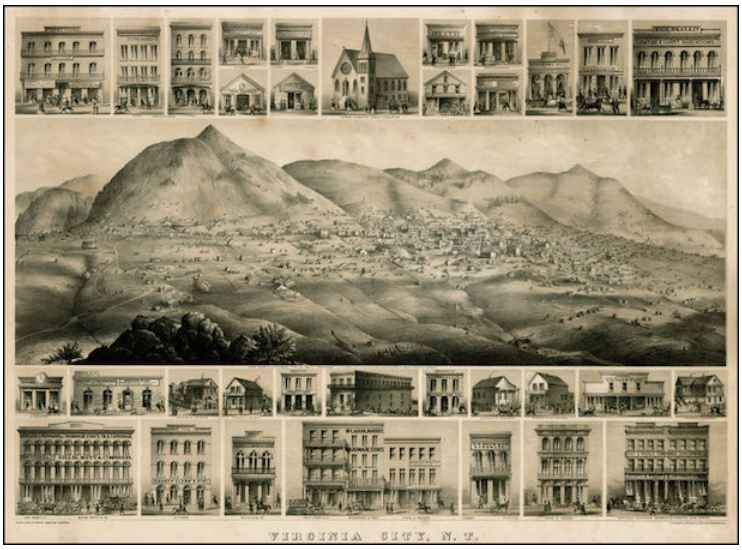


Figure **4.5.16.9**: Grafton Tyler Brown, Map of Virginia City, Nevada Territory, c. 1864, published by the C.C. Kuchel Company in San Francisco

By 1893, Brown had settled in St. Paul, Minnesota where he began work as a cartographer and consultant with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the city's engineering department. He would remain in Minnesota until his death in 1918.

Grafton Tyler Brown's career showcases the astonishing efforts of an extraordinary, yet sadly, relatively ignored artist who persevered despite the racial intolerance of the late nineteenth century to forge a fascinating body of work that painstakingly documents the beauty of America's western landscapes.

* As quoted by Dayton Duncan, "George Melendez Wright and the National Park Idea," **National Park Service Centennial Essay Series**

Additional resources:

Robert J. Chandler, *San Francisco Lithographer: African American Artist Grafton Tyler Brown* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., *African-American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1865-1945* (Routledge, 2004).

William Loren Katz, *The Black West: A Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States* (Touchstone, 1996).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.6: Western art

4.6.1: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

4.6.2: The end of an era- Remington's The Fall of the Cowboy

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4.6.1: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

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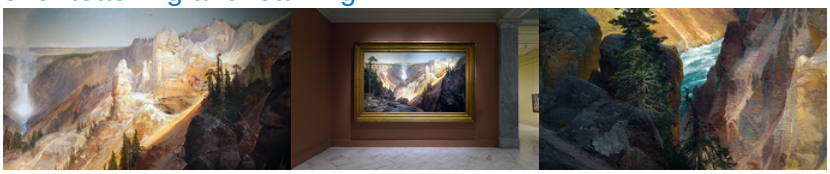
Video **4.6.1.1**: Thomas Moran, *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas mounted on aluminum, 213 x 266.3 cm (Smithsonian American Art Museum) Speakers: Dr. Eleanor Jones Harvey, Senior Curator, Smithsonian American Art Museum and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources

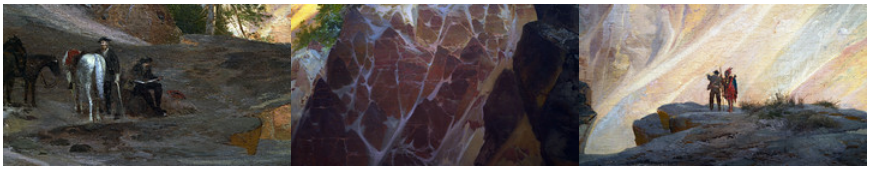
This painting at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone – American Experience in the Classroom (The Smithsonian American Art Museum)

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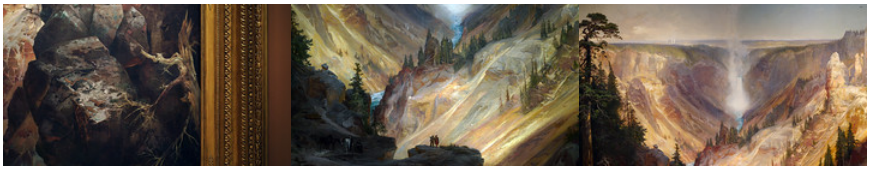
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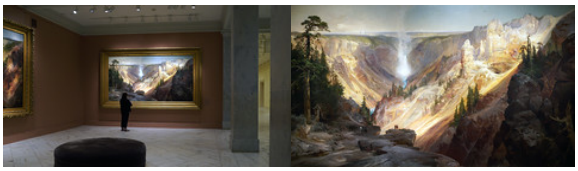
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4.6.2: The end of an era- Remington's The Fall of the Cowboy

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Video 4.6.2.1: Frederic Remington, *The Fall of the Cowboy*, 1895, oil on canvas, 24 x 35 1/8 inches (Amon Carter Museum of American Art), a *Seeing America* video Speakers: Sara Klein, Teacher and School Programs Manager, Amon Carter Museum of American Art and Steven Zucker

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.7: Aestheticism and the Gilded Age

Though American, both Whistler and Sargent worked and exhibited in Europe. Their patrons were often the wealthy industrialists who characterized the Gilded Age.

c. 1862 - 1900

4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler

- 4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl
- 4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket

4.7.2: John Singer Sargent

- 4.7.2.1: El Jaleo
- 4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit
- 4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)
- 4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose
- 4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent

4.7.3: Childe Hassam

- 4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square
- 4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler

4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl

4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket

This page titled 4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Smarthistory.

4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl

- Radical portraiture

Page ID

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Figure 4.7.1.1.1: James Abbott McNeil Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1862, oil on canvas, 213 x 107.9 cm (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.)

The woman in white stands facing us, her long hair loose, framing her face. Her expression is blank, her surroundings indistinct; posed before some sort of pallid curtain, she appears almost as an immobile prop on a stage.

Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl epitomizes James Abbott McNeill Whistler's departure from the established norms of the era, and was perhaps his most reviled work. When he submitted it to the 1863 Paris Salon, the jury rejected the painting and the artist instead showed *The White Girl* at Napoleon III's exhibition of snubbed artwork, the Salon des Refusés. Though it certainly defied many time-honored artistic conventions and earned much derision from critics, *The White Girl* does show some echoes of older standards. After all, its creator had studied under Marc-Charles Gabriel Gleyre in Paris, learning to paint in the academic manner – thus it is unsurprising that in the representation of his mistress, Joanna Hiffernan, Whistler opts for the customary full-scale society portrait format, and reproduces her features in a seemingly realistic and honest fashion.

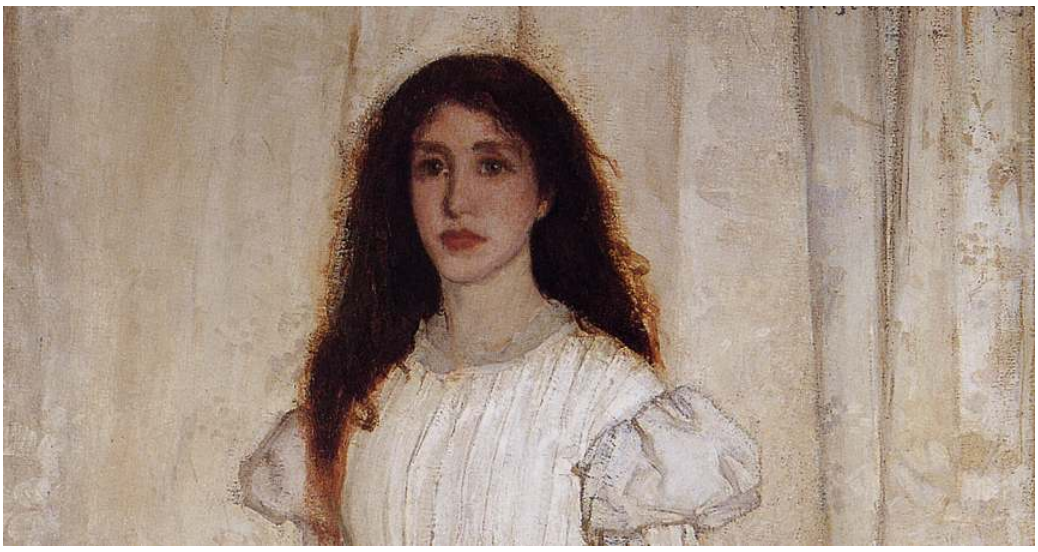


Figure 4.7.1.1.2: Detail, James Abbott McNeil Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1862, oil on canvas, 213 x 107.9 cm (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.)

The ways in which Whistler follows his own rules, however, far outnumber the few examples of accord, and they include the painting's flattened and abstracted forms, distorted perspective, limited color palette, and penchant for decorative patterning.

Though an intimate portrait, The White Girl is contrived and reveals no overarching mood or the personality of its sitter. While many of Whistler's stylistic innovations are unique to the artist, he associated himself with other artists – such as Édouard Manet and Gustave Courbet, who also defied the traditions of academicism. The influence of Théophile Gautier is also apparent; in the 1830s, Gautier stated that art need not contain any moral message or describe any narrative, as art making is an end in and of itself – Whistler accepted this credo, "art for art's sake," wholeheartedly. In this light, The White Girl is less a faithful portrait painting and more an experimentation in color, pattern, and texture.



Figure **4.7.1.1.3**: Detail, James Abbott McNeil Whistler, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1862, oil on canvas, 213 x 107.9 cm (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.)



Figure **4.7.1.1.4**: James Abbott McNeil Whistler, *Arrangement in Flesh Color and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret*, 1883, oil on canvas, 193.4 x 90.8 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Whistler produced many portraits of similar format in the next decades, and continued to fine-tune his style and technique. In paintings such as *Harmony in Gray and Green: Cecily Alexander* (1872-74) and *Arrangement in Flesh Color and Black: Portrait of Théodore Duret* (1883), the artist exercised his need to balance the realist components of a picture with its more abstract needs, cherry-picking elements from the real world and reorganizing them in controlled, harmonious ways. Often these images feature a subdued palette, a lack of depth, unresolved backdrops, and irrational props that serve only as accents. His figures typically stand upon an unthinkably flat floor, appearing almost to hover like specters. As for Whistler's signature, it evolved to take the form of a butterfly, applied to the surface in the manner of a mere decorative element.

Despite the controversy stirred when he entered the scene, Whistler won many wealthy and prestigious patrons over his career, and his portraits stand as testaments to growing interest in the radical new avant-garde approach to painting.

Additional resources:

This painting at the National Gallery of Art

Sound Cloud on this painting

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4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket

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Figure **4.7.1.2.1**: James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1875, oil on panel, 60.2 x 46.7 cm (Detroit Institute of the Arts)

A personal interpretation

One might say that for some artworks, seeing beyond the artist's intention to form a more indefinite, personal interpretation is, ironically, the creator's ultimate objective after all. Much like Alice stepping tentatively through the two-dimensional plane of the looking glass into the possibilities beyond, the viewer is invited to deduce his own meaning, to form his own associations, thus essentially taking part in the creative process itself. While ambiguity is standard in the conceptual contemporary pieces of today, what mattered most in early American art was what could be read on the surface: narrative clarity, illusionistic detail, realism, and straightforward moral instruction. When did things change? Perhaps, it seems, around the time avant-garde artists began to pursue abstraction, flirt with modernism, and challenge the aesthetic standards of the past.

Consider *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* of 1875. In the mass of shadowy dark hues, vague wandering figures, and splashes of brilliant color, museum-goers might construe myriad meanings from the same scene: perhaps sparks from a blazing campfire, flickering Japanese lanterns, or visions of far-off galaxies mystically appearing on a clear summer night. Indeed, while the Massachusetts-born artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) was inspired by a specific event (a fireworks display over London's Cremorne Gardens) the intangibility, both in appearance and theme, of the oil on panel was deliberate. The questions it conjures, the emotions it evokes, may differ from one viewer to another, and frankly, that's the point.



Figure **4.7.1.2.2**: Detail, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1875, oil on panel, 60.2 x 46.7 cm (Detroit Institute of the Arts)

"flinging a pot of paint in the public's face"



Figure **4.7.1.2.3**: Detail, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1875, oil on panel, 60.2 x 46.7 cm (Detroit Institute of the Arts)

The Falling Rocket resonates with many 21st-century beholders, yet when it was first exhibited at a London gallery in 1877, detractors deemed the painting too slapdash, incomprehensible, even insulting. Art critic John Ruskin dismissed Whistler's effort as "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face," as in his opinion it contained no social value. In response, Whistler – cheeky man that he was – sued Ruskin for libel, and though he won the case in court, he was awarded only a farthing in damages. During the highly publicized trial, the artist defended his series of atmospheric "nocturnes" as artistic arrangements whose worth lay not in any imitative aspects but in their basis in transcendent ideals of harmony and beauty.

Music

Whistler saw his paintings as musical compositions illustrated visually, and delineated this idea is his famed "Ten O'Clock" lecture of 1885:

> ***Nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music. But the artist is born to pick and choose… that the result may be beautiful – as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos glorious harmony.***



Figure **4.7.1.2.4**: Detail, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1875, oil on panel, 60.2 x 46.7 cm (Detroit Institute of the Arts)

Many of his titles incorporate allusions to music: “nocturnes,” “symphonies,” “arrangements,” and “harmonies.” The immaterial, the spiritual – these principles are subtly interwoven throughout Whistler’s oeuvre, and he preached his ideas on the new religion of art throughout his career.

Additional resources:

This painting at the Detroit Institute of Arts

Exhibition titled Whistler and His Followers at the Detroit Institute of Arts

Whistler Nocturnes at the Tate Britain

This page titled 4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Meg Floryan, "Whistler, Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket," in SmartHistory, August 9, 2015, accessed November 17, 2020, https://SmartHistory.org/whistler-nocturne-in-black-and-gold-the-falling-rocket/..

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.7.2: John Singer Sargent

4.7.2.1: El Jaleo

4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit

4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)

4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose

4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent

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4.7.2.1: El Jaleo

Page ID
165513

El Jaleo is housed within the quirky Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, a Gilded Age art collection that serves as a window into the eponymous collector's life and unique aesthetic taste. In order to view the painting, you must pass by the sunlit faux-Venetian courtyard and into the shadows of the first floor's Spanish Cloister. Here *El Jaleo* hangs at the end of a long hallway, its immense size (over 7 by 11½ feet) almost fully covering the far wall of a dark niche. Its mildly claustrophobic and somewhat out-of-the-way physical location lends the striking oil on canvas one of the most intimate settings for a work of art on display in an American museum.



Figure **4.7.2.1.1**: John Singer Sargent, *El Jaleo*, 1882, oil on canvas, 232 x 348 cm (Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston)

The raw passion of the dance

The scene portrayed is a dynamic one: a group of musicians provides the rhythm for a lone flamenco dancer who performs for an audience of clapping listeners. It is a snapshot of a specific point in time: the apex of the dance, a moment rife with energy and sensual drama. The footlights cast haunting silhouettes on the rear wall; the raw passion of the dance is palpable. The stark contrasts between murky shadow and dazzling illumination allow the painting to visually pop – a phrase that is often used in describing art but rarely so aptly. Due to the loose, frothy brushstrokes, there isn't the sense of a true illusionary space, yet the light (and hence the vitality) of the scene seems to emanate outward from within the work, as though *El Jaleo* commands a life of its own.

American, but born and studied abroad

El Jaleo's precocious artist, John Singer Sargent, painted the artwork in 1882 at the young age of 26. Both the painting and its creator are evocative of the times, reflective of the nineteenth-century American fascination with, and inherent dependence upon, foreign cultures for both technical training and artistic inspiration.



Figure **4.7.2.1.2**: John Singer Sargent, *La Carmencita*, 1890, oil on canvas, 229 x 14 cm. (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

Though labeled an American artist, Sargent was actually born in Florence to a Philadelphia family and traveled throughout his youth and career. In the late 1800s this type of background became the rule rather than the exception, with expatriate Americans taking advantage of the more accessible education opportunities abroad. Beyond the official state écoles (schools), private Parisian ateliers (studios) led by renowned artists offered instruction to admitted American students; Sargent studied under one such teacher, Charles Émile Auguste Durand, aka Carolus-Duran. The competitive annual salons (exhibitions) were another draw for foreign-born artists and these venues could win a painting great critical acclaim, as did the Paris Salon of 1882 for *El Jaleo*.

It was not uncommon for works at the salons to depict exotic subject matter, and Sargent's admiration for Spanish music and culture was a continuing theme throughout his career, notably resurrected for this 1890 portrait *La Carmencita* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris).

Additional resources:

This painting at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

John Singer Sargent at The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

America Comes of Age at The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

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4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit

Page ID

165514



Figure **4.7.2.2.1**: John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882, oil on canvas, 221.93 x 222.57 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Another painting exhibited at the Paris Salon and designed to showcase Sargent's talent was *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, a commissioned life-sized group portrait of a wealthy Bostonian's four daughters posed within the foyer of the family's Parisian apartment. The girls have highly individualized representations, each bestowed her own unique position, though they do not interact. Again Sargent reveals interest in the interplay of light and shadow, of clarity and obscurity. The treatment is uncannily beautiful, though somewhat unsettling: breaking with conventional portraiture, one of the girl's faces isn't even visible to the beholder, and the asymmetrical composition, the inclusion of empty space, and the isolation of the figures all add to the sense of quiet unease. As with *El Jaleo*, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* certainly succeeds in evoking a particular mood.



Figure **4.7.2.2.2**: Child in foreground (detail), John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882, oil on canvas, 221.93 x 222.57 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

Influence of Velásquez

Sargent's style is a clear testament to his artistic training. His instructor Carolus-Duran encouraged students to study the work of seventeenth-century Spanish master Diego Velázquez, and here Sargent produces a modern reimagining of Velázquez's famed ***Las Meninas*** of 1656. Unlike the tightly polished and refined brushwork of contemporaries such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, Sargent

preferred a painterly approach more akin to the Spanish Baroque. Sargent carried this brushier style into other works as well, including Impressionistic landscapes and outdoor watercolor experiments.



Figure **4.7.2.2.3**: Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656, oil on canvas, 318 x 276 cm (Museo del Prado, Madrid)



Figure **4.7.2.2.4**: Detail, John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882, oil on canvas, 221.93 x 222.57 cm (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

The vases

It should be mentioned that the two oversize Japanese porcelain vases pictured in the apartment were also donated by the Boit family to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and are exhibited beside Sargent's painting. This is a noteworthy stroke of luck that provides a rare opportunity for the viewer to more fully immerse himself in the scene portrayed, to transcend the boundary between the world captured in the art and the historical foundation on which it was based.

Additional resources:

This painting at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Video of the painting's visit to the Museo National del Prado

Sargent's letters at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art

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2020, SmartHistory.org/sargent-the-daughters-of-edward-darley-boit/..

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4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)

Page ID

165515



Figure **4.7.2.3.1**: John Singer Sargent, *Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)*, 1883-84, oil on canvas, 82-1/8 x 43-1/4″ (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

A controversial beauty

Madame X is perhaps Sargent's most infamous painting. When it debuted at the Paris Salon of 1884, critics lashed out at the artist for what they deemed a scandalous, immoral image. While the title omitted the sitter's name, the public immediately recognized her as the notorious Parisian beauty Virginie Gautreau. The gown's plunging neckline was considered too provocative for the times, and its right strap – which originally was shown to have slipped off the shoulder – ultimately led to Sargent repainting it in its proper position to appease outraged viewers and Gautreau's own family.

Madame X mixes the Gilded Age penchant for portraying status and wealth in portraiture with a daring seductive aesthetic. For all that it shocked onlookers, however, much of its details were based in older classical traditions: Madame Gautreau's hairstyle is based on one of ancient Greece, and she wears a diamond crescent that is the symbol of the huntress Diana.

A reputation secured

John Singer Sargent intended the portrait to establish his reputation, and despite the notoriety it attracted, the work did succeed: *Madame X* advertised his ability to paint his sitters in the most flattering and fashionable manner possible, and led to a healthy career in Britain and great esteem in America from the late 1880s onward. Though he was born oversees, traveled worldwide, and spent much of his life abroad, Sargent's career truly matured in his family's native land, and he always considered himself an American artist. He toiled for nearly three decades on a mural commission for the Boston Public Library, he frequently painted fellow American expatriates, and in 1906 he was appointed full academician of the National Academy of Design in New York.



Figure 4.7.2.3.2: Detail, John Singer Sargent, *Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)*, 1883-84, oil on canvas, 82-1/8 x 43-1/4″ (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

In 1916 the Metropolitan Museum of Art bought *Madame X*, which Sargent considered “the best thing I have done.” The painting —which debuted to severe disparagement but is today treasured as a masterpiece beloved in the history of Western art—is but one example of an artwork that gradually evolved from epitomizing the condemned to the celebrated. Much of a work’s initial reception is based upon society’s tastes, standards of etiquette, and values of the era, and as these attitudes shift over the decades, the public may begin to look at older paintings with new eyes. Sargent’s *Madame X* is perhaps a more dramatic example of this trend, yet it poses intriguing questions about what really defines an artwork’s popularity, legacy, and fame.

Additional resources:

This painting at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

About Madame X on The Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Madame XXX (The Guardian)

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4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose

Page ID
165516



Video **4.7.2.4.1**: John Singer Sargent, *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*, 1885-86, oil on canvas, 1740 x 1537 mm (Tate Britain, London), speakers Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker



Figure **4.7.2.4.1**: John Singer Sargent, *Carnation Lily, Lily, Rose*, 1885–86, oil on canvas, 174 x 153.7 cm (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, Tate Britain)

> ***Shepherds tell me have you seen,***
> ***Have you seen my Flora pass this way?***
> ***A wreath around her head, around her head she wore,***
> ***Carnation, lily, lily, rose,…***

The chorus of a popular song by composer Joseph Mazzinghi was the inspiration for the title of John Singer Sargent's painting *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose*. In Sargent's hands, however, the pastoral images of the song have been banished, replaced by an evocative twilight scene of children, flowers, and Chinese lanterns. The muted light and colors, unusual angles, and the lack of narrative content combine to create a beautifully rendered moment, capturing the fleeting atmosphere of dusk and the innocence of childhood.



Figure **4.7.2.4.2**: John Singer Sargent, *Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau)*, 1883–84, oil on canvas, 82-1/8 x 43-1/4 inches (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose was painted in the English village of Broadway. The artist had moved to London after leaving France due to the scandal caused by his painting ***Madame X***, which was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1884. Sargent's striking female portrait was the subject of enormous controversy due to the plunging neckline of her dress and the fact that originally one strap had been hanging off her shoulder (this was later repainted firmly in its correct place). Although the sitter, Virginie Gautreau, a fellow expatriate American who had married a French banker, was not explicitly identified, audiences recognized the likeness as well as her habit of using lavender dusting powder. Rumors of Gautreau's infidelities were rampant, so the risqué portrait added fuel to the fire, for both artist and sitter.

For several years after his move to England, Sargent spent his summers in Broadway, a picturesque village in the Cotswolds, which was also the site of a thriving artist's colony in the late 19th century. Both English and American artists and writers congregated there, and Sargent joined an expatriate community including such notables as Frank Millet, Edwin Austin Abbey and the writer Henry James. According to James in an article published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1889, "Broadway and much of the land about it are in short the perfection of the old English rural tradition," and here Sargent found both acceptance and inspiration for his work.



Figure 4.7.2.4.3: Parish church, Broadway, seen from the Cotswold Way (photo: Michael Dibb, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Sargent got the idea for the painting in August of 1885 after seeing a group of children among flowers and Chinese lanterns hung among trees in the village of Pangbourne in Berkshire. He spent more than a year trying to bring his vision to fruition. In letters, he pointed out that he was hindered from completing the painting in September because it was the end of the flowering season. Taking no chances, when he returned to Broadway to finish the painting in the summer of 1886, he had a friend grow lilies in pots to extend his available time for working on the painting.



Figure 4.7.2.4.4: Left: John Singer Sargent, *Lily*, Study for "Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose," 1885–86, graphite, pen, and ink on off-white wove paper, 34.4 x 24.6 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York); right: John Singer Sargent, *Carnation Lily, Lily, Rose*, detail, 1885–86, oil on canvas, 174 x 153.7 cm (Tate Britain)

In addition to the problem of maintaining blossoms, Sargent was plagued by other issues. His original intent for the composition was to use one younger child, but he was eventually forced to select little girls who were a bit older and able to pose as required. White dresses for the girls were specially designed. Most importantly, the painting was completed “en plein air” to get the correct effect of light, but given the fleeting nature of light at dusk, he could only paint for a few minutes each day.



Figure 4.7.2.4.5: John Singer Sargent, *Carnation Lily, Lily, Rose*, detail, 1885–86, oil on canvas, 174 x 153.7 cm (photo: Steven Zucker, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, Tate Britain)

However, the effort that went into *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* proved worthwhile. The painting was well received by both audiences and critics when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887 and was immediately purchased for the British nation by the Chantrey Bequest, a fund established by sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey to acquire works of art made in England. The subtle effects of light illuminating the faces of the little girls, the subtly sketchy brushwork, the unusual angle looking down at the children (taken from the influence of **Japanese prints**), and the attention to capturing the momentary changes of twilight all speak to Sargent’s modernity.



Figure **4.7.2.4.6**: John Singer Sargent, *Carnation Lily, Lily, Rose*, detail showing the colors of dusk, 1885–86, oil on canvas, 174 x 153.7 cm (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, Tate Britain)

Sargent's painting is a combination of several radical ideas found in the art of the end of the 19th century. Like **Impressionism**, it captures a distinct moment. In an instant, the children could move, or the light change and the spell would be broken. It is worth pointing out that Sargent was friends with **Claude Monet** and had in fact been invited to exhibit with the Impressionist group, an honor he declined. The picture is also firmly associated with the **Aesthetic Movement**, with its insistence on beautiful subjects and a lack of narrative content. Like the song that inspired its title, the painting reminds the viewer of a simpler time, creating a quietly beautiful snapshot of a bygone era.



Figure **4.7.2.4.7**: John Singer Sargent, *Carnation Lily, Lily, Rose*, 1885–86, oil on canvas, 174 x 153.7 cm (photo: **Steven Zucker**, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, Tate Britain)

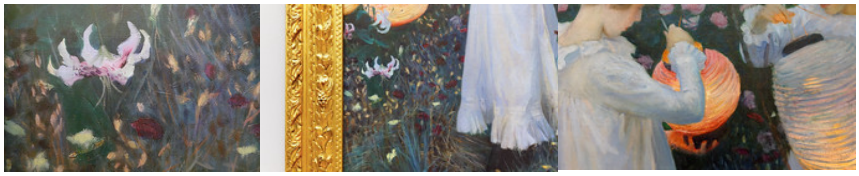
Additional resources

This painting at Tate Britain

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



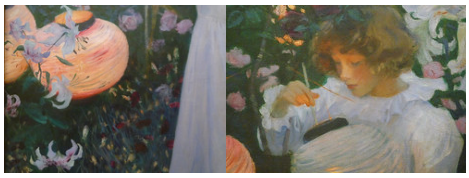
Click on image for larger picture (External link to flickr)



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4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent

- by **THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART**

Page ID

165517



The Artist Project is an online series in which artists respond to works of art in The Met's encyclopedic collection. **http://artistproject.metmuseum.org/1/kehinde-wiley/**

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.7.3: Childe Hassam

4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square

4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago

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4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square

- by **BANK OF AMERICA**

Page ID

165519



Though perhaps best known for his flag-draped depictions of Fifth Avenue during WWI, Childe Hassam was an industrious artist who produced numerous scenes of both city and countryside. His work *Snowstorm, Madison Square* is a masterpiece because it shows Hassam's skillful incorporation of French Impressionist techniques into a fully American urban scene, while foreshadowing the social progress to come. Learn more about this work with Christopher Bedford, the Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

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4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago



Video **4.7.3.2.1**: Childe Hassam, *Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago*, 1893, oil on canvas 18-1/2 x 26-1/4 inches / 47.0 x 66.7 cm (Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1999.67), a Seeing America video. Speakers: Dr. Katherine Bourguignon, Curator, Terra Foundation for American Art, and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources

This painting at the Terra Foundation for American Art

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.8: Photography

4.8.1: Carleton Watkins

4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River

4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins

4.8.2: Timothy O'Sullivan

4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death

4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle

4.8.3: Jacob Riis, "Knee-Pants" at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater's Shop, from How the Other Half Lives

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.8.1: Carleton Watkins

4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River

4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins

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4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River

Page ID

165523



Video **4.8.1.1.1**: Carleton E. Watkins, *Eagle Creek, Columbia River*, 1867, albumen silver print, 40.01 × 52.39 cm (LACMA)

Business or pleasure? Carlton Watkins could photograph both beautifully.

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4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins

- by **SFMOMA**

Page ID

165524



In the 1860s Carleton Watkins loaded a team of mules with his mammoth-plate camera and glass negatives and ventured into Yosemite Valley. The pictures he made there helped lay the foundation for American landscape photography, before the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 destroyed much of his life's work. Delve into the extraordinary tale of an artist nearly obliterated from history.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.8.2: Timothy O’Sullivan

4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death

4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle

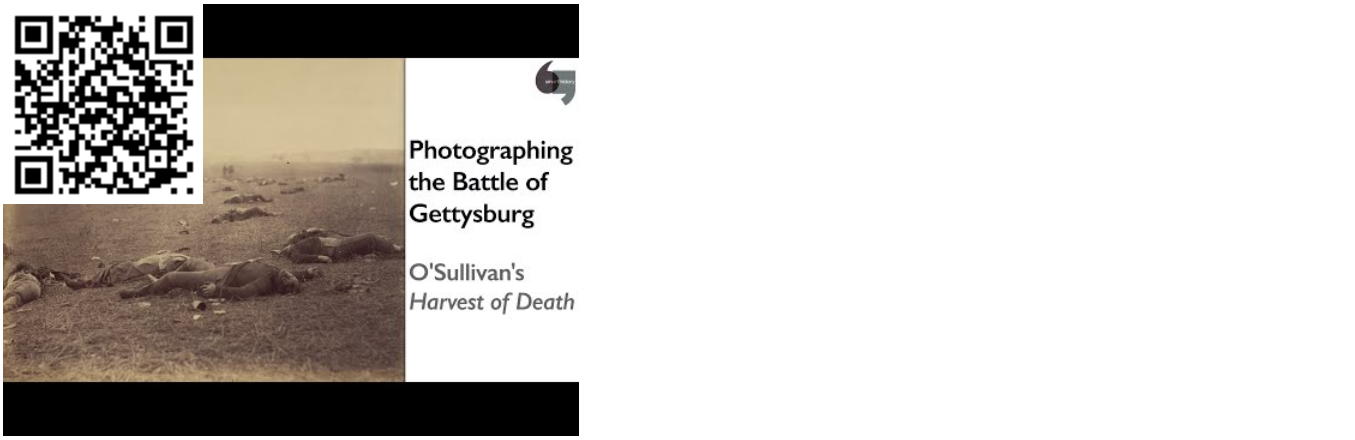
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4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death

- One of the most famous landscape photographs showing the horrible aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Page ID

165526



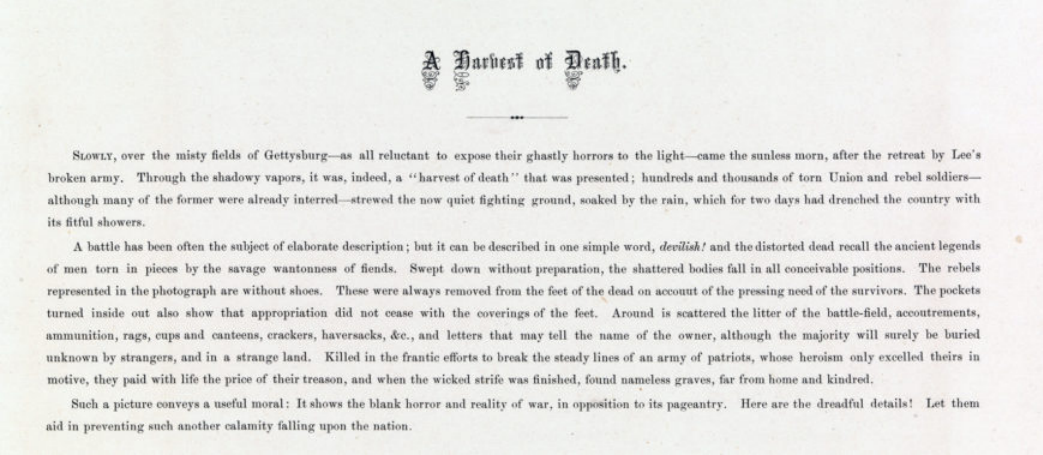
Timothy O'Sullivan, *A Harvest of Death*, 1863, albumen print, 17.2 × 22.5 cm, illustration in Alexander *Gardner's Photographic Sketchbook of the War*, 1866 (Library of Congress); a conversation between Dr. Kimberly Kutz Elliott and Dr. Steven Zucker

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Important concepts

- war photography
- collodion process
- The Civil War and the Battle of Gettysburg

This photograph was included in *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War* (1866). Each photograph had a lengthy caption that explained what was captured in each scene.



A Harvest of Death.

Slowly, over the misty fields of Gettysburg—as all reluctant to expose their ghastly horrors to the light—came the sunless morn, after the retreat by Lee's broken army. Through the shadowy vapors, it was, indeed, a "harvest of death" that was presented; hundreds and thousands of torn Union and rebel soldiers—although many of the former were already interred—strewed the now quiet fighting ground, soaked by the rain, which for two days had drenched the country with its fitful showers.

A battle has been often the subject of elaborate description; but it can be described in one simple word, *devilish!* and the distorted dead recall the ancient legends of men torn in pieces by the savage wantonness of fiends. Swept down without preparation, the shattered bodies fall in all conceivable positions. The rebels represented in the photograph are without shoes. These were always removed from the feet of the dead on account of the pressing need of the survivors. The pockets turned inside out also show that appropriation did not cease with the coverings of the feet. Around is scattered the litter of the battle-field, accoutrements, ammunition, rags, cups and canteens, crackers, haversacks, &c., and letters that may tell the name of the owner, although the majority will surely be buried unknown by strangers, and in a strange land. Killed in the frantic efforts to break the steady lines of an army of patriots, whose heroism only excelled theirs in motive, they paid with life the price of their treason, and when the wicked strife was finished, found nameless graves, far from home and kindred.

Such a picture conveys a useful moral: It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry. Here are the dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity falling upon the nation.

Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War, 1866 (**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**)

For the "Harvest of Death" photo the caption read: "It was, indeed, a 'harvest of death.' . . . Such a picture conveys a useful moral: It shows the blank horror and reality of war, in opposition to its pageantry. Here are the dreadful details! Let them aid in preventing such another calamity falling upon the nation."

Additional resources

The Gettysburg Address—setting and context, with Dr. Kimberly Kutz Elliott

The Gettysburg Address—full text and analysis, with Dr. Kimberly Kutz Elliott

See more photos from Alexander Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War at the Met

Learn more about the wet plate photography process from PBS

William A. Frassanito, *Gettysburg: A Journey in Time* (Scribner, 1975), and *Early Photography at Gettysburg* (Thomas, 1996).

D. Mark Katz, *Witness to an Era: The Life and Photographs of Alexander Gardner* (Rutledge Hill Press, 1999).

Richard S. Lowry, *The Photographer and the President: Abraham Lincoln, Alexander Gardner, and the Images that Made a Presidency* (Rizzoli, 2015).

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4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle

- Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle

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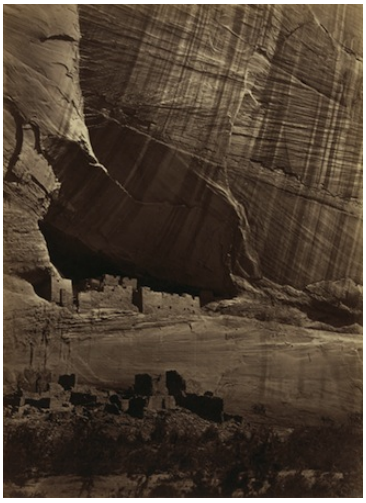


Figure 4.8.2.2.1: Timothy O'Sullivan, *Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle*, 1873, photographic albumen print, 27.5 x 20.2 cm (The J.Paul Getty Museum)

The impressive natural landscape of Timothy O'Sullivan's photograph *Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle*, 1873, immediately commands attention. The yawning black hole in the center is emphasized by the dramatic striations in the rocks, the black and white contrast of the photograph making the layers of sediment far more obvious than they would be in reality. In fact, the drama of the surrounding landscape makes it possible to almost overlook the ancient ruins at the mouth of a black cave.

Borrowing from landscape painting

Although clearly a documentary image of the scene, the photograph also employs many of the artistic conventions of landscape painting. The narrowly focused composition does not allow the viewer's eye to wander through the landscape. In fact, our vision is confined solely to the rock and the ruins, without the standard light source found in most landscape painting. However, light plays an obvious role in the play of light and dark on the rock walls. The ruins themselves, which suggest the passage of time, are so small as to emphasize the traditional Romantic interest in man's insignificance when confronted with the immensity of nature.



Figure 4.8.2.2.2: Timothy O'Sullivan, *A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania*, photographed July 5–6, 1863, Albumen silver print from glass negative, 17.8 × 22.5 cm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

The realities of war

Timothy O'Sullivan began his photographic career as an apprentice in the studio of Mathew Brady. At the start of the Civil War, he became part of Brady's team assigned to document the conflict, although O'Sullivan resigned after an argument with Brady over who was to receive credit for authorship of his photos. Many of O'Sullivan's war images have a haunting quality, for example, *A Harvest of Death* (1863), which captures a misty landscape in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania littered with corpses. At a time when standard war images consisted of portraits of soldiers in uniform and camp life, O'Sullivan's photograph is a stark reminder of the realities of the conflict.

Geological expeditions

During the late 1860s and 1870s O'Sullivan traveled west several times photographing as part of various geological survey teams. The difficulties of these trips must have been huge, carrying men and equipment through the wilderness in wagons and small boats. O'Sullivan himself nearly drowned on an early expedition when he was thrown from a boat and carried down stream by rapids before finally making his way to shore. Managing his personal equipment must have also been a challenge. Photographs at the time were exposed on large glass plates, and understandably, many of O'Sullivan's images simply didn't make it home.

In 1873 O'Sullivan himself led a group to explore the rock formations and long abandoned archaeological remains found in Arizona around the Canyon de Chelly. The ancient pueblos in the photograph were built by the Anasazi or Navajo for "ancient ones." Although O'Sullivan was one of the first to capture this impressive scene, many others have followed in his footsteps, including the legendary twentieth-century landscape photographer Ansel Adams. The Canyon de Chelly became a National Monument in 1931 and is today jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Navajo Nation.

Additional resources:

Timothy O'Sullivan at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Timothy O'Sullivan at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Margaret Regan, "The life of Timothy H. O'Sullivan," *Tucson Weekly*, March 13 2003

Canyon de Chelly National Monument

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4.8.3: Jacob Riis, “Knee-Pants” at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater’s Shop, from How the Other Half Lives



Figure **4.8.3.1**: Jacob August Riis, *“Knee-pants” at forty five cents a dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater’s Shop*, c. 1890, 7 x 6″, from *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1890 (The Museum of the City of New York)

The slums of New York

Jacob Riis documented the slums of New York, what he deemed the world of the “other half,” teeming with immigrants, disease, and abuse. A police reporter and social reformer, Riis became intimately familiar with the perils of tenement living and sought to draw attention to the horrendous conditions. Between 1888 and 1892, he photographed the streets, people, and tenement apartments he encountered, using the vivid black and white slides to accompany his lectures and influential text, *How the Other Half Lives*, published in 1890 by Scribner’s. His powerful images brought public attention to urban conditions, helping to propel a national debate over what American working and living conditions should be.

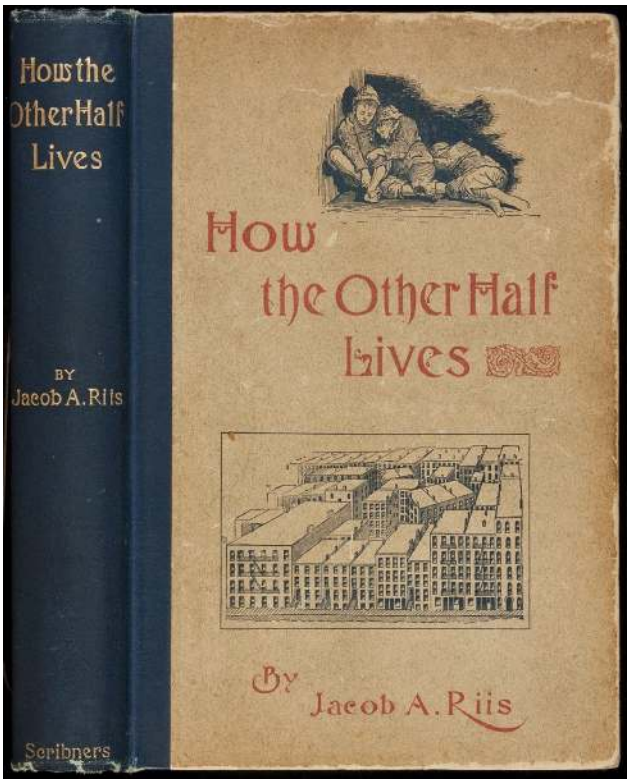


Figure **4.8.3.2**: Jacob August Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1890

A Danish immigrant, Riis arrived in America in 1870 at the age of 21, heartbroken from the rejection of his marriage proposal to Elisabeth Gjørtz. Riis initially struggled to get by, working as a carpenter and at various odd jobs before gaining a footing in journalism. In 1877 he became a police reporter for *The New York Tribune*, assigned to the beat of New York City's Lower East Side. Riis believed his personal struggle as an immigrant who "reached New York with just one cent in my pocket"[1] shaped his involvement in reform efforts to alleviate the suffering he witnessed.

As a police reporter, Riis had unique access to the city's slums. In the evenings, he would accompany law enforcement and members of the health department on raids of the tenements, witnessing the atrocities people suffered firsthand. Riis tried to convey the horrors to readers, but struggled to articulate the enormity of the problems through his writings. Impressed by the newly invented flash photography technique he read about, Riis began to experiment with the medium in 1888, believing that pictures would have the power to expose the tenement-house problem in a way that his textual reporting could not do alone. Indeed, the images he captured would shock the conscience of Americans.



Figure 4.8.3.3: Jacob August Riis, *The Mulberry Bend*, c. 1890, 7 x 6″, from *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1890 (The Museum of the City of New York)

Midnight rounds

At first Riis engaged the services of a photographer who would accompany him as he made his midnight rounds with the police, but ultimately dissatisfied with this arrangement, Riis purchased a box camera and learned to use it. The flash technique used a combination of explosives to achieve the light necessary to take pictures in the dark. The process was new and messy and Riis made adjustments as he went. First, he or his assistants would position the camera on a tripod and then they would ignite the mixture of magnesium flash-powder above the camera lens, causing an explosive noise, great smoke, and a blinding flash of light. Initially, Riis used a revolver to shoot cartridges containing the explosive magnesium flash-powder, but he soon discovered that showing up waving pistols set the wrong tone and substituted a frying pan for the gun, flashing the light on that instead. The process certainly terrified those in the vicinity and also proved dangerous. Riis reported setting two fires in places he visited and nearly blinding himself on one occasion.



Figure 4.8.3.4: Jacob August Riis, *"A man atop a make-shift bed that consists of a plank across two barrels,"* c. 1890, 7 x 6″, from *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1890 (The Museum of the City of New York)

Home and work

While it is unclear if Riis' pictures were totally candid or posed, his agenda of using the stark images to persuade the middle and upper classes that reform was needed is well documented. A major theme of Riis' images was the terrible conditions immigrants

lived in. In the 1890s, tenement apartments served as both homes and as garment factories. “Knee-Pants at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater’s Shop” depicts the intersection of home and work life that was typical. Note the number of people crowded together making knickers and consider their ages, gender, and role. Each worker would be paid by the piece produced and each had his/her own particular role to fill in the shop which was also a family’s home.



Figure 4.8.3.5: Detail, Jacob August Riis, *“Knee-pants” at forty five cents a dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater’s Shop*, c. 1890, 7 x 6″, from *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1890 (The Museum of the City of New York)

While Riis did not record the names of the people he photographed, he organized his book into ethnic sections, categorizing the images according to the racial and ethnic stereotypes of his age. In this regard, Riis has been criticized for both his bias and reducing those photographed to nameless victims. “Knee-Pants,” appears in the chapter Jewtown and one can assume that the individuals are part of the large wave of Eastern European Jewish migration that flooded New York at the turn of the twentieth century.

x CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VIII. PAGE

THE CHEAP LODGING-HOUSES, ... 82

CHAPTER IX.

CHINATOWN, ... 92

CHAPTER X.

JEWTOWN, ... 104

CHAPTER XI.

THE SWEATERS OF JEWTOWN, ... 120

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOHEMIANS—TENEMENT-HOUSE CIGARMAKING, . . . 136

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COLOR LINE IN NEW YORK, ... 148

Figure 4.8.3.6: Detail of the “Table of Contents,” Jacob August Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1914

They are likely conversing in Yiddish and share some type of familial or neighborly connection. Some of the workers depicted might have lived in a neighboring New York City apartment or next door back in the old country. Home life, family relations and business relations, are intertwined. Just as it is impossible to know the names of the people captured in Riis’ image, and what Riis actually thought of them, one also cannot know their own impressions of the workplace, or their hopes and day-to-day challenges.



Figure 4.8.3.7: Jacob August Riis, *"12 year old boy at work pulling threads. Had sworn certificate he was 16—owned under cross-examination to being 12. His teeth corresponded with that age,"* c. 1890, 7 x 6″, from *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1890 (The Museum of the City of New York)

The work performed in tenements like these throughout the Lower East Side made New York City the largest producer of clothing in the United States. Under the contracting system, the tenement shop would be responsible for assembling the garments, which made up the bulk of the work. By 1910, New York produced 70% of women's clothing and 40% of men's ready-made clothing. That meant that the knee-pants and garments made by the workers captured in this Ludlow Street sweatshop were shipped across the nation. Riis' photographs helped make the sweatshop a subject of a national debate and the center of a struggle between workers, owners, consumers, politicians, and social reformers.

The Progressive Era

Riis' photographs are part of a larger reform effort undertaken during the Progressive Era, that sought to address the problems of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Progressives worked under the premise that if one studies and documents a problem and proposes and tests solutions, difficulties can ultimately be solved, improving the welfare of society as a whole. Progressives like Riis, Lewis Hine, and Jessie Tarbox Beals pioneered the tradition of documentary photography, using the tool to record and publicize working and housing conditions and a renewed call for reform. These efforts ultimately led to government regulation and the passage of the 1901 Tenement House Law, which mandated new construction and sanitation regulations that improved the access to air, light, and water in all tenement buildings.



Figure 4.8.3.8: Jessie Tarbox Beals, Child on Fire Escape, c. 1918, for the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (**Columbia University Libraries**)

In the introduction to the *How the Other Half Lives*, Riis challenged his readers to confront societal ills, asking "What are you going to do about it? is the question of to-day." It was a question of the past, but one that endures.

1. Jacob Riis, *The Making of An American*, 2: 18

Additional resources:

Jacob A. Riis Photographic collection, The Museum of the City of New York

Lower East Side Tenement Museum virtual tour of the Levine family's home and sweatshop in 1897 at 97 Orchard Street, New York City

Ginia Bellafante, Discussion on *How the Other Half Lives*, *The New York Times*

Texts by Jacob Riis online bartleby.com

"Jacob Riis and the Other Half" website by Lisa Xie

Bonnie Yochelson and Daniel Czitrom, *Rediscovering Jacob Riis: Exposure Journalism and Photography in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Chicago University Press, 2014).

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.9: Sculpture and architecture

13.4.9.21: Burnham and Root

4.9.21.1: The Monadnock Building

4.9.21.2: Reliance Building

13.4.9.23: Carrère and Hastings, The New York Public Library

4.9.1: The Alamo (and Mission San Antonio de Valero)

4.9.2: Inventing America, Colt's Experimental Pocket Pistol

4.9.3: Cultures and slavery in the American south- a Face Jug from Edgefield county

4.9.4: David Drake, Double-handled jug

4.9.5: Little Round House

4.9.6: John Quincy Adams Ward, The Freedman

4.9.7: Anna Pottery, Snake jug

4.9.8: Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave

4.9.9: William Wetmore Story, Cleopatra

4.9.10: Thomas Crawford, George Washington Equestrian Monument

4.9.11: Slave Burial Ground, University of Alabama

4.9.12: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York

4.9.13: Olmsted and Vaux, Central Park

4.9.14: William Howard (attributed), Writing desk

4.9.15: Herter Brothers, Mark Hopkins House Side Chair

4.9.16: Robert Mills and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument

4.9.17: The light of democracy — examining the Statue of Liberty

4.9.18: Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause

4.9.19: Defeated, heroized, dismantled- Richmond's Robert E. Lee Monument

4.9.20: Shrady and Casey, Ulysses S. Grant Memorial

4.9.22: Louis Sullivan

13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building

4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building

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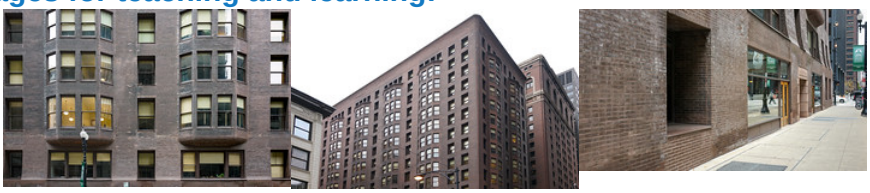
4.9.21.1: The Monadnock Building

by DR. STEVEN ZUCKER and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
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Burnham and Root, The Monadnock Building, 1885–91 and Holabird & Roche south addition (Kearsarge) 1891–93, 53 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois

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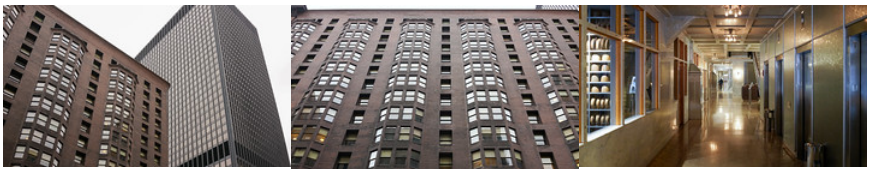
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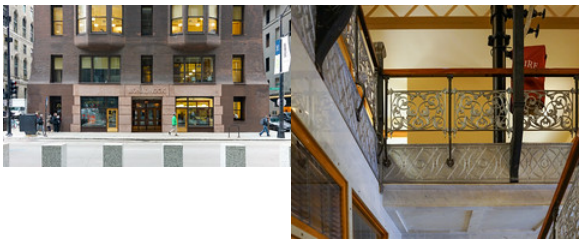
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4.9.21.2: Reliance Building

- by **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID

180337



John Wellborn Root (basement and first floor) and Charles B. Atwood (upper floors) for Burnham and Root, Reliance Building (32 N. State, 1 W. Washington, Chicago), 1895

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13.4.9.23: Carrère and Hastings, The New York Public Library

Page ID

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Figure **13.4.9.23.1**: Carrère & Hastings, The New York Public Library, 1902 and after, New York City (photo: **wallyg**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Today, the massive New York Public Library lies amidst the bustle of some of the busiest streets in the city. Along 42nd Street to the west is Times Square, a tourist mecca filled with throngs of visitors at all hours. A few blocks to the east is Grand Central Terminal, one of the city's gateways, and certainly the most elegant, built in a grandiose Beaux-Arts style almost simultaneously with the library. When construction on the library started in 1899, this area of the city had long been built up, but Fifth Avenue north of 42nd Street was still a mostly residential enclave, filled with the mansions of the newly-rich industrialists and bankers of recent generations. The tall skyscrapers that today hem in the library and the adjacent Bryant Park make the juxtaposition between the library's insistent horizontality and its towering neighbors startling. Yet the staggering difference in scale may only serve to heighten the observant visitor's appreciation for the consummate handling of details inside the library and out.



Figure **13.4.9.23.2**: Façade (detail), Carrère & Hastings, The New York Public Library, 1902 and after, New York City (photo: **endymion**, CC BY 2.0)

A new library for a major city

Officially, the name of the library is The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations. The long name resulted from a merger in 1895 between two earlier private libraries in New York, the Astor (below) and the Lenox, as well as the Samuel J. Tilden Trust, created specifically to fund a public library in New York as a major part of the former governor's philanthropic

legacy. New York City (consisting only of Manhattan until 1898) grew dramatically in the nineteenth century. In 1800, the city had a population of about 60,000; in 1890, more than 1.5 million. As a result, civic leaders and philanthropists felt that new cultural and social institutions were needed in order to provide the modern services expected of a major city, especially one with so diverse a population. Further, the two earlier libraries that joined the Tilden Trust were small and too peripherally-located to serve the needs of the new library.

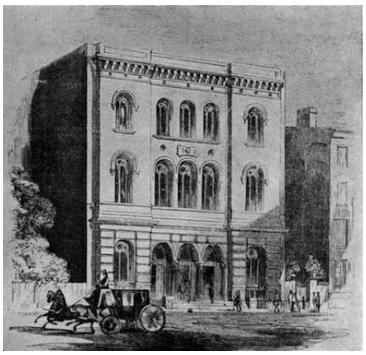


Figure **13.4.9.23.3**: Astor Library, from *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, February 25, 1854

Beginning in 1901, the main building of the New York Public Library became the center of a larger network of public libraries being built throughout the city to better reach citizens in each of its neighborhoods. Andrew Carnegie provided the funds to build the first round of these libraries, 39 in total, with the understanding that the New York Public Library would cover their future operations and maintenance. Carrère & Hastings' building on Fifth Avenue would be the administrative and symbolic center of this network.

Planning the library

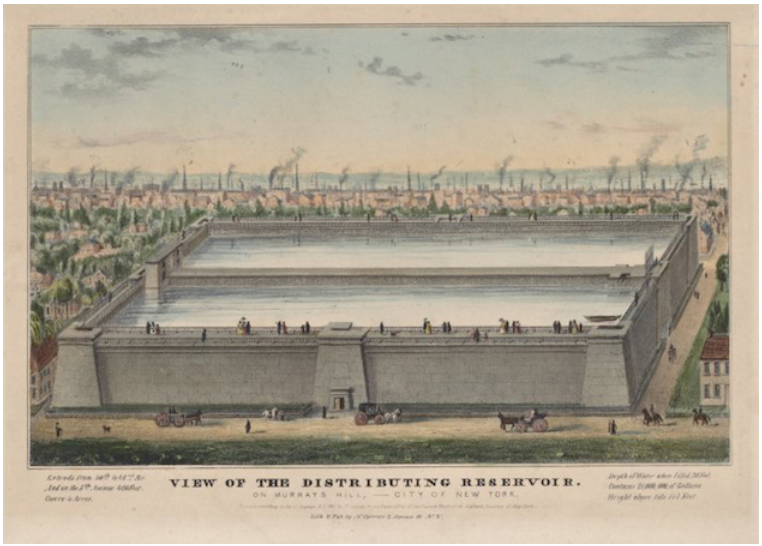


Figure **13.4.9.23.4**: Nathaniel Currier, *View of the Croton Distributing Reservoir*, 1842, lithograph

An intensive public debate surrounded the selection of the best location for the new library. Within two years, the site of the old Croton Distributing Reservoir (above), slightly to the north of the city's center at the time, had been chosen and, under the direction of the library's first president John Bigelow, a competition held to select the architect. Prior to the competition, in 1892, Bigelow and architect Ernest Flagg anticipated the library's formation and published ideal plans for the library in *Scribner's Magazine*. Flagg's drawings showed the library on the site of the reservoir, which had provided the city's water since the 1840s, but which was obsolete already in the 1880s. Although the library as built by Carrère & Hastings would be very different, Flagg's design set the parameters for a large Beaux-Arts-style building that would have a clear identity as a leading civic monument.



Figure **13.4.9.23.5**: Ernest Flagg elevation view showing the position suggested for the Tilden Library Building, Bryant Park from the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. XII, 1892, p. 291

Among the designers invited to submit plans to a closed phase of the design competition, the favorites were McKim, Mead & White, a well-established firm that had trained both John Carrère and Thomas Hastings in the early 1880s. McKim, Mead & White had recently completed the Boston Public Library, a celebrated design that for the first time made the public library a commanding monument within an American city and that provided the most direct model for New York's library.



Figure **13.4.9.23.6**: Façade, McKim, Mead, & White, Boston Public Library, 1895 and after, Boston, MA (photo: **AlexiusHoratius**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Carrère & Hastings, however, won the competition, having submitted a design that was deemed practical and monumental, functional and beautiful. Their entry prevailed over other senior architects of the day, including George B. Post, Cyrus Eidlitz, and Peabody and Stearns. Carrère & Hastings' design closely followed the competition brief, which had been drafted by the first director of the new institution, John Shaw Billings. His guidelines provided specific dimensions and set a demanding *parti*. In the French Beaux-Arts terminology that would have been familiar to architects at the time, *parti* refers to a schematic floor plan that represents a building's primary functions as a series of figural spaces and sets the parameters for the whole design. In Billings' guidelines, the library was to be a three-story building organized around a central circulation core—grand entry hall and stairs—with two courtyards and a large reading room on the third floor.



Figure 13.4.9.23.7: Front façade of The New York Public Library, December 26, 1907 (**NYPL Digital Collections**)

The location

The Croton Reservoir site was unusual in one important respect: it was a double block stretching between 40th and 42nd Streets with a large park on its western half. This small but very noticeable rift within the gridiron plan of Manhattan gave the library the great privilege of having a long frontage on Fifth Avenue with a park directly adjacent to it. This urban condition would have set apart any building at that location, but the architects took advantage of the rare opportunity afforded by the site to design a library that would make it a particularly visible landmark in the cityscape. As the architecture critic (and Progressive political theorist) Herbert Croly wrote in his review of the nearly-completed building in 1910, it was "essentially and frankly an instance of street architecture."



Figure 13.4.9.23.8: Façade of The New York Public Library along Fifth Avenue, New York, NY (photo: **Sam67fr**, CC BY 2.5)

By this, he meant that the architects had understood the importance of the broad street frontage along Fifth Avenue (above) and had adeptly configured the building to add to the variety and dignity of the streetscape. He perceptively described how the exterior "issues to the people an invitation to enter rather than a command." It was, he said, an "ingratiating rather than imposing" building. On the side facing Bryant Park (below), below the round-arched windows of the reading room, the architects introduced tall, narrow rows of windows that articulate the seven levels of structural steel and cast-iron book stacks directly behind. The striping effect of the dark windows alternating with the white Vermont marble of the wall gives the park face of the library a strikingly modern look. Croly had a lukewarm reaction to the park façade, but other critics then and since have greatly admired the design, especially the strong contrast it provides to the more conventionally Beaux-Arts Fifth Avenue front.



Figure **13.4.9.23.9**: Back of The New York Public Library facing Bryant Park, New York, NY (photo: **strangejourney**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Design elements inside and out

One of the key means by which Carrère & Hastings took advantage of the double-block site was the terrace upon which they lifted up their building from street level. The terrace not only elevates the library, symbolically exalting the public that would use it, but also helps orchestrate a carefully calibrated sequence of movements into and through the building, starting with the approach from the street. As the visitor moves up the wide, inviting stairs of the terrace on Fifth Avenue, the main façade of the library expands horizontally and completely dominates the field of vision. Carrère & Hastings designed this long façade according to the five-part French palace type (central entry or frontispiece, recessed wings, and end pavilions). The central portico (a porch supported by columns) composed of three large, arched openings with a tall sculpted attic (wall) above recalls an ancient Roman triumphal arch, a symbolic reference suggesting a ceremonial welcome into the library.



Figure **13.4.9.23.10**: Portico with “Fortitude” lion sculpture in foreground, Carrère & Hastings, The New York Public Library, 1902 and after, New York, NY (photo: **Ken Thomas**)

Once inside, the modest but exquisitely-detailed lobby splits into two stairs, which take the visitor to the functional rooms of the second floor and then further to the spacious and stately reading room on the third floor. There, the visit culminates in this surprisingly large space, split in two by the book delivery pavilion. The richly decorative Renaissance-style ceiling, with coffered (sunken) panels and luminous murals of a colorfully cloudy sky, and with the bright natural light provided by the massively-scaled

windows create an atmosphere of airy and serene openness that feels far from the bustle of the world outside, an atmosphere eminently conducive to serious study and writing.



Figure 13.4.9.23.11: Frederick MacMonnies, *Truth*, 1914-1920, marble

This sequence of spaces, so clear that no guide map is needed by the visitor, is abundantly decorated with murals and sculpture, beginning most famously with the lions reclining atop the steps outside. Designed by Edward Clark Potter, the placid but attentive lions were nicknamed Patience and Fortitude (above) by former New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia during the Great Depression. Also among the outside sculptures are the allegorical fountains by Frederick MacMonnies, embedded in the walls adjacent to the portico: *Truth* (above) to the right and *Beauty* to the left. Above the latter is an inscription from a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier that begins, “Beauty old yet ever new,” which could be taken as the motto governing the aesthetic sensibility of the architects and artists who created the library. Inside, the numerous decorations include the large murals, not begun until 1938, by Edward Laning in the McGraw Rotunda on the third floor. Depicting the *Story of the Recorded Word*, they illustrate crucial periods of development in the history of books and printing. The ceiling is covered by the vast *Prometheus Bringing the Gift of Fire*, the mythological spark to human invention and knowledge, an appropriate symbolic reference to the library’s role in bringing all the world’s knowledge within reach of the city’s residents. Many more decorative features embellish nearly every corner of the interior public spaces.



Figure 13.4.9.23.12: Edward Laning, *Prometheus Bringing the Gift of Fire, from The Story of the Recorded Word*, 1938- 1942, McGraw Rotunda, New York Public Library, New York, NY

Beaux-Arts style

As good Beaux-Arts architects, Carrère & Hastings knew how to create grandeur and drama in a building by directing movement and creating sight-lines. This ability was one of the strengths that the Beaux-Arts method of design cultivated in architects. The method also prized the study of ancient and Renaissance classical architecture. Originating at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France, Beaux-Arts architecture was prevalent in the United States from the 1880s until World War II.



Figure 13.4.9.23.13: Reed & Stem, Grand Central Terminal (Park Avenue aqueduct entrance), 1871 and after, New York, NY (photo: Beyond My Ken, CC BY-SA 4.0)

No city in the country has a greater concentration of Beaux-Arts-style buildings than New York, primarily due to the fact that many of the architects based in the city at the turn of the twentieth century, including Carrère and Hastings, had gone to Paris in order to gain a cosmopolitan education at the École. Many resident architects in New York shared the feeling that its architecture needed to reflect its new status as a major world city on par with Paris and London. The Parisian École welcomed foreigners, and its rigorous design method provided American architects with a set of skills and aesthetic ideas that helped make their practice more competent and professional. The school's reliance on historical forms chiefly drawn from the classical tradition in Italy and France enhanced the trend toward eclecticism in nineteenth-century architecture, which many critics have found problematic. However, its rigorous design methods and attention to spatial planning contributed, as in Carrère & Hastings' library, to a sense of modernity in productive dialogue with the past. Insofar as the New York Public Library is seen as a product of the École, it should be considered one of its most distinguished successes in the United States.

A special space in the city



Figure 13.4.9.23.14: Main reading room, The New York Public Library, New York, NY (photo: endymion, CC BY 2.0)

For a large part of the twentieth century, Beaux-Arts architecture was held in low esteem by many architects, critics, and even historians. Yet the New York Public Library's main building has always elicited a degree of reverence among its users—academics and other researchers, novelists and playwrights, cultural leaders and everyday citizens—who all seem to find things of special and enduring value in the building. Among these special things are, of course, its bountiful treasures: the books and documents that

constitute its reason for being. But it also provides, by means of its beautiful halls, gracious and welcoming steps, and ambiance attuned to scholarly pursuits, a temporary refuge from the harshness of the world that great libraries, large and small, have always provided. Carrère & Hastings' architectural dressing for the library has seemed to all these people, and even to the harshest critics today, to be an appropriate and enduring sign of the institution's signal importance to the intellectual and cultural life of a world metropolis.

Additional resources:

The website of The New York Public Library

Phyllis Dain, *The New York Public Library: A History of Its Founding and Early Years* (New York: New York Public Library, 1972).

A.C. David (Herbert Croly), "The New York Public Library," *Architectural Record*, September 1910, pp. 144-72.

Mark Alan Hewitt, Kate Lemos, et al. *Carrère & Hastings, Architects*. 2 vols. (New York: Acanthus Press, 2006).

Paul Andrija Ranogajec, "Apotheosis of the Public Realm: Civic Classicism in New York City's Architecture." Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 2014.

Henry Hope Reed and Francis Morrone. *The New York Public Library: The Architecture and Decoration of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

William R. Taylor and Thomas Bender, "Culture and Architecture: Some Aesthetic Tensions in the Shaping of New York," In *In Pursuit of Gotham: Culture and Commerce in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 51-67.

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4.9.1: The Alamo (and Mission San Antonio de Valero)

by **DR. LAUREN KILROY-EWBANK**

Page ID
165530



Figure **4.9.1.1**: The Alamo, formerly part of Mission San Antonio de Valero, San Antonio, Texas (photo: Daniel Schwen, CC BY-SA 4.0)

Before the Alamo

Few places in the U.S. conjure as many images and legends about heroism and nationhood as the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas. The Alamo is an icon of American identity—like Gettysburg or Pearl Harbor—and as with these equally famous historic sites, our perception of the Alamo is malleable, as are the stories it purports to tell.

The site is firmly rooted in the popular imagination, having been the subject of countless works of literature, film, prints, paintings, cartoons, postcards, and even folklore. Long before it became an emblem of U.S. history though, the Alamo had been a Spanish mission that eventually became a ruin that was “repaired, rebuilt, and redefined.” [1] Yet a single event—the battle of 1836—overshadows the Alamo’s long and complex past. Today, visitors pay reverence to the Texians who died there while fighting the Mexican General Santa Ana—not to the holy Catholic saints who once filled the building’s niches nor to the Tejanos (Mexican settlers from Texas) who also died at the Battle of the Alamo. The current representation of the Alamo as the site of patriotic heroism and brave sacrifice eclipses Spain’s earlier colonial presence and the history of the site’s ruination, reconstruction, and reframing.



Figure **4.9.1.2**: Map of the Viceroyalty of New Spain c. 1800, with Mexico City and San Antonio highlighted with red boxes

Mission San Antonio de Valero

Franciscan missionaries began to establish missions in what is today Texas beginning in the seventeenth century because this area was on the *camino real* (or royal road) that originated in the viceroyalty of New Spain's capital, Mexico City. Forty missions originally dotted the Texan landscape, but only 9 survive today. None is more well-known than Mission San Antonio de Valero (which would later become the Alamo), established in 1718 on the west bank of the San Antonio River. Like the initial missionary centers constructed after the waves of conquest after 1521 in central Mexico, the San Antonio de Valero's purpose was to convert local Indigenous people, including the Payayes, Ypanis, Xaranames, Zanas, and others. Soon after its establishment, the mission was moved across the river (to the east bank) and construction began in 1744 on a church (thought to be made of adobe) that would collapse. Construction eventually began on the stone and mortar structure that partially remains today. Adobe was a more common building material in this area, so the decision to use stone and mortar possibly associated the building with more Europeanized building practices (such as Spanish imperial buildings constructed in other parts of New Spain) and a clear deviation from local building types.



Figure **4.9.1.3**: Lower half of the entry on the façade, Alamo/Mission San Antonio de Valero (photo: Noconatom, CC BY-SA 4.0)

An account in 1772 describes the building under construction as having a transept and cross-vaulted roof, complete with a dome. This building was never completed though. Friar Sáenz, who wrote the 1772 account, describes the façade as having scalloped-shell niches with sculptures of saints Dominic and Francis in them, each framed by solomonic (twisting) columns. Dominic and Francis are patron saints of the Franciscan and Dominican orders respectively—and were representatives of broader missionary efforts of the Spanish Crown. He notes the beauty of the façade and its carvings too. Decorative relief carvings also animated the rounded arch entryway on the façade.



Figure **4.9.1.4**: Detail of the façade of the Alamo/Mission San Antonio de Valero (photo: David R. Tribble, CC BY-SA 3.0)

On the second level, St. Clare of Assisi and St. Margaret of Cortona (both female Franciscans) were to be carved and inserted into the niches (although descriptions cast doubt as to whether they ever were installed). A sculpture of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception was intended for the central niche (but was never installed). The façade was originally flanked by two towers that,

along with the barrel vault and the dome, collapsed circa 1762. Like most missions, the church was connected to a larger complex with a cloister, atrium, and more—today, only part of the church remains. The famous façade we know today was actually a chapel.

The Spanish conversion efforts involved in the missionary project in Texas, as elsewhere, involved dislocating, transforming, and converting local Indigenous communities, and the iconography of the façade may have played a role in this with its inclusion of saints associated with the evangelizing efforts of the Spanish Crown and religious orders.



Figure 4.9.1.5: An 18th-century retablo from New Spain; it is possible that the retablos that no longer exist looked something like this (albeit probably smaller). Main altar inside Santa Prisca y San Sebastián, gilded wood, plaster, Taxco, Guerrero, Mexico (photo: Javier Castañón, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Elaborate *retablos* (or altarpieces) once stood inside the mission as well. Unfortunately, they no longer remain and the sculptures once adorning them do not either (or were dispersed elsewhere without records that could tell us where they are now). Written inventories do list the images that once appeared on them. On the main altar, one apparently could have seen the Virgin of Sorrows, Saint Francis, Christ Crucified, John the Evangelist, Saint Clare, and Saint Joseph (among others). The wooden altarpiece was gilded, as was in style at the time, and retablos in churches like Santa Prisca and San Sebastián in Taxco, Mexico give us a sense of what this may have looked like.



Figure 4.9.1.6: Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, founded 1720; restored in the 1930s (photo: Shiva Shenoy, CC BY 2.0)

The remains of the façade point to the classicizing forms employed by the architects of the church, including the rounded arch of the doorway flanked by niches. It is an adaptation of a Roman triumphal arch motif, which had become popular again during the Renaissance. In essence, it looks similar to a Roman **triumphal arch** in its design, and also had associations with power and conquest. It is interesting to consider this choice and its interpretation today. While such classical language was found at other missions, this was not the *en vogue* architectural language found in New Spain's bigger and older cities, or even at other Texas missions (where ultrabaroque designs were preferred). It is possible that this more restrained, classicizing ornament was intended to call to mind visions of the early Church in its simplicity as well as its formation within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. With the initial waves of colonization, friars often modeled themselves and their built environment on the early church because they perceived it as purer and therefore more ideal.

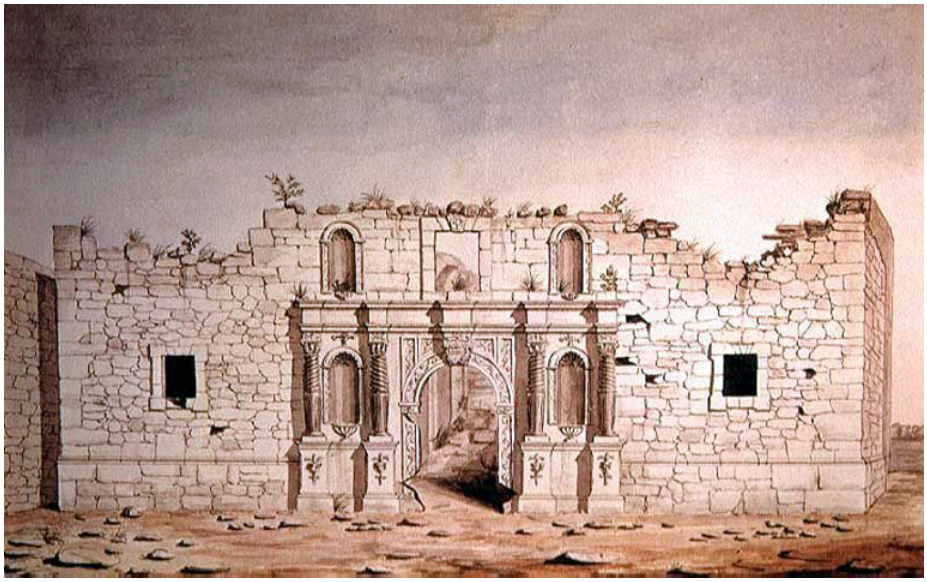


Figure 4.9.1.7: Edward Everett, *View of the Alamo church*, 1847 (Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth)

Abandonment and transformation: The mission becomes the Alamo

Mission San Antonio de Valero was abandoned in 1793 when it was secularized—the first of the Texas missions where this occurred. Its altars were removed in 1824 and this is when many of its statues were relocated or lost. Most of the mission's

structures have also been lost. As noted earlier, the Alamo's iconic façade that today graces tourist trinkets and postcards was actually the chapel attached to the larger mission church.

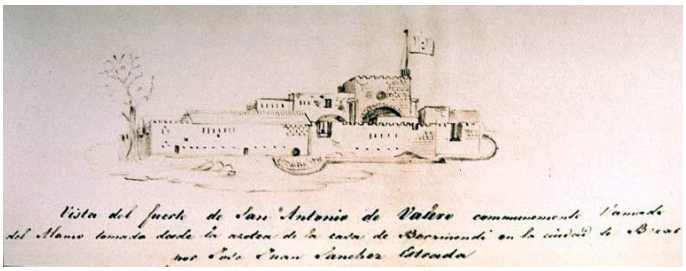


Figure 4.9.1.8: José Juan Sánchez Navarro, earliest known view of the Alamo, ca. 1835–36 (Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University)

The mission served as barracks for the Alamo Company (a military unit that came from Alamo de Parras, a town on the other side of the Rio Grande river, and which gave its name to the building we see today) and for the Mexican army until 1835, when Texians temporarily took the Alamo. It was at this moment that the famous battle involving the Mexican General Santa Ana occurred, in which Mexican troops defeated the Texians who sought independence from Mexico. The Mexican victory was brief; shortly thereafter Mexico would lose the war and Texas in the Mexican-American War. An early view of the Alamo by José Juan Sánchez Navarro shows how the artist envisioned the space as a fortified space, with turrets and tall, thick walls. It does not look like this any longer (if it ever really did).

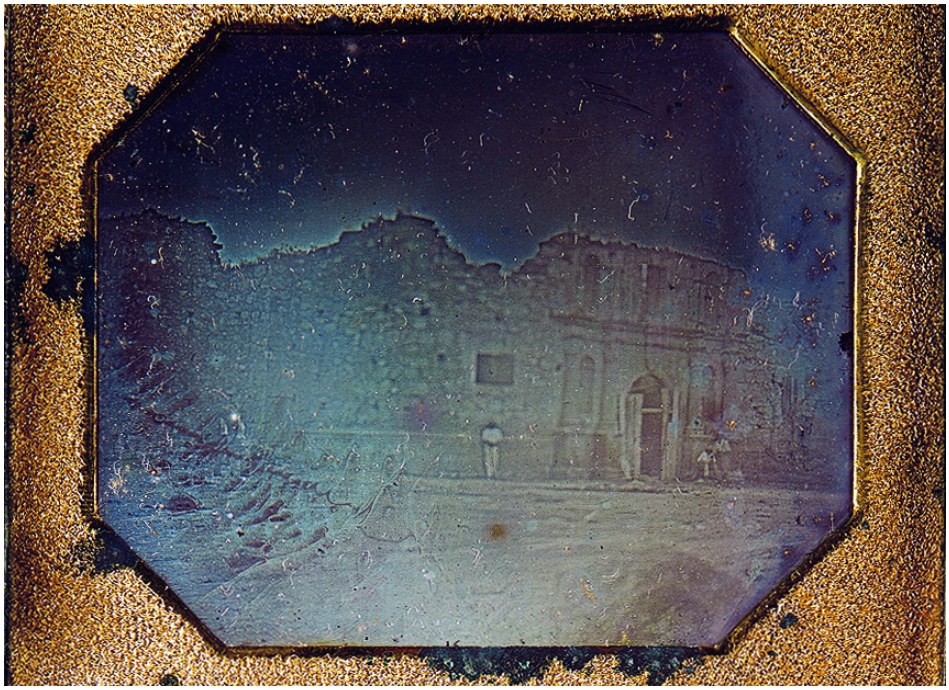


Figure 4.9.1.9: Earliest known photograph taken in Texas, 1849 daguerrotype, photographer unknown (Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin)

Throughout the nineteenth century, Mission San Antonio de Valero—now known as the Alamo—suffered neglect and vandalism. After the battle of the Alamo in 1836, most of what remained of the façade's sculptures were gone, and the building was badly damaged, much of it rubble. After Texas was annexed by the U.S. in 1845, the Alamo's surviving structure was eventually given a roof (the gable was added in 1850), and it functioned as a storage depot and commissary. A daguerrotype from 1849 shows the damage to the chapel's façade before the gable was added. After the Catholic Church sold the building in 1883, there were plans to transform it into a hotel.

It was not yet the shrine it would come to be in the following century.



Figure **4.9.1.10**: Now with the façade restored and the addition of the gable. Alamo buildings in use as Army supply depot, c. 1850–1870 (The San Antonio Light Collection, UT Institute of Texan Cultures)

Restoring the Alamo

Restoration of the Alamo started at the end of the nineteenth century when the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) took over the care of the building (after controversial discussions regarding responsibility for its caretaking). What people see today is the result of restorations that began in 1915.

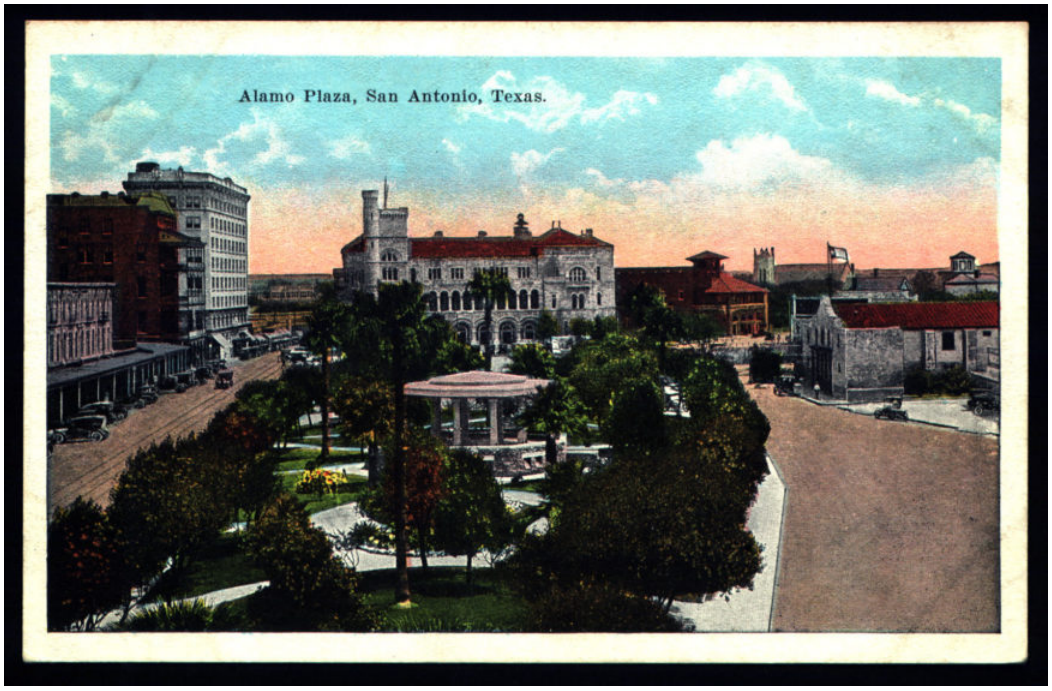


Figure **4.9.1.11**: The Alamo Plaza souvenir postcard, c. 1900 (Collection of Randell Tarín)



Figure **4.9.1.12**: Alamo gift shop and Centennial Museum

Much of what had been added after 1836 was removed, once again altering the site's appearance and how people understood it. Newly created buildings would also participate in memorializing and historicizing the Alamo. The gift shop was built to look as if it were constructed centuries earlier, but in reality was made in 1937 as a Centennial Museum to honor the hundredth anniversary of Texas independence. It displayed artifacts until the DRT transformed it into a store to sell souvenirs. The Arcade was built in the 1930s as a WPA project to beautify the site and help people find work during the Great Depression. This simulated historical "authenticity" aids in the performance of the primary narrative—the battle of 1836—not the Spanish mission.

The arcades

Even the way that visitors engage with the space has dramatically changed, attesting to the importance of understanding both the site's physical location and historical context. Where once a large mission structure stood, visitors now only see a remnant that occupies only one-third the original footprint. The Alamo sits in the middle of downtown San Antonio, below towering skyscrapers. The juxtaposition is jarring, although you'd be hard pressed to find commercial images that show the building in its present urban context.

The cultural memories of the mission/the Alamo

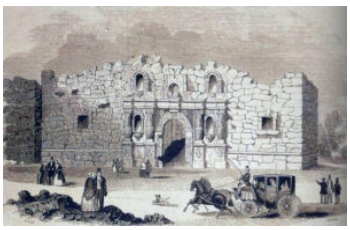


Figure 4.9.1.13: Picture depicting he Alamo as a stylish promenade ground. Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, 1854 (DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, TX)

Drawings, prints, paintings, and photographs have participated in creating this cultural memory of the Alamo. Drawings and prints in the mid-nineteenth century use the ruined space as a backdrop for elites in their fine clothing and carriages, in line with other artistic and literary movements that glorified the ruin. History paintings depict the Battle of the Alamo, with the chapel serving as its own character within the story instead of a mere backdrop.

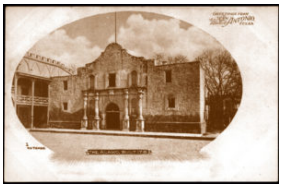


Figure 4.9.1.14: The Alamo, souvenir postcard, c. 1900 (Collection of Randell Tarín)

Early twentieth-century postcards often isolate the chapel, with little sense of the city around it gone. The longer history of the space as a mission is often obscured too. In the later twentieth and now in the twenty-first century, Latinx (including Chicanx) artists offer a new lens through which to remember the Alamo, with recent exhibitions such as "The Other Side of the Alamo: Art

Against the Myth" in 2018. From César Martínez's black and white photographs to Daniela Riojas's digital photographic images, these artists draw attention to the ways this cultural icon signifies painful injustices and racial disparities. They are pushing back against the myth.



Figure 4.9.1.15: Daniela Riojas, "We Built It, We Will Dismantle It," 2018, photograph, 20 x 16 inches

The complicated history of this place, a mission, ruin, battleground, emblem of patriotism, symbol of racial disparity, and tourist destination, has added yet one more layer to its story: in 2015, the Alamo became a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** as part of the San Antonio missions.

Notes:

[1] Donald Langmead, *Icons of American Architecture: From the Alamo to the World Trade Center* (Greenwood Press, 2009), p. 3

Additional resources

Holly Beachley Brear, *Inherit the Alamo: Myth and Ritual at an American Shrine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010)

James Early, *Presidio, mission, and pueblo: Spanish architecture and urbanism in the United States* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2004)

Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002)

Gloria Fraser Giffords, *Sanctuaries of earth, stone, and light: the churches of northern New Spain, 1530–1821* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007)

Todd Hansen, , ed. *The Alamo Reader: A Study in History* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003)

Peña, Daniel. "Remember the Alamo (Differently)," *Texas Observer* (22 Aug 2017)

Jacinto Quirarte, *The Art and Architecture of the Texas Missions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002)

Ramos, Raul. "The Alamo is a rupture," *Guernica*, 19 Feb 2019

Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, *Alamo Images: Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience* (Dallas: DeGolyer Library, 1985)

Susan Prendergast Schoelwer, "The Artist's Alamo: A Reappraisal of Pictorial Evidence, 1836–1850," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly, vol.* 91 (April 1988)

Alexandra Minna Stern, "On the Road with Chicana/o History: From Aztlan to the Alamo and Back," *Pacific Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (2013), pp. 581–587

Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, "Imagining a more expansive narrative of American Art." *American Art* 19, no. 3 (Fall 2015), pp. 9–15

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4.9.2: Inventing America, Colt's Experimental Pocket Pistol

by BRANDY CULP, WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID

165531



Elisha King Root for Samuel Colt, Experimental Pocket Pistol, Serial number 5, caliber .265 inches, barrel length 3 inches, overall length 7 inches, brass, steel, and iron, 1849-50 (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Bequest of Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt)

Additional resources:

This object at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
Colt biography from Connecticut History
Museum of Connecticut History Research Guide for Colt Manufacturing

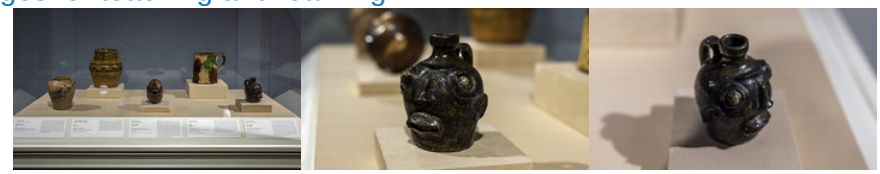
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4.9.3: Cultures and slavery in the American south- a Face Jug from Edgefield county



Video **4.9.3.1**: A conversation with Sarah Alvarez, Director of School Programs, Art Institute of Chicago, Beth Harris, and Steven Zucker in front of a Face Jug from Edgefield county, South Carolina, c. 1860, stoneware and alkaline glaze, 13.3 cm high (The Art Institute of Chicago 2006.84) A Seeing America video

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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Figure **4.9.3.131**: More SmartHistory images…

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4.9.4: David Drake, Double-handled jug

by DR. SUSAN J. RAWLES and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID
165533



David Drake (Lewis J. Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, South Carolina), 1840, stoneware with alkaline glaze, 44.13 x 35.24 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Additional resources

A face jug from Edgefield County, Smarthistory video

Jori Finkel, "The Enslaved Artist Whose Pottery Was an Act of Resistance," *The New York Times*, 17 June 2021.

Robert Hunter and Oliver Mueller Heubach, "Visualizing the Stoneware Potteries of William Rogers of Yorktown and Abner Landrum of Pottersville," *Ceramics in America* (2019).

Arthur F. Goldberg and James Witkowski, "Beneath his Magic Touch: The Dated Vessels of the African-American Slave Potter Dave," *Ceramics in America* (2006).

Jill B. Koverman, *I Made This Jar: The Life and Works of the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave* (McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1998).

Leonard Todd, *Carolina Clay: The Life and Legend of the Slave Potter Dave* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2008).

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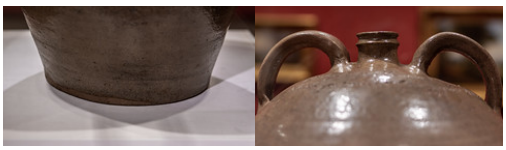
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4.9.5: Little Round House

by **DR. HILARY N. GREEN** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

Page ID
165534



The Little Round House, 1862, at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa
Speakers: Dr. Hilary N. Green and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

The Hallowed Grounds Project (from Dr. Hilary N. Green)

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4.9.6: John Quincy Adams Ward, The Freedman

Page ID

165535



Video **4.9.6.1**: A conversation with Erin Long, Lead Gallery Teacher, Amon Carter Museum of American Art and Beth Harris in front of John Quincy Adams Ward, *The Freedman*, 1863, bronze (Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas)

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4.9.7: Anna Pottery, Snake jug

Page ID

165536



Video **4.9.7.34**: Anna Pottery, Snake Jug, c. 1865, stoneware with painted decoration, 31.75 x 21.11 x 22.07 cm (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

Additional resources:

This work at the Minneapolis Institute of Art

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4.9.8: Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave

Page ID
165537



Video **4.9.8.1**: Hiram S. Powers, *The Greek Slave*, 1866, marble, 166.4 x 48.9 x 47.6 cm (Brooklyn Museum) Speakers: Margarita Karasoulas, Assistant Curator of American Art, Brooklyn Museum and Beth Harris

> ***They say Ideal beauty cannot enter***
> ***The house of anguish. On the threshold standsAn alien Image with enshackled hands,***
> ***Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her***
> ***(That passionless perfection which he lent her,***
> ***Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)***
> ***To so confront man's crimes in different lands***
> ***With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,***
> ***Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long***
> ***The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,***
> ***From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!***
> ***Catch up in thy divine face, not alone***
> ***East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,***
> ***By thunders of white silence, overthrown.***
> ***— Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Poems, 1850***

It is a rare work of art that could inspire the lyrical pen of a poetess as talented as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but such was the universal acclaim of Hiram Powers's *The Greek Slave* a mere five years after he first exhibited his statue in London. Powers, an American expatriate sculptor who had been living and working in Italy since 1837, was suddenly vaulted into the pantheon of great (American) sculptors, and drew favorable comparisons to **Phidias** and **Michelangelo**.



Figure **4.9.8.2**: Hiram Powers, *Martin van Buren*, modeled 1836, carved 1840, marble, 54.3 x 61.2 x 34.2 cm (The White House)

And yet, for Powers—who turned 40 in 1845, when *The Greek Slave* was first exhibited—it had been a long journey from his hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. Born in Woodstock, Vermont, Powers' family moved near Cincinnati when he was 14 years old. At the death of his father, Powers moved into the city and began work, first as a superintendent of a reading room attached to a hotel, and later as a clerk at a general store. His introduction to the art-making world was a humble one. At the age of 17 he worked as an apprentice to a wooden clockmaker. Several years later—in 1826—Powers began to study with Frederick Eckstein, a local sculptor of some regional renown. In his studio, Powers learned to model the human face and figure, and how to create plaster casts.

These skills were put to great use at Joseph Dorfeulle's Western Museum. While there, Powers created animatronic wax figures to occupy scenes taken from Dante's Inferno. At the same time, Powers began to create portrait busts of his friends. These likenesses brought him to the attention of Nicholas Longworth, a local wine entrepreneur. Longworth paid for Powers to undertake two extended periods of study away from Ohio: first to New York City (1829) and then later to Washington, D.C. (1834).

It was this later trip to the nation's capital that propelled Powers onward to the success he would later find with *The Greek Slave*. While there, he sculpted many Washingtonian elites, including current and former presidents—Andrew Jackson (1834), John Quincy Adams (1837), and Martin van Buren (1837)—as well as John Marshall (1835), the second chief justice of the United States Supreme Court. These successes prompted Powers to follow the lead of another American neoclassical sculptor, Horatio Greenough, and depart his native shores for Italy. Greenough had already been in Italy since 1828; if Powers hoped to emulate the work of Michelangelo and Bernini, then Florence was just the place to do it.

An American Venus

And so, in 1837, Powers moved to Italy, never again to step upon American shores. Four years later, he was at work on *The Greek Slave*, the sculpture that has become his most recognized and celebrated work. Powers completed no less than six full-sized versions of this work between 1843 and 1866, and it secured his fame on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Indeed, had he made nothing else of note, this work alone would have vaulted Powers into the pantheon of American sculptors. *The Greek Slave* was both familiar and new, and exceedingly relevant for the audiences that first viewed it.



Figure 4.9.8.3: Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*, model 1841-43, carved 1846, Serravezza marble, 167.5 × 51.4 × 47 cm (National Gallery of Art); *Aphrodite of Cnidos*, torso: Roman copy, 2nd century C.E., restoration, 17th century, marble (Rome, Roman National Museum, Palazzo Altemps); *Venus de' Medici*, 1st century B.C.E. (Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence)

In it, Powers sculpted a nearly life-sized nude female. Posed in the High Classical contrapposto, the figure faces towards her left so that when her body is viewed frontally, her face appears in near-perfect profile. Her weight-bearing left leg counterbalances the straight right arm, which leads the eye downwards to the drapery-covered vertical support. In contrast, her bent left arm leads the eye across her unclothed body towards both her non-weight-bearing right leg and the chains that bind her two hands together. Indeed, much like the classical (ancient Greek and Roman) works that Powers based *The Greek Slave* on—**Praxiteles's *Aphrodite of Knidos*** and the *Medici Venus* immediately come to mind—this gestural attempt to hide her nudity only forces the viewer to more directly address it.

The story of *The Greek Slave*

But who is this woman? Why is she nude? And what has caused her hands to be chained? In order to answer these questions—and, as importantly, justify Powers's then scandalous use of female nudity—Powers himself wrote an explanatory text to accompany the exhibition of his work. In it, he explained that his figure is an enslaved Greek maiden who stands in a slave market during the time of the Greek War for Independence against Turkey (1821-32).



Figure 4.9.8.4: Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave* (detail), model 1841-43, carved 1846, Serravezza marble, 167.5 × 51.4 × 47 cm (National Gallery of Art)

> ***The Slave has been taken from one of the Greek Islands by the Turks, in the time of the Greek revolution….Her father and mother, and perhaps all her kindred, have been destroyed by her foes, and she alone preserved as a treasure too valuable to be thrown away. She is now among barbarian strangers…and she stands exposed to the gaze of the people she abhors, and awaits her fate with intense anxiety, tempered indeed by the support of her reliance upon the goodness of God. Gather all these afflictions together, and add to them the fortitude and resignation of a Christian, and no room will be left for shame.***

Upon close inspection, one can see a small cross and locket carved on the support. The cross hints at her everlasting Christian faith, while the locket suggests far away love. Through these small details, Powers sets the stage for our reaction: a young Christian female has been abducted from her family, has been stripped bare by her captors, and now stands judged in the slave market. The pathos is palpable.



Figure **4.9.8.5**: John Vanderlyn, *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*, 1809-14, oil on canvas, 174 x 221 cm (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts)

That *The Greek Slave* is nude—and that this nudity was deemed acceptable and appropriate to the audiences who viewed it—is very much a part of this work's history. Nineteenth-century American art does not overflow with examples of the female nude, and those artists who attempted to paint or sculpt such scandalous subjects were often disappointed by reactions to their work. John Vanderlyn's 1814 masterwork ***Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*** is one such example. Vanderlyn painted Ariadne in Paris and hoped for this work to announce—to a New York City audience—that he was eminently qualified to paint neoclassical history paintings. But whereas this painting was a hit when it was shown at the annual Paris salon, the (comparatively) prudish American audience responded negatively to Ariadne's lack of clothing.



Figure **4.9.8.6**: Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave*, 1869, marble, 166.4 x 48.9 x 47.6 cm (The Brooklyn Museum)

The *Greek Slave* is even more exposed than Ariadne in Vanderlyn's painting (if we consider, for example, the drapery that comes across the top of her left thigh). So why was this sculpture so successful, when Vanderlyn's painting had been rejected by American audiences? *The Greek Slave* is a generation or two later, but this difference in time—from 1814 until 1841—cannot be the only reason why one was accepted and other not.

Many believe the primary reason why *The Greek Slave* was so popular was because of the *means* by which the figure came to be nude. Her clothing was not removed because of an amorous tryst, like Ariadne's. Although her clothing may have been stripped away, she remained cloaked and covered in her Christian piety. The Reverend Orville Dewey summed this up in an 1847 article in *The Union Magazine*:

> ***"The Greek Slave is clothed all over with sentiment; sheltered, protected by it from every profane eye. Brocade, cloth of gold, could not be a more complete protection than the vesture of holiness in which she stands."***

The art-viewing public agreed, and the popularity of this work—a popularity that likely exceeded the work's aesthetic merits—catapulted Powers to international fame. One of the contributors to the impact of this work was the way in which viewers could consider this both a historical and allegorical composition. In addition to being based upon an event taken from the Greek War of Independence, it was also topical to the situation of slavery in the United States.

A work admired around the globe



Figure **4.9.8.7**: John Absalon, *The Greek Slave* on view in the East Nave of the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, London, 1851, hand-colored lithograph, 27.1 × 37.6 cm, published by Lloyd Brothers & Co., 1851 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

These were the connections viewers consistently made when the sculpture was first shown to great fanfare in London in 1845, and then when it toured the United States two years later. It made an appearance at the next two world's fairs—London's Crystal Palace in 1851 and the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855. At each stop, viewers made the connection between the statue and rising anti-slavery sentiment in the United States.

Beyond his six versions of *The Greek Slave*, Powers continued to contribute to the field of sculpture during the course of his long career. As an inventor, he patented new files and rasps, and developed an easier-to-use pointing machine that aided in the creation of marble copies of his works. He also developed a new finishing technique that allowed him to closely recreate the appearance of human flesh on the finely grained Carrara marble so preferred by Florentine sculptors. But it was *The Greek Slave* more than any other element that secured Powers's reputation as an American sculptor of the highest rank and it remains one of the most important and enduring works of American sculpture.

Additional resources:

The Greek Slave at the National Gallery of Art, The Brooklyn Museum, Yale University Art Gallery, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum (the two other copies are held by Raby Castle, England, and Newark Museum, New Jersey)

Sarah L. Burns and Joshua Brown, "White into Black: Seeing Race, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery in Antebellum America"

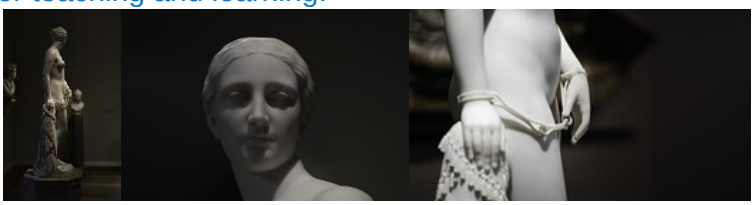
Essay on Hiram Powers from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Smithsonian exhibition on the plaster cast of *The Greek Slave*

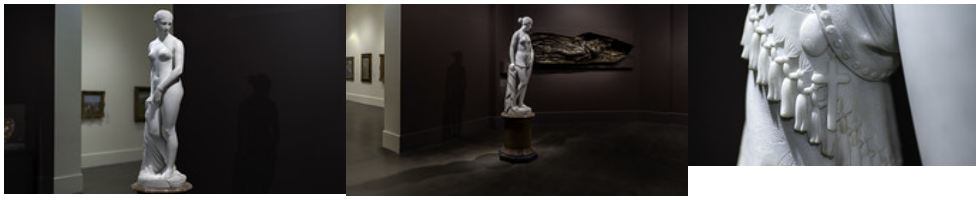
Replicating *The Greek Slave* from Smithsonian.com

Special issue on *The Greek Slave* from *19th-Century Art Worldwide*

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



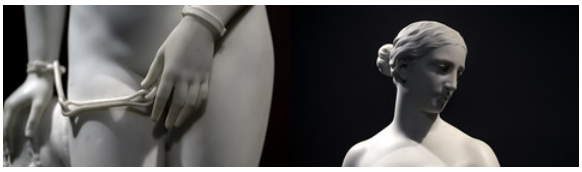
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4.9.9: William Wetmore Story, Cleopatra

by TYLER GREEN and DR. BETH HARRIS

Page ID
165538



A conversation with Tyler Green and Beth Harris in front of William Wetmore Story, *Cleopatra*, marble, modeled 1858, carved 1865, 137.16 x114.3 x 68.58 cm (Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

Additional resources

Copy of William Wetmore Story's *Cleopatra* at The Met

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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4.9.10: Thomas Crawford, George Washington Equestrian Monument

by TYLER GREEN and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID
165539

Thomas Crawford, *George Washington Equestrian Monument*, cast 1857 in Munich, partly erected 1858 (Washington, Henry, Jefferson, and Mason), remaining figures completed by Randolph Rogers in 1869, bronze, granite, the equestrian bronze element is 21 feet high (State Capitol, Richmond, Virginia)

Additional resources

Learn more about the legacy and symbolism of George Washington through Jean-Antoine Houdon's *George Washington*

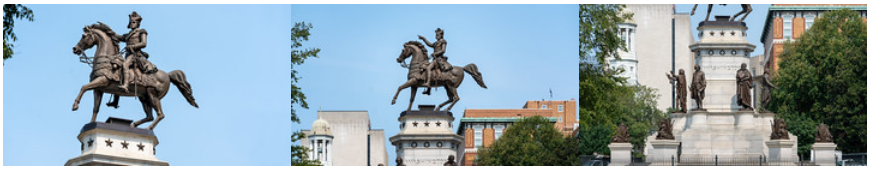
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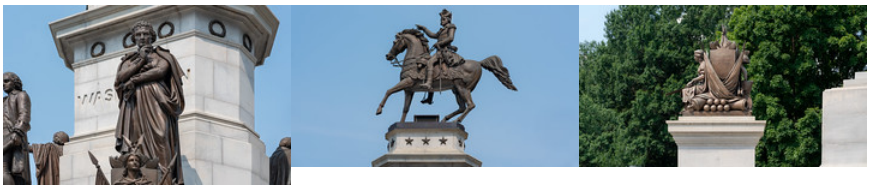
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4.9.11: Slave Burial Ground, University of Alabama

by **DR. HILARY N. GREEN** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID

165540



Slave Burial Ground, c. 1840s, University of Alabama. A conversation with Dr. Hilary Green, Associate Professor of History and Dr. Beth Harris.

Additional resources

The Hallowed Grounds Project: Race, Slavery and Memory at the University of Alabama

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4.9.12: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York

Page ID

165541



Video 4.9.12.1: A conversation between Dr. Diana Wall and Dr. Steven Zucker in Central Park about Seneca Village

If you are a descendant of a Seneca Village resident, or know someone who is, please contact the Seneca Village Project at: diana.diz.wall[at]gmail.com.

A SmartHistory ARCHES video

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4.9.13: Olmsted and Vaux, Central Park

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165542



Figure **4.9.13.1**: View of Central Park, New York City (photo: **alan-light**, CC BY 2.0)

The second crucial factor, by the middle of the nineteenth century, was the widespread awareness that industrial cities needed to be carefully planned. Reformers such as the poet and newspaper editor William Cullen Bryant and the travel writer, horticulturalist, and co-designer of Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted embraced the urban future, but they wanted to better the lives of all city dwellers by introducing nature as an antidote to what they saw as the unsafe and unsanitary qualities of large cities. Of course, these reformers knew that true rustic nature was impossible in the middle of cities. Instead, they sought to cultivate a man-made, pastoral landscape that captured the best qualities of nature as filtered through human invention and design. Large parks were to be "the lungs of the city." The reformers professed a Romantic conviction that being surrounded by nature assuaged the nerves and mind and helped "unbend" certain physical and psychological tensions.



Figure **4.9.13.2**: View of a grove with schist outcropping, Central Park, New York City (photo: **kpaulus**, CC BY 2.0)

Some reformers, though, expressed their views in a more paternalistic manner, showing disdain toward the poor and working classes. They argued that Central Park's bucolic scenery should serve as a setting to refine the coarse, impolite manners thought to characterize especially the new, often impoverished immigrants then found in large cities like New York. Olmsted himself wrote that "a large part of the people of New York are ignorant" of a park's social purpose and needed "to be trained in the proper use of it." Olmsted's original objective was to direct visitors to stroll through Central Park and quietly admire the natural scenery; they were not to partake, as they often do today, in strenuous exercise, large festivals or concerts, or any other behavior that would

disturb the park's bucolic ambience. Early on, he and his design partner Calvert Vaux issued regulations to achieve the desired behavior among park visitors: a polite sociability that might then filter out into behavior in the city itself.

The English landscape



Figure **4.9.13.3**: View of sheltered valley, Leonardslee Gardens, England (photo: **ukgardenphotos**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

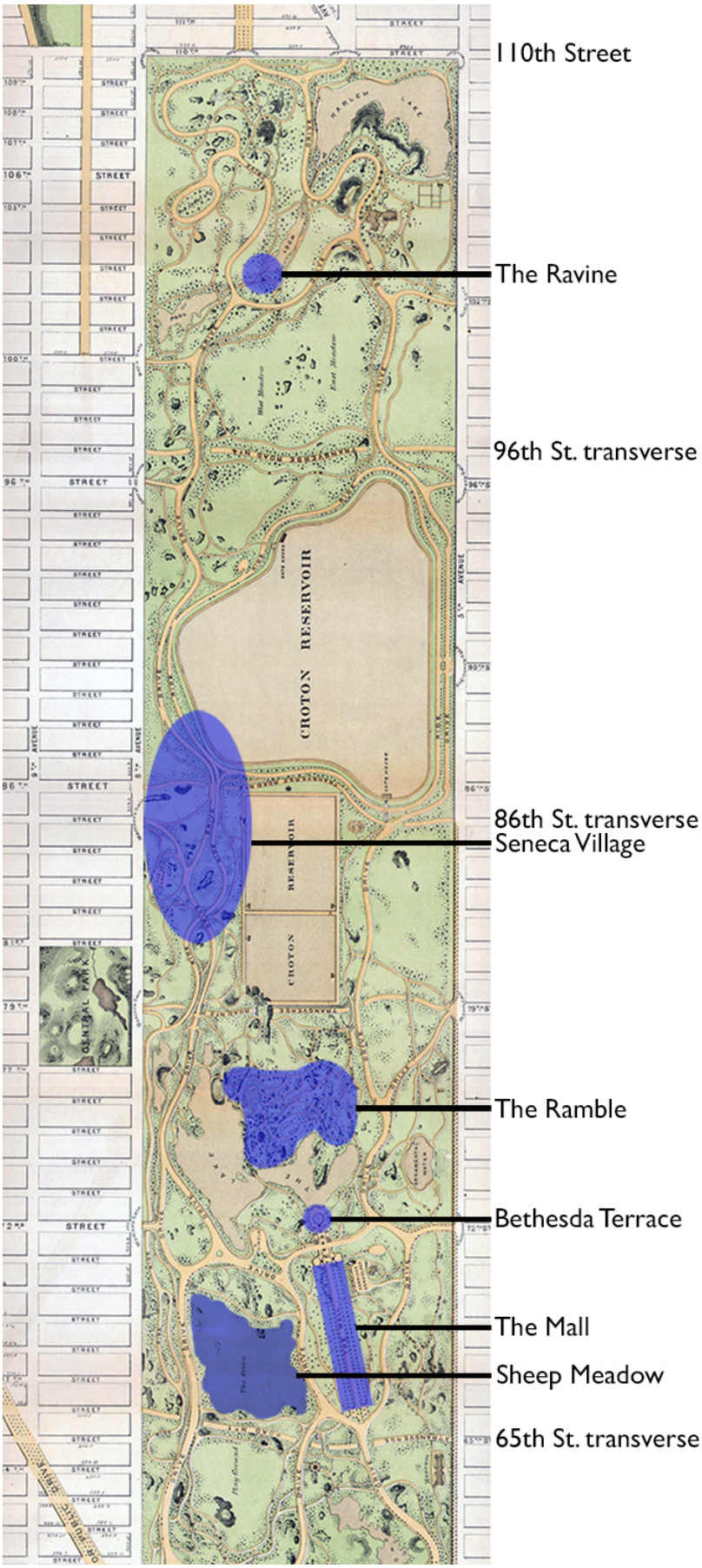
These social concerns relied on the aesthetics of the natural landscape pioneered earlier in England. The "English landscape gardens" of the eighteenth century, as well as the early nineteenth-century suburban cemeteries of Paris, especially Père-Lachaise, strongly influenced landscape design in the United States. In the 1830s, for example, the Rural Cemetery Movement produced important landscape designs including Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Green-Wood in Brooklyn (below), and Laurel Hill in Philadelphia. These suburban cemeteries were intended to provide a quiet retreat and confer physical and mental health benefits on visitors. They were designed according to the aesthetics of the English landscape garden (above), in which winding paths, open meadows, ponds, and occasional architectural "follies" created picturesque effects very different from the rigidly symmetrical or geometrical layouts of gardens in the Italian and French traditions, such as the Boboli Gardens in Florence or the royal gardens at Versailles.



Figure 4.9.13.4: Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, 1836 (photo: Dave Bledsoe, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Politics and Central Park

Political support was the third major factor in Central Park's development. The land acquired for the park had been included in the city's gridded urban plan of 1811, which was an early effort to take control of Manhattan Island's development. The area was treeless, rocky terrain. On the west side it encompassed a small settlement that counted 264 residents in the 1855 census. About half of the modest houses in "Seneca Village," as it was known, were owned by free African Americans, along with many German and Irish immigrants. There were at least two churches, cemeteries, and a school. City and state government used the legal power of eminent domain to claim the land as part of Central Park, forcibly evicting all the residents by 1857.



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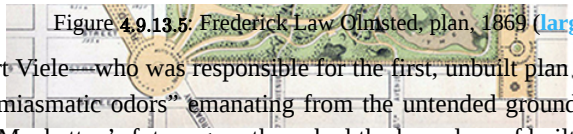


Figure 4.9.13.5: Frederick Law Olmsted, plan, 1869 (larger image available)

New York engineer Egbert Viele—who was responsible for the first, unbuilt plan for Central Park in 1856—described the land as a "pestilential spot" with "miasmatic odors" emanating from the untended ground. Unhealthy and unsightly, the land was ripe for reform as projections for Manhattan's future growth pushed the boundary of built-up land further and further north. Reformers and politicians also soon realized that the 1811 plan had not sufficiently taken account of the need for recreational and other types of open space. Even the few parks provided by that plan had mostly been built over in the intervening decades as real estate interests trumped the public good.

In 1853, after more than a decade of agitation by Bryant, landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing, and others, the state of New York authorized the creation of a large park in Manhattan, originally to be built and designed by Viele. However, his design was considered perfunctory, offering little in the way of artistry or ingenuity. The Central Park Commissioners, as the governmental body was known, appointed Frederick Law Olmsted as superintendent of works and called for an open competition for a new design.

Olmsted was not a designer or engineer. He had been a farmer and horticultural enthusiast on Staten Island for several years before traveling in northern Europe, Mexico, and elsewhere. His travels inspired him to take up writing and, later, magazine publishing. Calvert Vaux approached Olmsted about jointly submitting a design to the park competition. Vaux, an English architect, had earlier worked in partnership with Downing and eagerly took up the latter's Romantic ideas about landscape. His partnership with Olmsted resulted in a pairing of like-minded, strong-willed individuals determined to mold the park to their shared vision.



Figure 4.9.13.6: Calvert Vaux, Gothic Bridge, Central Park, New York City (photo: Bryan Schorn, CC BY-SA 3.0)

The plan

Olmsted and Vaux won the design competition with their "Greensward Plan," the last of thirty-two to be submitted. Two elements distinguished the Greensward design from those of their competitors. One was the sheer allure of their landscape features, conveyed in twelve before-and-after panels included in their submission. The other was the ingenious separation of pedestrian and cross-park carriage (now vehicular) traffic.

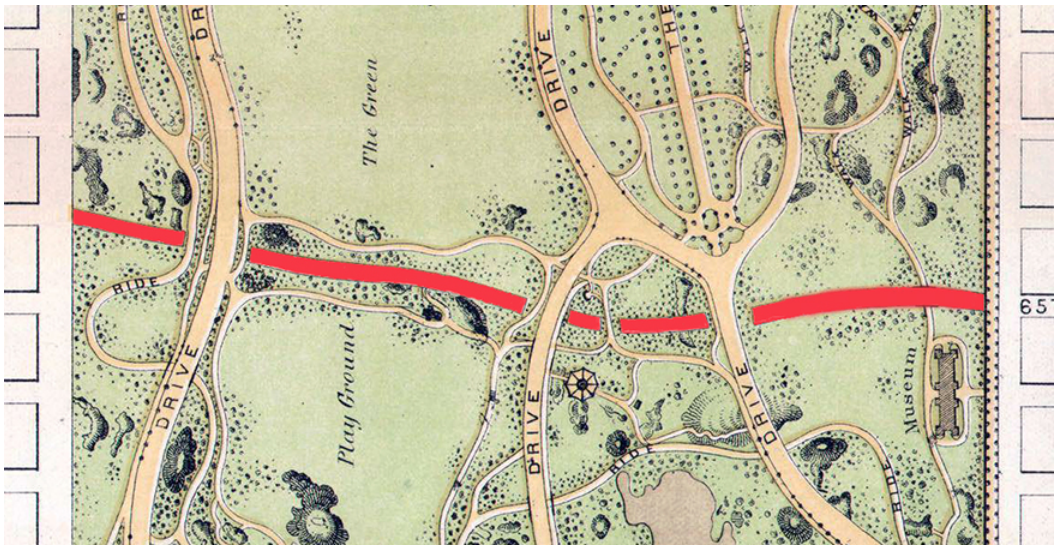


Figure 4.9.13.7: 65th Street transverse in red (detail), Frederick Law Olmsted, Central Park Plan, 1869

The competition brief had insisted that four roadways should connect the east and west sides of Manhattan through the park. All other submissions put those roads on the ground surface, effectively dividing the park into five zones separated by street traffic. However, Olmsted and Vaux submerged their “transverse” roads below ground level and created a continuous expanse of park differentiated by designed topography. As they discovered during construction, this critical invention gave them the chance to increase the park’s picturesque scenery since the many drives and walking paths that cross over the transverses and bridal paths could be embellished by attractive bridges.



Figure 4.9.13.8: Sheep Meadow, Central Park, New York City (photo: yourdon, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

From south to north, the park is laid out to create distinct visual experiences, helping the visitor navigate the vast space and creating picturesque variety in strong contrast to the rectilinearity of the gridded city around it. South of the reservoirs—there were originally three but today only the largest irregular one remains as a lake—the park is a series of pastoral areas, including the large glade called the Parade Ground (now the Sheep Meadow) surrounded by copses or small groves of trees (above).



Figure 4.9.13.9: The Mall, Central Park, New York City (photo: chrisschoenbohm, CC BY-NC 2.0)

In the southern end of the park, we find one area that departs from the naturalism: the long, tree- and bench-lined Promenade now know as the Mall (above) which leads to the Terrace and Bethesda Fountain (below).

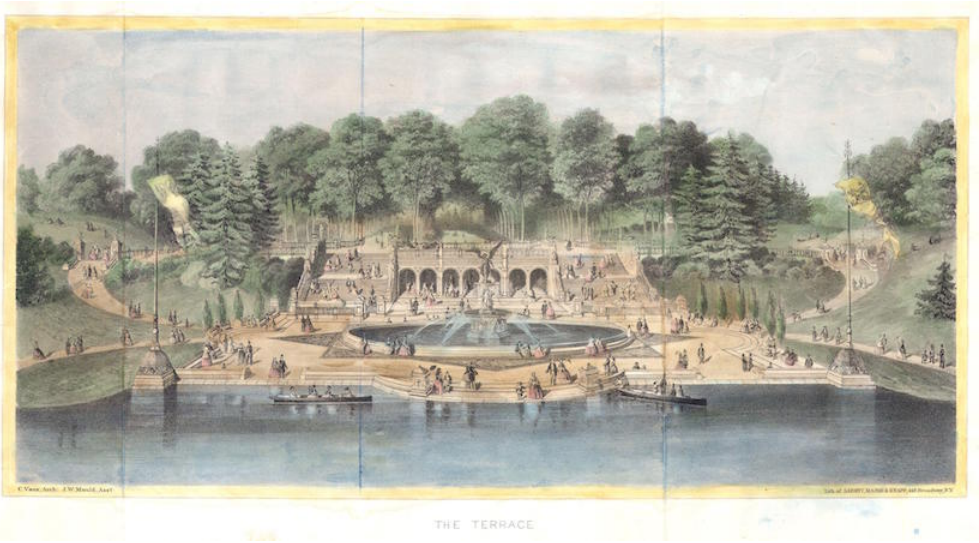


Figure 4.9.13.10: Major and Knapp Engraving, Manufacturing, and Lithographic Company, *The Terrace*, 1869, color lithograph



Figure 4.9.13.11: Emma Stebbins, Angel of Waters, 1873, bronze, Bethesda Fountain (photo: Wayne Noffsinger, CC: BY 2.0)

The Terrace is divided into upper and lower sections, a remarkably classical environment with wide, symmetrical stairs and a sense of formality. Jacob Wrey Mould, an English architect who worked on the park for Olmsted and Vaux until 1874, designed its

ornament. A surprising and elegant space, the Terrace is a delightful foil to the landscape around it. At its center is the much-photographed fountain surmounted by sculptor Emma Stubbins' *Angel of the Waters*, installed in 1873 (left). Between the Terrace steps is the Arcade, a long subterranean space with a stunning ceiling decorated with tiles designed by Mould and manufactured by the Minton Tile Works in England. The formal but festive appearance of the Terrace is appropriate for a space conceived as the city's "open air hall of reception."

North of the Lake is the Ramble, a series of small, twisting paths along rocky outcroppings of the local stone, called schist, that can be seen throughout the park. At the northernmost edge of the park is the most rugged landscape with the densest foliage, then and now the park's least visited section. But the area offers some of the park's most stunning features, including the Ravine with its small brook, waterfalls, and tomb-like Glen Span Arch, made from massive, rough-faced stones. The quiet of the area is an almost haunting experience; it feels much more secluded than its actual distance from the busy surrounding streets would suggest.



Figure 4.9.13.12: Glen Span Arch, Central Park, New York City (photo: **gigi_nyc**, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The park's influence

Central Park was very much a product of its particular moment in time, a combination of aesthetic ideas, urban concerns, and political will that coalesced in the decade before the Civil War. Its instant success led to other opportunities for Olmsted and Vaux to apply their approach to landscape design: a few of the important projects were Prospect Park in Brooklyn (1866-73), the Buffalo park system (begun 1868), and the suburb of Riverside, Illinois (1868).

Later, working apart from Vaux, Olmsted had a flourishing practice: he designed the campus of Stanford University (1889), the Druid Hills district in Atlanta (1892), and the grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893)—just three among many projects. The landscape philosophy developed by Olmsted and Vaux and first expressed at Central Park had lasting influence, inspiring, for instance, Jens Jensen's "prairie landscapes" in Chicago and elsewhere in the early twentieth century. It was arguably no exaggeration when *Harper's Magazine* declared in 1862 that Central Park was "the finest work of art ever executed in this country." It may still be.

Essay by Paul A. Ranogajec

Additional resources:

The Central Park website

Industrialization and Conflict in America, 1840-70, on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History

Morrison H. Heckscher, *Creating Central Park* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008).

Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park & City: The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

Robert Twombly, ed. *Frederick Law Olmsted: Essential Texts* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010).

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4.9.14: William Howard (attributed), Writing desk

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Figure **4.9.14.37**: Writing desk, attributed to William Howard, c. 1870, yellow pine, tobacco box and cotton crate wood, 154.31 75.88 x 60.17 (Minneapolis Institute of Art)

Additional resources:

This work at the Minneapolis Institute of Art

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4.9.15: Herter Brothers, Mark Hopkins House Side Chair

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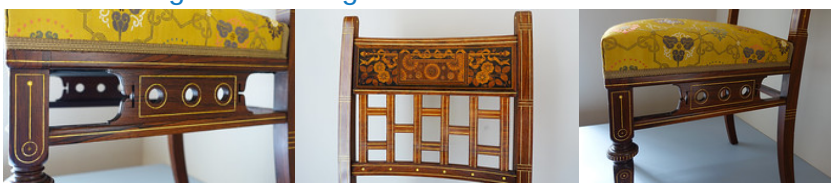
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Video 4.9.15.1: Mark Hopkins House Side Chair, c. 1878-80, designed and made by Herter Brothers (New York), rosewood, inlaid and veneered with various woods, silk (of the period, but not original) (Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York City)

This video was produced in cooperation with the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.

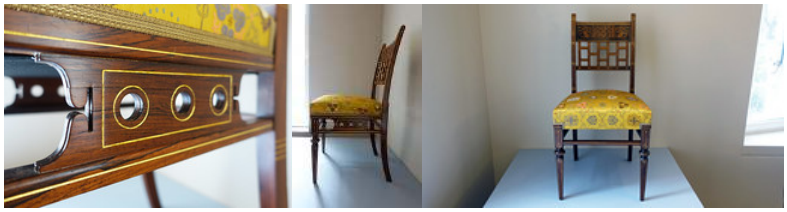
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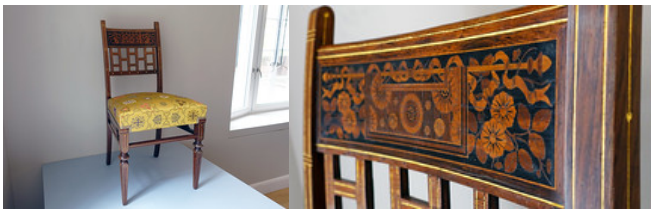
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4.9.16: Robert Mills and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument



Figure **4.9.16.1**: View of the National Mall showing the Washington Monument in the center. Robert Mills and Lietenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument, completed 1884, granite and marble, Washington, D. C

Evolving American narratives



Figure **4.9.16.2**: Robert Mills and Lietenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument, completed 1884, granite and marble, Washington, D. C

At 555 feet high the Washington Monument towers over the National Mall. In a city of height-restricted buildings, this enormous, mottled-marble obelisk can be seen piercing the sky from miles around like a beacon to the country's symbolic center. Once there, the observation deck at the top of the monument provides visitors with a breathtaking bird's eye view of the city – from the World War II Memorial, past the Lincoln Memorial and over Arlington Bridge to the west, down the museum-lined Mall to the Capitol Building to the east, over the Ellipse and past the White House to the north, and beyond the Tidal Basin and the Jefferson Memorial into Virginia to the south. Built to honor the country's first president, the Washington Monument is the linchpin of an evolving American narrative told through the buildings and monuments that surround it.

L'Enfant's proposal

Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the architect and city planner responsible for the design of Washington D.C. and the National Mall, was the first to propose a monument to Washington. Inspired by the city planning in his native France, L'Enfant suggested placing an equestrian statue of George Washington as commander of the Continental Army in the middle of the National Mall. It was to be set

on the spot where the sight lines from the White House and the Capitol intersected so that future presidents and members of Congress would always have Washington in view and on their minds as they deliberated on what was best for the country. Funding fell short for L'Enfants' grand scheme, however, and his sculpture was never completed.

Mills' proposal

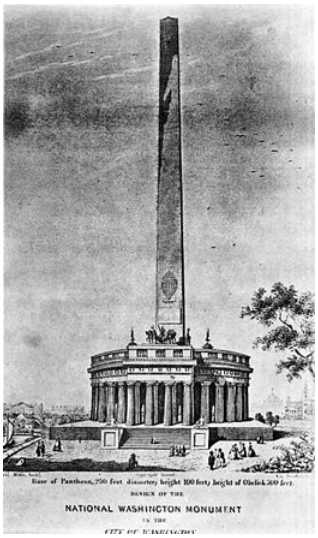


Figure **4.9.16.3**: Robert Mills, Sketch of the proposed Washington Monument, c. 1836

Fifty-four years later, Federal architect Robert Mills put forward plans to celebrate Washington with a 600 foot tall Egyptian-style obelisk surrounded by a vast colonnade decorated with sculptural elements recalling ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Unlike a true Egyptian obelisk which was carved from a single block of stone, the one Mills proposed would be made of many marble blocks some carved with portraits of the first president in action. Its grandeur would serve to equate George Washington with the greatest leaders of antiquity.

With a modest amount of private funding in hand, Mills began work on the obelisk thinking he would be able to raise the rest. However, the venture did not go as planned. By 1851, the marble shaft of the obelisk was only one-quarter complete. It stuck up like a great stump and became a symbol for the government's poor planning and mismanagement of the Mall.



Figure **4.9.16.4**: Matthew Brady, Washington Monument, circa 1860, glass plate (wet collodion)

Money problems

The Monument's Board of Managers lobbied Congress for money but was soon overthrown by a group of anti-immigration, anti-Catholic activists called the "Know-Nothings". The Know-Nothings wanted to use the monument to promote their "America for

Americans" agenda by having the monument paid for and built by those who supported their cause. However, the oncoming Civil War drained interest from the project and the Washington Monument remained stump-like for more than a quarter century. Then, in 1878, Congress appointed Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, an army engineer, to complete the project.



Figure **4.9.16.5**: A flag representing the ideas of the Know-Nothing Party, originating in 1849 and active throughout the 1850s.

Colonel Casey

Colonel Casey jumped into the project by significantly altering Mills' plans. Right away he simplified the design of the obelisk, stripping the structure of extraneous decoration, and creating a narrower, higher, peak at the top. Using a white marble that was a better quality, but not an exact match of the first stone used, Casey completed the monument. And while Congress gave Casey money incrementally and tried to intercede in the design process, they failed to get the Colonel to alter his vision of a façade free of any and all ornamentation. In 1884, over widespread objections about its lack of descriptive, narrative and historical elements, Casey completed the memorial.

In the end, it had taken more than three dozen years for the Washington Monument to be completed. Soil stability issues forced its move some 400 feet from the exact intersection point for the Capitol and White House. Funding shortages, politics and the intrusion of the Civil War delayed its completion.

But what does it actually tell us about Washington? Unlike the other monuments on the Mall, the Washington Monument says next to nothing about the subject for whom it was created. In contrast, one can learn a lot about Lincoln from visiting the Lincoln Memorial, viewing his sculptural likeness and reading his words inscribed on the walls. And a person can learn a lot about World War II by visiting that Memorial and studying the reliefs, inscriptions, sculptures and other symbolic features. But one cannot learn anything about the way Washington looked or his words or deeds by visiting the Washington Monument. And that is a result of the long and contentious process from which the Monument to America's first president arose.

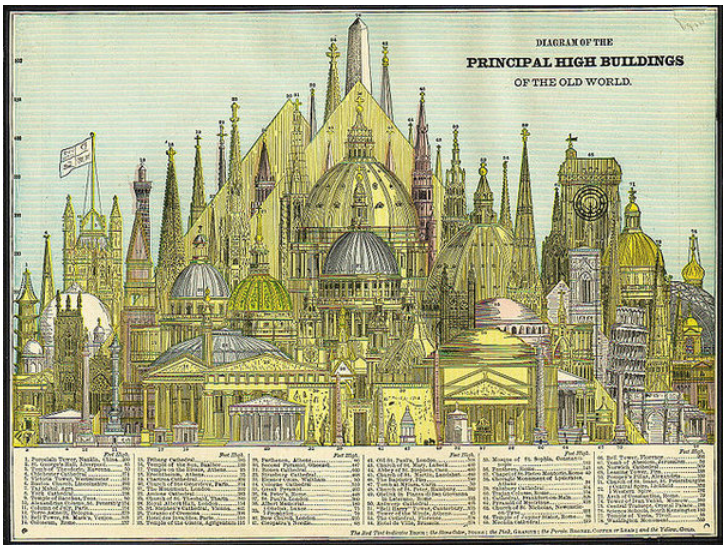


Figure 4.9.16.7: Diagram of the principle high buildings of the old world, showing the Washington Monument to be the tallest, 1884, lithograph color print

The Washington Monument receives an estimated 4 million visitors a year. It was the tallest building in the world until the completion of the Eiffel Tower in 1889, and remains the tallest stone building in the world today.

Additional resources:

NYPL Digital Gallery of early photographs of the Washington Monument

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4.9.17: The light of democracy — examining the Statue of Liberty



Video **4.9.17.1**: Statue of Liberty, New York Harbor, installed 1886, conceived by Édouard Laboulaye, sculpture designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, engineered by Gustave Eiffel, pedestal designed by Richard Morris Hunt. Speakers: Dr. Elizabeth Macaulay-Lewis and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources:

Official website from the National Parks Service

Rediscovering An Ornate Cast Of Cast-Iron Buildings (New York Times)

Biography of Bartholdi from the National Gallery of Art

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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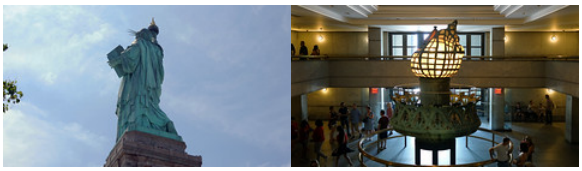
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4.9.18: Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause

by **DR. SARAH BEETHAM** and **DR. STEVEN ZUCKER**

Page ID

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A conversation on Monument Avenue, Richmond, Virginia, July, 2021

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4.9.19: Defeated, heroized, dismantled- Richmond’s Robert E. Lee Monument

by **DR. SARAH BEETHAM** and **DR. BETH HARRIS**

Page ID

165548



Antonin Mercié, Robert E. Lee Monument, 1890, bronze (removed from Monument Avenue, Richmond Virginia, September 9, 2021) This video was recorded in July 2021. speakers: Dr. Sarah Beetham and Dr. Beth Harris

Additional resources

Kirk Savage, M*onument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (University of California Press, 2011)

Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America*, new ed. (Princeton University Press, 2018)

Kevin M. Levin, “Richmond’s Confederate Monuments Were Used to Sell a Segregated Neighborhood,” *The Atlantic* (Jun 11, 2020)

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4.9.20: Shrady and Casey, Ulysses S. Grant Memorial

Page ID

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Figure **4.9.20.1**: Henry Merwin Shrady (sculptor) and William Pearce Casey (architect), *Ulysses S. Grant Memorial*, 1901-1922, marble and bronze, 520 x 500 x 120 cm, Washington D.C.

Location, location, location

The dramatic and action-packed monument to Ulysses S. Grant in front of the U.S. Capitol Building, at once grand and intimate, speaks to both the valor and the horror of the Civil war. Henry Merwin Shrady's massive tripartite memorial features a bronze equestrian statue of Grant on a central pedestal flanked by two sculptural groups of soldiers.

Sited on top of a grand terrace 252 feet wide and 71 feet long, the memorial stands in front of a large reflecting pool built to complement the water feature in front of the Lincoln Memorial at the opposite end of the Mall.



Figure **4.9.20.2**: Henry Merwin Shrady (sculptor) and William Pearce Casey (architect), *Ulysses S. Grant Memorial* in front of the U.S. Capitol Building, 1901-1922, marble and bronze, 520 x 500 x 120 cm, Washington D.C. (photo: **Martin Falbisoner**, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Grant, at the apex of the central column, calmly attends to the war around him. Silent, certain and yet not traditionally heroic, the figure appears weary, but determined, his uniform unadorned, his presence unassuming.



Figure 4.9.20.3: Henry Merwin Shrady (sculptor) and William Pearce Casey (architect), *Cavalry Charge*, 1916, marble and bronze, Washington D.C.

On Grant's right is the seven men *Cavalry Charge*. Their commanding officer raises his sword and urges his men into battle. The horses leap into action as the bugler prepares to sound the charge. Yet this powerful and inspiring moment has already turned tragic. One of the horses has fallen and trapped his rider beneath. He is about to be trampled by the cavalryman behind who shields his eyes in horror. Shrady made himself the model for the fallen soldier by working from his reflection in a mirror, which proved prophetically poignant as Schrady gave his life to the monument's completion.



Figure 4.9.20.4: Henry Merwin Shrady (sculptor) and William Pearce Casey (architect), *Artillery*, 1912, marble and bronze, Washington D.C.

To the left of Grant is the equally dramatic portrayal *Artillery*. Three horses and five men bring forward a cannon but the bridal of the lead horse has broken. While the other two horses attempt to stop, the third plunges ahead causing the driver to lose control. The three riders appear both anxious and resigned as they brace themselves to be pitched to the side. Everything and everyone is destabilized. Even terrain under the cart is uneven and rutted. Both the Artillery and the Cavalry groups leave the visitor with narrative questions that will never be answered.

Memorializing Grant

The monument's origins go back to 1895, when The Society of the Army of the Tennessee proposed a memorial to Grant. Ulysses S. Grant was a two-term president, brilliant strategist ,and resolute commander in chief of all U.S. armies. He led the Union troops to victory time and time again, culminating in the surrender of General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox, Virginia in 1865.

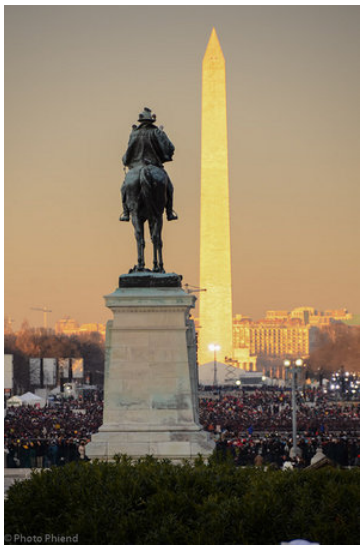


Figure 4.9.20.5: Henry Merwin Shrady (sculptor) and William Pearce Casey (architect), *Ulysses S. Grant Memorial* with the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial in the background, 1901-1922, marble and bronze, 520 x 500 x 120 cm, Washington D.C.

In 1901, Congress authorized $250,000 for a memorial to the Grant Memorial Commission, the largest sculpture commission of the time. Sculptor Henry Merwin Shrady and architect Edward Pearce Casey won the design commission.

Shrady immediately immersed himself in the details of Civil War battles. He joined the National Guard for four years to better understand military practice, borrowed Civil War uniforms, equipment and artillery, and convinced the military to run drills that would allow him to study the movements of soldiers and their horses. Shrady, taking great pains with every detail, pored over flags, uniforms, weapons, people, animals, and equipment to ensure they were accurately reproduced. The Grant Memorial Commission members, chaffing at the slow pace, pushed Shrady to work faster finally insisting he complete his work by the 100th anniversary of Grant's birth. His health suffered under the strain. Two weeks before the memorial was dedicated, Shrady died.

On April 27, 1922 the memorial was unveiled. Later that year, the Lincoln Memorial was completed and the Mall's narrative was set. At the center, the Washington Memorial speaks to the founding of the country. On the far west end sits the great thinking man, Lincoln. On the other end of the mall the great man of action, Grant, sits astride his proud horse, Cinicinnatus. Together they succeeded in saving what Washington had established.

Additional resources:

Official government website for the memorial

National Park Service website for the memorial

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SECTION OVERVIEW

4.9.22: Louis Sullivan

13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building

4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building

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13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building

by **DR. MARGARET HERMAN**

Page ID

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Figure **13.4.9.22.2.1**: Hancock Building, Chicago (photo: Steven Miller, CC BY 2.0)

Walking amidst the endless crowd of tall buildings in Chicago's downtown neighborhoods, the twenty-first century viewer, overwhelmed by the colossal Hancock Tower (1970) almost misses the comparatively stocky, whole-block office buildings and stores in Chicago's Loop that first gave rise to the term "skyscraper" in the late nineteenth century. At the intersection of State and Madison Streets, however, one building with large glass windows and a rounded corner entryway covered with lavish decoration stands out. In contrast to its relatively plain neighbors, the pedestrian's eye is immediately attracted to the structure's bronze-colored ground floor and broad white façade stretching twelve stories above it. This is Louis Sullivan's Carson, Pirie, Scott building, a department store constructed in two stages in 1899 and 1903–04

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Figure **13.4.9.22.2.2**: Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, 1899 and 1903–04, Chicago (photo: Ken Lund, CC: BY-NC 2.0)

Sullivan's building is an important example of early Chicago skyscraper architecture, and can also be seen as a fascinating indicator of the relationship between architecture and commerce. The firm of Adler & Sullivan first became known in Chicago in the early 1880s for the design of the Auditorium Building (see below) and other landmarks utilizing new methods of steel frame construction and a uniquely American blend of Art Nouveau decoration with a simplified monumentality.



Figure **13.4.9.22.2.3**: Dankmar Adler & Louis Sullivan, Auditorium Building, 1889, Chicago (photo: JW Taylor, 1890, Library of Congress)

By the mid-1890s, Sullivan struck out on his own and wrote his treatise on skyscraper architecture, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered.” In it, Sullivan analyzed the problem of high-rise commercial architecture, arguing with his famous phrase “form must ever follow function” that a building’s design must reflect the social purpose of a particular space.



Figure **13.4.9.22.2.4**: Louis Sullivan, The Wainwright Building, 1891, St. Louis (photo: Tom Bastin, CC: BY 2.0)

Sullivan illustrates this philosophy by describing an ideal tripartite skyscraper. First, there should be a base level with a ground floor for businesses that require easy public access, light, and open space, and a second story also publicly accessible by stairways. These floors should then be followed by an infinite number of stories for offices, designed to look all the same because they serve the same function. Finally, the building should be topped with an attic storey and distinct cornice line to mark its endpoint and set it apart from other buildings within the cityscape. For Sullivan, the characteristic feature of a skyscraper was that it was tall, and so the building’s design should serve that goal by emphasizing its upward momentum.



Figure **13.4.9.22.2.5**: Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, Chicago (while still Schlesinger & Mayer, with original cornice and before addition at right)

Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, Chicago (while still Schlesinger & Mayer, with original cornice and before addition at right)

By the turn of the century, Sullivan adapted these ideas to a new context, a department store for the Schlesinger & Mayer company that was soon purchased by Carson, Pirie, Scott. In contrast to Sullivan’s earlier office buildings (like the 1891 Wainwright Building in St.

Louis—image right), Carson, Pirie, Scott in downtown Chicago was intended to meet its patrons' needs in a much different way. Instead of emphasizing the beehive of identical windows meant to reflect the identical work taking place in each individual office, in the Carson Pirie Scott building, Sullivan highlighted instead the lower street-level section and entryway to draw shoppers into the store. This was done in a number of ways. The windows on the ground floor, displaying the store's products, are much larger than those above. The three doors of the main entrance were placed within a rounded bay on the corner of the site, so that they are visible from all directions approaching the building.



Figure 13.4.9.22.2.6: Detail of corner entrance, Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, 1899 and 1903–04, Chicago (photo: Chris Smith, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)

The corner entryway and the entire base section are differentiated from the spare upper stories by a unified system of extremely ornate decoration. The cast-iron ornament contains the same highly complicated, delicate, organic and floral motifs that had become hallmarks of Sullivan's design aesthetic. For Sullivan, the decorative program served a functional project as well: to distinguish the building from those surrounding it, and to make the store attractive to potential customers.

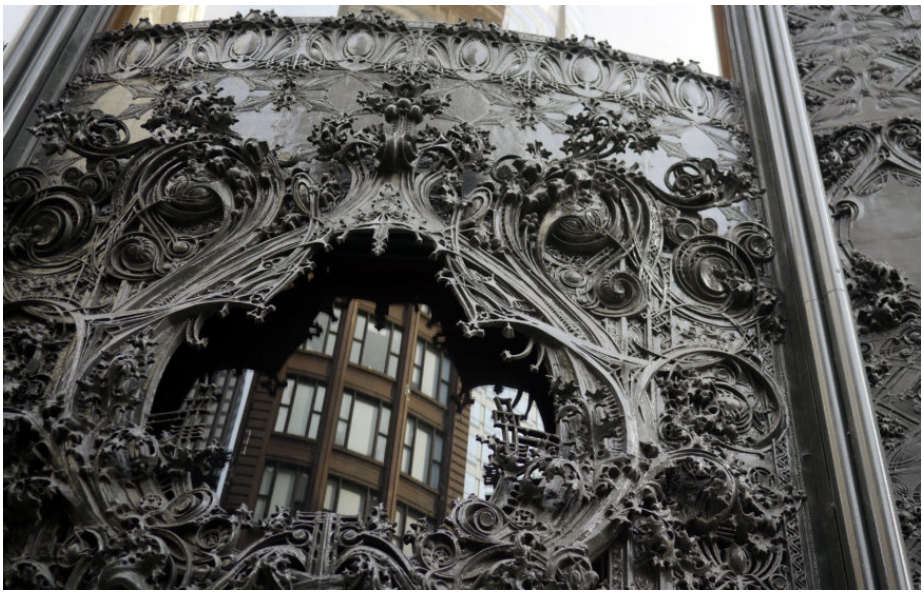


Figure 13.4.9.22.2.7: Detail of corner entrance, Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, 1899 and 1903–04, Chicago (photo: Dauvit Alexander, CC: BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Figure **13.4.9.22.2.8**: Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott Building, 1899 and 1903–04, Chicago (photo: artistmac, CC BY-SA 2.0)

The upper parts of the Carson, Pirie, Scott building also reflect Sullivan's adaptation of his skyscraper theory to a department store. Each successive story of the white terra-cotta façade contains identical windows, in this case the three-sectioned "Chicago" window common to late nineteenth-century skyscrapers in the city. There is an overhanging cornice at the very top that seems to signify the end of the building's ascent, and makes the slightly set-back attic level distinct from the broad mid-section and the dark cast-iron decoration of the base level.

Unlike Sullivan's office buildings, however, the building's primary thrust is horizontal rather than vertical. Sullivan's design emphasizes the long, uninterrupted lines running under each window from each side of the building towards the entry bay, while the decorative base at the bottom and the cornice line at the top flow seamlessly around the corner.

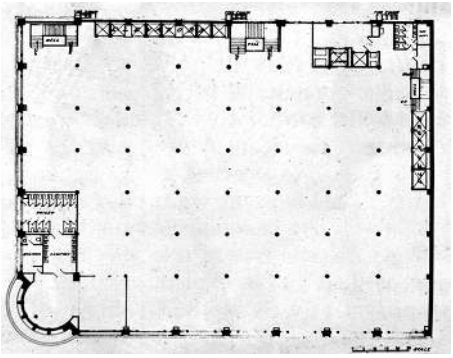


Figure **13.4.9.22.2.9**: Louis Sullivan, Open floorplan of Carson, Pirie, Scott Building

The wide rectangular window frames and relatively squat twelve-story frame were intended to meet the specific requirements of a department store, whose mission called for expansive open spaces to display products to customers, not endless individual offices.

Some later critics like Lewis Mumford and Sigfried Giedion viewed the lower, ornamental section of Sullivan's Carson Pirie Scott building as an uncomfortable disruption to the otherwise stripped-down, planar style they favored. Nevertheless, the building's continuous operation well into the twenty-first century speaks not only to the prestige of Sullivan's name, but also to the sustained value of architecture as a corporate symbol.



Figure 13.4.9.22.2.10: Terracotta detail, Louis Sullivan, Carson, Pirie, Scott, 1899, 1903-04, Chicago (photo: Steve Minor, all rights reserved, by permission)

With its elaborate decorative program and attention paid to the functional requirements of retail architecture, Sullivan's design was a remarkably successful display for the department store's products, even if it diverged from the wholly vertical effect of his earlier skyscrapers.

Additional resources:

Louis Sullivan, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered,” 1896

Louis Sullivan collection at the Art Institute of Chicago

Louis Sullivan and the invention of the skyscraper: the Bayard-Condict Building

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4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building

by DR. MATTHEW A. POSTAL and DR. STEVEN ZUCKER

Page ID

165552



Louis Sullivan, Bayard-Condict Building, 1897–99 (65 Bleecker Street, NYC), a Seeing America video speakers: Dr. Matthew A. Postal and Dr. Steven Zucker

Additional resources

New York City Landmarks Preservation Report
Louis Sullivan, The tall office building artistically considered, 1896
Louis Sullivan papers, etc., Art Institute of Chicago

SmartHistory images for teaching and learning:



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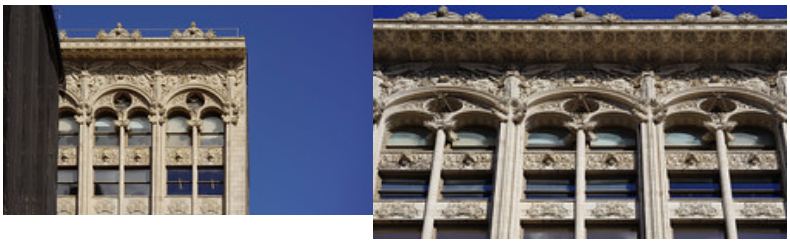
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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Canada in the 19th Century

13.5.1: “A Cheap Farm House,” c. 1864–onward

13.5.2: William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal

13.5.3: Frances Jones (Bannerman), In the Conservatory

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13.5.1: “A Cheap Farm House,” c. 1864–onward

by DR. JESSICA MACE

Page ID
180064



Figure **13.5.1.1**: “A Cheap Farm House,” near Markdale, Ontario (photo: Peter Coffman, 2021)

When you walk through any town in Ontario, Canada, or drive down any of its rural roads, if you look closely at the old houses, you’ll notice that many bear a striking resemblance to one another. This is no accident. In the nineteenth century, as settler development expanded across the territory, architectural plans were circulated in print for prospective homeowners. The purpose of the published designs was so that anyone could build a comfortable and attractive home, with local materials, even in remote places that were beyond the reach of trained architects. Although labeled as a farm house, the design for “A Cheap Farm House” became popular in both the country and the city.

The Canada Farmer



Figure **13.5.1.2**: Elevation, “A Cheap Farm House,” *The Canada Farmer* 1.22, November 15, 1864, p. 340 (Canadiana)

The house pictured above stems from a design published in *The Canada Farmer* in November of 1864 called “A Cheap Farm House.” [1] Founded this same year by George Brown, the owner and publisher of the *Globe*, the bi-weekly periodical was dedicated to agricultural interests. The publication was founded on the belief that the future prosperity of Canada was closely tied to its agriculture, part of the larger settler-colonial project extended to the construction and appearance of rural homes. [2]

“Architecture is perhaps a complimentary word when used in reference to most of the structures which have been erected upon the farms of Canada,” wrote *The Canada Farmer*, and for this reason, the periodical intended “to do somewhat toward improving the

style of rural architecture in Canada." [3] The aim of *The Canada Farmer*'s editors and authors was to spread what they perceived as good taste and architectural ideals to those in rural areas beyond the reach of architects, who mostly lived and worked in big cities. From its very first issue, the journal featured a series on rural architecture that included general advice, but more importantly, architectural drawings, cost estimates, and instructions for construction to help the average person build a house. The "Cheap Farm House" elevation that we see here was attractive but also simple enough to be easily achievable without an architect.

"A Cheap Farm House" model

The designs for the various houses printed in the pages of *The Canada Farmer* were created by James Avon Smith, a budding Toronto-based architect who would go on to have a prolific career. Although a number of models in different styles were published, "A Cheap Farm House" was one of the most popular. Its simple form was easy to recreate and to modify, even in the absence of an architect. It made use of the most basic form for a building, using simple techniques drawing on the vernacular—that is, local knowhow and traditions—so that any builder could execute this design.

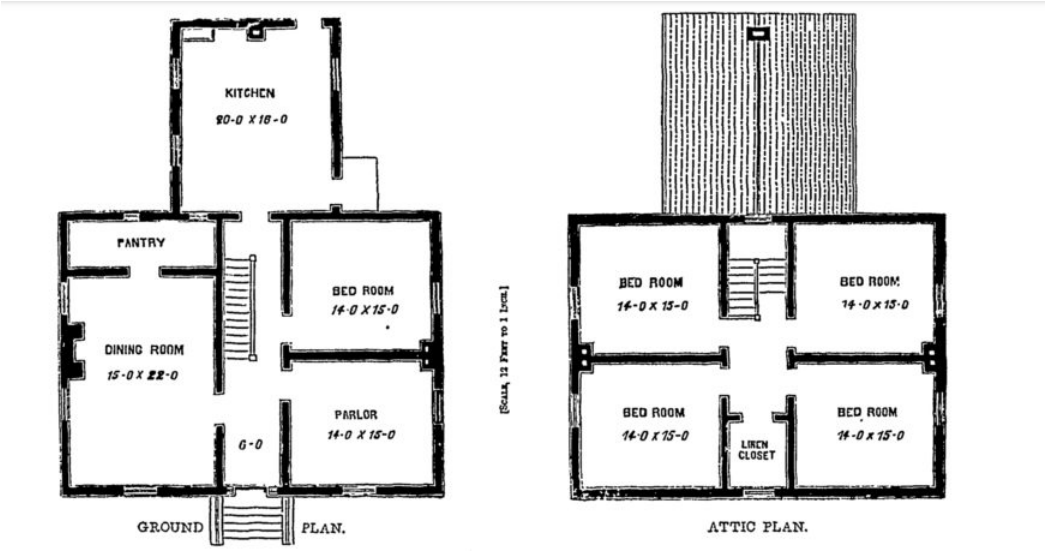


Figure **13.5.1.3**: Plan, "A Cheap Farm House," *The Canada Farmer* 1.22, November 15, 1864, p. 341 (Canadiana)

Built on a simple rectangular plan, the home rises two storeys in height. The façade is defined by a steeply pitched roof and a central window, framed by a gable. There is also a windowless cellar, intended for food storage. The interior layout is divided simply and symmetrically with a central hallway and staircase. Each room is accessible from this central corridor. The kitchen at the back of the house was considered optional, or at least its construction might be postponed to make the initial cost of the house more affordable. Kitchens did not hold the same essential role in the home as they do today. They were often placed in outbuildings to reduce fire risks, to temper heat in the summer, and to keep objectionable cooking smells away from the main house. Similarly, without indoor plumbing and sewage infrastructure, until the turn of the century (and sometimes even later) houses like this would have an outhouse instead of a bathroom.



Figure 13.5.1.4: 220 Centre Street North, Whitby, ON (photo: Jessica Mace)

The instructions stated that this model could be built either of brick or of wood, depending on locally available materials and the budget of the soon-to-be homeowner. The design was made even more customizable with the option of a veranda, shutters, and a picket fence.



Figure 13.5.1.5: 29 Guelph Street, Georgetown, ON (photo: Jessica Mace)

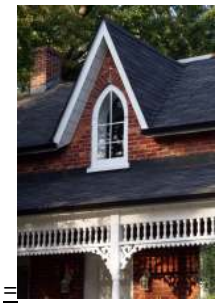


Figure **13.5.1.6**: Window and veranda detail, 81 Main Street, Unionville, ON (photo: Jessica Mace)

Beyond these modifications as outlined in the design brief, in practice, the pointed (or Gothic) window used in the central gable was often converted to a round-headed or squared window. Similar liberties were taken with the wooden bargeboard and finial, which could either be further embellished or omitted entirely. Overall, the cost of the model as presented in the pages of *The Canada Farmer* was estimated at $600 to $800 if made of wood. [4] This is roughly $10,500 to $14,000 CAD today.

Printed media and the built environment

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the small house became a matter of direct architectural concern in industrializing nations, including in the British colonies that would later come to be known as Canada. With the rise of the **Industrial Revolution** social structures changed dramatically, calling for more variety in domestic architecture, and for smaller, affordable housing in particular. It also made building materials more affordable and easier to transport. Also at this time, print technology and distribution made it easier and more affordable for publications of all kinds to be printed and circulated. Both of these important social and economic factors changed the architectural industry in practice and in print.

British culture held considerable cultural and political sway in Canada throughout the 19th century. British architects had already turned their attention to the cottage providing detailed advice, plans, and cost breakdowns speaking directly to the growing middle class. Publications called pattern books were pioneered by Scottish landscape gardener John Claudius Loudon in 1832 with *An Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture, and Furniture*. The format became a popular and affordable way to spread architectural knowledge and taste. Similarly, around this time, architectural periodicals were established that gave advice for architects, builders, and tradespeople, but also for average people with an interest in architecture. Like pattern books, they also occasionally offered models for small homes. Examples include the influential British periodicals *The Builder* (est. 1843) and *The Building News* (est. 1854), which were circulated to the British colonies, including the territory now known as Ontario.

Why Gothic?

The prominent pointed window and the wooden bargeboard in *The Canada Farmer* design link this tiny home to the Gothic Revival trend. This was one of the most popular architectural movements of the nineteenth century, spreading like wildfire in the English-speaking world in particular. First emerging in England in the early eighteenth century, Gothic Revival architects looked to late **medieval Gothic architecture** for inspiration.



Figure **13.5.1.7**: The Centre Block, Canadian Parliament building, with the Peace Tower in front,1859–66, Ottawa, Southern Ontario (photo: Saffron Blaze, CC BY-SA 3.0)

Gothic architecture's popularity would inevitably impact Canadian popular taste, but also because most of the colony's earliest architects were trained in England. Like in England, Gothic was used most notably in church architecture and in prominent secular buildings like the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

As time wore on, the Gothic style was used for smaller, less architecturally significant buildings too. This is because Gothic was believed in the nineteenth century to be the most adaptable of architectural styles. Understood then as a counterpoint to classical architecture, Gothic was seen to have fewer precise rules. For example, a classical Doric temple must follow exact plans, geometry, and measurements. Architects and patrons thought of classical design as harder to translate to different contexts without careful consideration. On the other hand, Gothic could be communicated with only a steep roof and a bit of simple ornamental detail (the pointed window, the bargeboard, or finial). And so, the Gothic Revival provided a path toward an affordable, stylish statement for small houses, and one that was well adapted, because of its steep roof, to shedding heavy snow fall. These are some of the reasons that these minimal Gothic designs caught on in Ontario.



Figure **13.5.1.8**: 36–40 Amelia Street, Toronto, ON (photo: Jessica Mace)

A versatile model



Figure **13.5.1.9**: 54 Spruce Street, Toronto, ON (photo: Jessica Mace)

The Gothic design of “A Cheap Farm House” was not just popular in rural areas—we also find many examples of this model and related models in towns and cities across the province. This was particularly the case for those building in bulk or building speculatively to sell. There are many such homes even in Toronto, Ontario’s largest city.

“A Cheap Farm House” and *The Canada Farmer* acted as a connective thread in the architectural fabric of the province, speaking to a moment in time, and to a desire for style and comfort. This modest house fits into an important network of architectural ideas in Canada and beyond, demonstrating that the trajectory of architectural knowledge in the nineteenth-century was not always straightforward.

Next time you are out wandering, take a look at the old houses. There is much more behind their design than meets the eye.

Notes:

[1] “Rural architecture,” *The Canada Farmer* 1.22, November 15, 1864, p. 340.

[2] “To the farmers of Canada!” *The Canada Farmer* 1.1, January 15, 1864, p. 8.

[3] “Canadian farm architecture,” *The Canada Farmer* 1.1, January 15, 1864, p. 7.

[4] “Rural architecture,” *The Canada Farmer* 1.22, November 15, 1864, p. 340.

Open Art Histories

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Additional resources

James Avon Smith.

An Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture, and Furniture.

Jessica Mace, “**Beautifying the Countryside: Rural and Vernacular Gothic in Late-Nineteenth-Century Ontario**,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 38, no. 1 (2013): pp. 29–36.

Jessica Mace, “The Evolution of the Toronto Bay-and-Gable House,” *Ornamentum* (Spring–Summer 2021): pp. 29–33.

This page titled 13.5.1: “A Cheap Farm House,” c. 1864–onward is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Jessica Mace, ""A Cheap Farm House," c. 1864–onward," in Smarthistory, September 2, 2022, accessed November 1, 2022, 'https://smarthistory.org/a-cheap-farm-house-1864-onward/..

13.5.2: William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal

by DR. ELIZABETH ANNE CAVALIERE

Page ID
180065



Figure **13.5.2.1**: CWilliam Notman, *Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal*, 1884, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 20 x 25 cm (VIEW-1498, McCord Museum, Montreal, Quebec)

The movement of winter ice is so powerful that it can physically change the shape of waterways, destroy entire harbors, block key economic trade routes, and in the most devastating instances, take human life. One of the more spectacular forms of movement is an ice shove, which follows the total ice blockage of a river. Upward pressure from the rising water level behind the blockage forces the ice to suddenly and rapidly jut, or shove, outward. As water levels recede, they leave behind both the piled ice and a hollowed area underneath. But, perhaps the greatest power of this natural force is the way it captures the popular imagination with equal parts wonder and fear as it is photographed and circulated in images such as William Notman's *Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal* from 1884.

A harbour frozen over

In Notman's *Ice Shove*, large pieces of protruding ice fill the foreground as a massive rupture of the ice shove juts into the sky on the right side of the photograph. Posed atop that ice shove are more than a dozen indistinguishable figures standing triumphantly, as though they had summited a mountain peak. The small size of the figures reveals the enormity of the shove, which appears to reach the scale of the buildings along the left edge of the image. The ice pushes directly against the stone buildings that run the length of the port, emphasizing the harbour front's close call with total destruction.

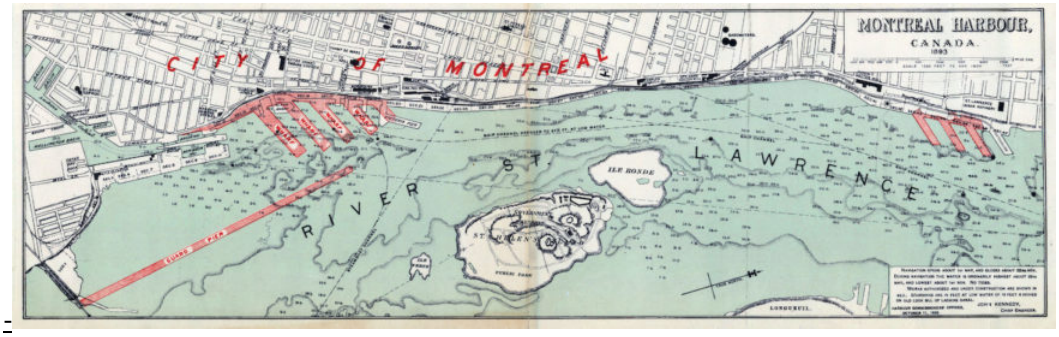


Figure 13.5.2.2: Map of Montreal Harbour, 1893 (Port Montreal)

Throughout the nineteenth century, from December to May, the port in Montreal, Quebec, along the Saint Lawrence River, was blocked by ice and closed to shipping. While the economic heart of the city came to a frozen standstill, the ice gained popularity as a tourist attraction for those who were tempted by its danger and wanted to view its impressive formations. The shoves were a subject of wonder and fascination for the city's residents, but also for people who were curious about the dramatic stories of damage and peril. Photographs like Notman's offered viewers the ability to tour the shoves for themselves, just as we see those doing in the photograph, and were reproduced in many formats—books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, albums, keepsakes, and especially postcards—that circulated the images as far as the postal service could take them. Spectacular ice shoves warranted the effort of hauling cumbersome photographic equipment, including a heavy, large-format camera and tripod, as well as glass negatives and photographic chemicals, out into the elements—not just once, but every year that the ice shove occurred in the port.

Notman and internationalism

Scottish-born, Montreal-based photographer Notman operated a prolific studio business that catered to a range of photographic needs—from portraiture to collectible landscape scenes. The ice shove was a subject that he photographed several times as it occurred in the port throughout the years, a spectacular site that was sure to be of interest to his clientele. His photographs were brought to the attention of Queen Victoria after Notman photographed her son, the prince of Wales in 1860. Soon after, Notman touted himself as "Photographer to the Queen," which he had inscribed into the stone over his studio doors as a way to bolster his reputation. By 1865 he had set up studio branches throughout Canada and into the United States. As a result, he was among the first Canadian photographers to gain an international reputation.



Figure **13.5.2.3**: William Notman & Son, *Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill*, Montreal 1885, silver salts on glass, gelatin dry plate process, 17 x 12 cm (McCord Museum, Montreal, Canada)

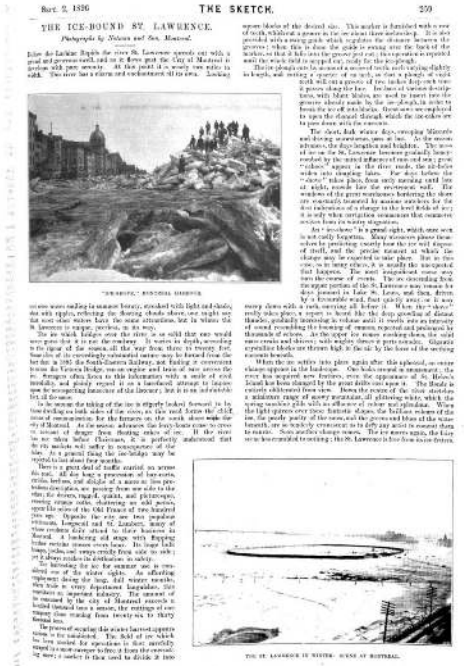
Like other commercial photographers in the late nineteenth century, Notman also photographed celebrities and events of public interest—including Buffalo Bill's Wild West show that made a stop in Montreal in 1885 on its nearly thirty-year tour of North America and Europe. In *Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill*, Notman famously captures Hunkpapa Lakota (Sioux) leader and former warrior-turned-performer Sitting Bull along with legendary plainsman and showman William "Buffalo Bill" Cody.



Figure **13.5.2.4**: Left: Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, Montreal, QC, Canadian Illustrated News (30 October 1869); right: William Notman, Albert, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, Montreal, QC, 1869, silver salt on glass, 25 x 20 cm (McCord Museum, Montreal)

Picturing a precarious port: the circulation of photographs

On Oct. 30, 1869, Notman's portrait of Prince Arthur appeared on the front page of the inaugural issue of Montreal's *Canadian Illustrated News*. The photograph was reproduced as a Leggotype, a halftone printing process that enlarged, reduced, or reversed photographs for print publication in a way that would simulate a continuous gradation of tone. This technological feat cleared the way for highly detailed photographic reproduction to reach a wide-ranging audience through printed newspapers and periodicals.



Sept. 2, 1896 THE SKETCH. 259

THE ICE-BOUND ST. LAWRENCE.

Photographs by Notman and Son, Montreal.

Figure 13.5.2.5: "The Ice-Bound St. Lawrence," *The Sketch* 188.15 (September 2, 1896), p. 259

Decades later, Notman's 1884 photograph of the ice shove was printed in the September 1896 issue of *The Sketch*, a popular British illustrated magazine, to accompany the story "The Ice-Bound St. Lawrence." It casts the winter port vividly, with wonder and nostalgia:

> ***Down the center of the river stretches a miniature range of snowy mountains all glittering white, which the spring sunshine gilds with an affluence of colour and splendour. When the light quivers over these fantastic shapes, the brilliant colours of the ide, the pearly purity of the snow, and the greens and blues of the water beneath are so tenderly effervescent as to defy any artist to commit them to canvas."The Ice-Bound St. Lawrence," The Sketch (September 2, 1896) [1]***



Figure 13.5.2.6: Notman's photo of the ice shove, p. 20 in Thomas C. Keefer, *Ice floods and winter navigation of the lower St. Lawrence*,… (Ottawa: J. Hope & sons, 1898)

In addition to *The Sketch*, which described the shove's spectacular presence and beauty, Notman's photograph also appeared in a government report (by Thomas C. Keefer) to demonstrate and document the disaster, as well as on postcards (such as the one below) produced by a variety of manufacturers over the next decade.



Figure 13.5.2.7: "Montreal, Ice Shove," postcard, Montreal import Co. (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec)

A similar postcard with a photograph taken by Notman of the ice shove in 1875 not only indicates an enduring interest in the phenomenon of the ice shove, but also a reflection of something quintessential about Montreal's resilience as a community with its caption: "Hearty Greetings from Montreal."



Figure **13.5.2.8**: "Hearty Greetings from Montreal, ice shove in Harbor," 1875, postcard (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec)

Photographs such as Notman's offered spectacular views of popular events and scenes while also providing a way for people to imagine the failure or success of a Canadian city's ability to cope with the forces of nature.

Notes:

[1] "The Ice-bound St. Lawrence." *The Sketch* 188.15 (September 2, 1896), p. 259.

Open Art Histories

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Additional resources:

Demonstration of halftone process

Sarah Parsons, **"William Notman, Life & Work,"** (2013–2014).

Port Montreal, "**Where were the first port operations located in Montreal?**"

"The Ice-bound St. Lawrence," *The Sketch* 188.15 (September 2, 1896).

Douglas Borthwick, *History of Montreal, Including the Streets of Montreal. Their Origin and History*. (Montreal: D. Gallagher, 1897).

Elizabeth. Cavaliere, "Flood Watch: The Construction and Evaluation of Photographic Meaning in Alexander Henderson's *Snow and Flood After the Great Storms of 1869*," in *The Photograph and the Collection*, ed. Graeme Farnell (Edinburgh and Boston: Museums Etc., 2013), pp. 244–267.

Charles N. Forward, "The Development of Canada's Five Leading National Ports." *Urban History Review* 10, no. 3 (February, 1982), pp. 26–27.

Jason Gilliand, "Muddy Shore to Modern Port: Redimensioning the Montréal Waterfront Time-Space." *The Canadian Geographer* 48, no. 4 (2004), pp. 463–465.

David Harris, “Alexander Henderson’s *Snow and Flood after Great Storms of 1869*.” *Revue d’Art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 16, no. 2 (1989), pp. 155-160, 262–272.

Jeffrey H. Jackson, “Envisioning Disaster in the 1910 Paris Floods.” *Journal of Urban History* vol. 37, no. 2 (December 2010), pp. 176–207.

Thomas C. Keefer, “Ice Floods and Winter Navigation of the Lower St. Lawrence” in *From the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada.* Second Series 1898–99 Volume 4 Section 3. (Ottawa: J. Hope & Sons; Toronto: The Copp-Clark Co., 1898), pp. 6–7.

Sarah Parsons, *William Notman: Life and Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2014).

Joan M. Schwartz, “Documenting Disaster: Photography at the Desjardins Canal, 1857.” *Archivaria* 25 (January 1987), pp. 147–54

Thomas C. Keefer. “Ice Floods and Winter Navigation of the Lower St. Lawrence.” In *From the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada.* Second Series, volume 4, section 3 (Ottawa: J. Hope & Sons; Toronto: The Copp-Clark Co., 1898), pp. 3–17.

Stanley Triggs, *William Notman: The Stamp of a Studio* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario / Coach House Press, 1895).

This page titled 13.5.2: William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal is shared under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Dr. Elizabeth Anne Cavaliere, "William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal," in Smarthistory, January 21, 2022, accessed November 1, 2022, https://smarthistory.org/william-notman-ice-shove-montreal/..

13.5.3: Frances Jones (Bannerman), In the Conservatory

by **DR. SAMANTHA BURTON**

Page ID
180338



Figure **13.5.3.1**: Frances Jones Bannerman, *In the Conservatory*, 1883, oil on canvas, 46.5 x 80.6 cm (Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS; photo: Samantha Burton)

In Frances Jones's **Impressionist** painting *In the Conservatory,* a young woman reads in a glass windowed interior full of tropical plants. [1] The setting is the conservatory in the Jones family's home in Halifax. This might be a familiar, even mundane scene to a twenty-first-century viewer, but it was very unusual for nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. A large collection of exotic indoor plants was a luxury few could afford before the widespread availability of plate glass and the invention of modern heating and ventilation systems. As such, while this painting seems at first glance to be an intimate representation of modern domesticity, it in fact reflects Halifax's—and Jones's—place in political, economic, and cultural networks that stretched across the globe.

Modern domestic life

In the Conservatory shows the artist's cousin Nelly sitting on a wicker chair surrounded by a lush collection of colorful plants and flowers. Wearing a modern dress and casual hairstyle, Nelly reads a book by herself. We see her from behind, her figure framed by the curving leaves of a large green plant in the background. This warmly lit composition emphasizes her quiet solitude. This cozy scene contrasts with the damp grey exterior outside the big plates of glass. Here, the trees have been stripped of most of their leaves and the blurry brushwork gives the impression of condensation on the windows. Comfortably indoors, Nelly seems the very picture of domestic leisure, untouched by the outside world. Absorbed in a book, she turns her back to the viewer. She, like the plants that surround her, might be seen as a delicate object sequestered away in a space dedicated to her care.



Figure 13.5.3.2: Mary Cassatt, *The Child's Bath*, 1893, oil on canvas, 100.3 x 66.1 cm (Art Institute of Chicago)

Women artists like Jones often painted domestic subjects similar to that depicted in *In the Conservatory*. Jones's Impressionist peers Helen McNicoll, Mary Cassatt, and Berthe Morisot all painted women in domestic interiors and gardens reading, sewing, and doing other activities associated with white, bourgeois femininity. Women painted these subjects not because they were naturally inclined to them, but because of their limited access to the modern public spaces—bars, cafés, city streets—painted by their male colleagues.

Although often not recognized as such, the everyday lives of women like Nelly were equally modern subjects, and a new and exciting theme for art. Plant conservatories were popular subjects for artists in the later nineteenth century. Versions of the theme by Morisot, J. J. J. Tissot, and Édouard Manet would have been familiar to contemporary exhibition audiences.

Jones's painting was exhibited at the prestigious Paris Salon, the first painting of an identifiable Canadian location to be given such an honor. [2] Viewers in Paris must have been surprised by the modern luxury of this Canadian domestic interior and the cultured refinement of Nelly herself.

Transplants



Figure 13.5.3.3: Photograph of Nelly posing in the Jones conservatory, date and photographer unknown (presumably Jones herself, c. 1882–83) (Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS)

But *In the Conservatory* is not a straightforward representation of a domestic space separate from the outside world. The painting, in fact, suggests political, economic, and cultural networks that stretch across the globe in both its subject matter and style. In particular, the plants and flowers are tropical varieties non-native to Nova Scotia. The plants on display were part of Jones's father's extensive horticultural collection, which also included an arboretum on the family's Halifax estate. The vivid colors of the plants present a striking contrast to the gloomy grays and browns beyond the windows, highlighting their foreignness to nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. The artist includes numerous terracotta pots and a watering can, emphasizing the deliberately cultivated origins of the plants.

Plant collecting has a long history in Western Europe and in settler colonies like Canada and the United States. Beginning in the fifteenth century, this practice was closely linked to European colonization. Plants from across the world came to European attention through colonial exploration and trade. The development of natural history as a field of knowledge was one way Europeans made physical and aesthetic sense of their new worlds. Visual culture played an important role in developing new

knowledge about plants and animals, as specimens were chronicled in illustrations that circulated widely. The discipline of natural history also gave colonization a scientific backing and provided a false justification for the exploitation of local labour and natural resources. As part of this process, plants were uprooted from their places of origin and transported to Europe, where they became objects of study, commerce, and display.



Figure **13.5.3.4**: Clive Gardiner, *Kew Gardens*, 1927, color lithograph poster, 101.6 x 63.5 cm (London Transport Museum, London, UK)

The first modern public Western botanical gardens emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Built for public education and entertainment, botanical gardens promised to make the flora and fauna of the empire visible to the metropole. An advertisement for London's Kew Gardens, for example, promises "All Climates, all Floras, at your choice." Kew was home to one of the largest and most extensive plant collections in Europe in the nineteenth century, and its glass conservatory buildings were some of the first and largest of their kind. Jones and her family may have visited Kew on one of their many trips to London—it was a "must see" for Canadians abroad. Another Canadian artist, Emily Carr, wrote about her own experience at Kew, describing it as "a bouquet culled from the entire world." Smaller-scale private conservatories like the Joneses' gained popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, inspired by places like Kew. Part of the pleasure these spaces gave to their owners and visitors was pride that they were members of a global community that had the power and wealth to amass such an impressive collection, and the knowledge to transplant, condense, and reorganize the world on their own terms in their own backyards.



Figure **13.5.3.5**: Frances Jones, *Sand Beach, South Shore, Bermuda*, 1876, watercolor on paper, 16.2 x 24.5 cm (private collection; photo: Samantha Burton)



Figure **13.5.3.6**: Frances Jones, photograph of Jamaica, date unknown (Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS)

The transnational links evident in the painting are based firmly on Canada's membership in the British Empire. When this painting was made in 1883, Canada was still a fairly new nation. While Confederation in 1867 had united several British colonies as a self-governing country, Canada remained closely tied to Britain politically, economically, and culturally. The Jones family was securely embedded in these networks. Halifax was a key port linking Canada, Britain, the United States, and the Caribbean in the nineteenth century, and the artist's father was a wealthy merchant and company owner in the thriving West Indies trade market. He was also a politician who was elected to Parliament on an Anti-Confederation platform aimed at preserving Nova Scotia's colonial trade economy. Photographs, sketches, and written evidence show that the extended Jones family travelled widely throughout the British Empire, trips that made their plant collecting possible.



Figure **13.5.3.7**: Frances Jones Bannerman, *In the Conservatory* (detail), 1883, oil on canvas, 46.5 x 80.6 cm (Nova Scotia Archives, Halifax, NS; photo: Samantha Burton)

Although it is difficult to identify and trace the painted plants with any certainty, photographs and another painting of the conservatory show pots of geraniums and clivia, two varieties originating in South Africa. Most prominent in the painting is the large green taro plant at the back of the conservatory. Taro was originally transplanted to the Caribbean alongside breadfruit and plantain to serve as a food source for enslaved people. Here, its broad leaves form an overhanging umbrella that visually shields the reading woman from the rainy outdoors. Hovering over this idyllic scene, the plant's connection to a history of subsistence and enforced labor is a sobering reminder of the colonial power systems that make this white woman's leisure possible.

Light and air

In the Conservatory also suggests transnational networks through its style. The painting was one of the first major Canadian experiments with Impressionism, an artistic movement focused on representing modern subjects and experimenting with new

compositions, loose, sketchy brushstrokes, and the effects of light and color studied *en plein air* (in the open air). Impressionists like Jones attempted to represent a more spontaneous view of the world, painting what they saw directly from nature. These qualities are shown in *In the Conservatory*. While the figure is treated relatively conventionally, the space seems somewhat off-kilter, light glints off each surface, and the brushwork used to represent the flowers and outdoor landscape is loose and sketchy.

Impressionism originated in France but was transported across the globe by artists like Jones, who studied art in Paris. Jones was a member of the first generation of Canadian artists for whom it was common to travel to Europe to attend art school and pursue a professional art career, due to improved transportation and communication infrastructure. Although she would have gone seeking a traditional art education, she also found a more avant-garde approach to art than was available in Canada at the time. Although the painting may not seem especially controversial today, Impressionism was the subject of much debate in the Canadian art world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and unpopular among audiences who found the style too modern.

Although on first glance *In the Conservatory* appears to be a representation of bourgeois femininity, this is not just a domestic scene shut off from the outside world. Jones's painting provides evidence of how her family's household, Halifax, and Canada were connected to global artistic, trade, and colonial networks. By looking closely at the work's subject and style we can begin to expand the boundaries of Canadian art history beyond the nation's geographical borders.

Notes:

[1] Although the artist is now often known by the name Frances Jones Bannerman, I use Frances Jones throughout because the work under discussion was painted and exhibited before her marriage to the English artist Hamlet Bannerman.

[2] Mora Dianne O'Neill, *Two Artists Time Forgot / Deux artistes oubliées par l'histoire: Frances Jones (Bannerman) and Margaret Campbell MacPherson* (Halifax: AGNS, 2006), p. 78.

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Additional resources

Katerina Atanassova, ed., *Canada and Impressionism: New Horizons, 1880–1930* (Ottawa, ON: National Gallery of Canada, 2019).

Samantha Burton, "Transplanting Impressionism to Canada," in *Mapping Impressionist Painting in Transnational Contexts*, edited by Emily C. Burns and Alice Price (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 65-76.

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Index

Glossary

Sample Word 1 | Sample Definition 1

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    - TitlePage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - InfoPage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - Table of Contents - *Undeclared*
    - Licensing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1: Native North American art, c. 1500 – today - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.1: Terms and Issues in Native American Art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.2: About geography and chronological periods in Native American art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.3: East - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.1: Global trade and an 18th-century Anishinaabe outfit - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.2: Anishinaabe shoulder bag - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.3: The bandolier bag - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.4: Bandolier Bag - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.5: Codex Canadensis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.4: West - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.1: Juana Basilia Sitmelelene, Presentation Basket (Chumash) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.2: Bear Claw Necklace (Pawnee) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.3: Eastern Shoshone- Hide Painting of the Sun Dance, attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.4: Feathered war bonnet - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.5: Headdress (Cheyenne or Lakota) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.6: Paukeigope (Kiowa), Cradleboard - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.7: Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), Battle of Little Bighorn - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.8: War Shirt (Upper Missouri River) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.9: Nellie Two Bear Gates, Suitcase - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.10: Henry Oscar One Bull, Custer's War - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.11: Carrie Bethel (Mono Lake Paiute), Basket bowl - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.12: Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Earth Song - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.13: Brummett Echohawk (Pawnee), An Island of Redbuds on the Cimarron - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.5: Southwest - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.1: Pueblo architecture and its relationship to place - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.3: Acoma polychrome water jar - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.4: Hopi- White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.5: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.6: Puebloan- Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.7: Julian Martinez, Buffalo Dancers - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.8: Awa Tsireh (Puebloan), Pottery Makers - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.9: The pueblo modernism of Ma Pe Wi - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.6: Northwest coast - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 1.6.1: Tsimshian shaman's rattle - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.2: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.3: Transformation masks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.4: North Wind Mask - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.5: Arctic clothing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.7: Haida potlatch pole - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.8: Bentwood Boxes of the Northwest Coast peoples - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.9: Tlingit mortuary and memorial totem poles - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.10: Tlingit Proud Raven totem pole, Saxman Totem Park - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.11: Tlingit Oyster Man totem pole, Saxman Totem Park - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.12: Dorica Jackson, Diving Whale Chilkat Robe - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.13: Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit), Resilience Robe - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.14: Northwest Coast Basketry—Woven Traditions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 1.7: Contemporary art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1.7.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1.7.2: Wendy Red Star, 1880 Crow Peace Delegation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.8: Contemporary Native American Architecture - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 2: Colonial period - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.1: Theodore de Bry's Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.2: Portraits of John and Elizabeth Freake (and their baby) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.3: Puritan court cupboard - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.4: African Burial Ground, New York City - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.5: John Smibert, The Bermuda Group - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.6: Gerardus Duyckinck I (attributed), Six portraits of the Levy-Franks family, c. 1735 - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.7: Silver sugar bowl - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.8: Benjamin West - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.8.1: Benjamin West, The Death of General Wolfe - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.8.2: Benjamin West, Penn's Treaty with the Indians - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.9: John Singleton Copley - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.1: John Singleton Copley, A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.3: John Singleton Copley, Paul Revere - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.4: John Singleton Copley, The Copley Family - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.5: Watson and the Shark - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 3: Early Republic - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.1: John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.2: Jean-Antoine Houdon, George Washington - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.3: Gilbert Stuart - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3.1: Gilbert Stuart, The Skater - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3.2: Lansdowne Portrait - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.4: Thomas Jefferson - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4.1: Monticello - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4.2: Rotunda, University of Virginia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.5: Charles Willson Peale - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5.1: An African Muslim among the founding fathers, Charles Willson Peale's Yarrow Mamout - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5.2: Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5.3: The Artist in His Museum - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.6: John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.7: Thomas Birch - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.7.1: Perry's Victory on Lake Erie - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.7.2: Fairmount Water Works - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4: United States in the 19th century - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.1: Beginner's guide—American art in context - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1.1: The Mexican-American War- 19th-century American art in context - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1.2: John Brown's "tragic prelude" to the U.S. Civil War - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.1.4: Nativism, immigration, and the Know-Nothing party - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.2: The 1893 Chicago World's Fair - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition-Introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.2.2: The White City and fairgrounds - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.2.3: The Midway - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.3: Romanticism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.1: Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.2: Thomas Cole - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.2: The Oxbow - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.3: Hicks's The Peaceable Kingdom as Pennsylvania parable - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.4: George Catlin, The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.5: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.6: Rothermel, De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.7: Jasper Francis Cropsey, Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.8: Frederic Edwin Church - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.8.3: The Iceberg - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.4: The U.S. Civil War in Art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.1: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War in Art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.2: "The Immediate Cause of the Civil War," an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.3: The problem of picturing slavery - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.4: Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.6: Images in a divided world - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.7: Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.8: Memory and commemoration of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.9: Experiences of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.10: Refugees, prisoners, and displacement - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.11: Homes and families - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.5: Realism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.1: Francis Guy, Winter Scene in Brooklyn - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.2: John Wesley Jarvis, Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.3: William Sidney Mount, Bargaining for a Horse - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.4: John James Audubon, The Wild Turkey - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.5: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.6: George Caleb Bingham, Country Politician - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.7: George Caleb Bingham, The County Election - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.8: Frederic Church, The Natural Bridge, Virginia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.9: Blythe, Justice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.10: Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.11: Eastman Johnson, A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.12: Lilly Martin Spencer, The Home of the Red, White, and Blue - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.13: Samuel Colman, Jr., Ships Unloading, New York - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.14: Thomas Eakins - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

        - 4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.5.15: Winslow Homer - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.4: The Life Line - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.6: Northeaster - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.5.16: Grafton Tyler Brown, View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.6: Western art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6.1: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6.2: The end of an era- Remington's The Fall of the Cowboy - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.7: Aestheticism and the Gilded Age - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7.2: John Singer Sargent - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.1: El Jaleo - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7.3: Childe Hassam - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.8: Photography - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8.1: Carleton Watkins - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8.2: Timothy O'Sullivan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8.3: Jacob Riis, "Knee-Pants" at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater's Shop, from How the Other Half Lives - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9: Sculpture and architecture - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.1: The Alamo (and Mission San Antonio de Valero) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.2: Inventing America, Colt's Experimental Pocket Pistol - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.3: Cultures and slavery in the American south- a Face Jug from Edgefield county - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.4: David Drake, Double-handled jug - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.5: Little Round House - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.6: John Quincy Adams Ward, The Freedman - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.7: Anna Pottery, Snake jug - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.8: Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.9: William Wetmore Story, Cleopatra - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.10: Thomas Crawford, George Washington Equestrian Monument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.11: Slave Burial Ground, University of Alabama - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.12: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.13: Olmsted and Vaux, Central Park - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.14: William Howard (attributed), Writing desk - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.15: Herter Brothers, Mark Hopkins House Side Chair - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.16: Robert Mills and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.9.17: The light of democracy — examining the Statue of Liberty - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.18: Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.19: Defeated, heroized, dismantled- Richmond's Robert E. Lee Monument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.20: Shrady and Casey, Ulysses S. Grant Memorial - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.22: Louis Sullivan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 13.4.9.21: Burnham and Root - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.21.1: The Monadnock Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.21.2: Reliance Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.4.9.23: Carrère and Hastings, The New York Public Library - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 5: Canada in the 19th Century - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.5.1: "A Cheap Farm House," c. 1864–onward - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.5.2: William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.5.3: Frances Jones (Bannerman), In the Conservatory - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- Back Matter - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - Index - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - Glossary - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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By Page

- SmartHistory of Art XIb - North America 1500 to 1900 - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - Front Matter - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - TitlePage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - InfoPage - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - Table of Contents - *Undeclared*
    - Licensing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1: Native North American art, c. 1500 – today - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.1: Terms and Issues in Native American Art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.2: About geography and chronological periods in Native American art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.3: East - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.1: Global trade and an 18th-century Anishinaabe outfit - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.2: Anishinaabe shoulder bag - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.3: The bandolier bag - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.4: Bandolier Bag - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.3.5: Codex Canadensis - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.4: West - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.1: Juana Basilia Sitmelelene, Presentation Basket (Chumash) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.2: Bear Claw Necklace (Pawnee) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.3: Eastern Shoshone- Hide Painting of the Sun Dance, attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.4: Feathered war bonnet - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.5: Headdress (Cheyenne or Lakota) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.6: Paukeigope (Kiowa), Cradleboard - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.7: Mató Nájin/Standing Bear (Minneconjou Lakota/Teton Sioux), Battle of Little Bighorn - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.8: War Shirt (Upper Missouri River) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.9: Nellie Two Bear Gates, Suitcase - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.10: Henry Oscar One Bull, Custer's War - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.11: Carrie Bethel (Mono Lake Paiute), Basket bowl - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.12: Allan Houser (Chiricahua Apache), Earth Song - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.4.13: Brummett Echohawk (Pawnee), An Island of Redbuds on the Cimarron - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.5: Southwest - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.1: Pueblo architecture and its relationship to place - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.2: Mission Church, San Esteban del Rey, Acoma Pueblo - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.3: Acoma polychrome water jar - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.4: Hopi- White Ogre Tihu (Katsina Figure) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.5: Nampeyo (Hopi-Tewa), polychrome jar - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.6: Puebloan- Maria Martinez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.7: Julian Martinez, Buffalo Dancers - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.8: Awa Tsireh (Puebloan), Pottery Makers - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 1.5.9: The pueblo modernism of Ma Pe Wi - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 1.6: Northwest coast - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 1.6.1: Tsimshian shaman's rattle - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.2: Ceremonial belt (Kwakwaka'wakw) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.3: Transformation masks - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.4: North Wind Mask - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.5: Arctic clothing - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.6: Haida totem pole, from Old Kasaan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.7: Haida potlatch pole - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.8: Bentwood Boxes of the Northwest Coast peoples - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.9: Tlingit mortuary and memorial totem poles - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.10: Tlingit Proud Raven totem pole, Saxman Totem Park - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.11: Tlingit Oyster Man totem pole, Saxman Totem Park - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.12: Dorica Jackson, Diving Whale Chilkat Robe - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.13: Clarissa Rizal (Tlingit), Resilience Robe - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.6.14: Northwest Coast Basketry—Woven Traditions - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 1.7: Contemporary art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1.7.1: Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Trade (Gifts for Trading Land with White People) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 1.7.2: Wendy Red Star, 1880 Crow Peace Delegation - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 1.8: Contemporary Native American Architecture - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 2: Colonial period - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.1: Theodore de Bry's Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.2: Portraits of John and Elizabeth Freake (and their baby) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.3: Puritan court cupboard - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.4: African Burial Ground, New York City - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.5: John Smibert, The Bermuda Group - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.6: Gerardus Duyckinck I (attributed), Six portraits of the Levy-Franks family, c. 1735 - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.7: Silver sugar bowl - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.8: Benjamin West - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.8.1: Benjamin West, The Death of General Wolfe - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.8.2: Benjamin West, Penn's Treaty with the Indians - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 2.9: John Singleton Copley - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.1: John Singleton Copley, A Boy with a Flying Squirrel (Henry Pelham) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.2: John Singleton Copley, Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Mifflin (Sarah Morris) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.3: John Singleton Copley, Paul Revere - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.4: John Singleton Copley, The Copley Family - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 2.9.5: Watson and the Shark - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 3: Early Republic - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.1: John Trumbull, The Declaration of Independence - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.2: Jean-Antoine Houdon, George Washington - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.3: Gilbert Stuart - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3.1: Gilbert Stuart, The Skater - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.3.2: Lansdowne Portrait - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.4: Thomas Jefferson - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4.1: Monticello - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.4.2: Rotunda, University of Virginia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.5: Charles Willson Peale - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5.1: An African Muslim among the founding fathers, Charles Willson Peale's Yarrow Mamout - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5.2: Staircase Group (Portrait of Raphaelle Peale and Titian Ramsay Peale) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.5.3: The Artist in His Museum - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.6: John Vanderlyn, Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 3.7: Thomas Birch - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.7.1: Perry's Victory on Lake Erie - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 3.7.2: Fairmount Water Works - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4: United States in the 19th century - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.1: Beginner's guide—American art in context - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1.1: The Mexican-American War- 19th-century American art in context - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.1.2: John Brown's "tragic prelude" to the U.S. Civil War - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.1.3: Nast and Reconstruction, understanding a political cartoon - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.1.4: Nativism, immigration, and the Know-Nothing party - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.2: The 1893 Chicago World's Fair - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.2.1: The World's Columbian Exposition-Introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.2.2: The White City and fairgrounds - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.2.3: The Midway - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.3: Romanticism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.1: Washington Allston, Elijah in the Desert - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.2: Thomas Cole - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.1: Expulsion from the Garden of Eden - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.2: The Oxbow - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.3: Thomas Cole, The Architect's Dream - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.2.4: The Hunter's Return - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.3: Hicks's The Peaceable Kingdom as Pennsylvania parable - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.4: George Catlin, The White Cloud, Head Chief of the Iowas - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.5: Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.5.1: Washington Crossing the Delaware - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.5.2: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.6: Rothermel, De Soto Raising the Cross on the Banks of the Mississippi - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.7: Jasper Francis Cropsey, Mount Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.8: Frederic Edwin Church - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.8.1: Niagara and Heart of the Andes - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.8.2: Cotopaxi - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.3.8.3: The Iceberg - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.9: Fitz Henry Lane, Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.10: Albert Bierstadt, Hetch Hetchy Valley, California - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.3.11: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.4: The U.S. Civil War in Art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.1: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War in Art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.2: "The Immediate Cause of the Civil War," an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.3: The problem of picturing slavery - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.4: Michelle Browder, Mothers of Gynecology - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.5: Literacy and slavery- David Drake, Double-handled jug - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.6: Images in a divided world - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.7: Imagining the West, territorial expansion, and the politics of slavery - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.8: Memory and commemoration of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.9: Experiences of the U.S. Civil War, an introduction - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.10: Refugees, prisoners, and displacement - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.4.11: Homes and families - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.5: Realism - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.1: Francis Guy, Winter Scene in Brooklyn - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.2: John Wesley Jarvis, Black Hawk and His Son Whirling Thunder - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.3: William Sidney Mount, Bargaining for a Horse - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.4: John James Audubon, The Wild Turkey - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.5: Richard Caton Woodville, War News from Mexico - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.6: George Caleb Bingham, Country Politician - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.7: George Caleb Bingham, The County Election - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.8: Frederic Church, The Natural Bridge, Virginia - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.9: Blythe, Justice - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.10: Thomas Hovenden, The Last Moments of John Brown - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.11: Eastman Johnson, A Ride for Liberty — The Fugitive Slaves - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.12: Lilly Martin Spencer, The Home of the Red, White, and Blue - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.13: Samuel Colman, Jr., Ships Unloading, New York - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.5.14: Thomas Eakins - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

        - 4.5.14.1: The Champion Single Sculls (Max Schmitt in a Single Scull) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.14.2: The Gross Clinic with Timothy Rub - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.14.3: The Gross Clinic - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.5.15: Winslow Homer - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.1: The U.S. Civil War, sharpshooters and Winslow Homer - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.2: Army Teamsters - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.3: Taking Sunflower to Teacher - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.4: The Life Line - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.5: The Fog Warning (or Halibut Fishing) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
        - 4.5.15.6: Northeaster - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.5.16: Grafton Tyler Brown, View of the Lower Falls, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.6: Western art - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6.1: Thomas Moran, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.6.2: The end of an era- Remington's The Fall of the Cowboy - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.7: Aestheticism and the Gilded Age - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7.1: James Abbott McNeill Whistler - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.1.1: Symphony in White, No. 1- The White Girl - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.1.2: Nocturne in Black and Gold- The Falling Rocket - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7.2: John Singer Sargent - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.1: El Jaleo - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.2: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.3: Madame X (Madame Pierre Gautreau) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.4: Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.2.5: Kehinde Wiley on John Singer Sargent - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.7.3: Childe Hassam - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.3.1: Childe Hassam, Snowstorm, Madison Square - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.7.3.2: Childe Hassam, Horticulture Building, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.8: Photography - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8.1: Carleton Watkins - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.1.1: Eagle Creek, Columbia River - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.1.2: Peaks and perils- The life of Carleton Watkins - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8.2: Timothy O'Sullivan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.2.1: A Harvest of Death - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
      - 4.8.2.2: Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.8.3: Jacob Riis, "Knee-Pants" at Forty-Five Cents a Dozen—A Ludlow Street Sweater's Shop, from How the Other Half Lives - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9: Sculpture and architecture - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.1: The Alamo (and Mission San Antonio de Valero) - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.2: Inventing America, Colt's Experimental Pocket Pistol - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.3: Cultures and slavery in the American south- a Face Jug from Edgefield county - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.4: David Drake, Double-handled jug - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.5: Little Round House - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.6: John Quincy Adams Ward, The Freedman - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.7: Anna Pottery, Snake jug - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.8: Hiram Powers, The Greek Slave - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.9: William Wetmore Story, Cleopatra - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.10: Thomas Crawford, George Washington Equestrian Monument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.11: Slave Burial Ground, University of Alabama - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.12: Seneca Village- the lost history of African Americans in New York - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.13: Olmsted and Vaux, Central Park - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.14: William Howard (attributed), Writing desk - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.15: Herter Brothers, Mark Hopkins House Side Chair - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
    - 4.9.16: Robert Mills and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Lincoln Casey, Washington Monument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 4.9.17: The light of democracy — examining the Statue of Liberty - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.18: Monument Avenue and the Lost Cause - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.19: Defeated, heroized, dismantled- Richmond's Robert E. Lee Monument - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.20: Shrady and Casey, Ulysses S. Grant Memorial - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 4.9.22: Louis Sullivan - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.22.1: Bayard-Condict Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.4.9.22.2: Carson, Pirie, Scott Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
- 13.4.9.21: Burnham and Root - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.21.1: The Monadnock Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 4.9.21.2: Reliance Building - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.4.9.23: Carrère and Hastings, The New York Public Library - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

- 5: Canada in the 19th Century - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.5.1: "A Cheap Farm House," c. 1864–onward - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.5.2: William Notman, Ice Shove, Commissioner Street, Montreal - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
  - 13.5.3: Frances Jones (Bannerman), In the Conservatory - *CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*
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