

Defining a Nation

PAINTINGS OF
NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AMERICA

*Featuring
the
Wheeler Collection*





*Defining a Nation:
Paintings of Nineteenth-Century America*

FEATURING THE WHEELER COLLECTION

OCTOBER 22 – DECEMBER 15, 2007

DEDICATION

We are extremely grateful to Marilee Wheeler for her valuable contributions to this catalog. The daughter of the late Leeds and Marion Wheeler of Wellesley, Massachusetts, Ms. Wheeler has shared with us her family's passion for nineteenth-century art as well as their enthusiasm for collecting. This catalog features twelve oils from her parents' collection, fulfilling their desire to make these works available to others who might also experience the joy of collecting.

—The Vose Family and Staff



INTRODUCTION

The paintings in this catalog were created at a time of considerable growth and transition in the United States. Artists witnessed the expansion of thirteen colonies into forty-five states, the development of an American infrastructure through the growth of railroads and the Erie Canal, and even such technological advancements as the creation of the first light bulb. As America embraced this growing prosperity and its newly found independence, artists sought out an original means of expression. The results were the first uniquely American schools of art.

During the Colonial Period, Americans found little use for the fine arts, as survival was their primary concern. Even as late as 1767, Boston artist John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) lamented the status of painting: “A taste of painting is too wanting [in Boston] to afford any kind of help; and was it not for preserving the resemblance of particular persons, painting would not be known in the place. The people generally regard it no more than any useful trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of carpenter, tailor or shoemaker, not as one of the most noble Arts in the world.”¹ As Copley referenced, formal portraiture was the earliest accepted art form, with the first roots of landscape painting appearing as the backgrounds of more elaborate works. Independent American landscapes developed soon after the earliest professional artists settled in the new country. **Joshua Shaw (1776–1861)** (see p.12), for example, was among the first trained painters to arrive, and he methodically illustrated the East Coast in watercolor. These works were the basis of John Hill’s engravings for his 1820

travel book *Picturesque Views of American Scenery*, the first collective depiction of the country.

In addition to portraiture, many early American artists tried their hand at history painting – a fashionable European subject matter – but these works failed to excite the American public. As citizens of a new nation, Americans wished not to commemorate the past, but to look toward the promising future of their country. By the 1820s, a formal school of American painting was in development that better aligned with the patriotic mindset of the era. Under the loosely applied title, Hudson River School, similarly-minded artists such as Thomas Cole (1801–1848), **Asher B. Durand (1796–1886)** (see p. 4), and John Kensett (1816–1872) painted throughout the Northeast. They were drawn together by their common interest in realist depictions of native scenery, imbued with a Romantic idealism closely linked to the literary and philosophical climate of the period. These artists looked with pride to America’s primordial wilderness, seeing perfection in its natural wonders. The eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke was their mentor, defining the untouched wilderness as the ideal form of beauty and arguing that God was embodied in its elements. Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) gave a modern adaptation of his theories, encouraging their fellow citizens to look to nature for rejuvenation. Cole and his many followers embraced this theory of the Sublime in their work, and captured the American man at peace with the magnificent natural world.

The optimism of the Jacksonian period (1828–1864) with its overwhelming prosperity and technological advancements significantly helped to spur on the Hudson River School and the fine arts in general. Even the tradition of still life painting displayed the opulence and hopefulness of this period, exemplified by the bountiful still lifes of **Severin Roesen (1815–1872)** and other pre-Civil War artists. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 enabled further exploration of the country and provided a plethora of new subjects for landscape painters. Many expressed their enthusiasm for the American wilderness in writing as well as paint. Charles Lanman (1819–1895) in his 1845 *Letters from a Landscape Painter* decreed: “No other country has ever offered such advantages as our own. Let our young painters use their pencils to illustrate the thousands of scenes, strange, wild, and beautiful, or our early history. . .let them toil and toil with nature as their guide, and they will assuredly have their reward.”² The growing railroad system was an additional aid, and artists such as Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) traveled to the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevadas to create grand, Romantic panoramas for an eager public. Even eastern locales like the White Mountains (see p. 10) and the Catskills became increasingly accessible, and painters visited these regions in growing numbers. This resulted in the development of such associations as the White Mountain School.

After the death of Thomas Cole, a second generation of Hudson River School painters gathered under the leadership of Asher B. Durand (1796–1886) (see p. 4). Their work came to embody less of the Romantic overtones of the school’s founders, and the men looked instead to the writings of British art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900). In his essays of the 1840s, Ruskin openly criticized the Old Masters that Cole had idolized, such as Claude Lorraine (1600–1682), for their idealized portrayals of the landscape. Ruskin instead emphasized careful observation and truthfulness in art. In his *Letters on Landscape Painting*, published in 1855, Durand espoused these innovative theories on art, and



SEVERIN ROESEN (1815–1872), *Still Life with Peaches*
OIL ON WOOD PANEL, 12 X 16 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: S. ROESEN, \$69,000

advised his students to look first to Nature. As a result, artists flocked to the countryside and experimented with plein air techniques. Ironically, the railroad, which had assisted Hudson River School painters in reaching rural settings, also caused their decline. In 1869, the first track of rail connected the East and West Coasts, and as more citizens crossed the nation, its landscape ceased to hold its novel appeal. Without the discovery of new scenery, the Hudson River School slowly waned in popularity and was soon replaced by new approaches to landscape painting.

By the end of the century, artists moved away from literal representations of nature to more emotionally charged interpretations of her beauty, introducing a concept new to American art. European influences were a strong force, and artists returned from travels abroad with innovative approaches and techniques. **Winckworth Allan Gay (1821–1910)** (see p. 17) and George Inness (1825–1894) were among the many painters to visit the Barbizon region of France, and they returned to America with a new interest in light and a more poetic approach to landscape painting. American Impressionism was not far behind, as artists drew from their experiences abroad to create a distinctly American visual language.

While schools of American landscape painting flourished during the nineteenth-century, traditions of portraiture, still life and genre painting also remained vibrant. In the realm of genre in particular, artists were able to communicate the optimism of the period. Their imagery was rooted in the American experience, defining the American people through scenes of their daily lives. **Alvan Fisher (1792–1863)** (see p. 12) was at the forefront of this tradition, working to establish genre painting as an accepted art form at the beginning of the century. A true pioneer, Fisher introduced such subject matters as barnyard scenes and domesticated livestock, focusing on the rural life of the nation's early citizens. His contemporary, William Sidney Mount (1807–1868), followed his example, and in his journal writing of 1847, Mount rejoiced in the endless subject matter around him:

A painter's studio should be everywhere; wherever he finds a scene for a picture in doors or out. In the blacksmith's shop. The shoemakers – the tailors – the church – the tavern – or hotel . . . Go and search for materials – not wait for them to come to you. . . Treasure up something in your mind, or on paper, or canvas, wherever you may happen to be thrown – An artist should have the industry of a reporter, not ashamed or afraid to plant his easel in the market place for figures or background or both. For painting is an honorable calling, and the artist will be respected let him sketch where he will.³

Eastman Johnson (1824–1906) (see p. 8) and countless other artists looked to their neighbors for inspiration, and the resulting genre scenes became the most reproduced



JAMES FAIRMAN (1826–1904), *EAGLE CLIFF, MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA, MA*
OIL ON CANVAS, 26 x 36 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: JAS. FAIRMAN, \$49,000

images of their time. The American Art Union, established for the purpose of promoting uniquely American scenes, distributed over 1,000 works to nearly 19,000 members in 1849, its peak year. The majority of these pieces were genre works depicting the customs of local people.

Over a one-hundred-year span, American art developed and diverged into a vast array of themes and approaches; Colonial portraiture, Hudson River School, White Mountain School, Luminism, Tonalism, Barbizon and Impressionism, as well as schools of genre and still life, are just a few of many to emerge over this period. *Defining a Nation* spans a vast portion of this spectrum, describing nineteenth-century America through the eyes of a diverse collection of artists.

¹ Copley Pelham Letters, letter of circa 1767. As quoted in Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969) 27.

² Charles Lanman, *Letters from a Landscape Painter* (Boston: James Munroe & Co, 1845) 82.

³ William Sidney Mount, Stony Brook Manuscript, August 30, 1847. As quoted in Novak, 151.

ASHER B. DURAND (1796–1886)

Asher B. Durand's (1796–1886) artistic career began in 1812 when he apprenticed at Peter Maverick's Newark engraving firm. They formed a partnership just six years later, and with Durand's growing reputation as an engraver, he was drawn into the circles of the leading literary and artistic minds of the day, including that of his eventual mentor Thomas Cole. In 1826, Durand joined ranks with a number of artists and craftsmen and helped to establish the National Academy of Design, later serving as president from 1845 to 1861. Having received no formal academic training, Durand took full advantage of the Academy's workshops and lectures, and according to his son, John Durand, in his 1894 biography of his father, became "both pupil and teacher. Not a moment was lost. None of his compeers, perhaps, pursued the study of art technically with more ardour and enthusiasm."¹ His eagerness to improve upon his skills and explore new mediums resulted in the inclusion of three painted compositions at National Academy exhibitions in the 1820s.

Durand's experiments with painting continued into the 1830s, with a concentration on genre scenes, historical narratives and commissioned portraits. Around 1835, Luman Reed, a wealthy New York merchant and the most prominent art patron of the time, commissioned him to paint the portraits of America's presidents, leading up to Andrew Jackson. Completing the presidential series brought him Luman Reed's continued endorsement, and with it Durand fulfilled his dream of becoming a professional painter and stopped engraving altogether by 1835. Reed was the foremost proponent of American painting, and his friendship and unwavering support at this early point in Durand's painting career was vital to his progress. In the spring of 1836, the artist and his patron planned to visit their friend Thomas Cole in the Catskills when Mr. Reed was taken ill. Sadly, he would not recover and passed away in June of that year. The shock of Reed's untimely death was felt throughout the art community and deeply affected Durand, who not only lost his major supporter but also a dear friend. In a letter to Durand, shortly after Reed's passing, Thomas Cole wrote:

*The tone of your letter induces me to urge again the necessity of your leaving the city for a time in order to renovate your strength and by that means your spirits—I have been and am much depressed—but I should be much more so if confined in the City—Nature may not cure but she will soothe.*²

Durand followed Cole's advice and accompanied him on a sketching trip to Schroon Lake in the Adirondacks in 1837. This excursion to nature must have effected the rejuvenation Cole promised, for soon after, Durand devoted his energies entirely to landscape painting, leaving behind a lucrative portrait career to pursue his art. He focused on the soothing qualities of the rural countryside and produced pleasing compositions, often depicting human figures engaged in some form of relaxation or restorative activity, meant to offer the spectator, his urban patrons, a peaceful respite from their real world stresses. Around 1843, Durand began his first plein air sketches from nature, becoming one of the first American artists to paint out of doors.

Cole's sudden death in 1848 thrust Durand to the forefront of American landscape painting and soon established his distinctive approach to the subject. Thematically, he continued to depict the bucolic reverie evident in his earlier work, but to this he applied the meticulous plein air studies of trees, roots, rocks and vegetation he had been producing for years. Durand believed that Nature was the physical manifestation of God on earth and by closely studying and translating these unadorned splendors with paint to canvas, he was giving His creation the accuracy

and prominence it deserved. Having emerged from the shadow of Cole's influence, Durand's method of conceptual realist landscape painting became an inspiration for those who would follow. In 1855, he wrote nine *Letters on Landscape Painting* for *The Crayon* magazine in which he espoused his theories on landscape painting:

Go first to Nature to learn to paint landscapes. . . Let [every student] scrupulously accept whatever she present him, until he shall, in a degree, have become intimate with her infinity, and then he may approach her on more familiar terms, even venturing to choose and reject some portions of her unbounded wealth. — Letter I

A Quiet Afternoon embodies many of the theories which Durand spread forth in his *Letters*: a faithfulness to the rendition of natural objects, the inclusion of figures within the landscape, and the careful portrayal of atmosphere. As was common in Durand's work, the painting is divided into two sections: the close up at left of the figure and his homestead, and the pastoral landscape at right. The foreground foliage and rocks in their careful delineation sit as the focal point of the composition, inviting the viewer into the painting. From them the eye travels, following the curving line of the road until it falls upon the lone human figure on the path. He easily blends with the environment and his subordination to the surrounding countryside holds true to Durand's belief that the inclusion of figures should not detract but rather harmonize with the landscape.

A diffused sunlight blankets the still waters of the lake and distant mountain peaks beyond, making the clarity of detail and color value less dramatic. The pastoral level varies in coloration, emphasizing the greens of the landscape and adding variety to Durand's palette, describing the lush American landscape as was his custom. Durand's use of atmospheric qualities carries the spectator farther within the composition; we feel the warmth of the sun and the firmness of the dirt road under our feet and begin to experience the scene in a manner similar to what the artist must have encountered when he painted it. His use of atmosphere was also endorsed in his *Letters*:

When you shall have acquired some proficiency in foreground material, your next step should be the study of the influence of atmosphere. . . an intangible agent, visible, yet without that material substance which belongs to imitable objects, in fact, an absolute nothing, yet of mighty influence. — Letter V

A Quiet Afternoon ideally exemplifies Durand's intentions for his work. His meticulous attention to the foreground elements serves to celebrate the unspoiled wonders of the natural world, and in turn he offers the viewer a momentary escape into the soothing painted realm and an opportunity to experience a sense of communion with the American landscape. Art historian William H. Gerds commends it as a fine example of Durand's pastoral works, likely dating to the 1830s just prior to the period in which he fell under the influence of John Ruskin and depicted the natural world with near photographic precision. — CSK

¹ John Durand, *The Life and Times of Asher B. Durand* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2006) 82.

² David Lawall, *Asher Brown Durand, His Art and Art Theory in relation to His Times* (Garland Publishing, New York, 1977) 199.



ASHER BROWN DURAND (1796–1886), *A QUIET AFTERNOON*
OIL ON CANVAS, 25 X 36 1/4 INCHES, PRICE UPON REQUEST

This painting is accompanied by letters of authentication from Dr. William H. Gerdts, Professor Emeritus of Art History, Graduate School of the City University of New York; and Wayne Craven, H. F du Pont Professor Emeritus of Art History at the University of Delaware.

GEORGE LORING BROWN (1814–1889)

An active member of the expatriate colonies in Rome and Florence, **George Loring Brown (1814–1889)** lived abroad for nearly twenty years, yet still reached acclaim as one of America's top landscape painters. Even in his first venture in oil painting, Brown was blessed with success; he borrowed the oils and brushes of local Boston artist G.P.A. Healy, and with a stroke of luck, sold the resulting landscape to the wealthy merchant Isaac P. Davis. This sale funded the first of many voyages to Europe, and Brown struck out for London and Paris in 1832, the same year he executed the romantic composition *Landscape with Sheep and Cattle*.

While abroad, Brown's most influential teacher was the Louvre, and he spent hours copying the works of Claude Lorraine, Jacob Ruisdael and John Constable, receiving his only formal training at the atelier of Eugene Gabriel Isabey. In 1834 he returned to the United States and spent five years traveling throughout New England. The early works of this period, such as *New England Landscape*, largely exhibit the qualities of the Hudson River School; the subject of man in nature creates a scene of quiet reverie, carefully composed and harmoniously colored. If Brown had only remained in his native country, it is likely that he would have become fully immersed in this school of painting, but his search for Claude Lorraine's Arcadian landscapes brought him to Italy in 1840. The resulting Italian paintings became Brown's claim to fame, appealing to the many wealthy Americans who embarked upon the Grand Tour. The 1850s proved to be the very apex of Brown's career, for he sold over 100



GEORGE LORING BROWN (1814–1889), *NEW ENGLAND LANDSCAPE*
OIL ON CANVASS, 20 X 24 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER CENTER: G. L. BROWN 1836, \$32,000



GEORGE LORING BROWN (1814–1889), *LANDSCAPE WITH SHEEP AND CATTLE*
OIL ON CANVAS, 32 X 46 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: G. L. BROWN / PINX / 1832 BOSTON, \$58,000

paintings in this decade alone and exhibited many more at the National Academy of Design, the Boston Athenaeum, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

In 1859, he returned to New York City and found himself a stranger in his homeland, surrounded by a nation in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. Brown responded to the changing trends in American landscape painting from a focus on idealizing the sublime and beautiful natural world to a focus on representing it through close observation. His Boston critics reacted with mixed praise and criticism as Brown affiliated himself with this latter approach. After he participated in the 1860 Athenaeum exhibition, Brown wrote: "The fact is my gallery has created a great stir here, and all the artists cry out too rich!! Too much effect!! – but I say that I have not enough. I intend to paint still stronger."¹ Brown exhibited 109 pieces in this show, subsequently selling \$8,000 worth in a T. W. Parker & Co. exhibition that same year.

The years of 1861 and 1862 found him residing in New York, but traveling extensively to such locales as the New Hampshire White Mountains, Newport, Rhode Island, and Medford, Massachusetts. Medford became Brown's home in 1863, and was his inspiration for many serene landscape paintings such as *Morning View of Mystic Pond, near West Medford, MA*. His devotion to the natural world was unmatched during this period, and his paintings of Medford display his attention to finite differences in light and weather conditions. Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *Marble Faun* or *Romance of Monte Beni* describes Brown's devotion to Mother Nature: "...an artist who has studied Nature with such tender love that she takes him to her



intimacy, enabling him to reproduce her in landscapes that seem the reality of a better earth, and yet are but the truth of the very scenes around us, observed by the painter's insight and interpreted for us by his skill."²

Paintings such as *Afternoon, A View of the Mountain Rigi Colm on the [near Winkel] Lake of Lucerne*, executed in 1865 remind us that Brown never completely left behind his fascination with the Italian landscape. As official patronage declined, artists were forced to mold their works to public tastes, and Brown continuously reverted to his picturesque foreign scenes and the thriving souvenir market.

Seth Vose (1831–1910), second generation owner of Vose Galleries, was one of many who recognized the quality of George Loring Brown's paintings of local scenery. Seth, while not a consumer of alcohol, received frequent invitations from this good friend for a cigar, some whisky and some business talk.

¹ Letter to John O. Sargent, April 4, 1860, Manuscript Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

² Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Marble Faun* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1860) 160.

GEORGE LORING BROWN (1814–1889)

TOP:
AFTERNOON, A VIEW OF RIGI COLM ON THE LAKE OF LUCERNE
OIL ON CANVAS, 28 X 48 INCHES
SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: GEO. L. BROWN / 1865
\$14,500

BOTTOM:
MORNING VIEW OF MYSTIC POND, NEAR W. MEDFORD, MA
OIL ON CANVAS, 11 1/8 X 20 1/2 INCHES
SIGNED LOWER CENTER: GEO. L. BROWN / 1863
\$38,500



EASTMAN JOHNSON (1824–1906)

Eastman Johnson (1824–1906) stands out among his contemporaries as a leader in the tradition of American genre painting. Instead of describing the sublime American landscape as were Frederick Church (1826–1900) and Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), Johnson chose an alternative means of visual patriotism and devoted himself to accurately portraying the rural life that surrounded him. His earliest pieces depicted natives of Augusta, Maine, where Johnson spent his youth, but his career brought him to produce an astounding breadth of work. Johnson became known not only for presidential portraits, but also for paintings of domestic interiors, frontier life, and rural life of the North and South.

While genre painting was Johnson's field of choice, the artist would begin and end his career in the more profitable field of portraiture. Johnson's father was Maine's Secretary of State, and his connections with prominent political figures helped Eastman to acquire a plethora of commissions in the 1840s. Extremely gifted for twenty years of age, Johnson was permitted to set up a studio in a Senate committee room in Washington, D.C., where he worked with such sitters as John Quincy Adams and Daniel Webster. News of his skill reached as far north as Boston, and soon Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Ralph Waldo Emerson joined his impressive line of sitters. Johnson interrupted his stream of success, however, when he went abroad for instruction in 1849.

Johnson was entirely self-taught up until this point, but he set sail for Düsseldorf and the studio of Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868). The school of German genre painting was at its very height, and its artists were highly regarded for their technical mastery. It was his time in The Hague (1851–55), however, that had the most influence on his future work, as Johnson discovered the long history of Dutch genre painting. He found inspiration in the masters Rembrandt and Vermeer, and honed his skills through copying their works. Deemed an “American Rembrandt” by his audience, Johnson returned to Washington in 1855 to exhibit at the National Academy. Combining European training with American subject matter, he emerged from this period a devoted genre painter, celebrating his own country by capturing its people.

Johnson explored the American West upon his return to the United States, focusing on the raw frontier life and the Anishinabe natives of Wisconsin. Rather than executing stereotypical images of the “noble savages,” Johnson recorded their human qualities in a series of factual portraits. He would remain dedicated to accurately rendering the life around him throughout his career, even constructing a temporary studio on wheels from which to paint. From this mobile standpoint, Johnson spent the sugaring seasons of the early 1860s observing the activities of the maple groves in Fryeburg, Maine. Summers of the 1870s found him on the island of Nantucket, where he captured the cranberry harvesters in a collection of sketches and large-scale exhibition pieces, including the Timkin Museum's *The Cranberry Harvest*, which Vose Galleries sold in 1972.

His most celebrated painting, *Life in the South*, was created shortly after his return from the West and was exhibited at the National Academy in 1859. Like many artists, Johnson shadowed the Civil War, but instead of focusing on scenes of battle, he was drawn to the less dramatic events. Originally shown as *Negro Life at the South*, the painting earned Johnson acceptance into the National Academy, and is considered Johnson's tour de force by scholar Patricia Hills: “It was Johnson's first important painting and the one that brought him to the attention of the art world and the public. It remains the gauge by which we measure his later artistic progress.”¹

The piece was re-titled *Old Kentucky Home* by 1867 in response to the popular song by Stephen Foster that read:

The sun shines bright in the old Kentucky home,
'Tis summer, the people are gay.
The corn-top's ripe and the meadow's in the bloom,
While the birds make music all the day.

Ironically, Johnson used his father's property at F Street in Washington, D.C. as the painting's setting, rather than Kentucky. Meticulously executed and composed, it was praised by slave owners and Abolitionists alike; those who were pro-slavery approved of its portrayal of content and well-cared-for slaves, while Johnson pleased the Abolitionists with his allusion to the destruction of the system in the crumbling slave quarters. The painting was again exhibited at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867, and, due to its immense popularity, was lithographed for wide distribution.

In addition to its subject matter, the success of *Life in the South* was due to Johnson's refined technique; it displays exquisite detail, delicate blending of dry brushwork, and a pictorially complex and well-balanced composition. The piece is a compilation of multiple focal points, as was common in panorama scenes in both American and European art, with six small snippets of narratives within the larger oeuvre. *Southern Courtship* is the finest of at least three details which Johnson developed into completed paintings. It shows the young couple on the far left of the larger composition as they are engaged in a private, leisurely moment of discourse. Their faces are sculpted with soft chiaroscuro and delicate color, and Johnson defines the solid masses of their bodies with fluid outlines, again reflecting his European training. Always fond of the sentimental, Johnson shares this personal moment with his viewers, leading our eyes over the shoulder of the young man as he steals a quiet moment with his sweetheart. In this piece Johnson not only displays his mastery of depicting these intimate moments, but also of inserting them in an academically rendered setting of textures and surfaces. With the execution of such works, Johnson stepped into the forefront of American artists.

Such paintings as *Southern Courtship* set the stage for additional political works as Johnson continued to comment on the current issues that surrounded him. As one Harper's Weekly reporter remarked: “Mrs. Stowe broke the spell in literature [*Uncle Tom's Cabin*]. Eastman Johnson broke it in art.”² In 1862, for example, he executed *The Ride for Liberty*, a heart-wrenching illustration of a slave family as they galloped for the border in a final reach for freedom. Even after the conclusion of the war, Johnson continued to focus on African-Americans in his work, including a compassionate ante-bellum portrait of Harriet Tubman, leader of the Underground Railroad.

While decidedly successful during his life time, Johnson largely vanished into oblivion after his death in 1906, and it was not until thirty years later that major exhibitions at the Frazier Gallery and the Brooklyn Museum bolstered interest in his work. Today, Johnson has achieved the rightful status of one of America's most celebrated genre painters.

¹ Patricia Hills, *Eastman Johnson* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1927) 38.

² Stephen May, “America's Chronicler,” *Art & Antiques* (April 2000) 90.



EASTMAN JOHNSON (1824–1906), *SOUTHERN COURTSHIP*
OIL ON CANVAS, 20 X 15 3/4 INCHES
SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: E. JOHNSON. / 1859.
PRICE UPON REQUEST

THE WHITE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL



BENJAMIN CHAMPNEY (1817–1907), *SPRING*
OIL ON BOARD, 6 1/2 X 9 1/2 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: B. CHAMPNEY 1868, \$14,500

The summer of 1851 was a defining moment in American art history as the nation witnessed the birth of one of its earliest artist colonies, North Conway, New Hampshire. Inspired by the enthusiasm of **Benjamin Champney (1817–1907)** and John Kensett (1816–1872), artists ventured north from Boston and New York to the White Mountains for an introduction to this painters' haven. For many artists, this first summer visit would become an annual expedition, and together, these men would shape the White Mountain School of painting.

Hudson River School painters Thomas Cole and Thomas Doughty had made earlier sketching trips into the mountains during the 1830s, yet Champney would become the area's strongest advocate. He made his first voyage on foot from Boston to North Conway during the summer of 1838, and was so enchanted by the picturesque summits, falls and gorges of this region that he devoted the following sixty years to painting its landscape. A period of study in Europe during 1841 introduced Champney to other inspirational landscapes, including the Forest of Fontainebleau, the Rhine Valley of Switzerland, and the ruins of Rome, yet he lamented the influence of European art on American painters: "A truly American school of art therefore is not possible so long as we can not translate our nature for ourselves, and only see through French eyes and follow their fads and fashions."¹ Champney returned to the United States committed to promoting a uniquely American art form.

In 1853, Champney purchased the Lewis Eastman House just south of Conway Village and hosted a broad circle of artists and students at his studio. As artists began visiting the Conway area with increasing numbers, Champney joked that his home threatened to become a fashionable tourist attraction. Artists tucked under white umbrellas speckled the hillsides for much of the summer, having traveled up in "steamcars" to Portland, Maine, and from there along the White Mountain stage to

Crawford Notch. During the summer of 1853, roughly forty artists were staying in North Conway alone.

Samuel Griggs (1827–1898) was among the many painters who traveled north during the warm months, stopping at fashionable hotels in the mountains such as the Crawford House and Thompson's Tavern. Griggs was a Boston native, working from studios on Tremont Row and the Studio Building during the 1850s and '60s, and showing his works alongside his friends Champney and Samuel Lancaster Gerry at the Boston Athenaeum. Like Champney, Griggs' work illustrates an ordered wilderness, impacted by the hand of man. The presence of a human element is vital to his paintings, whether through the inclusion of distant farms and fields, domesticated animals, or ships sailing on a remote lake. In *On the Ammonoosuc River, New Hampshire*, Griggs complements a pristine wilderness with a small figure fishing off a shaded shoreline. Such harmonious imagery is synonymous with White Mountain paintings.

As the White Mountains grew in popularity, so too did the work of Benjamin Champney rise in fame; during the 1870s, Louis Prang produced up to 100,000 chromolithographs of his works. Artists continued to flock to the region during the following years, but the traditions of the White Mountain School soon gave way to new interests. **Winckworth Allan Gay (1821–1910)** (see p.17) and George Inness (182–1894) were among the next stable of artists to travel north, but they rendered the mountains in the new French Barbizon manner. By the end of the decade, changing tastes coupled with the commercial development of the region caused a depletion in the number of artists who traveled north. The intimate landscapes favored by the Tonalist and Barbizon artists would be the next attractions.

¹ Benjamin Champney, *Sixty Years' Memories of Art and Artists* (Woburn: Wallace & Andrews, 1900) 134.



SAMUEL GRIGGS (1827–1898), *ON THE AMMONOOSUC RIVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE*
OIL ON CANVAS, 12 X 20 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: S. W. GRIGGS / 1864, \$13,500

The Wheeler Collection

Leeds and Marion Wheeler's collection of fine art spans nineteenth-century American landscape painting, providing a unique small-scale survey of this period. Ranging from works by some of the earliest professional American artists like Joshua Shaw, to Benjamin Champney and other painters of the White Mountains, Leeds and Marion Wheeler were also drawn to less celebrated local artists. They acquired works with a discerning eye for quality and diversity and took the greatest pleasure in watching their collection grow. Their daughter, Marilee, recounts their history:

Totaling 81 works at its height, my parents' collection largely developed between 1963 and 1969. Both Leeds and Marion had an affinity for old objects, Marion's stemming from her parents' interest in furniture and decorative arts, and Leeds because of his family's history in printmaking. Leeds' grandfather was Charles Armstrong, a Boston lithographer active during the 1870s, and when Leeds joined a Boston law firm sixty years later, he became interested in knowing more about his grandfather's work. The Boston Public Library proved a vast resource, and today it houses Leeds' large lithograph collection.

Apart from a few old portraits, my parents' first painting was a marine by Frederick Judd Waugh that Marion had inherited from her father, who had known the artist from the Lotus Club in New York. Since she was not fond of sailing on anything smaller than the "Queen Mary," the painting languished in the attic ever since it came into her possession. My parents eventually recognized that they might consider selling it and purchasing something that they both might enjoy more. They began looking in the direction of early American landscapes, which they both admired.

They visited museums along the East Coast to become more familiar with the field and read extensively about the artists of the period. When they were ready to purchase, my parents sought out the premier gallery of nineteenth-century American paintings, and thus began their relationship with Vose Galleries. They began with two works by Thomas Doughty and remained committed to acquiring pre-Civil War paintings, particularly those with a local connection. Together they traveled to the locations at which their works were painted and researched the artists in great depth, enjoying this project with each piece.

After Leeds' sudden death in 1969, Marion lost interest in acquiring additional paintings, for collecting alone was no longer enjoyable. As the years went by Marion downsized her life, and a number of works were donated to museums or individually sold. Leeds and Marion had decided long before that they would not leave their collection as a whole to a museum, for they wanted others to discover the pleasure that they had found in the process of collecting. Marion continued to derive great joy from the paintings which surrounded her until she died at the age of 103.

John White Allen Scott (1815–1907) began his career at the Boston lithography firm of William Pendleton, working alongside two great figures of American art history: lithographer Nathaniel Currier and marine artist Fitz Henry Lane. During the 1840s he settled into the Cambridge home that would be his residence for over half a century, and began working seriously as a fine artist. His works became constant additions to Boston Athenaeum and Boston Art Club exhibitions, as well as at local gallery shows. By 1905, Scott had outlived all other members of the Boston Art Club, and he was still actively drawing and painting well into his nineties.

Scott's acquaintances remembered him as a jovial, bearded figure, fully engrossed in his artwork and endlessly experimenting with his technique; at the age of ninety, Scott was still testing the resiliency of various oils to sunlight. He was enraptured by the scenery of the White Mountains and the Catskills, using nature as his muse over the sixty years that he painted. In an uncited 1905 article, a reporter commented on Scott's affinity to the landscape: "All his art life he has striven to rob nature of her secrets... And he has never forgotten the topography of his landscape." His hundreds of sketches and oils attest to his infatuation with the Northeast, whether the wild upper limits of the Catskills, or such nearby farming towns as Ashland, Massachusetts, not more than twenty miles from his home.



JOHN WHITE ALLEN SCOTT (1815–1907), *A FARM IN ASHLAND, MA*
OIL ON CANVAS, 10 X 14 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: J. W. A. SCOTT / 66, \$9,500



JOSHUA H. SHAW (1776–1861), *SEVEN HILLS: AN AMERICAN LANDSCAPE*
OIL ON CANVAS, 17 1/8 X 24 1/4 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: J. SHAW. / 1818., \$35,000

Joshua Shaw (1776–1861) was among the earliest professional artists to immigrate to America. A native of Lincolnshire, England, Shaw was an established sign and landscape painter, exhibiting at the Royal Academy alongside J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851) beginning in 1802. At the suggestion of his artist friend Benjamin West (1738–1820), Shaw traveled to Philadelphia in 1817. He was immediately enamored by the natural beauty of his adopted homeland and made watercolor sketches of the entire Eastern seaboard from Georgia to New York, devoting himself to executing “...correct delineations of some of the most prominent beauties of notable scenery.”¹ These images were etched by John Hill in his *Picturesque Views of American Scenery* of 1819, and became the earliest collective depiction of the American landscape.

Shaw continued to commemorate early America in paint, even antedating Catlin and Remington in depicting Native Americans. Working in a style often described as a Romantic rendition of nineteenth-century British pastoral painting, Shaw captured tranquil farm- and woodlands not so unlike those of Thomas Doughty (1793–1856). His commitment to depicting American topography for the enjoyment of his fellow countrymen led him to publish a number of other useful reference books, including *A New and Original Drawing Book* (1816) and *United States Directory for the Use of Travellers and Merchants* (1822).

¹ *Prints of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia Print Shop, 1990) 38.



ALVAN FISHER (1792–1863), *HORSEBACK RIDERS*
OIL ON CANVAS, 17 X 21 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: A FISHER / PINXT 1838, \$36,000

Alvan Fisher (1792–1863) was one of the earliest American pioneers of both landscape and genre painting. He began his painting career in 1814, the same year that America ended its second war with Great Britain and signed the Treaty of Ghent, and like many Americans, he looked upon his new nation with pride and optimism. Fisher opened a studio in Boston, Massachusetts, yet traveled extensively, exploring nearly all thirteen colonies of his homeland. He exhibited locally as well as at such important national venues as the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and achieved critical acclaim as one of a limited number of artists seriously painting the American landscape.

An influential trip to Europe in 1825 reinforced Fisher's proclivity for new subject matter. While his ability to capture his sitter's likeness guaranteed a steady flow of portrait commissions, his real love was animal painting and narrative landscapes such as *Horseback Riders*, capturing subject matter never before presented in American art. Meeting the needs of a public no longer concerned just with portraiture, Fisher was unique in his ability to turn a profit with these innovative themes. An astute businessman and prolific painter, Fisher marketed his work extensively and sold nearly one thousand canvases between 1826 and 1860. His successes opened the doors to numerous future genre and landscape artists and greatly contributed to the founding of a new tradition of painting in America.

Like so many nineteenth-century artists, **Thomas Hinckley (1813–1896)** transitioned through a number of artistic careers. He first tried his hand with sign and decorative painting, raised his standing to the accepted field of portraiture, and then finally incorporated the more recently explored subject matter of animal painting. These genre scenes, such as *Snipe Shooting*, are how he is best remembered, combining a Hudson River School mastery of the landscape and an adeptness with the animal form in the manner of British artist Sir Edmund Landseer.

Hinckley lived out his life on the small farm on which he was born in Milton, Massachusetts. In 1845 he built himself a studio, and that same year received his first of many important commissions; Daniel Webster requested that he paint his renowned herd of Ayrshire cows. Hinckley's subject matter then focused on the interests of his neighbors and friends as he painted their prize cows and hunting dogs, as well as the wild elk and deer that they pursued.

Exhibiting nationally at prestigious venues such as the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Hinckley was pressured by his colleagues to accompany them abroad, and in 1851 he departed for London. His impressions of this trip were recorded in his account book: "Visited during an absence of four months Manchester, Sheffield, Rotterdam, London & vicinity....Returned perfectly satisfied that there is No place like Home."¹ Hinckley would remain devoted to the wild life, domestic life and land of his nation, and would execute 478 combined landscape and animal pictures over the course of his career.

¹ Marjorie Shaw, *Thomas Hewes Hinckley, Artist to a Generation* (Milton, MA: Milton Historical Society, 1985) 11.



THOMAS HEWES HINCKLEY (1813–1896), *SNIPE SHOOTING*
OIL ON CANVAS, 17 1/8 X 21 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: T. H. HINCKLEY / 1845, \$45,000



CLINTON LOVERIDGE (1824–1915)



LEFT: *WINTER*, OIL ON WOOD PANEL, 4 5/8 X 6 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: C. LOVERIDGE
RIGHT: *SUMMER*, OIL ON WOOD PANEL, 4 5/8 X 6 1/4 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: C. LOVERIDGE, \$5,500 FOR PAIR

Venturing out from his Brooklyn studio, **Clinton Loveridge (1824–1915)** documented the New England landscape throughout his career. He was known for his paintings of cattle and sheep, but the White Mountains were also a common subject matter, as were the farmlands of his birthplace, Troy, New York. *Summer* and *Winter* are typical of his seasonal works, and illustrate his fondness for the picturesque.

Active in Albany during the late 1850s, Loveridge settled in Brooklyn in 1867, joining an active arts community in the burgeoning area. He was one of many artists who gathered at Annesley and Vint's, an artist supply store and only commercial gallery in the city at that time. Loveridge diligently exhibited his works with the National Academy over a thirty year span, and regularly contributed to the Brooklyn Art Association shows.



BENJAMIN C. CHAMPNEY (1817–1907), *THE WHITE OAK - A NEW ENGLAND LANDSCAPE*
OIL ON WOOD PANEL, 12 X 8 7/8 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: B. CHAMPNEY 70, \$14,500

Benjamin Champney (1817–1907) was an avid writer as well as painter, and he frequently discussed his theories on art in his texts. In his book *Sixty Years' Memories of Art and Artists*, Champney commented on American art's future:

Art in this country should become American. Students should shake off the shackles and fetters of French and German art, and paint no more reproductions of foreign works, which, however skillfully done, can not have half the value of the originals. Then they could go seriously to work, study our own beautiful scenery, our manners, our customs, our history.¹

Champney's influential role in the White Mountain School of painting is further discussed on page thirteen of this catalog.

¹ Benjamin Champney, *Sixty Years' Memories of Art and Artists* (Woburn: Wallace & Andrews, 1900) 149-150.

Robert Spear Dunning (1829–1905) was best known in his lifetime as a painter of bountiful still lifes; the New England landscapes he produced are rare today. In a letter to Robert C. Vose dated December 12, 1901, Dunning related his history:

Dear friend Robert:

. . . I was born in the town of Brunswick Maine, Jan 3d 1829, moved to Fall River Mass. at the age of six years, and have resided there ever since. . . [I] took a studio and began to paint portraits, landscapes, and figures. About 1864 took up the painting of still life and fruit pictures and was very successful in receiving large prices. . . .

Residing in an industrial town of Fall River, Dunning often sought reprieve from the bustle of the textile mills. His landscapes attest to his many travels, including views of Newport and the White Mountains. Dunning's 1864 *Study from Nature, West Campton (Mt. Chocorua)* captures a landscape made popular by Benjamin Champney, but Dunning chose to depict the domesticated landscape rather than the splendors of the wild. Just one year later, Dunning largely abandoned landscape painting to devote himself entirely to the more profitable genre of still life. He passed on his still life techniques to many students and followers at the Fall River Evening Drawing School, which he founded with fellow painter Edouard Girard in 1870.



ROBERT SPEAR DUNNING (1829–1905), *STUDY FROM NATURE, WEST CAMPTON (MT. CHOCORUA)*
OIL ON CANVAS, 7 1/4 X 11 1/4 INCHES, INITIALED LOWER RIGHT: RSD 64, \$11,500

Known for their exquisitely rendered landscape paintings, **Russell Smith (1812–1896)** and his son Xanthus (1839–1929) remain firmly established among esteemed artists of the nineteenth century. Smith emigrated with his family from Glasgow, Scotland, in 1819, settling in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, at the age of seven. In 1828 he began his formal artistic training under portraitist James Reid Lambdin (1807–1889) and then pursued the arts independently just three years later. He began a longstanding career as a stage set painter and became well-known for his naturalistic scenery, working for theatres from Georgia to Boston until he reached the age of eighty.

After his marriage to floral painter Mary Priscilla Wilson, however, Smith began to focus on painting landscapes of Philadelphia, New England and Europe. In his autobiography of 1884 he confided that these little pieces were never executed with a mercenary mission in mind, but rather as pleasing arrangements of hue and values that had somehow impressed him favorably. He became extremely active in the local arts and exhibited these personal oils and watercolors at the Pennsylvania Academy and the Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia, befriending Thomas Birch, Joshua Shaw and John Neagle through these associations. Rembrandt Peale was also among his companions and wrote to an art collector that Smith was a "...most industrious artist, whose landscapes please me chiefly because of their having truth, nature, and Americanism in them."¹

¹ Vose Galleries exhibition catalog, *Russell Smith (1812–1896)*, 1979.



GEORGE LORING BROWN (1814–1889), *PICNIC AT GREEN MOUNTAIN GROVE, NEAR SPOT POND, MEDFORD*
OIL ON CANVAS, 14 X 20 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: G. L. BROWN 1862, \$28,000



RUSSELL SMITH (1812–1896), *THE BROKEN BRIDGE TACONY CREEK, PHILADELPHIA*
OIL ON WOOD PANEL, 18 X 13 7/8 INCHES
SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: RUSSELL SMITH / 1862, \$16,000

Prominent landscape painter **George Loring Brown (1814–1889)** found a home in Medford in 1863 after nearly 20 years abroad. He had been active in the expatriate colonies of Rome and Florence, yet Brown developed a fondness for the landscapes of the Boston suburbs. He executed *Picnic at Green Mountain Grove, near Spot Pond, Medford* just one year prior to purchasing his Medford home. Three years later, Medford residents would celebrate the return of their Civil War survivors at the pond. In the year this piece was painted, this single town had sent 100 men to war; in 1865 only 66 men returned. Unaware of this sad fate, Brown captured the pond as a popular site of leisure, illustrating local folk in the pleasant activities of fishing and picnicking (see p. 6).



Born on Christmas Day in the southern Maine town of Portland, **George H. Bailey (1832–1905)** was one of few nineteenth-century artists who lacked the urge to explore. He remained in Portland his entire life, working as a town clerk and executing equine paintings and scenes of his local landscape. *The Clambake, Portland, Maine* is a delightful narrative that he completed while only a teenager, showing a primitive picnic on the untamed coastline. It is one of few known works by Bailey on the market today, and gives a unique glimpse of mid-century Maine culture.

Just as Portland remained a constant throughout Bailey's life, horses were ever-present as well. He tried his hand at farming for a brief period, but nearly lost all of his limited possessions in a horrific fire. Horse racing proved the better alternative, and Bailey became a driver, trainer, and judge of local harness races. At fifty-five years of age, Bailey decided to build on his equine knowledge and enrolled in the veterinary medicine program of New York College. He returned to Portland to a long and successful practice, authoring a number of equine columns in local agricultural papers and establishing himself as an authority on the subject. While his paintings remain rare today, his 1905 obituary reported that they adorned the walls of the best offices and residences of New England, New York, and beyond.

GEORGE H. BAILEY (1832–1905)
THE CLAMBAKE, PORTLAND, MAINE
 OIL ON CANVAS, 15 X 21 1/8 INCHES, 1851
 \$8,500

During the mid-nineteenth century, each and every resident of Portland, Maine, was familiar with the local character Tom “Piggy” Huston. He was the city butcher, seen day by day driving his Appaloosa horse and his pig-laden sled across the city's Market Square. Local artist George Bailey also captured this pot-bellied figure in an 1870 piece entitled *Tom “Piggy” Huston in the Country*, just one year after this piece was executed by **Scott Leighton (1849–1898)**. Leighton documents his town history in his rendition, showing Piggy driving by the hunched figure of Jonathan Morgan, the town Squire. A sign reads “Agricultural Warehouse” in the distance, while city-folk make their way through the arched stalls of the New Market and Theatre Building at the left, recently designed by Captain Alexander Ankeny in 1868.

Leighton was a local artist, born in Auburn, Maine, who developed a strong reputation as an animal painter. He had entered the horse business while only fourteen, and within three years had saved enough money (\$2,000) from trading horses to establish himself as a painter in Portland. Leighton studied under the tutelage of Harrison Bird Brown, and quickly became an established Boston painter, exhibiting with the Boston Art Club, the National Academy and the Pennsylvania Academy. Leighton benefited from the immense popularity of harness racing in New England and had thirty of his horse paintings lithographed by Currier and Ives between the years of 1880 and 1889. He also reportedly sold his works for as much as \$8,000 apiece. Despite his success, Leighton died in debt at the Waverly Asylum; 350 of his paintings were auctioned off that year in an attempt to balance his finances.



SCOTT LEIGHTON (1849–1898), *GOING TO MARKETPLACE, PORTLAND, ME*
 OIL ON CANVAS, 10 X 14 1/4 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: W. S. LEIGHTON / 1869, \$9,500

THE INFLUENCE OF BARBIZON PAINTING



WINCKWORTH ALLAN GAY (1821–1910), *BLACK ROCK, HINGHAM, MA*
OIL ON CANVAS, 14 X 24 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: W A GAY, 1861, \$29,500

Seth Morton Vose (1831–1910), second-generation owner of Vose Galleries, imported his first Barbizon painting during the early 1850s. This began a lifelong infatuation with these masterpieces of French landscape, and Seth almost single-handedly established a market for Barbizon work in America, importing and selling hundreds of pieces during his lifetime. His friendship with American Barbizon artist William Morris Hunt (1824–1879) further strengthened his ties to this community, and Vose promoted the art of both French and American Barbizon painters at his gallery in Providence and later Boston.

Hunt was one of many American artists inspired by the French Barbizon tradition during a period of study abroad. America still offered little in the way of art instruction during this era, and it was not uncommon for young painters to travel to Europe for four or five years of training. Classes at the formal academies were coupled with painting excursions into the countryside, and many artists, like Hunt, joined the radical painters Corot, Rousseau, Daubigny and Millet in the Barbizon forest. Abandoning the biblical and historical subject matters endorsed by the French Academy, the Barbizon men broke free from its rigidity to focus on the indigenous landscape, and their American companions embraced their poetic interpretations of

this native subject.¹ In contrast to the Hudson River School's grandiose depictions of Sublime America, the subjective nature of the Barbizon School was a welcome release; American artists returned to the United States to apply this new approach to their own nation.

William Hunt, George Inness (1825–1894) and Henry Ward Ranger (1858–1916) were among the leaders of Barbizon painting in the United States, infusing their works with atmosphere and mood in a style that became known as Tonalism. Regarded by many scholars as the very first American to study with a Barbizon artist, **Winckworth Allan Gay (1821–1910)** also embraced this European trend. In 1847, Gay joined the Parisian atelier of Constant Troyon (1810–1865) and learned to interpret rather than imitate the natural landscape. Studies direct from nature were not unknown to Gay's American contemporaries, but instead many Hudson River Painters utilized on-site paintings merely as sketches for meticulously developed studio works. Gay, on the other hand, came to sensitively render his observed landscapes with great attention to light effects and atmosphere, resulting in tonal quality works filled with brushwork.



CHARLES HARRY EATON (1850–1901), *BEND IN THE RIVER*, CIRCA 1899
OIL ON CANVAS, 24 X 18 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: C. HARRY EATON A.N.A., \$27,000

In 1851, Gay settled into a studio in Boston and was increasingly drawn to the local scenery of his home in Hingham; he also enjoyed sketching tours of the White Mountains with his close friend Benjamin Champney (see p.10). Gay studied the New England landscape for nearly twenty-five years, exhibiting his oils at the Boston Art Club, Pennsylvania Academy and National Academy, before he was again overcome by the desire to travel. In 1874, he auctioned off his entire inventory of

paintings to fund a four-year visit to Japan; he was one of the first Americans to reside there. An accomplished world traveler, Gay became an inspiration for his contemporaries.

Barbizon painting found a welcoming environment in Boston, as it was a hub of the literary and philosophical elite. The influence of Barbizon painting, however, was far-reaching, and even **Charles Harry Eaton (1850–1901)**, active in Michigan and New York, felt the desire to experiment with the new plein air techniques. He was largely a self-taught artist, yet Eaton determinedly earned himself a national reputation. He received numerous prizes—including gold medals—from the Boston Art Club, the American Water Color Society, the Philadelphia Art Club and the Pan-American Exposition (posthumously). *Bend in the River* exemplifies his expressive Barbizon-style landscapes, all the more impressive considering that Eaton never voyaged abroad.

George Smillie (1840–1921) also transitioned smoothly along with America's emerging interests in European trends. Over the course of his career, he would take the traditional skills he had learned from his teacher James McDougal Hart (1828–1901) and transform them into paintings full of brushwork and light, influenced more by the French Barbizon than the American Hudson River School.

The son of James H. Smillie (1807–1885), a highly regarded steel engraver and artist, and brother to engraver and painter James David (1833–1909), George was the most experimental member of his family, achieving great recognition as the Hudson River School dwindled in favor. By 1860 George was applying luscious brushwork to scenes of the Catskills, the Adirondacks and the Hudson River valley, such as *Haying in the*



GEORGE HENRY SMILLIE (1840–1921), *HAYING IN THE JEWETT VALLEY, CATSKILL MOUNTAINS*
OIL ON CANVAS, 15 1/4 X 24 1/8 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: GEO. H. SMILLIE - NY, \$19,500

Jewett Valley, Catskill Mountains. His paintings often did not capture a specific location, but attempted to describe a mood and feeling. These emotionally charged landscapes were the products of the 1880s, a period when George was staying often in Poughkeepsie as a retreat from the pressures of his New York City studio. In 1884, George finally traveled abroad and witnessed the French Barbizon first-hand.

American artists working in the Barbizon style sought out remote farms, quaint villages and pristine wilderness during the last half of the nineteenth century, attempting to discover the qualities of the Fontainebleau Forest in their own native land. Just as artist colonies emerged in Europe at locations such as Giverny, Cornwall, Brittany and Grez, so too did American artists band together at picturesque locales. Developed by artist Henry Ward Ranger in 1899, Old Lyme, Connecticut, quickly became the site of an “American Barbizon,” and today is remembered as one of the nation’s most celebrated artist colonies.

In 1903, four years after Old Lyme emerged as a center of Barbizon painting, American Impressionist **Childe Hassam (1859–1935)** made his first visit to the area. Hassam was originally a Boston watercolorist and illustrator, but he traveled to Europe in 1883 and was awed by the bountiful landscapes of France and Spain. Hassam returned from that trip to create his own pastoral oils of New England. His earliest paintings of the rural countryside were closely tied to the Barbizon spirit of the 1880s, and Hassam executed naturalistic, tranquil scenes such as *Willows in Spring*. Although his roots were in Barbizon painting, Hassam arrived in Old Lyme nearly twenty years after creating this piece, and ironically introduced the bright tones and pointillism of the French Impressionists to Connecticut. Hassam’s style soon overtook the muted tonalism of this colony, and he became a pioneer of American Impressionism. Both the development and gradual decline of American Barbizon had resulted from European influences, and America entered the twentieth century with Impressionism at the forefront of its artistic circles.



FREDERICK CHILDE HASSAM (1859–1935), *WILLOWS IN SPRING*
OIL ON CANVAS, 9 1/4 X 12 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: CHILDE HASSAM 84, PRICE UPON REQUEST

¹ The French Revolution of 1848 found many of the Barbizon men fighting on the front lines, supporting the egalitarian spirit of the new democracy both in their actions and paintings. Rather than seeking out dramatic vistas and classical landscapes as were the vogue, these artists settled on the Barbizon forest, roughly 42,000 acres of serene, domesticated wilderness and farmland, directly affronting the old establishment with this subject matter.

SEASCAPES AND MARINES



Philadelphia born painter and etcher **Charles Morgan McIlhenney (1858–1904)** received his training in his home town of Philadelphia, later settling in New York City. An Associate Member of the National Academy, McIlhenney was well regarded for his abilities in both oil and in watercolor, and held memberships with the American Watercolor Society, the New York Watercolor Club, the New York Etching Club, and the Artist Fund Society.

An active participant in public exhibitions, McIlhenney showed his works annually at the Art Institute of Chicago and the National Academy of Design, as well as at the Boston Art Club and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His exhibition entries attest to the broad range of subjects which he painted, spanning genre works to paintings of land and of sea, and many were awarded public recognition and prizes. These works display the painterly brushwork of European influences, but a dedication to American subject matter. In *The Docks, Boston Harbor*, for example, McIlhenney includes such definitive features of a New England seaport as an Essex Schooner pulling out of the harbor and lobstermen dragging up their pots, capturing a quintessential Boston scene.

CHARLES MCILHENNEY (1858–1904)
THE DOCKS, BOSTON HARBOR
 OIL ON CANVAS, 26 X 21 INCHES
 SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: C MCILHENNEY
 CIRCA 1885
 \$19,500

MARSHALL JOHNSON, JR. (1850–1921)
THE SUNBURST
 OIL ON CANVAS, 30 3/8 X 44 1/4 INCHES,
 SIGNED LOWER LEFT: MARSHALL JOHNSON
 \$28,000

Boston native **Marshall Johnson (1850–1921)** set sail for South America aboard the ship *Sunbeam* at age eighteen. Horrifically, the ship burned at sea, and Johnson was one of only twelve survivors. This harrowing experience did not dampen Johnson's enthusiasm for the ocean, however; he returned to Boston and took classes at the Lowell Institute and the Boston Art Club, and then studied painting with well-known marine artist William Norton. Johnson developed a romantic and dramatic style of painting, and traveled to Europe to broaden his study of marine paintings.

Upon his return, Johnson settled in a Boston studio, and became highly successful within local art circles. He was a member of the Boston Art Club and exhibited his oil paintings and watercolors regularly in their annual exhibitions. Today, he is probably best remembered for his painting of the *U.S.S. Constitution*, which was the trademark for the New England Life Insurance Company for many years. *The Sunburst* likely depicts the ship of this name, a 57-foot-long schooner built by the Norris Arm Shipbuilding Co. of Newfoundland, Canada, in 1878. Just two years after Johnson's death, this piece was exhibited in a memorial show held by Vose Galleries.



A technically accomplished and diverse artist, **Henry Wolcott Boss (1827–1916)** remains a mystery within the Hudson River tradition. He was extremely talented in the realms of portrait, genre, landscape, seascape and still life, but history leaves a gap as to where he received his training. Boss traveled extensively to such locations as Lake George and Franconia Notch and likely encountered many of the great painters of his time.

A resident of Binghamton, New York, Boss maintained a studio between 1875 and 1904, but sadly never made a financial success of his art. The exhibition records of the National Academy of Design list two paintings by a H. Wolcott Boss in 1878, proving that his works were well received, but perhaps the artist struggled in finding a market in western New York.

Boss' work had gone largely uncelebrated until his hometown museum, the Robertson Center for the Arts, commemorated him with an exhibition in 1972. Displaying woodland interiors as well as seascapes, this exhibition set Boss in his rightful place among his contemporaries.

HENRY WOLCOTT BOSS (1827–1916)
SAILING OFF A ROCKY COAST
 OIL ON CANVAS, 24 1/4 x 36 INCHES
 SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: BOSS / '90
 \$55,000



Like many nineteenth-century artists, **Samuel Lancaster Gerry (1813–1891)** began his career as a sign and decorative painter before looking abroad for inspiration. He traveled to England, France, Switzerland and Italy during the mid-1830s, befriending George Loring Brown, and falling under the influence of Barbizon painter Constant Troyon. While remaining largely self-taught, Gerry eventually established himself as a successful genre and landscape painter in his hometown of Boston. He became a leading promoter of the arts and exhibited in nearly every Boston Art Club exhibition from its inception until the year he died.

Believing that nature encompassed the divine, Gerry wrote in an 1857 article in *The Crayon*: “[artists shall]...paint, not for the amusement of self or others, but for the instruction, and the honor of Him, in whose great gallery of painting and sculpture we daily make memorandum studies.”¹ Gerry did not remain fully faithful to directly capturing nature, however, and often made composite views and interpretive works. He became widely known for his poetic landscapes and seascapes of the New England Coast, as well as his depictions of White Mountains.

¹ *The Crayon* No. 4 (Nov. 1857) 351.

SAMUEL LANCASTER GERRY (1813–1891), *SUNRISE OVER THE ATLANTIC*
 OIL ON CANVAS, 24 x 40 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: SL GERRY, \$28,000

FIGURAL WORKS



LOUIS CHARLES MOELLER (1855–1930), *STOP FOOLING*
OIL ON CANVAS, 18 X 24 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: LOUIS MOELLER N.A., CIRCA 1890, \$59,500

Louis Moeller (1855–1930) is among the most popular genre painters of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, having made his mark through anecdotal and often comical paintings of everyday American life. Born in New York City, Moeller began training under his father, portrait painter Charles Moeller, before attending the Cooper Union Art School and the National Academy of Design. His early years were spent as an apprentice to a painter of interior decorations, but in 1873, he became determined to seek professional training and enrolled at the Royal Academy of Munich. There Moeller spent six years under the training of Frank Duveneck (1849–1919) and Wilhelm Diez (1839–1907), the latter having greatly influenced his future career. Diez encouraged Moeller to look to the art of the seventeenth-century Dutch, which so inspired the genre scenes for which Moeller is best known.

Moeller learned to duplicate the light-hearted subject matter of Dutch genre, yet added to his compositions a more sophisticated and academic style. His paintings go beyond the over-emphasized facial expressions and often uncouth topics found in Dutch and even early American genre, and instead depict honest scenes of American people. Following the example of **Alvan Fisher (1792–1863)** (see p. 12), William Sidney Mount (1807–1868), **Eastman Johnson (1824–1906)** (see p. 8) and countless other painters of genre, Moeller looked to the life around him for inspiration. In his paintings, men and women go about their daily activities, husking corn, playing cards, and laughing over a comic moment.

Moeller's finely executed oils were exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy between the years of 1883 and 1908, earning him awards as well as admittance into the National Academy of Design.

Boston artist and Museum School graduate **Horace Robbins Burdick (1844–1942)** remained closely tied to the genre tradition throughout his career. He was active in Providence and Malden, exhibiting his paintings of rural New England life and landscapes at the Boston Art Club, the National Academy of Design, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Society of Independent Artists over a lengthy career. In 1927, he was the oldest living member of the Boston Art Club, and the organization honored him that year by displaying his portrait of President Coolidge.

Haying in Wartime is typical of Burdick's local genre scenes employing patriotic subject matter. Likely dating to the summer of 1898 when America was at war with the Kingdom of Spain, this piece shows the women and elderly men of a rural community as they bring in a cutting of hay in the absence of the town's soldiers.



WILLIAM JOHN WHITTEMORE (1860–1955), *FRAMER AT WORK*
OIL ON CANVAS, 14 X 12 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER RIGHT: WM. J. WHITTEMORE / 1886, \$25,000



HORACE ROBBINS BURDICK (1844–1942), *HAYING IN WARTIME*
OIL ON PAPER ON PANEL, 18 X 23 3/4 INCHES, CIRCA 1890, \$6,500

William Whittemore's (1860–1955) portraits and genre scenes are evidence of the many artistic influences present by the turn of the century. With the onset of Realism and Impressionism, expressive figural paintings rose in popularity and traditional genre scenes became viewed as cliché in their sentimentality. Such early Whittemore paintings as *Framer at Work* display the popular mid-nineteenth-century trend of idealizing the working class in art. Following Jean Francois Millet's (1814–1875) heroic renderings of lower class men and women in his realist paintings of the 1850s and '60s, American artists also became increasingly focused on their own country's laborers and poor. In this casual portrait of 1886, Whittemore glorifies a blue collar worker, a subject matter which he replaced later in his career with another popular subject—sunlit impressionist paintings of women in garden settings.

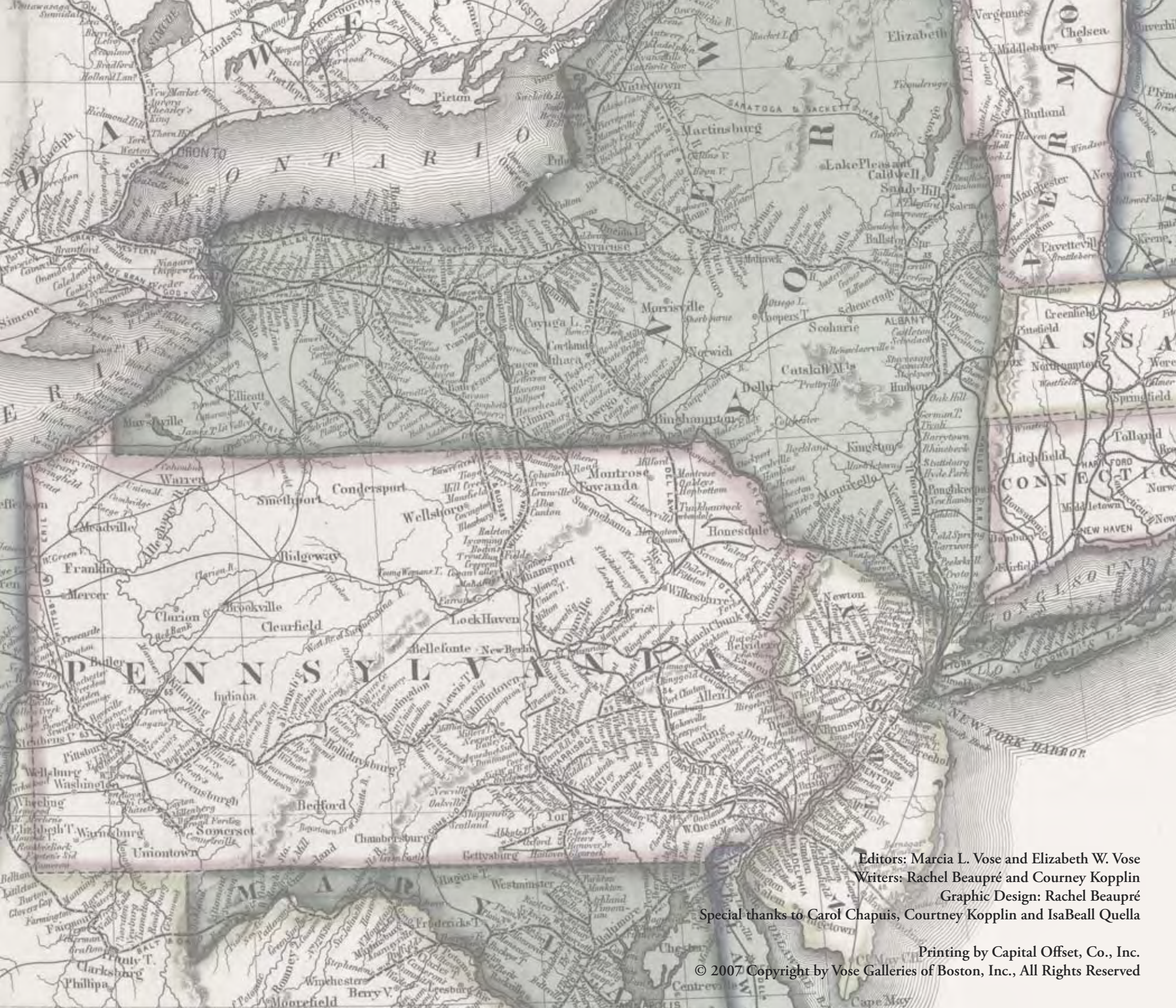
Whittemore's knowledge of European trends is not surprising based on his rigorous academic training and impressive exhibition record. Studies at the National Academy of Design were followed by a year at the Art Students League in 1885. From there, Whittemore joined the Académie Julian for two years of training under Constant and Léfèbvre. He began exhibiting professionally while still a student and participated in National Academy shows for over sixty-five years. These were augmented by exhibits at the Boston Art Club (1886–1908), Paris Salon (1889), and the Art Institute of Chicago (1890–1928). Also an educator of high esteem, Whittemore was regarded as a figure painting specialist and passed on his skills to a new generation of painters.



GEORGE F. FULLER (19TH C.), *AUTUMN AFTERNOON ON THE LAKE*
OIL ON CANVAS, 16 X 27 INCHES, SIGNED LOWER LEFT: G. F. FULLER, \$11,500

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