

The Hudson River School

An Online Professional Development Seminar



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AMERICA *in* CLASS[®]

from the National Humanities Center

FROM THE FORUM

- Which artists' paintings are most representative of this school and what are the most effective ways to help students analyze the paintings?
- What is the relationship between the art of the Hudson River School and the industrialization and urbanization that were occurring in early nineteenth-century America?
- How does the art of the Hudson River School relate to the westward expansion of the nation?
- What is the relationship between the art of the Hudson River School and the writing of the Transcendentalists?

Alan Wallach

1989-2011 Ralph H. Wark Professor of Art and Art History and
Professor of American Studies at
the College of William and Mary.
From September 2011, Professor Emeritus.

Co-curator of “Thomas Cole: Landscape into History,”
National Museum of American Art (Mar. ‘94), Wadsworth
Atheneum (Sept. ‘94), and the Brooklyn Museum (Jan. ‘95)

*Exhibiting Contradiction: Essays on the Art Museum
in the United States*
(University of Massachusetts Press, 1998)

Recipient of the College Art Association’s
Distinguished Teaching of Art History Award, 2007



The Hudson River School

- dates from 1825, the year Thomas Cole first showed his landscape paintings in New York City
- flourished during the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s
- fell out of fashion in the 1870s.

The Hudson River School

- not a “school” in the formal sense
- primarily a movement that developed a unique romantic vision of the American landscape
- deeply influenced by European and especially British romanticism

The Hudson River School

- began when artists—most notably Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Jasper Cropsey, Frederic Church, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Moran, John Frederick Kensett, and Sanford Robinson Gifford—started depicting scenes in the northeastern United States—the Catskills, the Adirondacks, the White Mountains, the New England coast
- soon these artists roamed further afield, traveling to Europe, South America, the American West, the Middle East, and even the Arctic in search of subjects
- although primarily concerned with landscape, several Hudson River School painters, beginning with Cole, also produced popular allegories embodying literary, historical, and religious themes. They also often incorporated these themes in their seemingly “pure” landscapes.

Seminar Structure

Discussion will fall into three parts:

- **Part I** will focus on the art of Thomas Cole, the school's Founding Father
- **Part II** will examine the vision of the leaders of the school at the height of its popularity
- **Part III** will take up the work of artists today known as "Luminists" (Kensett, Gifford). While Cole, Church, Bierstadt, et al. projected a heroic vision of the American landscape on outsize canvases, the "Luminists," working on a much smaller scale, attempted to portray American nature in its quieter moments.

Seminar Themes

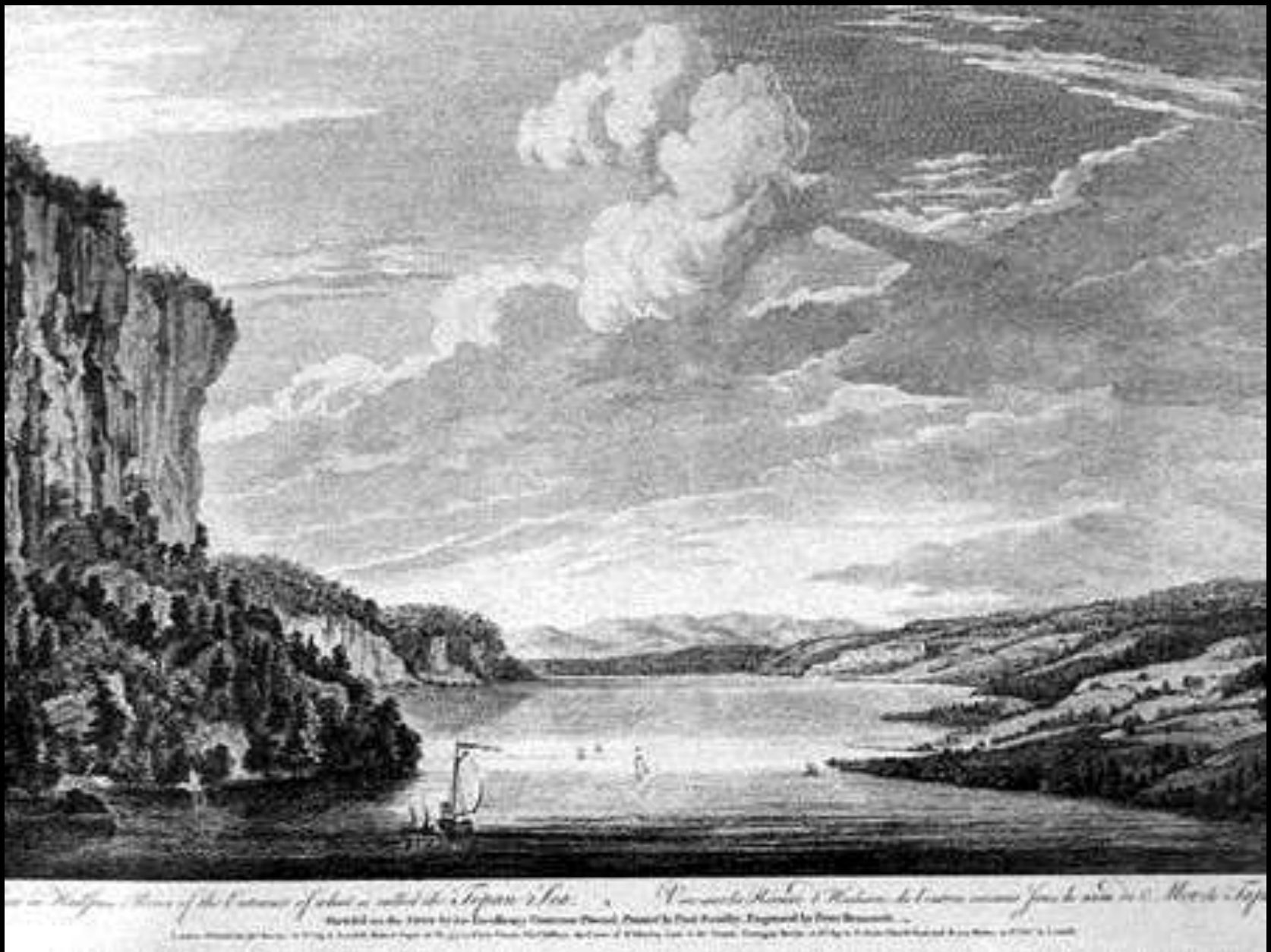
- The beliefs—especially Manifest Destiny—that inspired the Hudson River School artists
- The unique “panoramic” style they developed to express those beliefs.

Key Terms

- landscape (considered as an art form)
- topographical landscape
- the beautiful
- the sublime
- the picturesque
- pastoral
- prospect
- panorama and panoramic
- telescopic
- artistic or aesthetic sensibility.

Part I

The Art of Thomas Cole



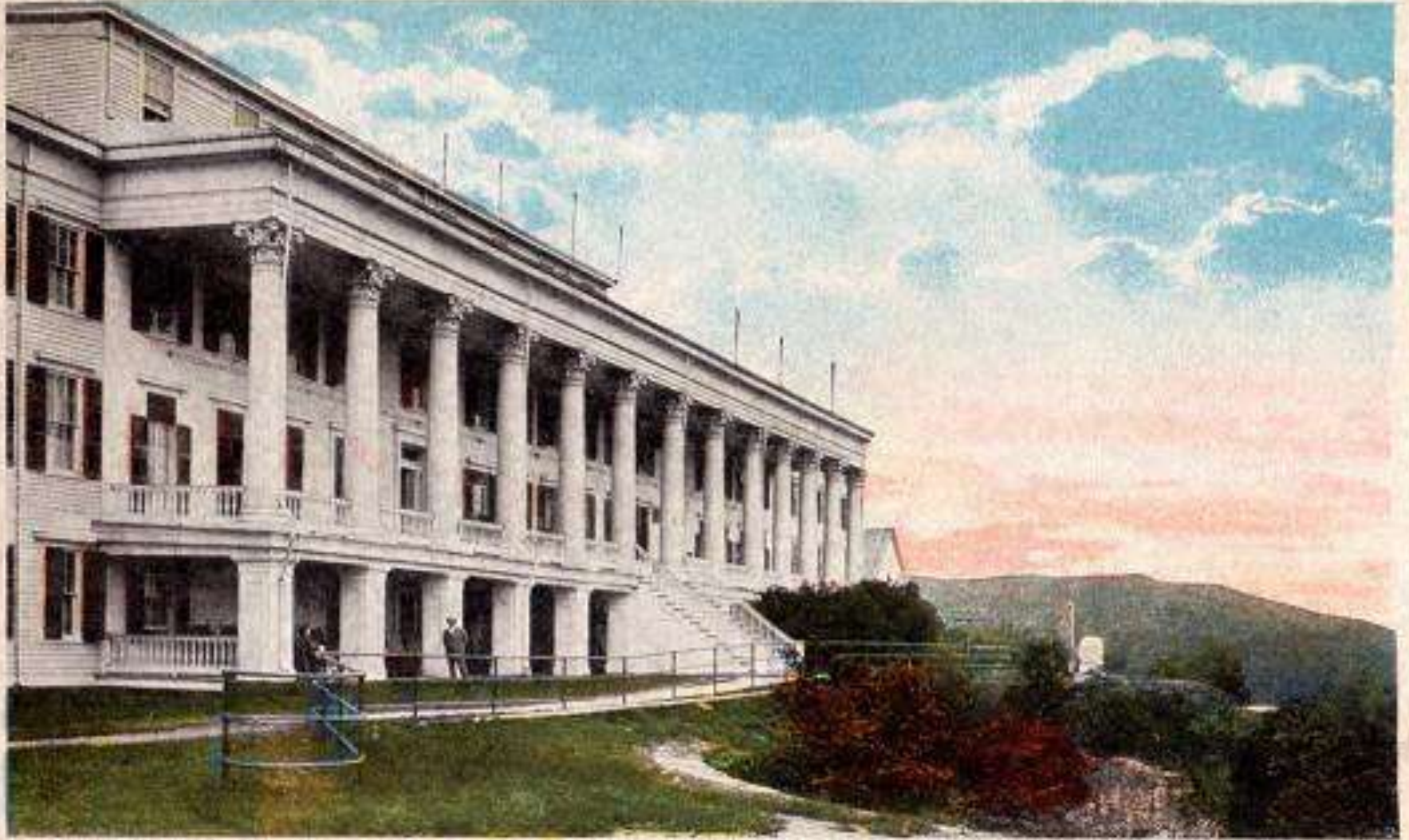
Capt. Pownell, *Hudson's River View*, 1761 engraving by Paul Sanby, New York State Library
<http://www.common-place.org/vol-06/no-02/lessons/>



Alvin Fisher (1792-1863), *A General View of the Falls of Niagara*, 1820, oil on canvas, 34 3/8 x 48 1/8 in. (87.2 x 122.3 cm), Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_General_View_of_the_Falls_of_Niagara,_1820,_by_Alvan_Fisher_-_SAAM_-_DSC00862.JPG₁₂



William G. Wall and John Hill, *The Palisades, No. 19, The Hudson River Portfolio No. 19*, 1823, hand colored aquatint and engraving, 14 1/8 x 21 1/4 in. (35.9 x 53.9 cm), private collection <http://metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/357126?img=1#fullscreen>



102. CATSKILL MOUNTAIN HOUSE, OTIS SUMMIT, CATSKILL MOUNTAINS, N. Y.

Postcard, Catskill Mountain House, ca. 1900.



Matthew Brady (?), *Thomas Cole*, c. 1846, daguerreotype,
National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/dag/item/2004663910/>



Thomas Cole (1801-1848), *Lake with Dead Trees*, 1825, oil on canvas, 27 x 33 3/4 in. (68.6 x 85.7 cm), Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio
<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/thomas-cole/lake-with-dead-trees-catskill-1825>

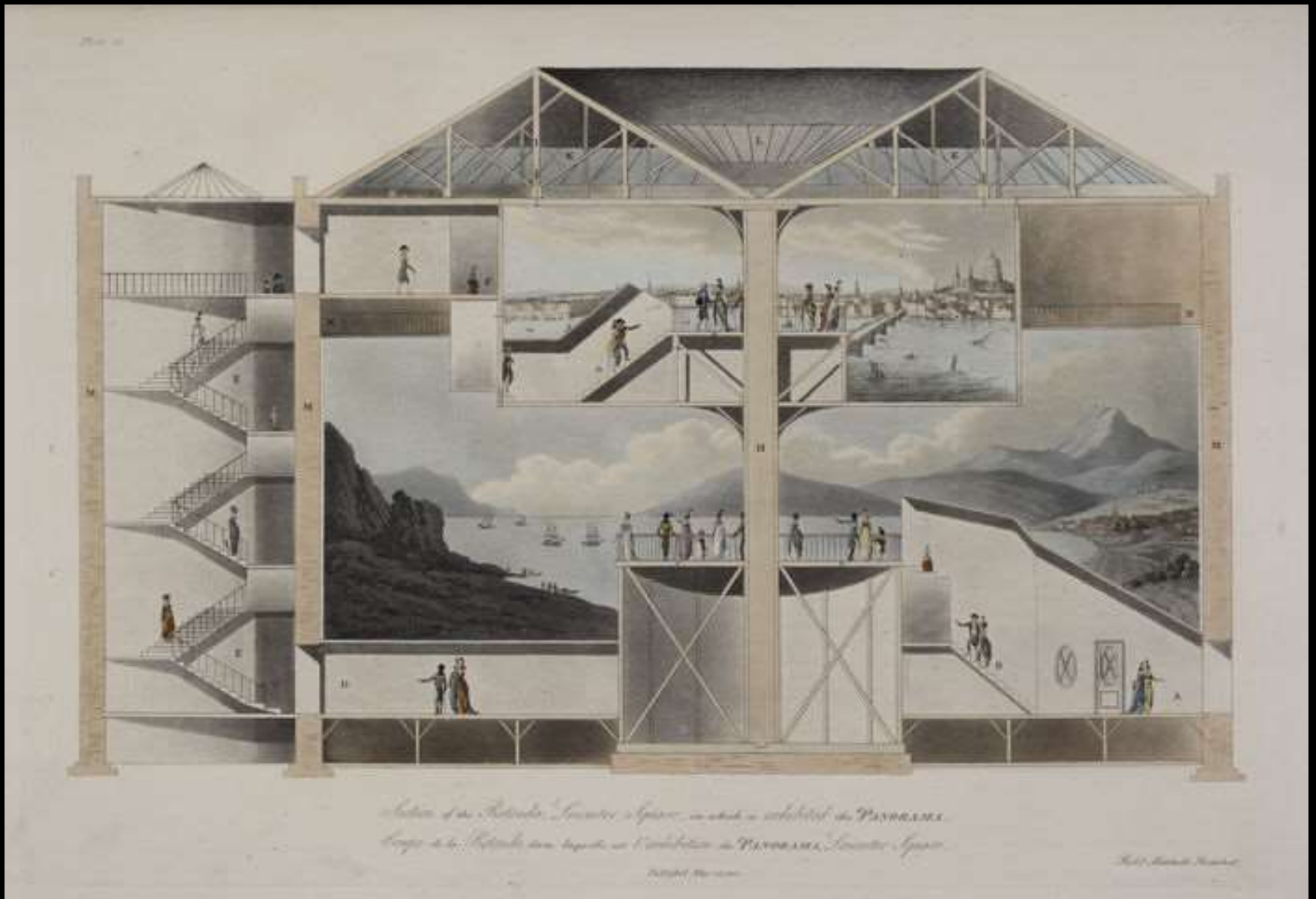


Thomas Cole (1801–1848), *The Falls of Kaaterskill*, 1826, oil on canvas, 43 x 36 in. (109.22 x 91.44 cm), formerly the Warner Collection of American Fine and Decorative Arts, Gulf States Paper Corporation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, current location unknown

<http://www.explorethomascole.org/tour/items/14/>

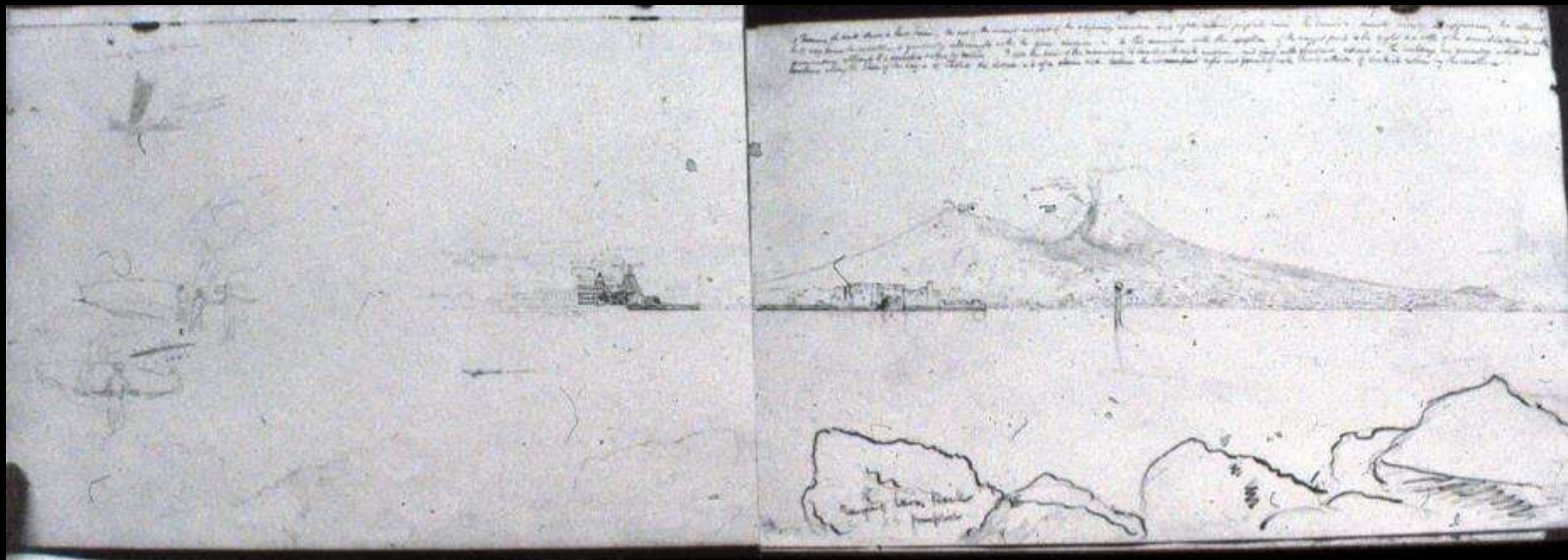


Thomas Cole (1801–1848), *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51½ x 76 in. (130.8 x 193 cm),
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/08.228>



Robert Barker and Robert Burford, *Panorama*, London, 1795, hand colored engraving. The first circular panorama showing the English fleet at Spithead (bottom), and London (top).

<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2007/v/n46/016130ar.html?vue=figtab&origine=integral&imID=im2&formatimg=imPIGr>



Thomas Cole, *Drawing of the Bay of Naples*, 1831, Sketchbook, Detroit Institute of Arts



Thomas Cole, *Drawing of the View from Mt. Holyoke*, c. 1833, Sketchbook, Detroit Institute of Arts



Thomas Cole (1801–1848), *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)*, 1836, oil on canvas, 51½ x 76 in. (130.8 x 193 cm),
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/08.228>



The Oxbow, details

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/08.228>



Thomas Cole (1801–1848), *View on the Catskill, Early Autumn, 1836-37*, oil on canvas, 39 x 63 in. (99.1 x 160cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/10501>



View on the Catskill, Early Autumn, details
<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/10501>



Thomas Cole (1801–1848), *View on the Catskill, Early Autumn, 1836-37*, oil on canvas, 39 x 63 in. (99.1 x 160cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/10501>



Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire* (series), 1836, New-York Historical Society
(reconstruction of the original installation)



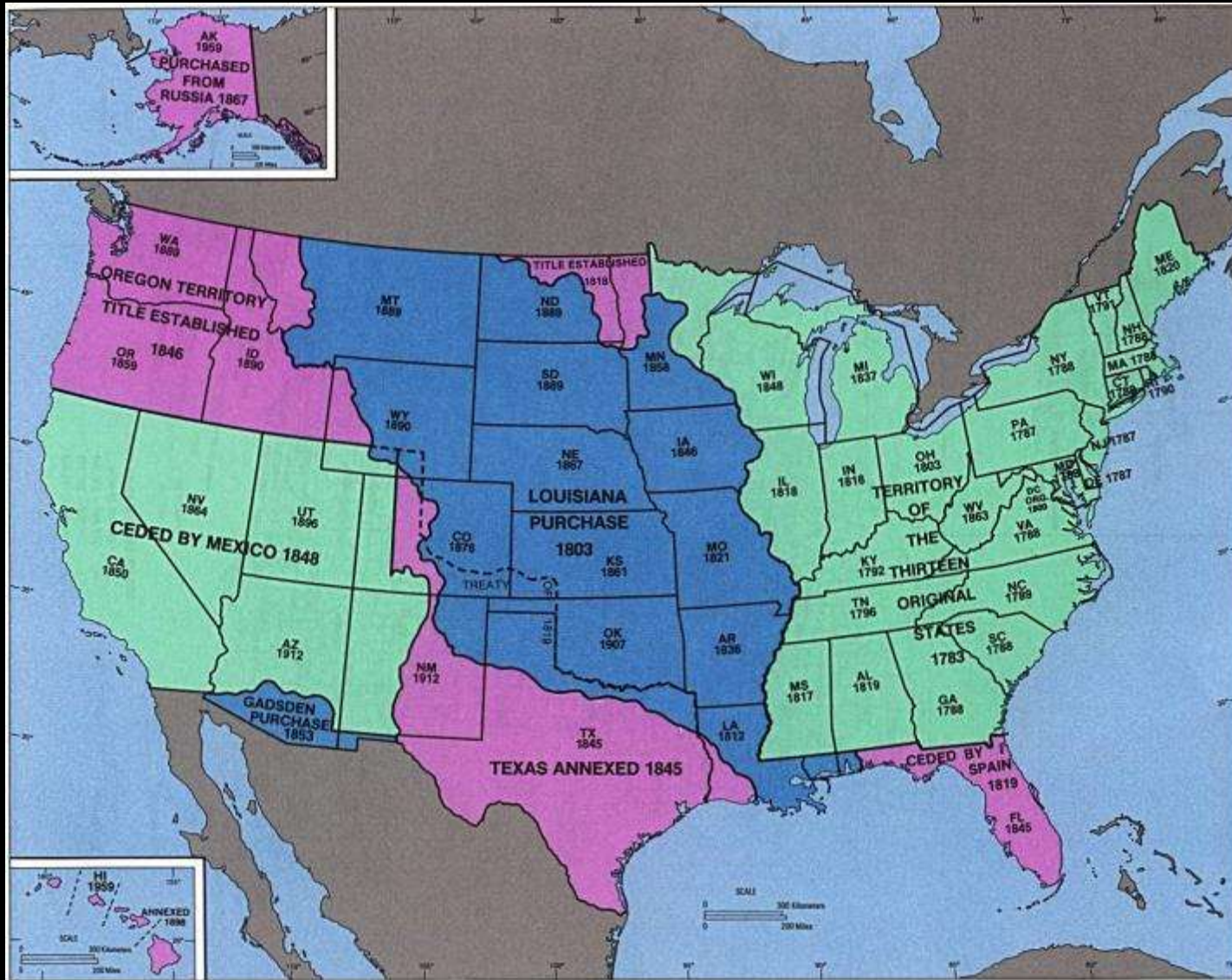
Emanuel Leutze (1816-1868), *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way*
(mural study, U.S. Capitol), 1861, oil on canvas, 3¼ x 43 3/8 in. (84.5 x 110.1 cm.)

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC

<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=14569>

Part II

The Hudson River School at its Height



U.S. Territorial Growth in the Nineteenth Century, U.S. Bureau of the Census
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/territory.jpg



ACROSS THE CONTINENT.

WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY.

Fanny Palmer (1812-1876), *Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, 1868, color lithograph, 23.78 x 32.20 in. (60.4 x 81.8 cm), published by Currier and Ives, The Library of Congress, Washington, DC

<http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/308328.html?mulR=3382>



Jasper F. Cropsey (1823-1900), *Starrucca Viaduct, Pennsylvania*, 1865, oil on canvas,
22.36 x 36.38 in. (56.8 x 92.4 cm), Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio

<http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/asset-viewer/starrucca-viaduct-pennsylvania/dwHDLmC-W3dE7g>



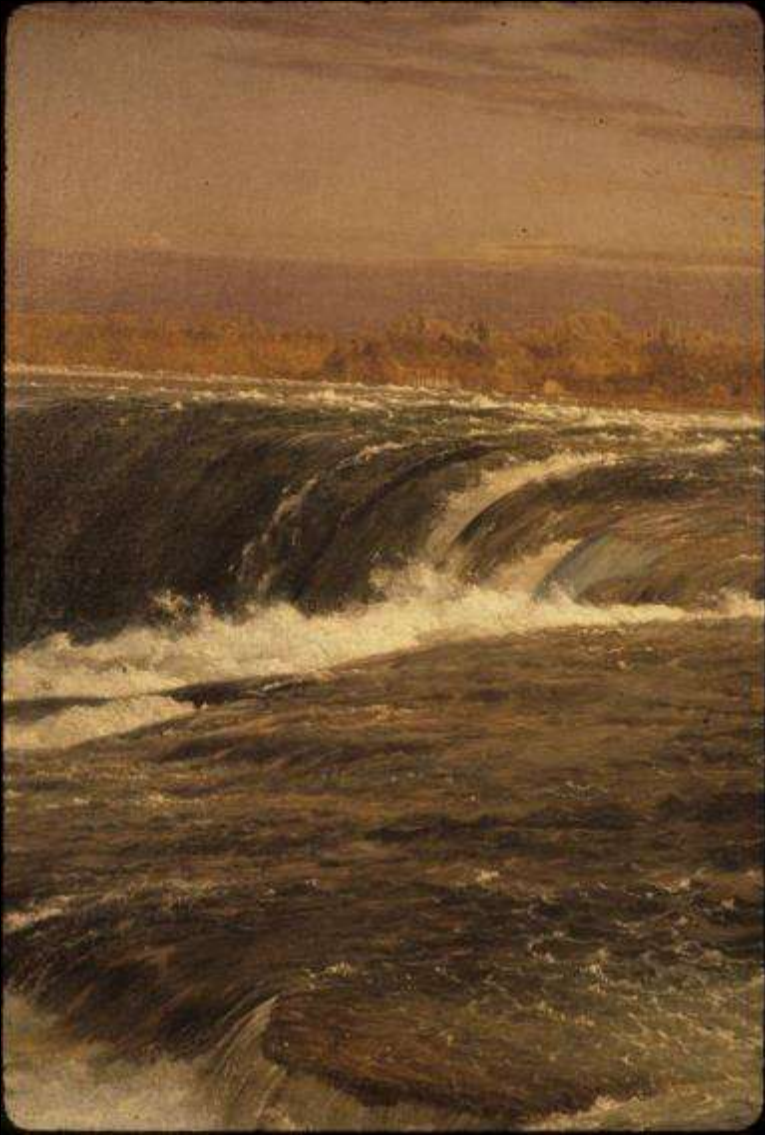
Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), *Niagara*, 1857, oil on canvas,
41.9 x 90.5 in. (106.5 x 229.9 cm), The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
<http://collection.corcoran.org/collection/work/niagara>



Thomas Cole, *Distant View of Niagara Falls*, 1830, oil on panel,
18 7/8 x 23 7/8 in. (47.9 x 60.6 cm), Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/90048>



Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), *Niagara*, 1857, oil on canvas,
41.9 x 90.5 in. (106.5 x 229.9 cm), The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
<http://collection.corcoran.org/collection/work/niagara>



Church, *Niagara* (detail)



Cole, *The Oxbow* (detail)



William H. Bartlett, *The Terrapin Tower*, 1839, engraving, R. Brandard



Frederick Church (1824-1900), *Heart of the Andes*, 1859, oil on canvas, 68 1/8 x 119 1/4 in. (167.9 x 302.9 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York
<http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/10481>



Photo, *Heart of the Andes* in a facsimile of its original frame

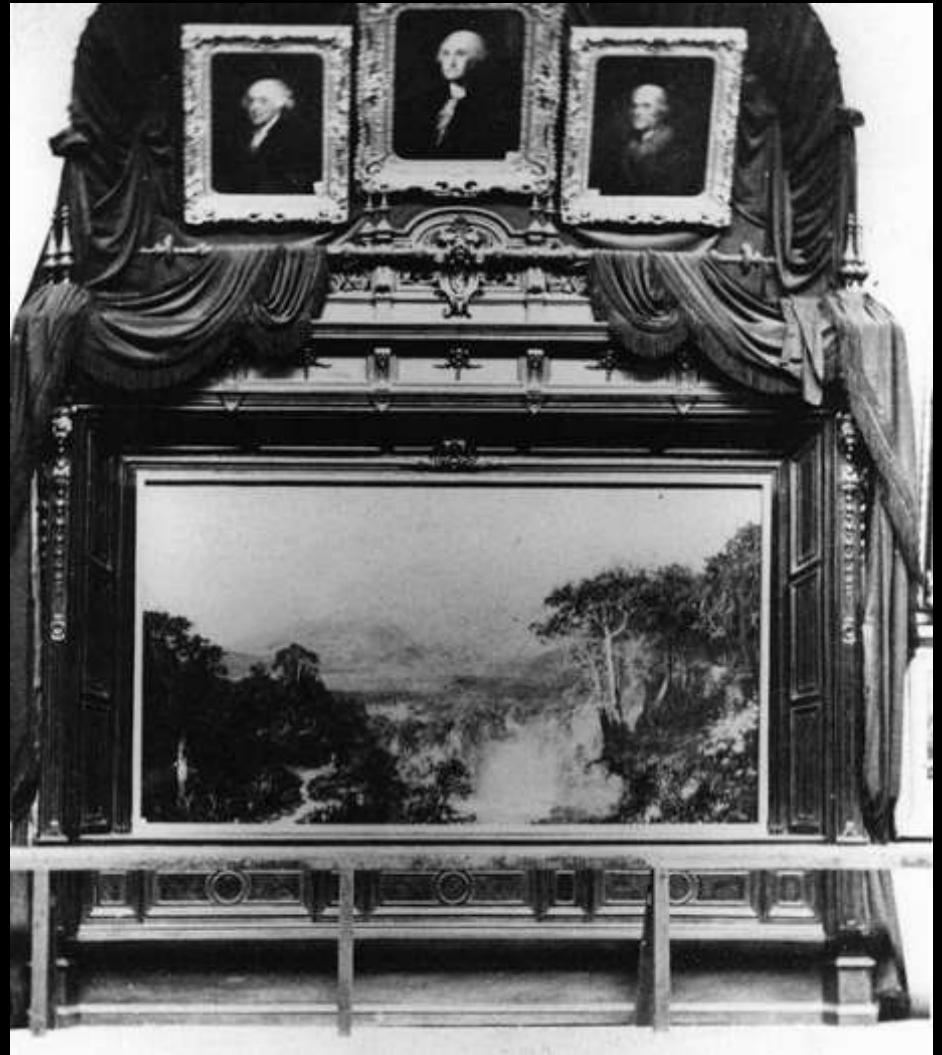


Photo and wood engraving: *Heart of the Andes* exhibited at the Metropolitan Sanitary Fair 1864



Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), *The Rocky Mountains: Landers Peak*, 1863, oil on canvas,
120.75 x 73.5 in., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/07.123>



Albert Bierstadt, *Valley Down Yosemite Valley, California*, 1868, Oil on canvas. 64 1/2 x 96 1/2 in. (163.83 x 245.11 cm) Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama
<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/albert-bierstadt/looking-down-yosemite-valley-california-1865>



Thomas Moran (1837-1926), *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas, 144 x 84 in.,
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/moran/grand.htm>



Thomas Moran (1837-1926), *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas, 144 x 84 in.,
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/moran/grand.htm>



Thomas Moran (1837-1926), *Chasm of the Colorado*, 1873-74, oil on canvas, 144 x 84 in.,
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=17814>



Asher B. Durand (1796-1886), *The Beeches*, 1845, oil on canvas, 60 3/8 x 48 3/8 in.
(153.4 x 122.2 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/15.30.59>



Asher B. Durand (1796-1886), *Kindred Spirits*, 1849,
Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/15.30.59>



Durand, Kindred Spirits (detail)



Asher B. Durand, *Study from Nature, Stratton Notch, Vermont*, 1853, oil on canvas,
18 x 23 3/4 in. (45.7 x 60.3 cm), New-York Historical Society, New York, NY
<http://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/full.php?ID=20764>



Asher B. Durand, *Woodland Interior*, c. 1855, oil on canvas mounted on panel, Addison Gallery of American Art, Philips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AsherDurand-Study_Woodland_Interior.jpg

Part III

The Luminists



John F. Kensett (1816-1872), *Shrewsbury River*, 1859, oil on canvas,
8 1/2 x 30 1/2 in. (47 x 77.5 cm), New-York Historical Society, New York, NY

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:John_F_Kensett_-_View_of_the_Shrewsbury_River,_New_Jersey_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg



John F. Kensett (1816-1872), *Passing Off of the Storm*, 1872, oil on canvas, 11 3/8 x 24 1/2 in.
(28.9 x 62.2 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
<http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/11319>



John F. Kensett , *Long Neck Point from Contentment Island, Darien, CT*, 1870-1872, oil on canvas,
15 3/8 x24 3/8 in. (39.05 x 61.91 cm), Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



Sanford Robinson Gifford, *The Palisades*, 1877, oil on canvas board, 15/16 x 11 1/2 in.

(15.1 x 29.2 cm Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts

[http://emuseum.williams.edu:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People\\$004012542/0?t:state:flow=162d7b05-6387-4bb3-abcf-24e143b5e651](http://emuseum.williams.edu:8080/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People$004012542/0?t:state:flow=162d7b05-6387-4bb3-abcf-24e143b5e651)



Sanford Robinson Gifford, *Mist Rising in the Sunset in the Catskills*, 1861, Oil on canvas
6 3/4 x 9 1/2 in. (17.2 x 24.1 cm), Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois
<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/71971>



Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823–1880), *A Gorge in the Mountains (Kauterskill Clove)*, 1862, oil on canvas, 48 x 39 7/8 in. (121.9 x 101.3 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/15.30.62>



Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *Clipper Ship 'Southern Cross' Leaving Boston Harbor, 1851*, oil on canvas, 25.3 x 38 in. (64.14 × 96.52 cm), Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Clipper_Ship_Southern_Cross_Leaving_Boston_Harbor_1851.jpeg



Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay*, 1862, oil on canvas,
15.7 x 26 in. (40 × 66 cm), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/owl-s-head-penobscot-bay-maine-33195>



Fitz Henry Lane, *Ships and an Approaching Storm, Owl's Head off Owl's Head, Maine*, 1860, oil on canvas, 24 x 38 1/8 in., private collection



Lane, *Ships and an Approaching Storm*, detail



Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1804), *Summer Showers*, oil on canvas, 13.1 x 26.2 in.
(33.4 × 66.6 cm), The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY

http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/946/Summer_Showers/set/53d36693d07d6f9cc56159adf520c1c3?referring-q=47.8



Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904), *Lake George*, 1862, oil on canvas,
26 x 49.4 in. (66.04 × 125.41 cm), Karolik Col., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
<http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/lake-george-33800>

Final Slide

Thank you