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FARMSCAPES: PICTURING LAND TRANSFORMATION IN NINETEENTH-
CENTURY AMERICA

By

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B.A., University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2005

M.A., University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2011

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Art History

Department of Fine Arts
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December, 2017

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A Dissertation Approved on

November 6, 2017

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Mary Billings,
husband Dr. Stephen Yanoviak, and
daughters Lorelai and Claire.

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ABSTRACT

FARMSCAPES: PICTURING LAND TRANSFORMATION IN NINETEENTH- CENTURY AMERICA

Eileen Yanoviak

November 6, 2017

This dissertation examines American farmstead imagery of the nineteenth-century and how those images reflect the environmental history of the North. In this study, images of farms illustrate, through the landscape, the transition from subsistence farming to agribusiness that fundamentally changed American life and the land over the century. By comparing the actual ecological and economic conditions of the farm and farmer to the images depicted by artists, it is possible to see both representations of change and the persistence of the agrarian myth in spite of dramatically different realities.

This study focuses on the process of change in the American landscape, beginning on the north eastern coast in the early nineteenth century and developing westward through the end of the century with Frederick Jackson Turner's closing of the western frontier. Chapter One provides a foundation for the yeoman ideal using works like Thomas Cole's *The Hunter's Return* (1845). Industrious, independent, hard-working, and noble, the yeoman cleared the countryside and established subsistence farms across the northeast, bringing to fruition Jackson's agrarian nation.

Chapter Two demonstrates the transition from pioneer yeoman farmstead to farmer's agribusiness as reflected in imagery from the mid-nineteenth century. From

technological advancements to prospect views, images of agribusiness express very different values than the yeoman farmsteads in the wilderness. Works by Jasper Francis Cropsey and Edward Hicks are the focal points of this chapter.

Chapter Three looks at the farmstead along the Union and Confederate boundary as a site of anti-slavery sentiment. Farms were simultaneously the site from which slaves wished to depart, the site that harbored them in the escape, and the site of their potential futures, while providing an escape from war for their free counterparts. Other than those depicting Southern plantations, farm imagery that deals specifically with issues of slavery is scarce. Robert Duncanson, Sanford Gifford Robinson, Worthington Whittredge, and William McKendree Snyder provide examples in this chapter.

Finally, Chapter Four follows the path west, looking at representations of major agricultural centers in the West, including the Great Plains and California. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first examines monolithic narratives of a singular "Great West," and the second section looks at specific people and places of the West.

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INTRODUCTION

The sublime wilderness landscape and the cultivated farmscape form two conflicting, but powerful visions of American exceptionalism. The farmstead, like sublime wilderness, was a common subject for landscape painters throughout the nineteenth century, an outgrowth, perhaps, of European pastoral models. However, farm landscapes are often summarily addressed in scholarship for a seeming lack of complexity. The imagery depicting farms ranges from simple pioneer farms to expansive orchards and impressive estates. In the nineteenth century, Americans witnessed dramatic changes during the Industrial Revolution of roughly 1760 to 1840, including the transition from Thomas Jefferson's agrarian nation to the advent of commercial farming. The yeomen farmer, as envisioned by Jefferson, was the morally superior symbol of the bounty of the land and the nation's prospect. That symbol persisted in the face of unprecedented environmental, economic, and social change in America. In this study, I focus on images of farms in the nineteenth century, illustrating, through the physical land, the transition from subsistence farming to agribusiness that fundamentally changed American life and the land. By comparing the actual ecological and economic conditions of the farm and farmer to the images depicted by artists, it is possible to see both representations of change and the persistence of the agrarian myth in spite of dramatically different realities.

This study focuses on the process of change in the American landscape, beginning on the northeastern coast in the early nineteenth century and developing westward

through the end of the century with Frederick Jackson Turner's closing of the frontier.¹ I avoid, almost entirely, the study of the South and economies of slavery because, as historian Elliott West explains about the South,

Dedicated to commercial farming, these settlers were establishing a system of large-scale staple agriculture at the outset, with no preliminaries or transition. Many were planters of means who brought capital, equipment, and slaves. They lived with huge investments and onerous debts and succeeded or failed by shifts among complex markets and by the distant decisions of investors.²

As such, the story of the South has its own trajectory, one which develops largely independent from the narrative of the subsistence farm and its foundational image in American mythology. The imagery of southern farms deserves its own extensive analysis. I do, however, consider the farm image during the Civil War era, particularly at the boundary of the Union and Confederacy. The images I discuss are not, for the most part, images of slave plantations. Instead, the focus is on the farm as site and symbol of anti-slavery sentiment.

The most comprehensive study of farmstead imagery is by venerable art historian Sarah Burns in her valuable book *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture*.³ What Burns does very well is evaluate imagery of country folk and farms of the northeast that were produced largely for northeastern audiences. Her focus is on the actions of people and the iconography of agrarian life—the particularities of environment are not of paramount concern because she wants to

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1898; repr., Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2014).

² Elliot West, "American Frontier," in *Oxford History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 133.

³ Sarah Burns, *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

elucidate the "inherited cultural belief about the significance and otherness of American agriculture and rural life."⁴ In her introduction, Burns explains why imagery of the south and the west are not central to her study, mostly because, she claims, the west was an outgrowth of northeastern economic and political principles, and because the south was an outgrowth of an entirely different social and economic system.⁵ I make a similar distinction about the south.

My research on farmstead imagery builds upon and diverges from Burns in significant ways. While Burns focuses heavily on the human role and tangentially the human in the environment, this study focuses on place and environment, and tangentially the human interaction with that landscape. Therefore, the focus is on images where the primary mode of communication is through the landscapes that humans occupy. Burns makes significant claims in this arena, particularly in the chapters entitled "The Poetry of Labor" and "'Unlovable Things': Farmscapes Real." Both chapters influenced my approach, but I try to expand upon their content, incorporate environmental and local histories, and identify different imagery sources.

Finally, Burns explains in her introduction that the majority of images she focuses on were produced by city-dwellers for city audiences with escapist fantasies. For Burns, the primary way to understand how Americans thought about the farm was through the lens of those who were not farmers. Granted, there is an incredible wealth of information from which to glean those perceptions—from popular prints like Currier & Ives, to paintings by major Hudson River School artists, to popular periodicals like *Harper's Bazaar*. However, if you dig further into local histories and begin to look at publications

⁴ Burns, *Pastoral Inventions*, 3.

⁵ Burns, *Pastoral Inventions*, 8.

and images geared toward the farmers and regional audiences themselves, a fuller picture of the American understanding of the farmstead emerges. While Burns does a remarkable study that expertly weaves in literature, history, culture, capitalism, and politics, there is room for expansion and a different emphasis upon the land itself that simultaneously broadens, complicates, and reinforces our vision of the Arcadian myth(s) of America.⁶

Analysis of farmstead imagery has been heavily anthropocentric, but I am particularly interested in images where the landscape is the primary argument and the land is the primary focus of my analysis.⁷ Landscape painting studies rarely attempt a phenomenological and ecological analysis of both actual and represented landscapes, particularly when it relates to agricultural scenes, which are themselves rarely the focal point of study at all. I do not, however, dismiss the ideological approach that is commonly deployed with images of, for instance, progress and American exceptionalism. As the study of American-landscape-as-ideology has waned in recent years because scholars want to avoid the hegemony that accompanies an overgeneralization of the "American Mind," there has been a dearth of critical landscape scholarship generally.

Art historian and landscape scholar Allan Wallach argues in his essay "Between Subject and Object" that it is possible to rectify ideological and phenomenological readings of the landscape, citing the value of W.J.T. Mitchell's concept of landscape as

⁶ Christiana Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England, 1780 - 1890* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) provides a useful European counterpart to Burns' *Pastoral Inventions*.

⁷ Malcolm Andrews references Jacques Derrida's distinction between the parergon, or ornamentation, and the primary argument of an image which contains landscape. I focus on images where the landscape is the argument, and human figures are parergon. Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7 and Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," trans. by Craig Owens, *October* 9 (1979): 3-41.

ideology in the seminal *Landscape and Power*.⁸ Environmental history and cultural geography study the interaction of humankind with land and nature, the phenomenological aspect, and the ways in which ideas shape that interaction—the ideology. Phenomenology breaks down the subject-object relationship established by ideological readings of landscape, but ideological studies acknowledge the undeniable status of landscape paintings as human-created "views." Cultural geographers Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove conclude, "A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring, or symbolizing surroundings," or in other words, a human construct of a very real, natural surrounding.⁹

American environmental historian William Cronon proposes there are three levels of analysis in the understanding of environmental history, or the history of man's interaction with nature.¹⁰ The first level is to understand the dynamics of natural ecosystems, or, in the case of landscape painting, to identify the ecosystems present within the painted landscape. This may be as simple as identifying the location, if topographical, and the ecology of natural systems present there. This has been too often the single-minded focus of landscape research of topographical works. The second level of analysis is to identify the political economies that people erect within those natural systems. This is closely related to Marx's modes of production, and is a particularly

⁸ Allan Wallach, "Between Subject and Object," in *Landscape Theory*, eds. Rachel Zeady DeLue and James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2008), 315-322. W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, edited by W.J.T. Mitchell, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5-34.

⁹ Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 1.

¹⁰ William Cronon, "Modes of Prophecy and Production: Placing History in Nature," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990):1122, Oxford Academic.

poignant aspect of understanding ideas of progress and nostalgia in American landscape. Finally, where landscape painting can be most instructive, is in the third level of analysis that is the ideological relationship of people to the first and second levels.¹¹

In a 1992 essay, Angela Miller wrote something of a manifesto that proclaims the characteristics of a “national landscape.” The landscape as a “cultural and social abstraction” was created by artists “committed to an identifiably New World image yet faced with a profusion of actual landscape forms” seeking “a formula to balance the demands of place-specific landscapes with those of national meaning.”¹² However, Miller resists the idea that there might be a “univocal nature” of American landscape, and she calls for scholars to recognize the “multitude of associations emanating from the actual, experienced landscape.”¹³ This is precisely the agenda undertaken here, through the lenses of environmental history and cultural geography.

Perhaps this study is particularly poignant now as Americans in particular, but the world more generally, consider food production, its sustainability, and imminent changes (predictable, preventable, or unanticipated) in the ecological landscape. As the community garden and backyard farmer gains popularity, we retain a twenty-first-century nostalgia for the yeoman farm that defined our agrarian nation in spite of realities that paint a very different picture.

¹¹ Cronon, "Modes of Prophecy and Production," 1122.

¹² Angela Miller, “Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of a National Landscape,” *American Literary History* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 207-08, JSTOR.

¹³ Miller, "The Making of National Landscape," 211.

CHAPTER I

THE YEOMAN FARMSTEAD BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

“Cultivators of the earth are the most virtuous and independent citizens.”
-Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1781-82¹⁴

Imagery depicting farmstead landscapes of nineteenth-century America are rarely the focal point of research, overshadowed by the awe-inspiring sublime wilderness scenes that dominate our collective imaginings of unsettled America. Otherwise, narratives of progress and technology occupy the scholar. Scholarship over the past century underscores the sentiment that idealized scenes of rural life, both American and European, portrayed by artists and writers alike, were merely pastorals consumed by and directed towards urban customers wishing to escape the realities of city life.¹⁵ The stereotypical European pastoral landscape, which certainly serves as the model for the conception of the American pastoral, might look something like Titian’s *Pastoral Scene* of c. 1565 (Figure 1.1) or Claude Lorrain’s *Pastoral Landscape: The Roman Campagna*.¹⁶ (Figure 1.2) In Titian’s print, the corrupt and polluted Renaissance city looms in the distance, while the foreground is occupied by resting shepherds, a flock of

¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1781, as reproduced in Merrill D. Peterson, ed. *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* (New York City: Library of America, 1984), 301.

¹⁵ Kenneth J. LaBudde, "Rural Earth: Sylvan Bliss," *American Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1958): 142-53, JSTOR. Henry Nash Smith, "The Western Farmer in Imaginative Literature, 1818-1891," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 36 (1949): 479-90, JSTOR.

¹⁶ For further discussion of Titian and Claude’s, see Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57-58 and 97-98.

sheep, and a poetically ambiguous shrouded nude. The focal point is the ideal countryside of villa culture as an escape from the city. Claude, as the quintessential pastoralist, presents the pleasantries of a rural shepherd playing an instrument amidst his well-behaved livestock within a picturesque countryside. Neither of these ideal landscapes presents a topographical or even environmental reality. Neither do they depict the labors of the rural workers, focusing on repose or pleasure. Finally, these romanticized images are not bound by any temporal restrictions because they exist in an ideal realm.

In his influential book *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, literary scholar Leo Marx explains the enduring preoccupation with the Virgilian pastoral in the study of American ideology:

The pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold upon the native imagination. The reason is clear enough. The ruling motive of the good shepherd, leading figure of the classic, Virgilian mode, was to withdraw from the great world and begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape. And now here was a virgin continent! ... With an unspoiled hemisphere in view it seemed that mankind actually might realize what had been thought a poetic fantasy... Soon the dream of a retreat to an oasis of harmony and joy was... embodied in various utopian schemes for making America the site of a new beginning for Western society.”¹⁷

There is certainly some truth to Marx’s male-centric, consumer-driven interpretation of the pastoral narrative as the result of supply and demand, a concept to which we will return. However, written in 1964, Marx’s hegemonic vision of society obsessed by utopian Arcadian visions of nature in the face of progress has come under scrutiny in revisionist scholarship.¹⁸

¹⁷ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 3.

¹⁸ For an excellent overview of the pastoral in scholarship through the late 1980s, see Lawrence Buell, “Pastoral Ideology Reappraised,” *American Literary History*, col 1 no 1 (Spring 1989): 1-29, JSTOR.

From popular illustrations to fine art paintings, nineteenth-century farmstead images often reveal the human ideological resistance to constantly changing conditions of the physical and social landscape. The disparity between reality and the depicted environment can only be identified through an understanding of environmental change in the nineteenth century, the modes of production upon the land, and the human ideals that determined the perception of the land portrayed. This study is equal parts mythology of the land, physical changes of the land (both natural and human-induced), and human experiences of the land.

There are certainly parallels in popular American imagery that justify an obvious pastoral readings, such as *Spring in the Country* and *Spring in the City* in *Harper's Weekly* in 1858 where the direct comparison of urban and rural relies on European models of the pastoral. (Figures 1.3 and 1.4) The images are accompanied by a brief, but revealing entry that describes the two scenes. Claiming they both represent a specific place, the entry refrains from revealing the location, claiming "It would be unfair to the proprietors of country-seats to reveal the charming spot which has been selected to illustrate spring in the country; for [the readers'] minds would be filled with envy..."¹⁹ The absence of specificity and the implication that the location is approaching "paradise" is precisely what distinguishes *Spring in the Country* from the imagery presented in this chapter.

The images analyzed in this chapter focus on the early American yeoman agrarian ideal of the nineteenth-century. They incorporate aspects of labor, economy, politics, and ideology through depictions of topography, agriculture, architecture, families, farmers,

¹⁹ "Spring in the City and Country," *Harper's Weekly*, April 17, 1858, 250.

ecologies, and, most importantly, the land altered by human activity—concepts which far exceed the parameters of the pastoral. The quintessential American landscape painter, the beloved Thomas Cole, serves as the focal point for this chapter, specifically two farmstead paintings *Landscape* of 1825 and *The Hunter's Return* of 1845. They represent an important span of time that forms the waning of a lifeway—the yeoman in the nineteenth century—and present a nostalgic, ideal version of the agrarian nation.

If labor-free, gentlemanly agriculture exemplifies the European pastoral model, Thomas Cole's 1825 *Landscape* illustrates how inadequate the pastoral model was for a burgeoning American nation. (Figure 1.5) Instead, *Landscape* presents the process, labor, and ideal of yeoman success, an emblem of Jefferson's agrarian nation. A sweeping vista of an increasingly cultivated, yet still wild, land, Cole's landscape eschews the traditional Claudian composition. Rather than a picturesque central recession into space flanked by trees as framing devices, Cole's painting is starkly divided down a central axis by a group of three lush trees. On the left of this division is a man wielding his axe standing in the middle of the foreground path that leads to a mill, cabin, and barn in the distance. On the right, a younger boy sits with a dog near a lake surrounded by cattle. The stark division of space and shifting perspectives implies a simultaneous narrative, or as David E. Nye, who has chronicled the impacts of technologies in American history, observes, the “unfolding of a process.”²⁰

Nye describes this process in Cole's painting as “the emergence of civilization from the log cabin.”²¹ By this, he means that Cole depicts the process and labor of the

²⁰ David E. Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 62.

²¹ Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 62.

“improvement” of the land. The rhetoric of “improvement” emerged in the 1810s and reinforced the idea that land should be claimed from wilderness and made to serve the purposes of livelihood.²² The preliminary step in improvement of the wilderness landscape was the clearing of the land (and construction of the cabin), accomplished by the labor of the settler wielding the axe. This scene was painted long before Cole’s oft-quoted 1836 “Essay on American Scenery” where he lamented, “. . .the ravages of the axe are daily increasing.”²³ Instead, here, there is a neutral, if not optimistic, presentation of the frontiersman living in harmony with the natural resources he simultaneously subdues with his axe. Nye explains this as a uniquely American “technological sublime”: “The sublime was inseparable from a peculiar double action of the imagination by which the land was appropriated as a natural symbol of the nation, while at the same time, it was being transformed into a man-made landscape.”²⁴

In Cole’s *Landscape*, the land has already been cleared of many of its trees, supplying the lumber necessary to construct the cabin, water-driven mill, and barn in the distance. This farmstead is well “improved” by several years’ labor. Presumably, the land was covered in trees before the settler’s arrival, though he may have found a patch of cleared land abandoned by Native Americans.²⁵ He continues the process of clearing and constructing, a monumental task. A farmer could chop, log, burn, plow, and sow ten acres

²² Steven Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 20.

²³ Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” republished in *American Art to 1900: A Documentary History*, ed Sarah Burns et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

²⁴ David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 37.

²⁵ Simon Litten, “Agriculture in the Hudson Basin Since 1609,” in *Environmental History of the Hudson River: Human Uses that Changed the Ecology, Ecology that Changed Human Uses*, ed. Robert E. Henshaw (New York: SUNY press, 2011), 154.

of forestland in a year.²⁶ The log cabin would be the first structure built, followed by the sawmill and barn.

At the point portrayed in the painting, his labor provides the raw materials to produce the lumber for production in the mill, which may then be traded to nearby communities of farmers. Smoke billows from the cabin's chimney, implying the need to both feed the family and heat the home with more lumber resources. Not only has Cole's settler labored to clear the land and successfully established his farmstead, he has also settled on ideal property. The water source for the mill seems to feed into the small lake surrounded by cattle. Identifying a farmstead on the water was a key to success for the settler, crucial to their survival and cultivation of livestock and crops.

Cole provides plenty of evidence in this painting that this young settler and his family have achieved the nineteenth-century vision of yeoman success, a subject to be explored further shortly. With improved land, prospects for a healthy future, eager (though rarely a sufficient number of) laborers, and all the natural resources afforded by the American landscape, the viewer might assume this is an optimistic view of life in the woods. However, by 1825, the year Cole painted *Landscape*, the reality of the Eastern landscape was very different from this ideal vision of yeoman success.

According to environmental historian Steven Stoll, by 1820, farmland in the old union states had been exhausted.²⁷ Stoll explains, "Throughout the nineteenth century, eastern farmers emigrated—pushed and pulled by a lack they caused but would not

²⁶ U.P. Hedrick, *Agriculture in the State of New York* (Albany: J.B. Lyon, 1933) as referenced by Litten, "Agriculture in the Hudson Basin Since 1609," 154.

²⁷ Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth*, 19.

replenish,” leading to soil exhaustion.²⁸ Permanence was not a paramount value in the 1830s and 1840s as farmers would drain the soil and move further west or ultimately resorting to less than ideal lands at higher elevations. Settled for more than one hundred years by this point, the Atlantic seaboard did not provide the cultivation opportunities expected by many new farmers.

Cole's painting is not an idealized pastoral of leisurely agriculture, but a yearning for a particularly American “native arcadia”— whether presumed to be fact or fiction.²⁹ Ultimately, Cole’s painted landscape is the result of labor, and that labor is depicted both literally, through the male figure’s chopping, and implied, through the unfolding of process in the simultaneous narrative. Thus, the traditional model of the pastoral, with its languid shepherds and happy flocks, is insufficiently nuanced for the American farmstead painting. The pastoral is rooted in European gentility—a gentlemanly retirement to the country or a laborless agrarian escapism.³⁰ In stark contrast to the passive, aristocratic roots of the pastoral, the yeoman ideal, rooted in puritan morality, emphasized hard work, ingenuity, and individualism. Perpetuated by the political agendas of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson in the 18th and 19th centuries, the yeoman is the real human subject of Cole’s landscape.

Originating in ancient philosophy and literary ideas, the concept of the virtuous farmer living a simple, rural life resurfaces throughout western history. Thomas

²⁸ Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth*, 17 and 20.

²⁹ The phrase "native versions of Arcadia" is used in Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 52.

³⁰ For a detailed analysis of the political and social roots on the yeoman heritage, see Rex Burns, *Success in America: The Yeomen Dream and the Industrial Revolution* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976).

Jefferson's Republican ideals emphasized local government and an agrarian national economy. Farming and land were so integral to early American life that in 1790, nine out of every ten Americans farmed the land and land took up more legislative time than any other issue for the first 100 years.³¹ The concept of the "agrarian ideal" as yeoman was most clearly articulated by consensus historian Richard Hofstadter in his 1955 book *The Age of Reform*. In it, he claims country politicians, or "Articulate" people as he calls them, were drawn to the ideal of the "noncommercial, nonpecuniary, self-sufficient aspect of farming life."³² In addition to hard work, three major elements defined the yeoman farmer: competence, independence, and morality.³³ The agrarian myth's "hero was the yeoman farmer, its central conception the notion that he is the ideal man and the ideal citizen." In reality, farmers themselves were indeed interested in making money and any self-sufficiency was determined by conditions of transportation and the market.³⁴ In an increasingly commercial society, people clung "in imagination to noncommercial agrarian values."³⁵ Hofstadter summarizes the picture of the yeoman farmer and his role in society succinctly,

Unstinted praise of the special virtues of the farmer and the special values of rural life was coupled with the assertion that agriculture, as a calling uniquely productive and uniquely important to society, had a special right to the concern and protection of the government. The yeoman, who owned a small farm and worked it with the aid of his family, was the incarnation of the simple, honest, independent, healthy, happy human being.³⁶

³¹ Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 162.

³² Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 23.

³³ Burns, *Success in America*, 1-2.

³⁴ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 23.

³⁵ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 23-24.

³⁶ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 24.

While it is prudent to remember that a consensus history of the “agrarian myth” of the yeoman nation may be problematic, there is strong evidence for the presence of this myth through the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries.³⁷ Knowing “social, spatial, and temporal” discontinuities occur, such as the disparity between depiction and reality, acknowledges the presence of the myth while admitting its fallacies and limitations.

Sarah Burns points out the pervasiveness of the yeoman ideal in her book *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture*. Her study differs from this one in that she primarily focuses on the human presence rather than the landscape itself, but her chapter “The Noble Yeoman” does a great deal to confirm the perceived status of the yeoman farmer in the collective imagination and political landscape. Images like *The Farmer Pays for All*, a lithograph printed in 1869, illustrate how the farmer was considered the cornerstone of the nation without whom fundamental American rights and responsibilities like trade, pleading, prayer, and legislature would not be possible. (Figure 1.6) Even the regional presses evoked yeoman ideals in their discourse on everything from tee-totaling to the duties of a farmer. In the *Vermont Telegraph* of 1836, the editorial on “the Wine Question” leaps to the defense of the “noble spirited, intelligent, independent yeomanry, the lords of creation” who should be able to consume wine at their choosing.³⁸ This is humorous in its anecdotal quality, but there was no shortage of opinion about what the farmer *should* be in society. In the

³⁷ See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) and Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* for discussion of the “agrarian myth.”

³⁸ Published under the pseudonym Radicus, “Tee-Totalism—the Wine Question,” *Vermont Telegraph*, August 25, 1836, 190.

Vermont *Voice of Freedom*, an anti-slavery newspaper published from 1839-1849, farmers were commanded to “Be content with your occupation,” “Seek to elevate the calling of which you are members,” and “Seek the intellectual improvement of your class” all with the justification that “As agriculture goes, so goes the state.”³⁹ Farmers are reminded of these calls to action, but also reminded to be content with their station, with “peace of mind and of body, and of high respectability, which is the portion of the enterprising, industrious farmer.”⁴⁰ What is poignant about such declarations is that in this progressive paper published by political reformers, farmers were exalted as the foundation of the nation and reminded of their importance, even as many fled to the city to pursue other paths.

Different populations defined success in different ways for the yeoman farm. Through the nineteenth century, the political and social concept of success was not equated with wealth, but with the yeoman farmer’s fee-simple subsistence farm and a middling income. Dating as far back as Crèvecoeur in the late 1700s, wealth was equated with enough food for maintenance and shelter achieved through industry and assured through neighborhood relations.⁴¹ Yeomanry, according to Allan Kulikoff, “understood land as a means to sustain themselves and their families, not to accumulate capital, even

³⁹ Josiah T. Marshall, “Duties of the Farmer,” *Voice of Freedom*, February 16, 1839, no page number, Library of Congress.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Crèvecoeur as discussed by Martin Bruegel, *Farm Shop Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 11. See J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* (1782; New York: Penguin Classics, 1986).

if they acquired substantial wealth.”⁴² Yeoman farmers formed coveys of linked farmers that worked on a network of bartering, but not markets, where planters would be found.⁴³

However, as Peter S. Onuf and Leonard J. Sadosky point out, recent scholars are grappling with a less rigid definition of the economic aspirations of the yeoman farmer.⁴⁴ Definitions of “competence” and “independence” take on multiple meanings in response to changing markets, a subject to be discussed further in the chapter on agribusiness. Regardless, according to Michael Lewis, the image of the pioneer took on a specific meaning, particularly in the 1840s and 1850s. The wilderness pioneer came to symbolize the “self-reliance of a new democratic culture of self-made men, epitomized by the figure of the pioneer, building a future out of raw, unsettled nature.”⁴⁵ The ability to cultivate wilderness became the “measure of the resourceful independence and fortitude of the American pioneer, who typified the new nation,” sentiments reflected in the labored land and determined settler of Cole’s *Landscape*.⁴⁶

Cole often explored this intersection of nature and the yeoman farmer, reinforcing the agrarian myth while ignoring the reality of an emerging capital system of markets, understood only when we analyze the disparity between depiction and the reality of the particular landscape and systems he portrays. While he is well-known for extolling the virtues of wilderness—God-as-nature untouched by human hand—with sweeping epics like the *Course of Empire* series that reveal anti-progress sentiments in apocalyptic

⁴² Allan Kulikoff, *Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 35.

⁴³ Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth*, 28.

⁴⁴ Peter S. Onuf and Leonard Sadosky, *Jeffersonian America* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 130-32.

⁴⁵ Michael Lewis, *American Wilderness: a New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 102.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *American Wilderness*, 102.

grandiosity— Cole’s *Landscape* is evidence of ambivalent and sometimes idealistic sentiments towards man’s position in nature, particularly given the realities of environmental constraints. Cole revisits the subject of the farmstead repeatedly throughout his oeuvre, emphasizing the persistence of this subject in the collective American imagination despite rapid change. Cole’s 1845 painting, *The Hunter’s Return* perpetuates the myth of the yeomen farmer as the American ideal, but hints at his strongly ambivalent feelings towards the improvement of nature. (Figure 1.7) Situated in the revered American landscape of the White Mountains, the pioneer family and their balanced interaction with nature symbolize the moral fortitude and nationalist sentiments of the symbol of farm and farmer, only insinuating the nearly insurmountable obstacles faced by the pioneering settler in a rapidly changing environment.

The Hunter’s Return has not figured prominently in the scholarship on Cole, earning only a passing mention in most monographs.⁴⁷ There are at least two plausible reasons. First, the painting was seen only once publically between 1848 and 1983, known only through catalogue entry and small sketches of Mount Chocorua.⁴⁸ The second reason, and probably more salient, is that it does not conform to the now canonical version of Cole’s historical, moral, and allegorical scenes of wilderness or apocalyptic paintings like *The Course of Empire* series or even the *Falls of the Kaaterskills*. (Figure 1.8 and 1.9) *The Hunter’s Return* is often mentioned via list amongst other paintings of the 1840s to which scholars generally attribute a “pastoral aesthetic that increasingly characterized Cole’s work of the 1840s” that “pictured an ideal balance between human

⁴⁷ The only in-depth treatment of *The Hunter’s Return* is by Elwood C. Parry, “Thomas Cole’s *The Hunter’s Return*,” *American Art* 17 (1985), 2-17, JSTOR.

⁴⁸ Sarah Cash, *American Art: Paintings from the Amon Carter Museum* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1992), 12.

and nature.”⁴⁹ Elwood C. Parry, who wrote most extensively about *The Hunter’s Return*, supports this assertion, but acknowledges that Cole was more ambivalent about the destruction of nature because he recognized the inevitability of progress.⁵⁰ Parry proposes that the painting is in essence “an escapist retreat to an earlier era or a more primitive stage in human progress, when each man was in greater control of his own life and his own destiny.”⁵¹ While these interpretations have merit, they lack a more thorough analysis of the social implications of the persistent yeoman ideal amidst rapid environmental change and harsh realities.

Unlike the creative temporal division of space in *Landscape*, Cole employs a rather traditional Claudian picturesque composition in *The Hunter’s Return*. A small young farmstead is nestled in the valley of an expansive vista of what is believed to be Mount Chocorua in the White Mountain range of New Hampshire.⁵² The foreground of the painting is occupied on the left by evergreens and fallen tree stumps. From the dark woods of this foreground area of the canvas, two hunters and a young boy emerge. They walk a path that intersects the picture plane at a diagonal line, easing the eye into the middleground of the painting where their family—two women and a baby—stand near a sundrenched cabin awaiting their return. The family farm is composed of a moderate log cabin and subsistence garden, arranged in neat rows beside the house, large enough to feed only the family, if that. The men carry a deer, hung from a pole and hoisted on their shoulders, the bounty of their hunt. All seem rather content, if not happy, to be reunited.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Empire of the Eye*, 59.

⁵⁰ Parry, “Thomas Cole’s *The Hunter’s Return*,” 3.

⁵¹ Parry, “Thomas Cole’s *The Hunter’s Return*,” 3.

⁵² Donald Keyes, *The White Mountains: Place and Perceptions* (Hanover: Univ Press of New England, 1980), 88.

In the tradition of Claudian landscapes, trees in the foreground left provide the asymmetrical framing device, and the recession of space continues into the great distance through the zig-zag pattern of the water and mountainscape.⁵³ The mountains in the distance are painted with atmospheric perspective in an increasingly pastel palette of blues, pinks, and purples. The foreground palette of the painting is very warm, with pleasing autumnal hues of green, red, yellow, and orange as the dominant color scheme. The warm lush foliage provides a cozy environment for the familial reunion.

Superficially, this painting may be read as a simple pastoral with its happy homestead and brilliant scenery that would have appealed to Cole's patrons, who were largely city-dwellers. *The Hunter's Return* was commissioned by George W. Austen, then president of the American Art Union, in 1844.⁵⁴ Though painted in 1845, the idea occurred to him nearly a decade earlier as "The Hunter's return – a log Hut in the Forest - several Figures. Some men carrying a deer on a pole - a child running to meet them + a woman standing in the door of the cabin with a child in her arms."⁵⁵ In the 1830s and 40s, authors and artists alike took up the image of rural life for their city patrons who, like their Renaissance counterparts, sometimes preferred the rural landscape to sublime wilderness.⁵⁶ Cole himself acknowledges in his *Essay on American Scenery*, "The cultivated must not be forgotten, for it is still more important to man in his social

⁵³ William A. Truettner and Alan Wallach, *Thomas Cole: Landscape in to History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 70. Cole considered Claude Lorraine to be the "greatest of all landscape painters."

⁵⁴ Parry, "Thomas Cole's *The Hunter's Return*," 10 and confirmed by Amon Carter Museum archivist Jonathan Frembling via email August 4, 2015.

⁵⁵ Howard S. Merritt in "Appendix II: Thomas Cole's List, 'Subjects for Pictures'," *The Baltimore Museum of Art Annual II; Studies on Thomas Cole, An American Romanticist* no. 78 (1968): 90 as quoted by Parry, "Thomas Cole's *The Hunter's Return*," 10.

⁵⁶ LaBudde, "Rural Earth: Sylvan Bliss," 142.

capacity— necessarily brining him in contact with the cultured; it encompasses our home, and though devoid of the stern sublimity of the wild, its quieter spirit steals tenderly into our bosoms mingled with a thousand domestic affections and heart-touching associations—human hands have wrought and human deeds hallowed all around.”⁵⁷ In this often-ignored passage, Cole admits the unique value of cultivated land as a symbol of domestic life (a subject to be explored in further detail later) and hard labor.

While Cole admired the labor of human deeds in the shaping of farmland, he chose not to paint the rigors of farm life in *The Hunter’s Return*. The land has been cleared of trees, the home built, and the soil has been prepared and planted for crops. Unlike his earlier *Landscape*, with its industrious yeoman chopper, *The Hunter’s Return* only implies the labor and turmoil experienced by the seemingly happy farm family. Cole’s early *Landscape* and its portrayal of labor is an outlier—many of Cole’s paintings of the homestead, such as *Schroon Lake* of 1846, resist outright acknowledgment of the inherent toil and risk. (Figure 1.10)

Each of the elements in *Hunter’s Return*, from the mountain in the distance and the small garden to the cabin and hunted game, imply this pioneering farm family would have endured a great deal to achieve the yeoman dream. In describing the New England farm families of the nearby Connecticut River valley, John Cumbler explains, “Times were not easy for these farmers. Crops failed. Hard winters or early frosts, heavy rains, flooding, droughts, or pests could wipe out a farmer’s food supply.”⁵⁸ Farm families survived by bartering and borrowing through resources of the commons and by hunting

⁵⁷ Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” 264.

⁵⁸ John Cumbler, *Reasonable Use: The People, the Environment, and the State, New England 1790-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 14.

wild animals and fish and collecting nuts, and fruits.⁵⁹ Some even lamented that hunting sustained a larger family well enough to promote insolence.⁶⁰ Thus, when Cole depicts the farmer as hunter, in view of his small subsistence farm, there is at least a hint that the product of the land was, as yet, insufficient, and might never sustain the family. Thus the future of this small farm, though cheery in its disposition, is at best tenuous as harsh winter approaches.

The family portrayed here has at least one asset—the nearby lake—which may increase their chances for survival (though we will find that, perhaps, this particular lake could also serve as a bad omen.) Its already been established that water sources provided necessary reserves for livestock, but a lake (and any river that fed the lake) was also an invaluable food-supply and thus a source of commerce.⁶¹ For the yeoman farms, the surplus goods—whether fish, lumber, flaxseed, or otherwise—were circulated by country stores. Together, farm families and local country stores provided a commune of material goods and a support structure crucial to the success of the pioneering farmer, but not to be confused with a market scale economy.⁶²

Cole's idyllic scene omits any hint towards the social structure that helped to sustain farms, emphasizing instead those yeoman virtues of industry and competence. The small planting, clearing, and modest cabin featured in *The Hunter's Return* make no promise of evolving into a large-scale business agriculture, which was, by that time, increasingly the goal for new farms. The more ambitious goals of a farmer are exemplified by a series of illustrations in Orasmus Turner's *History of the Holland*

⁵⁹ Cumbler, *Reasonable Use*, 15.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² For more on the subject of country stores, see Cumbler, *Reasonable Use*, 17-23.

Purchase of western New York published in 1849.⁶³ The prints represent the development of a farm from small subsistence farm to sprawling commercial family estate over 45 years. The first stage exemplifies the yeoman farmer's aspirations and tribulations. (Figure 1.11) The section, entitled "The Pioneer Settler upon the Holland Purchase, and His Progress," is accompanied by a poem by Alfred B. Street that summarizes the optimism and admiration felt towards the ambitious farmer.

Through the deep wilderness, where scarce the sun
Can cast his darts, along the winding path
The Pioneer is treading. In his grasp
Is his keen axe, that wondrous instrument,
That like the talisman transforms
Deserts to fields and cities. He has left
The home in which his early years were past,
And led by hope, and full of restless strength,
Has plunged within his forest, there to plant
His destiny...⁶⁴

The engraving that accompanies the poem and first stage of the pioneer's life depicts a lone farmer wielding his axe in winter. Turner indicates the farmer "has taken possession of his new home"—he is not merely intruding upon the wilderness, but has firmly taken ownership, indicated by the log cabin and cleared land.⁶⁵ On the one hand, Turner identifies the struggles ahead for the farmer by stating, "Those trees are to be felled and cleared away, fences are to be made..." but concludes with distinctive admiration of the farmer's diligent labor, "...here, in this rugged spot, he is to carve out his fortunes, and against what odds!...The task before him is a formidable one, but he has a strong arm and

⁶³ Orasmus Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of western New York* (Buffalo: Jewett Thomas, 1849).

⁶⁴ Alfred B. Street in Turner, *Pioneer History*, 562.

⁶⁵ Turner, *Pioneer History*, 562.

a stout heart.”⁶⁶ Turner’s conclusion of this section positions the pioneer farmer as an important contributor to national progress,

...Success and competence will have crowned their efforts. They are destined to be the founders of a settlement and of a family; to look out upon broad smiling fields where now is the dense forest, and congratulate themselves that they have been helpers in a work of progress and improvement, such as has few parallels, in and age and in a country distinguished for enterprise and perseverance.⁶⁷

The second sketch of the pioneer emphasizes the persistent themes of progress and improvement, as they have created a “rugged home in the wilderness as yet, but we have already the earnest of progress and improvement.”⁶⁸ (Figure 1.12) Turner’s description of the second sketch of the pioneer could also describe Cole’s painting, even indicating that “His wife has become a mother, and with her first born in her arms, she is out, looking at the plants she has been rearing...raised with her own hands.”⁶⁹ The series continues, to be taken up again in later chapters, but what is already clear in these early sketches of the pioneer is that improvement, progress, and family are key components of the yeoman family farm.

The family was indeed an integral part of yeoman farms. Parry proposes an autobiographical reading of *The Hunter’s Return* based largely on the presence of the family. Cultivated fields and a cottage appear in Cole’s picture notes as early as the 1830s accompanied by notes about departures or returns from travel.⁷⁰ Sketching trips often took Cole away from family. Parry observes that a number of Cole’s compositions prominently feature a return or departure, such as *The Departure* of 1837. (Figure 1.13) Thus, Parry proposes that each of the characters in *The Hunter’s Return* serve as

⁶⁶ Turner, *Pioneer History*, 563.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Turner, *Pioneer History*, 564.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Elwood C. Parry, “Thomas Cole’s *The Hunter’s Return*,” 5, JSTOR.

biographical models. Cole himself might be the huntsman, the little boy on the lower right is his son Teddy Cole who was seven and a half years old at the time, his six year-old daughter Mary embraces the dog, his wife Maria holds the infant Emma.⁷¹ Cole, himself, was a “gentlemen farmer” from his home in the Kaaterskills.⁷² This biographical reading of the painting may be a little exaggerated, particularly since there are too many characters.

However, the family unit was integral to the success of the yeoman farm. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, property bound families together, determined social relations, and often dictated migration patterns of farms.⁷³ Because labor was in short supply and the need was immense, family members were the source of the majority of labor. As has been established, Cole’s painting does not really show the family bound by labor and the land, but the social relations are clear. The domestic sphere belonged to the woman, who occupies the space of the cabin. She would not be allowed to own the land. The eldest male child accompanies the father carrying the day’s hunt. The dynamics of this division perhaps reinforce what would be the paternal-son relationship in which the family farm is passed on to the son by legacy, a common practice that also set up situations of inequality.⁷⁴

In *The Hunter’s Return* and Turner’s first illustration of the family farm, the scenes still exude the charming qualities of the “quieter spirit” Cole describes in his *Essays*, and there is little hint of familial strife. They have recently completed the most labor-intensive activities of the rural farm—clearing land. While this activity is not

⁷¹ Parry, “Thomas Cole’s *The Hunter’s Return*,” 15.

⁷² LaBudde, “Rural Earth: Sylvan Bliss,” 144.

⁷³ Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing*, 26.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

directly depicted, it is implied by the stumps and logs that litter the land in *The Hunter's Return*. These stumps have been read by innumerable sources as a warning sign of the overproduction of the land. However, the pioneer through the nineteenth century was also practically a lumberman.⁷⁵ Because the scene in *The Hunter's Return* is one of a young farm, the first step in the process of settling land was to clear the land. In the north, this meant cutting down trees, and leaving the stumps in the ground to rot before removal.⁷⁶ The wood would be used for the construction of a home, for fuel, fences, and, when overly abundant, for sale.

Parry believed that *The Hunter's Return* was Cole's best attempt of the 1840s to show the beginnings of the "ravages of the axe."⁷⁷ Cole's anti-logging sentiments are derived, at least in part, from his often quoted *Essays on American Scenery*, "The beauty of such landscapes are quickly passing away—the ravages of the axe are daily increasing—the most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation."⁷⁸ It is prudent to remember that it is in this same essay that he also praises the emotional bond to the cultivated landscape. While Cole clearly mourns the destruction of wilderness, he seems to acknowledge, at least in this painting, the subtleties of this moral imperative.

To understand further the ambiguities of Cole's (and the nation's) sentiments towards the progress of civilization, it might be fruitful to compare Turner's illustrations of the Pioneer's progress to the stages of the *Course of Empire*. In the *Pastoral* state, man

⁷⁵ Michael Williams, "The Clearing of the Forests," in *The Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Michael P. Conzen (New York: Routledge, 1990), 148.

⁷⁶ Williams, "The Clearing of the Forests," 148.

⁷⁷ Parry, "Thomas Cole's *The Hunter's Return*," 3.

⁷⁸ Thomas Cole as quoted by Susan Platt, "Paradigms and Paradoxes: Nature, Morality, and Art American Art" *Art and Ecology* 51 (1992): 82.

and nature coincide in harmony, and destruction awaits greed, magnificently coming to fruition in *Consummation*. We know from this series that Cole has serious reservations about the march of progress, but this note of pessimism seems to be subdued in *The Hunter's Return*, arguably more than most of Cole's landscapes. The primary difference is in an apparent admiration of the yeoman model or agrarian ideal, however removed from reality.

Thus, we might hesitate to read the stumps in *Hunter's Return* as *only* the "ravages of the axe." The wood that was cleared served many purposes for this young farmstead, among the most vital was to provide shelter. The cabin in *The Hunter's Return* is the standard log cabin that symbolizes the American frontier. The corner-notching system required no nails, holes, or shaping, but it was an "extravagant in its use of wood."⁷⁹ However, it was convenient, easy, and only took three days to construct. As David E. Nye points out in his analysis of Cole's paintings of the farmstead and Orasmus Turner's etchings, the symbol of the axe and the cabin are integral to the agrarian myth and became political symbols of American ideals. Nye explains that the cabin was used in political rhetoric at such events as the 250th anniversary of Jamestown in 1857 and by literary figures like Walt Whitman who published "Song of the Broadaxe" in 1856 that demonstrate how the log cabin had become part of the "foundation narrative."⁸⁰ However, Nye clarifies that "as logging became a specialized form of labor, the log cabin declined as a form of housing," and by 1900 was merely a sentimental memory in the East and Midwest.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Williams, "The Clearing of the Forests," 150.

⁸⁰ Nye, *America as Second Nature*, 67-69.

⁸¹ Nye, *America as Second Nature*, 79.

Cole was apparently intrigued by the vernacular architecture he encountered on his many journeys on foot through the wilderness.⁸² The studies begin in the 1820s and recur throughout his career, done on numerous sketching trips. The painting is also based on sketches of the White Mountains of New Hampshire, but is not strictly topographical.⁸³ While not entirely topographical, being able to identify a particular location is crucial to understanding both the environmental factors at play and why they cannot be read as the generic *beau ideal* pastoral. First, Cole's interest in the particularities of specific locations is evident in his numerous trips, writing, and sketches. Cole made several sketching trips throughout his life including across Pennsylvania and Ohio between 1819 and 1823, his first trip up the Hudson River in 1825, and later in 1827 and 1828 to the White Mountains of New Hampshire.⁸⁴ A number of sketches, which serve as the basis for *The Hunter's Return*, reside in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts. (Figures 1.14-1.15) Of the White Mountains, Cole wrote admiringly,

But in the mountains of New Hampshire there is a union of the picturesque, the sublime, and the magnificent; there the bare peaks of granite, broken and desolate, cradle the clouds; while the vallies and broad bases of the mountains rest under the shadow of noble and varied forests; and the traveller who passes the Sandwich range on his way to the White Mountains, of which it is a spur, cannot but acknowledge, that although in some regions of the globe nature has wrought on a more stupendous scale, yet she has nowhere so completely married together grandeur and loveliness—there he sees the sublime melting into the beautiful, the savage tempered by the magnificent.⁸⁵

⁸² Parry, 8.

⁸³ Sheryl Ball, ed. *The American Landscaper's "Quieter Spirit": Early Paintings by Frederic Edwin Church* (Seattle: Marquand Books, 2005).

⁸⁴ Parry, "Thomas Cole's *Hunter's Return*," 9. Much of the groundwork on *The Hunter's Return*, and in particular provenance and identifying the drawings which serve as sketches for the painting, was done by Parry, 2-17. For more on Cole's sketching trip up the Hudson, see Tracie Felker, "Thomas Cole's Drawings of His 1825 Trip up the Hudson River" *American Art Journal* 24 (1992): 60-93, JSTOR.

⁸⁵ Cole, "Essay on American Scenery."

Cole went on his first trip to the White Mountains in 1828, sent by his patron Daniel Wadsworth.⁸⁶ While on this trip, Cole became particularly fascinated by and climbed Mount Chocorua, the peak seen in the distance of *The Hunter's Return*. This leads to the second reason that topography cannot be ignored—Mount Chocorua appears in several paintings, identified from the sketches, many of which depict farmsteads.

Mount Chocorua occupied a distinct place in the imagination of the nineteenth century traveller. It was described by poet Starr King in 1871 as defiant, jagged, rugged, and ghostly amongst other adjectives.⁸⁷ Perhaps the most apt word used by Starr was “proud,” a sentiment which seems to be echoed in Cole’s painting where the mountain rises distinctly but unthreateningly in the distant glory of the sunlight—more proud than ominously sublime. The mountain was named after Chief Chocorua of the Pequawket Indians. While many versions of the legend circulated, most prominently by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in his 1825 poem *Jeckoyva*, the basic story was that Chief Chocorua remained in the White Mountains after the rest of his tribe fled to Canada in the wake of the Dover Raid of 1686. When Chocorua went to visit the tribe in Canada, he left his son with the Campbells, a New Hampshire family. Under their care, the boy ingested poison and died. Blaming the Campbells, Chocorua murdered the mother and four children. When the father demanded his surrender, legend has it that Chocorua invoked the power of the mountain to curse the cattle and agricultural yield of white settlers, and then he leapt to his death.⁸⁸ It is no small coincidence that the legend of the mountain

⁸⁶ Christopher Johnson, *This Grand and Magnificent Place: The Wilderness Heritage of the White Mountains* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2006), 65.

⁸⁷ Starr King as referenced by John T.B. Madge, *The White Mountains: Names Places, & Legends* (New Hampshire: Durand Press, 1992), 33.

⁸⁸ This version of the legend in Madge, *The White Mountains*, 34.

parallels so closely to the predicament of the white settlers building a fledgling farm at its base. This farm, ideal in its conception, may ultimately be doomed to failure by the mountain's curse, perhaps reinforcing the ambivalent sentiments that Cole associated with the family farm, nature, and progress.

Cole was especially attracted to Mount Chocorua for its particular combination of sublime prospect. He wrote of his climb in his sketchbook on October 3, 1828, noting, "We came out, at length, to a lonely and deserted clearing, just at the foot of the mountain. The cause of this abandonment is, they say, the poisonous effects of the water upon the cattle; the result, according to tradition, of the curse of Chocorua..."⁸⁹ In this short excerpt, Cole combines the very real agricultural conditions of the land (an abandoned clearing, unclaimed by a subsequent occupant, was indeed noteworthy) with a mythical historical element (Chocorua's curse). Cole apparently made a painting entitled *The Death of Chocorua* on the subject which is known through only via print reproduction.⁹⁰ The scene Cole describes is not unlike the one depicted in *The Hunter's Return* with its placid lake near the foot of the mountain. Is Mount Chocorua a bad omen for this small yeoman farmstead or a prediction of its impending failure?

Once Cole reached the summit of Mount Chocorua, he noted that "prospects mighty and sublime opened upon the vision: lakes, mountains, streams, woodlands,

⁸⁹ Thomas Cole in a letter dated October 3, 1828 as reproduced by Cole's biographer, pastor, and friend Louis Legrand Noble in *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, reprinted (Delmar: Black Dome Press, 1997), 65. While this primary text is more valuable for its biographical material, it does reveal some of the biases held by Noble and the public towards Cole's work and reproduces a number of his writings.

⁹⁰ Robert L. McGrath, *Gods in Granite: The Art of the White Mountains of New Hampshire* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 33.

dwelling and farms wove themselves into a vast and varied landscape.”⁹¹ The concept of “prospect” has been much discussed in landscape research since Jay Appleton’s influential prospect-refuge theory, an extension of habitat theory, was released in 1975. Appleton’s basic premise was based on the idea that aesthetic judgment of an environment is based on the ability to observe or survey the land (prospect) without being seen (refuge). He writes,

What matters is not the *actual* potential of the environment to furnish the necessities for survival, but its *apparent* potential as apprehended immediately rather than calculated rationally...[A]esthetic satisfaction, experienced in the contemplation of landscape, stems from the spontaneous perception of landscape features which, in their shapes, colours, spatial arrangements and other visible attributes, act as a single-stimuli indicative of environmental conditions favourable to survival, whether they really *are* favourable or not.⁹²

These are precisely the conditions under which Cole observes the prospects from atop Chocorua and perhaps the construct that cultivates an image as idyllic as *The Hunter’s Return*.

Perhaps because the painting represents both a bygone era and a mode of production of the land fraught with problems, the proposition that it represents an idealized version of man’s communion with nature is valid. The yeoman farmer did not conflict with Cole’s vision of responsible land use. And, in contrast to Miller’s argument that Cole avoided nationalistic sentiments, the yeoman farmer who finds success in his meager farm is a clear symbol of Jeffersonian politics that pervaded the intellectual classes and were complicated by the farmers that enacted those ideals.

As much as Cole’s two paintings exemplify the yeoman ideal and its separation from the real environmental, economic, and experiential realities, Cole was certainly not

⁹¹ Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole*, 65.

⁹² Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1996), 62.

alone in his sentiments. Paintings such as *Landscape with Farm and Mountains* of 1832 by Charles Codman and *Eagle Cliff, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire* of 1858 by Jasper Francis Cropsey exhibit many of the same qualities, perpetuating the nostalgic vision of man's interaction with nature. (Figures 1.16 and 1.17)

I reiterate here American environmental historian William Cronon's outline of the processes of environmental history, or the history of man's interaction with nature.⁹³ The first level is to understand the dynamics of natural ecosystems, or, in the case of landscape painting, to identify the ecosystems present within the painted landscape. This may be as simple as identifying the location, if topographical, and the ecology of natural systems present there. The second level of analysis is to identify the political economies that people erect within those natural systems. This is closely related to Marx's modes of production, and is a particularly poignant aspect of understanding ideas of progress and nostalgia in American landscape. Finally, where landscape painting can be most instructive, is in the third level of analysis that is the cognitive relationship of people to the first and second levels.⁹⁴

The *Hunter's Return* is most compelling for its engagement with all three of these analytical categories. The location of the painting, based on a topographical scene, tells of the vision of a New England farmstead nestled in the mountainside near a body of water. The harvesting of trees, potential use of land, and the agriculture upon that land informs the "modes of production." Finally, the fact that Cole chose to depict this idealized version of the farmstead, free from labor, clearly successful in their venture, and in a time when already there was less and less available farmstead in the New England area,

⁹³ Cronon, "Modes of Prophecy and Production," 1122.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

informs the cognitive relationship that people have both with the land and how they interact with it.

Landscape scholar Denis E. Cosgrove writes, “Landscape is a way of seeing that has its own history, but a history that can be understood only as part of a wider history of economy and society; that has its own assumptions and consequences, but assumptions and consequences whose origins and implications extend well beyond the use of land...”⁹⁵ Cole’s bond to the cultivated land, persistent in spite of his distrust of progress, is evidence of that the agrarian ideal of the yeomen farmer and frontier family values had an incredibly powerful lure over American ideology. The landscape paintings of Cole and others who idealized harsh rural life attest to the strength of the myth in the face of poor land, disappearing resources, and encroaching industry. Perhaps the twenty-first century revival of small farms in urban communities is, at least in part, a testament to the enduring strength of this American agrarian ideal, an identity so convincingly formed at the dawn of the New World.

⁹⁵ Denis E. Cosgrove, “Introduction to *Social Formations and Symbolic Landscape*,” in *Landscape Theory*, eds. Rachel Z. DeLue and James Elkins (New York: Routledge, 2008), 20.



Fig. 1.1 Titian, *Pastoral Scene*, about 1565, pen and brown ink, black chalk, heightened with white gouache, 7 11/16 × 11 7/8 in., Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum



Fig. 1.2. Claude Lorrain, *Pastoral Landscape: The Roman Campagna*, c. 1639, oil on canvas, 40 x 53 1/2 in., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 1.3. Winslow Homer, *Spring in the City*, in *Harper's Weekly*, Vol II, April 17, 1858, wood engraving, 9 1/8 x 13 3/4 in., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 1.4. Unknown artist, *Spring in the Country*, in *Harper's Weekly*, Vol II, April 17, 1858, 249.



Fig. 1.5. Thomas Cole, *Landscape*, 1825, oil on canvas, 23 3/4 x 31 1/2 in., Minneapolis, MN, Minneapolis Institute of Art.



Fig. 1.6. Chicago Lithographing Co., *The Farmer Pays for All*, 1869, lithograph, Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress.



Fig. 1.7. Thomas Cole, *The Hunter's Return*, 1845, oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 60 1/2 in., Fort Worth, TX, Amon Carter Museum of American Art.



Fig. 1.8. Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: The Arcadian or Pastoral State*, 1834, oil on canvas, 51 1/4 x 76 in., New York, The New York Historical Society.



Fig. 1.9. Thomas Cole, *Falls of the Kaaterskills*, 1826, oil on canvas, 43 x 36 in., Tuscaloosa, AL, Warner Collection of Gulf States Paper Corporation.



Figure 1.10. Thomas Cole, *Schroon Lake*, c. 1846, oil on canvas, Blue Mountain Lake, NY, Adirondack Experience.

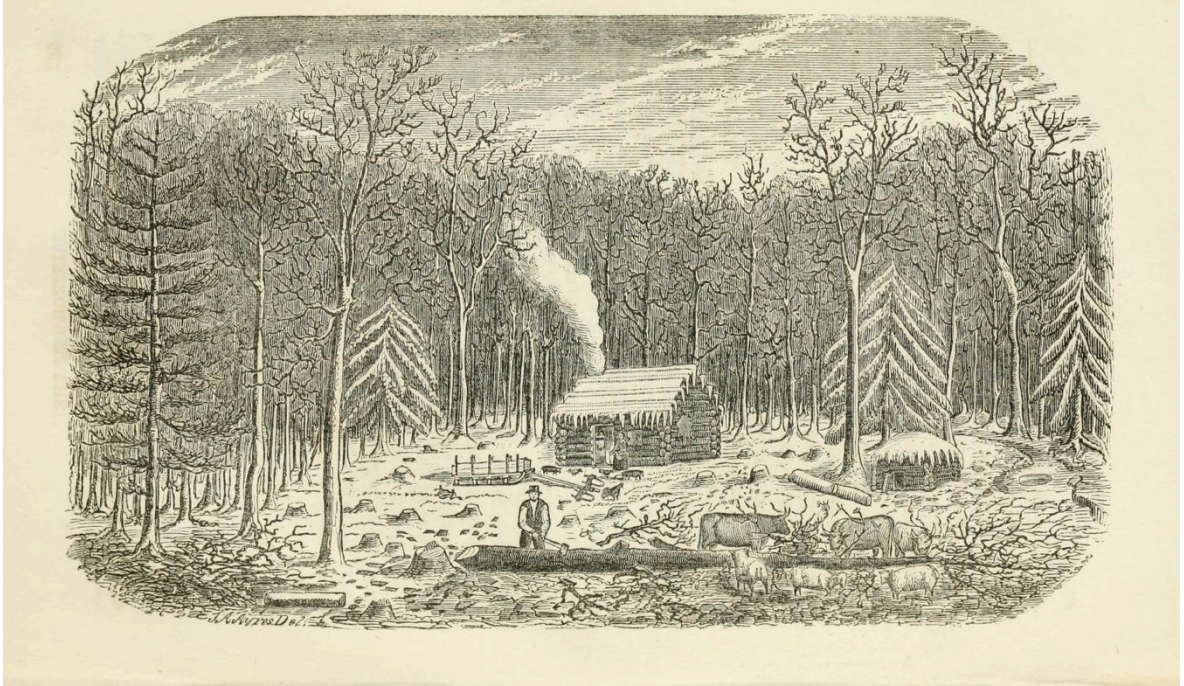


Fig. 1.11. *No 1, It is Winter*, 1849, plate between 562 and 563. From Orasmus Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of western New York* (Buffalo: Jewett Thomas, 1849).

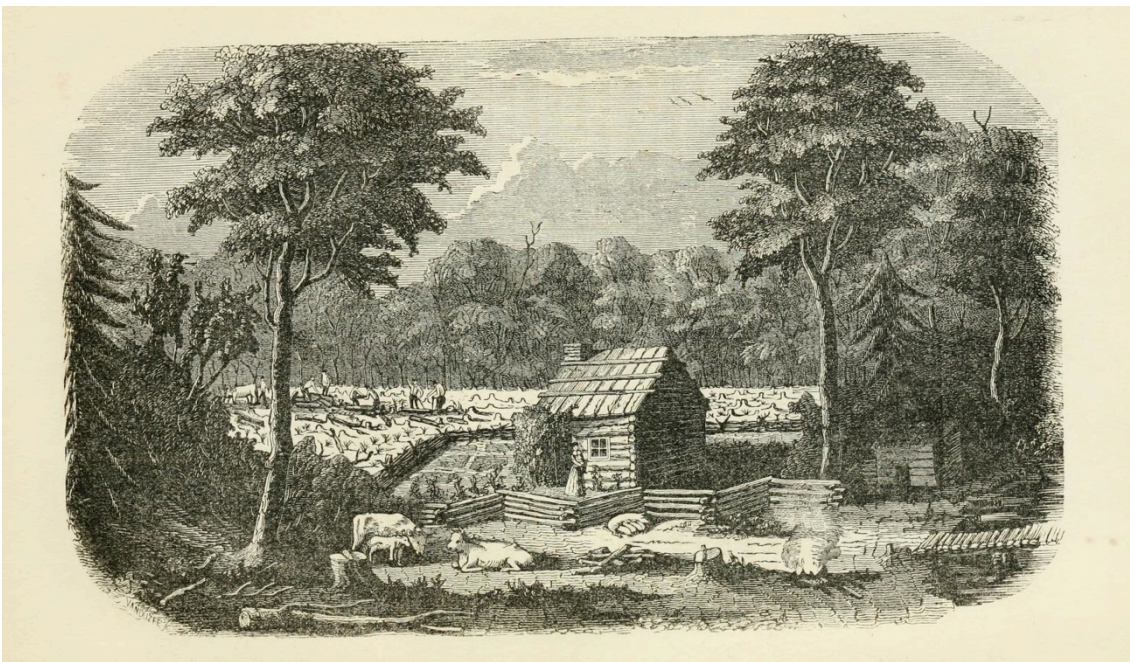


Fig. 1.12. *No 2.*, 1849, plate between 562 and 563. From Orasmus Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of western New York* (Buffalo: Jewett Thomas, 1849).



Fig. 1.13. Thomas Cole, *The Departure*, 1837, oil on canvas, 39 1/2 × 63 5/8 in., Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 1.14. Thomas Cole, *A Log Cabin, Huntsmen Carrying a Deer, and a Man Holding a Hat*, c. 1845, graphite pencil with brown chalk on beige wove paper, 10 5/8 × 14 7/8 in., Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts.



Fig. 1.15. Thomas Cole, *Wretched Hovel...in Midst of Burnt Trees (Log Cabin with Yellow Birch)*, 1828, graphite pencil on off-white wove paper, 14 5/8 × 10 1/2 inches, Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts.



Fig. 1.16. Charles Codman, *Landscape with Farm and Mountains*, 1832, oil on canvas, 21 x 26 in., Washington D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Fig. 1.17. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Eagle Cliff, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire*, 1858, oil on canvas, mounted on panel, 23 15/16 x 38 7/8 in.

CHAPTER II

FROM SUBSISTENCE TO AGRIBUSINESS

In *Common Landscapes of America: 1580-1845*, John R. Stilgoe tells the story of how, by 1860, husbandry matured into farming. “*Farming*,” he writes, “bespoke the maturation of technical expertise, the first success of agricultural innovation. A farmer *farmed* the land, he *worked* it, he *made it pay*, he *mastered* it. He shaped it to his ideal and coerced it into fertility.”⁹⁶ He goes on to explain,

The shift from husbandry to farming found expression in the changing landscape. Nineteenth-century farms bore slight resemblance to the farms created by the first generations of colonists. They were larger, carefully ordered for specific rather than general ends, and shaped for efficiency... The first half of the nineteenth century was indeed the “farmer’s age,” but it was an age when tradition very slowly gave way to innovation.⁹⁷

This transition from pioneer farmstead to farmer’s agribusiness finds expression in imagery from the mid-nineteenth century. Two paintings by Jasper Francis Cropsey illustrate the dichotomy between the two farm types and display an ambivalence towards the yearning for progress and profit farming. The first is Cropsey’s *Backwoods of America* of 1858, which represents the traditional yeoman farm of the eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries. (Figure 2.1) Compare this painting with Cropsey’s *Bareford Mountains, West Milford, New Jersey* (1850) which represents the changing landscape of agribusiness. (Figure 2.2)

⁹⁶ John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America: 1580-1845* (New Haven: Yale, 1982), 137-38. Stilgoe’s account of the changing landscape may be a bit overgeneralized, but it does provide an excellent, and particularly readable, holistic picture of land use.

⁹⁷ Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America*, 138.

Backwoods of America, along with several other frontier farm paintings done during this point in Cropsey's career (like *Eagle Cliff*, *Franconia Notch*, *New Hampshire*, Figure 1.17), may look exceedingly familiar. It exhibits many of the same qualities as Thomas Cole's *Landscape* (1825) and *The Hunter's Return* (1845) discussed in the previous chapter. As an avid admirer of Cole, Cropsey's affinity for Cole's style and subject comes as no surprise.⁹⁸ The quintessential elements of a pioneer farm are incorporated, including the crude log cabin, the axe, the small family garden, the lake, and the omnipresent mountain in the distance. Bernardo Bonario describes the scene beautifully in his essay on the piece, emphasizing the charming details such as birds nesting in the roof of the cabin and the identifiable crops in the garden (a ripe orange pumpkin and a precise rendering of a cornstalk for Cropsey's European audience.)⁹⁹ Like *The Hunter's Return*, the emphasis is on the narrative and cultivated foreground rather than the awe-inspiring sublime wilderness characteristic of so many Hudson River School paintings.

It is noteworthy that Cropsey painted this landscape in 1858, and another very similar called *Retired Life* of 1847, (Figure 2.3) while living in Europe, to be shown at the annual Royal Academy exhibition, and later to be sent from Rome to America.¹⁰⁰ In other words, this image was produced in Europe, primarily for the consumption of a

⁹⁸ For information on Cropsey's admiration of Cole, see, Anthony M. Speiser, "Jasper F. Cropsey: Painter of Faith" in *Jasper Francis Cropsey: Catalogue Raisonne Works in Oil Volume One: 1842-1863* (Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Newington Cropsey Foundation, 2013): XIX.

⁹⁹ Bernardo Bonario, "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow: Jasper F. Cropsey's 'The Backwoods of America'," *RACAR: revue d'art canadienne* no.1/2 9 (1982): 12.

¹⁰⁰ Notably, *Retired Life* also includes Mount Chocorua, the mountain in the distance of Thomas Cole's *Hunter's Return*, as detailed in Chapter 1. Anthony M. Speiser, ed. "Jasper F. Cropsey: Painter of Faith," 51 and Bonario, "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow," 10.

European audience eager to see America as an Arcadia of opportunity and ingenuity. Additionally, surrounded by Italian landscapes, the visions of America were populated by the rugged frontiersman. Therefore, the subject, composition, and title of Cropsey's paintings consolidate American national identity—the frontier farmstead steeped in wilderness and tamed by the labor of the American man—into a tidy package, reinforcing how strongly this ideal persisted in the ideology of Americans and abroad.

In the previous chapter, I establish that the representation of the yeoman farmscape persisted long after it was reasonably likely to acquire such land in the Eastern landscape and cultivate it for the purposes of a small family farm. Bonario, too, reads nostalgia and apprehension in the scene, stating, “The provisions extracted from the land are offset by the family’s fear of divinely created Nature and reverence for her as moral instructor, qualities threatened in the industrial capitals of Europe and the rapidly expanding cities of the American Northeast.”¹⁰¹

The rapid expansion of cities that threatened the reverence of nature was accompanied by the emergence of a completely different approach to the business of farming; what we now refer to as agribusiness. Agribusiness is the result of agriculture moving from individual family farms or yeomanry to the development of the staple crop. By the 1780s, farmers were already “beginning to sense the coming of a great transformation that would gradually erode self-sufficiency and remake yeoman, artisans, and their children into workers dependent upon wages.”¹⁰² However, before the 1830s, “even if subsistence families were inclined to exploit the market, there were constraints in

¹⁰¹ Bonario, “Here Today, Gone Tomorrow,” 17.

¹⁰² Bruce Laurie, *Artisans Into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 15.

the 1820s on the development of commercial agriculture. Capital was scarce and tied up in land, shipping, and marine insurance," coupled with poor transportation.¹⁰³ The expansion of market systems was precipitated by the commodity market, transportation, and manufacturing.¹⁰⁴ The result was an enormous reallocation of human resources away from subsistence agriculture toward the production of staple crops.¹⁰⁵ While farming in the South always existed on a larger scale and to supply markets, northern farms experienced an enormous shift, and one that transpired in many ways as agriculture migrated further west—a subject to be covered in depth in a subsequent chapter.

When we compare Cropsey's *Backwoods of America*, painted in 1858, with *Bareford Mountain, Milford New Jersey*, a painting done in 1850, nearly a decade earlier, the juxtaposition of agribusiness reality and yeoman nostalgia becomes abundantly clear. *Bareford Mountain* is probably Cropsey's first celebration of harvesting, one among about a dozen on the subject. Bareford Mountains are on the west side of Greenwood Lake near West Milford, close to the family home of Maria, his beloved wife, a location which also served as Cropsey's occasional home and a frequent subject.¹⁰⁶ The only preparatory sketch for the painting presents the farmhouse and haystacks. (Figure 2.4) However, it is known from Cropsey's journals that he was actually in West Milford at the time, and that he had painted some "upon a picture of Bearford Mt."¹⁰⁷ Thus, there is evidence that suggests that the image is representative of his actual experience rather than entirely his reminiscence.

¹⁰³ Laurie, *Artisans Into Workers*, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Laurie, *Artisans Into Workers*, 15.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Speiser, "Jasper F. Cropsey: Painter of Faith," 88.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted by Kenneth W. Maddux, "Jasper F. Cropsey: Painter of Faith," in *Jasper Francis Cropsey*, 88.

While there is no record which confirms the precise farm depicted in the painting, Kerry O'Brien, member of the West Milford Heritage Committee, suggests that the painting may represent Wallisch Homestead, a historic farm located about a mile from Maria's family farm at Greenwood Lake.¹⁰⁸ The farm is bordered by Belcher's Creek that flows into Greenwood Lake and "boasts a scenic vista of Bearfort Mountain," much like the painting by Cropsey.¹⁰⁹ During the 1800s, the area grew substantially, creating opportunities for farms like the Wallisch Homestead to provide goods for the increasing population. A hotel trade grew around the Greenwood Lake tourist industry. Workers populated new manufacturing facilities, and a canal built in the 1830s allowed for the movement of commercial goods.¹¹⁰

Simultaneous with the growth of the West Milford area, the Wallisch farm expanded as well. At the time of the painting, the Wallisch Homestead was in the hands of James H. Gregory. The 123-acre Gregory Farm was established in 1836 and grew through the 1850s to more than 140 acres. The Gregory Farm house of the 1850s bears little resemblance to the one depicted by Cropsey, but perhaps that is not surprising given Cropsey's architectural background. He could easily have adapted any number of houses for the painting.

¹⁰⁸ Per correspondence with Kerry O'Brien, member of the West Milford Heritage Committee, February 27, 2017. The historic farm Tichenor-Gregory-Goodell-Wallisch Farm is commonly referred to as Wallisch Homestead. I am indebted to him for generously researching the farm and farming practices in the area for the purposes of this research.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ According to O'Brien's research, in 1837, new Long Pond dam and canal allowed for shipment of goods upstream. In the 1850s, the Long Pond Ironworks village experienced growth that contributed to increased demand. In the 1850s, Greenwood Lake became a destination for tourists looking to escape the city, leading to development of hotels around the lake.

According to US Special Census data, the Gregory Farm's production varied over three decades, appearing to accommodate market demand. Between 1850 and 1860, Gregory Farm grew hay, wheat, rye, oats, and buckwheat, any of which could be the subject of this harvesting scene.¹¹¹ Given the evidence of location, scenery, topographical details, and the crop depicted, it seems probable that Cropsey's painting was at least loosely based on Gregory Farm. At the very least, he depicts a functioning commercial-scale farm that produced goods for the market rather than for the subsistence of a small family.

The 1850s through the Civil War marked an important moment in the history of agriculture. An address made by Edward Burroughs, president of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture in 1888-89 summarized the changes as follows,

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, meadow grass held full sway. Farmers ate rye bread, and the growth of this cereal far exceeded wheat. As timothy and clover took the place of natural grasses, so wheat superseded rye, and the cradle supplanted the sickle, which in turn was supplanted by the reaping machine and self-binding harvester; so New Jersey soon became a grain and grass producing state. These changes seem to have been the first marked developments of the agriculture of the state.¹¹²

With these changes came a more scientific approach to agriculture which incorporated crop rotation (not just field rotation) and other methods to increase productivity and organize farmers in the pursuit of profitability.

Cropsey's painting appears during a time still in the midst of this transition. The harvest scene is occupied by one horse-drawn cart and four laborers. The painting is

¹¹¹ Agricultural Censuses from 1850-80 as collected by Kerry O'Brien from the US Special Census records.

¹¹² Edward Burroughs, president of the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture. Reprinted in the Board's Sixteenth Annual Report, 1888-89. As reprinted in William Starr Myles, ed., *The Story of New Jersey* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1945), 357.

remarkable for showing the process of binding the grains. Half of the field is cut, while the other half remains. One person brings the cut grains into piles, two others gather the piles and bring them for binding, while a fourth loads them onto the horse-drawn wagon. Cast in the glow of autumn, the process unfolds in an idyllic scene.

While it seems like this farm is operating on a market scale—producing a grain for commercial sale—new farming implements that would have been available to the farmers are not being employed. We know from the census data that the cash value of farming implements on the Gregory Farm is listed at \$150, but the specifics are unknown. At this time, reapers and self-binding harvesters were widely available. The McCormick Harvesting Machine Company invented the reaper in 1831 and patented in 1834.¹¹³ By 1848, the design of the McCormick was improved and the reaper gained significant commercial success between 1855-59.¹¹⁴

In an 1899 history of agriculture in America, Waldo F. Brown, the Agricultural Editor for the *Cincinnati Gazette*, wrote of the advances of farm machinery as though nature itself and human ingenuity divined the progress of American farming, manifested in part by the development of machinery. He wrote,

In writing on the improvements in agriculture one can scarcely fail to be impressed with the fact that whenever the human race comes to the point that it must have help and make a demand upon nature, she always honors the draft; and as the steps are portrayed by which agricultural products of this continent have been increased a hundred fold, while the power of the individual worker has increased a hundred fold, and the labor lightened by machinery, we can see that these inventions and improvements came just as they were needed, and no faster. God has given to the human mind such power, and to the hands such skill, that

¹¹³ C. H. Wendel, *Encyclopedia of American Farm Implements & Antiques* (Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 1997), 298.

¹¹⁴ Wendel, *Encyclopedia of American Farm Implements & Antiques*, 301.

whatever is necessary is soon provided...Perhaps there is no better way in which this can be traced than in the appliances by which the farmer feeds the world.¹¹⁵

In the eye of this historian, machinery was symbolic of God's creation of man, who was able of mind and skill to create the machinery, and nature, which yields to the needs of man.

This rhetoric epitomizes notions that man was predestined to coerce nature to produce on a commercial scale—all in due course marching towards the goal of improving nature. A popular chromolithograph dating to the 1860s or 70s shows how inextricably ideas of progress, farming, and machinery were linked. In a play on Emmanuel Leutze's 1862 *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, the anonymous and undated print reads across the top, "'Westward the Course of Empire Take Its Way' with McCormick Reapers in the Van."¹¹⁶ (Figure 2.5) In this revision of Leutze's dramatic call to the pioneer, machinery punctuates neatly organized plots of land in the vista below.

Cropsey's painting falls shy of overt commercialization of the farm and avoids depicting the farming implements that would have so substantially impacted the labor of the workers. Clearly, when Cropsey is painting from experience and observation, he sees a rural countryside populated by farms that operated as businesses, producing agricultural products on mass scale for sale on the market, while still immersed in a nostalgia and

¹¹⁵ Waldo F. Brown, "The Century's Progress in Agriculture" in *Triumphs and Wonders of the 19th Century: The True Mirror of a Phenomenal Era*, ed. James P. Boyd (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman & Co., 1899), 309.

¹¹⁶ Albert Boime uses this image to discuss the "magisterial gaze" of the westward pioneer, a subject for a subsequent chapter. Albert Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting c. 1830-1865* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 46-47.

romance of the farm. Conversely, when creating a painting of the idea of farming in America for a European audience, Cropsey resorts to the still persistent ideal of the yeoman farmer taming wilderness by the sheer force of individual labor—living in harmony with nature, but also clearly in control of its bountiful resources.

The dance between farm and farmer as nostalgia, commerce, reality, and metaphor is well-illustrated in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Farming," originally delivered in 1858 at the annual exhibition of the Middlesex Agricultural Society as "The Man with the Hoe."¹¹⁷ Emerson's essay extolls the virtue of the farmer, but also the increasingly prevalent notions of science—and implicitly increased productivity—that permeate mid-nineteenth century concepts of the farmer. The essay is extensive and could alone be used as a mechanism to dissect *Bareford Mountain*. However, suffice it to highlight a few key passages as they relate to this study. For Emerson, the farmer represented the center of all economy. Without him, cities could not exist. He claims this gravitas prevents a too nostalgic picture of the farmer. The generative work of the farmer, however, is embroiled in the minute details of daily and seasonal work.

The farmer's office is precise and important, but you must not try to paint him in rose-color; you cannot make pretty compliments to fate and gravitation, whose minister he is. He represents the necessities. It is the beauty of the great economy of the world that makes his comeliness. He bends to the order of the seasons, the weather, the soils and crops, as the sails of a ship bend to the wind. He represents continuous hard labor, year in, year out, and small gains.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ See note 1 by Edward Waldo Emerson in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works* (New York and Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904) via Bartleby.com, 2013. www.bartleby.com/90/0706.html#note0706.1. Accessed February 5, 2017.

¹¹⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Farming," in *The Complete Works* (New York and Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904) via Bartleby.com, 2013. <http://www.bartleby.com/90/0706.html#note0706.1> paragraph 3

While this passage implies that the farmer's work is determined by the seasons, Emerson conversely implies that nature relinquishes to the will of man's intellect. He continues, "The earth works for him; the earth is a machine which yields almost gratuitous service to every application of intellect."¹¹⁹ Emerson establishes the codependency of nature, now a machine, and man to be the most productive. Without man's intellect and application of science, nature would not be so fecund, but man is simultaneously dependent upon the seasons and conditions to determine his actions. What is most impressive about Emerson's essay is his ability to view farming and nature from both a micro and macro scale—its own economic cosmos— and as a long history, while maintaining its romanticism.

In many ways, *Bareford Mountain* achieves a similar melding of romance and economy, progress and nostalgia. For Cropsey, the connection to farming was both familial and a by-product of philosophy. Cropsey had humble beginnings as the son of a farmer, living on a small rural farm in Staten Island. Even in his youth, Cropsey sketched views of his family farm, barns, and the landscape.¹²⁰ (Figure 6) Cropsey was a talented youth, excelling in both painting and architecture. Eventually, he settled into a life as a painter, encouraged by positive reception from the American Art Union. His theories on art aligned largely with the second generation of Hudson River School artists who believed in the now very familiar motto that America was the last remaining unspoiled wilderness, exuding natural beauty as a gift from God.¹²¹ Cropsey revered Cole, but, like

¹¹⁹ Emerson, "Farming," paragraph 12.

¹²⁰ Speiser, "Jasper F. Cropsey: Painter of Faith," xvi.

¹²¹ Speiser, "Jasper F. Cropsey: Painter of Faith," xx.

his peers, he also incorporated civilization and progress into a positive narrative of nature—for which Asher Durand's 1853 *Progress (Advance of Civilization)* is exemplar.

Durand's *Progress* speaks on a macro scale—a compendium of civilization in one image. *Bareford Mountain* in its charming detail brings the perspective down—it does not aim to represent all of farming or all of industry. The specificity of the image changes how we read it. While we cannot be certain which farm Cropsey portrays in Bareford Mountain, identifiable farmstead portraits, often commissioned by their owners, were common in the nineteenth century. Images of family farmsteads were ubiquitous in printed material, particularly in the 1870s onward. Many maps of cities, counties, states, and regions included images of prominent farmsteads, such as a map of New England which includes Marshfield, the farm of politician Daniel Webster. (Figure 2.7) City and county atlases, such as the 1860 *Farm Map of Hillsboro: Somerset Co., N.J.*, might have more than one hundred subscribers, and farmers paid extra to have portraits of their property included in the border.¹²² (Figure 2.8) The implication is that prosperous family farms were the marker of success, a source of pride for the owner, but also the region. Farms, like businesses, became touch points for the community.

While lithographs in atlases portrayed farms to a public audience, American folk artists often created farmstead portraits that reveal an intimate relationship between farm families and their farms because paintings were commissioned for the family and acquaintances as a record of prosperity. This is not to claim that folk artists had a more authentic practice than major artists like Cole or Cropsey (that is a slippery slope), per se.

¹²² "NOVA CÆSAREA: A CARTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF THE GARDEN STATE, 1666-1888" <http://library.princeton.edu/njmaps/counties/somerset.html> This map had 137 subscribers, and fifteen farmers paid to have engravings of their farms, residences, or businesses added to the image. Accessed February 6, 2017

Because farmers were either uninterested in, unable to afford, or unaware of the lure of the Hudson River School painters, they often commissioned paintings from artists who they knew personally. Farmstead portrait paintings reveal a regional aesthetic defined by the artists and farmers themselves. Simultaneously, they illustrate common narratives of progress, creation, and the meaning of success in America while documenting the changing landscape.

Edward Hicks's farmstead portraits provide both a stylized vision of orderly farm life and a detailed inventory of the practices of agribusiness. Although Hicks's legacy is rightly considered amongst the canon of great American artists of the nineteenth century, he considered himself more of an artisan. He was, however, first and foremost a Quaker minister who actively avoided any associations as a fine art painter, even mounting a failed attempt at farming in 1816-17, believing it was an occupation more aligned with Christianity and family life.¹²³ In the last fifteen years of his life, Hicks moved away from ministry and instead focused on personal matters. During this period, his most productive for easel painting, he broadened his subject matter to include history paintings, pastorals, and farmscapes.¹²⁴ Arguably, the farmscapes are his greatest achievements in this latter part of his life and a notable departure from his frequent allegorical and history paintings.

In spite of a failed attempt at farming, the farm life seemed to hold a particular enchantment for Hicks. Within three years' time, Hicks painted several farmsteads, but

¹²³ For an overview of Hicks's reputation both during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, see David Tatham, "Edward Hicks and John Comply: Perspectives on the Peaceable Kingdom Theme" *The American Art Journal* 13 (Spring 1981): 36-50. Alice Ford sites his attempt at farming in Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Life and Art* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1985), 29.

¹²⁴ Carolyn Weekley and Laura Pass, *The Kingdoms of Edward Hicks* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1999), 156.

three may be considered instructive as an illustration of the prevailing emphasis on the development of market scales, even in the eyes of a Quaker minimalist. *Twining Farm* of 1845-47 is the first of four versions of the same subject, painted for a member of the Twining family of Newtown, Pennsylvania.¹²⁵ (Figure 2.9) Mrs. Twining, painted in the lower left with her Bible, was Hicks's childhood guardian.¹²⁶ The young Hicks stands at her side receiving instruction. The painting is a reminiscence of Hicks's childhood home on the farm in 1785, as indicated on the inscription.

Hicks and Mrs. Twining are joined by other family members and workers and the setting is the family farm. In the foreground is a selection of livestock including pigs, cattle, sheep, and goats. Hicks's meticulous rendering of the animals reads like an inventory more than a pastoral. While this may be a reflection of his Quaker aesthetic, it is also a reflection of Hicks's reliance on printed models for his compositions because he had no formal education other than an apprenticeship with a sign painter. Art historian Alice Ford provides ample documentation of Hicks's use of prints of from a myriad of sources including illustrated Bibles and livestock and fine art prints.¹²⁷ See, for instance, Hicks's 1846 painting *James Cornell's Prize Bull*. (Figure 2.10) Ford provides convincing evidence of Hicks's sources for the presentation of Cornell's impressive cow including a stock image of a steer that remains in the Hicks family collection and prints after

¹²⁵ Per Carnegie Institute Pittsburgh. For an overview of *The Twining Farm*, see Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Life and Art*, 214.

¹²⁶ Edward Hicks's father was widowed when Hicks was three years old. He was taken in by the Twining family, an acquaintance of "Kitty" Hicks, his mother.

¹²⁷ For extensive evidence of his use of prints as sources, see Ford's analysis of various versions of the *Peaceable Kingdom* and several landscapes, pastorals, and history paintings in *Edward Hicks: His Art and Life*.

paintings of Paulus Potter among others.¹²⁸ (Figures 2.11) Such prints were popularly collected amongst Quaker farmers according to Ford's research. Similar sources exist for the other livestock. While there is clearly a desire to depict the presence of specific breeds and a variety of animals, there is no sense of the overabundance of them. All the animals fit neatly into a small corral in the foreground.

Of equal visual weight, the middle ground is occupied by a black man working a horse-drawn plow, known to be a freeman named Caesar. The presence of black figures in northeastern farmstead imagery is certainly uncommon, and particularly interesting given that we know he was a freeman. For Hicks, abolition was a moral, rather than political, issue.¹²⁹ This may explain, in part, the combination of Caesar's presence in the painting as Hicks receives Biblical instruction in the foreground.

Interestingly, Caesar is the only person shown truly laboring on the farm. He uses a horse-drawn plow—what is likely to be a turn plough or moldboard plow, its main objective to "prepare the soil for the germination of seeds and the growth of plants," with good tilth, few weeds, and soil adequately broken to allow air and water to move about.¹³⁰ Even though plows had been in existence since at least 3,000 B.C.E., the mid-nineteenth century moldboard plow signaled the development of the modern plow and significant advancements.¹³¹ An 1855 illustration provides a visual of the plow and its functionality. (Figure 2.12) Hicks left the Twining farm rather early in his life which

¹²⁸ Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Art and Life*, 223. Ford acknowledges the contribution of scholar Julius Held in identifying the source in *Peter Paul Rubens: The Leopards*, Privately Printed, 1970.

¹²⁹ Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Art and Life*, 24.

¹³⁰ Peter McClelland, *Sowing Modernity: America's First Agricultural Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 16.

¹³¹ McClelland, *Sowing Modernity*, 18-20.

might explain why he painted what could be a mid-nineteenth century plow in a scene supposed to have been set in 1785. He would have been very familiar with the farming implements he painted in his farmscapes because he was a sign-painter for Brown & Eyre, a company that produced plows, stoves, and other farm equipment.¹³²

Poetic and subtle, and perhaps unconscious to Hicks, the plow depicted is a symbol of the future of farming, not only because of its idiosyncratic timing, but also because it literally prepares the ground for future growth. It seems well-aligned with the education of young Hicks in the foreground. The innovations of the plow in America can also stand in for the advancements made in American agriculture-at-large. As economist and agriculture historian Peter D. McClelland points out, the plow evolved immensely between the first settlements in America to the 1830s. Mirroring the development of agricultural practices, the early implements used by frontier farmers were the products of native lands including England, Germany, France, etc. As time passed, though, the innovations in the efficiency of the plow were thoroughly American, and American agriculture developed independently from European counterparts. The chief economic factor was abundant land.¹³³ Indeed, the plow can be read as a symbol of the agricultural revolution, which "was dominated by the market, and its participants, by and large, were preoccupied by profits...It was, in short, a revolution that was quintessentially capitalistic in motivation and American in character."¹³⁴

The size of the worked fields, livestock holdings, home, and barn, at least as presented in the painting, is certainly larger than those of yeoman farms, but otherwise

¹³² Alice Ford, *Edward Hicks, Painter of the Peaceable Kingdom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 97.

¹³³ About the evolution of the American plow, see McClelland, *Sowing Modernity*, 41-63.

¹³⁴ McClelland, *Sowing Modernity*, 63.

seems rather modest. However, we know from the will of David Twining that his holdings were indeed much larger than let on in the image. In 1791, he bequeathed 1,000 acres to his two daughters and another 200 acres to a third daughter—too much land to be considered a subsistence farm.¹³⁵ This reveals that not only were farms of market scale already established in the late eighteenth century, but also that the prevailing vision perpetuated by nostalgia about the period is of the small to moderate family farm, not unlike Cropsey's invention of *Backwoods of America*, the quintessential farm, while in Europe.

There is an intuitive perspective at play in Hicks's landscapes that evidences his informal training but also his perception of the farm size. Hicks organizes his landscape canvases in bands, positioning them one above the other to show recession in space. Yet, the perspective does not align accurately with the figures, shown frontally or in profile from a low perspective. The effect is orderly and stilted, almost like a ledger inventory reading from bottom to top. And in the case of *Twining Farm*, this view and the cropping limits the acquisition of prospect through the survey of the land.

It is instructive to compare *The Twining Farm* with two other landscapes done in the same period, *Leedom Farm* (1849) and *Cornell Farm* (1848), both likely to have been commissions. (Figures 2.13 and 2.14) *Leedom Farm*, Hicks's last painting before he died, is inscribed: "A May morning view of the Farm and Stock of David Leedom of Newtown Bucks County—Pennsylvania with representation of Himself. Wife. Father. Mother.

¹³⁵ Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Art and His Life*, 218.

Brothers and nephew. Painted by Edw. Hicks in his 70th year of his age." The Leedom family had relations to the Twining family, so the comparison is especially apt.¹³⁶

While they share similar subjects of family, farm, and livestock, there are significant differences between the compositions of Hicks's recollection of the eighteenth-century Twining farm and the mid-nineteenth-century contemporary Leedom Farm. The differences point to changing definitions of farm success. *Twining Farm* is dominated by a horizontal, grid-like emphasis that compartmentalizes different parts of the narrative. The figures and structures fill the entire compact composition. In contrast, the perspective in *Leedom Farm* is elevated and the viewer at a substantial distance, allowing for greater prospect of the wooded area beyond the farm fence at approximately middle ground. The livestock, while still not exactly naturally portrayed, are more animated, less stilted, and certainly more abundant.

According to Art Historian and Hicks expert Alice Ford, this family farm was a mere 167 acres, only slightly larger than the average of 119 acres of New England farms in 1860.¹³⁷ If this farm produced for the market, their yield was moderate. So how can the stark difference in composition be explained? The first explanation returns to the nostalgic sentiments that pervade the yeoman farm, and the persistence of the yeoman ideal even in the face of immense growth. Perhaps to Hicks's reminiscence of the *Twining Farm*, small scale equated with his mental image of familial comforts under the care of

¹³⁶ Shown in the painting are Jessee Leedom and Mary Twining, already deceased at the time of the painting. Their son David Leedom, heir to the farm, and late grandmother Polly Leedom are among the figures shown in the painting. Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Art and His Life*, 240.

¹³⁷ Laurie, *Artisans Into Workers*, 20.

the Twining family. This sentiment accords with those expressed by other artists representing the happy family on the yeoman farm, as in Cole's *The Hunter's Return*.

We can understand this shifting perspective in terms of the now-familiar "magisterial gaze" of Manifest Destiny as proposed by Albert Boime, Boime argues that artists of the nineteenth century are far from the impotent spectators that passively document the changing landscape from Virgin land to commerce, but rather they "participated in the very system they condemned and projected it symbolically in their work." This projection occurs through the acquisition of prospect by the viewer (or a figure that establishes the viewer's perspective) from an elevated position so as the landscape beneath is laid out as a "sociopolitical ideology of expansionist thought," or, in other words, a viewer surveys the potential or realized potential of development, improvement, and commerce from his elevated point-of-view.¹³⁸ Certainly, Hicks's painting is not the most egregious example of this model, and Hicks's personal religious affiliations complicate this interpretation. However, even taken at face value, this farm portrait, symbolic of a family's hard won success, is also an exaltation of Manifest Destiny and the American Dream.

David E. Nye describes America's technological creation stories in *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings*. According to Nye, one of the preconditions of technological change, which we will further address shortly, is the survey of the land. In post-revolutionary America, a new grid-system of land division was the goal. The system, enacted by the government, allowed for the impartial distribution of land in an abstract grid system, which, over time, became the "normal"

¹³⁸ Boime, *The Magisterial Gaze*, 4-5.

conditions within which the market operated. This was in contrast to pre-revolutionary models where a family's land may be more irregular and dispersed.¹³⁹ In *Leedom Farm*, there is a stark division between cultivated, improved, and gridded land in the foreground of Hicks's painting and the wilderness prospect in the distance, emphasizing the achievement of the Leedom family. But, the Leedom farm is not the only one portrayed in this farmstead portrait. In the distance, other cultivated fields and a farmhouse appear. The potential for market scale farms stretching as far as the eye can see in the distance. Even the presence of Addisville road (as identified by Ford) reinforces the interconnectivity of farms to other farms and towns—the presumed markets for their goods and bartering.

If *Leedom Farm* exhibits the potential for growth, *Cornell Farm* serves as the culmination of the farmer's aspirations, representing success and abundance. *Cornell Farm* is inscribed "An Indian summer view of the Farm Stock of James C. Cornell of Northhampton Bucks County Pennsylvania. That took the Premiums in the Agricultural Society October the 12, 1848." *Cornell Farm* is perhaps Hicks's greatest achievement in landscape. The canvas is divided into quarters. The bottom quarter is occupied by a catalogue of the livestock of the Cornell family. The second quarter holds vast pastures and plowed fields—land serves as a powerful symbol of farm and family success. Occupying the next quarter of the painting are the farm structures of home and barn, and—portrayed in naïve atmospheric perspective—virtually endless rows of carefully cultivated orchards. Finally, occupying the top quarter of the painting is the beautiful and vast pink/blue sky. The entire composition suggests abundance—abundance that would

¹³⁹ Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 21-23.

have earned the family market success. This is a significant difference from the *Twining Farm* where the scarcely present sky and distant land are deemphasized. With this elevated vantage point, the land holdings of the Cornell family are a central feature of the painting, and make an interesting comparison to both *Twining Farm* and *Leedom Farm*. Cultivated land of limited products dominates this painting. Nowhere in this scene is there the quaint farm that would have fed just the members of the immediate family. This prize-winning family, who had only settled in Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, amassed a tract of land more than 2,000 acres.¹⁴⁰

We can return to the illustrations by Orasmus Turner to see the popular concept of the trajectory of farm growth that is illustrated by Hicks's painting. We left Turner's pioneer farmer in chapter one with his "rugged home in the wilderness," with its "earnest of progress and improvement."¹⁴¹ In the third sketch of the pioneer, ten years have passed and forty more acres have been cleared and enclosed. (Figure 2.15) Turner describes their state, "Various crops are growing, and the whole premises begin to have the appearance of careful management, of thrift, comfort, and even plenty."¹⁴² In another forty-five years, the pioneer (and notably mentioned, his wife) has finally achieved a status of veneration and honor. (Figure 2.16) He has amassed livestock and surplus through his "long years of patient, persevering industry."¹⁴³ The compositions of Turner's illustrations for these farmers are nearly identical to the escalating elevations found in the paintings of Hicks. Turner concludes his sketch of the pioneer farm in Western New

¹⁴⁰ Ford, *Edward Hicks: His Art and His Life*, 234.

¹⁴¹ Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase*, 564.

¹⁴² Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase*, 565.

¹⁴³ Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase*, 566.

York with the grandiose proclamation that the conversion “from a wilderness, to a theatre of wealth, enterprise, and prosperity” was indeed a reality.¹⁴⁴

In the late eighteenth century, when Jefferson was writing his *Notes on Virginia*, nobody, not even Jefferson with his emphasis on the individual farmer, would have predicted the massive economic development of America’s mechanization and market systems. In 1786, geo-politically, America was still largely unsettled and unexplored, populated primarily by farmers living on cheap or free land.¹⁴⁵ According to Leo Marx in his influential book *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, not only did no one adequately predict the emergence of the market, there was active opposition from Jefferson, among others.¹⁴⁶ According to Marx, the availability of land “worked against manufactures in two ways: it provided an inducement to agriculture, and it dispersed the people over an area too large to be a satisfactory market for manufacture.”¹⁴⁷ These geo-political conditions may have precluded visions of a European-style market.

Fast forward from 1786 to 1899, James Penny Boyd edited an exhaustive volume of essays about progress in the nineteenth century, with an equally exhaustive title: *Triumphs and Wonders of the 19th Century, a Volume of Original, Historic and Descriptive Writings Showing the Many and Marvellous Achievements Which Distinguish an Hundred Years of Material, Intellectual, Social and Moral Progress Years*.¹⁴⁸ The title

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 146-48.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 149.

¹⁴⁸ James Penny Boyd, *Triumphs and Wonders of the 19th Century, a Volume of Original, Historic and Descriptive Writings Showing the Many and Marvellous Achievements*

is relevant, though, as it points to the very persistent concept of progress as the defining characteristic of achievement in America in the nineteenth century.

Waldo F. Brown's chapter on "The Century's Progress in Agriculture" in this volume essentially defines progress as the emergence of the market system and improvement of the land.¹⁴⁹ Brown claims he writes, from personal experience, about the transformation of "agriculture from a simple art to a profound science."¹⁵⁰ Much of the chapter is dedicated to practically apologizing on behalf of the early nineteenth-century farmers who worked in "years of depressed agriculture."¹⁵¹ According to Boyd, in the early nineteenth century, the "difficulty was not in the farm or the farmer; for he could grow not only all that was necessary for family use, but more than enough to supply the demand for such market as he had."¹⁵² He goes on to explain that transportation was the key factor in connecting the farmer to markets.

Brown succinctly outlines the great achievements of infrastructure that allowed for the emergence of national markets for agricultural goods. The first development was a system of roads, including the National Road that connected east to west in 1827. Another was the canal "craze" of the 1820s, just before the railroad system. Then, by the 1830s, the "railroad idea had taken possession of the minds of the people."¹⁵³ Boyd proclaims, "The era of railroads—that wonderful factor which was to revolutionize farming—dates from about 1830," but, it was "very near the middle of the century before

Which Distinguish an Hundred Years of Material, Intellectual, Social and Moral Progress Years (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman and Company, 1899).

¹⁴⁹ Waldo F. Brown, "The Century's Progress in Agriculture," in *Triumphs and Wonder*, 307-38.

¹⁵⁰ Brown, "The Century's Progress in Agriculture," 307.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Brown, "The Century's Progress in Agriculture," 308.

the system of railroads had been completed so as to materially improve the condition of agriculture."¹⁵⁴

The impact of the railroad system on the expansion of agricultural markets cannot be overstated. The railroad has certainly figured prominently in narratives of progress in America, whether those narratives were conjured in the past or reconstructed by historians in the present. As Leo Marx points out in his introduction to the 1981 exhibition catalogue for *The Railroad in American Landscape: 1850-1950*, and certainly confirmed by the likes of Waldo F. Brown in *Triumphs and Wonders of the 19th Century*, the railroad was the single innovation which made the general public aware of the radical transformation of what we call the Industrial Revolution and tangentially the advent of market-scale agriculture.¹⁵⁵

The first railroad was built in Baltimore in 1828, marked by celebrations and a clear understanding of its political and economic promise.¹⁵⁶ While there were certainly detractors, there was a general sense of optimism and enthusiasm that surrounded the railroad and the development of transportation as a whole, particularly in its relation to the expansion of agriculture markets. David Matthews created two charming illustrations made in 1889 to commemorate the 1831 inauguration of the Dewitt Clinton locomotive, the first in New York State, by the Mohawk and Hudson Railroad Company. These drawings illustrate both the development of transportation and the importance of farms in the railroad narrative. Matthews's images are unique in character. He created them in

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Leo Marx, "Introduction, The Railroad in the American Landscape," in *The Railroad in the American Landscape: 1850-1950* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Museum, 1981), 12.

¹⁵⁶ Nye, *Technological Sublime*, 47.

1889 for his book *A Pictorial History of the Locomotive*, which chronicled the history of the railroad from memory through the lens of his decades long career as an engineer and mechanic.¹⁵⁷ This powerful collection of a lifetime's work presents from a first-person citizenry perspective the enormous impact of the railroad. The first image presents a virtual compendium of the advancements in transportation, and thus the agriculture market, from flatboats and steamboats to canals and railways. (Figure 2.17) The second shows the placement of the railway at the juncture of a farmstead, illustrating the symbiotic relationship the railroad had, from the outset, with farms. (Figure 2.18) These images warrant further investigation, but suffice it to say for the purposes of this study, the railroad occupied an incomparable place in the American imagination, and that vision was bound to the agricultural landscape.

Georges Inness's numerous paintings of the Delaware Water Gap, such as the 1859 version in the Monclair Art Museum, perfectly illustrate the optimism associated with the expansion of the railroad and the indisputable connection between trains and agribusiness. (Figures 2.19 and 2.20) Unlike many of his contemporaries who focused largely on the virtues of unspoiled wilderness, Inness explained in an 1878 magazine article,

“...the highest form of art is where has been most perfectly breathed the sentiment of humanity...Some persons suppose the landscape has no power of communicating the human sentiment. But this is a great mistake. The civilized

¹⁵⁷ Scant information on David Matthews as author or artist exist in records. For this basic information, see R.F.S. “Dawn of the Railroad: A pioneer locomotive builder used pen and ink, watercolor, and near total recall to re-create the birth of a titanic enterprise” *American Heritage*, 35 (1984) and First Frist, “More on Matthew,” *American Heritage* 36 (1985), both available via www.americanheritage.com.

landscape peculiarly can; and therefore I love it more and think it more worthy of reproduction than that which is savage and untamed. It is more significant.”¹⁵⁸

These paintings represent the civilized landscape through the presence of the railroad and expansive tracts of developed land along the river. In one version, the reapers occupy the foreground, in another a small farmhouse. Inness emphasizes the cultivated land, relishing the geometric patterns created by the land plots. In both images, the railroad is not an intruder in the landscape, but seamlessly incorporated into the vista. The three primary factors which would have influenced the development of commercial agriculture—railroad, waterway, and quality land—are all gloriously present. There is no sense of apprehension or tension in Inness's presentation of the scenery.

The harmonious topography laid out in a rational geometry is no accident. The system of land distribution was developed largely during the American Revolution, and enacted from about the 1780s onward.¹⁵⁹ The first settlers recreated European-style towns with the church at the center and homesteads radiating outward. Their land allotments were often divided into different areas based on the type of land. The concept to survey land into rectilinear patterns was introduced on a small scale east of the Alleghenies, and became the standard for all land west of the range. According to David E. Nye, the "new grid system erased hierarchy and centrality from the landscape, substituting the values of individuality and equality." Inness's romantic view of the civilized landscape is predicated on this rational and very American concept of the geographical distribution of

¹⁵⁸ George Inness, "A Painter on Painting," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 56 (Feb 1878) 461. As quoted by Susan Danly Walther, Kenneth W. Maddox, and Judith Hoos Fox, *The Railroad in the American Landscape*, 80.

¹⁵⁹ Information about the grid system of land survey is from Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 22-42.

land.¹⁶⁰ While the program had practical legislative purposes and was problematic, the effect on concepts of space and the past were enormous as people of the nineteenth century released their spatial associations with Europe and established new ways of seeing the land.

Thus, Inness's focus on the rectilinear patterns of development along the Delaware Water Gap present an eastern landscape altered by New World concepts of spatial distribution and implied a homogenized solution to the distribution of land. Nye points out that surveying the land "was the essential precondition to owning land, building a mill race, or constructing a canal, a railroad, or an irrigation ditch."¹⁶¹ Inness's painting portrays this codependency, which will be increasingly relevant in the move westward in the following chapter. A Currier & Ives print based on Inness's painting incorporates the human element missing from Inness's landscape. Almost pastoral in its peaceful representation of labor, the print may best represent the confluence of human labor, the products of that labor, the technological advancement, and chiefly, the enormous changes in the American landscape brought on by agribusiness.

¹⁶⁰ As Nye points out, "It is tempting to claim that the creation of the grid expressed an immediate and fundamental shift in consciousness, but a look at discussions that preceded the adoption of the Ordinance of 1784 and the later revisions of that ordinance reveals that legislation was a practical program as well as a reconception of space" to facilitate the selling of western land. Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 23.

¹⁶¹ Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 25.



Fig. 2.1. Jasper Cropsey, *Backwoods of America*, 1858. Oil on canvas, 42 x 70 1/4 in., Bentonville, Arkansas, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art



Fig. 2.2. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Bareford Mountains, West Milford, New Jersey*, 1850, oil on canvas, 23 1/16 x 40 1/16 in., Brooklyn Museum of Art.



Fig. 2.3. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Retired Life*, 1868, oil on canvas, 10 in. x 15 in.,
Columbus, OH, Columbus Museum of Art.



Fig. 2.4. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *West Milford*, July 20, 1850, pencil on paper,
Newington-Cropsey collection.

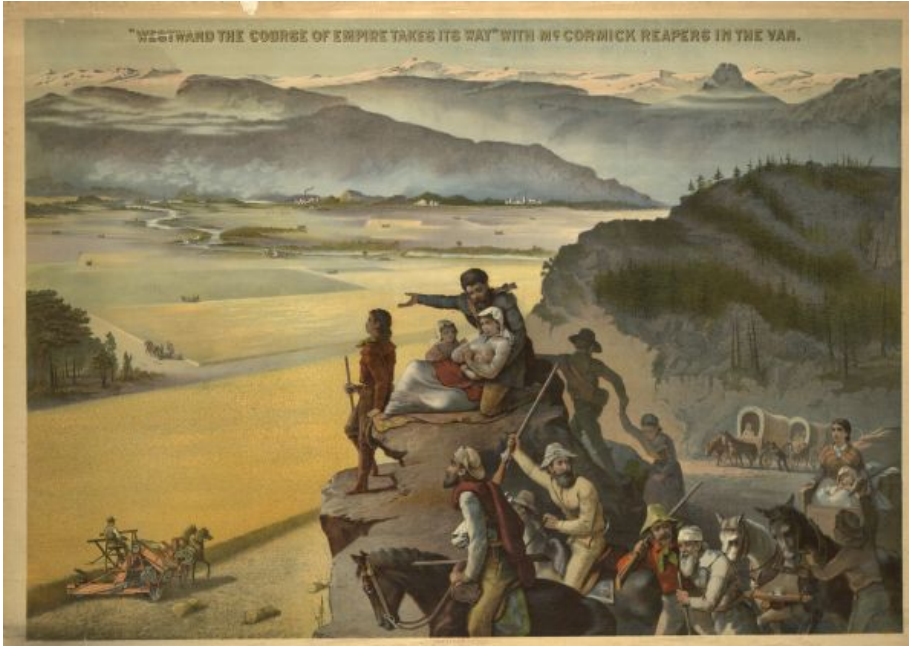


Fig. 2.5. Printed by Shober & Carqueville Lithog. Co, *"Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way" with McCormick Reapers in the Van*, ca. 1886, Madison, WI, Wisconsin Historical Society.



Fig. 2.6. Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Cropsey Farm, Staten Island*, 1843, oil on canvas, Newington-Cropsey collection.

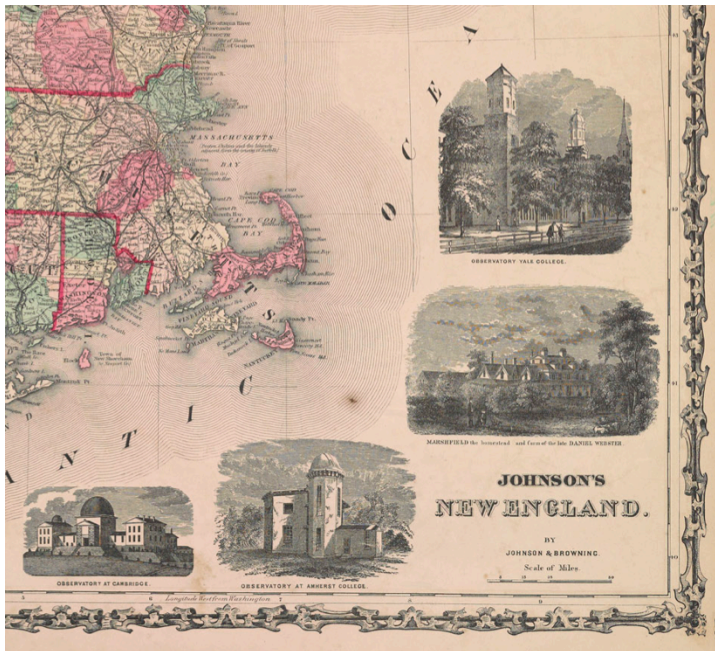


Fig. 2.7. *Johnson's New England* by Johnson & Browning, ca. 1860, Portland, ME, Osher Map Library.



Fig. 2.8. Matthew Hughes, printed by T.S. Wagner, *Farm Map of Hillsboro, Somerset Co. N.J.*, 1860, wall map with added color, 96 x 142 cm, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Library.

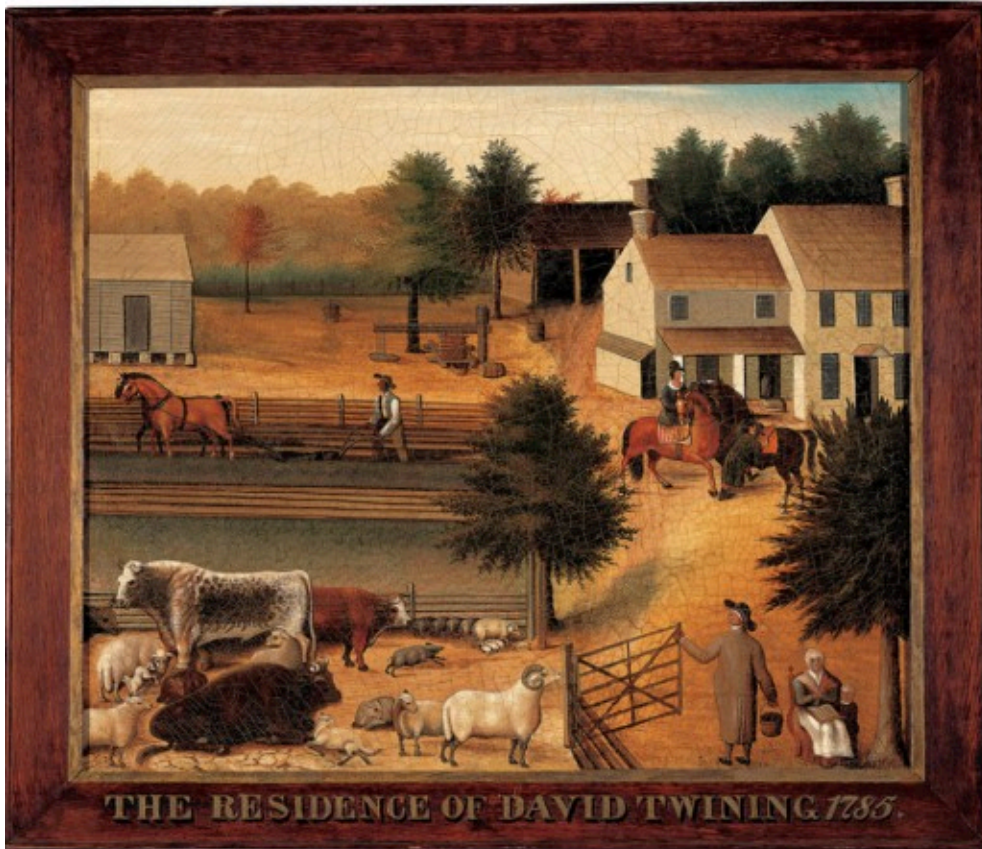


Fig. 2.9. Edward Hicks, *The Residence of David Twining*, 1785, 1846, oil on canvas, in original wood frame with paint and gold leaf, 30 1/2 × 35 7/8 × 1 3/8 in. (framed), American Folk Art Museum.

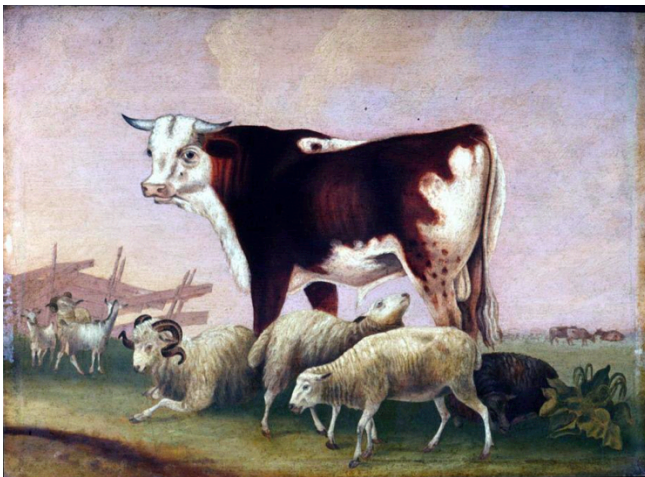


Fig. 2.10. Edward Hicks, *James Cornell's Prize Bull*, 1846, oil on poplar panel, 12 x 16 1/8 in., Colonial Williamsburg.



Fig. 2.11. Paulus Potter, *The Bull*, 1647, oil on canvas, 235.5 x 339 cm, The Mauritshuis.

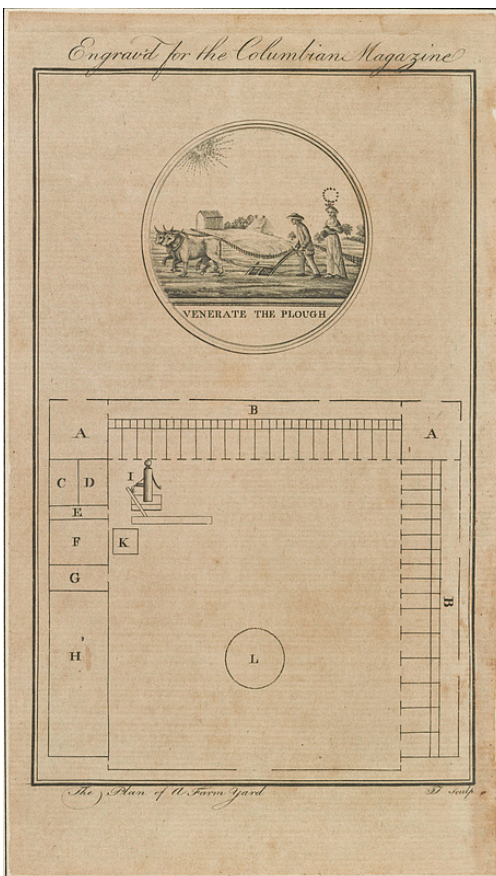


Figure 2.12. James Trenchard, *The plan of a farm yard - venerate the plow*, 1786, etching, 24.5 x 17 cm, Washington D.C., Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 2.13. Edward Hicks, *Leedom Farm*, 1849, oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 49 1/16 in., Colonial Williamsburg.



Fig. 2.14. Edward Hicks, *The Cornell Farm*, 1848, oil on canvas, 36 3/4 x 49 in.,
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 2.15. No. 3- *It is Summer*, 1849, in Orasmus Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York* (Buffalo: Jewett Thomas, 1849).



Fig. 2.16. No. 4- *It is Winter*, 1849, in Orasmus Turner, *The Pioneer History of the Holland Purchase of Western New York* (Buffalo: Jewett Thomas, 1849).

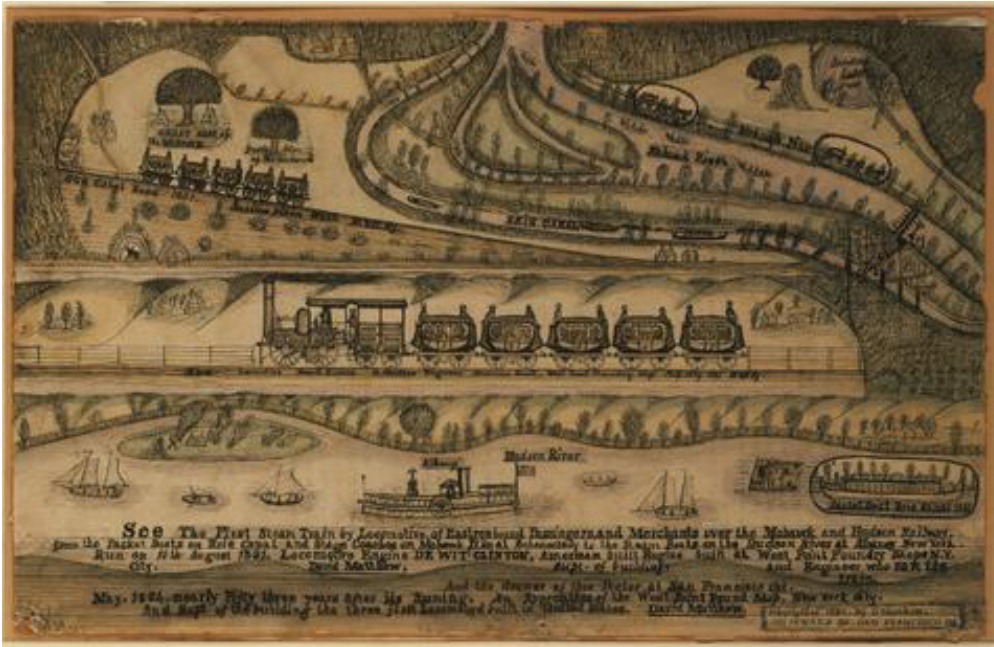


Fig. 2. 17. David Matthew, *Locomotive “DeWittClinton” in 1831, 1884*, black ink and watercolor on paper, whose verso is printed with a patent license, 11 1/4 x 17 7/8 in., New York Historical Society.

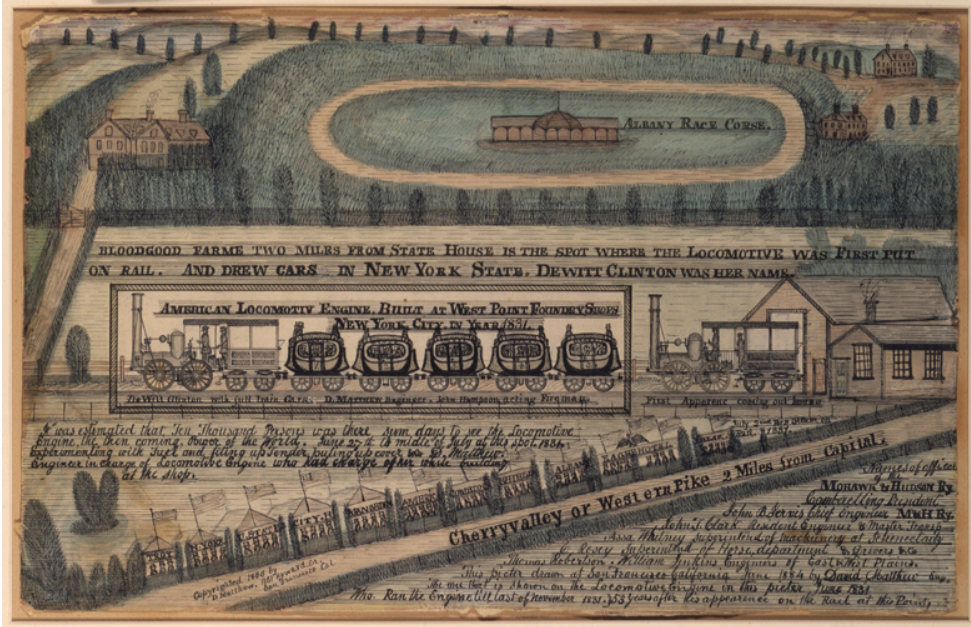


Fig. 2.18. David Matthew, *Locomotive “DeWittClinton” Engine at the Bloodgood Farm, New York in 1832, 1884*, black ink and watercolor on paper, whose verso is printed with a patent license, 11 1/4 x 17 7/8 in., New York Historical Society.



Fig. 2.19. George Inness, *Delaware Water Gap*, 1857, oil on canvas, 46 x 65 1/2 in., Montclair, NK, Montclair Art Museum.



Figure 2.20. Currier & Ives, after George Inness, *View on the Delaware: "water gap" in the distance*, c. 1860, lithograph, Washington D.C., Library of Congress.

CHAPTER III

CROSSINGS: THE FARM IN THE CIVIL WAR ERA

In the catalogue for an ambitious 2012 exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum entitled *The Civil War and American Art*, curator and essayist Eleanor Jones Harvey proclaims that, through metaphor, landscape painting was the "emotional barometer of the mood of the nation" in the decades leading to and during the Civil War.¹⁶² Echoing the words of presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln in 1860, the "coming storm" and political tensions of Civil War were expressed in landscape painting as tumultuous weather, cataclysmic conditions, exotic locations, meteors, and geological phenomena.¹⁶³ Among the many examples is Martin Johnson Heade's *Approaching Thunder Storm* of 1859, which was acquired by prominent abolitionist Noah Schenck, a colleague of Henry Ward Beecher.¹⁶⁴ (Figure 3.1) Frederic Edwin Church's *The Icebergs* of 1861 was retitled as "*The North*" Church's *Picture of Icebergs* at the onset of war, and proceeds went to the newly-established Union Patriotic Fund to benefit Union soldiers.¹⁶⁵ (Figure 3.2) Certainly, landscape was also used as an escape or "sanctuary," as in Sanford Gifford's *A Gorge in the Mountains (Kaaterskill Cove)* of 1862. (Figure 3.3) Painted at

¹⁶² Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art* (Washington DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2012), 19.

¹⁶³ See Eleanor Jones Harvey, "Landscapes and the Metaphorical War," in *The Civil War and American Art*, 17-71.

¹⁶⁴ Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art*, 20.

¹⁶⁵ Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art*, 31-34.

the conclusion of two years of service, Gifford's painting offered "an antidote to civilization and to war."¹⁶⁶

While images of cataclysmic nature might represent the anxiety of the period, and idyllic scenery satisfied escapist yearnings, it was, arguably, the farmstead image which made the most meaningful connection to the Civil War. The farm and its labor sources were, after all, the core site and cause of contention. Images of the farm in the years preceding, during, and immediately after the war Civil War often reveal veiled abolitionist sentiments couched in pastoral bliss. The farm as abolitionist symbol takes primarily three forms. The first is images of abundant and successful white labor on the land. The second is the laborless land of exceptional quietude. Finally, images of the farm that incorporate slaves themselves represent the prospect of freedom and the site of reparation.

Worthington Whittredge's idyllic scene *Landscape with Haywain* was painted at the onset of Civil War and represents the first type of farming image that might adopt abolitionist sentiments. (Figure 3.4) Whittredge painted a golden field at harvest-time, tended by white men and women that we can surmise are there of their own choosing or of familial obligation. A reasonably-sized cabin sits on the modest but successful farm that lies near a body of water and overlooks a stunning wilderness landscape. The American flag hangs to the left of the cabin, declaring the "American-ness" of the scene. It is the picture of harmony between man's needs and nature's beauty and bounty, with a distinctive American idealism. The farm maintains all of the optimism of other market-

¹⁶⁶ Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art*, 38.

scale images seen in chapter two, but its timing is particularly significant, as is the artist himself.

The subject of farms is not a surprise given Whittredge's nostalgic reminiscences on his boyhood in Ohio, where he was born on a farm in 1820. He writes in his autobiography of log cabins, sparse settlement, and the remnants of Indian inhabitants. His descriptions are laudatory and full of charm: "In the region where we lived, which was one of the richest in the state and the land most coveted by farmers, there were great expanses of prairie and woodland extending for miles around. Log cabins were the rule and I was born in one."¹⁶⁷ He relays the appealing stories of a youth spent trapping, the grazing farm that belonged to his father, and the seasonal trips to market to sell dairy products.¹⁶⁸ Whittredge writes of the familial obligation to tend to the family farm and the scarcity of labor in those early periods, and his sense of duty and reverence for the family farm is evident. These sentiments creep into *Landscape with Haywain*, where the family farm follows its usual season of harvest in spite of looming conflict of Civil War. Whittredge's autobiography makes scarce mention of the Civil War and its impact on him, but it would be difficult to assume that his insistence on painting pictures "distinctive of American landscape" had no relationship to impending war.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, he tried unsuccessfully to enlist in the Union Army in Baltimore, instead joining a genteel Civil War sewing circle.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Worthington Whittredge, *The Autobiography of Worthington Whittredge: 1820-1910*, John I.H. Baur, ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 7.

¹⁶⁸ Whittredge, *The Autobiography of Worthington Whittredge*, 7-8.

¹⁶⁹ Whittredge, *The Autobiography of Worthington Whittredge*, 41.

¹⁷⁰ Anthony F. Janson, *Worthington Whittredge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 76.

Historian Adam Wesley Dean offers an exceptional account of the relationship between farming, slavery, and the Civil War in his book *An Agrarian Republic: Farming, Anti-Slavery Politics, and Nature Parks in the Civil War Era*.¹⁷¹ The primary objective of his book is to dispel the common narrative that positions agrarian south against industrial north. Instead, he provides a more nuanced view that acknowledges the sources of this narrative while illustrating its deficiencies. For example, most of the northern population were still small-scale farmers in the nineteenth century, and farm work accounted for 60% of the labor force. Also, most land holdings were small, between 113 acres in New York and Pennsylvania and 169 acres west of the Mississippi.¹⁷² While most northerners and southerners were farmers, the northern concept of land improvement distinguished the two regions. Dean goes on to establish the Republican political ideology that was dominant in the north in the 1850s as both anti-slavery and agrarian.¹⁷³

In the aftermath of the Mexican-American war, many Americans began to view slavery as an impediment to the expansion of Jefferson's agrarian nation because if slavery expanded into the West, plantations would exhaust the soil and thwart the small-scale farming model favored by northern political ideals. Whigs promoted agricultural permanence while Democrats supported expansion to offer additional lands to farmers.¹⁷⁴ Essentially, free-soil politicians argued that slavery prevented small farms from being established in the West, threatening the progress of civilization and the Union.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷¹ Adam Wesley Dean, *An Agrarian Republic: Farming, Anti-Slavery Politics, and Nature Parks in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

¹⁷² Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 2.

¹⁷³ Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 3.

¹⁷⁴ Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 12-13.

¹⁷⁵ Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 36.

Compromise of 1850—the series of laws that addressed slavery’s expansion in former Mexican lands—balanced powers between pro-slavery and anti-slavery interests for a short period. The Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854 intensified the conflict between pro-slavery and anti-slavery parties, leading to a series of violent confrontations. According to Dean, the Kansas-Nebraska act, along with antislavery literature by Frederick Law Olmsted, the 1856 and 1860 elections, and the publication of Hinton R. Helper’s *Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, convinced Republicans of the connection between land use and social structure.¹⁷⁶ In fact, most Free-Soilers were more concerned about the expansion of slavery than its morality in the South. Dean summarizes the sentiments of Free-Soilers George Julian and Joshua Giddings in 1860 and 1861 as follows,

Small farmers, by practicing agriculture permanence, could build civil society in the West. Owning land encouraged independence and loyalty to democratic institutions. Tending a farm for multiple generations allowed the formation of schools and churches, building “civilization.” The slave South, if allowed to expand, would only bring land monopoly, destructive farming practices, and barbarism.¹⁷⁷

If agriculture, and by extension civilization, was a significant motivating factor of the Civil War, it was also a source of power and center of political action during the war.¹⁷⁸ The sentiments of agricultural permanence, family labor, and civilization expressed by Julian and Giddings in this statement pervade Whittredge's *Landscape with Haywain*. The white laborers manage their sizable farm set in an ideal location along the river

¹⁷⁶ Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 41. For more on Olmsted’s writing, see Dean, *An Agrarian Republic*, 47-67. Olmsted originally supported slavery and abhorred the Free-Soilers—until he visited the South. He wanted to stop the expansion of slavery in the west to prevent the exploitation of the land under southern slaveholders.

¹⁷⁷ Dean, 70 and chapter 2 footnote 65 on page 198.

¹⁷⁸ R. Douglas Hurt, *Food and Agriculture During the Civil War* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2016).

populated by boats near small towns that dot the civilized landscape. The gentle rain that rolls in on the right side of the canvas is less foreboding and more a natural weather event that rolls into the sundrenched vista. Can we rightly impose upon Whittredge's painting a subtle, but important, promotion of the northern family-based, smaller-scale ideal of farming in contrast to the "barbarism" of the plantation south?

Whittredge's close friend Sanford Gifford created *A Home in the Wilderness* in 1866, a painting that represents the second type of farm image that arose in the midst of Civil War. (Figure 3.5) In lieu of Whittredge's image of white farm labor, Gifford's painting is of the laborless farm. Gifford was, by this time, no stranger to the Civil War, and his work reflects a multitude of personal and social responses.¹⁷⁹ Having served in the Union army, he painted landscapes of refuge, like *A Gorge in the Mountains (Kaaterskill Cove)* mentioned earlier, but also several scenes of military life, such as *Sunday Morning in the Camp of the Seventh Regiment near Washington, D.C., in May 1861*.

Unlike the escapism inherent in beautiful luminist Kaaterskill landscapes, the farm both confronts and negates the Civil War in *A Home in the Wilderness*, becoming the barer of both a nostalgic past and an optimistic American future. Based on sketches of Mount Hayes, New Hampshire from 1865, the scene depicts an isolated cabin nestled at the foot of a mountain range on the banks of a lake. The gorgeous autumnal hues of

¹⁷⁹ An archive of materials related to Sanford Gifford, including Civil War photographs, is housed in the Smithsonian Archives for American Art. The written correspondence, generally, makes little mention of his time serving in the New York's Seventh Regiment in the Civil War between 1861 and 1863. One letter in Box 1, Folder 4: Loose Letters 1856, 1869, 1874 addressed to C.B. Frothingham in 1874 mentions the paintings created directly in response to Civil War service, but does not expound upon the Civil War for as inspiration for other imagery. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/sanford-robinson-gifford-papers-8974/series-1/box-1-folder-4>, Accessed October 8, 2017.

oranges, pinks, and purples bestow upon it a sense of optimism and reverence, not uncommon for Hudson River School artists. What is compelling about this painting is its almost total stillness. There are no people, animals, or rolling clouds. The water is placid. The only sense that the land is occupied is the smoke rising from the cabin chimney. The scene is simultaneously still, simple, and majestic. We are also keenly aware of our position as viewer. There is no parcel of land within the frame which connects us to this cabin across the body of water, and we are the only form of human consciousness to which we have access. Painted in the years immediately following the Civil War, this remote and far-removed farmstead, seemingly untouched by the devastations of war, feels like an unattainable ideal.

In Arne Neset's study of the iconology of waterscapes, ubiquitous American lakes function as "topoi that signify spiritual stasis; a reflective, stagnant, transparent, narcissistic, and meditative mood." He goes on, "The pond—like Walden Pond—is a blank in the landscape with the capacity for physical metamorphoses...These modes of being also symbolize the way the human imagination transforms, reflects, and reconstitutes itself."¹⁸⁰ Barbara Novak elaborates on the connection between lake imagery and Thoreau further, pointing to a phrase in Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, which connects Transcendental philosophy, Gifford's painting of a subsistence farm on a lake, and the looming conflict of Civil War.¹⁸¹ Thoreau wrote,

Walden is a perfect forest mirror...Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence. Nations come and go without defiling it...It is a mirror which no stone

¹⁸⁰ Arne Neset, *Arcadian Waters and Wanton Seas: The Iconology of Waterscapes in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 101-02.

¹⁸¹ Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36.

can crack...a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush.¹⁸²

Viewed through this lens, Gifford's painting is not only an escape and erasure of the conflicts of war, but also a declaration of the persistence of nature and its capacity to deflect man's mistakes. We can see Gifford's lake, and its simple farm cabin, as an oasis from conflict—a more perfect reflection of a nation defiled by Civil War and slavery.

Making the connection between lake, farm, and anti-slavery sentiments in the work of Thoreau is not a stretch of imagination. In *Walden*, the quiet and simple life on the American farm is intertwined with abolitionist and pacifist ideals. It was on the shores of Walden, just a few weeks after setting up camp, that Thoreau refused to pay six years of delinquent poll taxes on the grounds of the Mexican-American War, which he believed was a plot to expand slavery. His subsequent imprisonment and 1849 essay "The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government" inspired civil disobedience in protests of injustice.¹⁸³ In the section titled "Baker Farm," Thoreau meets a not-too-distant Irish neighbor who laments his long labors to attain enough money to provide for his family. Thoreau "talked to him as if he were a philosopher," proclaiming that "the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without" little luxuries like tea and butter, and "where the state does not endeavor to compel you to sustain slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things."¹⁸⁴ Literature

¹⁸² Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854; repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 122-23.

¹⁸³ This brief summary of the essay is provided by Elise Lemire, *Black Walden: Slavery and Its Aftermath in Concord, Massachusetts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 6.

¹⁸⁴ Thoreau, *Walden*, 133.

scholar Elise Lemire believes Walden was Thoreau's attempt to achieve "freedom from capitalism, conformity, and all other restraints of modern life," but also "the place where he sought to extricate himself from the politics of slavery."¹⁸⁵

In 1859, Thoreau delivered a speech to the citizens of Concord, Massachusetts, on the occasion of the passing of Captain John Brown. While it is unlikely this speech was heard by Gifford, it gives insight into the imaginative capacity of artists to envision and record a future free of slavery.

I foresee the time when the painter will paint that scene, no longer going to Rome for a subject; the poet will sing it; the historian record it; and with the Landing of the Pilgrims and the Declaration of Independence, it will be the ornament of some future national gallery, when at least the present form of slavery shall be no more.¹⁸⁶

Thoreau's wistful hope is brought to fruition in Gifford's idyllic scene, free from the torments of slavery and expounding the beauty of a landscape free from conflict.

Admittedly, Thoreau's writing and Gifford's paintings are heavily influenced by their northeastern origins, and a certain idealism pervades their views. In order to better understand the pivotal and dynamic role of the physical farm in the Civil War era, and its expression in imagery, we should shift location to the hazy boundaries that distinguish the Confederacy from the Union and East from West between Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. If we think of the farm as the site of Civil War battles, as the barer of slave labor, as the place from which slaves wished to depart, as the route of the Underground Railroad, and as the aspiration for African-American futures, the farm becomes the locus of past, present, and future of a nation at odds with itself.

¹⁸⁵ Lemire, *Black Walden*, 6.

¹⁸⁶ Henry D. Thoreau, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," in *A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers* (Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1866), 181.

The scarcity of images depicting the slave experience is compounded by an even more pronounced dearth of images from the perspective of African Americans themselves. Here we find Robert S. Duncanson—a mulatto who was the free son of a free black woman and a Scottish-Canadian father—as the first African-American artist of the mid-nineteenth century to adopt the Hudson River School style landscape as symbol of the African-American cultural experience. As the sole artist representing the African-American experience in this study, I feel compelled to echo the sentiments of David M. Lubin in his influential essay, "Reconstructing Duncanson," where he expounds on the problem of white scholars writing on black experience and reducing Duncanson's paintings to merely a discourse on race simply because he is a lone representative.¹⁸⁷ To avoid this slippery slope, however, would also deny the voice of the African American in an otherwise heavily biased study. Admittedly, this is, in part, because of limitations of the period itself. With black artists consumed by their duties as slaves, the production of art was largely limited to slave crafts, then eventually portraiture, via Joshua Johnson, and landscape.¹⁸⁸ Most widely known representations of African-Americans during the antebellum period or the Civil War were, regrettably, created by white men.

Joseph Ketner's authoritative monograph on Robert S. Duncanson positions Duncanson as a pivotal figure in the history of African American artists who ushered in an era of expanding opportunity. Born in Ohio and educated in Canada before making his home near Cincinnati in 1840 until his death, Duncanson quickly established himself, influenced by regional landscape painters like Worthington Whittredge and William

¹⁸⁷ David M. Lubin, *Picturing a Nation: Art and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 107-11.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph D. Ketner, *The Emergence of the African-American Artist: Robert S. Duncanson, 1821-1872* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993,) 1.

Louis Sonntag.¹⁸⁹ During the decade that preceded the Civil War, Duncanson became the leading landscape painter in the region. It was during this period of success that Duncanson created a work that is arguably unusual in its forthright commentary on slave labor.

View of Cincinnati, Ohio from Convington, Kentucky, from circa 1851, is, according to Ketner, the first direct visual representation of Duncanson's views on slavery. (Figure 3.6) The painting depicts a farmstead in the foreground, identified by the small log cabin and clear-cut land. The middle ground is occupied by a river, identified as the Ohio River by location in the title, and a robust cityscape on the opposite bank. The top half of the painting is filled with billowing smoke from Cincinnati's manufacturing and by a pastel-hued calm sky. Upon first glance, it is a scene of codependency between city and farm, a subject I investigate further in the next chapter. Upon closer inspection, however, the figural staffage of the foreground scene takes on an important racial juxtaposition. The black male farmer standing closest to the viewer looms tall over two white children. The nature of their meeting is practically unreadable. The farmer holds a scythe, the tool of his trade, as though he was making his way to the fields. Near the cabin, a black woman hangs laundry on a clothesline while a white couple enjoys a leisurely view of Cincinnati in the distance.

Interpreting Duncanson's intentions and the racial relations in this scene poses problems from the outset, but becomes even more difficult when compared to its source:

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*

an engraving of a daguerreotype printed in *Graham's Magazine* in 1848.¹⁹⁰ (Figure 3.7) Copied in exacting detail, Duncanson's only substantive changes are to the color of the people inhabiting the scene. The farmer and his presumed wife are white in the original print, and presumably in the daguerreotype upon which the print was based.

Accompanying the print is an article simply titled "Cincinnati."¹⁹¹ The essay exalts the growing importance and status of Cincinnati and its change from a frontier trade-post to booming river town, in thanks to the invention of the steamboat.¹⁹²

As industry and market-scale farming sprung up in and around the city in response to the exceptional growth, there was accompanying conflict, particularly because Cincinnati, which abolished slavery in its 1802 constitution, was bordered by Kentucky, a slave state. Lubin points out the many contradictory sentiments expressed overtly and perhaps covertly in Duncanson's painting of the Queen City—the only painting he did of the Ohio River. First, it must be remembered that Cincinnati was Duncanson's home. Yet, he paints it from across the river, from the viewpoint of the African American slaves that inhabit and work the farm. Lubin describes a city that was deeply divided, and light-skinned African Americans occupied a more privileged position than their dark-skinned neighbors, yet did not fully assimilate into white culture, either.

Although Duncanson painted some of the area's most well-known abolitionists, he rarely painted black figures. This view of Cincinnati is an exception. Lubin provides two possible explanations. First, the most palatable, is that Duncanson catered to the demands

¹⁹⁰ The source for Duncanson's painting *View of Cincinnati, Ohio from Covington, Kentucky* as the print in *Graham's Magazine* is identified by Ketner, *Robert S. Duncanson*, 40-41, though he does not indicate the source of his knowledge.

¹⁹¹ Ketner makes no mention of an accompanying essay in *Graham's Magazine*. Fayette Robinson, "Cincinnati," *Graham's Magazine* 32, no. 6 (June 1848): 352-53.

¹⁹² *ibid.*

of his patrons. The second, and more contested reason, was that Duncanson wanted to "pass for white."¹⁹³ Lubin explains that although Duncanson himself denied the accusation as leveled by his family, the attempt at "passing" for white allowed him the "social legitimation and acceptance into dominant society."¹⁹⁴ Lubin believes images of bodies of water, particularly the river in *View of Cincinnati*, function as a visual metaphor for "passing." According to his reading, "...what characterizes the Duncanson landscape above all else is the water transecting the composition, usually cleaving foreground from background...In every one of these instances, the body of water constitutes an obstacle, a space to be crossed, something, as it were, needing to be passed."¹⁹⁵ Whether Lubin's claims about Duncanson's desire to pass for white are conjecture, the concept of crossing waters in order to reach a promised land across the river is absolutely visually emphasized and makes an interesting parallel with Sanford Gifford's *Home in the Wilderness*. In either case, the water stands as an obstacle to overcome in order to reach a more perfect life without the shackles of slavery or the baggage of Civil War. Narratives of crossing reinforce these ideas, not least of which is Eliza's crossing of the frozen Ohio River in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as illustrated by an unknown artist in 1852. (Figure 3.8)

During the Civil War, Duncanson fled to Canada and eventually to the British Isles, to escape rising racial tensions in Cincinnati. Meanwhile, his *View of Cincinnati, Ohio from Covington, Kentucky* was a quiet protest to slavery in the Southern states, made particularly poignant because of location along the Underground Railroad route and time period. The Fugitive Slave Act was enacted in 1850, and the Kentucky-Ohio border

¹⁹³ Lubin, *Picturing a Nation*, 116-17.

¹⁹⁴ Lubin, *Picturing a Nation*, 116.

¹⁹⁵ Lubin, *Picturing a Nation*, 117.

was one of the most common routes to free territories. In Kentucky, twelve major Ohio River crossing points, with major centers in Cincinnati and Louisville, among other cities, connected by smaller centers, including the farmstead of fugitive friend Levi Coffin.¹⁹⁶ Although not focused largely on the landscape, I include Charles Webber's 1893 painting titled *The Underground Railroad*, which was created as a tribute to the Underground Railroad "conductor" Levi Coffin. It represents the important role farms played in the movement of fugitives towards freedom, particularly beginning in the 1840s and 50s.¹⁹⁷ (Figure 3.9) Levi Coffin was born in North Carolina and eventually moved to Indiana, where they aided in the Underground Railroad, before settling in Cincinnati in 1847. There, Coffin hired free labor to supply a wholesale warehouse that handled cotton, sugar, and spices.¹⁹⁸ Coffin and his wife, Katherine, worked with the area free black and the white, anti-slavery community to form the "Grand Central Station" of the Underground Railroad, for which he was appointed the unofficial "President."¹⁹⁹ Accounts of the Underground Railroad in the fifty years following the Civil War consistently name Levi Coffin as the most notable of Underground Railroad conductors,

¹⁹⁶ J. Blaine Hudson, *Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad* (Jefferson: MacFarland & Company, 2006,) 4.

¹⁹⁷ This painting has been identified alternatively as *Fugitives Arriving at Levi Coffin's Farm, a Busy Station of the Underground Railroad*, however, I use the identification indicated by the Cincinnati Museum of Art records, where the painting is currently held. A signed photographic reproduction of the painting in the collection of the Library of Congress includes the title *The Underground Railroad*, further supporting the use of this title. Webber, Charles T. (reproduction of a painting in the Cincinnati Art Museum). "The underground railroad." C1893. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁸ Hudson, *Encyclopedia*, 64-65.

¹⁹⁹ Hudson, *Encyclopedia*, 65.

and identify Levi and Catherine Coffin as the likely inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Quaker couple in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.²⁰⁰

Charles Webber was a long-time and well-respected artist in Cincinnati who had worked there since the 1850s. He created this painting for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago as a tribute to Levi Coffin, his wife Catherine, and Hannah Haydock—another prominent abolitionist—all friends of Webber. The setting is on a farm, though there is some discrepancy about its location. Some sources indicate the setting is in Indiana, where the Coffins had a successful farm and began assisting fugitives.²⁰¹ The more plausible site is the family farm in Ohio, between Avondale and Walnut Hills, near Cincinnati. Charles Webber resided in Cincinnati, as did the Coffins at the time of the painting. When the Coffins moved to Cincinnati from Indiana, they had a townhouse in the city that became the actual site where most fugitives were stowed, not their farm.²⁰² Regardless, Webber chose to depict the Coffins on a farm rather than the actual site of their "Grand Central Station" house in the city where they hosted fugitives in a clandestine room. The farm was at once the actual site of slave entrapment and, in white imagination decades later, the quintessential route to freedom. Indeed, many slaves crossed extensive tracts of farmland and were frequently stowed in barns, often in

²⁰⁰ W.D. Waldrip, "A Station of the Underground Railroad," *The Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History*, 7 no 2 (1911): 65-67, JSTOR.

²⁰¹ Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Civil Disobedience: An Encyclopedic History of Dissidence in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

²⁰² This Ohio farm location is identified by Cincinnati Museum of Art, "The Underground Railroad" <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/the-underground-railroad/cwGRLw8raEDwOg>

temporary shelters.²⁰³ It is fitting, though, because Coffin did hire freemen to stock his merchant business with products, and his small farm helped him maintain enough capital to keep the business (both mercantile and fugitive) afloat.

The farm-site as boundary between, and barer of, both freedom and slavery—lamented by Duncanson and memorialized by Webber—is at the very core of a pair of paintings that depict the family farm of Cornelius Deweese in Hunter's Bottom, Kentucky in 1884, by Indiana artist William McKendree Snyder. (Figure 3.10 and 3.11) The first painting, *View Across the River to Hunter's Bottom, Kentucky*, presents the Deweese's expansive farm estate as viewed from across the Ohio River in an area near Madison, Indiana, Snyder's hometown. The second painting, *Deweese Place, Hunter's Bottom, Carroll County, KY with Family*, is a family portrait on the steps of their lavish domicile on the grounds of their lush orchard garden.²⁰⁴ Without the regional and familial context, these paintings may be rather unremarkable estate portraits by a regional artist. However, the context of family, history, place, and artist biography combine to form a fascinating image of changing times.

²⁰³ John Michael Vlach, "Above Ground on the Underground Railroad: Places of Flight and Refuge," in *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory*, ed David W. Blight (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 110.

²⁰⁴ I must acknowledge Aaron Rosenblum, Associate Curator of Collections, at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Kentucky, for alerting me to this curious set of paintings. I am also grateful to James Holmberg, Curator of Collections, who was able to provide some context for their donation to the Filson via accessions files and his own research. I am also indebted to Linda Roaks, Volunteer, and John Nyberg at the Jefferson County Historical Society in Madison, Indiana for access to their archives on William McKendree Snyder that includes extensive notes by amateur historian and conservator Emmett S. Wood.

Snyder was a prolific artist, with more than 900 known paintings with a wide range of subjects including reclining nudes, portraits, still-lives, and nature scenes.²⁰⁵ This pair of paintings reflects Snyder's confidence depicting the landscape setting, particularly images of great prospect and distance. His stylized trees and preference for woodlands is evidenced in the river view. Less common for Snyder is the depiction of specific residences or architecture—only one other identified house portrait is catalogued in the resources I discovered, and few of his landscapes are obviously commissioned to depict a specific location. From images of his studio, his famed birch tree paintings were largely formulaic and numerous to appease his extensive patrons.

As with the paintings of agribusiness or market-scale agriculture, the point-of-view in this painting illustrates the expansive tracts of Deweese landholding. Deweese was a capable business-man who worked in the steamboat business before making his fortune in the flour market and real estate. His success in river trade along the Ohio might be part of the explanation for the appearance of the river and steamboat in the landscape view of his estate. He retired in 1847 and bought a 900-acre tract of land in Hunter's Bottom. His Hunter's Bottom farm was also successful, and he invested his money in real estate including the Arlington Hotel in Louisville.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ The number of known works is noted by Emmett S. Wood, a conservator who made it his mission to catalogue Snyder's works and research his biography. His notes are housed at the Jefferson County Historical Society in Madison, Indiana. He notes the total of more than 900 paintings in *William McKendree Snyder: Biography, 1848-1930*, a catalogue published by the Jefferson County Historical Society in an unknown date, perhaps 1995, 8. Also housed in the collection is uncaptioned snapshots of hundreds of works by Snyder which evidences the range of subject matter.

²⁰⁶ Biographical information on Cornelius Deweese is largely from a reprint of a tribute in the *Louisville Courier*, April 1, 1896 as reprinted in Mrs. Philip E. LaMunyan, *The Dewees Family: Genealogical Data, Biographical Facts and Historical Information* (Noristown, PA: William H. Roberts, 1905), 212-14.

In the years prior to the Civil War, Deweese ran his farm with the help of at least six slaves that he purchased in 1833.²⁰⁷ Fast-forward to the 1884 portrait, also by Snyder, of the family on the steps of the lavish home, nearly twenty years post-Civil War. It depicts Cornelius and Hannah Deweese, their son and his wife, and their young son, also Cornelius Deweese. Standing on the grounds, further in the foreground is an African American woman identified as Aunt Lish, the children's nanny and the daughter of a slave.²⁰⁸ The grounds surrounding the home are filled by Mrs. Deweese's orchard garden and, nearly obscured by trees, one of several tenant houses on the property.²⁰⁹

On the one hand, by including the free black woman in the painting, perhaps the family implies that she is part of the family and worthy of representation. On the other hand, she is distinctly separated by spatial barriers of depth and height, implying a threshold that would constitute trespass.²¹⁰ Her home is also clearly represented in the background as also separate. Yet, Aunt Lish is foregrounded so substantially, she almost becomes the focal point of the painting.

²⁰⁷ Cornelius Deweese, Slave bills of sale, 1833-1836, Louisville, KY, Filson Historical Society.

²⁰⁸ Sitters for the portrait are identified by a tag which can be found in the accession files of the object at the Filson Historical Society. The tag reads, "'Deweese Place' painted by W. M. Snyder 1884. Scene- 2 story brick facing Ohio River, my great-grandparents, Cornelius & Hannah Deweese on porch with their son and daughter-in-law, the former Ann Alexander of Alexander, Illinois- with their young son Cornelius Deweese- also Aunt Lish the children's Nanny- the daughter of a slave.-Marjorie Geary Anderson"

²⁰⁹ An uncredited and undated news clipping in the accession file at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, KY describes the white building in the background as a tenant house.

²¹⁰ This concept occurred to me from an analysis of William Sydney Mount's painting *Power of Music* by Randall R. Griffey, "Drawing Boundaries, Crossing Borders: Trespassing and Identity in American Art," in *A Companion to American Art* eds. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, Jason D. LaFountain (Malden, MA : Wiley, Blackwell, 2015), 419.

Compounding this curious composition is a reminder of the companion painting of the farm from across the Ohio River. Indiana was a free state, and Kentucky was a slave state. Hunter's Bottom, Kentucky, where the Deweese's resided, was a major fugitive crossing point to free Indiana between 1838 and 1861.²¹¹ Runaway slaves crossed the Ohio River in Hunter's Bottom to the area near Eagle Creek in Indiana. The best-known Hunter's Bottom aid to fugitives was slave Richard Daly, who was owned by Samuel Fearn, Sr. Samuel co-owned about 1,000 acres along the Ohio River with his brother George. It is believed that the Fearn brothers were aware of, if not actively assisting, Richard Daly's operation. In fact, George eventually became an ardent Methodist, vocal abolitionist, and strongly pro-Union.²¹² There is not currently any documentation which directly connects the Deweese family to the Fearn, but the two families were among the most wealthy in Hunter's Bottom, and Deweese eventually donated a lot at the northwest corner of his property to build the Hopewell Methodist Church.²¹³

Returning to the two paintings by Snyder, it is difficult not to consider them as pendants, and it is very compelling to impose this contextual analysis. No documentation exists that directly indicates any kind of beliefs about slavery over the years, only the slave bills and the painting of Aunt Lish made some fifty years later. Can we rightly read the paintings as an apology? Is Aunt Lish separate but equal in the home, or is there an implied boundary across which she should not trespass? Is the view across the river a

²¹¹ Paul A. Tenkotte and James C. Claypool, *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015), 899.

²¹² Diane Perrine Coon, "Daly, Richard," in *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, 255.

²¹³ Diane Perrine Coon, "Hunter's Bottom," in *The Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky*, 468.

reference to an implied contrast between formerly free and slave states, or merely a laudatory farm vista? With the information as yet uncovered, it is nearly impossible to decipher the intentions of these paintings. However, the position of the farm along the Ohio River, the perspective from former free state, the inclusion of the black nanny, the hint at the tenant houses, and the composition all insist we look harder at the role of the farm and river crossing as site of memory and reparation in the post-Civil War era.



Fig. 3.1. Martin Johnson Heade, *Approaching Thunder Storm*, 1859, oil on canvas, 28 x 44 in., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 3.2. Frederic Edwin Church, *The Icebergs*, 1861, oil on canvas, 64 1/2 x 112 1/2 in., Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art.



Fig. 3.3. Sanford Robinson Gifford, *A Gorge in the Mountains (Kauterskill Clove)*, 1862, oil on canvas, 48 x 39 7/8 in., New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 3.4. Worthington Whittredge, *Landscape with Haywain*, 1861, oil on canvas, 25 3/4 x 40 1/2 x 4 7/8 in., Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art.



Fig. 3.5. Sanford Robinson Gifford, *A Home in the Wilderness*, 1866, oil on canvas, 45 3/16 x 68 5/16 x 6 1/2 in., Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art.



Fig. 3.6. Robert Duncanson, *View of Cincinnati, Ohio from Covington, Kentucky*, ca. 1851, oil on canvas, Cincinnati History Library and Archives, Cincinnati Museum Center.



Fig. 3.7. J.W. Steel, *View of Cincinnati, Ohio*, in *Graham's Magazine* 32, no. 6 (June 1848).

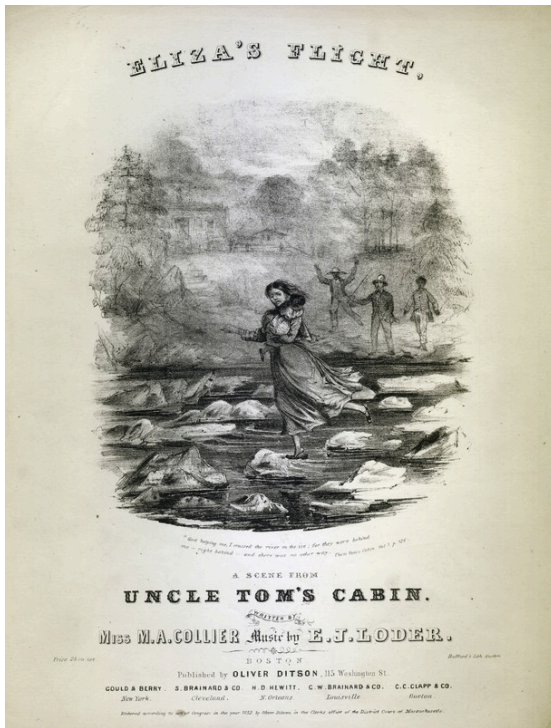


Fig. 3.8. Unknown artist, *Eliza's Flight: A Scene from Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852 from E.L. Loder and M.A. Collier. *Eliza's Flight: A Scene From Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1852. Chicago, Newberry Library.



Fig. 3.9. Charles T. Webber, *The Underground Railroad*, 1893, oil on canvas, 52 3/16 x 76 1/8 in., Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum.



Fig. 3.10. William McKendree Snyder, *View Across the Ohio River to Hunter's Bottom, Kentucky*, c. 1884, oil on canvas, Louisville, Kentucky, Filson Historical Society.



Fig. 3.11. William McKendree Snyder, *Deweese Place, Hunter's Bottom, Carroll County, Kentucky, with Family*, c. 1884, oil on canvas, Louisville, Kentucky, Filson Historical Society.

CHAPTER IV

"SOMETHING SIMPLE" AND "SOMETHING COMPLICATED": FARMING

IMAGERY OF THE GREAT WEST

We want yet more people to wake our sleeping wealth; strong-armed men to press to the front in our march of civilization, and conquer easy victories with the plowshare—"to tickle our prairies with a hoe that they may laugh with a harvest." We offer them the greatest boon on earth—Manhood and Independence.²¹⁴
-Frederick Bartlett Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why: Homes and Fortunes in the Boundless West and Sunny South*, 1869

...Jefferson's idea of a short and easy connection between the waters of the east and the waters of the west set a long-range pattern, by which Americans would ask the West for something simple, and the West would give them something complicated.

-Patricia Limerick, "The Great West," in *Western Voices: 125 Years of Colorado Writing*, 2004

In American history, the West and the amorphous "Frontier" are fraught with contradictory notions of immense opportunity, devastation, beauty, and myth—all of which are inextricably linked, at some level, to the American farm. While the prospect of finding fertile farmland was one of the most pervasive motivations for the migration of people westward in post-Civil War America, western farms were very rarely the subject of major paintings by notable artists intended for national audiences. Instead, imagery depicting the western farm is found largely in print media—from popular prints to advertising to guidebooks—and intimate paintings and drawings intended for regional or personal audiences. What emerges from the print media and occasional painting is a

²¹⁴ Frederick Bartlett Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why: Homes and Fortunes in the Boundless West and Sunny South* (New York: People's Publishing Company, 1869), 13.

wildly idealized and conflated vision of the West—something too "simple" in the words of historian Patricia Limerick. This “Garden Myth” is tempered by depictions of actual farms that reflect the conditions of the varied landscapes, redefining farming success in the West and demonstrating the disparity between vision and reality based on the actual circumstances of the land—Limerick's "something complicated." This chapter is divided into two sections: the first looks at the "Great West" and its farms as a "simple" monolithic narrative, and the second focuses on the more "complicated" specificities of people and places.

The Great West

Art historian of the American west Peter H. Hassrick conveniently summarizes the mythic themes and iconographic phases that pervade art representing the West. The three mythic themes were "progress, Eden, and masculinity," and the four phases of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art about the West were the "art of exploration," "the frontier experience," "landscape grandeur and national identity," and "the demise of native cultures and indigenous animals."²¹⁵ Acknowledging the dangers of such simplification, there is merit to using them as a springboard for further investigation into imagery of farmsteads and questioning to what extent these categories really serve to understand the complexity of the West as depicted by artists.

There is no figure that better represents all of Hassrick's categories than the mythic hero of Daniel Boone, represented numerous times by artists of the nineteenth century. Daniel Boone was a real person, but his story is metonymic. Strong male characters like Boone took on mythic proportions, frequently appearing in nineteenth-

²¹⁵ Peter H. Hassrick, "The Elements of Western Art," in *The American West: Out of Myth, Into Reality* (Washington DC: Trust for Museum Exhibitions, 2000), 27.

century imagery that depicts early phases of settlement in the West. By 1820, the frontier had crossed the Appalachians, populated by "thousands of hunters, trappers, traders, farmers, merchants, soldiers, and other assorted floaters."²¹⁶ While farms were vital to the survival of all these assorted characters, it is the farmer's journey, not the farm, which often took center stage in the visual accounts of the West. Turn-of-the-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner, to whom we will return later, credits Daniel Boone and his family with pioneering the way for farmers in the regions of Kentucky, Missouri, and the Rocky Mountains.²¹⁷ Turner glorifies Boone as "the great backwoodsmen, who combined the occupations of hunter, trader, cattle-raiser, farmer, and surveyor..." who "helped open the way for civilization."²¹⁸ Scarcely admitting that the Boone family did not work alone, Turner states, "Thus this family epitomizes the backwoodsman's advance across the continent."²¹⁹ However, critiques of this mythologizing cropped up in the first quarter of the twentieth century, such as Clarence Walworth Alvord who wrote in 1926,

The elements of the myth are quite simple. Boone was a great Nimrod, honored by all lovers of outdoors; he explored an unknown but fertile section of the country; he led thither the earliest immigrants; and in this way he started into the Mississippi Valley the flow of settlers which never ceased until the west was populated...To puncture the myth...may seem an ungracious and irreverent act of defamation...[But] The Kentucky wilderness was not the discovery of Boone; nor was it an unknown and untrodden land of milk and honey whose allurements were suddenly advertised among men by the heroic achievements of some colossal among explorers.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Elliott West, "American Frontier," 115.

²¹⁷ Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 15.

²¹⁸ *ibid.*

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

²²⁰ Clarence Walworth Alvord, "The Daniel Boone Myth," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 19, no. ½ (April – Jul 1926): 17, JSTOR.

While there are innumerable fictionalized and true accounts of Daniel Boone in literature and in art, two images can suffice to represent the many ways that the Boone family came to symbolize the frontier experience—even from the perspective of the landscape.

In Thomas Cole's *Daniel Boone and His Cabin at Great Osage Lake*, we find the solitary figure of Daniel Boone shrouded by the wilderness that surrounds his cabin in the woods. In the distance, light breaks through the clouds to shine upon a small lake like a beacon of hope beyond the brush. Light shines conspicuously on Boone, too, in the foreground. Robert Mugerauer contends this image is another manifestation of Cole's beliefs that humankind should not exploit the wilderness because Boone is juxtaposed against an "impenetrable tangle" of wilderness and because the original sketch had a Native American figure in lieu of Boone.²²¹ (Figure 4.1) I might disagree with that interpretation. The old lone figure of Boone who ekes out a livelihood in the dense wilderness, even paralleled by the Native American figure in the original composition, reveals a symbiotic relationship with nature that does not bring destruction. Without Boone's family in the image, Cole is emphasizing the singular, resourceful, and independent male hunter and farmer figure that dominated frontier mythology.

The second image, Emmanuel Leutze's *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, is not really a representation of Daniel Boone, but what environmental historian William Cronon called "Daniel Boone reincarnated."²²² (Figure 2) If Cole's Boone exists in a landscape that foreshadows the migration of hundreds of thousands of people across

²²¹ Robert Mugerauer, *Interpreting Environments: Tradition, Deconstruction, Hermeneutics* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2014), 66.

²²² William Cronon, "Telling Tales on Canvas: Landscapes of Frontier Change," in *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 37.

the country, Leutze's Boone-like character looks out over a featureless landscape that is, according to Cronon's reading, the "endpoint of a human drama in which Americans on their westward course of empire plod across broad plains, struggle over mountain passes, and descend at last to a land of plenty."²²³ Cronon contends that Leutze's far western (Californian) landscape need not reflect reality because, in 1861, it was so far removed from the experiences of those who visited the capital, where the painting would be installed.²²⁴ And so, we find that these two Boone-inspired images bookend the pioneer story, from the Appalachian crossing to the promised land beyond the mountains of California.

Between the Boones of Cole and Leutze, we receive a sweeping epic of westward migration and settlement from one frontier to the next, while the details and accuracy of the narrative were not of paramount importance. Details were often sacrificed in imagery that sought to represent this epic story in a single frame. John Gast's painting *American Progress* of 1872 was commissioned by George Crofutt to serve as the basis of a steel engraving for the frontispiece of a tourist guidebook entitled *New Overland Tourist and Pacific Coast Guide* published in 1878-79.²²⁵ (Figure 4.3) *American Progress* is the quintessential textbook illustration for the concept of "Manifest Destiny." It was not until 1845 that the term "manifest destiny" was codified by John L. O'Sullivan when he wrote in the *New York Morning News*

It was the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions. No

²²³ Cronon, "Telling Tales on Canvas," 39.

²²⁴ *ibid.*

²²⁵ Patricia Hills, "Picturing Progress in the Era of Westward Expansion" in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*, ed. William H. Truettner (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press 1991), 134.

longer bounded by the limits of the confederacy, it looks abroad upon the whole earth, and into the mind of the republic daily sinks deeper and deeper the conviction that civilization on the earth—the reform of the governments of the ancient world—the emancipation of the whole race, are dependent, in a great degree, on the United States.²²⁶

In *American Progress*, a sexualized personification of Progress wears what Croft calls the "Star of Empire." She floats over the landscape, propelling civilization further west. Untamed nature (mountains) and savage beasts (Indians and buffalo) occupy the left side of the canvas, shrouded in dark clouds. In the wake of the earliest speculators and pioneers, Progress, who is center stage, brings bright skies, technology, and agriculture. Progress unravels telegraph wires while trains charge forward. The Native Americans are merely the incidental expenses and obstacles of the inescapable march of progress. Steamboats and a river town in the distance already occupy a space of the past. There is a feeling of an inevitable thrust forward which eventually obliterates nature and natives.

Like almost every image of the migration journey, the direction of motion is to the left, reinforcing what Roger Cushing Aiken describes as a "westward historical, political, and psychological orientation of the nation during Manifest Destiny." Aiken continues, "...these paintings are intended to be read as maps, with north at the top and west at the left, thus literally pointing the way west to California and Oregon."²²⁷

Farming occupies an important position in this panoply. In the lower right, at the foot of Progress, is the farmer and his nascent farm. While the farmer and his ox are moving

²²⁶ According to Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003) we must be conscious that John O'Sullivan originally used the phrase "manifest destiny" in conjunction with a prediction that pioneers would settle remote lands and eventually annex from the Union.

²²⁷ Roger Cushing Aiken, "Paintings of Manifest Destiny," *American Art* 14 Issue 3 (Fall 2000): 78-89, JSTOR. Aiken attempts to identify if the left orientation of manifest destiny imagery is unique by briefly surveying the history of landscape in Europe and America, as well as many other factors.

forward as if they join the train of progress, they are also place bound. A row of hedges demarcates their territory and seems to prevent them from joining the gold prospectors in the foreground. Was the farm really part of this narrative of progress, and how would it adapt to the changing circumstances of place? Also, as cultural geographer Paul F. Starrs points out in his essay on popular thinking about the ranch, popular images of the movement west, like *American Progress*, fail to incorporate ranching into visions of life in the West in spite of its prevalence.²²⁸ As an image meant to promote travel, not immigration, it is apparent that Gast and Corfutt are promoting the "old rhetoric of Manifest Destiny" that served publicists promoting travel west very well some thirty years after the term, and its premises, first appeared.²²⁹

In addition to the westward orientation, or, as Aiken calls it, "compass consciousness,"²³⁰ Gast's painting does not represent one place or even one narrative. It is a panorama, an allegorical view of the entire North American continent and its recent history.²³¹ Aiken contends that the more panoramic the image, the more we read them from right to left. Given this premise, Gast's farm is not the way forward. Instead, the farm is foundational—the historical underpinning of civilization, positioned behind and at the foot of Progress, prominently in the far right foreground. The Native American in the left segment of the painting are merely the collateral damage for this inevitable march of progress across the nation.

²²⁸ Paul F. Starrs, "The Inescapable Range, or the Ranch as Everywhere," in *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West*, ed. Gary J. Hausladen (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2006).

²²⁹ Hills, "Picturing Progress," 134.

²³⁰ Aiken, "Paintings of Manifest Destiny," 83.

²³¹ Aiken, "Paintings of Manifest Destiny," 86.

While Gast's painting and its composition may imply that farming is part of the nostalgic past, other panoramic views offer a different reading. In 1867, prominent mapmaker Gaylord Watson self-published an elaborate and highly decorated pocket map entitled *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, which was engraved by Fisk & Russell.²³² Inset at the top is a remarkably detailed landscape scene with the caption, "A Panoramic View of the Country Between San Francisco and St. Louis." (Figure 4) As Aiken suggests, the scene also reads from right to left, but farming occupies a very different position in this narrative. The far right is labeled "St. Louis," which is represented by its proximity to the Mississippi River. In the distance of this minute landscape is a mountain range, perhaps St. Francois mountains, from which rock was used to build the St. Louis port. (Figure 4.5) In the middle ground, steamboats float along the river. The foreground wilderness remains unaltered by civilization. Moving further west (and left) the scene is occupied by pioneer wagons and bison hunters on horseback, while telegraph lines and railroads stretch across the distant background. (Figure 4.6) The telegraph and railroad continues, omnipresent in the background while the foreground is increasingly populated by wild flora and fauna. Rugged terrain and native encampments occupy the area labeled "Rocky Mountains." (Figure 4.7) Then, from sublime mountains emerges Salt Lake City, and further west, gold miners and the

²³² The full title of the map is *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States, British Provinces, West-Indies, Mexico and Central America. Compiled from the latest official sources*. David Rumsey Map Collection <http://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~34342~1171266:The-American-Republic-and-rail-road>. Gaylord Watson was a map publisher in New York City who partnered with Phelps & Watson through 1864. From 1865 through the 1880s, he published western maps and travel guides. He expanded his presence to Chicago through agent Dwight Needham. Nancy Finaly, *Picturing Victorian America: Prints by the Kellogg Brothers of Hartford, Connecticut, 1830-1880* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 126-27.

enormous trees of California. (Figure 4.8) Finally, we reach our San Francisco destination, and there we find the farm. Removed from the major city center on the bay and the telegraph wires of civilization, the farm is reliably identified by its stretch of treeless land and organized gridded plots. (Figure 4.9)

The position of the farm in this narrative reveals the real role of farms in the development of cities in the West. While prospectors and boosters drove the California Gold Rush of 1849, a subsequent, larger wave, swarmed Colorado in 1858.²³³ Environmental historian Elliott West describes the codependent nature of the gold rushes and the development of river towns from Missouri to California, where the "great stampede changed the plains as much as the mountains, and yet we kept our gaze on what was rushed *to* rather than what was rushed *over*."²³⁴ Watson's panorama implies the interconnectedness of these regions, changes upon the land, technologies, and people—both native and pioneer. In this sprawling picture, farms are the "unsung heroes" of the march of civilization because, as West points out,

Visions of gold and grain were not in conflict; they were in harmony. Miners had to eat, so a growing population at the Rockies would provide an expanding market for farmers and shippers of eastern Kansas...Around the gold camps themselves was land for fields and pastures.²³⁵

Dubious miner handbooks extolled the agrarian potential of the plains—a subject to which we will return.²³⁶

Gaylord Watson's deceptively simple illustration is evocative because it makes the connections between place, environment, and people that Gast's *American Progress*

²³³ Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998), xv.

²³⁴ West, *The Contested Plains*, xvii.

²³⁵ West *The Contested Plains*, 131.

²³⁶ West, *The Contested Plains*, 131 and 250-51.

cannot seem to achieve. Perhaps this is partially because, unlike Gast, this panorama reads like one. The panorama was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century in Europe and America. In its more strict definition, the panorama was the name of both a painting and the circular building in which it was displayed. In the Parisian *Dictionary of Building Terms* of 1881, the panorama experience was defined as

A building in which a painting referred to as a panorama is exhibited, that is to say painted on the inside wall of a rotunda, covered by a cupola or cone-shaped roof. The paintings are faithful reproductions of what a place looks like when viewed from all angles and from as far as the eye can see...²³⁷

The themes of panoramas were typically history paintings such as battle scenes or travel to distant lands. The purpose was to be both instructive and simulacral—so akin to reality that one might be fooled by the experience. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the moving panorama, intended to mimic the journey downriver, became common, often depicting the Mississippi River. The only surviving example of this subject and format is John J. Egan's *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi*. Egan was commissioned to create the mural around 1850 by De Montroville Wilson Dickeson, an archeologist whose fieldwork excavated the Lower Mississippi valley from 1837-46. The panorama was an experience—people gathered into a theatre and viewed a 348 feet long, seven-and-a-half feet tall painting through an apparatus that both focused the view, but also moved it in an almost cinematic way. The panorama as a whole had didactic purposes to expose viewers to a range of cultures and invigorate scientific display by incorporating popular culture and mass entertainment.²³⁸

²³⁷ *Dictionary of Building Terms*, as quoted by Bernard Comment, *The Painted Panorama* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), 7.

²³⁸ Comment, *The Painted Panorama*, 172 and Nenetta Luarca-Schoaf, "Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Mass Medium," *American Art* 27, no 2 (Summer 2013): 15.

Egan's panorama was part of an ambitious program, including lectures and displays of artifacts, created by Dickeson to present his findings to the public. Many of the scenes contrast modern innovations and society with Native history. In scene 18, a steamboat crosses torrential river waters in the foreground, Native burial mounds occupy the middle ground, and settler homes litter the landscape. Another scene presents a nascent pioneer farm juxtaposed with native cliff pictographs. (Figure 4.10) The large cliffs loom over the newly logged riverside farm that seems sparse and unnatural in the context. Art historian Nnette Luarca-Shoaf explains, "For their part, historians of American literature and art have focused on the way that panoramas of the West simulated movement through time and space, a trajectory emblematic of a vigorous national ideology favoring manifest destiny and Indian removal."²³⁹ She goes on to explain that new scientific and non-biblical ideologies explaining the passage of time beginning in the 1820s led to an increasing number of middle- and upper-class Americans becoming "interested in how the passage of time had manifested itself on American soil..."²⁴⁰

Watson's small illustration on the map of America clearly was not intended to mimic the experience of a large-scale moving panorama like Egan's. However, like the grand panoramas of the nineteenth century, it allowed those purchasing the map to consume a sweeping vista of distant lands unfamiliar to them. Too, Watson's panorama

²³⁹ Nnette Luarca-Shoaf, "Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Mass Medium," *American Art* 27 (2): 17. Luarca-Shoaf references Anne Baker, *Heartless Immensity: Literature, Culture, and Geography in Antebellum America* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2006); Angela Miller, "'The Soil of an Unknown America': New World Lost Empires and the Debate over Cultural Origins," *American Art* 8, nos. 3–4 (Summer– Autumn 1994): 8–27; and Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2002), 47–86.

²⁴⁰ Luarca-Shoaf, "Excavating a Nineteenth-Century Mass Medium," 17.

adds in the elements of history, progress, and civilization subtly across the epic small-scale scene. There is something inherently appealing about this palatable story, but the risk is that the West, in paintings and prints, was presented as a harmonious and homogenous landscape.

Actually, maps provided Americans their first visual encounters with the West much earlier. The first commercially available visual accounts produced for the American public of the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 were made in 1814 by Samuel Lewis in his map entitled *Missouri Territory formerly Louisiana* in Mathew Carey's *General Atlas*.²⁴¹

(Figure 4.11) The map, which illustrated the geography of the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, was based on the findings of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Mapmakers shared the results of the Lewis and Clark, Pike, and Long expeditions in commercial maps published between 1816 and 1840, and interest grew through the 1840s as more information was readily available and new land acquisitions during the Mexican American War of 1846-48 and settlement of Oregon, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco put pressure on the government to mount new expeditions.²⁴²

While maps provided a spatial representation of the West, inexpensive popular prints, like those published by Gaylord Watson and especially Currier & Ives, provided the bulk of visual representation of farm life in the West. Like the sweeping panoramas, these images provide a deceptive oversimplification of the West into a monolithic experience. Gaylord Watson was not only a mapmaker. His ambitiously titled lithograph

²⁴¹ Walter W. Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), 446. According to Ristow, Carey established the first commercial publishing company in the United States in 1794 and became a pioneer in atlas publishing.

²⁴² Ristow, *American Maps and Mapmakers*, 447.

The Great West of 1881 compliments his earlier 1867 map with panoramic view of the West. *The Great West* includes many of the same quintessentially American endeavors like mining, surveying, hunting, and, of course, farming. (Figure 4.12) Here, though, the prosperous farm takes foreground center stage in an idyllic coalescing of frontier history that rings with nationalism. The location of this farm is not specified, but there are enormous sublime peaks in the background and a bustling river town with modern conveniences like the railroad and telegraph in the middle ground. The farm is composed of a grand home, barn, organized plots for produce, an orchard, and livestock. The farm is occupied by a family, the patriarch presumably on horseback, and the help with the livestock. There is absolutely no indication of conflict or struggle, no Native American sacrifices, and this lovely scene is framed by the beautiful bounty of harvest interspersed with vignettes depicting mining, hunting, steamboats, and surveying. There are many ways to interpret these vignettes. Do they look backwards to imply that those ways of life were waning, and that the future lie in the romantic vista of the main scene? Is it a game of "chicken and egg" to surmise which must come first in order for the others to achieve success?

There are numerous underlying errors and omissions that complicate this idyllic scene. First, unlike Watson's earlier panorama, the West is represented as a single conflated place. The lack of specificity denies the complicated topographies of the West and therefore the very real struggles of the families building their livelihoods there—a subject to which I will return. Also, this scene eliminates representation of any natives, even by symbolic tepees. If the vignettes surrounding the scene are indeed backwards looking, why is the Native American absent?

David Lowenthal points out an intriguing concept in the evaluation of these pioneer landscapes. While we envision the pioneer as the sturdy and independent man and woman weathering their new environments, that is not the enduring result. It is the farmer, not the pioneer, who ultimately coaxes the land to fulfill its capacity for harvest.²⁴³ What we see in Watson's *Great West* is not the hope for prosperity (like in the image of the pioneer journey in Gast), nor the work to achieve this American dream, but the actual culmination of that effort. For Lowenthal, the "pioneer landscape lasted a generation at most, becoming more ephemeral and transient as pioneers moved west."²⁴⁴ Perhaps these images were necessary because the pioneers needed the benefit of imagination, because, as Lowenthal puts it, "The landscape pioneers like best imagined futures, with nature transformed into settlement."²⁴⁵ Just as the American Dream persists in the twenty-first century largely for the prospect of futurity, not its actual proximity to reality.

Perhaps Watson's image is the product of that pioneer imagining, but it is compelling that this composition, from 1881, departs from the westward motion that characterizes so many pioneering images of the 1860s and 1870s. In Watson's composition, the surveyable prospect of land is halted by the ominous cliffs that rise starkly in the distance. Undoubtedly, this is a nod to the sublime qualities of the Western landscape, but they also imply a finality and limit to the prosperous bounty of the land. Is this the looming sensibility that the frontier was closing?

²⁴³ David Lowenthal, "The Pioneer Landscape: An American Dream," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2 (Winter 1982): 11, JSTOR.

²⁴⁴ Lowenthal, "The Pioneer Landscape," 10.

²⁴⁵ Lowenthal, "The Pioneer Landscape," 12.

Late nineteenth-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner's influential essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," delivered in 1893 to the American Historical Association, quotes in its introductory paragraph an 1890 bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census:

Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census report.²⁴⁶

So, in 1880, the point at which Gaylord Watson is illustrating "The Great West," (a term which appears in capital letters in Turner's essay), the frontier had essentially already closed. Through a monolithic narrative of successive American frontiers, Turner sets out to reveal "luminously the course of universal history," because the

United States lies like a huge page in the history of society. Line by line as we read this continental page from West to East we find the record of social evolution. It begins with the Indian and the hunter; it goes on to tell of the disintegration of savagery by the entrance of the trader, the pathfinder of civilization; we read the annals of the pastoral stage in ranch life; the exploitation of the soil by the raising of unrotated crops of corn and wheat in sparsely settled farming communities; the intensive culture of the denser farm settlement; and finally the manufacturing organization with city and factory system.²⁴⁷

This narrative has endured no shortage of scholarly criticism for the past century, but that is not the present endeavor. Instead, these lines are reproduced here to show that sentiments of progress, civilization, and development pervaded narratives of "The Great West," even before Turner's essay gained notoriety. Watson's 1881 illustration positions the successful farm as the nexus or focal point of this same narrative. The vignettes depict the trader and prospector, the development of city life, and the advancement of

²⁴⁶ Quoted by Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 3.

²⁴⁷ Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 9.

technology and civilization, culminating with the prosperous farm filled with livestock, orchard, and neatly planted rows.

Scholars of the American West undertook a reevaluation of the discipline in the 1990s to eschew this monolithic narrative of the West that originated with the likes of Turner, among others. In researching the West, scholars, like historian William Deverell, urged their peers to recast the story and present it as a series of power struggles endured by diverse peoples, moving beyond the government-sponsored expeditions and gold-rush prospectors.²⁴⁸ This initiative, of course, continues to yield many important new perspectives. However, Patricia Nelson Limerick provides a cautionary measure to this academic, pessimistic, and fatalistic twenty-first-century interpretation of the West in her essay, "The Real West."²⁴⁹ In her critique of post-modern scholarship, "reality, contemporary scholars tell us, is a social and cultural construction, which is profoundly unsatisfying as a foundation for living one's life."²⁵⁰ She defends the use of mythologizing as a legitimate scholarly subject because, "Jefferson's idea of a short and easy connection between the waters of the east and the waters of the west set a long-range pattern, by which Americans would ask the West for something simple, and the West would give them something complicated."

If any single source of imagery demonstrates the simplicity of our demands on the West (and perhaps America, in general), it is the popular printmakers Currier & Ives.

²⁴⁸ See, for example, William Deverell, "Fighting Words: The Significance of the American West in the History of the United States," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25, No. 2 (1994): 185-206, JSTOR.

²⁴⁹ Patricia Nelson Limerick, "The Real West," in *Western Voices: 125 Years of Colorado Writing*, ed. Steve Grinstead and Ben Fogelberg (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2004), 240-56.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

Established in 1834 by Nathaniel Currier as the place to purchase "Colored engravings for the people," the printmaking company achieved nationwide fame in 1840 for illustrations of the *Lexington* steamboat fire and other illustrations of disaster.²⁵¹ By the late 1830s, lithographers were innumerable across the United States, producing everything from architectural plans, to illustrations of current events for newspapers, to parlor pictures. Currier & Ives was known for identifying a market and developing prints which appealed to their tastes. These prints could be purchased inexpensively from street vendors or from regular dealers for the finer hand-colored lithographs. In 1852, James Ives joined the company as a bookkeeper and later introduced Currier to the concept of genre scenes of American life that so characterize what we now imagine to be the Currier & Ives legacy.²⁵² According to Currier & Ives scholar Walton Rawls, Ives, in particular, "was attuned to subtler vibrations in the air, correctly sensing in the discontent of harried city-dwellers a ready market for inexpensive depictions of what they imagined was a simpler, more fulfilling, more American way of life."²⁵³ Ives was made a full partner in 1857, and the trademark Currier & Ives lithography brand was born.

Undoubtedly, the Currier & Ives brand and the desires of its audiences were far more complex than a mere yearning for simple life outside the city. However, their popularity during the period cannot be denied, and those types of images also define how we collectively remember America's past.²⁵⁴ Among many depictions of farm life in the

²⁵¹ Walton H. Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America: from a Young Nation to a Great Power* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2015), 23-4.

²⁵² Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America*, 39.

²⁵³ Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America*, 39.

²⁵⁴ From abolition to politics to war-time to advertising, Currier & Ives participated in many important civic conversations through images. To suggest that their greatest legacy

vast Currier & Ives oeuvre, two images, published only four years apart, illustrate particularly the powerful lore of success and the myth of the western farmstead. The first, *Pioneer Home on the Western Frontier*,²⁵⁵ seems exceedingly similar to the yeoman farmscape of Thomas Cole, *The Hunter's Return* (see chapter 1). (Figure 4.13) They share compositional elements (though in reverse) and subject matter of the hunter returning home to his eager family. As such, much of the analysis in chapter one can be generally applied to this image of the young farm, which is telling because one represents the East while the other represents the west.

While Cole's eastern farm and Currier & Ives's western farm are remarkably similar, comparing *The Pioneer Home on the Western Frontier* to a print of only four years later entitled *The Western Farmer's Home* reveals strikingly different representations of a singular West. (Figure 4.14) In *The Pioneer Home*, "The West" as romantic amalgamation is represented by a rugged wilderness landscape of thick forests, namely stylized pine trees, hunting, rolling hills, a small field of wheat, and log cabin. Meanwhile, in *The Western Farmer's Home*, "The West" is represented by sprawling fields, prosperous home, and boundless sky. Perhaps we can attribute the difference between these visions of the West to different artists—*The Pioneer Home On the Western Frontier* was designed by Frances Flora Bond Palmer and *The Western Farmer's Home* is

is in the genre scenes is inaccurate. However, for the purposes of understanding the role of the farm in the west, genre scenes are the focal point of this study.

²⁵⁵ *Pioneer Home on the Western Frontier* is the title given to the colorless lithograph reproduced for this study. However, Rawls provides a different title for a colored lithograph: *The Pioneer's Home/On the Western Frontier*, Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America*, 260.

by an anonymous artist.²⁵⁶ Despite the similarity of their titles, these two prints illustrate very different environments and people under the guise of a singular "West."

Walton Rawls explains the appearance of images like these quite simply; "home" was an "almost magic concept" that was the primary subject of more than fifty prints by Currier & Ives, largely because a significant majority of city-dwelling customers had grown up on rural farms and moved to the city. Rawls suggests that the homes represented by Currier & Ives were simultaneously bucolic, picturesque, and perceived as attainable to the average city-dweller.²⁵⁷ The suggestion that people needed to envision themselves in the scenes is, perhaps, most significant when aligned with Hassrick's formulation of the three main myths of the west; progress, Eden, and masculinity. If the goal was to envision oneself experiencing life on the frontier, then the proximity of the myth to reality is not essential.

The Currier & Ives image of the rugged frontiersman in the West may look almost indiscernible from one representing any eastern landscape. We can return to Turner's essay on the significance of the western frontier to help explain these two visions of the Western farm. Turner quotes "Peck's New Guide to the West" of 1837 which proposes there are three classes of people—men really—"like the waves of the ocean" that "have rolled one after the other" to advance the farm and frontier.²⁵⁸ Peck's guide identified the first wave of the pioneer, "who depends for the subsistence of his family chiefly upon the

²⁵⁶ Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America*, 260-62.

²⁵⁷ Rawls, *Currier & Ives' America*, 241-48. Rawls' chapter on the home is quite interesting and compelling, though not the focus of this particular study.

²⁵⁸ Summarized from a quote in Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 15.

natural growth of vegetation...and the proceeds of hunting."²⁵⁹ Turner envisions this farmer as the founder of a new country or state who needs only a dozen acres, log cabin, and stable. He exhausts the soil and moves on because of the availability of cheap land for his growing family. This is precisely the image we are given by Currier & Ives in *Pioneer Home on the Western Frontier*. But, as the narrative goes, that farmer moves on to pioneer another land and investors buy his land to initiate market-scale agriculture. Currier & Ives gives us that image as well in *The Western Farmer's Home*. What may seem idiosyncratic about these very different versions of a single West is more about a single driving narrative that was being told, even as early as 1837, of waves of farmers, both pioneer and intensive, that pushed the boundary further and further west.

In many ways, the transitory nature of the pioneer farmers, a sort of nomadic vision, contrasts sharply with the Jeffersonian and John Lockean vision of land ownership that laid the groundwork for the Homestead Act. Passed during the Civil War, the Homestead Act was a monumental legislative act that grew out of discontent with the earlier Land Ordinance of 1775, which Americans believed favored land speculators who could pay the price.²⁶⁰ The "Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain" took effect in 1863. Men and women over the age of twenty-one, whether citizens or immigrants, could claim up to 160 acres of land if they cultivated the land, improved it with a house or barn, and lived for five years. Their only cost was a ten-dollar fee. During the next seventy years, more than four-hundred thousand families

²⁵⁹ *Peck's New Guide to the West* as quoted by Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, 15.

²⁶⁰ Overview of Land Ordinance Act of 1775 and Homestead Act of 1862 can be found in Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *Frontier: A Short History of the American West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 133-36.

claimed 285 million acres, along with more than 700 million public acres that were purchased.²⁶¹

The agrarian ideal with the West's abundance of property and the prospect for prosperity was ubiquitously integrated into government rhetoric from the 1860s through the close of the century.²⁶² Even the two cent postage stamp of 1898 incorporates the idea into its central imagery, a real scene captured by camera in 1888.²⁶³ (Figure 4.15) Captioned "Farming in the West," a long line of farmers stand perhaps awaiting the harvest. The image has an unintentional eeriness as farmer after farmer waits in a line with livestock and machinery for an unclear purpose. The line stretches into the horizon and vanishes without revealing that purpose. As the largest printing of any stamp in the Trans-Mississippi issue, the stamp stands in many ways as an ironic symbol of the promise of western land that ultimately left many unfulfilled.²⁶⁴ Or, perhaps it is a representation of the unknown towards which so many farmers marched in hopes of a brighter future. Undoubtedly, the image was intended to be much more optimistic, but our twenty-first century pessimism cannot ignore its unsettling ambiguity.

Beyond official government propaganda, there was no shortage of publications dedicated to attracting settlers to the West, and this study can't do justice to the many varieties. For the sake of brevity, I focus on one illustrated and illustrative example. While many emigrant guides provide details of a specific region, New Yorker Frederick B. Goddard sought, in 1868, to provide a comprehensive guide for foreigners (and

²⁶¹ Hine and Faragher, *Frontier*, 134.

²⁶² For a more elaborate exploration of the Homestead Act and its effects on social and political ideals, see Smith, *Virgin Land*, 165-73.

²⁶³ "2-cent Farming in the West," Smithsonian National Postage Museum, https://arago.si.edu/category_2028275.html. Accessed October 7, 2017.

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*

Americans, too) to choose comparatively between locations across the western and southern regions. The publication was really intended for foreign emigrants seeking a new life in America, as evidenced by the illustration of "Castle Garden, the Emigrant Landing-Place" in New York.²⁶⁵ Goddard lists his ambitious goals on the title page:

Where to Emigrate and Why, describes the climate—soil—productions—minerals and general resources—amount of public lands—the quality and price of farm lands in nearly all sections of the United States; and contains a description of the Pacific Railroad—the Homestead and other land laws—rates and wages throughout the country. Etc., etc. With maps and illustrations.²⁶⁶

The frontispiece, by an unknown artist, is a wonderful testament to the American Dream. (Figure 4.16) The image is divided into two registers representing the present and the future for the pioneer family. In the top register, the family has traversed the land to find an ideal plot to establish their farm. They have literally just begun their tenure as American farmers. There is no home, no possessions beyond the contents of their covered wagon and few wandering livestock. The woman kneels over a fire to make a meal while the children and pet dog witness the very first swing of the axe which will pave the way for their homestead. Set in a picturesque scene, with ample water and beautiful scenery, and armed with the labor of the axe, this family is undoubtedly poised to achieve the great success represented in the register below. This scene is in the unknown future. Its implication is that the strong work ethic of the pioneer leads in a straight trajectory to the bustling success of market scale agriculture and the wealth of a city which springs up around them. First comes farmer, then comes city, technology, religion, and plenty. This is a bold promise to the emigrant crossing oceans and land.

²⁶⁵ Frederick B. Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why*, 21.

²⁶⁶ Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why*, title page.

Certainly, the optimism which infuses Goddard's guide is not unique, but it is aggressive, irresistible, and reinforced throughout the book. Including the contributions of "thousands" of people across America, Goddard's credibility is bolstered through facts, testimonies, and written laws. They coalesce with his glorifying prose to paint, again, a singular landscape that promises a life of prosperity among "Tens of thousands smiling cottages, and well-fenced and cultivated farms, and other evidences of thrift and happiness throughout the great West," that "bear eloquent testimony to the wisdom and the rewards of emigration."²⁶⁷ Godard's sweeping rhetoric in the earlier chapters gives way to the particulars of locations, organized by state. Yet, the singular illustration of the farmstead on the cover remains the sole representative of the life that awaits the pioneer emigrant in the present and the future.

Of People and Places

We are, by now, well-aware that the myths and narratives created by the people of the nineteenth century, documented by artists, and perpetuated by historians like Turner and decades of followers, are fraught with problems of accuracy, overgeneralization, and exclusion, to say the least. It comes, then, as little surprise that western farm ideals and mythic images depart so significantly from the plight of the real farmer. Their stories, in reality, are so determined by place, time, and circumstance that there is no single narrative of the western farm. Too, because of the scarcity of resources and artists, it is difficult to present a linear east-to-west narrative through farm imagery. Instead, the following examples illustrate the varied places and people that made up western farm life, focusing on how people impact the landscape and vice-a-versa.

²⁶⁷ Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why*, 16.

Historian Elliott West describes three early stages of the frontier. The years between 1763 and 1783 saw the first settlers from the east cross the mountains in the midst of combat and power struggles during the American Revolution. The next three decades brought a swelling tide of emigrants, and by 1812 to 1820, the government began to assert control over the region.²⁶⁸ Farming, generally speaking, also developed in successive stages. The earliest settlers practiced a diverse and extensive subsistence farming that allowed them to develop an economic system. This group was not as focused on permanence. But a successive wave wanted to stay on a plot longer, and they focused on intensive agriculture which allowed them to look toward distant markets for profit.²⁶⁹

By the early 1900s, the Ohio River region encompassing Cincinnati, Louisville, and Pittsburgh was thriving, but farmstead imagery of these earlier periods of settlement is rare, undoubtedly due to a lack of resources, markets, and artists. One important and often overlooked resource for western farm imagery in the first half of the nineteenth century is Swiss artist Karl Bodmer's sketches during his travels with naturalist-explorer Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied (current day Germany) between 1832 and 1834. Bodmer is best known for his images of Native Americans, and he is often compared to George Catlin. However, Bodmer's observations and studies during the trip from Boston to the Dakotas reveal a nuanced and capable artist that created far more than a record of the Native peoples. An extensive collection of more than three-hundred sketches record

²⁶⁸ Elliott West, "American Frontier," 118.

²⁶⁹ Summary derived from West, "American Frontier," 132-135.

the journey.²⁷⁰ In addition to observing Native life, he depicted marine life, townscapes, flora and fauna, landscapes, rural and urban life, and about half a dozen farm scenes, among other subjects. These images became the basis for eighty-one etchings that accompany Prince Maximilian's accounts and atlas of his travels, published by subscription in Paris in 1839-41.²⁷¹

One of the most important stops on the route was New Harmony, Indiana, the site of a utopian colony that boasted some of the most important scientists of the period, including Thomas Say and Charles Alexandre Lesuer.²⁷² While Maximilian spent five months preparing for the remainder of their journey and engaging with fellow naturalists, Bodmer documented the community in and around New Harmony, including visits to the prairie settlements outside of New Harmony in Indiana and Illinois in 1832 and 1833. A series of three of these sketches offer an interesting picture of prairie life and how it was interpreted by both Bodmer and Maximilian. Maximilian visited James Green's farm at Green's Prairie, Illinois in January 1833. Bodmer produced a pencil on paper sketch of Bon Pas near the farm, focusing on a close view that emphasizes man-made structures including fences. (Figure 4.17) This scene thwarts any development of space or recession into the distance. Nor does it allow Bodmer to represent the natural elements that characterize many other scenes in his sketches. The drawing is also quite geometric, the

²⁷⁰ An excellent resource for the entire collection of watercolor sketches is William Goetzman, David C. Hunt, Marsha Gallagher, and William J. Orr, *Karl Bodmer's America* (Omaha, NB: Joslyn Museum of Art and Omaha, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

²⁷¹ Basic information and bibliography about the expedition, Bodmer, and Maximilian can be found at "An Illustrated Expedition of North America: Bodmer and Maximilian in the West," <https://specialcollections.nal.usda.gov/bodmer-exhibit>. Accessed July 29, 2017.

²⁷² Goetzman, *Karl Bodmer's America*, 8.

lines of timber fences dominate the scene. The cropping, view, distance, and emphasis he chose are perhaps a reflection of Maximilian's observations about the unrestricted clearing of forests as a result of Congressional land grants.²⁷³ Maximilian laments the lack of oversight for clear-cutting and implies settlers should be punished for imprudence. He wrote, "By way of settlement we may preserve here in America neither the aborigines nor the wild beasts because the beginning of settlement is always the destruction of everything."²⁷⁴

However, Maximilian's pessimism about settlement does not pervade all of Bodmer's farm scenes. Bodmer painted a more delicate and forgiving depiction of a prairie settler in *Settler's Farm in Indiana*, painted west of New Harmony in 1832. (Figure 4.18) This image conveys many of the sentiments of yeoman farmsteads from the northeast. There is a quaint and modest cabin, wife hanging laundry on the line, husband on horseback, and faintly drawn child observing. In the distance is a wheat field, and further in the distance, a neighboring farm. From all evidence, this is a healthy developing farming community. What is compelling, and likely even unintentional, is how Bodmer's style reflects the tenuous nature of life on the prairie. The scene laid in with pencil is heightened by delicate washes of watercolor, but the sketch is unfinished, and detail gives way at the edges of the scene. It is evocative of both the sentiment and uncertainty tied to the pioneer life. This sentimentality is heightened in contrast to

²⁷³ Summary and Prince Maximilian quotations from David C. Hunt and Marcia Gallagher, annotation for plate 70 and 71, *Karl Bodmer's America*, 85.

²⁷⁴ As quoted by Hunt and Gallagher, *Karl Bodmer's America*, 86.

Maximillian's own gruesome observations about the neglect and wantonness of some prairie homesteads.²⁷⁵

The only farmstead image of Bodmer's travels which even came close to reproduction in Maximillian's atlas was one he completed upon return to Europe, based on his sketches. This small-scale finished watercolor painting presents a very different view of the farmstead. Instead of the intimacy of immediate observation and proximity, Bodmer paints *View of a Farm on the Illinois Prairie* from a significant distance. (Figure 4.19) In this painting we get a sense of prospect and the conditions of the farm itself. The lone tree in the middle ground emphasizes the clear-cut land in contrast to the distance with its lush forest. The scale of farm-house and barn in comparison to the vast landscape seems to emphasize the isolation of the farm rather than its proximity to others as in his previous view. On the other hand, this cleared and cultivated land was the very epitome of success that defined the prairie farm. Perhaps that is why this view was probably considered for reproduction for European audiences.

Bodmer's 1830s images of the American farmstead were not ultimately the focal point of Prince Maximillian's published atlas, which was largely intended for European audiences anyway. It was not until the 1864 that Junius Sloan, an itinerant portraitist, settled in Chicago to become one of its early resident landscapists, perhaps producing the earliest depictions of life on the settled Illinois prairies by an American artist.²⁷⁶ Born in

²⁷⁵ Maximillian observed neglected children in the yard of one settler's home, gnawing on discarded turkey bones with the dogs. As referenced by Hunt and Gallagher, *Karl Bodmer's America*, 87.

²⁷⁶ This claim is made without substantive documentation by Junius Sloan expert Richard H.W. Brauer, retired director of the Brauer Museum of Art at Valparaiso University, in *In Quest of Beauty: Nineteenth-Century America as seen in the Art and Life of Junius R.*

Ohio and raised in Ohio and Pennsylvania, Sloan helped his father on the farm until he established himself as a portrait painter. Self-taught, he received informal training from portraitist Moses Billings and freedman Robert Duncanson in Cincinnati. He also received some training in New York City. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, he eventually turned to landscapes, inspired in part by John Ruskin. Finally, in 1864, he moved from rural Ohio to Chicago to officially pursue a living as a landscapist.

Sloan was particularly dedicated to creating truthful, if laudatory, landscapes of the prairie farms outside of Chicago. Sloan commonly painted his father Seymour Sloan's farm in what became Kewanee in northwestern Illinois, about 150 miles southwest of Chicago. The painting is particularly interesting in this context for representing an actual farm, its staple crop, and Kewanee's proximity to the already bustling metropolis of Chicago. Seymour Sloan established his farm in 1853, just before the railroad had established itself in Kewanee and just as settlement picked up pace. He worked the land there for fourteen years. He owned as much as 558 acres, but had only 40 by the time that Junius Sloan painted *Farm of Seymour Sloan* in 1866. (Figure 4.20) Apparently Seymour had a diverse farm that grew food for the household, as well as corn for the market, presumably in Chicago.²⁷⁷

Junius's painting of his father's farm feels nostalgic—with sweeping skies, quaint farm, comfortable livestock, and dappled prairie flowers in the foreground—for good

Sloan, 1827-1900 (Valparaiso, IN: Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University, 2000), 1.

²⁷⁷ Brauer, *In Quest of Beauty*, 9-10. For rates of Illinois settlement, see Allan C. Bogue, *From Prairie to Cornbelt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1963), 8-9. Bogue points out the curiosity of settlement patterns in this area because it was relatively late given the good conditions of the land.

reason. His father's farm was by this point only a fraction of the size it was at its height, and he was soon to leave the practice. But, Junius's painting does not betray the small size of this parcel. Instead, the scene is sprawling with seemingly endless possibility, expansive land, and glorious sky. The field of yellow stretching beyond the cabins in this painting is the staple crop that so defines the prairie farms of Illinois.

Alan C. Bogue points out the curiosity of late settlement patterns in the region, including Northern Illinois. This area was sparsely settled until the 1850s as pioneers crossed into Kansas and Nebraska in spite of good quality land. Bogue explains, "In reality a very complex combination of factors controlled the flow of settlement... Transportation routes and facilities, potential markets. The quality of the land, real or imagined, location in relation to older settlements, and the state of the settling-in process there—all had important effects upon the development of new areas."²⁷⁸ Seymour Sloan's settlement in the area preceded the founding of the town of Kewanee by one year and the railroad sprang up nearly simultaneously.²⁷⁹

The railroad was, of course, an important factor in the success of an Illinois prairie farm growing any crop for market. Corn was among several market crops being produced in the area, including wheat, oats, barley, rye, flax, and hay.²⁸⁰ Corn, however, was among the most abundant and reliable of crops, producing forty to sixty bushels per acre compared to wheat's thirty.²⁸¹ The markets for corn were varied, from local cattle feed and incoming immigrants to foreign interests, southern shipments, and of course, the

²⁷⁸ Bogue, *From Prairie to Cornbelt*, 12.

²⁷⁹ Larry Lock, "History of Kewanee,"

<http://www.kewaneehistory.com/localhistory8.html>. Accessed July 30, 2017.

²⁸⁰ Bogue, *From Prairie to Cornbelt*, 124.

²⁸¹ Bogue, *From Prairie to Cornbelt*, 130.

nearby Chicago market. By the 1840s, Chicago was already doing good business with the growing farming communities in northern Illinois and Indiana, but conditions were not ideal for overland travel to move goods into the city.²⁸² And Chicago was the key to eastern and European markets. Kewanee's location provided for several advantages in the 1850s, including relatively easy access to the Illinois River and railroads that, by 1861, connected Kewanee to nearby Peoria, Davenport, and at greater length, to Chicago.

The 1850s had witnessed some of the most rapid expansion of the railroads in American history.²⁸³ William Cronon's fascinating history of Chicago *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, weaves a history of Chicago that incorporates its codependency on the surrounding rural economy, made possible, in part, by the railroad. In the book, Cronon reproduces the illustration on the back of a deck of playing cards that were distributed by the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, the railroad that ran through Kewanee beginning in 1856.²⁸⁴ (Figure 4.21) From his personal collection, Cronon aptly titles the image *The Great West as Chicago's corncob*. A fascinating advertising piece, the image reinforces the idea that the city of Chicago was reliant upon both the railroads and the countryside for sustenance, also implying that Chicago, as the core, feeds the rural populations, extending their reach all the way to Colorado. In 1893, a Chicagoan addressing settlers of Chicago prior to 1840 proclaimed, "The cities have not made the country, on the contrary, the country has compelled the

²⁸² William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 57-58.

²⁸³ Cronon, *Natures" Metropolis*, 68-map on 69.

²⁸⁴ Basic history of the founding of Kewanee and establishment of the railroad can be found at "Kewanee, IL," <http://www.greatamericanstations.com/stations/kewanee-il-kee/>. Accessed July 30, 2017.

cities...Without the former the latter could not exist. Without farmers there could be no cities."²⁸⁵

We can return to Goddard's book *Where to Emigrate and Why* as a starting point for a more robust discussion of both the railroads and, by extension, the immigrant populations as they embarked across the landscape of the west, particularly its prairieland. It comes as little surprise that Goddard begins and concludes his book with unapologetic endorsements of the progress of the railroad and its positive impacts on the emigrant experience. Certainly, the railroads produced their own publications promoting settlement of the West, particularly in the Great Plains, with a special emphasis on the farm. Railroads used familiar tropes of western life to attract people to the West, both in imagery and in appealing to the values of people. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad produced a poster in the 1870s that features four vignettes. (Figure 4.22) On the left is "A Start on the Prairie" and "The Same Place After Six Years Work and Profit" and on the right "A Start in the Woods" and "The Same Place After Ten Years Work and Profit." In the central medallion, the railroad, surrounded by the bounty of harvest, lights the way to this new life in southwest Kansas. These before-and-after images are so ubiquitous in farming imagery that they seem commonplace. Through diligent work and time, the farmer will, undoubtedly achieve success. Success looks like a sprawling farm that has reached agribusiness status, neatly ordered rows of stock products, and a sizable but modest home. This is all possible, as the poster claims, because of the specific location. The poster boasts of Kansas's temperate climates and pure and abundant water.

²⁸⁵ John Dean Canton, "An Address delivered at the Reception to the Settlers of Chicago Prior to 1840, by the Calumet Club of Chicago, May 27, 1879," in *Reminiscences of Early Chicago*, ed. Mabel McIlvaine (Chicago, Lakeside Press: 1912) as quoted by Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 97.

It even goes so far as to include the contact information for a German agent at the bottom, implying that this poster was used to attract European immigrants to settle in Kansas.

While the train is the machine which lights the way in the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe poster, a pamphlet distributed by Kansas Pacific Railroad opts for a rather inspiring image of the sun as the beacon of hope on the plains. (Figure 4.23) Here, the focus is on livestock rather than harvest. Abundant cattle graze upon open pastures that stretch as far as the eye can see. Like other images of the West, the orientation is clearly to the West as the sun brilliantly streaks the sky. This is an image of inspiration where beautiful vast landscapes open to improvement are abundant, cheap, and well-stocked with water, livestock, and labor. This is "The Sure Road to Health, Wealth and Happiness." It was, also, coincidentally, the road to wealth for the railroad, which positions itself indebted to the settlers for increasing their profits. Unlike the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe poster, the railroad is not represented in the imagery at all, and it is the land itself which beckons the settler. The Kansas Pacific Railroad states, "The Company are more desirous to get their Lands settled up and improved, thereby increasing the business of the Railroad, than they are to hold them with the view of realizing higher prices, the prosperity of the settlers being the prosperity of the Railroad."²⁸⁶ This passage is interesting because the railroad company acknowledges that the settlement of farmers is critical to its prosperity, while also conveying its benevolence towards the farmer. The success of the farm and railroad were codependent.

²⁸⁶ Excerpt of page 3 from *All Bound for the Kansas Valleys! Between 1870-1880* Pamphlet produced by Kansas Pacific Railroad and printed by Ramsey, Millet & Hudson Print, c. 1870-80, Kansas City, Kansas Historical Society.

Among seven railroads that were given land grants in Kansas, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad and the Kansas Pacific Railroad received the largest—about three million and four million respectively.²⁸⁷ Indeed they needed settlement for the construction and prosperity of their lines, so they set up robust promotional programs to attract settlers from the United States and Europe. With less inexpensive land for acquisition in the east, their efforts yielded good results and settlement grew each year until 1889.²⁸⁸

Its important, though, to know that the benevolent message of great wealth and prosperity on the Kansas plains (and by association, much of the Great Plains) is one that was vastly misleading out of either ignorance or obstinacy. Cultural geographer Karen De Bray provides an excellent account of the imagery associated with promotional literature of Kansas produced between 1854 and 1900. As De Bray explains, Kansas became a state in 1854 under the Kansas-Nebraska Act which stipulated the people's vote determined whether or not the state would be free or slave-holding. Settlers could acquire lands as part of the Preemption Act of 1841, Homestead Act of 1862, the Timber Culture Act, from the Office of Indian Affairs, from individuals, or from railroads which were granted right of ways from the federal government. Early in its history, immigration societies were established as a moral imperative to prevent the establishment of another slave state.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Karen DeBres, "Come to the 'Champagne Air': Changing Promotional Images of Kansas Climate, 1854-1900," *Great Plains Quarterly* 23 (Spring 2003): 115, JSTOR.

²⁸⁸ De Bres explains the many factors associated with population growth and decline in population in De Bres, "Changing Promotional Images," 116.

²⁸⁹ Summary of early statehood from De Bres, "Changing Promotional Images," 112.

While promotional images and description touted temperate climates and abundant water, the reality of the Kansas climate was dramatically more challenging. Kansas earned the nickname "Droughty Kansas" because of its first major droughts during statehood between 1859 and 1868. Henry Worrall, the same Topeka artist who is possibly credited with creating the image in the Kansas Pacific Railroad pamphlet, moved to Kansas in 1868 as weather conditions improved. He, like many other Kansans, seemed intent upon dispelling the worrisome image of Kansas as "the Great American Desert" and embracing its contradictory description as "Garden of the West."²⁹⁰

Worrall was a prolific artist with illustrations in *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and a national reputation, but his painting *Drouthy Kansas* became his most well-known and often reproduced image.²⁹¹ (Figure 4.24) It was even used on the cover of a government-produced magazine called *Kansas Farmer*. Painted upon the return of water, it is a whimsical image of farmers harvesting enormous corn, potatoes, watermelon, and other produce. In the background, the plains are practically flooded with torrential rain and illuminated by a rainbow. This is an image of excessive plenty, the sarcasm of which is not lost on twenty-first century viewers. But, the reactionary and defensive nature of Worrall's painting earned it great success as it was deemed "the biggest single advertisement Kansas has ever had" by *The Commonwealth* in

²⁹⁰ For information on the painting, see Kansas Historical Society, "Droughty Kansas Painting," in *Kansaspedia*, <http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/drouthy-kansas-painting/10123>. Accessed July 7, 2017 and De Bres, "Changing Promotional Images," 112.

²⁹¹ For an overview of Henry Worrall, see Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850-1900* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 117-28.

1875.²⁹² But alas, Worrall's vision of abundance was short-lived. Another drought began in 1873, followed by a grasshopper invasion and a blizzard in 1886. It was not until the 1930s that the cyclical nature of Kansas climate became clear. In the meantime, boosters perpetuated erroneous climate-change theories to encourage settlement, the most well-known was "rain follows the plow." Others proposed that electrical currents from telegraphs induced rain, or that planting trees brought rain.

The erroneous claims of railroads and prospectors had a significant impact on the emigrant populations who moved west to seek the promised land. German-born artist Albert Bierstadt, among other prominent artists, depicted the pioneer journeys of future farmers (and, of course, other tradesman, prospectors, and their families) in works like *Emigrants Crossing the Plains* (1869). (Figure 4.25) Bierstadt was inspired by a group of German emigrants he encountered on his second trip West in 1863. Silhouetted against a brilliantly lit mountainscape, the emigrants ride off into the promised land despite the ominous cow skeleton in the foreground and Indian settlement in the path. The cow skeleton not only predicts their difficult journey, but also the difficult life of settling in new land.

The imagery specifically depicting the immigrant farm, however, especially in its early stages, is almost non-existent. As was discussed in the previous section, we can look at images like the frontispiece to Goddard's *Where to Emigrate and Why* to understand the naiveté of how immigrant experiences are portrayed. (Figure 4.16) The happy family with resourceful and independent male at the helm will undoubtedly lead to

²⁹² As quoted in "Drouthy Kansas Painting," *Kansaspedia*, <http://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/drouthy-kansas-painting/10123>. Accessed October 8, 2017.

a secure and prosperous future on the prairie farm. This notion is reinforced, in many ways, by the remarkable story of Per Hansa and his family in *Giants of the Earth*, a novel by Norwegian American author Ole Edvart Rølvaag in 1924-25. The novel is set in 1873 and follows Per Hansa's family and peers as they attempt to settle in the Dakota Territory. Partially based on Rølvaag's personal experience moving from Norway to America, the story is both a celebration of the ingenuity and determination of the pioneer and also a tragedy of futility. These pioneers experience both great trials and great triumphs, from locusts to blizzards. The story chronicles the agricultural, environmental, and social issues that shaped pioneer life on the prairie.

The main character, Per Hansa, is the quintessential backwoodsmen and male pioneer character lauded by the myths of the West. To read his story is to imagine Walt Whitman's "youths" in *Pioneers! O Pioneers!* chanting,

All the past we leave behind;
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march, Pioneers! O
pioneers!²⁹³

Rølvaag's Per Hansa is optimistic, persistent, independent, and resourceful, all of the values attributed to the earliest yeoman settlers in America, as

his words, though few and soberly spoken, had in them an unmistakable ring of determination...This vast stretch of beautiful land was to be his—yes, his[...].His heart began to expand with a mighty exaltation. An emotion he had never felt

²⁹³ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, c. 1900) via Bartleby.com, 1999. <http://www.bartleby.com/142/153.html>. Accessed July 25, 2017. The connection between Walt Whitman and Rølvaag is discussed in Sacvan Bercovitch and Cyrus R.K. Patell, eds., "'All the Past We Leave Behind'? Ole E. Rølvaag and the Immigrant Trilogy," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Volume 6, Prose Writing, 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 434-41.

before filled him and made him walk erect..."Good God!" He panted. "This kingdom is going to be mine."²⁹⁴

While Per Hansa has bold dreams, persistent optimism, strong work ethic, and considerable breadth of character, his wife Beret balances his optimism with honest, though pessimistic, concerns about the pioneer experience that is rooted in people and place. Beret, reminds the reader of the doubts, insecurities, risks, and solitude of prairie life, describing it with such phrases as an "unknown, lifeless sea" of "sombre greyness."²⁹⁵ Eventually going nearly mad at the onset of locusts and later turning to the solace of spirituality, it is her pleas which drive Per Hansa into a blizzard that would take his life. With this tragedy in mind, it is difficult to go back to Goddard's frontispiece of the happy family or the Currier & Ives family on the frontier, with the supportive wife and buoyant children, and truly imagine the prosperous future for the emigrant family.

As Elliott West points out, it was not until after the Civil War that imagery of the frontiersman even regularly incorporated images of families at all, insisting on the mirage of the lone frontiersman.²⁹⁶ However, as *Giants of the Earth*, other literary sources, and innumerable photographs of pioneer farms testify, women were important members of the homestead. In *Giants of the Earth*, while Per Hansa's experience of the land was physical, Beret provided a psychological experience of the landscape, its vastness, and the anxiety it provoked. As art historian Joni L. Kinsey points out, it was the prairie's very appearance—sublime vastness with unending rolling hills and grasslands—that made it an unappealing subject in contrast with the picturesque scenery of northeastern

²⁹⁴ Ole E. Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth*, trans. Lincoln Colcord (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999, originally published 1927), 41.

²⁹⁵ Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth*, 119.

²⁹⁶ Elliott West, "American Frontier," 134.

farms and the sublime wilderness of the far west.²⁹⁷ Too, the apparently lacking potential for a prospect view of traditional sorts forced artists to either resist depicting the prairies at all or to contrive something for use as a sense of scale.²⁹⁸ These adjustments, Kinsey claims, are not merely reflections of the changes to the environment, but documents of the "psychological adjustments to the terrain that were necessary not only for artists, but for anyone who would confront the prairie landscape and attempt to conform it to his or her purposes."²⁹⁹

Worthington Whittredge was among the few artists not disoriented or unnerved by the vastness of the prairie landscape, which he visited on at least two trips west. He wrote, "I had never seen the plains or anything like them. They impressed me deeply...Whoever crossed the plains at that period...could hardly fail to be impressed with its vastness and silence and the appearance everywhere of an innocent, primitive existence."³⁰⁰ But even Whittredge's stark painting of the Nebraska landscape relied on a gravesite near Fort Kearney to anchor the scene. (Figure 4.26)

The prairie homestead serves as the anchor for two paintings done by female artists, unknown except for these paintings. These two apparently self-taught female artists depict what Kinsey assumes is their immediate surroundings as prairie wives. Little is known about Imogene See, painter of *Nebraska Farmstead* or of Sallie Cover who painted her neighbor's home in *Homestead of Ellsworth L. Ball*. (Figures 4.27 and 4.28) See and Covers represent two very different views of homesteading life and the

²⁹⁷ Joni L. Kinsey, "Not so Plain: Art of the American Prairies," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 15 no. 3 (Summer 1995): 185-86, JSTOR.

²⁹⁸ Kinsey, "Not so Plain: Art of the American Prairies," 186-87.

²⁹⁹ Kinsey, "Not so Plain: Art of the American Prairies," 187.

³⁰⁰ Worthington Whittredge as quoted by Kinsey, "Not so Plain: Art of the American Prairies," 192.

particularities of place. Covers's painting is set in Garfield County, Nebraska where settlement extended beyond the forests, and it depicts a type of frontier success so rarely conveyed through imagery. Art historian Elizabeth Johns describes the scene well.³⁰¹ Cover's style is a simplified color scheme and elevated perspective that Johns suggests might be derived from needlework. It depicts an advanced sod construction home and grounds that are the result of several years labor. The sizable home and barn had to be constructed from sod and grass because of the lack of timber. The fields are both bountiful and extensive, and livestock litter the scene. Too, the scene includes members of the Ball family in proprietary positions according to their family role: Mrs. Ball by the front door with her young children in her domestic sphere, and Mr. Ball manages the farmstead on the far right middle ground. This is a scene of the promise and success of prairie homesteading. However, as Johns points out, this scene is selective, like the county atlas farm portraits, representing a farm at the pinnacle of success. Johns compares the painting to a photograph from roughly the same period, *John Curry Sod House Near West Union, Custer County, Nebraska*, circa 1886, to demonstrate the humble origins such a vast farm scene. (Figure 4.29) This intermediary stage between pioneer travel and pioneer success—the stage of uncertainty and difficult labor—is almost never the subject of paintings and prints.

In contrast, Imogene See's painting of a Nebraska farmstead feels something more akin to the actual experience of living and working on the plains. First, the point of view is not elevated and avoids any attempt at the prospect view. This is the perspective of someone immersed *in* the landscape. Second, the garden metaphor is lost as this

³⁰¹ Summary derived from Elizabeth Johns, "Settlement and Development: Claiming the West," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*, 227-28.

landscape is dusky brown and there is no attempt to depict the lush vegetation which surrounds, and transforms, the landscape around the Ball home.

In the same way that we find scarce imagery that adequately portrays the plight of the female, immigrant, or nascent prairie farmstead, there is scant imagery of the Native American experience with farming in the second half of the nineteenth century. The story of Native farming is, of course, difficult to summarize because there is substantial variety. Agriculture historian R. Douglas Hurt presents a broad narrative of Native agriculture that begins in 5,000 B.C.E. in Northern Mexico, migrating largely into the American Southwest, Great Plains, North, and South. By 1,000 BCE, Indians had developed the agricultural system we so commonly associate with them: traditionally, women grew a staple of beans, corn, and squash to provide a stable food source for villages.³⁰² However, many groups, particularly in the Great Plains region, were largely nomadic, relying on hunting and gathering as their main source of food. During the Spring, villages would form to plant modestly along the flood plains.³⁰³ This general description is admittedly oversimplified, but suffices to emphasize that Plains Indians were not accustomed to the farming practices that were imposed on them in Indian reservations of the nineteenth century.

Historian William T. Hagan provides a useful synopsis of assimilation policy in the *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains Indians*, stating,

Both the United States and Canada developed assimilation policies for their Native peoples. Americans and Canadians both believed that the only way to save the Indians from extinction, and to make room for white settlers, was to locate Indians on reservations, convert them into Christians, self-sufficient farmers,

³⁰² R. Douglas Hart, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2002), chapters 1-3.

³⁰³ Hart, *American Agriculture*, 13-17.

complete with a European sense of individualism and private property ownership. The paradox should be evident: spatial segregation was supposed to lead to cultural integration.³⁰⁴

Hagan goes on to explain that by the late 1870s and early 1880s, the bison that was the primary source of food for the Plains Indians had nearly been brought to extinction, and so Indians remained on the reservations established for them even though they were being forced to abandon cherished customs, send their children to school, and left hungry by farm lands that even seasoned farmers would have trouble cultivating.

These are the conditions under which carpenter-turned-painter William Fuller painted *Crow Creek Agency, Dakota Territory* in 1884. (Figure 4.30) Crow Creek was established in 1863 and underwent a series of residence changes throughout the '70s and '80s, eventually managed by the same agent as the nearby Lower Brule reservation.³⁰⁵ Whites were employed to administer services to the Indians, including teachers, hospital personnel, a blacksmith, and a carpenter. William Fuller was hired as the carpenter at Crow Creek.³⁰⁶ Fuller, who apparently had no formal art training, completed two paintings of the Crow Creek Reservation, but we focus on the one in the collection of the Amon Carter Museum.

While Fuller's style is not particularly sophisticated, *Crow Creek Agency* is rich in detail and meticulously organized. The juxtaposition of Native lifeways and new Euro-American ideas seems so obvious and harmonious in this lush green landscape, one would never guess the eminent failure of assimilation from this image. Native teepees

³⁰⁴ William T. Hagan, "Assimilation Policy," in *The Encyclopedia of the Great Plains Indians*, ed. David J. Wishart (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 32.

³⁰⁵ Jan M. Dykshorn, "William Fuller's Crow Creek and Lower Brule Paintings," in *South Dakota History* (1976): 411-412.

³⁰⁶ Dykshorn, "William Fuller's Crow Creek," 412-13.

litter the open fields in the outskirts of the reservation grounds, while contemporary agency buildings like the school and church are either enclosed by fence and cultivated fields or organized around a village center with geometric pathways. In the foreground, portraits of white men are interspersed among the Natives, who don American clothes, Native clothes, or a combination of both.

Fuller carefully numbered the individual portraits and buildings in this painting helping us understand the historical significance of the portraits and the organization of reservation life. South Dakota historian Jan M. Dykshorn provides details for some of the identifications.³⁰⁷ Fuller himself is presented on the far left, numbered 4. Next to him, the figure numbered "1" is White Ghost, a chief of the Yankton tribe, who once controlled all of what is now South Dakota. Once he moved to the reservation, his band included only two-hundred. As is evidenced by Fuller's portrait, White Ghost never embraced the culture of white men, wearing buckskin and feathers and rejecting the Episcopal church. Next to him is Drifting Goose, chief of the Hunkapti band of the Yanktonai Sioux for forty-five years. Finally, the third Indian, Wizi, was White Ghost's cousin, who was accepting of white culture and likely acted as a mediator. The two men flanking the grouping are Mark and Wallace Wells who had a Santee mother and white father. Mark Wells was an interpreter, and Wallace was the farming supervisor. The other figures in the foreground grouping are not particularly relevant to the topic of farming. While most of the images that are discussed in this study focus on the land rather than the people, our interpretation of the landscape is dependent upon a very subtle organization of portraiture in the foreground. Fuller aligns himself with the Native population, and clearly portrays

³⁰⁷ Details on the portraits is from Dykshorn, "William Fuller's Crow Creek," 417-18.

important figures in the reservation community alongside the farming supervisor. The people Fuller chose to portray (or perhaps was commissioned to include) is important. From a white painter and two "half-breeds" with positions of authority, to Natives who either embrace or reject white culture, Fuller presents them harmoniously interacting, foregrounded in a staged but amenable arrangement.

The verdant landscape in the middle ground certainly extolls the virtues of life on the reservation. With improvement, order, hard labor and individualism, the land is presumed to provide sufficient bounty to sustain the people. William Truettner compared this painting to an earlier painting by George Catlin, *Bird's-Eye View of the Mandan Village, 1800 Miles Above St. Louis* (1837-39). (Figure 4.31) Truettner points out that few artists recognized and depicted the gridded spatial organization that was imposed on the landscape by surveyors trying to maximize land allotments for settlers beginning during the Jeffersonian era and rapidly increasing post Civil War when Great Plains settlement increased exponentially.³⁰⁸ Truettner proposes that the two images reveal a very different "cultural geometry." Both images come from artists who, at some point, were considered "primitive" artists, imbued with the assumption that naive artists were truth-tellers incapable of deceit because they were both unskilled at translating the visual experience and lacked the proficiency in execution. This is, of course, an overgeneralization, and we know that vernacular artists made deliberate choices to convey a specific message, just like trained artists.

Truettner argues, however, that neither Catlin nor Fuller represent a fully honest depiction of Native life, but instead "both scenes are programmed to advocate a fixed set

³⁰⁸ William Truettner, "Plains Geometry: Surveying the Path from Savagery to Civilization," *Winterthur Portfolio* 38, no.4, (Winter 2003): 199.

of ideas and values—an ideology, in other words, that becomes naturalized as a perfectly unexceptional byproduct of the way a work is composed and painted."³⁰⁹ For Truettner, the circular organic motif in Catlin's painting and its reference to Plains Indians' efforts at formal structure stands in strong contrast to the rigid geometry imposed on the Plains by white planners. Truettner proposes that, perhaps, Catlin's painting heralded the noble savage while Fuller's painting is an unintentional propaganda piece that extols the virtue of reservation life. Truettner points out, too, that the geometry of the landscape in Fuller's painting serves not only to demarcate space, but to separate races.³¹⁰

Julie Schimmel's essay "Inventing the Indian" in the seminal exhibition catalogue *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier* provides some interesting perspective to the painting of Crow Creek. She references Thomas Jefferson in 1802 who urged a group of Miami, Potawatomi, and Wea as follows:

We shall with great pleasure see your people become disposed to cultivate the earth, to raise herds of useful animals and to spin and weave, for their food and clothing. These resources are certain, they will never disappoint you, while those of hunting may fail, and expose your women and children to the miseries of hunger and cold. We will with pleasure furnish you with implements for the most necessary arts, and with persons who may instruct [you on] how to make and use them."³¹¹

The farm was thus positioned as the savior of a people who had known a long life without white interference. Two primary factors opposed this utopic vision of the reservation: first, many Natives resisted education, religion, and agriculture economy. Second, the land upon which the reservations were placed was some of the most difficult land to cultivate, even under the guidance of professional farmers provided by the

³⁰⁹ Truettner, "Plains Geometry," 203.

³¹⁰ Truettner, "Plains Geometry," 214.

³¹¹ As quoted by Elizabeth Schimmel, "'Inventing 'the Indian'," in *The West as America*, 185.

agency. The two farms, one on the right belonging to the schoolhouse, and the one on the left, the agency farm, are portrayed by Fuller at the height of good weather conditions. But alas, as Dykshorn points out, "The agency had the impossible task of teaching the Indians farming and agriculture on land eminently unsuited for it."³¹² She elaborates that an 1890 census reveals that many inhabitants were in poor health, and the agency blamed the "restricted and substandard life style forced upon the reservation Indians."³¹³ Fuller's image is provocative because of our contemporary perspective and knowledge that no adoration of the reservation system, regardless of its seeming harmony between old and new ways of life, can erase the struggle.

The prairie policies of land reservations are paralleled, in some ways, by California's missions and *rancherías*. By the 1840s, California, still a province of Mexico until the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe, had become an important destination for far-west settlers. During this period, Mexico had secured independence from Spain and the Catholic mission system, which had held land in the name of the Indians, to be divided among them once they had become "good subjects," underwent a "secularization" in an effort to reduce the power of the Catholic Church.³¹⁴ In 1833, the Mexican government ordered the Franciscans to turn over land to the neophytes, and they set up civil administrators to distribute land. Corruption in the system led to friends and associates receiving the mission lands, which became more than six hundred *rancheros* by 1840.³¹⁵ The dispossessed Indians who had worked in the missions established their own *rancherías* communities, and resorted to work on the rancheros as *vaqueros*, or cowboy

³¹² Dykshorn, "William Fuller's Crow Creek," 419.

³¹³ *ibid.*

³¹⁴ For an overview of mission and *rancherías*, see Hine and Faragher, *Frontier*, 78-79.

³¹⁵ Hine and Faragher, *Frontier*, 78.

ranch hands. They may have gained a sense of independence, but they were still deeply indebted to the Mexican *rancheros*. As California headed toward statehood, "Rather than expediting the transition to freedom, territorial California continued in law and custom the widely held belief that Indians existed principally in order to plant and raise crops and to work about farms. Under such circumstances, Indians could hardly expect to control their own destiny."³¹⁶

The long-lasting effects of this system can be seen in a print and photograph from the 1860s, more than thirty years after emancipation, representing the *rancheria* in California. (Figure 4.32) Since the circumstances surrounding the production of these images is unknown, it is difficult to determine the intentions. Were these merely ethnographic images, or were they intended to imply a positive outlook on the *rancheria* system that, by the 1860s had become akin to the reservation system? According to accounts from the late 1700s, life on the missions was a "mechanical, lifeless, careless indifference," consumed by squalor and gloom.³¹⁷ Some of that sentiment seems to have lingered in the print and photograph. These are not images of sprawling, well-tended farm lands or robust cattle herds. Instead, they represent the modest housing, equipment, and desolate land that did not deliver the success that Indians were promised upon emancipation.

It is under these circumstances we should view Jules Tavernier's painting *El Rodeo* of 1884. (Figure 4.33) Between 1822 and 1846, the Mexican government awarded thirty-five California land grants to soldiers who had fought for Mexico in the War for

³¹⁶ Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 108.

³¹⁷ George Vancouver, a British sea captain, in 1794, as quoted by Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 39.

Independence from Spain.³¹⁸ Commonly referred to as the "rancho days," this period was characterized by the free-roaming cattle that were gathered during rodeos and branded during elaborate feasts and performances. Tavernier's painting *El Rodeo* shows the second owner of this cattle ranch about twenty miles north of San Luis. It was commissioned by General Patrick W. Murphy, shown on horseback, whose parents purchased the property from Joaquin Estrada in 1861. Managing more than 79,000 acres and up to 200,000 Mexican cattle, Murphy was known for maintaining rancho traditions, sharecropping for squatters, and for keeping many vaqueros on staff.³¹⁹

Tavernier gained notoriety with an extensive coast to coast expedition in 1873-74 as illustrator for *Harper's Weekly* with fellow artist Paul Frenzeny.³²⁰ Tavernier and Frenzeny were French expatriates who spent the majority of their adult lives in America. The two artists were talented and brought with them an exceptional eye for detail and a fresh vision of the American frontier, a subject of interest to readers across the western world. By this point, *Harper's Weekly* was the most popular magazine in the nation, and the series of one-hundred illustrations produced during their journey and published over two years and four months chronicled a varied and robust frontier life for readers. In addition to native populations, industries, and country life, their images documented much of farming life in particular from the landscapes and environment to the people and

³¹⁸ Overview of this period provided by Cheri Roe, "Rancho Days," <https://santamargaritahistoricalsociety.org/pages/rancho.html>. Accessed July 30, 2017.

³¹⁹ Roe, "Rancho Days," <https://santamargaritahistoricalsociety.org/pages/rancho.html> and https://santamargaritahistoricalsociety.org/pages/rancho_old.html. Accessed July 30, 2017.

³²⁰ For basic information about Tavernier and Frenzeny, see Robert Taft, *Artists and Illustrators of the Old West, 1850-1900* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 94-115; and Claudine Chalmers, *Chronicling the West with Frenzeny & Tavernier, 1873-1874* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

their work upon the land. They represented the successes and the risks of life in the west—whether a prospect view of farmland and the hope of new pioneers or the blizzards and windstorms that threatened their survival. (Figures 4.34 and 4.35) The pair concluded their journey in San Francisco where, rather than returning east, they settled into San Francisco's emerging Bohemian Club scene.³²¹ There they were met with instant notoriety and a flood of commissions, including Tavernier's painting of the Rodeo.

There are still more images of California farming, such as Edwin Deakin's 1872 painting *Farming in Livermore Valley, California*, which are rather unremarkable because they do little to distinguish the California landscape from any other pleasant American pastoral. (Figure 4.36) However, in the distant background of this painting is perhaps a wheat field, one component of California's three major industries in the nineteenth century. While mining was the primary industry in California in the 1850s and 1860s, livestock, particularly cattle valued for their hides, was a close second. California's agricultural history was both an outgrowth of Eastern practices and also very much different because of its location and climate. What began as a mining state then evolved into a wheat boom that relied on unstable international markets and was effected by the transcontinental railroad, droughts, race and ethnic relations, and a robust real estate market.³²² The cattle market was strong through the 1850s when overbreeding, high interest rates, competition from other states, and the wheat boom brought about the decline of the cattle industry between 1860 and 1870.³²³ Combined with land laws,

³²¹ Chalmers, *Chronicling the West*, 194.

³²² Donald J. Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in California and the West, 1850-1931*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 1

³²³ Pisani, *Family Farm to Agribusiness*, 4.

monopolies, and speculation, California's inconsistent water supply and monoculture economy led many people to see California's future as unstable.

One of the hallmarks of farming in California was the emergence of irrigation, the subject of a fascinating painting by Thomas Hill entitled *Irrigating a Strawberry Farm* (circa 1865). (Figure 4.37) Hill, one of the Rocky Mountain School of Painters, is best-known for his 1870s paintings of Yosemite and as one of the artists who influenced early environmentalism. However, apart from his more famous peers Moran and Bierstadt, Hill was interested in more than the sublime landscapes. Educated at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Hill moved his family to San Francisco in 1861. He was successful selling images of California scenery and portraits during the era of the Union Pacific Railroad. After a sojourn to Europe and several years in Boston between 1866 and 1872, Hill returned to San Francisco.³²⁴ This background is relevant because some of Hill's paintings present subjects of regional significance such as trappers, the construction of the railroad, Indians, immigrants, and, of particular relevance to this study, farming.

According to William Cronon, *Irrigating a Strawberry Farm* represents "not just a profound transformation of a dry California valley but an equally profound social reorganization of the American yeoman myth."³²⁵ Hill's painting represents both Asian and white laborers overseen by a farmer. According to Elizabeth Johns, the stratification of labor in California is evident here as immigrants quickly diversified after the mining boom of the gold rush. Here, the immigrants were likely sharecroppers rather than slaves as in the South, though their plight was not easy or rewarding. Labor-intensive, the

³²⁴ "Thomas Hill," <https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/thomas-hill.htm>. Accessed July 5, 2017.

³²⁵ I am indebted to both Johns, "Settlement and Development," 230 and William Cronon, "Telling Tales on Canvas," 75 for providing a basic description and interpretation.

strawberry fields required one worker for every two acres of vines.³²⁶ But, the Chinese laborers were widely admired because they had a resolute work-ethic and agreeable exoticism.³²⁷ The inequitable sharecropping system of labor in strawberry fields, and agriculture generally, is still in place in the twenty-first century.³²⁸ The head of the operation is clear in Hill's painting. He stands erect and facing the viewer. He dons his best attire, and his opulent Spanish-style home is nestled on the hillside. Elizabeth John states that the circumstances of this commission are now lost, but Hill had a reputation as an able agricultural landscapist and this painting would undoubtedly convey a sense of achievement not unlike county atlas portraits (see chapter two).³²⁹

Hill's client must have been a farmer of means and influence, because irrigation was in its very early stages of development in California in 1865. Historian Donald J. Pisani provides a very good synopsis of California's unique position on the frontier, and the particularly complicated role of water,

Nineteenth-century California was a state characterized by extremes. It contained arid and humid regions, mountains and plains, benign coastal valleys and torrid deserts, mining camps and large cities, thousand-acre wheat farms and ten-acre orange orchards, Orientals and Occidentals, railroad barons and tramps."... California's fragmentation...added to its political corruption and...limited the state government's ability to deal with important issues [including] land monopoly, flood control...and the use of the state's vast water supply. The inability or unwillingness of Californians to solve important social and economic problems

³²⁶ Sucheng Chan, *This Bitter-sweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) as referenced by Johns, "Settlement and Development," 229.

³²⁷ See Street's chapter entitled "Trustworthy Laborers: Chinese Infiltration into Irrigated Agriculture," in *Beasts of the Field*, 235-257.

³²⁸ Eric Schlosser, "In the Strawberry Fields," *The Atlantic*, November, 1995. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1995/11/in-the-strawberry-fields/305754/>. Accessed July 26, 2017.

³²⁹ Johns, "Settlement and Development," 229.

prevented implementation of a rational water code and comprehensive irrigation plan until the twentieth century.³³⁰

In 1865, irrigation was in its infancy in California, unless within the service of the Los Angeles community water system. Otherwise, only about an estimated 60,000 to 100,000 acres of land out of 100,000,000 were irrigated in California by 1870. Between 1850 and 1860, there was exponential growth of improved land, but most was near San Francisco, Hill's hometown. Also, irrigation had its serious critics who either believed it was unnecessary or it was dangerous. Thus, in these early stages, irrigation was akin to land speculation. Therefore, the Hill's strawberry farm represents not only something of an agricultural novelty, but also the depiction of an entrepreneur seeking out (or seemingly sustaining) his own fortune.

From the prairie field to the strawberry field, the story of farming in the West is as varied as the terrain and people that worked the land. Frontier myths merge with the realities of environment and diverse people to form a picture of American agriculture that requires many lenses. As the foundation of an agrarian nation, nineteenth-century farmstead imagery in America represents the broadest range of economic, ideological, social, political, and environmental views that continue to pervade America's collective imagination, memory, and futurity.

³³⁰ Pisani, *Family Farm to Agribusiness*, 28-29.



Fig. 4.1. Thomas Cole, *Daniel Boone Sitting at the Door of His Cabin on the Great Osage*, 1826, oil on canvas, 38 x 42 1/2 in., Amherst, Massachusetts, Mead Art Museum.



Fig. 4.2. Emmanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*, 1862, stereochrome, 20 x 30 ft., Washington D.C., United States Capitol.



Fig. 4.3. Thomas Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, chromolithograph, Washington D.C., Library of Congress.



Fig. 4.4. Detail of inset "A Panoramic View of the Country Between San Francisco and St. Louis," Gaylord Watson, *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, 1867, engraved by Fisk & Russell.



Fig. 4.5. Detail of "St. Louis," from Gaylord Watson, *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, 1867, engraved by Fisk & Russell.

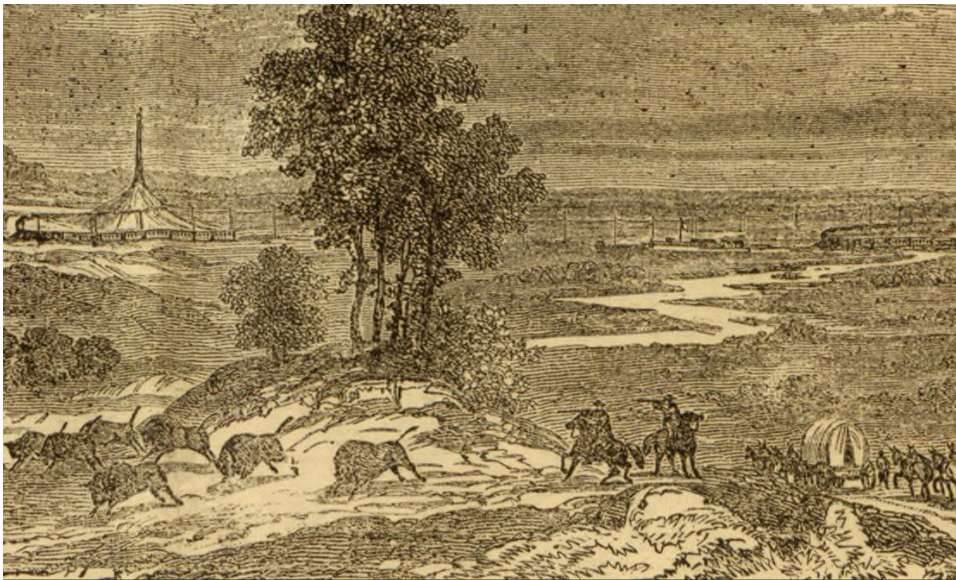


Fig. 4.6. Detail of pioneers and buffalo hunters, from Gaylord Watson, *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, 1867, engraved by Fisk & Russell.

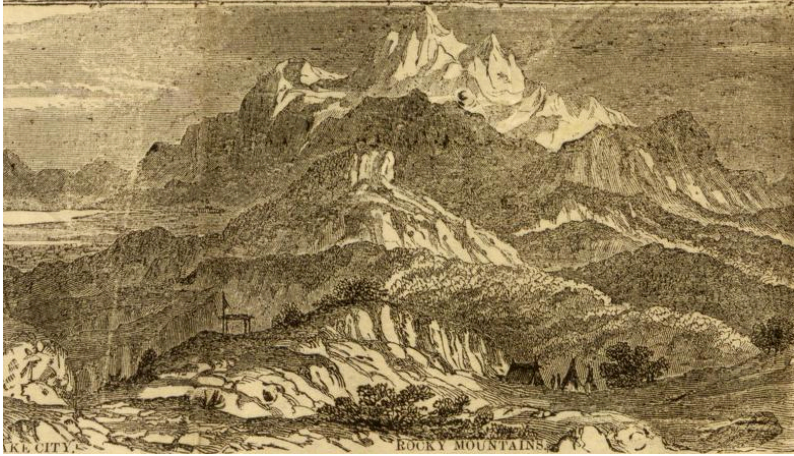


Fig. 4.7. Detail of "Rocky Mountains," from Gaylord Watson, *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, 1867, engraved by Fisk & Russell.

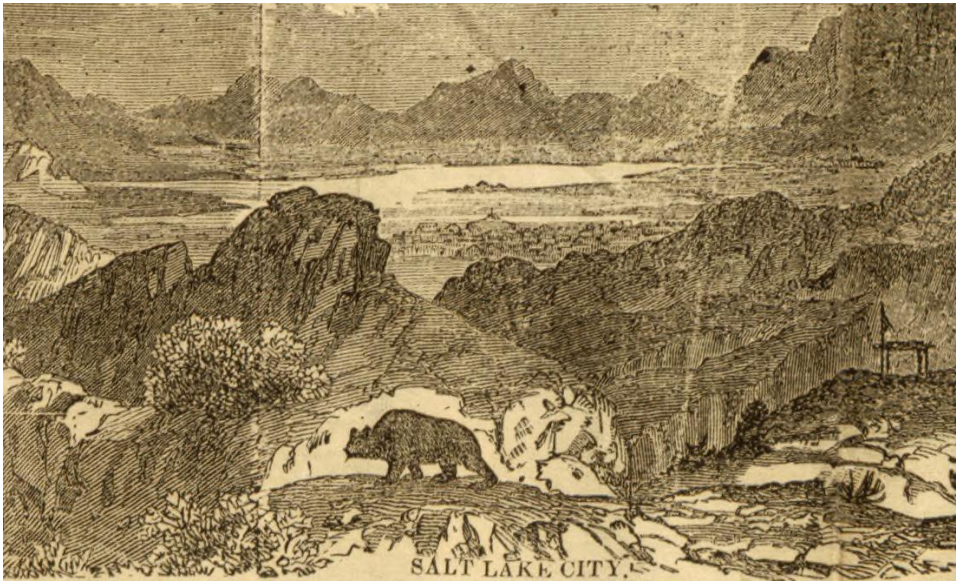


Figure 4.8. Detail of "Salt Lake City," from Gaylord Watson, *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, 1867, engraved by Fisk & Russell.

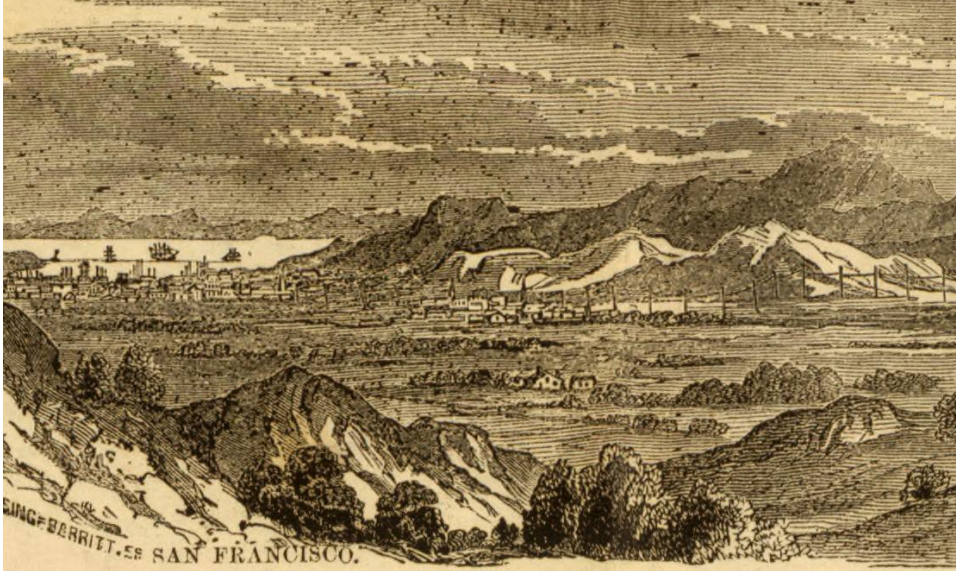


Fig. 4.9. Detail of "San Francisco, from Gaylord Watson, *The American Republic and rail-road map of the United States*, 1867, engraved by Fisk & Russell.

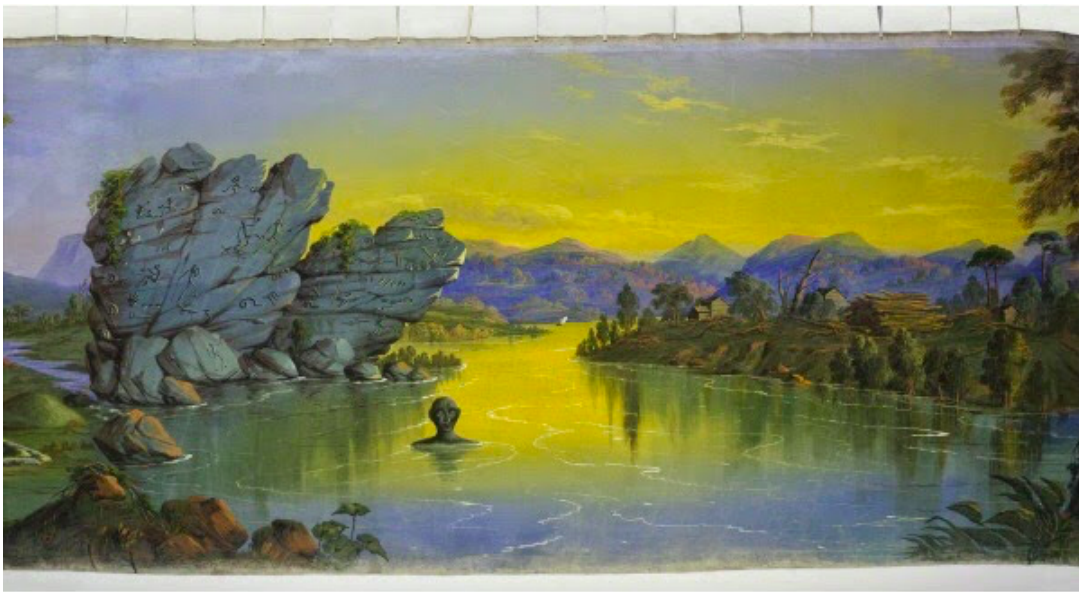


Fig. 4.10. John J. Egan, *Hanging or Hieroglyphical Rock; Colossal Bust at Low Water Mark, Used as a Metre by the Aborigines*, scene three from the *Panorama of the Monumental Grandeur of the Mississippi Valley*, c.1850, distemper on cotton muslin, Saint Louis, MO, Saint Louis Art Museum.



Fig. 4.11. Mathew Carey, *General Atlas*, c. 1814, Washington D.C., Library of Congress.

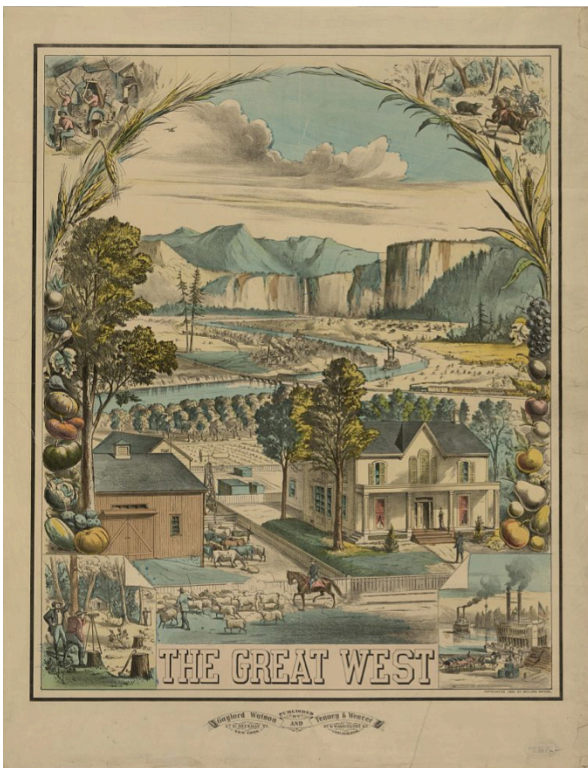


Fig. 4.12. Gaylord Watson, *The Great West*, New York: Gaylord Watson and Tenney & Weaver, c. 1881, lithograph, Washington, D.C., Library of Congress.



Fig. 4.13. Currier & Ives, *The Pioneer's Home on the Western Frontier*, 1867, lithograph, Washington D.C., Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

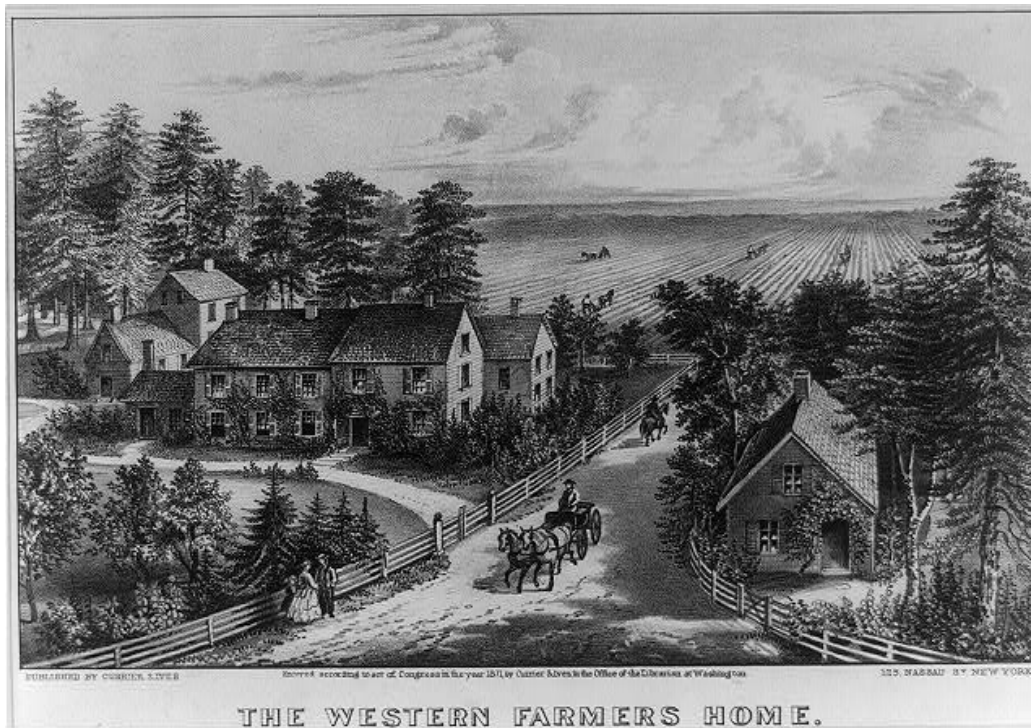


Fig. 4.14. Currier & Ives, *The Western farmers home*, c. 1871, lithograph, Washington D.C., Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 4.15. 2c *Trans-Mississippi Farming in the West* single, 1898, watermarked paper, ink, engraving, Washington D.C., Smithsonian National Postal Museum.

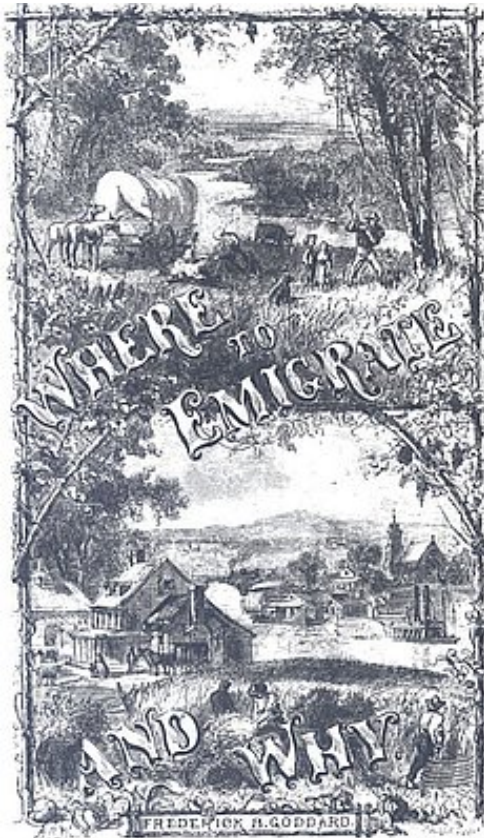


Fig. 4.16. Frederick B. Goddard, *Where to Emigrate and Why*, frontispiece, 1869, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.



Fig. 4.17. Karl Bodmer, *Bon Pas on Green's Prairie*, 1832, pencil on paper, 6 1/4 x 8 5/8 in., Omaha, NB, Joslyn Art Museum.



Fig. 4.18. Karl Bodmer, *Settler's Farm in Indiana*, 1832, watercolor and pencil on paper, 11 3/4 x 17 in., Omaha, NB, Joslyn Art Museum.



Fig. 4.19. Karl Bodmer, *View of a Farm on the Illinois Prairie*, 1832-33, watercolor on paper, 5 1/4 x 8 3/8 in., Omaha, NB, Joslyn Art Museum.



Fig. 4.20. Junius Sloan, *Farm of Seymour Sloan*, 1866, oil on canvas, 14 5/16 x 22 1/2 in., Valparaiso, IN, Brauer Museum of Art.

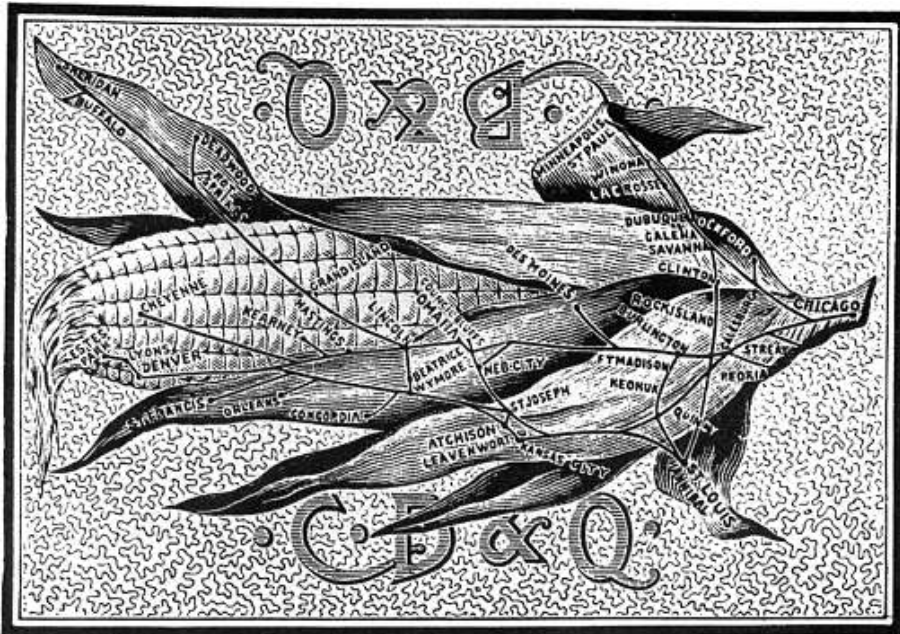


Fig. 4.21. Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy deck of playing cards, 1891, as reproduced in William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), plate between 168-69. From Cronon's personal collection.

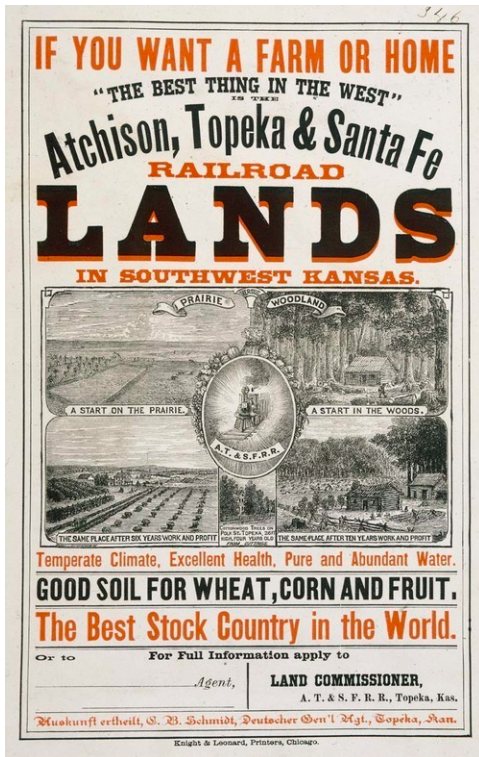


Fig. 4.22. Printed by Knight & Leonard Printers, Chicago, *Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Poster for Lands in Southwest Kansas*, 1870s, Kansas Historical Society.

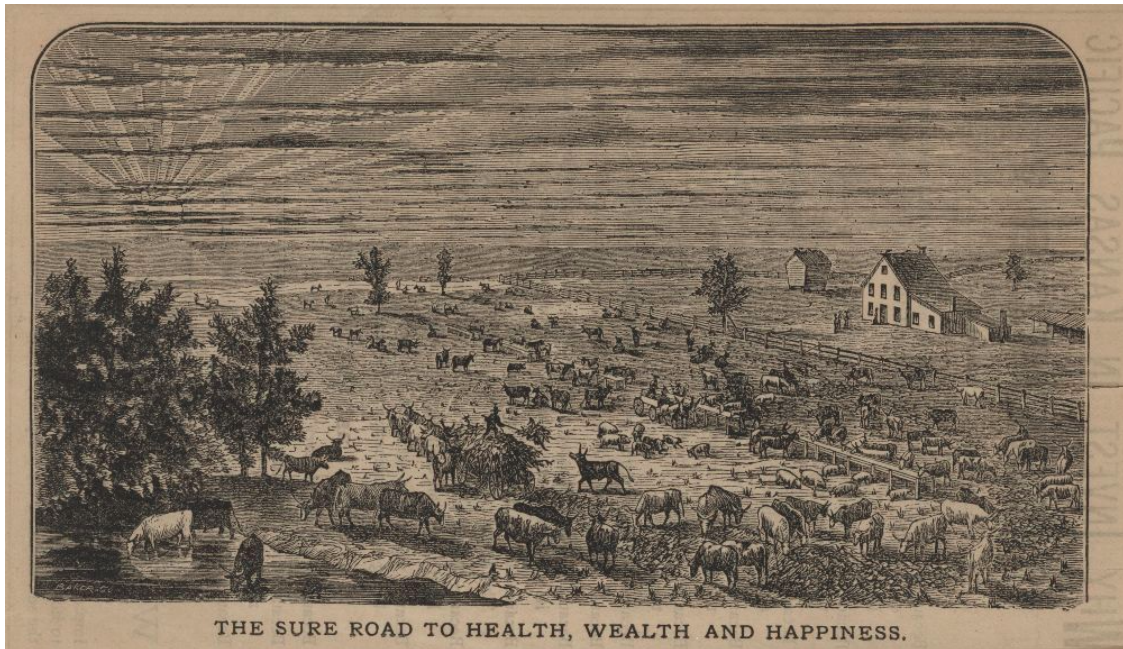


Fig. 4.23. Possibly Henry Worrall, in a pamphlet produced by Kansas Pacific Railroad and printed by Ramsey, Millet & Hudson Print, *The Sure Road to Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, in *All Bound for the Kansas Valleys!*, between 1870-80, Kansas City, Kansas Historical Society.



Fig. 4.24. Henry Worrall, *Drouthy Kansas*, 1878, Topeka, KS, Kansas Historical Society.



Fig. 4.25. Albert Bierstadt, *Emigrants Crossing the Plains*, 1869, oil on canvas, 67 x 102 in., Oklahoma City, OK, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.



Fig. 4.26. Worthington Whittredge, *Graves of Travelers, Fort Kearney, Nebraska*, 1866, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 7 3/8 x 22 3/16 in., Cleveland, OH, Cleveland Museum of Art.



Fig. 4.27. Sallie Cover, *Homestead of Ellsworth L. Ball*, 1885-90, oil on canvas, Lincoln, NE, Nebraska State Historical Society.



Fig. 4.28. Imogene See, *Nebraska Farmstead*, oil on academy board, c. 1880s
Omaha, NE, Joslyn Art Museum.



Fig. 4.29. Soloman D. Butcher, "*Nebraska Gothic*," the John Curry sod house near West Union, Nebraska, 1886, Nebraska Historical Society.



Fig. 4.30. William Fuller, *Crow Creek Agency, D. T.*, 1884, oil on canvas, Fort Worth, TX, Amon Carter Museum.



Fig. 4.31. George Catlin, *Bird's-eye View of the Mandan Village, 1800 Miles above St. Louis*, 1839, oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 29 in. Washington D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum.



Fig. 4.32. Edward Vischer, *Indian rancheria of Jose Antonio Venado, at San Luis Rey Mission, near the Zanja. Caicha-tribe, Quechumas. April 1865*. Supplementary drawings of Spanish and Indian life, 1873 (Sketched 1868), watercolor, Berkeley, California, Bancroft Library.



Fig. 4.33. Jules Tavernier, *El Rodeo, Rancho Santa Margarita*, 1884, oil on Canvas, 36 x 60 in., Arthur J. Phelan, Jr. Collection.



Fig. 4.34. Paul Frenzeny and Jules Tavernier, *Sketches from the Far West—Arkansas Pilgrims*, April 4, 1874, wood engraving with later hand coloring for *Harper's Weekly*, 6 7/8 x 9 in., private collection.



Fig. 4.35. Paul Frenzeny and Jules Tavernier, *A Prairie Windstorm*, May 30, 1874, wood engraving with later hand coloring for *Harper's Weekly*, 6 7/8 x 9 in., private collection.



Fig. 4.36. Edwin Deakin, *Farming in Livermore Valley, California*, 1872, oil on canvas.



Fig. 4.37. Thomas Hill, *Irrigating at Strawberry Farm, Santa Clara?, California*, c. 1865 or 1888, oil on canvas, Berkeley, California, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library.

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Staff Achievement Award in Personal Growth, UALR, 2012

Anne Russ Award, Donaghey Scholars, UALR, 2005

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PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:

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College Art Association

Southeastern College Art Conference (SECAC)

PUBLICATIONS:

Exhibition Review, "'The Future is Female' at 21c Museum Hotel in Louisville," *Burnaway.org*, June 2017

Exhibition Review, "William O'Brien at KMAC in Louisville," *Burnaway.org*, March, 2017

"Louisville Artists at the Louisville Ballet," *Burnaway.org*, February 2017

Editor and essayist for *Gaela Erwin: Reframing the Past*, Butler Books and Speed Art Museum, 2016

Co-editor and Introduction, *Formations of Identity: Landscape, Society, and Politics*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016

"Talking Heads: Three Curators Discuss University Galleries," *Burnaway.org*, February 2015

Co-editor, *Parnassus*, published by Aegis, the Hite Art Institute Graduate Student Organization, 2014

Exhibition Review, "Meatyrd's Photos of Merton, At Institute 193 In Lexington," *Burnaway.org*, 2014

"More than Marginal: Insects in the *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*," *Antennae: Journal for Animals in Visual Culture*, Issue 26, Autumn 2013

"*Souvenirs and Vues: Time, Memory, and Place in Corot's Late Landscapes*," *SECAC Review*, Volume XVI, Number 2, 2012

"Living, Artfully: Interview with Erin Lorenzen at the Kramer School," *Number 71: An Independent Journal for the Arts*, 2012

"Changing Lives: A Conversation with Niki Cicotelli Stewart," *Number 70: An Independent Journal for the Arts*, 2012

"The Curatorial Perspective," *Number 70: An Independent Journal for the Arts*, 2012

Exhibition review, "Will Barnett at the Arkansas Arts Center: A Centennial Exhibition," *Number 69: An Independent Journal for the Arts*, 2011

Drawings from Life: Aj Smith, Arkansas Arts Center exhibition essay, 2006

Essays “John Joseph Salvest” and “Michael Disfarmer” for the online *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, 2006

Editor, *Arnold Bittleman: A Drawings Retrospective*, Arkansas Arts Center, 2005

NATIONAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS:

Subsistence to Agribusiness: American Farmstead Imagery in the Nineteenth Century, 2017, Southeastern College Art Conference, Columbus, OH

Yeoman Farmscapes: Land Transformation in Early Nineteenth-Century America, 2016, Southeastern College Art Conference, Roanoke, VA

Insects in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, 2014, Medieval Animal Data-Network conference, Louisville, Kentucky

Society, Politics, and Landscape: Revisited, 2013, SECAC session co-chair, Greensboro, North Carolina

British Nationalism: Landscape Painting and the English Georgic, 2012, Southeastern College Art Conference (SECAC), Durham, North Carolina

Society, Politics, and Landscape, 2012, SECAC session co-chair, Durham, North Carolina

From Nature to Canvas: Corot's Lyrical Style and the Influence of Photographers at Fontainebleau, 2010, Southeastern College Art Conference, Richmond, VA

Transforming Members Into Donors, 2008, Art Museum Membership Managers Conference, Santa Fe, NM

Membership 101, 2007, Southeastern Museum Conference, Little Rock, AR

Tracing Fuseli: The Literary Origins of the Nightmare, 2004, Southeastern College Art Conference, Jacksonville, FL

INVITED PRESENTATIONS:

Curator and artist talk + poetry reading, 2017, Zephyr Gallery, Louisville, KY

Ottoman Architecture in Istanbul, 2013, Jefferson Community and Technical College, Louisville, Kentucky

Five Reasons to Value the Art Collection at the Kentucky Center for Performing Arts, 2013 Kentucky Center for Performing Arts

The Rise of Impressionism, 2011, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AR

Art, Love, Death, and Orpheus as Prophet, 2011, Central Arkansas Art History Symposium, Little Rock, Arkansas

Your Art Appreciation Toolkit, 2010, Lifequest, Little Rock, AR

Ancient Egyptian Art, 2010, Lifequest, Little Rock, AR

Panel moderator, *Jim Henson's Fantastic World*, 2008, Arkansas Arts Center

Panel participant, *The Making of Pursuing Picasso*, 2006, Arkansas Arts Center