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LIFE AND WORKS OF ALBERT BIERSTADT.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1963
Fine Arts

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LIFE AND WORKS OF ALBERT BIERSTADT

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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1963

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INTRODUCTION

The American painter, Albert Bierstadt, was born in 1830. He died on February 18, 1902. An obituary notice in the Boston Evening Transcript of Wednesday, February 26, 1902, stated that his passing "caused the merest ripple on the surface of the art pool." The same article quoted a contemporary artist as having said, "I did not know he was alive until I saw he had died."

During Bierstadt's career, which embraced that full and expansive second half of the nineteenth century in America, the artist had gained and lost an international reputation as a landscape painter. He had exhibited in London, Paris, and Berlin; was admitted to the courts of Europe; had been awarded the Legion of Honor by France, the Order of St. Stanislaus by Russia, and a medal by the Sultan of Turkey. Yet, he died virtually unremembered by his fellow artists.

When Bierstadt's gigantic painting, Storm in the Rocky Mountains, was exhibited in New York, during the winter of 1865-66, a banner hung across the entire width of Broadway announcing the event, and people paid admission for the privilege of viewing approximately eighty-four square feet of western scenery. That the artist could demand and receive up to $35,000 for each of his works attests, at least, to the monetary value

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1Biographical data in this study has been drawn from a number of sources, of which the most important are discussed on p. 4.

2The painting was destroyed in a fire in Philadelphia in 1869.
placed in his paintings by his contemporaries. While in the nineteenth century, he was one of the most popular and perhaps the most financially successful of American painters, he was always a target for contemporary critics, and beginning in the 1870's his reputation began to wane. Clarence King, geologist, author, and critic of the arts, who had conversed with Ruskin, stated in his book *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*:

> Its all Bierstadt and Bierstadt and Bierstadt nowadays! What has he done but twist and skew and distort and discolor and be-little and be-pretty this whole doggoned country? Why his mountains are too high and slim; they'd blow over in one of our fall winds ... .

Such a view grudgingly acknowledged the sensational popularity of Bierstadt but also indicates the severity of the attacks upon the painter's style.

Two years before King's book was published, the painter had become involved in a public controversy in the press about the authenticity of some of his paintings. The death of his wife Rosalie, and the burning of his Hudson River villa, Malkasten, added to his misfortunes in the 1880's. In 1889, a committee of New York artists in charge of the Paris Exposition refused to hang his *L ast of the Buffalo*. Likewise, Bierstadt's *The Landing of Columbus*, which was painted especially for the World’s Columbian Exhibition of 1893, was not acceptable to the

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2. Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.
exhibition committee. By 1895, the painter's amassed wealth had so dwindled that he was forced into bankruptcy.

Following the artist's death, his name and work dropped into complete obscurity. Bierstadt's second wife, Mary Hicks Stewart, found difficulty in disposing of the remaining canvases in his studio. The public taste had so changed that dealers in the 1920's even destroyed the artist's paintings because of their huge bulk; and as late as the 1940's, a roll of two hundred Bierstadt canvases was acquired at an auction for two dollars each.

Today, Albert Bierstadt's painting is being rediscovered. His works, in the early part of the twentieth century relegated to museum storage rooms, are now being placed in permanent galleries. "Lost" works are emerging from private collections, and both large canvases and small sketches are sought by dealers. It is in these latter sketches, particularly, that the twentieth century is finding unexpected qualities, elements of vitality and spontaneity not usually associated with Bierstadt's grandiose topographical scenes.

Thus, Albert Bierstadt presents for the historian of American art the unusual problem of an artist both praised and maligned by his contemporaries, but one who belied his critics by achieving phenomenal success within a short period of time, and who equally belied his supporters by falling into obscurity within his own lifetime. The fame

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and obscurity affecting the life of Albert Bierstadt presents a seeming paradox. The explanation will be revealed through a study of the nature of Bierstadt's popular appeal, his rise to influence, the change of taste within his lifetime, and the meaning of Bierstadt's work to his contemporaries. Yet, these answers cannot be provided short of a definitive examination of the artist's career, a career which becomes significant only within the setting of a particular time. Such an explanation of the man and his work is the principle aim of this study.

At first thought, research on a major figure who left the scene, so to speak, only yesterday, would seem to be a simple, straightforward task. However, this is not the case. One is immediately troubled by a lack of strong source material as well as a lack of precedent in approach and method of investigation. For example, there has been no major biography produced, no autobiography was written, there were no retrospective or memorial exhibitions held, and no catalogue of the painter's works was compiled. Furthermore, essential family documents were destroyed when Bierstadt's home on the Hudson River burned in 1882.

The evidence that does exist is scattered among historical societies and within the private collections of distant Bierstadt relatives. By assembling the numerous autographed letters, documents and diaries, a rather comprehensive survey can be made of the painter's extensive travels and personal acquaintances. Periodicals long out of print, such as The Crayon, The Cosmopolitan Art Journal, and the New Path, as well as contemporaneous newspaper comments, contain original source material related to the artist's exhibitions, reviews, and activities. Perhaps, the most important sources are the hundreds of
forgotten, lost, and unpublished examples of Bierstadt's art.

Predetermined methods or approaches, useful for other historical periods are far from satisfying when grafted upon the present subject. For example, a Bierstadt painting does not lend itself well to Wölflinian analysis; on the basis of Wölflin's criteria one is obliged to label the Bierstadt style as manneristic. Likewise, if one searches for similarities to European prototypes one inevitably concludes that his canvases are half American, half continental, and represent, if anything, a "Mid-Atlantic" style. The question of the character and relative amount of European and American formal elements in Bierstadt's paintings will be discussed briefly, but is not central to an understanding of the artist. Similarly, placing Bierstadt within the chronological development of the Hudson River School of painting demands comparison with other American landscape painters whose life and works are not one whit better known than Bierstadt's. Nevertheless, all these general approaches to available source material are germane to our problem, though not primary. Style, foreign influences, the distinctive contributions of American mid-nineteenth century landscape painting, and Bierstadt's place within its development will necessarily become a part of the discussion. The dominant outlook, however, must be broader, reaching beyond the conventional horizon of research in American Art.

If the art of Albert Bierstadt demands a more illuminating method than that hitherto applied to American Art, it is appropriate to make some brief comments about the organization and method to be employed in the present study. The formal emphasis found in contemporary art and criticism has tended to conceal the true meaning of nineteenth century
American art.

The intent of this dissertation is to study the art of Bierstadt in its relation to the artist's life and times. However, it is life and circumstance which illumine the understanding of all art and are prior to it. Hence, an investigation with an historical aim must, for the most part, start with circumstance and proceed from there to the art. In proceeding the other way, from art to circumstance, one risks a history of art which is largely appreciation or speculation.

Assuming the proposed sequence of investigation to be the soundest, our study employs as source material, two types of information. The first is drawn from evidence that is biographical and social. This material deals principally with the artist's personality, travels, acquaintances, and with his cultural and geographical environment; in short, with those sources of ideas most likely to affect his art.

The second type of material involves contemporaneous art theory and criticism, the chronological development of the painter's works, and the specific characteristics of Bierstadt's form.

These two bases for study should not be considered as isolated units, nor even as parts of a diptych; but, instead, should be viewed as segments of a scroll in which the accumulation of detail creates the total image of an age, a man, and his work.

Underlying our method is an assumption, which will determine the treatment of our subject. This assumption is known as the Turner thesis, or the "frontier hypothesis." The idea was originally formulated in a

paper entitled "On the Significance of the Frontier in American History," read by the historian, Frederick Jackson Turner, at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, in 1893. Turner believed that the western expansion during the nineteenth century made such a strong impact upon the American mind that it molded the American character and formed the pattern of popular aspiration of the ideal. Following Turner's presentation of his thesis, American history was rewritten in terms of the influence of the frontier on American thought. Henry Nash Smith points out that "it is still by far the most familiar interpretation of the American past," and that the present academic quibble among scholars over the validity of Turner's approach exists because it concerns "the image of themselves which many — perhaps most — Americans of the present day cherish, an image that defines what Americans think of their past, and what they propose to make of themselves in the future."¹

If the "frontier hypothesis," is applied to a study of American landscape painting, some interesting questions arise. For one, since American landscape painting grew in popularity at the same time as the nation was expanding, is there any relationship between the form and meaning of American landscape painting and the form and meaning of the westward expansion? Secondly, assuming that a parallel did exist, does the huge size, the piling up of detail, the extended horizon, the vast space, (all of which characterize the painting of Bierstadt) indicate a distinctive American feeling for space during the exploration and settling of the vacant West? Similarly, did the meaning of a Bierstadt canvas in any way mirror the image of the West as the painter's contemporaries

saw it? Furthermore, as Bierstadt's popularity failed, did the failure reflect a corresponding shift or crisis in the attitude towards westward expansion?

Such questions are rarely, if ever, specifically asked in conjunction with American Art. Before answers can be given, new categories of interpretation are needed. New evidence seemingly unrelated to art, but actually most revealing, is to be found in the writings of the champions of westward expansion, William Gilpin and Thomas Hart Benton, as well as in the literature of the geographer, Alexander von Humboldt. These and similar sources, when carefully examined, provide rich insights to the meaning of American Art. Even the hasheesh visions of the drug addict, Fitz Hugh Ludlow, and essays of Edgar Allen Poe become meaningful in studying the relationship of expansion to the landscape image. Application of the "frontier hypothesis" and examination of the possible relations between the paintings of Albert Bierstadt and westward movement demonstrate that there may be found in nineteenth century landscape painting some meanings which twentieth century eyes no longer see.

Within this general framework, the uniqueness of Bierstadt as an artist will also be explored.
Figure 1 - Albert Bierstadt
CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS (1830-1853)

Life in New Bedford

Albert Bierstadt was born in Solingen, Germany, in 1830. His parents, Henry and Christina Bierstadt, sailing from Rotterdam on the one-hundred-eighty-six-ton brig Hope, emigrated with seventy-six other souls to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Albert was two years old at this time. New Bedford sea-faring people had been chasing whales for over a quarter of a century prior to the arrival of the Bierstadt family in 1832. It was a colorful and prosperous era for the nineteenth century Massachusetts seaport. This was the port from which Melville sailed on his voyage abroad the whaling vessel Acushnet. Albert Bierstadt was ten years old when the author of Moby Dick, in 1840, visited the Seamen's Bethel, the chapel on Johnny Cake Hill where sailors meditated before leaving New Bedford on their whalers. Unfortunately, the outlines of Bierstadt's early life are only a dimly revealed part of his "full-length" portrait. In the absence of substantial biographical facts

1Biographical material on Bierstadt's early life has been drawn from several sources. The major ones are: (1) Diary of Esther Osborne Mayer, sister-in-law of Albert Bierstadt. (2) Scrapbook of Rosalie Osborne Mayer, niece of the artist. (3) Author's correspondence with Dr. Albert Morton Turner and Edward Hale Bierstadt, both of whom are nephews of the artist. Many biographical details have been determined by a comparative study of the above listed sources, along with others; therefore, reference cannot always be stated specifically.
about the painter's youth, we are obliged to substitute a wide-angle view, a panorama of life in New Bedford of the 1830's and 40's. These decades span Albert Bierstadt's formative period.

Bierstadt's father, Henry, had a military career and had fought against Napoleon while serving for over nine years in the army of the King of Hanover. In the New World, Henry established himself in a fitting profession for a resident of a whaling port; the New Bedford Directory of 1836 lists him as cooper living at the corner of Mill and Ray Streets. Across the street from this very residence, Albert Ryder was born in 1847. The modest five room dwelling of the Bierstadts, once used as a tavern, housed the whale oil lamps and a portrait of Martin Luther which the Bierstadts had brought from Germany. It was in this dwelling that the first meetings were held by early Methodists. From its stairway, Jessie Lee, the apostle of Methodism in New England, delivered, in 1795, the first Methodist sermon ever preached in New Bedford.

As one of the world's major whaling ports in the nineteenth century, New Bedford was materially prosperous. The opulent mansions along County Street, which stood in contrast with the dark nautical taverns that Melville described in Moby Dick, reflected the prosperity and acute business sense of local sea captains. However, the worldliness of many of New Bedford's citizens was also paralleled by a certain

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sense of piety which caused a restrictive attitude in morals and religion. In 1793, the launching of the Rebecca, a local whaling vessel, created a controversy that revealed some local citizens' attitude toward icons. Prior to launching, a figure-head had been placed upon the vessel; its owners, members of the Society of Friends, demanded that it be removed. New Bedford youth retaliated by holding a mock funeral and burying Rebecca's figurehead in the sand upon the shore.¹

New Bedford religious austerity can also be seen in its attitude towards the theatre and alcohol. In spite of the fact that the Siamese Twins had been exhibited in New Bedford for a week in the 1830's, as late as 1840, the townspeople, by secret ballot, prohibited the issuing of licenses for circuses and theatrical performances.² One year later, in 1841, alcohol was limited for "medicinal" purposes and use "in the arts," and a resolution was passed on the consumption of intoxicating liquor as a beverage, "declaring it a poison, deeming it the cause of much misery in the town."³

Piety pervaded New Bedford life, but practicality was also a part of its character. During a church quarrel in 1816, half of a New Bedford meeting congregation sawed its building in two and removed its part elsewhere by ox train. Likewise, the trustees of the local Athenæum thought that a study of nature was essentially for practical ends. They

²The Morning Mercury (New Bedford, Mass.), October 12, 1937.
³Ibid.
advised New Bedford youth to "liberally patronize the Atheneum," which was established in 1840, and to "take advantage of the books and collections in the natural history cabinets, thereby developing their minds and preparing themselves for a thorough knowledge of those things most useful in a business life." 

Though there were these pious and practical elements in the New Bedford character, there was also another ingredient, the romantic element. This found expression in the urge to travel, in exotic foods and pastries, elaborate ceremonies, spectacles, — generally in a high tenor of life.

Many of New Bedford's citizens were world travelers and some of the city's youth, often before fifteen years of age, went away to sea. For those who could not go on a whaling voyage around the world, journeys of the imagination could be made by reading the numerous travel books available in the Free Public Library, established in 1852. On the shelves of this library, which was one of the first municipal ones to be established in New England, could be found travel books about the continents of South America, the regions of South Africa and the Arctic Sea, the islands of the West Indies and about the countries of China, Russia, Cuba, Egypt, Arabia, France, Italy and Germany. The presence of Africans, Greeks and Orientals on the streets of New Bedford, which Melville described, attested to the cosmopolitanism of the city's 11,000 population. This atmosphere alone could well have aroused New Bedford youth to travel.

1Ellis, op. cit., p. 280.

That cosmopolitanism was not just in fancy, but also in actuality, is evidenced by an account of the contents of a typical New Bedford pantry:

... There were currants and figs and dates, cluster raisins, almonds, walnuts—grapes packed in cork, Messina oranges and lemons, and sweet oil ... brought by clipper captain relations who sailed to the Mediterranean. There was guava jelly, and also in season pineapples and coconuts from merchant men who went to the West Indies; and chutney, curry and preserved ginger and tamarinds from the East Indies .... There were wines and liquors from all over the world for much was used in cooking—white and red wine, calet, port, cherry, madeira and brandy ... vanilla beans in the pod were bottled in alcohol; dried oranges and lemon peel and preserved citron, brown sugar, white loaf sugar ... mustard seed and dried herbs (thyme, marjoram, sage and savory) dried sweet peppers ... caraway seeds for cookies, sea moss, isinglass (or gelatin), molasses, cider, vinegar, salt peter, dried apples.*

On a shelf in a New Bedford kitchen, these spices and exotic foods suggested worldwide concern but the city's interest in food was also expressed by a native art form, scrimshaw, those delicately carved jagging wheels which were carved from a whale's tooth by whalingmen at sea. These wheels were used for crimping pastry. Scrimshaw was used by New Bedford wives to ornament the crusts of pies, but it was Phebe Mendall, a maker of wedding cakes in New Bedford, who raised local pastry to the level of an art form.

Phebe, a Quaker, turned to the making of pastry in the early 1830's, when her husband drowned at sea. From her kitchen, "ship shape as vessel's deck at sea," with whitewashed ceiling, putty colored walls and pumpkin yellow floor, issued colossal cakes, the ingredients of which

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assumed gigantic proportions—4 ounces of mace, clove, and nutmeg, 1 pint of water, 1 quart of wine, 1 quart of yeast, 6 pounds of butter, 7 pounds of sugar, 8 pounds of currants, 12 pounds of flour, and 40 eggs\(^1\).

Phebe's reputation extended beyond the New Bedford area, for even Bostonians made the journey to purchase one of her creations. Other New Englanders consulted her book, *The New Bedford Practical Receipt Book*, first published in 1858, of which three editions were printed. There was seldom any wedding or dinner of social significance where her skills were not on exhibition; and, perhaps even Emerson, who was serving an interim pastorate in New Bedford in 1834, experienced her technique.

Ceremonious display of food in New Bedford was as important as the making and decorating of pastry. An opportunity was offered to display food in a landscape setting, when the Providence Light Infantry were guests of the New Bedford Guard at an encampment held for several days during the 1840's. The following account is quoted from the records of the Guards:

The ladies of New Bedford have long been distinguished for their elegance and taste, but in the beautiful arrangement for the picnic at Blackmer's Grove they certainly exceeded themselves. The table extended nearly the entire length of the grove, and the snowy drapery, the festoons and wreaths, the flowers and luscious fruits formed the most elegant display ever witnessed . . . \(^2\)

The uniforms of the Guards must have added further color to the spectacular still life:

The Guards wore a blue uniform, swallow-tail coats and trousers trimmed in white, black leather belts, cartridge

\(^1\) *Ibid.*

\(^2\) *Ellis, op. cit.*, p. 282.
boxes held in position by broad white cross belts over the shoulders.\textsuperscript{1}

almost any occasion became an excuse for elaborate display. The desire for spectacle extended to the mourning of national heroes. In 1841, resolutions were passed to publicly lament the death of William Henry Harrison. "A procession was formed at the town hall comprising military and artillery companies . . . 1000 persons marched to solemn music by the band through the principle streets . . . ."\textsuperscript{2}

It was this occasional high tenor of life, with its elaborate processions and colorful display, to which Bierstadt was exposed as a youth. While all this must have stirred his imagination, there was one particular event in New Bedford in 1840 that would have caused a great impression on a boy of ten years of age. It was the opening of the first railway to New Bedford.

Because the rails had been purchased in England, the English consul was present. The most distinguished dignitary was the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The train brought the notables to New Bedford where three hundred people made the excursion run to Taunton on July 4th and a new era of travel opened for New Bedford.\textsuperscript{3}

Perhaps it was this event, combined with the numerous travel books available in the Public Library, that caused Bierstadt to see the romance of a voyage through the landscape, for at the age of twelve he was supposed to have written an imaginary account of a trip through the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 281.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 498.
Rocky Mountains. Although he may have read Long's account of a Trip to
the Rocky Mountains, then available in the local library, the archi-
tectural style of the train station would have suggested far away places.
It had attracted some attention in Boston, for one writer found it "sin-
gularly odd" and yet "appropriate" since it was built in the "Egyptian
style of architecture with ends in the imitation of the entrance to
catacombs."\(^1\) Here, not only travel through space, but also movement
through time was suggested to the imagination.

For a New Bedford Boy, who was not only interested in traveling
to unknown regions, but who was also interested in painting, there was a
form that combined the pictorial image and the urge to travel. Such an
art form could be seen in New Bedford when Bierstadt was eighteen years
old. The New Bedford Mercury of December 5, 1848, advertised the fol-
lowing:

\[
\text{THE PANORAMA — — — — — —
of a
WHALING VOYAGE AROUND
THE WORLD}
\]

Messrs. Purrington & Russel re-
spectfully give notice that their
great painting of a WHALING
VOYAGE AROUND THE
WORLD, being now completed
will be exhibited in a few days
at SEAR'S HALL.\(^2\)

The panorama, now in the possession of the Old Dartmouth Historical
Society in New Bedford, attracted large crowds and was a great success.

\(^1\) Ibid.

\(^2\) Quoted in The Bulletin, Old Dartmouth Historical Society and
The gigantic painting was a roll seven feet high and three hundred feet long. It was probably wound from one wooden roller onto another and accompanied by a lecture in the nature of a commentary.

As we shall observe later, the panoramic form had a great influence in the development of Bierstadt's style. Moreover, much of the early life in New Bedford will seem to have been influential in determining the painter's personality. First, though, let us examine more specifically the artistic activity in New Bedford and Bierstadt's early training prior to the time he literally made his first voyage, the journey which began a lifetime of continuous travel in Europe and across the North American continent.

**Early Training and Artistic Activity**

In addition to scrimshaw, wedding cakes, and a whaling panorama, New Bedford had other art forms. There were the clipper ship portraits done by Chinese painters and brought back from the Orient to New Bedford on whaling vessels. They were full of observation, but there was neither wetness nor terror about the gigantic waves that threatened the ships, and the inaccuracies in the rigging of the painted vessels must have amused local seamen. Nevertheless, they were close in form to the local artists' portraits of sea captains and their wives. Like the clipper-ship portraits, these New England images had little amplitude, and there was a Yankee clarity about their pinched, hard, engraverlike linear quality. Some New Bedford citizens in the early 1830's, who found this image too real, had their portraits painted by William A. Swain, known as the
"Gainsborough of Nantucket." He softened and powdered the local image a little and directed the eyes of his patrons only as far east as the mother country of England.

Of the local painters, William A. Wall was one of the oldest. Born in 1801, he had studied with Thomas Sully, and had sailed on a packet ship to Europe in 1832, the year that the Bierstadt family had emigrated to America. After studying in London, Paris, Florence, and Rome, he opened a studio in New Bedford in 1834. Wall had traveled with Emerson, N. P. Willis, Horatio Greenough and Samuel F. B. Morse, but his reputation remained a local one. He was interested especially in local events and scenes. Wall is best known for the chromo-lithograph of his painting, New Bedford Fifty Years Ago, a print that is sought by collectors.

John James Audubon visited New Bedford. He caused somewhat of a sensation walking the streets in his unusual attire and long flowing red hair. New Bedford, however, had its own local color in the person of Adam Van Beest, a Dutch painter from Rotterdam, who had settled in the whaling port. Noted for his hat with tassel hanging in back, he was thought to have idiosyncratic manners, and believed to be erratic and temperamental in behavior. Van Beest had already acquired a reputation in his own country, and he had accompanied Prince Henry of the Netherlands on a journey to the East. In New Bedford, he depicted "dispariring

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1 Undated and untitled clipping, Scrapbook of the Free Public Library of New Bedford, New Bedford, Mass.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
souls on a storm tossed wreck in an empty ocean," and on one occasion was known to have bragged about the "wetness of his water."\(^1\)

In a Van Beest painting, the water may have looked wetter than in the clipper ship portraits, but the painter shared with the Chinese the same problems in the rigging of American vessels. It was another New Bedford painter, William Bradford, who came to his assistance by giving the proper number of sails. He also shared a studio with the Dutch eccentric. Bradford became one of the most popular of American marine painters in the last half of the nineteenth century and made trips to Labrador and Greenland in chartered vessels, chasing icebergs much as New Bedford seamen searched for whales.

It was Benjamin Russell who designed *The Panorama of the Whaling Voyage Around the World*, which attracted such large crowds in New Bedford in 1848.\(^2\) Russell, who came from a propertied family in New Bedford, owned thirty-eight vessels and was also director of a local bank. The family's fortune seemed to have failed in 1832-33, at about the time the Bierstadts came to New Bedford. Following this, Russell went to New York; but in 1841 at the age of thirty-seven years, leaving his wife and three children, he sailed—probably as a cooper—in the ship *Kutusoff* for a four year whaling voyage around the world. Bound for Australia, the ship went to the Northwest coast and stopped at Hawaii, Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands. Returning to New Bedford in 1845 with the *Kutusoff's*...
cargo of 749 barrels of sperm oil, 2526 barrels of whale oil and 14,000 pounds of whalebone, Russell had with him a number of ship's portraits and whaling scenes. Russell also did watercolors which were similar to Van Beest's storm-tossed ships. One represented the "ordeal of Charles Tallman who spent four wintry days and nights in the rigging of the schooner Christina before his rescue."\(^1\)

The year 1841, when Russell sailed on the Kutusoff, and only one year following Melville's departure from New Bedford on the Acushnet, was the year, or shortly thereafter, that the painter, Charles S. Raleigh, probably ran away to sea. Raleigh, who was one year older than Bierstadt, was born in Gloucester, England. He estimated his total production to be 1100 pictures, 600 of which employed whaling ships as subject matter. Raleigh's paintings were of huge proportions, being often six feet by eleven feet.\(^2\)

Little is known about Bierstadt's associations with other New Bedford artists. With Charles Raleigh he would, in the 1860's, share an interest in canvases of huge proportions. From William Wall he may have acquired an interest in historical painting, for Bierstadt's Landing of Gosnold at Cuttyhunk, an early work of his painted in 1858, had also been the subject of a painting by Wall.\(^3\) Benjamin Russell's grandson was named Albert Bierstadt Russell as a token of friendship between the two

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 1.


\(^3\)Old Dartmouth Historical Society and Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Mass.
New Bedford families. In New York, Bierstadt and Bradford became close friends, had studios with connecting doors, and benefited from the fortunes of the same art patron, LeGrand Lockwood. While he may have known the work of Adam Van Beest, it was probably the storm-tossed seas of Andreas Achenbach, an artist of Düsseldorf, Germany which had a more direct influence on the painter. Nevertheless, historical subjects, the sea and the coast, and struggling vessels were major subjects of interest throughout Bierstadt's career. Furthermore, the emphasis on truthful detail in painting, demanded by New Bedford patrons in the pictorially accurate rigging of vessels, and the search for devices of scale and proportions required in visually pitting man against ocean or whale, were certainly problems similar to those confronting an artist who later turned his interest to the presentation of the expanse and vastness of western landscape.

Bierstadt's formal training did not extend beyond the usual grammar and high school education afforded to most New Bedford boys. If he studied at all with any painters, it, no doubt, would have been Van Beest or Wall; however, his earliest "artistic" training seems to have been in the role of cake decorator for a New Bedford caterer. Certainly New Bedford's interest in scrimshaw and the ceremonious consumption of food would have supported a number of caterers. Yet, one likes to imagine that it was Phebe Mendall's gigantic cakes which Bierstadt embellished. If so, and if he knew Phebe well, he must have been introduced to not only poetry but also painting; for Phebe was an avowed reader of Scott, and on her

walls hung paintings by local artists such as William Wall. The meticulous painting technique Bierstadt developed, and the way in which he frosted the top of his Rocky Mountains with lush pink, pale blue and delicate lavender colors was not unlike the way in which he could have transformed the material bulk of Phebe's grand wedding cakes.

Sometime in his youth, Bierstadt was employed by a man named Albert Shaw, a picture frame and looking glass manufacturer. At an early date, though, Bierstadt was probably making landscape sketches.

Christina Bierstadt discouraged her son from entering a career of painting, thinking that the life an artist led was frivolous. She may have argued that her other sons were employed in practical professions; Charles and Edward Bierstadt, who later became photographers, were, in 1841, a plane-maker and wood-turner respectively. She could have had no doubt, though, that her youngest son, at the age of 20 years, had intended to make painting a financially profitable business. In 1850, the following advertisement appeared in the form of a circular, distributed throughout New Bedford:

IMPROVED SYSTEM
OF
MONO-CHROMATIC PAINTING

Albert Bierstadt respectively informs the inhabitants of New Bedford and vicinity that he will take one more Class in this beautiful Art. All those wishing to avail themselves of the present opportunity, will please apply as early as possible. Specimens may be seen at his room, in Liberty Hall, at all hours of the day.

New Bedfort, June 6, 1850

1 New Bedford Directory and Town Register (New Bedford, Mass, 1849)

How successful Bierstadt was in encouraging the townspeople to avail themselves of their fortunate opportunities is not known, but the painter soon attracted the attention of many important New Bedford citizens. John Hopkins, a local merchant who sold umbrellas and "music" and whose quarters were in the Ricketson block where the studio of Adam Van Beest was located, had a small gallery connected with his music store. Here Bierstadt exhibited some of paintings in 1851.  

Some of Bierstadt's early patrons were sea captains. There was Captain Thomas Nye, Jr., and also Captain William Blackler who for twenty years had been in command of ships in the East India and Cuba trade, but who in 1850 became a ship builder.  

Soon Bierstadt's reputation began to spread and he became known in Boston in the early fifties. There he is supposed to have taught a class in painting. Perhaps he tried his monochromatic system on Bostonians, or perhaps he taught at the Massachusetts Academy of Art, a short-lived art school, which existed between June, 1851, and the spring of 1853. Located at 37 1/2 Tremont Road in Boston, the Academy had premises adjoining the New England Art Union. The latter's Vice-President was Henry W. Longfellow. That Bierstadt did participate in the activities of the New England Art Union is known, for in 1851 and again in 1852, he exhibited a painting called Landscape, "painted in crayon," stated the
catalogue—at the New England Art Union quarters.\(^1\) John Frederick Ken- 
nett, Alvan Fisher, Fitz Hugh Lane and J. A. Codman, all of whom became 
significant nineteenth century American landscape and marine painters, 
exhibited at the same time.

In 1853, at the Massachusetts Academy, Bierstadt exhibited a work 
entitled The Old Mill.\(^2\) In that year, both the Academy and the Art Union 
were abandoned. The New England Art Union had supported the Massachusetts 
Academy, but following the prosecution of the Art Union in New York for 
its "lottery system," there was fear of interference also in Boston.

In Boston, Bierstadt became acquainted with the eccentric and 
wealthy patron of struggling young artists, Thomas Thompson. Thompson's 
collection when sold in 1870 caused great embarrassment to the painter. 
This collector, a Harvard graduate, had already lost one art collection 
in a fire, in 1852. Immediately afterwards, he began buying works which 
he ultimately planned to offer as a gift to the city of Boston. Early 
sketches by Bierstadt were purchased by Thompson, and in the Thompson 
sale of 1870, forty-one works by the artist were listed.\(^3\)

While Thompson provided financial help to struggling young artists 
of the Boston vicinity, there was another Bostonian, an acquaintance of 
Bierstadt, who contributed to the development of landscape painters in 
another way. This was Thomas Starr King, preacher and patriot of Boston

\(^1\)Catalog of Paintings Now on Exhibition, New England Art Union 
(Boston, 1851).

\(^2\)Catalog of the First Semi-Annual Exhibition of Paintings, Massa­
chusetts Academy of Fine Arts  (Boston, 1853).

\(^3\)Catalog of Thomas Thompson Collection Auction, Leeds Art Gal­
leries  (New York, 1870).
in the 1850's. When King died in 1863, over forty artists wrote a tribute to him in which they acknowledged their indebtedness to his inspiration. Starr King, as he was known, was on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Academy of Art. During its brief existence, King wrote articles for the Boston Evening Transcript which, in 1859, were published in the form of a book.¹ King's book, intended as a kind of travel guide to the mountains of New Hampshire, gave his reader more than the usual tourist information. It directed its travelers up to particular summits where the most favorable landscape views could be obtained. It acquainted them with what was most desirable in seeing a landscape, as for example, pure color, the change of hues during different times of the day and factual detail. In general, King's writing, with its liberal use of quotations from Emerson, Thoreau, Lowell, Wordsworth and in particular Ruskin, tried to heighten the reader's perception of nature in terms of the landscape image. Bierstadt knew King, and the writer listed his name along with Church, Durand and Gignoux as painters of "first rate" landscapes.² Thus, in the early 1850's, Bierstadt was already gaining a reputation in New England.

For any painter, who proposed to expand his patronage, improve his painting, and be in the stream of recent developments in art, a New England reputation was not enough. There had been some significant happenings in New York in the 1840's. Europeans were beginning to recognize a potential art market in America and "modern" foreign works of art were

¹Thomas Starr King, The White Hills: Their Legends, Landscape, and Poetry (Boston, 1860).
²Ibid., p. 176.
being imported for sale on New York's Broadway. Here Goupil of Paris established a gallery in the 1840's. The Düsseldorf Gallery began in 1849. Americans were being exposed to contemporaneous foreign art, and the exhibitions began to demonstrate inadequacies in the American artist's training. This was especially true, thought some critics after seeing the work of the Düsseldorf artists. The American Art Union Bulletin of 1849 in reviewing the Düsseldorf Gallery exhibition of that year might well have been directing its comments toward painters like Bierstadt. The article claimed that the American artist arose to popularity too fast, that he was in too much of a hurry. It warned the American not to be a mere follower of homeland fashion and suggested that German works merited careful study. The great lesson that could be learned, this article asserted, was "the indispensable necessity of German discipline, a long drill of the eyes and the fingers." It was generally true that this kind of training was lacking in the United States, and Americans began to swarm to Düsseldorf, where an American colony soon came into being.

It is doubtful, though, that American art students were attracted to Düsseldorf because of the rigid discipline offered there. Actually, the introduction of Düsseldorf art to America was due mainly to the efforts of one man, Karl Boker, American General Consul at Düsseldorf. Boker conceived the idea of forming an American branch of the Kunstverein, or Art Union, in New York. From the membership fees, he received a commission which he invested in Düsseldorf works of art.


While Boker established the Düsseldorf Gallery, and thus was to a great extent, personally responsible for the popularization of Düsseldorf art and thought, German art and thought found a ready-made climate for acceptance through the influence of Madame de Staël. Her De l'Allemagne, published in 1818, praised the German educational system.¹ One of her many readers was Edward Everett who received in 1817 the first Doctor of Philosophy degree given to an American at the University of Göttingen. Everett was during his career a member of Congress, Governor of Massachusetts, United States Secretary of State, and from 1846-49 he was President of Harvard University. At Harvard, he reorganized the educational system along principles then employed in Germany. It is possible that Everett was also influential in informing Boston artists of the reforms in art education in Germany, for he served as President of the short-lived Massachusetts Academy of Art where Bierstadt had exhibited in 1853.

Further evidence for the impact of German thought upon Americans in the middle of the nineteenth century is seen in the St. Louis Philosophical movement led by William Torney Harris. Harris translated Hegel for the American reading public, and was an early exponent of art education in the public school system. In 1886, Felix Adler, a German by birth, continued to popularize German thought in St. Louis in the organization of a branch of the Society for Ethical Culture.

For a German-American like Bierstadt, Düsseldorf had a particularly personal attraction. Johann Peter Hasenclever, one of the important

Düsseldorf artists who had exhibited in Boker's Gallery in New York was the cousin of Albert Bierstadt's mother. Bierstadt decided to go to Düsseldorf and study with Hasenclever using the financial assistance of such New Bedford patrons as Captain Blackler. Bierstadt's first ocean voyage as an adult was to take him back to his native country to within a few miles of Solingen where he was born.
CHAPTER II

IN EUROPE (1854-1857)

In Düsseldorf

Sometime early in 1854, Bierstadt left New Bedford for Düsseldorf, Germany. By the middle of the nineteenth century, this city along the Rhine, which was the residency of the Prince of Prussia, had become a major art center of Europe. In its population of about 30,000, over three hundred artists were present when Bierstadt was there.¹

The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city must have reminded Bierstadt of New Bedford. Worthington Whittredge, the American landscape painter from Cincinnati, Ohio, who had preceded Bierstadt to the Rhineland, recorded in his autobiography the gathering of artists from all over the world:

... The Düsseldorf School, when I reached there, was made up from students of all countries; there were few French students and only a few Englishmen, but Norway, Sweden, Russia, Belgium and Holland were strong in their representation. The School therefore was not alone in the teachings of a few professors in the Academy but of the whole mass collected at a once famous rendezvous ... ²

As Whittredge's remarks indicate, a distinction should be made between the Düsseldorf School and the Düsseldorf Academy. Most biographical


references to Bierstadt state that he attended the Academy in Düsseldorf; but, there does not seem to be any authority for this. Bierstadt's name does not appear on the Academy's class records of 1854 to 1857, the time he was in Europe. Yet, it seems that he did study with two Düsseldorf artists, Andreas Achenbach and Carl Friedrich Lessing, both of whom were associated with the Academy. In order to understand how one could be a student of these painters without attending the Academy, it is necessary first to make some brief comments about the establishment, the history, and the program of the Academy itself. In this way, we shall understand more fully what was meant by the "Düsseldorf School" as well as note the artistic atmosphere to which Bierstadt was exposed upon his arrival at the German art center.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a revolt against the official academies of art occurred in both France and Germany. France had Jacques Louis David, and Germany had Asmus Carstens, who was of the same generation. Among the members of Carstens' group was the landscape painter Joseph Anton Koch. Another was Gottfried Schick, who had himself actually studied with David. Inspired by Carstens, the group believed that art was unteachable and that genius did not need instruction. They

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1 Records of the Düsseldorf Academy were destroyed by fire in 1872. Fortunately, copies of the class records were deposited in the Staatsarchiv of Düsseldorf. The author's examination, in 1957, of these records from the years 1853 to 1857 produced no evidence that Bierstadt had been enrolled at the Kunstakademie.


3 Material concerning the Düsseldorf Academy is drawn from Jahresbericht der Staatlichen Kunstakademie Düsseldorf 1941-1944 (Düsseldorf, 1944).
reboubted against established methods of teaching art which advocated drawing from casts and which set up social and political ideals as necessary prerequisites for art.

While Academies were not abandoned following the Carsten revolt, "reform" did begin which profoundly influenced attitudes towards art education in Germany. Programs in art schools became less rigid than previously, rules were less significant and copying from other works of art were less emphasized.

Two results of the revolt influenced Düsseldorf art: (1) the establishment of an intimate relationship between an instructor and a student, the "workshop" concept rather than the "academic"; and (2) the introduction of landscape as a type of painting to be taught in an art school.

The first of the reformed methods of teaching art was accomplished by Friedrich Overbeck and Franz Pforr, who in opposition to the Vienna Academy, formed the Nazarene Movement. The Nazarenes, like the Pre-Raphaelites in England, discovered the "primitives," that is, the masters of the Middle Ages - Italian as well as German. Forming the Brotherhood of St. Luke, they emphasized what they called truth in opposition to the academic manner, and settled in a deserted monastery in Rome, St. Isidoro on the Pincio. Here life-drawings were practiced in the evenings and a "medieval" community was established. Two painters who eventually were admitted to the Brotherhood and are important in the history of the Düsseldorf Academy were Peter von Cornelius and Wilhelm Schadow.

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Cornelius was appointed director of the Academy in 1821, and he proposed reforms in the methods of art instruction. Three major classes were to be held. The first, an elementary one, was to deal with drawing from casts and life models; the second with painting; and the third with development of composition. In this latter painting class, the students were to work in their own studios which were close to those of their "masters." This third phase of the art student's training, called Meisterklassen, which according to Pevsner was the greatest innovation in art instruction during the nineteenth century, thus originated with Cornelius in the planned reorganization of the Düsseldorf Academy. It was Cornelius' successor, Schadow, however, who must be given credit for the actual organization of the new system of art training.

Appointed in 1826 as director, Schadow put Cornelius' ideas into practice by employing the three-part system of drawing, painting, and composition and he executed the new Meisterklasse system. For low rent, studios were given to talented post-graduate students in the Academy after five years of training in the usual curriculum and the carrying out of their own compositions. Therefore, the community spirit and the apprenticeship system, which Cornelius had planned, was the transference of the Nazarene ideas to the art school. While Schadow is significant as the administrator of these new art education principles, he is equally significant in the development of landscape painting because he did permit it to be taught in the Düsseldorf Academy. The revolutionary nature of this kind of instruction is understood best when one realizes that even painting as a subject for instruction in European Academies was not popular.

\[1\textit{Ibid.}, p. 213.\]
until the first quarter of the nineteenth century. ¹ (As Pevsner stated, with the emergence of such painters as Constable, Turner, Delacroix, Rousseau, and Corot, it had become obviously impossible to maintain governmental establishments for the training of artists as mere figure-drawing schools.)² Thus, Schadow was quite revolutionary when, in 1839, he appointed Johann Wilhelm Schirmer, a painter of idealized landscape, as a professor. Nevertheless, it was not the Academy to which an American student interested in painting would turn upon arrival in Düsseldorf. It was, as in Paris at the same time, in the private ateliers (like those of Delacroix, Delaroche, and Ingres) that a student could spend the time with a master of his choice. Besides, for an American arriving in Düsseldorf, who was not only interested in painting in general, but specifically in landscape painting, not even Schirmer was available at the Academy; for in 1854, when Bierstadt arrived in Germany, he had left for Karlsruhe to establish a new school.³

Bierstadt's original purpose in going to Düsseldorf to study with Hasenclever was never realized. Upon his arrival, he learned that during his voyage to Germany, his relative had died. Nevertheless, there were other Americans in this German art center to whom he could turn for help. Two of these who became his close friends were Emanuel Leutze and Worthington Whittredge. Since Bierstadt's New Bedford patronage apparently provided meager funds for an American in Europe, Leutze supposedly remarked,

¹Ibid., p. 232.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 234.
"Here is another waif to be taken care of."¹ Leutze's comment was appropriate, for his studio became a mecca for Americans in Düsseldorf.

Bierstadt seems to have been little cause for concern to Leutze though, for Whittredge explained in his autobiography how industrious Bierstadt was in Düsseldorf:

. . . After working in my studio for a few months, copying some of my studies and a few others which he borrowed, he fitted up a paint box, stool and umbrella which he put with a few pieces of clothing into a large knapsack, and shouldering it one cold April morning, he started off to try his luck among the Westphalian peasants where he expected to work.²

Whittredge noted that Bierstadt remained away without a word until late autumn when he returned:

. . . loaded down with innumerable studies of all sorts, oaks, roadsides, meadows, glimpses of water, experiors of Westphalian cottages, and one very remarkable study of sunlight on the steps of an old church which some times afterwards was turned into a picture that gave him more fame than anything he ever painted.³

Whittredge thought it a remarkable summer's work for anybody to do, and "for one who had little or no instruction, it was simply marvelous."⁴

Bierstadt's work had improved and when he sent paintings back to New Bedford, local citizens questioned their authenticity. In fact, a minor local scandal questioning Bierstadt's character, developed in New Bedford. The local paper declared that the paintings arriving from

²Ibid., p. 27.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
Düsseldorf were actually by Bierstadt's master. So concerned was Bierstadt's mother, Christina, that she wrote a letter to Leutze asking for the truth about the accusation. If her son possessed no talent, she asked Leutze to encourage Albert to come home. Leutze replied by forwarding a paper which stated that the work sent to New Bedford was genuine. The signature of other established Düsseldorf artists added new confidence in Albert Bierstadt, the young New Bedford artist who was determined to succeed.

The paintings which Bierstadt made in Whittredge's studio, following his Westphalian tour, might be called composites. They were similar to the composite photographs of his English contemporary, Oscar J. Rejlander, whose The Two Paths of Life had established his reputation as an early Victorian photographer. In the way that Rejlander made one large positive by printing a series of negatives in a collage-like technique, so Bierstadt made "large canvases composing and putting together parts of studies he had made." Whittredge described Bierstadt's research method in gathering specific studies which he could use as resource material in composing his landscapes:

There was a window in my studio out of which he could see the sky and watch the clouds, so he made for himself a set of chalks of such tints as he needed and everyday he made studies of skies, after I had got through with my day's work and sometimes before I got up in the morning.

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1 Ibid.
3 Whittredge Autobiography, loc. cit., p. 27.
4 Ibid.
In spite of the fact that living costs in Düsseldorf were half those of a resident of the United States, Bierstadt seems to have had financial difficulties during these student days. The painter was known by his friends as being especially frugal. "He refused to drink beer or wine and if invited to dinner managed to get around all such invitations in a polite way, especially if they looked in the least as if they required dinners to be given in return."\(^1\) Whittredge contrasted the struggles of Bierstadt's student days with those of Frederick Church. He noted that Bierstadt's later rival in "grandiose landscape" was fortune's favorite son, and that no occurrence ever existed for Church to solicit letters of recommendation to send to his parents to pacify them and assure them that he had talent and would succeed.

Bierstadt's need to satisfy New Bedford patrons and his hopes for future patronage were reflected in his letter to a Mrs. Hathaway.

\[\text{Düsseldorf Moth 23rd 55}\]

*Mrs Hathaway.*

The picture which you had the kindness to order from me is now on its way to America, where I hope it will arrive in good condition. The view is near Limburg, Westphalia near the river Ruhr which can be seen in the distance and on the hill which rises from its surface stands the ruins of an old Castle which formerly belonged to Charles the tenth [sic], it was destroyed in the thirty years war [sic] by the French, you can see the hill on which it stands much better than the Castle owing to the great distance in the foreground—

I have represented an old farmhouse among the trees which is so characteristic of Westphalia. The woman crossing the bridge in the immediate foreground has just returned from the forest [sic] where she has been collecting dried leaves to be used as bedding for the animals. The custom of carrying

\(^1\) _Ibid._, p. 26.
[sic] things on the head is common all over Germany. If this picture should not prove perfectly satisfactory, I do not wish you to take it but will paint you another. I trust, however, that you will find this much better than any of my former pictures and that others will like it, and be the means of my disposing of more of my pictures in New Bedford. In a few months I shall have some large pictures on the way, and I hope I shall find some purchasers for them in New Bedford, thanking you a thousand times for your kindness I remain with the highest esteem

Your ob't servant
ABierstadt.

Although Bierstadt had little money, life in the Altstadt in Düsseldorf, where Leutze, Whittredge, and other Americans lived, was gay. A "true brotherhood seemed to reign among them," said Sanford Gifford, another American who lived a brief time in the German art center when Bierstadt was there.² Life centered around the Malkasten (paint box), the club the name of which Bierstadt later gave to the Hudson River villa which he build following his amazing financial success in the 1860's. This artists' club, guild, or society, of which Leutze was a director, included most artists in Düsseldorf and was both a social and professional organization. At the Malkasten, there was equipment for gymnastic exercise, facilities for pistol shooting, and space for theatrical and operatic productions. Plays were written and produced by the artists themselves. To help needy artists, funds were available from which any member could borrow without interest. Malkasten's walls were decorated with frescoes and in its gallery changing exhibitions were held.


Up the Rhine and into Switzerland

In July, 1856, Albert Bierstadt, Worthington, Whittredge, William Stanley Haseltine, John Henry Lewis, and two other artists went on a sketching tour along the River Nahe, a tributary of the Rhine which emptied into that River at Bingen. Accompanying them were a shaggy brown-grey donkey named "Rapp," which carried the sketching equipment, and a mongrel dog named "Eselchen," which guarded the American sketching party.

From Bingen they continued up the Rhine to Switzerland stopping at Brunnen on Lake Lucerne. Adopting their usual custom of not going to a first class hotel, they chose an inn, Weisses Rössl. Here they encountered Albert Calamé, the Swiss landscape painter, with four or five of his pupils. Haseltine described Calamé's entourage of plein air artists of the 1850's:

... Every morning, at early candle lighting, a procession headed by M. Calamé, pupils — paint box and bottle carriers, started up a very steep mountain; by seven o'clock six white umbrellas were set and M. Calamé, by right of seniority, sat one to two hundred feet higher up than any of the others.

Next, Bierstadt and his friends went to a place called Landstadt in view of Mt. Pilatus. From there they took the post for Meiringen but had to go on foot for four hours over a high mountain-pass called Sëntnig. At Meiringen, they stayed at a pension kept by Vater Roofam, which had been an artists' resort for more than thirty years.

A group of English tourists encouraged them to go twenty-five miles

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2 Ibid., p. 47.
further to the Faulhorn where, on the way, they saw the Glacier of the "Valley of the Roses." Haseltine described the view he and Bierstadt saw after reaching the Great Scheidegg, one of the mountain passes:

... The scenery becomes stupendous; range after range of snow-covered mountains stretch away as far as the eye can reach; steep mountainsides, sloping pastures, herds of mountain cattle, complete the picture. One place in particular, where I made a rough outline, was superb; a mountain-lake, the Bach-Alpsee, six thousand feet above sea-level, lies in the midst of meadows and rugged cliffs, all in shadow; directly behind it, tower the Bernese Alps, dazzling in sunlight and their peaks reflected in the water; the mountain shepherds were milking their cows and every now and then broke out in Alpine songs or rather trills, which were caught up and re-echoed by the mountain.¹

In October, 1856, Haseltine and his friends left Switzerland and started toward Florence and Rome. Since the sketching party frequently separated, the Americans probably divided themselves into groups, traveling to Italy by different routes. One group went to Genoa, then by steamer to Leghorn, and then on to Florence. Another hired a berlina, a carriage of four seats large enough to hold themselves and their baggage. They stopped at Civitá Castellana to change horses and arrived there in time to see an Etruscan tomb opened — not by archaeologists, but by peasants who had discovered it and were pilfering its contents.

The Americans continued their way through the Campagna, following the Tiber until they crossed it at Ponte Milvio and entered Rome, by the Porta del Popolo.

¹Ibid., pp. 48-49.
Figure 2 - Cottage near Lake Lucerne
In Italy

From November, 1856 to June, 1857, Bierstadt was in Italy. One of his American friends in Rome, Sanford Gifford, described those bleak winter months:

The winter in Rome has been about as unpleasant as it could be. For sixty days we have had scarcely a fine one. New Years Day is the only one I remember; it has been almost a constant rain, with a chilling comfortless atmosphere . . . .

The weather may well have been depressing for members of the American colony in Rome, but life was simple and inexpensive for artists there during the 1850's. Studios could be rented for eight dollars per month and tinned food could be purchased at inexpensive prices for those who did not wish to dine at a Trattoria. Many resident artists met daily for meals at the Lepre Restaurant in the Via Condotti, and for coffee at the Cafe Greco which was immediately opposite.

The Cafe Greco was the central gathering place for painters, sculptors, writers and diplomats. Here Bierstadt probably received his mail from New Bedford, for the cafe was a kind of international post office. From a cigar box on the counter of the bar, letters were delivered to the artists as they passed on into the "Omnibus," a room so called because of the overhead skylight and benches along the side.

As Bierstadt and his friends sipped coffee and chatted, they probably recalled that ten years previously there had sat at the same stained marble tables Washington Allston, John Vanderlyn, and James Fenimore

1"Sanford R. Gifford European Letters," loc. cit., p. 126. [Unless otherwise indicated, all data concerning Bierstadt's Italian tour is drawn from Gifford's detailed account.]
Cooper; and that, even earlier, both Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West had had their places at the same cafe. Now at the Greco sat William Makepeace Thackeray and Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was then writing his *Marble Faun*. Other poets and writers such as Kate Field and Thomas Buchanan Read, who was a painter as well as a poet, had taken up permanent residence in Rome.

On March 25th, Bierstadt went to a country fair at Grotta Ferrata with Gifford. At the fair they saw figures in costumes peculiar to the different parts of the country. They returned from the fair after having sketched some of the peasants whom Gifford noted looked, dressed, and walked much like American Indians. Bierstadt's Italian costume studies at the Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Connecticut, which are so similar to those costumed figures in his *Arch of Octavius*, may well have been done at this time in Rome.\(^1\)

On March 29th, Bierstadt exhibited *The Wetterhorn*, a Swiss scene, at a showing of works by artists of many nations. Gifford thought the painting was one of the best in the exhibition.\(^2\)

On Easter Sunday, April 12, Gifford recorded in his diary other places which he and Bierstadt had visited in Rome:

Bierstadt called and we went to St. Peter's, and saw the papal benediction in the Piazza in front of the church. There were probably 200,000 people gathered in the Piazza. A large portion of them were soldiers. A company from each

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Figure 3 - Italian Costume Studies
Figure 4 - Arch of Octavius
regiment of horse and foot is delegated to receive the Papal blessing for the rest. There were also great numbers of country people. St. Peter's, the Piazza, and the streets in the neighborhood, were thronged. On top of the circular colonade were balconies, shaded and hung with tapestry for royalty and diplomats.

The sun shone splendidly, and the scene, with the great multitudes, and various costumes and bright colors, was very brilliant . . . .

Days were full for Americans in Rome. On April 18th, for example, Bierstadt and his friends attended a horticultural exhibition in the court of the Palazzo Doria, where they examined tropical plants. From there they went to the Forum, where they sketched the hairless buffalos which were used for drawing stone and timber. Next they proceeded to the Colosseum, where they were surprised to encounter two French soldiers holding a duel with rapiers. The same day they visited the Ossuarium, the cemetery of the convent, under the church of the Cappucini. In the church itself they saw the Arch-Angel Michael Conquering Satan by Guido Reni and the Conversion of St. Paul by Pietro da Cortona.

The architecture, paintings, or sculpture to be found in Rome, however, did not especially attract the travelers. Instead it was the spectacles which Bierstadt and Gifford saw that evening of April 18th which impressed the latter when he recorded his Roman experiences of that spring of 1856. For example, an "illumination" of St. Peters, which they saw had some of the pyrotechnics that both he and Bierstadt were to explore in landscape painting:

... The Piazza was filled with people in carriages and on foot. The principle lines of the great colonade that encircles the piazza, of the facade and the mighty dome with the ball and cross, were delineated against the dark sky in

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1 Ibid., pp. 142-143.
lines of fire by paper lanterns. There must have been millions of them. The effect was fairy-like and beautiful.

About nine o'clock there was a sudden hocus pocus among the lights, a quick flashing and darting of flames, and in an instant, as if by magic, the whole thing was changed, and the lights that were before small and star-like, blazed out in twenty fold volume and brilliance. The effect was magical. The Piazza and its hundred thousand upturned faces were as light as day...  

The next evening the lighting effects continued. A display of fireworks was held on the pincio where it overlooked the Piazza del Popolo. Again Bierstadt saw a spectacle similar to that produced by sunsets which he would experience in the Rocky Mountains a few years later. Gifford described the illumination:

The principle piece was a beautiful temple of fire. Then came the famous "cirandola." This consists of about ten thousand (so it seemed) rockets set off at once, and from one point. The effect of such a multitude starting from one center, and spreading like a bouquet in all kinds of brilliant fire is magnificent... The show was closed very prettily. There was a circle of tall posts planted round the piazza, connected by wires to the obelisk in the center. The obelisk was also connected by a wire with the pincio. Of course, the wires were not visible. What pyrotechnists called a "pigeon" (a ball of fire) rushed down from the pincio to the obelisk, and there set fire to other "pigeons" which flew off in radiating lines to the posts on the circle, where they ignited bengal lights, and then flew back again...

Every spring in Rome, the "Cerbara Festa," an artists' festival, was celebrated on the campagna about five miles out of the Porta Salora. When Bierstadt attended that festival in 1856, the German artists' colony presented a pantomime of the siege of Troy. Costumes, helmets, and spears were made by the artists themselves. Bierstadt participated in this burlesque which was held on April 22. In addition to the siege of Troy,

1Ibid., p. 146.
2Ibid.
"Olympic games" were held . . . "such as tilting at the ring on horseback, donkey races, running in sacks, throwing the javelin, horse and foot races, etc." The victors in the games were crowned with laurel in a pompous ceremony and received a common earthen pot painted in an imitation of an Etruscan vase.

On May 4th, Bierstadt, Whittredge, and Beard called on Cornelius at his studio in the Palazzo Poli. The Düsseldorf artists, about whom Bierstadt must have heard much before leaving Düsseldorf, had come to Rome as a young man along with Overbeck and Schadow. They found the appearance of the elderly Cornelius not unlike that of Michelangelo, for he was short and had square features. At Cornelius' studio they saw photographs of his cartoons for a proposed painting to be executed in a Byzantine church in Berlin, and saw his Pietà in process. While copying a drawing for the Pietà in charcoal on a smooth gesso ground, Cornelius chatted in German with Whittredge and Bierstadt.

Two days after visiting Cornelius' studio, Bierstadt and Gifford began to make definite plans for an excursion to Naples. They had intended leaving on May 7th, Thursday, but because of the weather decided to delay their departure until the following Monday. In the meantime, they went to the Alban Hills for a few days. Plans for the southern excursion were all ready.

Bierstadt and I have determined to go through the Abruzzi to Naples. Wild, who has just returned from a ten days' excursion in that region, gives a glowing description of the scenery and people. All the artists who have been there say it is the most Italian part of Italy. Strangers rarely ever

\[ \text{Ibid., p. 144.} \]
go there; so there is scarcely any accommodation for travelers. The "lingo" spoken there is said to be almost unintelligible. B. and I will walk most of the way, making digressions among the mountains as the scenery, etc. invite. We will shoulder our knapsacks, and expect to rough it through to N. in about a fortnight.¹

By May 23rd, Bierstadt and Gifford had arrived in Naples. There they visited the National Museum and saw examples of Hellenistic sculpture such as The Farnese Bull, Hercules, and the Wounded Gladiator; works by José Ribera and Correggio; frescoes; bronze and marble sculpture; mosaics; and jewelry and gems from Pompei and Herculaneum. Near Naples the two American painters visited the Tomb of Virgil and later that same day climbed to the convent of San Martino overlooking the city. Searching for panoramic vistas occupied much of their time, as for example, when at 5:00 A.M. on May 27th (using donkeys for transportation) they went to the Convent of Camaldoli. Here a magnificent view opened up before them from the summit of a high ridge a few miles north of Naples. Noting that the sites of monasteries must surely have been chosen by monks because of their "wide and beautiful" landscapes, Gifford painted a verbal picture of the extended view.

A fog covered the landscape when we arrived, but it cleared soon, and disclosed a magnificent panorama, rich in natural beauty and classical associations. On the south was Naples and the broad bay with the long sweeping lines of Vesuvius, and bounding the further shore the ragged outline of the mountains over Castellamare and Sorrento. Below us on the west was the volcanic region of the Solfatara, with the lakes Agiano, Fusaro and Avernus — the Elysian fields. Cumae, the shores of Baiae, the islands of Procida and Ischia, and further south Capri. North and east extended the great plain of the campagna Felice bounded by the snowy Apennines.²

¹Ibid., p. 151.
²Ibid., pp. 153-54.
Also near Naples they saw the Sibyl's Cave, visited ruins of Roman villas and temples, and made a seven-mile excursion by boat to Ischia. They landed on a small island, climbed into an abandoned battery and sketched the outline of Ischia in the distance. Once on the island, they made a sketch of the shore, a place which Gifford described as being rich and tropical in appearance because of the luxurious growth of orange, lime, and fig trees.

At noon, May 28th, the two Americans embarked in a large open market boat for the return trip to Naples. They arrived at 5:30 P.M., and immediately took a train to Portici; after a half hour's walk they were in Nesina, the village directly under Vesuvius. Engaging the same guide who had accompanied Alexander von Humbolt in his explorations of Vesuvius, they began the ascent of the volcanic mountain, so that they could see the crater at night. About midnight they started up. Gifford described the journey as follows:

The night was dark, though the stars shone brightly in the black sky. We were on horseback, S., the guide and I — the guide leading the way, carrying a great flaming torch. On his back he carried a knapsack with our breakfast. A little boy on foot carried extra torches. The effect of the torchlight, half relieving the figures against the gloom of the mountain, was very picturesque.

By 2:00 A.M., they had reached the "Atrio del Cavallo," the gorge between the two summits Monte Somma and Vesuvius, at the base of the great cone. Clambering over ragged fragments of lava, they arrived at the great crater.

To Gifford, the great volumes of flame and smoke and the discharge and falling of the burning stones was like a grand flight of rockets. The

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1Ibid., pp. 155-56.
lava currents issuing smaller molten streams crept and wound down the mountain side like monstrous snakes of fire. The Americans noted the "strong black and sulphur yellow, and green and purple, and all sorts of strange and violently contrasted and dissonant colors." While seated on the warm lava, Bierstadt and Gifford roasted eggs in the crevices. As they breakfasted, a magnificent sunrise appeared over the Apennines — "the clouds blazing with splendid color — crimson, purple and gold — changing, flushing and flashing with great glory and magnificence."  

Following the dazzling display of an erupting Mt. Vesuvius and the sight of a splendid sunrise, the two Americans ascended five hundred feet further up the volcano to the very peak, where a great panorama of the campagna, the sea, the cape, and the Islands opened up before them. The diary of Gifford recorded the extended map-like view:  

... Capri (20 miles distant) gleamed like a jewel on the blue sea as the horizontal rays lighted its bright cliffs. The shadow of Vesuvius stretched over the sea, the apex touching the horizon. The white buildings of Naples lay in shadow crescent-shaped along the curved margin of the bay — the castle of St. Elmo above it, warmly lighted by the sun. Down the sides of the mountain, sometimes extending far into the plain, broad, black desolate streams of lava showed the tracks of the great eruptions, contrasting strongly with the fresh bright green of the vineyards and luxuriant vegetation that bordered them on the lower slopes. Numerous white villas and villages gleamed in the morning sunlight, or lay cool in the shadow on the lower sides of the mountain, and all around its base — looking bright and smiling as if there were no such thing as danger and death in the fearful mountain.  

1Ibid., p. 157.  
2Ibid.  
3Ibid.
After seeing Vesuvius, Bierstadt and Gifford traveled by train to Pompeii, where they spent the remainder of the day examining the frescoes and mosaics of the once fair Roman resort city.

The next day, May 30th, Bierstadt and his friend took a boat to Capri and stopped at the Hotel Pagano and acquired a room with terrace which commanded a view of Faraglioni and the blue sea. The Americans spent fifteen days sketching at the Piccola Marina and then sketched at the Marina Grande. They spent many days on the shore, sketching the boats and figures, and bathed in the sea every day. A trip by boat around the island allowed them to see the red, green, and more famous blue grotto.

Before Gifford and Bierstadt separated during their southern Italian tour, they made one more excursion. On June 26, they went to Sorrento, lunched there, and then walked fourteen miles along the coast to Castellamare, sketching along the way. The next day they went to Amalfi and again took the opportunity to sketch. Next, accompanied by a guide, they passed through Atrani, and climbed up a ravine to Ravello, where they saw some examples of Saracenic architecture.

Another leisurely walk from Amalfi took them on a sketching trip along the coast to Salerno, famed for its university. Engaging a "corricolo," they started for Paestum, which was twenty five miles distant. Along a vast uncultivated plain, they saw herds of a hairless type of buffalo, - not wild as in America, but attended by shepherds. They reached Paestum just "as the last rays of the sun were gilding the magnificent ruins of the temple."\(^1\) The next day at Paestum, Bierstadt lost his sketchbook and had to walk four miles to recover it.

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 164.
On July 1, after having returned to Salerno, they made a trip through a valley to Nocera, which was in the area where Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorraine had studied. "In the mountains," said Gifford, "we recognized the lines of Salvator's savage landscapes, and in the valley the rich and genial character that belongs to Claude."

On July 4th, Gifford took passage on the French steamer, Oronte, for Leghorn; then traveled by rail to Florence, on to Bologna and finally arrived in Venice. According to Gifford's diary (the writer is not explicit), the two seem to have parted at this time. Perhaps Bierstadt went directly to England via the Mediterranean and then returned to America. If so, he returned to New Bedford sometime in the late summer or the early autumn of 1857.

\[1\text{Ibid., p. 166.}\]
In New Bedford

At the time of Bierstadt's return to America in the fall of 1857, a reporter for the Harper's Weekly painted a somber picture of the current situation. "It is a gloomy moment in history," stated the writer, telling of the feeling of unrest throughout the world.¹

In France the political cauldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty; Russia hangs like a cloud, as usual, dark and silent, upon the horizon of Europe, while all the energies, resources and influences of the British Empire are sorely tried and are yet to be tried more sorely, in coping with the last and deadly Indian insurrection and with its disturbed relations in China.

It is a solemn moment and no man can feel an indifference... in the issue of events.²

In Italy there was a brooding feeling of instability. French troops were garrisoned in Rome; the Austrians were juggling their loyalty between the French and Italian governments; and among the Italians themselves there was a rising interest in nationalism.

If an American had left Europe to escape the current feeling of insecurity about the future, he would have found little feeling of security at home. The Harper's Weekly reporter also spoke of the gravity of recent events in the United States:

²Ibid., p. 60.
In our country there is a universal commercial prostration and panic, and thousands of our poorest fellow-citizens are turned out against the approaching winter without employment and without the prospect of it.¹

The New Bedford to which Bierstadt returned was affected by the financial panic as were New York and Boston. The Merchants' National Bank of New Bedford closed its doors on October 14, 1857, and did not resume payments of specie until two months later.² Thus, for an artist hopeful of local patronage in the fall of 1857, New Bedford was not a likely place to find it.

Within the atmosphere of a general depression in New England, Bierstadt opened a studio in his native city. He began a series of paintings of European subjects, using for reference the numerous sketches accumulated during his three years of travel abroad. He sent Lake Lucerne, a Swiss scene, to the National Academy of Design Exhibition in 1858.³ For the Hathaway family in New Bedford, who had commissioned one of his Westphalian landscapes three years before, he painted the Landing of Gosnold at Cuttyhunk, (Fig. 6) a subject of local historical interest.⁴

By April, 1859, Bierstadt had completed other paintings of European subjects. In the National Academy of Design Exhibition of that year, he showed a Westphalian landscape, a Swiss scene, a painting of

¹Tbid.


Figure 6 - Landing of Gosnold at Cuttyhunk
Paestum, and a scene of St. Peter's in Rome with Castle St. Angelo in the background. Thus, two years following Bierstadt's return to the United States, European subjects dominated his interest. It is significant, though, that, to the same National Academy Exhibition, he also sent two New England landscapes, *Mt. Washington, Shelburne, New Hampshire* and *View Near Newport*. Thus, the artist had made a sketching tour of the White Mountains sometime following his return from Europe. By the time the National Academy Exhibition had opened, Bierstadt had already begun a sketching tour of the Rocky Mountains as we shall later note. Thus the artist began to express more interest in the American scene. Bierstadt's continued interest in the subject of American landscape, the desire to travel in the United States, and possibly even the need to leave New Bedford may well have been the indirect result of a New Bedford art exhibition which the painter himself organized in 1858. With the help of John Hopkins, a New Bedford umbrella merchant who was a friend and early patron of local artists, Bierstadt assembled the exhibition which is as significant in the history of American art as it was in Bierstadt's career.

New Bedford's first major exhibition of paintings opened on July 1, 1858, in the Ricketson block where both Bierstadt's studio and Hopkins' umbrella and music shop were located. One of the one-hundred and twenty-five works assembled in the old whaling port town, the largest number was by the major American landscapists who later became known as the Hudson River School. Among those artists represented were Thomas Cole, Frederick E. Church, John Frederick Kensett, Asher B. Durand, John W. Casilear, George Inness, Sanford Gifford, and the Hart brothers,
William and James. Bierstadt included twelve of his own works. Other New Bedford artists such as Van Beest and Wall were also represented. Likewise, Bierstadt did not fail to include his Düsseldorf friends, Emanuel Leutze and Andreas Achenbach. The New Bedford Daily Evening Standard thought Leutze's painting of a scene from the early life of Frederick the Great to be one of the major attractions of the exhibition and placed the Shrimp Fishers by Achenbach next in importance. The article in that newspaper, with an air of provincial pride, claimed that Bierstadt and Van Beest did not "suffer by comparison with any American." The Crayon also reported the exhibition. It optimistically stated that such exhibitions, which were "open in various towns," afforded proof of the growth of art in the country and that the exhibition was indicative of how art had taken root in the land.

The New Bedford exhibition must have had a great effect on Bierstadt's career. The gathering of the paintings certainly brought to his attention (if he had not already been aware), that New York was the center of a rising group of American landscape painters. In fact, his old Düsseldorf friends were beginning to settle there. So seemingly great was the new enthusiasm for American painters' works, that many of those

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1 Catalogue of the New Bedford Art Exhibition, 1858 (in the files of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, New Bedford, Mass.). The following Bierstadt paintings are listed: Old Mill, Westphalia; Paestum; Bay of Gaeta; Bay of Naples; Roman Fish Market, Arch of Octavius; Moonlight - Italian Coast near Gaeta; Storm Among the Alps; View near Düsseldorf after Sunset; On the Weser - Afternoon; Blue Grotto, Island of Capri; Fishing by Torch Light, Lake Lucerne; Lake Lucerne.


artists who once met at the Café Greco in Rome, or who gathered at the Wäckesten in Düsseldorf, were returning to America in 1858 and 1859. Gifford, Haseltine, Whittredge, Leutze, and others were having a reunion in New York.

Why was there such an exodus of these American travelers from Arcadia? As has been suggested, it may well have been a result of political unrest in Europe, but, an enterprise which began in New York in 1857, should not be eliminated from a list of the attractions which began in the city at that time. For the first time, a building existed in New York which had been designed exclusively for practicing artists. The structure accommodated a group of painters whose interests and theories would later link them as the Hudson River School.

The idea of a studio building was conceived by James Boorman Johnston late in 1857. Richard Morris Hunt was the architect for the red brick structure, which was located at 15 Tenth Street.\(^1\) The studios were first occupied in January, 1858. Here painters, sculptors, and architects worked in rooms with connecting doors, and here the artists could participate in group criticisms, hold exhibitions, and meet patrons.\(^2\) Paintings were produced in the studios, but the group was far from being static — in fact, the history of art has known few artists who traveled as much as the Tenth Street Studio group. So great was the artists' urge to travel.

\(^1\)The building was destroyed in the 1950's. In 1920, the building was saved from this same fate when former tenants of the Tenth Street Studio made a cooperative purchase to maintain the structure as a "shrine" of art.

\(^2\)The Sun and New York Herald, June 20, 1920, p. 4.
that, in the spring of 1858, the Baltimore and Ohio Railway organized a special train to transport painters, photographers, writers, and other nature lovers from Baltimore to Wheeling for a landscape "outing."¹

The B & O called it the Artists' Excursion, and spared no details in making the travelers comfortable. There were dining cars, observation cars, and lounge cars including a piano and bar. Among these travelers was John Frederick Kensett, who could not only sketch the landscape when the train stopped, but also could taste the deviled crabs which were served and drink the champagne which was available en route.

The excursion was partly a publicity stunt by the railway to promote travel along their "picturesque" line, but the fact that there was a general incentive to travel on the part of the mid-nineteenth century painter was well expressed in an article the Cosmopolitan Art Journal published concerning the location of American artists in 1859:

Artists are now scattered, like leaves or thistle blossoms, over the whole face of the country, in pursuit of their annual study of nature and necessary recreation. Some have gone far toward the North Pole, to invade the haunts of the iceberg with their inquisitive and unsparing eyes — some have gone to the far West, where Nature plays with the illimitable and grand — some have become tropically mad, and are pursuing a sketch up and down the Cordilleras, through Central America and down the Andes. If such is the spirit and persistency of American Art, we may well promise ourselves good things for the future.²

By the time this was written, Bierstadt had already been in the Rocky Mountains.

¹"An Excursion on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad," The Crayon, V (July, 1858), 208.

²"Domestic Art Gossip," The Cosmopolitan Art Journal, III (September, 1859), 183.
First Western Tour

Albert Bierstadt turned his eyes westward in the spring of 1859. The Crayon reported a notice from Boston, dated April 15, 1859:

Messrs. Bierstadt and Frost have just set out for a sketching tour among the Rocky Mountains. They intend to join Colonel Lander's wagon train at St. Louis, and will probably be gone eight or ten months.¹

Painters had gone west long before Bierstadt made his trip. Alfred Jacob Miller, John Mix Stanley, Seth Eastman, George Catlin, and others had accompanied expeditions exploring the west. However, in 1859, when accounts of the sweep of emigrants to the Pacific were reported to Easterners, there was particular excitement in the air. One reporter writing in The National Era thought the emigration was like a phenomenon of geography itself:

The tide of western immigration has set in with extraordinary force. The accounts from Kansas and Nebraska of the sweeping human tide which flows on and on are unparalleled by anything heretofore known in our history. We can only compare these accounts to the descriptions which come to us from these same quarters of the mighty floods of water which occasionally sweep over the valleys of the river, submerging towns and cities.²

The publication in which the report appeared, The National Era, was evidence alone that the westward expansion had made its impact on the American mind. As if responding to the vastness and scale of the unexplored continent, publishers enlarged the physical proportions of newspapers and introduced the mammoth publications, an unusual product of the mid-nineteenth

¹The Crayon, VI (May, 1859), 161.
²"Emigration to the West," The National Era, XIII (April 14, 1859), 58.
Figure 7 - Letter from the Secretary of War
century in America. The National Era was one of these publications. It measured twenty by twenty-one inches and boasted eight columns in width. Employing minute print which contrasted with its expansive size, the paper printed novels in serial form and articles concerning slavery, but particularly included news from the western territories.

It was in The National Era that a review of a lecture by Colonel Landers on American art appeared. Opposing "foreign worship" and advising artists to turn to the "theme of the soil" to educate the nation in art appreciation, he spoke to the Washington Art Association in March, 1857, pointing out that the nation was "inspired." It is not surprising then that Landers, who admitted that he was one who had "long since surrendered a love of the ideal for the plainer duties of practical life," may have encouraged painters to accompany his western tour. Landers interspersed his lecture with his own poetry, which was full of splendorous sunbeams and radiant color; but, the official government report of his western expedition confined itself to Indian affairs, the desirability of particular wagon routes to the Pacific, and general guide information for emigrants. The report, however, did make reference to a full corps of artists who traveled along at their own expense.

A. Bierstadt, esq., a distinguished artist of New York, and S. F. Frost, of Boston, accompanied the expedition with a full corps of artists bearing their own expenses. They have taken sketches of the most remarkable of the views along the route, and a set of stereoscopic views of emigrant trains.


2Ibid.
Figure 8 - Sketches of Indians (No. 1)
Indians, camp scenes, etc., which are highly valuable and would be interesting to the country.¹

Landers left Washington with five thousand dollars "to make peaceful arrangements with Indian tribes along the way," and proceeded toward the frontier.² The artists met him at St. Louis; and, after the wagon train was organized, the expedition left St. Joseph, Missouri, in the first week of May, 1859.

The wagon train traveled through northern Kansas to the crossing of the Big Blue River and then went northwest toward Ft. Kearney and the Platte emigrant route. En route to South Pass, Bierstadt saw with his own eyes the real drama of the great westward movement. There was the excitement of seeing Indians in the flesh, or observing wagon trains trying to ford rivers with their cattle. Also, there was the sight of disappointed miners who had been drawn west by the lure of gold. A writer who accompanied the expedition reported in Harper's Weekly, August 13, 1859, the experiences of the Lander party:

At the present date both banks of the river are lined with the wagons and animals of the emigrants; and the happy owners of those which have successfully "passed over Jordan" may well cast their eyes across the swelling flood and gaze with Christian resignation upon the toiling and struggling pilgrims who have yet to prove their faith and endurance. The water rushing over the wagons, the plunging and kicking of the mules, and the imprecations of the teamsters render the scene one of peculiar interest; and to add to it, Dog Belly, chief of the Ogallalah band of the Sioux tribe of Indians, with a small party of his braves, are grouped around Colonel Lander's carriage, smoking the pipe of peace. Mr. Albert Bierstadt,

¹U. S. Congress, House, Maps and Reports of the Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road, Executive Document No. 64, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, February 11, 1861, p. 5.

²Ibid.
of Boston, the artist of the expedition, is engaged in sketching their appearance . . .

This on-the-spot reporting of the western movement presented American emigration as a Christian pilgrimage. There was a Biblical or historical precedent in the act of the faithful crossing the Jordan. Even the savage Indian was a peaceful soul. On the other hand, there was another aspect about emigration which Bierstadt saw and which the Harper's correspondent reported with shocking objectivity. There was evil too in emigration, if one observed gold seekers returning east. Idealism shifts to a stark realism in the following description:

During the past ten days we have met thousands of the deluded and suffering gold seekers retracing their steps to the quiet farms of the West. Many of them were in starving condition, barefooted, ragged, and penniless; and it has caused much delay in the progress of the expedition, and materially diminished our supply of provisions, to feed these hungry, home-bound strollers. We counted upon one day ninety-three wagons, and the following one eighty-four, to each of which was attached from six to ten men; and besides these, hundreds of others who were wandering along without any mode of conveyance. Up to this point of our journey we have probably passed five thousand desponding and disappointed men returning to the States, and this number is but small compared to those who have pressed on toward California.

On the Smoky Hill Fork route the suffering has been more extensive and aggravated. Of one party some twelve or fifteen died in a state of starvation, and in some instances the survivors preserved their own lives by eating the dead bodies of their former companions.²

Little of this human tragedy can be seen in the drawings which Bierstadt expressly made as illustrations for the Harper's article. Any sentiment that the artist may have felt was probably distilled by the engraver's tool as it copied the Bierstadt sketches in bold outlines. On

²Ibid.
the other hand, it is apparent, when one compares the painter's sketches made on the western trip of 1859 (Fig. 8) with the drawings which appeared in Harper's Weekly, that Bierstadt's draftsmanship was inferior when he could not employ color and value.

Bierstadt himself reported from the Lander wagon train to the Crayon by means of a letter dated July 10, 1859. Speaking of the Wind River chain of mountains, he said:

... The mountains are very fine; as seen from the plains they resemble very much the Bernese Alps, one of the finest ranges of mountains in Europe, if not in the world. They are of a granite formation, the same as the Swiss mountains and their jagged summits, covered with snow and mingling with the clouds, present a scene which every lover of landscape would gaze upon with unqualified delight. As you approach them, the lower hills present themselves more or less clothed with a great variety of trees, among which may be found the cottonwood, lining the river banks, the aspen, and several species of the fir and the pine, some of them being very beautiful.

These are hardly the words of one carried away by the sublimity of western scenery! Bierstadt seems quite detached — there was no overpowering magnitude in his sight, some of the trees are beautiful, he said. He realized that the scenery was different, that there was need for finding some device for scale; but, there was no strain for hyperbole. He continued his "geographical" description as follows:

... We see many spots in the scenery that remind us of our New Hampshire and Catskill hills, but when we look up and measure the mighty perpendicular cliffs that rise hundreds of feet aloft, all capped with snow, we then realize that we are among a different class of mountains; ... .

The Wind River chain of mountains resembled the Swiss mountains; but, seventy miles west of them, Bierstadt saw the Wasatch range, which

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1 The Crayon, VI (September, 1859), 287.
2 Ibid.
he found much like the White Mountains. In color, the range reminded him of Italy, and it appeared as if it were cultivated:

At a distance, you imagine you see cleared land and the assurances of civilization, but you soon find that nature has done all the clearing. The streams are lined with willows, and across them at short intervals they are intersected by the beaver dams; . . . The color of the mountains and of the plains, and indeed, that of the entire country reminds one of the colors of Italy or America in a primitive condition.  

Especially exciting to Bierstadt during his first western tour was the opportunity to sketch Indian life. He wanted to record the manners and customs of that rapidly disappearing phase of America's history. For him, it was the painter's ethical obligation. "I think the artist ought to tell his portion of their history as well as the writer, a combination of both will assuredly render it more complete," he wrote.  

Eventually, Bierstadt and two companions decided to leave the Lander expedition and return east by themselves. During the journey they endured many hardships, such as having to live on wild game which they could shoot, and having to exist without water for several days at a time.

Return to the East

In November, 1859, Bierstadt returned to New Bedford. The Crayon noted his return and commented that he had brought back "much material in photographs, sketches, and stereoscopic views."  

When Bierstadt arrived in New York, the new studio building on

1Ibid.
2Ibid.
3The Crayon, VI (November, 1859), 349.
Figure 9 - Sketches of Indians (No. 2)
Tenth Street was "as full as a Broadway omnibus on a rainy day," stated the periodical.¹ Leutze, Haseltine, and Whittredge, recent arrivals in New York from Europe, had been able to rent studios there, but Bierstadt had to look elsewhere. Within a year, though, the artist found quarters in the new building, and completed paintings of western subjects, such as Thunderstorm in the Rocky Mountains and Base of the Rocky Mountains. That same year, 1860, he was elected to be a member of the National Academy.

It is strange that Bierstadt's reputation, up to that time, had not yet been based upon his western themes. Instead, it was a work with a European subject, according to Tuckerman, that had popularized the painter.² That painting was Sunlight and Shadow (Fig. 10) which was a study of light and shade on the façade of a Romanesque cathedral. The canvas had such popular appeal that it was chromolithographed by Storch and Kramer.

Being associated with the Tenth Street Studio group of landscape painters must certainly have been a major influence upon the development of Bierstadt's career. At the studio he could become more familiar with those Hudson River painters who had exhibited in his New Bedford show of 1858. In the studio gallery he could display his paintings within the atmosphere of walnut paneled walls and heavy Wilton rugs.

Among his many acquaintances at the Tenth Street Studio was Frederick E. Church. Born in Hartford, Connectitut, in 1826, Church was Thomas Cole's only pupil. After having avidly read Alexander von Humboldt's Cosmos, Church had made sketching trips to South America, where

¹Ibid.

²Tuckerman, op. cit., p. 338.
Figure 10 - Sketch for Sunlight and Shadow
he visited Ecuador and Colombia. Thus, Bierstadt and Church shared an interest in geographical exploration. Moreover, their painting style was also similar. As did Church, so did Bierstadt seek an Eden-like imagery in some of his works. For example, *The Landing of Gosnold at Cuttyhunk*, (Fig. 6) like Church’s *Hooker's Party Coming to Hartford*, which was painted in 1846 and is in the collection of the Wadsworth Atheneum, contained a feeling of lushness and fertility associated with a recently discovered and yet unsettled land. Both artists liked the clarity of form delineated by precise detail, and both attained a strange timeless and silent quality through the control of unusual lighting effects. From observing Church, Bierstadt could have recognized the importance not only of subject matter in painting, but also of the method of exhibiting one's works. Church caused a sensation in America as well as abroad by presenting his *Heart of the Andes*, a South American scene, to New Yorkers as if it were a panorama. The special event at Lyric Hall, 765 Broadway, in the spring of 1859 (to which invitation cards were issued), caused many comments in the press. The *New York Herald* printed a vivid description of the darkened exhibition room in which gas jets illuminated the canvas. A copy of that descriptive newspaper article was sent to Rome where it was read by Americans seated at the Café Greco. Whittredge recalled the theatrical method of exhibition used by Church, and commented in his autobiography about the *New York Herald* writer:

... The rich tapestry hangings, the enormous palm leaves, all the way from the Andes, gray in color because dried, but none the worse for that, suspended over the picture, with

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their long slender leaves rising out of the darkness and kissing, as it were, the rich gold frame, gave the writer an admirable chance to dilate on chiaroscuro, and that he made the most of this may well be imagined. He also offered important suggestions to the artist as to what he should do to accommodate the crowds of people who came to see the picture, and who could not find even standing room. Their sufferings should be alleviated. That they came to see the picture was unquestionable, since they could not see themselves in the darkened room provided. The exhibition was yielding nearly six hundred dollars a day!

Although Bierstadt had employed the long horizontal format of a panorama in his landscape painting prior to 1859 (as, for example, in his Marina Grande at Capri), it was not until 1862, the year in which he completed his Bombardment of Ft. Sumter, that he would seem to have consciously used the extended view of the panoramic form. As if suspended in a balloon, one sees in this work a limitless horizon or an endless extension of space. The Bombardment of Ft. Sumter, though, remained small in proportion, and, as we shall observe, Bierstadt's motif, the grand panoramic view of the western American landscape, remained yet to be formulated by the artist.

The Ft. Sumter painting was the result of a sketching tour which Bierstadt and Leutze made during the Civil War. On the 15th of October, 1861, the two painters, who had traveled through Germany's Rhine Valley together, were issued a five-day pass (Fig. 11) by General Winfield Scott, and were permitted to pass the United States' lines and visit the Union camps on both sides of the Potomac. Another painting resulted from this sketching tour was Union Sharpshooters Firing on Confederates (Fig. 12).

Figure 11 - Letter from Headquarters of the Army
It was during this same fall of 1861, that Bierstadt's brothers, Charles and Edward, visited Union troops as photographers. In 1860, they had already made many views of New England scenery, which they offered for sale, along with the photographs Albert had made on his western tour.

The Civil War venture of the Bierstadt brothers proved to be a very lucrative one. Their single and stereoptische views of forts and points of interest around the Army of the Potomac, were in great demand.

In April, 1862, Bierstadt was preparing for another trip to the frontier. In a letter directed to Alpheus Hyatt, a professor of zoology and paleontology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of several scientific treatises, Bierstadt regretfully announced the impossibility of acquiring a letter of assistance for their journey from the Secretary of War. The artist noted that Indian attacks were taking place beyond Fort Laramie and that regiments had been ordered to the region. He wrote Hyatt regarding the possible postponement of the western trip:


2Information furnished by Mrs. Byron Dexter, South Woodstock, Vermont, who owns a copy of the Bierstadt Brothers' 1860 catalog of photographs.

3Another photographic venture, which was published by the Bierstadt brothers in 1862, was called Stereoptische Views Among the Hills of New Hampshire. The forty-eight photographs were close-up views of rocks, cascades, and individual mountains. There was an ingenious stereoscope built into the cover of the book for viewing.

Figure 12 - Union Sharpshooters Firing on Confederates
... I regret it very much. The Indians you see will be driven into the mountains just where we want to go, and if they meet us there all of Spalding's glue will not keep our scalps on. Now the question is will you and your companions run the risk. Employ another man besides Spalding to prepare glue for us, and start off. 1

If Hyatt were not agreeable to the dangers of a trip that summer, Bierstadt planned to go up the Missouri River on a steamer and spend a few weeks at Fort Pierce. There is no evidence that the artist made either of those proposed trips in 1862.

Bierstadt was still living in New York City in 1862. As has been emphasized, the Tenth Street Studio building was the center of activity. Another gathering place for young painters, as well as writers, was Pfaff's beer cellar. At this restaurant, which was originally located at 653 Broadway, New York, artists met and held discussions with Walt Whitman, Bayard Taylor, and other writers. Pfaff's served German food and was well-known for serving excellent beer. No doubt, the establishment's European atmosphere would have attracted American artists who had once dined and wined in similar places when they lived and studied in Germany. It is not known if Bierstadt frequented Pfaff's, but his friend, Fitz Hugh Ludlow, a young writer who was considered to be a member of the New York Bohemians of his day, was often seen there. 2

Ludlow published The Hasheesh Eater in 1857, at the age of twenty-one years. In his book, the self-styled De Quincey frankly described how he became a drug addict and narrated the characteristics of his hallucina-

1 Ibid.

2 For a discussion of the Bohemian movement in America in the nineteenth century, see Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders — A History of Bohemianism in America (New York, 1933).
tions or visions while under the influence of the drug. The "hasheesh eater" in 1862 was married to Rosalie H. Osborne of Waterville, New York. The union was seemingly brief and unhappy, for divorce occurred probably sometime early in 1863. Both the drug addict, Ludlow, and his winsome and beautiful wife Rosalie, were to become important figures in Bierstadt's life in the next few years.

The proposed western tour of 1862 with the scientist Alpheus Hyatt probably did not materialize. During the next year, definite plans were made for the artist's second western journey. This time his companion would be Fitz Hugh Ludlow. Albert would renew his acquaintance with Rosalie at a later date.

CHAPTER IV

THE OVERLANDERS (1863)

On the Plains

At eight o'clock, one morning in May, 1863, a red Concord wagon rumbled out of Atchison, Kansas. Under the vehicle's flat arched roof of water-proof cloth were seated Albert Bierstadt, Fitz Hugh Ludlow, and two companions, who were beginning a "scientific and artistic" journey to the West on the Overland Mail Route. In his book The Heart of the Continent, Ludlow vividly records their experiences and impressions of the landscape as they pushed westward.\(^1\)

Their travels would take them across the Plains, into the Rocky Mountains and on to California and Oregon.

The mail wagon was heavily packed with a strange array of equipment. There was a mixture of such things as arsenic soap for the preservation of biological finds, along with artist's supplies -- canvas, sketch pads, and oil paints. Guns were hung in their cases by the

\(^1\)Fitz Hugh Ludlow, The Heart of the Continent: A Record of Travel Across the Plains and in Oregon with an Examination of the Mormon Principle (Cambridge, 1870). The report of the western tour was originally published in the Atlantic Monthly, in the months of June, July, August, and December, 1863, and was later expanded into a book. It is curious that Ludlow only refers to Bierstadt in his book as "our artist," and never mentions his name. The reason for this is not known. Biographical accounts of Ludlow, and contemporaneous newspaper articles about Bierstadt's activities refer to the journey of the two men being made together. Ludlow is best known as the author of The Hasheesh Eater (New York, 1857). The book records the author's visions while under the influence of the drug, hasheesh.
straps of the wagon-top; blankets were folded under the seats as cushions; and under the passenger's feet were stores boxes containing tins of food prepared by the Shakers. Jars of apple butter, preserved green corn and tomatoes, assorted pickles, and tamarinds were included in their commissary. These foods would supplement the dinners of buffalo-hump and antelope-steak which they would have in the West.¹

The fashionable eastern clothing of the four passengers was gone, and they were dressed "to guard against any emergency ... if need occurred to camp out all night."² Ludlow described their attire:

We wore broad slouch hats of the softest felt ... stout pantaloons of gray cheviot, tucked into knee-boots; revolvers and cartouche-boxes on belts of broad leather about our waists; and light loose linen sacks over all ...³

The travelers had already crossed half of the vast continent. Having acquired from railway officials letters of introduction which permitted a reduction in fares, they had gone by rail from New York to Pittsburgh and passed through Cincinnati before arriving in St. Louis. They continued by rail to St. Joseph, where they spent a few days visiting friends, and purchasing additional blankets and ammunition. Then, they proceeded again by rail to the Kansas terminus of railway communication, Atchinson. This was the starting point of the overland journey.

Although Bierstadt had traveled west in 1859 with the General Lander Expedition, for Ludlow it was a first western journey. The day

¹Ludlow, op. cit. Unless otherwise indicated, all the material concerning this western tour is based upon The Heart of the Continent.
²Ibid., p. 9.
³Ibid.
before the Concord wagon left, some sights were observed which must have
reassured the two eastern gentlemen that they were approaching the fron­
tier. They had stayed the previous night at the Massasoit House, "a
very creditable hotel," in Atchinson, but had been kept awake most of
the night by the "sound of fiddles, loud swearing and yells for drinks."\(^1\)
The day before must have been equally disturbing, for upon their arrival
in Atchinson, they were invited to a "hanging."

Nearly two thousand people were assembled in a deep ravine
indent in the rolling plain back of the town, around a lone
cotton-wood tree, under which stood the fatal wagon. . . .
Here and there stood the unhitched wagons of whole families
who had come in from distant ranches to make a gala-day of
the execution.\(^2\)

They listened to the trial, heard the sentence, saw the rope adjusted,
the wagon driven away, and the man hanging. To Ludlow, it was a "horrid
fruit of man's hateful passions," and the agonizing wails of the vic­
tim's wife, he thought, might have "melted a Marat."\(^3\)

The experiencing of a lynch execution, as Ludlow defined the
form of Kansas justice which they had witnessed, emphasized for him and
Bierstadt that they were on the frontier. As the Overland wagon, driven
by a "terrible fellow with all the fingers missing from one hand,"
started westward that spring morning, the change of landscape revealed
to the travelers that they were gradually leaving all forms of civiliza­
tion as they arrived on the "Plains."\(^4\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 9.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 4.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 6.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 17.
For a while we were accompanied by picket fences; but these in despair at the idea of limiting immensity, soon gave way to rails, and by the time we reached Lancaster, - a station merely, not a town, - ten miles out of Atchinson, the rails themselves had succumbed, and we were running through an unbroken waste.¹

Looking out of the open windows of the moving wagon, the travelers began to observe the components of the landscape. The grass was long and rich, the prairie hens were plentiful; there were plover, mourning dove, falcons, large ravens, and meadow larks. Contrasting the plains and the prairie, and having his eye directed to distant western mountains, Ludlow invoked the science of physical geography to describe an imaginative elevated glance at the continent:

The "Plains" are very different in their character from the Prairies. Nowhere, after leaving the Missouri River westward, does the traveler behold such stretches of grass running to the horizon, everywhere level like the sea, as he finds in Illinois. The great sedimentary deposits which form the prairies proper, were laid in a period of long quiet, and denuded of their super-adjacent water by a slow uniform upheaval, or equally slow evaporation, which embraced much larger tracts of country than the formative influences further west. As might be expected, the land gives evidence of more spasmodic and irregular disturbances the nearer we approach the great spinal mountain chain of the Continent.²

The first settlement where the Overlanders stopped, which was also a station, was Seneca, sixty miles from Atchison. Here they had tea in an "ambitious frame tavern," and let their eyes "lay lingeringly on the shingle of Civilization's last justice of the peace."³

¹Ibid., pp. 11-12.
²Ibid., p. 12.
³Ibid., p. 13.
Now, it was dark, and for the first time the passengers began to realize that Overland mail coaches traveled twenty-four hours a day. Writes Ludlow, "It was a strange sensation, this, like being in an armchair and sentenced not to get out of it from Missouri to California."¹

That night they stopped at Guittards' station, where they stayed only long enough to change horses. Following this, arriving near a settlement called Marysville, they forded the Big Blue River, "one of the largest streams in this portion of Kansas—timbered with cotton-woods, sycamores, oaks, and occasional elms."²

By sunrise, they were one hundred and eleven miles from Atchison, and had reached Seventeen Mile Point, which was the last station before entering Nebraska. They had breakfast, and after traveling a short distance, entered Nebraskan landscape. Here the view became more desolate: "The country now became wilder and somewhat sterile. The sights of human occupation disappeared entirely, and with them the prairie-chickens became less and less abundant."³

At noon, they had reached Virginia City, a hundred and thirty miles from Atchison where they lunched on pilot-bread, sardines, and canned peaches. Only the afternoon's journey remained to be completed, and the wanderers would arrive at the Comstock Ranch, an Overland station, where they planned to halt their journey for a few days while going on a buffalo hunt. At sunset, a few hours before arriving at the ranch,

¹Ibid., p. 13.
³Ibid., p. 16.
a natural spectacle occurred which was so theatrical that Ludlow thought words of description inadequate. This was a thunder-storm on the Nebraskan Plains.

To describe "the awful splendor" and the "impression of un\-governed power" of the storm, Ludlow saw the heavens as though animated by giants climbing "an eton staircase, draped with gold, mounting from the western horizon to the zenith."^1

. . . as the daylight declined, the massive steps became tesselated every now and then with lightning working across them silently in strange patterns . . . . The agency that wrought those delicate traceries of golden sprig and anas-\tomosing vein-work began to have a voice . . . at the foot of the great stair came a rumbling and a groan, as if the giants were beginning to climb. It grew louder, and here and there step parted from step, then the structure lifted at the base and descended at the top, making a series of black blocks and boulders hanging downward from the same level of sky with lurid interstices between them, through which the upward depths looked awful . . . .^2

As the thundering increased, the image shifts to giants in a military combat:

. . . the great artillery combat of the heavens commenced in earnest. At first the adjoining masses had their duels to themselves,—battery fighting battery, pair and pair. Half an hour more, and the forces had perceptibly massed, —their fire coming in broader sheet, their thunder bel\-lowing louder. An hour, and the fight of the giants became a general engagement. The whole hemisphere was a blinding mass of yellow flame at once, and the reports were each one instantaneous shock, which burst the air like the explosion of a mine . . . . The lightning got broader, and its flashes quicker in succession; the thunder surpassed everything I have heard, or read, or dreamed of . . . . We were so stunned that we could scarcely speak to or hear each other . . . . One moment we were in utter darkness . . . the next . . . earth and

^1Ibid., p. 16.

^2Ibid., p. 19.
heaven illumined with a brightness surpassing the most cloudless noon.1

The description continues to build up crescendo, and after noticing a temporary lull in the conflict, there appears one final grand streak of lightning:

Into the blackness there rose out of the ground, apparently from a high divide, not a mile beyond our leaders, a column of lightning sized and shaped like the trunk of a tall pine. Straight and swift, it shot up, shedding its glare for many rods around, and making a sharply cut band of fire against the black background of the clouds, until it struck the nearest mass of vapor. Then, with the most tremendous flash and peal of the whole storm, its blazing capital broke into splinters, and went shivering across the area, right over our heads. If it were only possible to paint such things! But on canvas they would seem even more theatrical than they do in these inadequate words.2 (italics mine.)

Ludlow's description of the storm seen by the Overlanders is one of the most vivid in his entire narrative. Employing contrasts of lightness against darkness, intricate detail combined with progressive magnification, the author searches for a form that can embody the power and grandeur of a western thunderstorm. Ludlow's use of hyperbole gives an extravagant touch to his writing. Yet, the figure of giants is not mere exaggeration. It is imagery mainly for effect of scale, and one feels a sense of psychological detachment, as if the goal were natural history on a titanic scale. It was undoubtedly the scene's real theatricality itself that stirred his intense perception, and made him reach towards the poetic. This quality of inflation, magnification, or extension, links Ludlow with the tradition of the American tall-tale. As Constance Rourke said, in referring to the origin of American tall-tale,

1Ibid., pp. 19-20.
2Ibid., pp. 20-21.
"It was the wilderness with its impenetrable depths, the wild storms of the West, the great rivers, the strange new wonders on every side, that produced the content of the stories . . . .\(^1\) Bierstadt and Ludlow were now experiencing, first-hand, one of those western geographical phenomena which were so significant in the creation of American legend.

The thunderstorm on the Nebraska plains gave dramatic climax to the Overlanders' arrival at the Comstock ranch. In a torrent of rain, the travelers were ushered by lantern light into the cabin. With a crack of the whip, the Concord wagon rolled away, leaving Bierstadt and Lodlow to spend the night. From the ranch, they would go in search of buffalo, and the sight of them would provide new symbols for the magnitude and power of the West.

In Search of Buffalo

The first day it rained. However, at seven o'clock on the second morning, after arriving at the Comstock ranch, everything was ready for departure to the buffalo country. All the provisions were piled in front of the cabin:

A sack of flour, a small bag of salt pork, a box of hard tack, a gridiron, two frying pans, some camp kettles, a pile of tin plates, and a lot of knives and forks; a judicious selection from our own parties' private stores, consisting of pickles, canned fruits, condensed milk and coffee . . . .\(^2\)

An official of the Overland Mail Company, whose name was Munger, supervised the expedition which consisted of ten men. Munger, Bierstadt,

\(^2\) Ludlow, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
and Ludlow rode in a double buggy with a pair of rifles, a shot-gun, and a large paint box. Fording the Little Blue, and heading towards Kansas again, they "struck south over the trackless plains." Within an hour, they saw their first antelope. By noon they got close enough for a shot, hit one, and placed him in the wagon. Six more miles and the party sighted their first buffalo. A strange fever of enthusiasm came over Ludlow:

It was such a strange jumble of feeling to remember operas, National Academy pictures, and the crowd on Broadway, so close on the heels of these grand old giants, who own the monarchy of the Continent's freest wilderness. I felt as happy as a green boy, and trembled all over. Buffaloes—indubitable buffaloes—feeding on that vast, sunny, fenceless mead, in as matter-of-fact and bovine a manner as any New England farmer's cows on one of Coleman's or Shattuck's elm-dotted pasture-lots . . .

They continued in pursuit of the buffalo, but stopped at noon to feast on antelope-steak. After the meal, Bierstadt began sketching the antelope's head, which had been left intact especially for this purpose. In the meantime, Ludlow and other members of the party shouldered their guns and went on foot to stalk buffalos. When they returned at sunset, Ludlow noted that while they were gone, Bierstadt had made two or three studies of game and horses.

For the first time on their journey, that night the Overlanders slept out-doors. It was like "a return to Childhood," thought Ludlow.

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1 Ibid., p. 34.
2 Ibid., p. 42.
3 Ibid., pp. 50-56.
4 Ibid., p. 61.
They were "half a score of white men alone in the virgin heart of the
continent." As they lay before the camp-fire, the sensation of being
under the dome of heaven "infused some genius into every mind," said
Ludlow.

It was the organic nature of the nation's geography that mel-
lowed the loneliness for the Overlanders:

Nothing broke the silence save now and then the yelp of
a coyote, a night-bird's scream, our own subdued voices, and
the lulling gurgle of the river at our feet, on its way over
dusky sand-bars to carry the message of the Rocky Mountain
snows to the soft current of the Gulf and the mad waves of
the Atlantic. We lay half-way between great mysteries,—
in the lap of a loneliness as profound as the caves of the
Nereids.

The following morning, the hunters planned their strategy a-
against the buffalo, for they were getting close to the herd. Horses
which were attached to wagons were put under saddle. Bierstadt made
special preparations for his role in the attack. Ludlow described the
painter's intent:

Our artist, though a good shot, and capable of going to
market for himself wherever there was any game, as well as
most people, had seen enough buffalo-hunting in other expe-
ditions to care little for it now, compared with the ar-
tistic opportunities which our battue afforded him for por-
traits of fine old bulls. He accordingly put his color-box,
camp stool, and sketching-umbrella into the buggy, hitched
a team of the wagon-horses to it, and taking one of our own
party in with him, declared his intention of visiting the
battlefield solely as "our special artist."

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1. Ibid., p. 57.
2. Ibid., p. 57.
3. Ibid., p. 58.
4. Ibid., p. 62.
Definite arrangements for the hunt had been made to give Bierstadt the best possible situation for sketching. The hunters were to ride down a buffalo until they got within an easy range for a shot; closely behind, Bierstadt and the buggy were to follow. Within the shadow of trees, the hunting party pushed slowly through the grass towards their game. They were two hundred and fifty yards away when the stampede became general. Soon, a rare opportunity offered itself. The buggy was lagging about a mile behind when Ludlow rushed back to get the painter. Munger was holding at bay a giant bull on a grassy basin. It had been shot at least six times, but had not been killed. Bierstadt "did not need three words to show him his opportunity."\(^1\)

He leapt from the buggy; out came the materials of success following him, and in a trifle over three minutes from his first halt, the big blue umbrella was pointed and pitched, and he sat under it on his camp-stool, with his color-box on his knees, his brush and palette in hand, and a clean board pinned in the cover of his color-box.\(^2\)

Ludlow described the exciting events that followed. For fifteen minutes the "artist's hand and eye followed each other at the double-quick on the board."\(^3\)

Munger's old giant glowered and flashed fire from two great wells of angry brown and red, burning like a pair of lighted naptha-springs, through a foot-deep environment of shaggy hair .... He was wounded in the haunch, through the lower ribs, through the lungs, and elsewhere .... From both his nostrils the blood was flowing, mixed with glare and foam. His breath was like a blacksmith's bellows. His great sides

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 67.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 68.
heaved laboriously, as if he were breathing with his whole body... It was the first time I had seen moral grandeur in a brute.¹

Bierstadt's friends assisted him by riding slowly around the bull, attracting the animal's attention by feigned assaults, so that the buffalo could be seen in action. "As each of us came to a point where the artist saw him sideways, the rider advanced his horse, and menaced the bull with his weapons," said Ludlow.²

The sight had now become rather distressing to Ludlow. As the thunderstorm on the Plains had wrought up images of mythical figures, so the buffalo's struggle found association for the writer. "I seemed to see Prometheus on his rock, defying the gods," said Ludlow.³ The tendency to see mythic meaning in the slaughter also caused Ludlow to name Bierstadt an American Parrhasius.⁴ The title, of course referred to the Greek painter, a contemporary of Zeuxis, who was active in Athens around 400 B.C.

As the signs of exhaustion in the buffalo increased, and as the blood streamed faster from the wounds and nostrils of the animal, Bierstadt at last exercised compassion:

¹Ibid., pp. 67-68.
²Ibid., p. 68.
³Ibid., p. 68.
⁴Ludlow's association of Bierstadt with the name of Parrhasius could be imagined as having more significance than what is implied by the buffalo incident. Perhaps it is a criticism of the artist by Ludlow as well as comment on Bierstadt's personality. The Greek Parrhasius received excessive prices for his paintings, and was noted for having an extremely naturalistic style.
But our Parrhasius was merciful. As soon as he had transferred the splendid action of the buffalo to his study, he called on us to put an end to the distress, which for aught else, than art's sake, was terrible to see. All of us who had weapons drew up in line, while the artist attracted the bulls attention by a final feigned assault. A hat might have covered the chasm which poured blood from his side when our smoke blew away. All the balls had sped home; but the unconquerable would not fall with his side to the foe. He turned himself painfully around on his quivering legs; he stiffened his tail in one last fury; he shook his mighty head, and then, lowering it to the ground, concentrated all the life that lasted in him for a mad onset. He rushed forward at his persecutors with all the elan of his first charged; but strength failed half way. Ten feet from where we stood, he tumbled to his knees, made heroic efforts to rise again, and came up on one leg; but the death-tremor possessed the other, and with a great panting groan, in which all of brute power and beauty went forth at once, he fell prone on the trampled turf, and a glaze hid the anger of his eyes. Even in death those eyes were wide open on the foe, as he lay grand, like Caesar before Pompey's statue, at the feet of his assassins.\footnote{Ibid., p. 69.}

Bierstadt's model in his plein-air studio provided rare opportunities for "action-studies" that he could not have made in any other way. Undoubtedly, these sketches became source material for his painting, The Last of the Buffalo (Fig. 24).\footnote{2 The Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.}

The grandeur of a buffalo pitted against man had been witnessed by the Overlanders. Yet, there was something equally grand in the idea of multitude awakened by the sight of a herd of buffalos. It was this aspect of the giants of the Plains that Bierstadt and Ludlow were next to experience.

With the hope of capturing a buffalo calf, which could be shipped east, Munger decided to attempt another stampede. After riding three

\footnote{1 Ibid., p. 69.}

\footnote{2 The Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.}
miles, they sighted through their field-glasses another herd which was even larger than they had encountered previously. The thundering of hooves announced they had succeeded — the buffalos were in a stampede. Ludlow was almost trampled to death when a herd came up from the rear; but suddenly all the buffalo came to a halt. They had come up to the main herd which was grazing. Then, Ludlow saw a spectacle that forced him to apologize to the reader for his inability to express what he saw. Mounting a small hill, he looked westward. It was the overwhelming magnitude of the view before his eyes that so astonished the New Yorker.

Yes, there, beyond peradventure, in my plain sight, grazed the entire buffalo army of Middle Kansas. As far as the western horizon the whole earth was black with them . . . . I had no way of measuring the unbounded plain, looking west-erly . . . .

Ludlow searched for comparisons to imply the buffalo myriads, but figures of speech were inadequate.

... flies on a molasses barrel, ants on an ant-hill, tadpoles in a puddle, all these strong but vulgar similitudes fail to express the ideas of multitude awakened by looking at that mighty throng. Arithmetic is as petty to the task as the lightning calculator to the expression of a hurricane. . . . I remember my first and my succeeding impressions of Niagara, but never did I see an incarnation of vast multitude, or resistless force, which impressed me like the main herd of buffalo . . . . I only wished to look, and look till I could realize or find some speech for the greatness of Nature that silenced me.2

On to Colorado

On the 29th of May, the Overlanders were forced to divide, since a westward stage had not arrived which could accommodate all four members

1Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

2Ibid., pp. 76-77.
of their group. Two of the party were able to squeeze themselves into an overcrowded coach. Bierstadt and Ludlow remained behind. However, the delay allowed them to become acquainted with a frontiersman who had stopped for a few days at the Comstock ranch. This was Baptiste Moncrévié.

Moncrévié, who had been educated in Paris, was "full of French grace, fire, and vivacity, grafted with American humor," said Ludlow.\(^1\) Conversant with the Sioux, Pawnee, Arapahoe, Blackfeet, Crow, and Flathead languages, Moncrévié was an Indian interpreter. He had once been insane (over the death of his wife during childbirth), but recovered his sanity prior to going west with Audubon. After the ornithological tour, he determined to stay among the Indians.

Baptiste Moncrévié's stories about the American Indians amused Bierstadt and Ludlow, and the Frenchman must have made a great impression on them. Ludlow had engraved for his book a profile sketch of the Indian interpreter, which probably was a sketch made by Bierstadt during the three days they remained at the Comstock ranch.\(^2\)

At eleven o'clock on the night of May 30, Bierstadt and Ludlow resumed their journey westward on the Overland coach. This time, the temporary destination was Denver, Colorado. One hundred miles were accomplished that night and several station-stops were made: Little Blue, Liberty Farm, Lone Tree, and Thirty-two Mile Creek. At the latter station, where they had breakfast, they observed a "rudely inclosed little

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 104.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 102.
grave-yard, containing one large and one small headstone.\footnote{Ibid., p. 108.} The feeling of loneliness evoked by the sight of the miniature burial ground—"real pathos," reflected Ludlow—must have already been sensed in the increasing barrenness and aridity of the landscape. Even Ludlow's usual straining for hyperbole disappears, and his description of the journey to the station, Fort Kearney, reads more like that of a topographical engineer or of a botanist. Ludlow dryly reports:

The journey from Thirty-two Mile Creek to Fort Kearney (a distance of thirty-five miles) disclosed to us increasing barrenness in the soil, accompanied by a corresponding change in the zone of the flora. Cactuses became a prominent feature on all the hot sand dunes; a peculiar desert species of the Asclepias here and there began showing itself; and wherever the arid ground yielded any herbage, the succulent grass of the Little Blue region was replaced by the short, wiry gramma ....

As the travelers approached Fort Kearney, the ground appeared to rise perceptibly, and they began to climb the loftiest and longest hills they had seen since leaving St. Louis. Their spirits seemed also to heighten as a new sensation was felt, not just in the imagination as in the previous part of their journey, but before their eyes—a sensation of mountain scenery. The sight to Ludlow struck, so to speak, "the resolving chords between the low plains of Kansas and the high plateaus to the Rocky Mountain region, whither we were tending."\footnote{Ibid., p. 109-110.} They also sighted trees along the edge of the Platte River. "Its further banks were enveloped in a misty veil, and looked languidly soft, like far
islands seen through a tropical fog.\footnote{Ibid., p. 110.}

About fifteen miles from Fort Kearney, Bierstadt and Ludlow saw another sight which, if judged by Ludlow's description, warmed their hearts even more than the landscape they had just seen. An opportunity presented itself to observe actors in the drama of the great American westward expansion. For his reader, Ludlow presents a verbal picture in rosy tones, interspersed with spots of other color. The description has elements of genre painting, and, indeed, Ludlow was quite aware of this effect.

About two o'clock, we passed a very picturesque party of Germans going to Oregon. They had a large herd of cattle and fifty wagons, mostly drawn by oxen, though some of the more prosperous "outfits" were attached to horses or mules. The people themselves represented the better class of Prussian or North German peasantry. A number of strapping teamsters, in gay costumes, appeared like Westphalians. Some of them wore canary shirts and blue pantaloons; with these were intermingled blouses of claret, rich warm brown, and the most vivid red. All the women and children had some positive color about them, if it only amounted to a knot of ribbons, or the glimpse of a petticoat. I never saw so many bright and comely faces in an emigrant train. One real little beauty, who showed the typical German blonde through all her tan, peered out of one great canvas wagon cover, like a baby under the bonnet of the Shaker giantess, and coquetted for a moment with us from a pair of wicked-innocent blue eyes, drawing back, when the driver stared at her, in nicely simulated confusion. Several old women, of less than the usual amile hideousness of the German Bauerinn, were trudging along the road with the teamsters, in short blue petticoats and everlasting shoes; partly to unbend their joints, as was evident from the pastime alacrity of their gait, and partly to oversee a crowd of children who were hunting green grass with sickles, and conveying their scanty harvest to the cattle by handfuls at a time. In the wagon all manner of domestic bliss was going on. A young teamster, whose turn it was to ride, sat smoking a pipe and wooing his bashful dear, thus uniting business and pleasure in an eminent degree, under the shadow
of a great wagontop, and on a barrel of mess pork. Many mothers were on front seats, nursing their babies in the innocent unconsciousness of Eve. Old men lay asleep on bales of bedding, with their horn spectacles still astride the nose; old women, with similar aids, read great books of theoretical religion, or knitted stockings of the practical kind. Every wagon was a gem of an interior such as no Fleming ever put on canvas, and every group a genre for Boughton. The whole picture of the train was such a delight in form, color, and spirit that I could have lingered near it all the way to Kearney.

Ludlow's emphasis on the gaiety and color of the spectacle, and the joyous state in which his subjects move through the landscape is seemingly no more than a naturalistic genre "painting." However, the writer's tendency to exaggeration, as has been noted, assumes a new form in his observation of the emigrant train—that of idealization. In fact, his verbal picture was so idyllic that it could have served as an advertisement for the promotion of westward expansion. Ludlow's account gave no suggestion of the suffering endured by the Donner Party; nor is there any indication of the disappointments and hardships experienced by emigrants following the gold rush. (See chapter III, p. 67 for description of emigrants returning east after the gold rush.) Instead, people of all ages, children, young lovers, even old men, move blissfully through the landscape in a kind of mobile Arcadian atmosphere. There is much this same attitude surrounding westward emigration in Bierstadt's painting, The Oregon Trail (Fig. 14), which was completed in 1867. Ludlow had stressed in his description the tones of warm color, which seemed to indicate his warm, romantic feelings about the idea of emigration. Similarly, Bierstadt added an element of pictorial

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1 Ibid., pp. 110-112.
2 The American Automobile Association, Cleveland, Ohio.
Figure 14 - The Oregon Trail
rhetoric, a golden tone, to his canvas. In his painting, the emigrants are pushing towards the setting sun; and for the nineteenth century viewer, there must have been no mistake in the mind of the spectator as to what direction the course which the American empire was taking. In his painting, Bierstadt took special effort to include, in the equipment of the emigrants, the sacred plow, the instrument by which the yeoman was to transform the West into a garden.

Within an hour after passing the emigrant train, the Overland party reached the Fort Kearney station. During the afternoon and the following morning Bierstadt sketched a pair of buffalo calves "transferring them to canvas in every variety of attitude, and getting their animus and typical distinctions as well by heart as he had succeeded in doing with their belligerent sires."\(^1\)

Boarding another Overland coach, the travelers continued westward, stopped at Plum Creek, Willow Island, and Midway Stations, and arrived the following noon at Cottonwood Station. They noticed that the landscape became more undulating, and as they passed through a series of sand canons, the first limestone out-croppings were observed. West of Cottonwood, the land began to rise perceptibly, and they felt the first sensation of ascent toward the Rocky Mountains. "There was a solid under-braced look in the hills, a firm, resonant quality to the road," said Ludlow.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 112.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 118.
Twenty-nine more miles west and they reached Fremont Springs where they found a water fountain enshrined, "as if it were a Greek god."\(^1\) To Ludlow, "it sang temperance lectures without knowing it."\(^2\)

Passing Alkali Lake, Diamond Springs, Spring Hill, and Beaver Creek, they went through a desert, a pathless waste, "We rode through a solitude broken only by one station-house, a few antelope, and innumerable jackass-rabbits," said Ludlow.\(^3\)

For two days they traveled through the desert. When greenness at last appeared in the landscape, it set their hearts bounding. Ludlow described the new picturesqueness:

Nature for a little respite, had repented her of neutral tints, and forsaken the Society of Friends. The Platte had made a concession to our rebellious aesthetic sense . . . the grass was green and thick even to rankness . . . The eye rested on the broad borders and patches of living greenness, with a feeling of comfort that no Eastern imagination can appreciate . . . .\(^4\)

The green color of the landscape was seen at dawn and heightened by the warm hues of a sunrise. As the dawn advanced, a new color in the distance appeared, "the faintest solution of ultramarine blue . . . drawn . . . across the western sky."\(^5\) It is not without significance that the description is in terms of a painter's material. When his sight adjusted to the view, the realization of what he saw caused Ludlow to

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 119.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 128.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 129.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 131.
break into tears. He described the event that led to this intense feeling, which to him was like "a sudden revelation of the truth."  

We were all seated on or in the wagon, when our scarred driver pointed westward across the Plains, now all afloat with the gold of the risen sun, and said,—

"There are the Rocky Mountains." [italics mine]\(^2\)

**In the Rocky Mountains**

After the Overlanders first sighted the Rocky Mountains in the western sky, they were only sixty miles from Denver. Station stops were made at Junction, Fremont Orchard, and Latham. At the latter station, they left the main trail to California, and continued up the Platte River to Denver.

In Colorado, Bierstadt made two major trips for sketching purposes. One journey was to Idaho Springs where he contacted William Newton Byers as a guide.

Byers recalled how they secured saddle animals and two or three donkeys to pack bedding, provisions, and paint boxes.\(^3\) When they approached a site with a spectacular panoramic vista, Bierstadt began sketching. Byers described the view as follows:

It was indeed a notable, a wonderful view. In addition to the natural topographic features of the scene, storm clouds were sweeping across the great chasm from north-west to south-east. The northwest wall is serrated—a saw-tooth edge with sharp pinnacles and spires and masses of broken granite—and

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 130.

\(^3\)William Newton Byers, "Bierstadt's Visit to Colorado," Magazine of Western History, XI, No. 3 (January, 1890), 238.
the clouds were so low that they were being torn and riven by these points. Eddies of wind from the great chasm following up the face of the cliff were again caught in the air-current at its crest and drove the broken clouds in rolling masses through the storm-drift. From the clouds sweeping across the gorge, rain, and large, soft hailstones were falling. Rays of sunlight were breaking through the broken, ragged clouds and lighting up in moving streaks the falling storm. Bierstadt worked as though inspired. Nothing was said by either of us . . . The glorious scene was fading as he packed up his traps.  

According to Byers, it was this particular view which became the subject for Bierstadt's Storm in the Rocky Mountains (Fig. 17). The painting, which Bierstadt completed following the Overland journey, unfortunately was destroyed in a fire in 1869.

Bierstadt's other trip out of Denver was to Pike's Peak, made in the accompaniment of Ludlow and the other two Overlanders (who had joined them in Denver). They set out on the 10th of June in an "ambulance" which was furnished by Governor Evans of Colorado. Bierstadt rode in a buckboard with a man named Pierce, who piloted the expedition.

The party had gone only a few miles outside Denver when the foothills shrank out of sight, and the Rocky Mountains behind the town uncovered themselves to the traveler's view.

A description of the Rocky Mountains presented for Ludlow an even more difficult problem in expression than had the spectacles of the Overland landscape which he had seen in the previous part of the western journey. Geographical comparisons with the eastern part of the United States were inadequate to convey the sublime size and the westward extension of the mountains. He searched for devices of scale, but

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
found none. "In the East there is nothing to illustrate the Rocky Mountains by," wrote Ludlow.\(^1\) "It is so consistently great, it is a congress of such equal giants, that you cannot compare it with any of the ranges you have seen before," said the writer.\(^2\) The term "range", he found unsuitable. "The only name for the system is 'nation' . . . . It is a whole country populous with mountains."\(^3\) It was this multitudinous nature of the ranges and their extension westward that most astounded the Overlanders. The unfolding of the anastomotic ranges, as Ludlow described them, and the way in which one's sight rises to higher planes of vision is evident in the following:

Mountain billows westward after mountain, their crests climbing as they go; and far on, where you might suppose the Plains began again, break on a spotless strand of everlasting snow.

This snow indicates the top of the range. But of what range? Not the top of the Rocky Mountains, but only of a small minor range in that range. That glittering ridge yonder is but one of a hundred lying parallel with it to the westward. We have not even yet seen the Rocky Mountains.\(^4\)

Thus, to see the Rocky Mountains it was necessary that the observer must continually shift his viewpoint, for the Rockies could not be seen within a single glance. That a one-point system of perspective could not represent the totality of the Rocky Mountains seemed to have been evident to Ludlow when he said:

\(^1\) Ludlow, op. cit., p. 142.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 143.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 144.
\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 143-144.
I have been betrayed into the artistic error (or excellence, according to your school) of painting more into my picture than I could see from my camp-stool; of adding after experience to the present facts of vision. But to see the Rocky Mountains means so much more than the view of any one mighty ridge or peak, that I might just as well give its idea by glancing across the whole billowy main as by stopping short where the undulations break on that ice-bound coast yonder, in clouds against the blue of heaven.\(^1\)

The shifting viewpoint, or the use of a multi-perspective system, became for some Eastern critics a source of comment about Bierstadt's paintings. Nevertheless, that Ludlow found it necessary to resort to this type of "vision" to make the Rocky Mountains "visible" to his reader suggests that Bierstadt likewise may have used such a perspective system for the similar purpose of presenting endless extension.

The Rocky Mountains suggested unlimited expansion, but other interesting formations characteristic of the mountains were those suggesting a sense of enclosure. These were the Parks, tracts of level country "embosomed between snow-ridges, and, so to speak, alcoved into the very heart of the system."\(^2\) The grand enclosures resembles the green dells of the Atlantic range, thought Ludlow. However, this comparison he believed inadequate, for the "Rocky Mountain" analogy was an expansion on the scale of miles to the inch. When agriculture would come to Colorado, Ludlow thought, these parks would become an earthly paradise.

Another feature of the Rocky Mountain landscape in Colorado that impressed the Overlanders was the way in which geological formation seemed to rival the art of man. It was as if "Nature kept repeating

\(^1\) Ibid., pp. 146-147.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 145.
fantastic freaks of sculpture and of architecture.\textsuperscript{1} Strange effects were seen that made the landscape appear to embody a history of art.

"I saw models belonging to the art of almost every country and time," said Ludlow.\textsuperscript{2}

He related the strangeness of the illusion:

You thought you were in the most untrodden wild of a late discovered continent; but here Palmyra, here the Parthenon, Nineveh, and Ballbec. In one place the tawney columns of the ruin were arranged at regular intervals around an oblong; a well defined, though broken pediment, rested on the front row; and about the bases of the entire columns lay splintered shafts and shattered capitals...\textsuperscript{3}

Other landscape formations seem to simulate sculpture, as Ludlow imagined himself in the burying ground of some extinct race.

This marvelous cemetery contained obelisks, little baby gravestones, a foot high, truncated columns, shafts, and wins, pedestaled statues, plain horizontal tablets, and royal sarcophagi...\textsuperscript{4}

It is interesting that these geological freaks of nature never became major subjects for Bierstadt, although he sketched them during his journey to Pike's Peak. Ludlow commented about this and regretted that the painter never chose the Garden of the Gods, which they visited near Colorado City, for a "big picture."\textsuperscript{5}

The Colorado interlude during the Overland journey provided Bierstadt with many sketches of the landscape. Obviously, though, the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 159.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 163.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 180.
failure to use certain Rocky Mountain motifs implies a selectivity on
the part of the artist. It was the unfolding extension of giant moun-
tain ranges and the vast enclosures of garden-like parks that Bierstadt
saw as appropriate to the physical dimensions of a huge canvas. This
kind of selectivity suggests that there must have been something meaning-
ful to both artist and patron in the relationship of subject matter to
the size of a painting.

Across the Rocky Mountains

From Denver, Bierstadt and Ludlow continued on the Overland Route
to Salt Lake City, Utah. Crossing the North Platte River and Cooper Creek,
they found themselves "completely shut off in a chaos of mountains," at an
altitude of more than 10,000 feet. It was a "colossal wildness," and
"its toute ensemble was that of utter, unbroken solitude," thought Lud-
low. "The prevailing color on the heights was a dull reddish brown; in
the pits and chasms, a leaden gray."3

They crossed Bridger's Pass, encountered another emigrant train,
and reached the South Pass plateau. In view were the Wind River, Unitah,
and Wasatch Ranges. Here, Bierstadt must have recalled his experiences
of four years earlier, during the Lander Expedition. This same area pro-
vided the subject for his large Rocky Mountains (Fig. 15), which probably
was begun prior to his leaving New York for the Overland tour.4

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1 Ibid., p. 251.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 253.
4 Metropolitan Museum, New York City, New York.
As he had done on his 1859 western trip, Bierstadt must again have made many sketches while crossing the Rockies for the second time. Arrangements had been made with the Overland stage line to have the driver halt for an half hour, in order to facilitate "the taking of sketches, and the collection and preparation of specimens."\(^1\)

At Placerville, Utah, the Overlanders had completed half of their journey. "We were now 983 miles from our journey's beginning, 930 from its end, and 272 from Salt Lake City," calculated Ludlow.\(^2\)

In Utah, they began the only phase of their travels, so far, in which they feared Indian attack.

We resumed our journey at the peril of our lives, the whole Desert at that time reeking with massacre. Here our horrors began. For three hundred miles we rode expecting death in every canon.\(^3\)

They climbed the eastern slope of the Humboldt Mountains, and the appearance of a panoramic landscape view purged them of any concern with personal harm, recalled Ludlow. As if the mere size of the mountains created a new self-confidence, Ludlow boasted about the scale of their mountains compared to others.

Set the White Mountains there! the flattered, the boasted of the East. The star-shadows of our lower ridge would eclipse them . . . . From this height of vision we seemed to see half a world—the globe around and down to its very girdle.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 266.  
\(^2\)Ibid.  
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 282.  
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 283.
By this time, Ludlow is obviously thinking of himself as a Westerner.

Twenty-one miles east of Ft. Bridger, Ludlow found an occasion to boast again—not just about size in the western landscape, but also about its age. To him, America had the equivalent of a cultural past in its natural phenomenon:

We go out of our way to lavish raptures upon the temples of Yucatan . . . the Sphinx, and the Cave of Elephanta, while through our own mountain fastness and trackless plains exist ruins of architecture and statuary not one whit behind the foreign remains of forty centuries in power of execution, and far vaster in respect to age and size.\(^{1}\)

Ludlow's cultural "nationalism" was inspired by the sight of the Church Buttes, which he thought gave the impression of a stupendous cathedral or basilica built in a cruciform plan. The relationships of its ground plan, nave, transept, buttresses, and recessed arches with figures, Ludlow believed to represent a new order appropriate to America:

... here were the suggestions for an order as fresh and original as comported with the virgin fields and forests, life and energy, spirit and material of the New World. Were I an architect, I should tomorrow be on my way to spend a year, if need be, in the study of the Church Buttes . . . .\(^{2}\)

When Bierstadt and Ludlow arrived in the area of Mormon conquests, they saw "a boundless scape of living green" replace the ashen gray and burnt brown of the landscape through which they had just traveled.\(^{3}\) "Five minutes had sufficed to bring about the greatest visual contrast in our

\(^{1}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 288.}\)

\(^{2}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 289.}\)

\(^{3}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 302.}\)
lives," noted Ludlow.¹

The transformation of a desert into a garden, which had been accomplished by the Mormons, was one of the Overlander's major impressions when they arrived in Salt Lake City. By an obedience to heavenly instructions, the Mormons have made "the wilderness like Eden, the desert like the garden of the Lord," said Ludlow.² He described the Mormon's elaborate irrigation system that caused the water from snow crested mountains to flow through a series of right angled channels. For Ludlow, Salt Lake City had biblical associations:

The associations of Palestine throng everywhere throughout Mormondom, and with special cogency they came upon me here. I remembered the declaration of the Psalmist. "Thou turnest men's hearts as the rivers of water are turned."³

It was through a kind of "intuitive" knowledge of physical geography that the Mormons had created their garden. As Ludlow observed the irrigation system more in detail, he remarked: "How much of the Bible's poetry we lose through our ignorance of physical geography."⁴

While in Salt Lake City, Bierstadt and Ludlow conversed with Brigham Young, attended a Mormon Fourth of July celebration, visited the city's theatre or opera house, and made an excursion to the "Dead Sea."

How long the Overlanders remained in Salt Lake City is not known, but, eventually they set out for California to complete the remainder of their transcontinental journey.

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 327.
³Ibid., p. 331.
⁴Ibid., p. 332.
In the Yosemite Valley

The Overlander's journey from Salt Lake City to the Pacific coast is not recorded by Ludlow in his Heart of the Continent. Also, only briefly does he mention his and Bierstadt's activities in San Francisco, the city to which they went following their sojourn in Utah. However, in discussions of San Francisco's mid-century literary "frontier," the names of Ludlow and Bierstadt are associated with a young group of writers who gathered in the offices of the Golden Era, a literary magazine of the day which was published weekly.\(^1\) Here they met Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, and Mark Twain. Van Wyck Brooks states that Mark Twain submitted his literary efforts to Ludlow for advice and correction.\(^2\) In a "Good-bye Article," published in the Golden Era, November 22, 1863, Ludlow praised the local San Francisco writers and said that Mark Twain "is a school by himself."\(^3\) Bierstadt's contribution to the literary group was the design of a new masthead for the Golden Era.\(^4\)

Another writer then living in San Francisco, and one whom the Overlanders seemed to have had great personal contact with was Thomas Starr King. Perhaps, before their western tour, they had already become familiar with King's The White Hills, in which King quoted Emerson and

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 235.
\(^3\)Fitz Hugh Ludlow, Union Worthies, Number 8, Union College (Schenectady, New York, 1953), p. 16.
\(^4\)Van Wyck Brooks, op. cit., p. 259.
Thoreau, and advised his readers to seek the picturesque landscape while traveling through New England.

In Thomas Starr King's drawing-room, Bierstadt and Ludlow gazed at Watkin's photographs of Yosemite Valley. These photographs aroused great expectations in the minds of the Overlanders, much in the same way as they caused "exclamations of awe at Goupil's window, and ecstasy in Dr. Holme's study."²

Looking forward to their seven weeks to be spent in the Yosemite area, Ludlow said:

If report was true, we were going to the original site of the Garden of Eden, [italics mine]—into a region which out-Bendemere Bendemere, out-valleyed the valley of Rasselas, surpassed the Alps in its waterfalls, and the Himal'ye in its precipices . . . .³

The trip was to be even more rugged than anything they had attempted thus far on their western tour. "No Saratoga affair this!" commented Ludlow, as he recalled how they departed armed with the Ballard rifles, shotguns, and Colt revolvers which had come with them across the continent.⁴

The party consisted of the four original Overlanders plus two young artists, Williams, "an old Roman," and Perry, "an ancient Düsseldorff friend."⁵ Also accompanying them was "a highly scientific metallurgist

¹ Thomas Starr King, The White Hills: Their Legends, Landscape, and Poetry (Boston, 1860).
² Ludlow, op. cit., p. 412.
³ Ibid., p. 412.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., p. 419.
and physicist generally, Dr. John Hewston of San Francisco, and a man and boy to serve them during the seven weeks excursion. Thomas Starr King had anticipated going along to Yosemite Valley, but was not able to join the party.

They went first by steamer from San Francisco to Stockton, and then by horseback on to Mariposa, "that jumping off place of civilization," where they acquired pack mules for the journey into the wilderness. The one-hundred mile trip from Stockton to Mariposa consumed four days, during which time they stopped to "sketch, peep, and botanize." Traveling in single file, they alternately climbed and descended outlying Sierra ridges and arrived at "Clark's," a cabin half-way between Mariposa and Yosemite Valley, where tourists stopped to see the Big Trees. Here they stayed for the night.

Near Mariposa, in sight of the Big Trees, Ludlow once again saw "giants" and images of magnitude. It was as if he were trying to describe the grandeur of a storm, a herd of buffalo, or the Rocky Mountains,—again it was the problem of dimension, proportions, or scale. Referring to an Easterner's inability to realize the vastness of these western wonders, Ludlow asserted: "They have no concrete idea of how the asserted proportions look. Tell a carpenter, what you have seen in the Mariposa County groves, and his eye grows incredulous in a moment ... ."
To explain the proportions, Ludlow uses a device so often employed by Poe in developing scale, that of numerically progressive expansion.

Take the dry statistics of the matter. Out of one hundred and thirty-two trees which have been measured, not one under-runs twenty-eight feet in circumference; five range between thirty-two and thirty-six feet; fifty-eight between forty and fifty feet; thirty-four between fifty and sixty; fourteen between sixty and seventy; thirteen between seventy and eighty; two between eighty and ninety; two between ninety and one hundred; two are just one hundred; and one is one hundred and two. This last, before the storms truncated it, had a height of four hundred feet . . . .

The space which the grand trees encompassed in height and circumference astonished the Overlanders, but they were equally amazed when they considered time in reference to these giants. With an almost boastful tone, and as if he were addressing those who claimed America had no past, Ludlow reminded the reader that the birth of the giants goes back to 1200 B. C. and added:

Thus their tender saplings were running up just as the gates of Troy were tumbling down, and some of them had fulfilled the lifetime of the late Hartford Charter Oak when Solomon called his master-masons to refreshment from the building of the Temple.

Bierstadt and the other painters sketched the giant trees, but Ludlow noted that the artists "neither made nor expected to make anything like a realizing picture of the groves." The problem of giving scale to the natural marvels of the western landscape, which before had perplexed Ludlow, was especially evident to him when he considered how the size of the trees could be visually presented in a painting.

1Ibid.
2Ibid., p. 423.
3Ibid., p. 424.
The marvelous of size does not go into gilt frames. You paint a Big Tree, and it only looks like a common tree in a cramped coffin. To be sure, you can put a live figure against the butt for comparison; but, unless you take a canvas of the size of Haydon's, your picture is quite as likely to resemble Homunculus against an average timber-tree as a large man against Sequoia gigantea. What our artists did was get a capital transcript of the Big Trees' color . . . .

From these sketches, Bierstadt painted his Giant Redwoods of California. He made a natural transcription of the trees' color, but he added human figures for scale and expanded the dimensions of his canvas to ten times the size of his original sketch. Thus the methods employed by Bierstadt and Ludlow in solving the problem of scale are similar.

At last, the Overlanders arrived at a place which gave them their first sight of the Yosemite Valley. This was "Inspiration Point." The view was spectacular! It was like nothing that Ludlow had ever seen before. The travelers had anticipated coming to the original site of the Garden of Eden, and this thought must have entered Ludlow's mind, for the landscape before them seemed to be an earthly paradise that had just been created. "We did not so much seem to be seeing from that crag of vision a new scene on the old familiar globe," thought Ludlow, "as a new heaven and a new earth into which the creative spirit had just been breathed."3

When Bierstadt returned to New York, the view from "Inspiration Point" became the subject of one of his largest landscapes, Domes of the

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1 Ibid.
2 The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts.
3 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 426.
Yosemite (Fig. 18), a gigantic canvas, nine feet tall and fifteen feet wide.\footnote{St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont.}

Ludlow's description of the scene is so similar to Bierstadt's painting of the same subject that it is practically a verbal equivalent. In Ludlow's writing, there is less straining for effect than there was in his descriptions of storm clouds or buffalo hunts. Instead, there is perhaps a slight hesitancy to exaggerate, even possibly a certain feeling of reserve about attempting any description. The writer seems to wish for the reader to experience only an objective reporting of the landscape view. Both Bierstadt and Ludlow recreate, for the viewer and the reader, a feeling of actual presence at the scene. This is accomplished by the special device of having foreground, middleground, and background, which, for the "viewer," is not so much a thrusting or flowing into depth, but rather a methodical advancement of the eye into a space created by overlapping of planes. Likewise, radially, one senses this same kind of shifting viewpoint, or multi-perspective system. It is as if the scene were moving by, or as if the head were turning from one part to focus on another part of the scene. This shifting viewpoint is clearly employed by Ludlow in arranging the parts of his literary landscape "picture." First the writer describes his foreground:

We stood on the verge of a precipice more than three thousand feet in height—a sheer granite wall, whose terrible perpendicular distance baffled all visual computation. Its foot was hidden among hazy green spiculae [italics in the original],—they might be tender spears of grass catching the slant sun on upheld aprons of cobwebs, or giant pines whose tops that sun first gilt before he made gold of all the Valley.\footnote{Ibid., p. 426.}
Then he takes his viewer across the space to a middleground, leading toward the opposite wall:

There faced us another wall like our own. How far off it might be we could only guess. When Nature's lightning hits a man fair and square, it splits his yardstick. On recovering from the stroke, mathematicians have ascertained the width of the Valley to vary between half a mile, and five miles. Where we stood, the width is about two.

Next, Ludlow's "eye" focuses on a precipice:

... Our eyes seemed spell-bound to the tremendous precipice which stood smiling, not frowning at us, in all the serene radiance of a snow-white granite Boody,—broadly burning, rather than glistening, in the white-hot splendor of the setting sun.

Now Ludlow shifts his view to look at El Capitan: "... a little east of our off-look, there projected boldly into the Valley from the dominant line of the base a square stupendous tower ..."3

Then looking farther up the Valley eastward:

... There rose high above the rest the sky line, and nearly five thousand feet above the Valley, a hemisphere of granite, capping the sheer wall, without an apparent tree or shrub to hide its vast proportions. This we immediately recognized as the famous To-cov-ae, better known through Watkin's photographs as the Great North Dome.4

Finally, Ludlow leads his reader down into the valley and into atmospheric distance:

Let us leave the walls of the Valley to speak of the Valley itself, as seen from this great altitude. There lies a sweep of emerald grass turned to chrysoprase by the slant-beamed sun,—chrysoprase beautiful enough to have been the tenth foundation-stone of John's apocalyptic heaven. Broad and fair just

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 427.
4 Ibid., p. 428.
beneath us, it narrows to a little strait of green between
the butments that uplift the giant domes. Far to the westward,
widening more and more, it opens into the bosom of great moun-
tain-ranges,—into a field of perfect light, misty by its own
excess,—into an unspeakable suffusion of glory created from
the phoenix-pile of the dying sun . . . .

Ludlow was impressed by another quality about Yosemite. This
was the visible silence of the Valley,

... Not a living creature, either man or beast, breaks the
visible silence of this immost paradise; but for ourselves,
standing at the precipice, petrified, as it were, rock on
rock, the great world might well be running back in stone-
and-grassy dreams to the hour when God had given him as yet
but two daughters, the crag and the clover. We were break-
ing into the sacred closet of Nature's self-examination . . . .
Earth below was as motionless as the ancient heavens above,
save for the shining serpent of the Merced, which silently
to our ears threaded the middle of the grass, and twinkled
his burnished back in the sunset wherever for a space he
glided out of the shadow of the woods.²

Thus, the Overlander's had gone west and had found their Garden
of Eden. Even the serpent is present. It is most significant that, for
Ludlow, both the serpent symbol and the garden image itself were existent
in natural geographical phenomena. It is not without insignificance
that Bierstadt's large Domes of the Yosemite eliminates the presence of
human figures and animals, his usual devices for giving scale. Perhaps,
too, the painter wished to evoke the paradisical nature of the Valley.
Also, one might speculate by saying that the winding form of the Merced
river in Bierstadt's version of the scene could have had some possible
serpentine meaning for the artist, much as it did for Ludlow.

¹Ibid., pp. 431-343.
²Ibid., p. 432.
It is interesting that Ludlow's method of description, which progressively leads his reader from the foreground into the valley, parallels the actual events of the Overlander's journey into Yosemite Valley. That is, after their arrival at "Inspiration Point," and following their scanning of the panoramic view, they descend into the valley to see more in detail the individual components of the landscape. Thus, Ludlow's description mirrors his and Bierstadt's actual journey.

In the valley, they found themselves in a "green meadow, ringed by woods, on the banks of the Merced."\(^1\) Here they pitched their first camp. Later they moved five miles up the valley, and passed Bridal Veil Falls. Here they were impressed by beautiful groves of oaks and cedars. Next, they went to Yosemite Falls.

Bierstadt and Ludlow's third camp was pitched on the shore of Lake Ah-wi-yah, "a crystal pond of several acres in extent, fed by the north fork of the valley stream, and lying right at the mouth of the narrow straight between the North and South Domes."\(^2\)

The last camp was made among the crags and forests behind the South Dome. From here, with packs on their backs, they threaded their way through a canyon on a narrow trail until they reached the great Vernal and Nevada Falls.

During the seven weeks camping in Yosemite, Bierstadt produced numerous sketches of the lake, the valley river, trees, and crags and crevices of the valley's rock formations. Bierstadt's method of working

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 432.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 440.
and the importance of this Yosemite trip to the painter was stated by Ludlow:

Sitting in their divine workshop, by a little after sun-rise our artists began labor in that only method which can ever make a true painter or a living landscape,—color-studies on the spot; and though I can not here speak of their results, I will assert that during their seven weeks' camp in the Valley they learned more and gained greater material for future triumphs than they had gotten in all their lives before at the feet of the greatest masters.

Into Oregon and along the Columbia River

With the exception of one artist companion and myself, our party had become sated with travel, and gone home. One glorious September day we took our saddle-bags, note-books, and color-boxes, put our horses on board the Sacramento steamer, and, without other baggage or company of any sort, set out for the Columbia River and Vancouver's Island.

So wrote Ludlow, as he and Bierstadt left San Francisco for their journey northward. When they arrived at Sacramento, they acquired a small light-draught boat which took them up the shallow Sacramento river to the head of its navigation. On the morning of the third day they reached Tehama. Here they began the horseback part of the journey and eventually arrived at Red Bluffs. From this small enterprising California settlement to the Oregon border, Ludlow thought the landscape appeared "exhaustlessly fertile." Finally they came to Shasta, a mining depot, where they picked up their "color-box" which had been shipped by the California Express Company from Red Bluffs to this settlement. From here they left the main wagon road and went to the base of Shasta Peak by the way of a small town called Buckeye. "The country about us became

1 Ibid., p. 434.
2 Ibid., p. 445.
wilder and wilder; our road was sometimes a mere trail, half obliterated by springs or traversing rivulets,"\(^1\) described Ludlow. In view of Shasta, it was vastness in the height of this single mountain that impressed Ludlow and Bierstadt. This kind of grandeur was new to the Overlanders and apparently had not been experienced in the Rocky Mountains as intensely as they perceived it now.

When Bierstadt painted Mt. Shasta following his western journey, the mountain's pyramidal form projected majestically from an extended flat plain, much as Ludlow described the scene.\(^2\)

... No peak which we met in all our large experience of the mountains of this Continent ever compared with Shasta in producing the effect of vast height ... Shasta is a mountain without mediations. It sits on the verge of a plain, broken for a hundred miles to the northward only by pigmy volcanic cones heaped around extinct solfataras [italics in the original] ... When we first saw the whole of it distinctly, it seemed to make no compromise with surrounding plains or ridges, but rose in naked majesty, alone and simple from the grass of our valley to its own topmost iridescent ice.\(^3\)

On the way from Mt. Shasta to Portland, Oregon, Ludlow suffered a violent attack of pneumonia. He credited Bierstadt with saving his life. "I had been saved by the indefatigable nursing of the friend I traveled with,—by wet compresses, and the impossibility of sending for any doctor in the region."\(^4\)

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\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 459.

\(^{2}\)Union League Club, New York City, New York.

\(^{3}\)Ibid., p. 461.

\(^{4}\)Ibid., p. 473.
A short distance south of Salem, Oregon, Bierstadt and Ludlow were able to take within a single sweep of vision seven snow-peaks,—the "Three Sisters, Mount Jefferson, Mount Hood, Mount Adams, and Mount St. Helens,—with the dim suggestion of an eighth colossal mass, which might be Ranier."¹

With this view in sight, Ludlow saw a different kind of splendor than that which he had emphasized in previous mountain descriptions. The magnitude of size, height, or number was substituted by an impression of vastness in intensity, whiteness, or incandescent brilliance. Ludlow reported:

I cannot express their vague, yet vast and intense splendor by any other word than incandescence. It was as if the sky had suddenly grown white-hot in patches. When we first looked, we thought St. Helen's an illusion,—an aurora, of a purer kind of cloud,—a band of refracted light with a predominant orange tint, which out-lines the higher snowpeaks seen at long range,—traced it down, and grasped the entire conception of the mighty cone.²

They followed the Willamette Valley to Portland, and then by boat went to Ft. Vancouver. Here they boarded the steamer, Wilson J. Hunt, a former Hudson River vessel, which took them up the Columbia River to the Falls of the Columbia, where they disembarked for a six mile jaunt by train. Again by steamer they continued up the river to The Dalles and the Upper Cataracts. This area, Ludlow believed, was a region "where the artist might stay for a years University course in water-painting."³

¹Ibid., p. 475.
²Ibid., pp. 475-476.
³Ibid., p. 500.
DUE TO A TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR IN PAGINATION,

NO TEXT EXISTS FOR THIS PAGE.
When the two Overlanders returned to San Francisco, their western
tour was completed. Probably in the month October, Bierstadt and Ludlow
sailed from the Golden Gate city for New York. Just before the lines
were cast off, Thomas Starr King (who died a few days after Bierstadt
and Ludlow arrived in New York) stood at the door of their stateroom and
bade them goodbye.

Bierstadt's arrival was anticipated in New York. An eastern
newspaper briefly reviewed his activities on the Pacific Coast, and the
reporter asked an interesting question:

Bierstadt, the artist, when last heard from by letter,
dated August 23d, was in the Yo Semite valley, where he was
making numerous studies of the magnificent scenery of that
region. He wrote that, in about ten days from that time, he
and his party intended making a trip on horseback into Ore­
gon, and after a sojourn there for a few weeks, would go to
San Francisco, whence they would take steamer and return home
by way of the Isthmus, instead of attempting the overland
route. We may, consequently, look for their arrival here
early in November. Bierstadt spoke of himself and party as
in the enjoyment of excellent health, and possessed of the
finest spirits. He could scarcely realize that the summer
had passed, and only questioned whither it had gone to. He
wondered if he had been drafted, not knowing at the time that
he had, indeed, been one of the fortunate ones. The question
arises in our mind whether, on his return, he will be re­
garded as a deserter or not.\footnote{Undated and untitled newspaper clipping, from a scrapbook in
possession of Rosalie Osborne Mayer, \textit{Scrapbook}, p. 13.}
Figure 15 - The Rocky Mountains
CHAPTER V

YEARS OF SUCCESS (1863-1872)

The Rocky Mountains

In the 1860's, Bierstadt attained such phenomenal success that the Illustrated Annual of Phrenology and Physiognomy of 1869 reproduced the configuration of his skull, considering it significant enough for study of genius.¹ This singular honor attested to the popularity which the landscape painter gained following his second western tour. In fact, by the middle sixties one critic stated that Bierstadt was now competing with Church, and might even surpass him as the giant of American painting.² This success was accomplished often in defiance of critics. Yet, the story of his rocketing to fame is one of those fascinating success stories which Americans often delight in experiencing and relating. Bierstadt's fame was a timely one, for his western painting did capture the imagination of an expanding nation. Nevertheless, his elevation to success was well calculated. What is interesting is that his was a reputation based partly on advertising schemes and devices. Through self-promotion the painter created a myth about himself that, like advertising today, resulted in a

¹Illustrated Annual of Phrenology and Physiognomy (New York, 1869).

²Unidentified clipping, 1867, Rosalie Osborne Mayer, scrapbook of Bierstadt memorabilia (property of Mrs. Joyce Edwards, Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.), p. 27. Hereafter, this source will be referred to as ROM Scrapbook.
demand for a product. Bierstadt's activities in the sixties make it obvious that there was one bit of advice that Ashur B. Durand had given young landscape painters which would not be heeded by Bierstadt. In 1855, Durand warned:

"... take no thought on the question of genius or of future fame; with these you have nothing to do. Seek not to rival or surpass a brother artist, and above all, let not the love of money overlap the love of Art."

Let us follow the events of Bierstadt's rise to fame after his 1863 western tour. We will note how he progressively gained in audacity and boldness, how each painting progressively grew larger in intent and physical size, and how he disregarded Durand's advice.

The Rocky Mountains (Fig. 15) was the first large work of the artist to aid his reputation. The canvas probably was painted prior to his overland tour with Ludlow; however, it was not until after he returned to New York, in the spring of 1864, that he especially promoted its exhibition. It was as if through the influence of Ludlow, or even through a new self-confidence gained as a "frontiersman" that Bierstadt embarked on a campaign to publicize this western scene. His method of self-emulation did not go unnoticed by some critics.

The exhibition of The Rocky Mountains was reported in The New Path, a short-lived American art periodical, which was inspired by the writings of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The writer, in April, 1864, called Bierstadt's method "puffery" and suggested that an artist's reputation should be dependent upon his work and not the accessories of

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1 Ashur B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape Painting, No. 4," The Crayon, I (February 14, 1855), 98.
exhibition. He noted that The Rocky Mountains had first been shown to a few invited guests. Next, it was taken to Boston where it created an almost unprecedented furor; finally, it was unveiled to an impatiently waiting New York public. The New Path critic described what he thought to be the "new system" as opposed to the old way of exhibiting paintings and called it "a vast machinery of advertising and puffery put into motion on a ponderous scale."  

It is at present going through the ceremonies of exhibition and puffery preparatory to being engraved, which have now become settled by prescription, and with which all New Yorkers are thoroughly familiar; the upholsterer has done his work, the ten longettes and the magnifying glass have been duly provided, the puff-disinterested has been written, printed on the sheet of letter paper that etiquette prescribes, and distributed, and the gentleman-in-waiting stands ready, at all hours, to enter in his subscription book the names of those who desire to add this combined result of Mr. Bierstadt's genius and Mr. Smillie's talent, to their plethoric portfolios.

The New Path critic warned painters that the public might not be as gullible as they thought, for well-adjusted draperies, innumerable tin tubes, and nicely printed critical-descriptive sheets of letter paper were not a substitute for quality.

In spite of such critical comments, Bierstadt had not even begun his attack upon the public taste of New York. A mere handful saw The Rocky Mountains at the time of its first exhibition, as compared to the thousands who would see it later. The place where it was shown was the art gallery

1 "Notices of Recent Pictures," The New Path, I (April, 1864), 160.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
of the New York Metropolitan Fair.\(^1\) The fair, which began on April 5, 1864, was a gigantic endeavor to raise funds for the Sanitary Commission, an organization which provided housing and clothing for the wounded during the Civil War. The opening day was declared a national holiday. To inaugurate the event, a large military parade, including 10,000 troops, marched down Broadway, in view of the hero of Fort Sumter, General Anderson. Amid varied exhibitions, among which were the Seven Wonders of the World, was the Indian department, organized by Albert Bierstadt. This division of the fair contained a booth in which could be seen a tableau vivant of the Red Man. The spectacle was, strangely enough, practically a reconstruction of the subject matter of *The Rocky Mountains*. Against the background of reconstructed wigwams, real Indians could be seen preparing their food, indulging in sports, and performing ritual dances. This action took place on a stage which was carpeted with green baize to represent grass. Bierstadt claimed that some of the Indians had accompanied him on his recent trip from the West. Albert Bierstadt's Indian department, which was so similar in theme to the painting he had exhibited in the fair's art gallery, established his name in the mind of the public as an interpreter of the West.

According to the printed pamphlet or guide given to viewers of *The Rocky Mountains*, the painting depicted the scenery in the Wind River range of Mountains.\(^2\) The western slope of the mountains was represented and the

\(^1\) Information concerning the New York Metropolitan Fair of 1864 is drawn from the New York Daily Tribune (April 5, 1864), pp. 5-6.

principle peak was Mt. Lander, named after the leader of the expedition which Bierstadt had accompanied in 1859. The printed description added that in the foreground of the painting Bierstadt had included an Indian encampment, a Shoshone Village. Vegetation native to the region such as the dwarf sunflower, the wild sage, the artemisia, cottonwood trees, and a variety of evergreens provided the setting within which the various groups of Indians performed their characteristic labors. The descriptive sheet claimed that the painting possessed a geographical and historical value. "Upon that very plain where an Indian village stands, a city, populated by our descendants, may rise, and in its art-galleries this picture may eventually find a resting-place."¹

Now, it is this latter statement which offers a key to the meaning which Bierstadt's The Rocky Mountains had to his contemporaries. The viewer, in 1864, at the gallery of the New York Metropolitan Fair, could gaze at Bierstadt's painting and vicariously make a journey westward and experience that poetic dream which mid-nineteenth century America had about future national expansion. The painting, just as the panorama had done in the years before, permitted the journey of the imagination into the heart of a vast continent. Bierstadt gave form to the overland tour that he himself had made with Lander. The expansive panoramic form of eight feet by ten feet served as the vehicle for the spacial experience of the West.

It would be a less convincing argument that Bierstadt's huge format was a direct result of an urge to create a symbol of western physical space if he had not painted an earlier and smaller version of the same subject.

¹Ibid.
Figure 16 - Sunset Light, Wind River Range of the Rocky Mountains
Sunset Light, Wind River Range of the Rocky Mountains, (Fig. 16) now in the collection of the library at New Bedford, Massachusetts, presented almost the same scene as that of The Rocky Mountains. What was missing was a sense of scale that was created by enlarging the dimensions of the canvas in relation to the figures in the foreground. Also, in the earlier work, extreme contrasts of light and dark gave mystery and drama to the Indian encampment. In comparison, the larger work was more subtle in its contrasts of light and dark and the painting presented a feeling of overall illumination. Consistent with the increased use of light in his large Rocky Mountain scene, Bierstadt intensified his green colors in the park-like middleground. This result was an idyllic landscape, which for its viewers made visible the image of a "garden" in the West.¹

While Bierstadt's method of exhibiting The Rocky Mountains caused some consternation on the part of critics, his work was lauded by others. Barry Gray was so inspired by it that he wrote a descriptive, sentimental poem in dedication of the work.² One critic went so far as to say that it should be ranked among the highest existing productions of American landscape art.³ It was Bierstadt's use of light to create depth that the writer thought was unsurpassed. "It illuminates a twilight room," said the writer, "and nothing but absolute darkness extinguishes its marvelous


²Barry Gray [Robert Barry Coffin] (1826-1886) was assistant editor of "Home Journal," and contributor of humorous sketches to periodicals.

It was not the gas jets, as some had claimed, which created its unequaled luminosity. In contrast to other critics, this writer found no fault with Bierstadt's introduction of human life into the foreground. The human element did not compete with the landscape; in fact, the foreground detail, claimed the writer, helped in comprehending the vastness of the mountain ranges. Their presence, so seemingly insignificant to virgin nature, only verified the insignificance of man to nature.

Other critics thought that Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains*, while inspired by nature, was untrue to its model. James Jackson Jarves, for example, in his *Art Idea*, thought the painter depicted the silvery clearness and translucency of the western mountain air, but believed that the human figures in the foreground made *The Rocky Mountains* confusing. He felt that the presence of actual life in the foreground detracted from the principal feature of the scene, and, for this reason, created two pictures in one, from different points of view.

Tuckerman considered Bierstadt a true representative of the Düsseldorf school in landscape and believed that, because of this influence, skill prevailed over imagination in his work; pure light was often wanting; sharp, dewy green was apt to be too prominent; that he was inclined to be sensational; that there was mannerism in his composition; and that his works were more effective than impressive. These defects he attributed


to the artist's German influences; but when Tuckerman discussed *The Rocky Mountains* he stated that, "no more genuine and grand American work had been produced in landscape art . . . " He thought the subject was eminently national, that it was almost a virgin theme. He thought that the aerial perspective "lures the eye and imagination away into infinite depths of space," and believed that the painting inspired sublime emotions like those which Coleridge so eloquently uttered in his "Hymn in the Valley of Chamouni." Tuckerman noted that the figures in the foreground were not proportioned nor finished with the same skill as the landscape details. This, he felt, was recognized by the artist himself and was purposely rendered that way so as not to mar the impression of the whole.

The numerous exhibitions of *The Rocky Mountains* were climaxed in 1865, when the artist sold the work to an Englishman for a reputed $25,000. The buyer was James McHenry, who owned ten acres in the heart of London, called Oak Lodge. After the sale, the patron's name and the price paid for *The Rocky Mountains* would always be an added embellishment to press reports concerning Bierstadt's activities. The publicity probably paid off, because other Englishmen began to purchase his works and this in turn probably aided his American market.

**Storm in the Rocky Mountains**

Bierstadt followed *The Rocky Mountains* of 1863 with another major work, *Storm in the Rocky Mountains*, (Fig. 17), which was painted in

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Figure 17 - Storm in the Rocky Mountains
1864.1 It was larger in size and more dramatic in concept than the earlier work. The press eagerly followed the stages of the painting's development. When finally completed, Bierstadt's promotion idea surpassed any advertising scheme which he had so far employed. This time, for all New York to see, a banner hung across the entire width of Broadway, announcing the exhibition of Bierstadt's new landscape painting.2 The proceeds from the admission fee were donated to the new relief fund for destitute Civil War soldiers' orphans. Like The Rocky Mountains, the Storm in the Rocky Mountains was engraved in the form of a chromo-lithograph.

Storm in the Rocky Mountains represented a site in Colorado, about eighty miles from Denver. The spectator saw an elevated view of a lake which was fed by a stream from another lake on a higher level in the extreme distance. Over the farthest lake was an immense dark storm cloud which hid the towering peak of a gigantic mountain. The mountain crest itself, barely distinguishable as it emerged from the dark, massive cloud form, represented Mount Rosalie. A series of planes gradually led the spectator from the right foreground to the depths of an enormous valley upon which the central lake bordered. In spiraling fashion one's eye was led inward and upward to the brilliant white peak that curved back to the picture plane. This swirling motion, or Schwung, which was so typical of the seascapes of Andreas Achenbach, made the Storm in the Rocky Mountains a baroque counterpart to the more classically contained The Rocky Mountains.

1Storm in the Rocky Mountains was destroyed in a fire in 1869. See Rocky Mountain News (Denver, Colo.), September 6, 1869, p. 4.

2Rosalie Osborne Mayer, lecture delivered to Waterville Woman's Club, Waterville, N. Y., in ROM Scrapbook, p. 3.
While in *The Rocky Mountains* Bierstadt emphasized the horizontality of the middleground lake's edge and balanced the movement of one diagonal with another in depicting the mountain ranges, the painter employed, in his storm subject, a dramatic diagonal that almost divided the painting in half, from the lower left to the upper right. Keeping pace with this strong linear movement the artist used more arbitrary forms of lighting in his second and larger work and the transitions in value are more abrupt. In *The Rocky Mountains*, Lander and adjoining mountains, like the wigwams in the horizontal frontal plane, have a vertical axis and rest firmly upon their base. None of these stable forms can be seen in the work following the storm scene. Likewise the figures and horses in *The Rocky Mountains* are frozen in their stance, while in the storm scene the extremely minute mounted rider, two figures, and two horses are represented in agitated motion. Furthermore, they serve no anecdotal purpose, other than to enhance the dynamics of the painting's composition.

It would seem that as the versatile Bierstadt adjusted his style from a renaissance concept to a baroque one, his technique consequently would also substitute a certain obscurity of shape and line for a clarity of detail; paradoxically, however, the opposite seems true. As Bierstadt expanded his format, assumed a higher elevated view, and enlarged the panoramic nature of his vision, he also itemized more fully the detail.

*The Storm in the Rocky Mountains* was purchased by T. W. Kennard of New York City. The price this time was $35,000. The dimensions had increased from over seventy-three square feet in *The Rocky Mountains* to eighty-four square feet in the storm scene, for the latter measured seven by twelve feet.
According to the London Saturday Review, Bierstadt's Storm in the Rocky Mountains could be condemned as scene painting, since the painter used artifices to enhance the effect. Nevertheless, it was the artist's ability to accomplish what he had intended—his resolution, his audacity, and his plotting and planning for purely artistic ends that impressed a viewer, thought the critic. Although he felt that Bierstadt employed "German foreground art," the writer stated that no picture he had ever seen conveyed more entirely a sense of natural sublimity.

The Art Journal of August, 1868, maintained that the Storm in the Rocky Mountains showed a marked advance over the early Rocky Mountain painting. The writer thought that The Rocky Mountains could be compared favorably with Turner's Crossing the Brook, but that Storm in the Rocky Mountains could only find a satisfactory comparison with nature herself. In fact, the English critic thought that no finer landscape had been produced in modern time and that it would be difficult to discover any adverse criticism.

Domes of the Yosemite

If the criticisms of the Storm in the Rocky Mountains were generally laudatory and elevated, Bierstadt's reputation, the pinnacle of his success was reached, according to some critics, with the appearance of Domes of the Yosemite.

1 Tuckerman, op. cit., p. 394. [Tuckerman quoted from the London Saturday Review, but did not identify the article.]

2 Ibid., p. 395.

3 "Great Pictures by an American Artist," The Art Journal (London), August 1, 1868, pp. 159-60.
Figure 18 - Domes of the Yosemite
Yosemite (Fig. 18) in May of 1867. This work was more spectacular in size than the two previous paintings, for the new panoramic landscape was approximately nine and one-half feet high and fifteen feet long. Like the storm scene, Domes of the Yosemite was exhibited in the gallery of the Tenth Street Studio. Admission was charged and the funds were donated to the Ladies' Southern Relief Committee.

This picture will advance Mr. Bierstadt's reputation still more. He is ascending the throne and a few more strides, he will seat himself as the monarch of landscape painters. The works of most European landscapists are but mere muddy daubs when compared with this last great picture. We do not attach any importance to the size of the picture; in this case it required size to do justice to the subject; but it is the grasp, the daring and the matchless breadth exhibited in this picture that makes it great as a large one.

We recommend our readers to go at once and see the work. They will feel that the world is progressing and the Americans are a great people.

Thus wrote a New York columnist about Bierstadt's Domes of the Yosemite. Behind the left foreground plane of the painting the Yosemite Falls is represented. On the extreme right is a lofty granite crag, on the side of which oakhings and pine trees cling precariously. Both the cliff and the falling cataract guide the viewer to the center foreground where plunging rapids abruptly descend to conduct him to the undulating valley studded with oaks and pines. Within this verdant valley the

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1St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont. The painting was originally purchased by LeGrand Lockwood, Norwalk, Conn. Later, it became the property of A. S. Hatch of New York. About 1873, Hatch sold the painting to Horace Fairbanks, who constructed a special art gallery at the Athenaeum for the painting's permanent exhibition.


observer is further led by means of the serpentine Merced river through
the valley, past the arch-like opening of the cathedral-like north dome,
and onward to the south dome.

An even greater sense of depth is created as one is imaginatively
directed through the half-concealed ravine to mountain peaks beyond. In
addition to the overlapping of planes as a device to progressively lead
the viewer into space, Bierstadt alternated a pattern of light and dark
from the foreground to the infinite distance. The hovering cumulonimbus
cloud forms, which screened the morning light, offered excuses by which
the artist could present a serpentine flow of light into space. As in
his Storm in the Rocky Mountains, Bierstadt cherishes every square inch
of the canvas; yet, in contrast to both his The Rocky Mountains and his
storm scene, the actuality of atmosphere intercedes and a sense of infin-
ity, mysterious depth leads the observer ethereally onward.

In contrast to his other two grandiose landscapes, Bierstadt elimi-
nates in Domes of the Yosemite any reference to human or animal forms. As
if no human being had ever gazed upon this scene, the observer looks down
from his elevated viewpoint upon this unspoiled natural paradise. No won-
der that Ludlow, who described in detail the view which he and Bierstadt
had seen from Inspiration Point in Yosemite Valley, believed that they
had come upon the original site of the Garden of Eden.¹

Pervading this work is the visible silence and sense of contain-
ment which was present in The Rocky Mountains. On the other hand, the
drama of movement and the mystery of light depicted in the Storm in the

¹Supra, chap. IV, p. 115.
Rocky Mountains, are also embodied in the form of the Yosemite scene. Thus, both permanence and change find reconciliation in the artist's panoramic vista of Domes of the Yosemite.

Domes of the Yosemite was praised by many of Bierstadt's admirers, but Clarence Cook, an art critic for the New York Daily Tribune, leveled some very sharp criticisms against the artist when the painting was placed on exhibition. In a special feature story which appeared on the editorial page of the Tribune, Cook questioned the significance which Bierstadt had placed upon size:

Mr. Bierstadt seems to be under the delusion that the bigger a picture is the finer it is . . . . He [Bierstadt] has spread himself . . . over a bigger canvas than ever before. The result is a work almost entirely destitute of grandeur, although professing to portray a scene of which grandeur is the chief characteristic; a work in which our truism finds a most shining illustration, and which we think must open the eyes of many to the commonplace character of this artist's production.

Cook thought Bierstadt "a mediocre and mechanical" talent, but the artist's public, which was perhaps less sophisticated about aesthetic theories than was the Tribune critic, was not yet quite ready to pronounce such sober judgment on their interpreter of the Western landscape. Besides, wasn't it true that the free brochure available to the gallery viewer stated that Domes of the Yosemite merited the highest admiration ever accorded to this genius?


2 "The Domes of the Yosemite," leaflet (in the files of the Boston Public Library, Boston, Mass.).
Symbols of Success

As has been mentioned, the frothy peak which looms above the brooding cloud in the Storm in the Rocky Mountains is known as Mount Rosalie. The summit was named after Rosalie Osborne Ludlow, the wife of Bierstadt's companion on the overland journey of 1863. Following her divorce from Ludlow, the winsome beauty, Rosalie, became the wife of the painter who had commemorated her name. The marriage took place at her home, the Osborne homestead in Waterville, New York during November, 1866. It was an event which had been postponed too long, according to the artist, for he wrote a friend about a month after his marriage and said:

My only regret is that I did not know my wife when I was twelve years old and could have married her then. I am the happiest man living.

The artist's personal happiness was paralleling his professional and financial success.

The house where Bierstadt and his wife soon established residence became as well-known as the artist's Rocky Mountain paintings. The structure, or villa, as it was called, was another symbol of the artist's financial success in the 1860's. Known as Malkasten, (Fig. 19) the house overlooked Washington Irving's home, Sunnyside, which was located a mile and a half from Irvington-on-Hudson. Bierstadt had named his villa after the artists' club in Dusseldorf.²

¹Letter of Albert Bierstadt to "Adams," December 17, 1866, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, New York City.

²The description of Malkasten, Bierstadt's home, is drawn from several undated and untitled clippings in ROM Scrapbook and from Martha J. Lamb, The Homes of America (New York, 1879), p. 149.
The site contained twenty-four acres and it commanded a panoramic view of the Hudson River valley. Alexis de Tocqueville, author of Democracy in America, during a visit to this valley of legend popularized by Washington Irving, was conducted to this spot and pronounced the view, which embraced an area of thirty miles, one of the finest seen in any country.¹

Malkasten incorporated much of Bierstadt's own planning, but he hired the English-trained New York architect, J. Wray Mould, as designer. In 1867, Mould was assistant to Calvert Vaux, who was the chief architect of the public parks in New York and the designer in the early 1870's of Olana, the moorish villa of Frederick Church, which was located across from Catskill, where Thomas Cole lived.² Mould, Bierstadt's architect, had built several churches in adaptation of the Italian Gothic style. The design of Malkasten, however, borrowed from so many different historical styles and it incorporated so many individual ideas of Bierstadt himself, that it cannot be stylistically identified.

The villa Malkasten, was approximately seventy-five feet by one-hundred feet in dimensions and its construction supposedly had cost the artist $100,000. The four-story structure was built of rough bluestone gneiss, with white marble trim. The decoratively-tiled mansard roof was broken by pinnacles, chimneys, dormer windows, and was capped by an ornamental iron railing. Upon this was mounted a pole from which waved the American flag. A wide hall ran through the main building from east to west.

¹Lamb, loc. cit.

At the western end was a doorway leading to an overhanging second-story porch, or piazza as it was called, ten feet wide, extending around the four sides of the building. The rooms on the first floor were the dining hall, billiard room, pantry, and kitchen; on the second floor was a large library, drawing room, parlor, studio, and guest bedrooms; the upper two floors were likewise used as chambers for guests. The house existed on several levels and was supposed to have contained thirty-five rooms.

The artist's studio was considered to be one of the most unusual parts of Malkasten (Fig. 20). Occupying half of the entire space of the structure, it measured seventy-five feet by fifty feet. Bierstadt bragged that he could paint a canvas thirty-five feet by forty feet there. The studio was forty feet high and extended the entire height of Malkasten. The grandiose space of the interior of the studio could be extended further by the opening of three fifteen-feet-wide sliding doors. These doors, which stretched from floor to ceiling, enclosed plate glass that allowed the viewer to look out upon a vast Hudson River valley landscape to the north and west. When Bierstadt wished to take a similar perspective on a work that he had in progress, he could use a gallery or balcony which was constructed at one end of the studio. Ascending by means of a spiral staircase placed in a small area used for cleaning brushes, the artist could take a map-like view of his painting. In addition to the sliding doors that opened the cathedral-like interior to the outdoors, other additional sliding doors were built as movable walls so that the studio could be divided spatially according to the artist's wishes. At the western end of the studio, other sliding partitions, combined with drapery, separated a room which served as a library and archive for drawings and prints.
Figure 19 - Malkasten (exterior)
Here, more glass walls opened directly onto the balcony-porch.

With the artist's desire to somehow bring the landscape into the interior of his studio at Malkasten, he had embodied some principles of architecture that were to be explored more selfconsciously in the early twentieth century. The exterior of Malkasten also incorporated advanced architectural principles. The house had been constructed of materials found on the site and the elevation had been adapted to the contour of the land. The grand encircling piazza served a decorative function but also had, no doubt, been built for permitting the residents and visitors of Malkasten to perform a favorite mid-nineteenth century pastime, the contemplation of nature from an elevated viewpoint.

From his Hudson River retreat, Bierstadt could view, with one glance, a landscape that embraced a panoramic vista thirty miles in distance. But surrounding his studio, high upon the wall, was a form of panorama that embraced a view not only across the entire North American continent, but included Europe as well. In a narrow band or strip, Bierstadt had assembled his favorite sketches made during European travels and western expeditions. In addition to his own personal world panorama on the studio walls, the artist decorated his studio with various Indian artifacts, gathered during his two western tours. Scattered among Indian implements and costumes were specimens of the heads of elk and deer. The library also attested to the artist's interest in American history. One volume in particular was prized by Bierstadt. It had been given to him by General Sherman, who had acquired it during an Indian raid. The volume was written and illustrated by American Indians and contained a sketch by Sitting Bull himself.
Figure 20 - Malkasten (interior)
Although he was not as avowed a collector as Frederick Church, Bierstadt did assemble a minor collection of artists' works comparatively unknown today. At Malkasten, above a Dutch-tiled open fireplace equipped with sixteenth-century Venetian andirons, hung a Bouguereau painting. On the dark-paneled interior walls could be seen other paintings by Enoch Wood Perry, David D. Neal, William Stanley Haseltine, Johannes A. Oertel, Samuel L. Gerry, Andreas Achenbach, and William Hart. The surviving photographs of the interior of Malkasten give evidence that the cluttered surface of the walls was complemented on the floor by elegant Turkish rugs, Gothic-revival furniture, suits of armor, geological specimens, Swiss clocks, and other bric-a-brac. Bierstadt's taste in sculpture was reflected in bronze reproductions of classical sculpture such as the Venus of Milo, and examples by the blind sculptor, Vidal.

Bierstadt's lavish villa was not only a symbol of his recently acquired financial success, but it was also a means the artist used to gain even more recognition and popularity. At certain times, the studio at Malkasten served as a stage for amateur theatrical performances. Also, in opulent Malkasten, within the picturesque atmosphere of the Hudson River valley, the artist entertained and courted his wealthy patrons.

The erection of Malkasten was physical evidence of Bierstadt's expanding fame. Yet, the association of his name with an event of 1867, is perhaps equally symbolic of the artist's prestige. This occasion was one of the most colossal raffles ever conducted in America. During this time a Bierstadt painting was considered as being only second in importance to an entire opera house. The giant jackpot of 1867, like television giveaway programs today, aroused national interest. One contemporary said:
"It was the most colossal event in Chicago's history between the Civil War and the great Fire."^1

The Victorian give-away contest was organized by Uranus H. Crosby, who combined distilling and art collecting. With the dream of building a large opera house in Chicago, Crosby financed the construction of the theater by investing his own private fortune. The four-story marble structure of an Italian Renaissance-revival style, which was located on the north side of Washington Street between State and Dearborn, opened on April 20, 1865.^2 Il Trovatore was the grand opening performance. It was a great success, but Crosby found himself short of funds.

To solve the financial problem, a grand scheme was organized to give away by lottery the entire opera house and to offer paintings as other awards. One by Bierstadt, entitled The Yosemite Valley, evaluated at $20,000, was second prize. Other paintings, one by Thomas Cole and another by Sanford Gifford, were awarded as additional prizes. Tickets, costing five dollars each, were sold from Alaska to Florida. Over 200,000 were purchased, and clubs were even formed in which twenty-cent shares were sold to members for buying tickets in a group. So well-known did the spectacular contest become, that special newspaper correspondents were sent from New York, Philadelphia, and Boston to cover the proceedings.

The prizes had been announced in May, 1866, but they were not awarded until seven months later in January, 1867. The winner was Abraham

^1All material in this section is drawn from a feature article on Chicago's "Giant Jackpot," which appeared in the Chicago Sunday Tribune, May 14, 1950, p. 5.

^2The Crosby Opera House burned in 1871, at the time of the Chicago Fire.
H. Lee of Prairie Du Rocher, Illinois. Lee, who was in the flour milling business and father of nine children, came to Chicago, accepted the prize, but eventually sold the opera house back to Crosby for the sum of $200,000. One can imagine the suspicion that developed about the lottery following this business transaction. But when the winner of Bierstadt's *The Yosemite Valley*, the second prize, was announced, there was even excitement and anger. The winner and new owner of the painting was none other than Uranus H. Crosby himself.

The association with the giant jackpot of Chicago in 1866 may have caused some alarm in certain circles about Bierstadt's involvement. Among the artists themselves, his reputation may have suffered. However, once again, as occurred at the Sanitary Commission Fair, the name of Bierstadt was popularized throughout the country.

Up to this time Bierstadt's paintings were bringing astounding prices from private collectors, however, there was a new frontier of patronage that the artist had yet to explore. This was another wealthy patron, the United States Government. A governmental commission in the Capitol Building would place his name among the great history painters of America. Also, had not Emanuel Leutze been given a commission for a mural called *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*? This painting, which depicted the great western movement in America, had been personally admired, while in process, by none other than Abraham Lincoln himself.

Bierstadt had been corresponding with Congress in the latter part of 1866 about a commission for the Capitol Building. On the 21st of January, 1867, a committee in the House of Representatives passed a resolution authorizing the government to contract with Albert Bierstadt for two
paintings "thoroughly American in character." The artist's original intention was to paint one work with a Rocky Mountain subject and another with the motif of the Yosemite valley. However, he had informed Congress by letter that he would be willing to paint a scene that illustrated a specific event in American history. In that case, the price would have to be $40,000. On the other hand, he would consider it such an honor to be represented in the Capitol, he told his correspondent, that he would not decline $30,000.2

In spite of the fact that William H. Powell had received $25,000 for his The Battle of Lake Erie, and Leutze had received $20,000 for his mural, Congress did not think Bierstadt's special offer would save them $10,000. The Committee on the Library informed Mr. Bierstadt:

... that no appropriation having been made to carry out the purpose of the House resolution respecting the panels in their hall, the Committee deemed it inexpedient [italics mine] in the present state of our finances to recommend an appropriation for the object in question.3

The failure to receive a governmental commission did not discourage the artist. He could pursue the matter later.

In 1867, just one year after his marriage, Albert returned to Europe. This time he was not the art student from a whaling port arriving alone and penniless in Europe. Instead, he was coming from a grandiose house attended by servants and, accompanied by the beautiful Rosalie, was departing on a grand tour of the continent. There, the son of a New

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3 Fairman, loc. cit.
Bedford Cooper, who had assumed the role of a P. T. Barnum of American landscape painting, would experience the fruits of an emerging international reputation.

**In Europe (1867 - 1869)**

The Bierstadts arrived in London in June, 1867. During the two years in Europe, they traveled continuously; and, in the summer of 1868, they were once again located in England. One event which certainly popularized Bierstadt's name within the prominent social circles of London, was a dinner which the painter held in honor of Henry Longfellow, who was in England to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Cambridge University.\(^1\) The guests for that social event of July 9, 1868, were obviously well-chosen from the elite of London. The list of guests included Mr. Robert Browning; the Right Honorable W. E. Gladstone; General Sir Hope Grant of the British Army; Admiral Farragut of the United States Navy; the Duke of Argyll; Count Maffei, who was the Italian chargé d'affaires; Sir Edwin Landseer, RA; many lords and ladies; and others. Charles Dickens had received an invitation, but in a letter to Bierstadt he declined because of an "engagement of long standing."\(^2\)

Dickens missed an excellent five-course dinner which included fish, venison, veal, and chicken. Mais a l'Americaine, artichokes, and a George IV pudding were among the many dishes served. Appropriate wines and

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\(^1\) *"Dinner to Professor Longfellow,"* unidentified clipping, ROM Scrapbook, p. 18.

\(^2\) Letter of Charles Dickens to Albert Bierstadt, July 3, 1868. Autograph Album of Rosalie Bierstadt (in possession of Mrs. Leon Bascom, Waterford, Conn.).
liqueurs served between courses accented the international menu.

The menus which the guests took home as souvenirs carried the monogram of the dinner's illustrious host. It was a naturalistic bee, centered between the angle of two lines forming an A, with the insect's wings forming the crossbars.¹

The menu reminded the guests that Bierstadt was footing the bill for Longfellow's dinner. To further emphasize the rapport existing between the author of Hiawatha and the painter of The Rocky Mountains, the artist had made a painting especially for the dinner. Placed within view of the guest of honor was this sample of the artist's wares for the international guests to see. Attached to it was the dinner's menu, upon which were written the closing words of Hiawatha on his long and distant journey:

And the evening sun descending,
Set the clouds on fire with redness,
Burned the broad sky, like a prairie,
Left upon the level water
One long track and trail of splendour,
Down whose stream as down a river
Westward, westward Hiawatha
Sailed into the fiery sunset,
Sailed into the purple vapours,
Sailed into the dusk of evening.²

Bierstadt's elegant Longfellow dinner could well have proven that Mrs. Frances Trollope's image of the American without taste was a distortion of the truth.

The Bierstadts continued to ascend to higher levels of social prestige among the British, for soon the owners of Malkasten became guests on

¹Autograph Album of Rosalie Bierstadt (in possession of Mrs. Leon Bascom, Waterford, Conn.). The monogram was a variation on his signature, AB, and was also the design of his personal letterhead.

²"Dinner to Professor Longfellow," loc. cit.
the Isle of Wight, where they were received at the palace Osborne, by
none other than Queen Victoria herself. Preceding Albert and Rosalie's
reception by the Queen, were two of the artist's paintings which had cre-
ated such a sensation in America. They were The Rocky Mountains and
Storm in the Rocky Mountains.

Having magnified the importance of his role as an interpreter of
American landscape, Bierstadt crossed the Channel and invaded France. Ac­
companying the artist, naturally, was his gargantuan Storm in the Rocky
Mountains, which he proceeded to install in the world's exposition held
in Paris in 1867.

Following that exhibition, a new honor awaited the traveling Ameri­
can in Paris. Napoleon III awarded Bierstadt the Legion of Honor, a medal
which supposedly had never before been given to an American painter. As a
result of this award, Albert and Rosalie were to be presented to Napoleon
and Empress Eugénie, but the execution of Emperor Maximilian in Mexico
prevented this reception until a later date.

The artist's travels in Europe during the years 1867-69 are rather
difficult to trace. No source material is available except occasional let­
ters written by Rosalie to her niece or unidentified newspaper clippings
collected by the family. Bierstadt and his wife did visit Switzerland and
he took the opportunity to make more first-hand notes about Alpine geogra­
phy. In 1867, Rosalie wrote her niece the following:

I am now sitting on a side hill whence splendid views are
obtained of the opposite chain of mountains. Albert is perched
nearby on his sketching stool making an oil study of the Jung­
frau. He has almost 50 splendid studies.¹

¹Letter of Rosalie Osborne Mayer to Boston Museum of Art, 1947
(in the files of the Boston Museum of Art.)
In 1868, Bierstadt was once again in Italy. Almost a decade before, the American artists in Europe had withdrawn from the continent and gathered in New York City. But now, Italy was once again the mecca for American artists. Sanford Gifford had returned; Jervis McEntee was there also and had a studio near Frederick Church, who was seeing the Italian landscape for the first time.

In Rome, Bierstadt acquired a studio. Paintings with subjects, such as Mount Aetna and Mount Vesuvius, were produced by the artist at this time; but, in Europe, he continued to paint large American western scenes as well. Apparently so familiar with the geography of the western mountains that sketches as source material were no longer needed, he was able to paint in intricate detail a seven by ten foot canvas of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Thus, as he had painted Swiss, German, and Italian scenes in America, following his first trip to Europe, so now, while in Europe, he was looking nostalgically westward – not across a continent, but across the entire Atlantic.

The taste which Bierstadt was satisfying (one which he himself had been influential in creating), was that of a romanticism which Europeans had possessed for unexplored continents since the fifteenth century.

Europeans were beginning to note, particularly following the exposition of 1867 in Paris, that Americans such as Church and Bierstadt, were making superior contributions in landscape painting. In this recent recognition of an American school, Bierstadt had an advantage over Church.

Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains (location not known). The work may now be entitled Mt. Whitney, which was formerly in the Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minn.; in 1959, with Eberstadt Brothers, New York City.
As an English critic claimed, Bierstadt was not a native American; and, besides, he was European trained. The new European market which the enterprising Bierstadt found advantageous, added prestige to his name, so that even American collectors traveling in Europe purchased the artist's works while abroad. For example, it was in Paris, in 1869, that an Ohioan from Cleveland, Amasa Stone, arranged for delivery and payment of $15,000 for the *Emigrants Crossing the Plains* [also known as *The Oregon Trail* (Fig. 14)]^2

In May, 1869, the Bierstadts returned to France. This time the postponed reception with Napoleon and Empress Eugénie was finally realized in Paris. For Mrs. Bierstadt, the former Rosalie Osborne of Waterville, New York, the event, held at the Tuileries, was a high point in her social life during that European trip. She wrote later to her niece, describing the royal reception and its timely occurrence just prior to the downfall of the Empire.^3

While in Europe, the Bierstadts visited Berlin and Munich, and seemed also to have been in Spain. However, either preceding or following these trips, they returned to London in 1869. At the Royal Academy the artist exhibited the large work which he had produced in Rome, *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains*. Another painting, *Mt. Vesuvius*, which was also

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^1*The Art Journal* (London), November 1, 1867, pp. 245-49.

^2Fig. 14 is a smaller version of the large painting, *Emigrants Crossing the Plains*, now in the collection of the American Automobile Association, Cleveland, Ohio. Albert Bierstadt's receipt to Amasa Stone is also in the files of the above.

painted in Italy, was purchased by W. J. Kennard, who had already acquired the spectacular Storm in the Rocky Mountains.

Return to America (1869 – 1870)

After what must have been an exhausting two years of travel which would have involved the transportation of large bulky paintings, arrangements with customs' officials, and the procurement of lodgings and studios in England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Spain, and Italy, one would think that the artist and his wife would have retired to Malkasten for a rest. Nevertheless, in August of 1869, following the return of the Bierstadt’s to the United States, they once again became travelers. This time they made a sketching tour through New England.

First, they visited the painter’s sister at Niagara Falls. Here they were joined by Mr. Herbert Peto, an English patron of the artist. The group went down the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. On the return trip they stopped for six weeks at the Glen House located at the foot of Mt. Washington in the White Mountains. Bierstadt made many sketches of the autumn landscape during his trip. That same fall, the Bierstadts visited Boston. During their stay at the Parker House, they paid their respects to Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Henry Longfellow repaid his London host of two years previously with a dinner in the artist’s honor at the poet’s historic Cambridge home.

While in Massachusetts, Bierstadt called on a gentleman whose own expansive career in business paralleled that of the artist in painting. He was Alvin Adams of the Adams Express Company. Perhaps at this meeting final arrangements were made for Adams to purchase Among the Sierra Nevada
Mountains. The painting had been on exhibition that same fall at the Child's Gallery. For the seventy square feet of western scenery, painted in Rome and exhibited abroad, Adams paid $25,000.

The prices which Bierstadt was now demanding and receiving were, of course, creating a minor fortune for the artist.

With an interest in accumulating more funds, Bierstadt collaborated with his brother, Edward, in developing a new process of printing. This eventually became known as the Albertype.

The artist also invested in real estate. He owned twenty acres near Minnestoski, Minnesota, and lots near Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Orange, New Jersey. He owned stock in the Sovereign Mining Company, had shares in the Anderson Coke Company, plus other holdings in small enterprises. Near his twenty-four acres at Irvington, he purchased a farm and followed this by attempting to make arrangements with L. Jerome in Paris for adding an adjoining ninety-eight acres, which the French painter owned between Irvington and White Plains, New York.

Thus financial interests of Bierstadt were expanding; more and more his behavior became similar to that of those wealthy patrons who purchased his works. The market for Bierstadt's paintings during the decade of the sixties had been steadily rising, but an incident occurred in 1870 that may have made investors in Bierstadt paintings a little wary about their "stock."

At that time a crisis existed during which the value of Bierstadt paintings was at stake. The critical period was a direct result of the controversial Thomas Thompson sale, at which time a number of works were
"floated" upon the market. It was an unfortunate incident in the artist's career and raises some questions about his character.

Thomas Thompson, who was one of the artist's early patrons, was known in Boston for both his wealth and his eccentricities. In 1852, Thompson lost a large collection in a fire; however, he began to assemble another soon after his misfortune. At the time of his death in 1869, his estate included some two thousand different works. With apparently more enthusiasm than connoisseurship, Thompson had purchased indiscriminately among American and European painters. Like that of some of his contemporaries, interested in building personal empires, part of Thompson's taste was one of sheer magnitude itself. In the group were a Titian Venus, and a doubtful Rubens, plus many other known copies of old masters. One newspaper writer thought there was something very American about Mr. Thompson:

Surely none but an American would set about the accumulation of such a prodigious mass of paintings with no apparent object than to outdo all the rest of mankind in the number and variety of works.

Following Thompson's death, his paintings were referred to as "a buried treasure" and were discovered in a storeroom in Boston during the settling of his estate. To dispose of the mass of paintings, the works were brought to New York. Ten freight cars were required to transport them! Leeds and Minor were the auctioneers and Leeds' Art Gallery gave a

\(^1\)Catalog of Thomas Thompson Collection Auction, Leeds' Art Galleries (New York, 1870). In the files of the Frick Museum Library, New York City. All material on Thompson is drawn from the above, which contains numerous clippings about the event.

\(^2\)Ibid.
preliminary viewing to the press and artists and followed this by opening the doors to the public. It was reported that during that week of the Thompson collection exhibition in January of 1870, the attendance was rivaling that of the theaters.

Soon after the auction was announced, a verbal battle began in the press between the auctioneers, who had prepared the catalog of the exhibition, and Bierstadt. The artist was directly involved because forty-one of his works had been purchased by Thompson and the authenticity of many of these was questioned by the painter himself. There was an angry exchange of letters between Leeds and Minor, Bierstadt, and newspaper reporters.

The artist claimed that he had been misquoted as saying that the collection was worth a half-million dollars. Bierstadt's name thus appeared in connection with the auction, and his reputation was now at stake. When some disparaging remarks were published about the Bierstadt paintings which Thompson had purchased, the New York Sun said that among the works:

... there is not one that will repay a glance. They are not only among the worst but they are the very worst of the collection ... 

The writer's comments continued and indirectly complimented Thompson himself for being a "... penetrating observer ..." to have discovered any talent or "... one spark of capacity" in the artist. This attack on one of the nation's foremost landscape painters received an immediate re- 

tort written to the editor of the New York Times by the artist from his Hudson River villa.

\[1\] New York Sun, February 1, 1870.
Bierstadt's answer fell like a bomb upon those who thought the auction would prove to be a bonanza in the art market. He announced that Mr. Thompson had purchased many of his earliest sketches but he implied that if the public would closely examine the Thompson sketches they might discover some of them to be fakes. Bierstadt remarked about a specific instance of forgery of his works:

Not long since, a distinguished banker invited me to his home to inspect a picture bought at one of these auction sales, for one of mine. He had to have his doubts about it being genuine as it did not bear my signature—I need hardly add that I saw it for the first time on his walls.

Uncomplimentary replies to Bierstadt's letter followed the unfortunate incident and it probably did not assist the artist's career. Obviously the controversy developed because the painter was determined to control the outlet of his works upon the market.

Late that year Bierstadt and his wife returned to Europe. The artist again saw his *The Rocky Mountains* at McHenry's estate. In London, Albert and Rosalie were house guests of the brother-in-law of Princess Louise, Lord Campbell, so once again the Bierstadts were close to the steps of a throne.

In the spring of 1871, Bierstadt began making plans for another western expedition in the United States. He had been in Washington, D.C., in May; and in July he wrote General Sherman requesting letters of introduction to commanders of posts on the plains. In the same letter Bierstadt

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introduced a plan which would bring his name favorably before the American public. If he had created some public disfavor in the Thompson-sale episode, he would compensate for it by this projected scheme to aid the government in international diplomacy. Whether such strategy existed or no, Bierstadt's contribution to foreign relations even created polite obligations in Russia.

The son of the Czar, Duke Alexis, was coming to the United States in October of 1871. By some means, Bierstadt learned that the Duke wished to go on a buffalo hunt. In a letter the painter suggested to General Sherman that, since the Duke's visit had a "national character," it would be advantageous "... to give him one on a grand scale, with Indians included," as an example of American hospitality. The landscape painter who had entered international politics offered detailed plans concerning the foreigners visit. Bierstadt thought that native Indian dances should be performed, that Indians should accompany the Russian guest on the hunt; and, that, at a proper time, a buffalo herd should be driven up within view of the railway car that had transported the Russians to the heart of the continent. Bierstadt thought it best that General Sherman himself accompany the Russian party for the trip had clearly "... a more important meaning than the mere pleasure trip of a prince." Referring to the Russian travelers, Bierstadt said: "This would probably be the only way to give them a correct idea of Red America."
Washington responded to Bierstadt's suggestion enthusiastically. The War Department wrote that the matter would be turned over to General Sherman. General Sheridan also helped to plan the buffalo hunt and communicated to the painter that he would induce the Spotted Tails tribe of the Sioux Indians to accompany the Russians; that "His Royal Highness" could "... kill buffalo to his heart's content;" and that it would be cold, but not half as cold as Russia.¹

The painter received a generous compensation for his kindness to the Russians. The man who had received the Cross of the Legion of Honor from Napoleon III was now awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus by the Czar of Russia.

More Europeans in the 1870's began to travel in America and to express an interest in the West which Bierstadt had so popularized in his canvases. The next international guest whom the landscape painter assisted was the Earl of Dunraven. Like Duke Alexis, Dunraven expressed an interest in the wild western scenery. The English earl first came to the United States in 1869, and for over a decade crossed the Atlantic annually to travel and hunt in the West. Dunraven was a friend of Buffalo Bill, and had plans to purchase a large tract of land in Colorado as a hunting ground. Had not the Homestead Law been passed in 1874, the Colorado territory now known as Estes National Park would have become the private estate of an English nobleman.²

¹Letter of P. H. Sheridan to Albert Bierstadt, November 25, 1871 (in possession of Albert Morton Turner, Orono, Me.).

Dunraven recognized the potential value of Estes Park as a western tourist attraction, and he built the first hotel in that area. To choose the site, he engaged the services of a specialist in the beauty of western landscape, Albert Bierstadt. The site, which had Long's Peak in the background, became the subject of a Bierstadt painting commissioned by Dunraven.¹ The transaction cost the Earl $15,000.

In San Francisco (1871 – 1872)

Almost every aspect of patronage had been explored by Bierstadt. After his first European trip, he sold European subjects to Americans; then to Europeans, he sold American subjects. There remained one more potential market to be explored by the artist and this was the West itself. During the ten-year period when the painter had sky-rocketed to fame, the West was a direction and a continually receding frontier; but by 1870, it had become a place. That is, during Bierstadt's rise to national and international fame, the subject matter of his paintings, the West, was being transformed. The Denver which he and Ludlow had visited in 1863 could in the 1870's boast about the presence of Sharpiots Inn, a restaurant so excellent in its cuisine that it was called the Delmonico's of the West.² For those who thought Nebraska to be a desert, there was the realization that from this state in 1873 came the largest fruit

¹Estes Park, Colorado, The Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

²For a discussion of the transformation of the West, see H. W. S. Cleveland, Landscape Architecture as Applied to the Wants of the West (Chicago, 1873).
produced in the country.\footnote{Ibid., p. 32.}

It was the expansion of the railroad, though, that must have amazed Bierstadt in the 1870's and which must have made him realize that the East, the accepted source of patronage, was now linked with the West.

Bierstadt and his wife moved to the west coast in the autumn of 1871. In San Francisco, Bierstadt had a building constructed to serve as his west-coast studio. It was a tall frame structure on the top of Clay Street hill. The studio had large windows on all four sides and commanded a magnificent view of San Francisco below and the bay from the Golden Gate in the west to Mount Diablo in the east. Facing to the north, the window was so large that the wall appeared to be practically all glass. Through it the viewer could take, in one glance, reported the San Francisco Bulletin, "a view of the whole passage from the Pacific Ocean to the inner bay, with the peninsular and Marine county shores; including Mt. Tamalpais, a distance of six or seven miles."\footnote{Undated and untitled clipping quoting the Bulletin (San Francisco), ROM Scrapbook, p. 12.}

From his studio Bierstadt made numerous studies of sunsets and sunrises and completed a large work called Donner Lake from the Summit, which was commissioned by C. P. Huntington of the Central Pacific Railway.

The Bierstadts took Rosalie's younger sister, Esther Mayer, along with them to San Francisco, where they lived at the Occidental Hotel. Life in San Francisco was gay and delightful for the well-known landscape painter. Esther Mayer recalled how, at the William Ralston mansion, they danced to Strauss waltzes played by a mechanical piano; how they attended private
balls at other country estates; how her brother-in-law, Albert, was honored at a luncheon given by Admiral Pennock on board the American man-of-war, California. On Saturday afternoons, as was fashionable for San Francisco gay society to do, the Bierstadts visited the Cliff House, where guests could dance, sip lemonade, and watch the seals on Seal Rock.

Life for the artist was now, of course, entirely different than when he first saw the Golden-Gate City in 1863. Now he was no longer associating with the San Francisco Bohemians who had published the Golden Era, but rather, he or his coachman could now be seen driving handsome horses behind the latest C-spring light open carriage.

Yosemite Valley once again attracted the artist, and in the summer of 1872, the Bierstadts led a party into this natural wonder. They rode on horseback into the valley and stopped at the Hutching Hotel. During their six-week stay, they visited the Hetch-Hetchy Valley, a subject which would occupy the interest of the painter in the next few years.

The artist would never again locate in San Francisco, but his name would be recalled up and down the California coast for years to come. In 1875, there was launched in Maine a seven hundred-ton bark to be used in the California coast trade. The one-hundred and fifty feet long vessel had elaborately carved and gilded scrolls plus stained glass windows for its decoration. The elegant bark was christened Bierstadt, and had been named in honor of the landscape painter. Mrs. Bierstadt was also

1Diary of Esther Osborne Mayer (in possession of Mrs. Leon Bascom, Waterford, Conn.).

2"The Bark 'Bierstadt',' unidentified clipping, November 2, 1875, ROM Scrapbook, p. 21.
remembered in the construction of this model bark, for the life-size figurehead which adorned the vessel was supposedly an accurate sculptural image of Rosalie.
The 1870's

When the Bierstadts returned to the east coast from San Francisco, they did not spend much time at Malkasten. As they later would do, they may already have been renting their Irvington villa "by the season" to New Yorkers for summer vacations. Whether for this reason or some other, in January, 1874, the artist's correspondence came from Rosalie's Waterville home in Oneida County, New York. Here Bierstadt had another studio which had been constructed especially for him by Mr. Osborne, Rosalie's father. Perhaps this was one means by which the Osbornes hoped to keep their daughter nearby, since her health had continued to fail. However, it had always been customary, and it was becoming more and more necessary, that Bierstadt outwardly seek patronage; so, by the fall of 1874, the Bierstadts were located in metropolitan New York.¹

In New York City, the artist and his wife lived at a fashionable hotel, the Brevoort House. Bierstadt established his studio at 1155 Broadway. His decision not to return to the Tenth Street Studio reflected the changes that were occurring at that Hudson River School artists' center

¹Unless specifically noted, information in this chapter has been determined by cross-reference of several sources. The major ones are: (1) Diary of Esther Osborne Mayer; (2) Rosalie Osborne Mayer, scrapbook of Bierstadt memorabilia; (3) Autograph Album of Rosalie Bierstadt; (4) Bierstadt correspondence; (5) Miscellaneous clippings in the files of the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.; the Boston Museum of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and the Archives of American Art, Detroit, Michigan.
during the early seventies. John Kensett had died in 1872; Frederick E. Church was spending much of his time at Olana, the Moorish villa, which he had recently constructed across from Catskill in the Hudson River valley. John LaFarge still had a studio in the Tenth Street building, but many of the original occupants of the building had gone elsewhere.

It was the arrival of William Merritt Chase in New York City that began a new era for the Tenth Street Studio. Chase had returned from Europe in 1872, when Bierstadt was in San Francisco. With his negro servant, Daniel, who wore a red fez, his Russian hound, and his brilliantly plumed macaws, Chase invaded the dark quarters of the studio. Seeing these spots of color in and around number 15 Tenth Street must have made the forty-three year old Rocky Mountain landscape painter aware that a new atmosphere existed in New York. It was evident too that a young progressive group, which spoke of Munich and Paris, instead of Dusseldorf, was beginning to capture the imagination of New Yorkers. The Munich-trained Chase, whose taste for bizarre effects characterized the new generation, would eventually take over the entire gallery of the studio as his personal quarters. The building later became known as Chase's Tenth Street Studio; the new title became documented in a painting by Chase which is now located at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, Pa.

While Bierstadt chose to have a private studio, he continued in the seventies to use the gallery of the studio for exhibition purposes. Obviously he had not succumbed to Chase's domination of the building. In fact, the middle-aged Bierstadt was far from being an amateur in creating

spectacle himself. Rosalie's sister recalled, in her diary, one special event held by the artist in the studio building that could have favorably compared with the artist's Longfellow dinner in London, or with the elaborate dinners held at Malkasten. This was a dinner held in honor of the Earl of Dunraven, the English lord who became the owner of Estes Park, Colorado by Bierstadt.

Delmonico's restaurant was in charge of the affair. Over one hundred guests dined in the gallery of the Tenth Street Studio, which was decorated with special furniture, flowers, palms, and mirrors. Of course Bierstadt paintings surrounded the walls as a backdrop for the elegant affair. Prior to the occasion, the earl himself had sent a "barrel-full" of wild game from the West and this served as the main theme for the menu.\footnote{Diary of Esther Osborne Mayer (in possession of Mrs. Leon Bascom, Waterford, Conn.) [manuscript has no pagination; therefore, specific reference cannot be indicated.]} The earl and the artist were good friends and the Englishman had previously been a guest at Malkasten. Bierstadt dinners, though, were usually held for reasons other than a gesture of friendship or a ritualistic consumption of food. The Dunraven commission had not yet become a reality, and it was not until 1877 that Estes Park, Colorado was sent to England with a bill of $15,000. Perhaps the dinner helped encourage the Englishman to acquire the scene which depicted the Colorado park he had dreamed of purchasing.

In 1873, Bierstadt conceived the idea of promoting the establishment of a public art museum in New York. Although he was not one of the original founders of the Metropolitan, his early efforts to create such
an institution must be taken into account in the origin of that museum. Bierstadt, though, was not entirely altruistic in his intentions. In a letter dated 1873, in which he proposed such a metropolitan public gallery, he offered his services in collecting works of art, stating that he would donate a work valued at $2,000, and that a large painting of his, such as Autumn in the Sierras, could be acquired at "half price." In his letter, Bierstadt exposed a psychological insight he had about the mind of "men of large fortune." He noted that "up to a certain moment they are anxious to accumulate all they can and then it must rapidly be disposed of." The artist's paintings had been purchased by such men, so Bierstadt may have been considering the future destiny of his own works.

There may be some doubt about Bierstadt's motivation for holding such an affair as the Dunraven dinner, or in promoting a public art museum. Nevertheless, in the events and actions of the painter that were to follow in the 1870's; there is less doubt that Bierstadt often did employ extremely self-conscious and clever forms of strategy in order to accomplish his goals. It was as if the artist had a strong sense of pride—a pride so intense that paradoxically his behavior was characterized by a developing lack of pride in ethical behavior. Bierstadt had tasted fame and fortune both at home and abroad; now, when his reputation was beginning to wane, he employed the same boundless energy to maintain his success as he had used to create it.

An example of the "Bierstadt method" is demonstrated in a letter

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1 Letter of Albert Bierstadt to unidentified person, November 20, 1873, Manuscript collection, New York Historical Society.

2 Ibid.
of 1874. The result of the correspondence was one more royal acknowledge-
ment, which the painter added to a list which included France, Russia, and
England. Of a recent arrival in Washington from Europe, George Bancroft
(a historian and diplomatic minister to Germany), Bierstadt requested as-
sistance in presenting one of his paintings to the German emperor. He
wrote:

I am well aware that crowned heads are not in the habit
of accepting presents from their subjects or from people of
other countries, but knowing the great personal regard His
Majesty entertains for you and the terms of intimacy exist-
ing between you, I have thought you might present it for me
if you consider it best, and then give him as much pleasure
as I had when I first saw the grand original. The picture
is an upright—three feet by four feet. The tree is forty-
two feet in diameter, and three hundred feet in height—to
say nothing of the four thousand years in its sealed trunk.

It was William I, former King of Prussia, who in 1870 was elected
Emperor of Germany, to whom Bierstadt was referring. The painting was
called The King of the Mountain, "a portrait of the largest tree in Cali-
forina if not in the world," as the painter described it. Bancroft, who
knew the geographers Alexander von Humboldt and Arnold H. Guyot, probably
shared the painter's enthusiasm for the Washingtonia Gigantea, as Bier-
stadt identified the tree, and must have thought the artist's proposal a
good diplomatic gesture. After the painting was presented, the Emperor
sent Bierstadt a personally autographed photograph. Afterwards, the gift
was displayed in the artist's studio. How the painting was acquired by
the Emperor could easily be, and in fact, often was confused by the press
when the royal patronage of Bierstadt was itemized.

1 Letter of Albert Bierstadt to George Bancroft, October 17, 1874,
Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.

2 Ibid. [Location of painting not known.]
Sometime following Bierstadt's "recognition" by Emperor William, the painter was given a second Order of St. Stanislaus by the Czar of Russia; and in 1879, Duke Alexis sent him a silver loving cup from Russia. Both of these gifts might well have had reference to a particular painting being shipped to St. Petersburg, which the artist mentions in a letter of March 1, 1878.¹

Throughout his career Bierstadt piled up honors in the same way in which he accumulated holdings in real estate and investment companies. His extensive travels, dinners, and exhibitions, though, required cash. That there was increasing need for money, is expressed in his frequent correspondence with the Corcoran Gallery in the seventies. The means to which the vain artist now finds it necessary to resort become almost pathetic. More and more his tactics resemble those of twentieth century sales promotion schemes. He requests that the Corcoran exhibit his Mt. Adams.² To them or anyone else interested, he will sell it for half price. He reminds the curator of the gallery that he has received $15,000 for similar pictures and that he is already in contact with a Mr. Walters in Baltimore about selling him the work. To hasten the transaction, since the reduced price of $5,000 could only be offered for "a reasonable length of time," he enclosed in his letter an order form for the painting. Mt. Adams does not sell and the artist asks that it be removed from public view.³

¹Letter of Baron N. Schilling to Albert Bierstadt, February 15, 1879, autograph album of Rosalie Bierstadt (in possession of Mrs. Leon Bascom, Waterford, Conn.)

²Letter of Albert Bierstadt to "Lissie," March 1, 1878, manuscript division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

³The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.
Although Bierstadt's first attempt to sell a painting to the Corcoran was a failure, the painter was successful in selling them a Sierra Nevada scene in 1878. This he accomplished by a simple device—changing the title of his painting. In 1875, Bierstadt painted a work entitled Mountain Lake and exhibited it under that title at the National Academy of Design Exhibition in 1877. Following the exhibition, he sent it to Mr. Corcoran, but now the work carried the title, Mt. Corcoran and the artist informed his future patron that he had named a mountain after him! Major Powell, who was familiar with the Sierra Nevada mountain ranges, examined the work and declared that the painting was untruthful. In spite of the fictitious geology, Mr. Corcoran was delighted with the painting and purchased it for his private collection at a price of $7,000, a reduction of $3,000, according to the artist.

No confusion existed in the Mt. Corcoran sale until a letter arrived at the gallery from Bierstadt, indicating that a misunderstanding had developed. Bierstadt wrote and agreed to the price (this he wished to remain a secret) and stated how happy he was that the gallery would have for its permanent collection a namesake for Mr. Corcoran which was "not unlike him in its lofty serenity and the firmness of its foundation." Both the curator and Mr. Corcoran had intended that the painting be a part of the patron's private collection. To avoid any confusion, the

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gallery accepted the painting. It was in this way that Bierstadt's Mt. Corcoran joined Church's Niagara along with paintings by Thomas Cole and John Kensett in the permanent Corcoran Gallery collection.

The confusion surrounding the Corcoran transaction may well not have been intentional on the artist's part, but there was little doubt that actual intrigue existed in the acquisition of Bierstadt's paintings by the United States Capitol. Congress had refused him a commission in 1867, but the painter pursued the matter again in the 1870's. As will be noted, the artist's scheme did not go unnoticed by some individuals. It would seem, though, that even Bierstadt's contemporaries underestimated the buffalo-like determination he was to display in realizing a commission that would link his name along with John Trumbull, John Vanderlyn, Robert H. Weir, and William H. Powell as American historical painters.

There are today in the stairwell of the Speaker's lobby of the House of Representatives, two large paintings by Bierstadt. The works, entitled Entrance into Monterey, and Discovery of the Hudson River, originally flanked the Speaker's desk in the House itself.\(^1\) The actual means by which and date when a specific grant was awarded to the artist remained a mystery. Even Fairman's research, in his Art and Artists of the Capitol, fails to trace the series of events leading up to final resolutions by Congress authorizing purchase.\(^2\)


\(^2\) Charles S. Fairman, Art and Artists of the Capitol (Washington, D. C., 1927).
The installation of the paintings, strangely enough, occurred before any Congressional resolution was made. Presumably they were placed there for exhibition purposes through the request or permission of someone. The artist himself was rather vague in recollecting the details of the commission. In a letter to the Congressional Librarian, Ainsworth R. Spofford, he referred to a resolution passed about 1872. Furthermore, he stated that he had postponed the fulfillment of the commission but that at the time he was writing, which was in 1874, two years later, he was engaged in preparatory studies.

For one seeking patronage, the "postponement" for two years was unusual. Moreover, to exhibit works in the Capitol before they were purchased was also rather unorthodox procedure. A Washington correspondent writing in the Chicago Inter-Ocean adds some light but also confuses the story. The correspondent mentioned that neither of Bierstadt's paintings were finished. He noted that visitors to the Capitol had the novel experience of watching the artist add final touches. The artist "declined to sell them in advance," stated the article, and preferred to submit them to the judgment of his countrymen first.

Bierstadt's unprecedented procedure at the Capitol did not go unnoticed by another Washington correspondent. The New York Times on December 6, 1874, quoted from the Springfield Republican the following:

1 Letter of Albert Bierstadt to Ainsworth R Spofford (Information furnished by Architect's office, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.)

2 Undated and untitled clipping, Rosalie Osborne Mayer, scrapbook of Bierstadt memorabilia (property of Mrs. Joyce Edwards, Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.), p. 21. Hereafter, this source will be referred to as ROM Scrapbook.
Bierstadt, the artist, had got both of his large pictures . . . hung on two of the House panels. There was no authority for this, as the joint committee on the library declined all responsibility in the matter. A few years ago, on motion of General Banks, a resolution was passed in the House authorizing these pictures, but the Senate declined to agree to it. Subsequently a resolution was adopted declaring it inexpedient to buy them but Bierstadt went ahead and painted them, and in some way he has got them into the House, and he expects to get $50,000 for them before the session closes. The Hudson River picture is a failure, but this will not necessarily injure its changes before Congress.¹

In both the New York article as well as the Chicago one, there is no mention of Entrance into Monterey as one of the two works on exhibition. Instead the companion piece to Discovery of the Hudson River was a western landscape called King's Canyon.

If Bierstadt's bold enterprise was a purposefully planned scheme to oblige Congress, and there is some evidence that it was, it did prove successful, for at least one of the works, Discovery of the Hudson River, was purchased. The Joint Committee on the Library passed a resolution which authorized its chairman to acquire Discovery of the Hudson River at a price not exceeding $10,000.² Apparently King's Canyon was not acceptable to Congress and not until 1878 was the present companion piece, Entrance into Monterey, purchased in lieu of the Sierra Nevada landscape scene.³ The hesitancy on the part of Congress to contract for two works by Albert Bierstadt was complicated by another American landscape painter's requests. Thomas Moran was also in communication with Congress about the

¹The New York Times, December 6, 1874, p. 10.
²Information furnished by Architects' Office, United States Capitol, Washington, D. C.
³Ibid.
installation of a work of his own for the other panel next to the Speaker's desk.

Bierstadt's activities reached a climax in Washington when on March 1, 1878, he was in the position to write a letter that employed stationery with the heading, The Executive Mansion. President Hayes had summoned Bierstadt to the White House. Exactly what relationship the invitation had to his U. S. Capitol paintings is not known. However, Albert Bierstadt and President Hayes got along famously. The artist wrote that "he cannot speak too highly of President and Mrs. Hayes," and that he was much engaged in attending balls and dinners. Presumably about this time Bierstadt's second picture, Entrance into Monterey, was finally accepted by Congress.

During the Hayes' administration, any visitor to the White House could see a momento of Bierstadt's visit. Exhibited on red velvet were colorful abstract miniatures. They were created by folding in half a small piece of paper upon which small bits of oil pigment were placed. The chance forms made by the equal distribution of paint on both sides of the fold were known as Bierstadt's butterflies. Signed by the artist with the A and B in monogram, these "original" Bierstadt's were distributed at receptions and social gatherings. For a certain group of ladies during the Victorian era, Bierstadt butterflies were considered to be collector's items.

During the time when Bierstadt was gathering a long list of

1 Bierstadt to "Lissie," loc. cit.

Washington acquaintances that extended all the way from army officers to the President of the United States, he also developed a friendship with the Governor General of Canada and his wife, Lord and Lady Dufferin. The occasion that cemented the long friendship with the Dufferins for the artist was the Great Ball of 1876.¹

In February of that year, the Governor General and his wife were hosts for a magnificent masked ball at Rideau Hall in Ottawa. The affair attracted attention throughout Canada as well as the United States. This ostentatious spectacle, to which the Bierstadts were invited, must have surpassed any of the many gala social events which the American artist had attended.

Invitations to the great Canadian masked ball were sent to fifteen hundred guests, three months in advance. Costumers in Boston, New York, London, and Paris were supposedly engaged weeks before the ball. The dinner, served at midnight to two hundred and fifty guests, took place under a red and white striped canvas tent of near eastern design. New Yorkers anxiously awaited detailed news of the menu that was telegraphed them in advance of the affair. Rooms and corridors at Rideau Hall were barked by flowers and in the gas-lighted ballroom festoons of roses hung from floor to ceiling. Mrs. Bierstadt, disguised as Many Queen of Scots, (Fig. 22) marched in the opening procession near to his Excellency masked as James V. Bierstadt himself, "wearing black velvet slashed with purple satin" and a plumed hat, was costumed as Charles I. (Fig. 23). For the Bierstadts, who were established anglophiles by now, this was one of the highpoints of

¹"The Ball," The Times (Ottawa, Canada), February 29, 1876, and other undated and untitled clippings in ROM Scrapbook, pp. 44-50.
Figure 23 - Albert Bierstadt
their social career. Bierstadt acknowledged the Dufferins' hospitality two years later, in 1878, by donating a California landscape, Sacramento Valley, to the Montreal Art Association for a public gallery which had just been organized. During the remainder of his life, Bierstadt made periodic visits to Ottawa. His niece recalled that he often admitted that he would like to have lived in Canada. 1

The same year in which costumed figures at the Canadian masked ball nostalgically looked back to the era of Charles I and Mary Queen of Scots, America looked back upon a century of progress at its Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. Although Dufferin's Great Ball rivaled any ever held at home or abroad, America could proudly claim that its exposition was without a doubt the largest and the most expensive one that had ever occurred at any time or in any place.

For the Centennial, States of the Union as well as foreign governments erected enormous structures to house their exhibits. The daring and experimental Industrial Building of glass and iron enclosed an area four times the size of St. Peter's cathedral in Rome.

At the fair, visitors could not only survey the products of science, such as the Corliss engine, or a railway sleeping car, but could examine one hundred years of American art in the Art Gallery. Also known as Memorial Hall, the gallery had to be enlarged prior to the opening in order to contain the numerous native and foreign examples of painting, sculpture, and "industrial" arts.

If magnitude alone were one criterion for judging the significance

of painting at the Centennial, Bierstadt would have done rather well for himself at Memorial Hall. He was third among the American artists in the number of works exhibited by individuals. The magnitude of size and number gave Bierstadt a prominent share of the seventy-five thousand square feet of wall space, but some critics had doubt about his progress during the last decade. Bierstadt had contributed his Yosemite Valley; The Great Tree of California; Mount Hood, Oregon; Western Kansas; and California Spring. John F. Weir, who in 1876 was Director of the Yale School of Fine Arts, was appointed Judge of the Fine Arts at the Philadelphia exposition and wrote the official report of the same. Professor Weir thought the earlier works of Bierstadt showed a vigorous, manly style of art, that had its undeniable attractions. Weir thought, however, that the painter's works shown at Philadelphia showed "a lapse into sensational and meretricious effects, and a loss of true artistic aim." They were "vast illustrations of scenery, carelessly and crudely executed," said Weir. "We fail to discover in them the merits which rendered his earlier works conspicuous."

Two of the most significant factors about the Memorial Hall exhibition were that new American talent could be seen and that new European influences were evident. As one writer observed, the Philadelphia Centennial was a symbol of the demise of Bierstadt as the giant of American landscape painting. At that time, Bierstadt would, of course, not have

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acknowledged that fact; but, as he must have already sensed a change at the Tenth Street Studio, so at Philadelphia, he was made aware of a changing taste in landscape painting. Bostonians had seen Millets and Corots before the Centennial exhibition, through the efforts of Hunt, but the nation now added to its vocabulary the term Barbizon, which joined the word Munich as a threat to the prestige that once surrounded the word Düsseldorf.

In March of 1878, the Bierstadts sailed for the Bahama Islands. Rosalie's condition was now recognized as tubercular, and the Victorian prescription for "consumption" was a warmer climate during the winter months. In the Bahamas the artist sketched the landscape, entertained guests, and distributed more of his butterflies. They returned to New York in May, intending to leave immediately for Europe. However, Bierstadt wished to make certain that final agreement was made in Congress about the purchase of his U. S. Capitol paintings. Even as late as July 9th the matter had not been settled, but by August 5, 1878, the Bierstadts departed for Europe accompanied by Esther, Rosalie's sister, and Harriet Claxton, the Bierstadts' negro maid.

The itinerary for the artist's third European trip had originally included Egypt. This was a region where both Gifford and Church had traveled, but there is no evidence that the Bierstadts went to North Africa. The reason for the change in plans is not known. It was evident though that the inexhaustible energy of her husband could not be matched by Rosalie. Esther recorded in her diary how Rosalie's illness progressively became worse during the trip.¹ As she had done in San Francisco in 1872,

¹Diary of Esther Osborne Mayer, loc. cit.
so now in Europe, Esther substituted for Rosalie as Bierstadt's companion at social functions. The occasions were numerous; there is an almost endless list of ladies, earls, dukes, and other Europeans abroad whom Esther remembered meeting and an equally extensive list of dinner engagements and balls which she attended with or without her sister. In London, the Bierstadts once again saw their old friends, the McHenrys, at Oak Lodge. As in 1867, Bierstadt once again saw there his The Rocky Mountains. The painter took his sister-in-law to the Royal Academy where they examined Estes Park, Colorado, which the Earl of Dunraven must have loaned for exhibition. They were also guests of Lord Walter Campbell, who was the son of the Duke of Argyle and brother-in-law of Princess Louise. At Swansea in South Wales, Esther and Albert spent a weekend amid stuffed birds and potted palms at Park Morn as guests of Sir Nussy and Lady Vivian. During their absence Rosalie had become extremely ill. It was one of her old New York literary friends, Bret Harte, who was then in London and was one of many friends who comforted Bierstadt's wife.

The next phase of the artist's tour took him from London to Paris and then in March, 1879, to Cannes for the winter. At Cannes, Bierstadt established a studio and exhibited one large painting which he had had shipped from the United States. Sometime in the summer of 1879, after visiting Nice and Monte Carlo, and returning to Paris in the spring, the Bierstadts boarded the Britannic en route for New York.

The artist had climaxèd the second decade of his painting career with a European trip just as he had done in the 1860's. It was a period of some new honors, but in the wake of a waning reputation, success was maintained only by a struggle.
Like the ascending levels of mountain crests in a Bierstadt image, one misfortune and disappointment after another would pile upon the artist in the next few years. Yet, nearly a decade remained before the artist's name would fall into obscurity. He was not yet the last of the buffalo.

The 1880's

When the Bierstadts returned to New York in that fall of 1879, it was again the Brevoort House rather than Malkasten where they lived.

The months spent in southern France were probably a period of comparative inactivity for the artist, for no major work was produced at that time, and no sketches of that area have survived. Yet, the phoenix-like character of Bierstadt sometimes needed only a new landscape to restore any vitality which he might have lost. Indeed, this is what happened, or at least seemed to occur in 1881, when once again he toured the Rocky Mountains.

A newspaper reporter, who was admitted to the "opening" of his New York studio in the last of October, 1881, following his western trip, thought the graying Bierstadt had grown younger in appearance and that his cheeks had been "tinted by the headwaters of the Missouri."¹ Bierstadt had just returned from visiting the Yellowstone Park area for the first time in his career. To his interviewer, he showed the numerous sketches of Beehive and Old Faithful geysers, and studies made on the shores of Salt Lake, where he also sketched on this trip, plus a twenty-foot buffalo

skin acquired at an Indian reservation—the largest the artist had ever seen.

Bierstadt enthusiastically announced he was preparing for a long winter's production, yet no major works followed his Yellowstone venture. Perhaps the geysers appealed to the artist more as geological wonders rather than as visual objects. His description of Yellowstone, as quoted in the newspaper, indeed was more in the language of the geologist than the painter. "I have always had an inclination towards geological studies, and here I had a whole world of geological phenomena spread before me."¹

The artist demonstrated his point by using a sketch of Beehive geyser and said:

... The cone-shaped orifice through which the steam escapes is gradually growing taller and more strikingly characteristic of the volcanic origin of the geyser. It is surrounded by a sedimentary deposit of silica, iron, and sulphur crystals ...

²

If science had interfered with aesthetic intentions of the artist after his Yellowstone trip, there was the added burden of personal problems in the 1880's for Bierstadt. Life was more complex and his relationship with Rosalie was becoming increasingly "awkward," to use the term the artist himself employed. Her necessary trip to the Bahamas each winter caused them to be more and more absent from each other. With the ever present urge to travel, to search for new landscape elements, and to meet more both native and foreign art patrons, Bierstadt often traveled alone during the 1880's.

¹Ibid., p. 62.

²Ibid.
The artist's wife had not accompanied her husband to Yellowstone in 1881, and it is doubtful that she went along to Canada that same year when the artist went salmon fishing with Lord Dufferin and visited the Citadel in Quebec.¹

Rosalie may have visited the Dufferins the previous year in 1880, when Bierstadt had also visited the Governor General. Moreover, she may have accompanied him to Niagara Falls to lunch with the Marquis of Lorne and Princess Louise when the English visitors were touring Canada and the United States. It is certain that in 1883, she was at Nassau when her husband was again at Ottawa. Bierstadt wrote Rosalie's mother from Canada that winter, saying how unfortunate it was that Rosalie could no longer go there. He spoke of Princess Louise's presence and how he escorted her each evening to a full-dress dinner. As if to assure his mother-in-law of Rosalie's necessary absence, he reported the temperature of eighteen degrees below zero.²

Financial difficulties were also a part of the mounting complexity of Bierstadt's personal life. A situation developed in 1880 that threatened a claim the artist had on mining property in Inyo County, California. There was a hurried exchange of letters and telegrams at that time between the artist and General Sherman. Bierstadt requested that Sherman use his influence to intercede in the sale of the mine.³

¹A sketch which probably resulted from this trip is The St. Lawrence River from the Citadel, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

²Letter of Albert Bierstadt to Mrs. Osborne, March 7, 1883 (copy in the files of the Boston Museum of Art.)

In 1883, the artist borrowed $8,500 from the Pratt and Whitney Company of Hartford, Connecticut. The loan may have been related to a particular misfortune that fell upon Bierstadt in the fall of 1882. The artist had become the proprietor of a ruin.

In the summer of 1882, the Bierstadts had rented Malkasten to Mr. Henry T. Chapman, a broker and member of the New York Stock Exchange. On November 10th of that year, Chapman returned to his permanent home in Brooklyn. Peter Conrad, Bierstadt's gardener for thirteen years, who had taken care of Malkasten in the artist's absence, remained at the Irvington house that night. At daybreak, he went to his own home in East Irvington for breakfast, and returned to Malkasten at 7:00 A.M. Smoke was curling above the house and Malkasten was on fire.

Conrad's first thought was to save the studio, but the sashes and blinds were closed and locked for the winter, so he could not enter. He called for help and workers on the adjoining estate of J. Gould came. Working frantically, they carried out paintings and furniture from the house. Fire engines from Irvington, Tarrytown, and Penny Bridge were unable to save the building.

Bierstadt was in his studio in New York when at 9:00 A.M. a friend rushed in to tell him that Malkasten was burning. He took the first train to Irvington. When he arrived, nothing remained standing but the charred stone walls. "I could have painted a picture 40 feet long by 38 feet high in that studio," was one of the first reactions of the artist upon hearing of the tragedy.\(^1\)

\(^1\)"Burning of Malkasten," unidentified clipping, November 11, 1882, ROM Scrapbook, p. 40.
Many New York state newspapers reported the Malkasten fire. It was the Utica Morning Herald's account that literally added insult to injury.\footnote{Morning Herald (Utica, N. Y.), November 18, 1882.} It stated that the destruction of Malkasten came as a crushing blow, one from which the artist would probably never recover. Strangely enough, the account was as much a brief biographical and critical study of the painter as it was the report of the fire. As if addressing a younger audience not familiar with the great Bierstadt, it served an artistic "obituary notice" on the painter's career.

Employing the past tense, the writer spoke of Bierstadt as having been one of the most fortunate of artists, that he was not worthy of the tremendous prices paid for his works, and that his popularity was due to the inflation created by capitalists. The works of foreign artists were the rage now among collectors, maintained the writer; but, if for no other reason than the fact that painters would never again attempt such grandiose works as Church and Bierstadt, a Yosemite valley picture of Bierstadt should be placed in a public gallery.

It became increasingly difficult for Bierstadt to exhibit his paintings in the 1880's. The New York Spectator of April 26, 1884, mentions his being refused permission to exhibit in London.\footnote{New York Spectator, April 26, 1884, clipping in ROM Scrapbook, p. 6.} Also, three years later he was barred from an exhibition in Washington, D. C. Bierstadt donated the painting, Dells of the Wisconsin River, for a hospital benefit show, but it was considered unacceptable by Newman A. Montrose, a New Yorker who had organized the loan exhibition. Montrose was quoted as
saying that, "to tell the truth, Mr. Bierstadt does not belong to the school of young American artists represented in the collection." The painting was probably a result of a sketching tour in Wisconsin and along the shore of Lake Superior made during the summer of 1886.

When Bierstadt returned to New York in the fall of that same year, a new award awaited him in spite of his waning reputation. It was the Order of Medjid given to the artist by the Sultan of Turkey. Joining the Sultan's collection of paintings by Messonier, Gerome, and works by other nineteenth century artists was Bierstadt's *Geyser in Yellowstone Park.*

In spite of Bierstadt's rejection in some exhibitions, his works continued to be accepted for others. In a Minneapolis exposition he showed *Storm on the Matterhorn.* At the Sub-Tropical Exposition of Sumter County, Florida, he exhibited *Off Farralene Islands: Sunset, Cypress Point, California; Early Snow Lake in Nova Scotia;* and *Niagara Falls.* In April of 1887, a number of other works, including a painting of the big trees of Maraposa Grove, California, as well as *Sentinel Rock, Yosemite Valley, Autumnal Woods,* and *The Falls of the Minnehaha,* were shipped to London.

An injury to the artist's pride occurred in March, 1889. Bierstadt had just completed a large work entitled, *The Last of the Buffalo*

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2 Unidentified clipping, ROM Scrapbook, p. 25.

3 Information concerning following exhibitions is deduced from fragments of unidentified clippings in ROM Scrapbook.
Figure 24 - The Last of the Buffalo
The subject represented an attack upon a huge herd of buffalo and was theatrically staged against a background of mesas, or tablelands, and the distant Rocky Mountains. Bierstadt considered it one of his best works and submitted it to a selection committee for the American art exhibition at the Paris exposition of 1889. Much to the shock of New Yorkers, Bierstadt's painting was refused. One critic thought that indirectly the rebuke paid a delicate compliment and tribute to the painter, since the selection committee chose mainly its own works. While this was at least some form of negative credit to the artist, Bierstadt was not only insulted but extremely irritated. He retaliated by submitting his work to the French Salon and thus exercised the privilege granted to him by his Legion of Honor, the ribbon which had been awarded to him in 1867.

The Last of the Buffalo offered to Europeans a window-like view of a scene that no American or European traveler would ever see again. The painting symbolized the closing of the frontier by presenting the tragic process of the extermination of myriads of American bison. It was a unique spectacle of the "Wild West."

The Last of the Buffalo was reported to have been purchased by a Colonel Morton. Morton, who had amassed a fortune dealing in nitrate, was supposed to have paid $50,000 for the six by ten foot canvas, but there is no evidence that the reported sale took place.

Following the biggest blow that had yet been given to his popularity, Bierstadt strove to maintain his success with buffalo-like determination. In September, 1889, he again toured the West in search of new source

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1 Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D. C.

material. The report he sent to Rosalie of an unusual sight he experienced during this trip could well have reminded him not only of the truthfulness of his last major work, but also of the rapid transformation of the West. What he saw was boxcars of buffalo bones being shipped eastward for use in sugar refineries. In his letter he noted that Indians were paid four dollars per ton to collect them. Bierstadt jokingly asked his wife if she would like to have a ton sent home and he remarked that here truly was "the last of the buffalo."  

In September, 1889, Bierstadt visited Alaska. For five days he lived in Indian huts and salmon canneries. He wrote Rosalie, "I was busy all the time and have 60 studies in color and two books full of drawings of Alaska." On this trip a near tragedy occurred, when the steamer Ancon, upon which he was a passenger wrecked off the Alaskan coast. "It was a narrow escape," wrote Bierstadt to his wife.

On his overland return trip to New York, Bierstadt made many stops and was lavishly entertained. He wrote Rosalie, who apparently was in the Bahamas, about the hospitality he received during his eastward journey.

I was dined and wined wherever I went in Vancouver, B. C., and at Tacoma where I remained about ten days making studies. At Vancouver Mr. Abbott gave me his private car and my cook was one of the ones the Princess Louise had had, and I lived a' la! Prince! At Tacoma I met old and new friends and they sprinkled the ground with champagne in my honor. Then to San Francisco .... The clubs in all these places made it very pleasant for me ....

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1 Letter of Albert Bierstadt to his wife Rosalie, August 5, [probably 1889] (copy in the files of the Boston Museum of Art).

2 Letter of Albert Bierstadt to his wife Rosalie, September 18, 1889 (copy in the files of the Boston Museum of Art).

3 Ibid.
At Denver City they made dinners for me, Governor Evans, General Elbert and Bishop Warren;--Mrs. Warren ordered a picture. Then to Omaha. I stopped with General Patrick, two days in Chicago where I called on Pullman and Potter Palmer. Here I find many letters, sinners, receptions, the Astors, Roosevelt . . . Mrs. Bliss, . . . Stuart, etc. etc.¹

While Albert Bierstadt basked in the light of a past reputation during that eastward journey of 1889, the painter experienced increasing difficulty to maintain his professional position as the giant of American landscape painting. Apparently the publicized $50,000 sale of his The Last of the Buffalo did not materialize. From New York, in 1890, he wrote the curator of the Corcoran gallery and tried to "arrange" an exhibition of the painting. Recalling methods of both himself and Church two decades previously, he advised the Corcoran that his work had been "requested" by friends in Washington. Bierstadt wished the viewing to be a special event. The Corcoran was to have special complimentary invitation cards printed and sent to prominent people in Washington. They were to be printed "as if they came from the Art Gallery.²

The 1890's

Others in Washington began to hear from the artist, who was desperately and openly seeking patronage. President Harrison received a letter from Bierstadt in May, 1891. According to the painter, a number of his works were in the White House. They had been sent there through the

¹Letter of Albert Bierstadt to his wife Rosalie, December 26 [probably 1889] (copy in the files of the Boston Museum of Art.)

²Letter of Albert Bierstadt to Corcoran Gallery of Art, May 16, 1890, Register of Letters Received, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
request of President Arthur. Would the committee of Public Buildings bring about their purchase, asked Bierstadt. ¹

Some escape from the reality of his declining patronage must have been experienced by the artist during the summer of 1891, when he visited England. Writing his sister-in-law, Mrs. Mary Osborne Hall, on August 10, he spoke of his visit to the Isle of Wight, where he was the guest of Lord Lorne and Princess Louise. He mentioned that the Princess had just completed a statue of Queen Victoria and that this work, he thought, would firmly establish her reputation as an artist. ²

In 1892, Bierstadt was working on a very large painting called *The Landing of Columbus* (Fig. 25). It was the last major work of his career. If one were to judge the work by the elaborate preparation and publicity campaign conducted by the artist, one could conclude that the painter thought it to be his *magnus opus*. No better example of Bierstadt's process of self-emulation can be seen than to follow the campaign which advertised this work. Like the press releases which issue from a Hollywood film studio today, newspaper articles reported the progress of the painting. Long in advance of the completion of the work, Bierstadt was reported to have received what he called a "commission" to paint this historical scene for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. One article noted that he had returned from Spain and Portugal, where he had been doing research in museums and palaces. Since the painter desired to be historically accurate

¹Letter of Albert Bierstadt to President Benjamin Harrison, May 31, 1891, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

²Letter of Albert Bierstadt to Mrs. Mary Osborne Hall, August 10, 1891, autograph album of Rosalie Bierstadt, *loc. cit.*
models were to be used wearing authentic costumes made from imported fabrics. The flora in the proposed painting likewise was to have a scientific accuracy. These "facts" were recorded in on-the-spot sketches made by Bierstadt in the Salvadore Islands.

As early as 1889, the physically ailing Rosalie Bierstadt was putting forth effort to help her husband in his super-production. She corresponded with Henry A. Blake of Jamaica in November of that year. Blake replied in answer to a request about the landing of Columbus in the Bahamas. He wrote:

The point upon which Columbus landed was a sweeping coral beach on the S.E. point of Watlings Island. It will be found in the charts . . . where an anchorage is marked. My wife sketched the spot and it is the only point in the Bahamas that answers the close description in the diary of Columbus. I am sure that Mr. Bierstadt's picture will create a sensation. The general character of the beach is the same as all the coral beaches in those islands and the colouring of the water is identical . . . .

Visitors were permitted to see the painting in process and in May of 1892, a preview of the forthcoming attraction was offered to a few privileged viewers. In a column entitled "New York Gossip," printed in the Detroit Free Press of May 15, there was described in detail what the favored New Yorkers were permitted to see.

Albert Bierstadt the famous artist, received a small number of friends at his Broadway studio the other day for a private view of his great picture, "The Landing of Columbus," which he is painting for the world's fair, and which is yet unfinished, Mr. Bierstadt having wintered in the Bahamas making sketches for the picture. The scene was a typical New York "afternoon." Ushered by a liveried page into a magnificent anteroom carpeted with Persian rugs, and the walls lined with paintings, one met the

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Letter of Henry A. Blake to Rosalie Bierstadt, November 19, 1889, Autograph Album of Rosalie Bierstadt, loc. cit.
Figure 25 - The Landing of Columbus
typical high-class gathering of the city, a couple of dignified divines, two or three artists with Velasquez beards, one or two literary people, a half dozen society men and women and a celebrated beauty. This, with a musician, is the proper admixture for a correct "afternoon." . . . Over the mantel hangs a small portrait of the Emperor of Germany, bearing his autograph, a gift to the great artist from the emperor in memory of their friendship. Mr. Bierstadt's transcriptions of western scenery have met with great enthusiasm abroad, the Sultan of Turkey, who is, Mr. Bierstadt says, himself an artist of no mean ability, having decorated him with an order, and Queen Victoria having invited him to spend a day at the Isle of Wight in token of admiration.

After a few moments spent in the anteroom we went into the large studio where the great picture, unveiled, stood on an easel in a favorable northern light. The first impression is of the glowing, riotous golden sunlight of the tropics, so different from our polar light. . . . The artist has chosen the moment when Columbus, with a few attendants, is just landing on the yellow beach from a small boat. The discoverer, taking possession of the country in the name of his king, has evidently just set his feet upon the golden sand, and swarming Indians are hurrying through the wood toward him, leaving a neglected fire in the clearing, to prostrate themselves at his feet . . . .

The large studio is a curious place. With its great number of stuffed animals—moose, reindeer, seal, bear—you might imagine you were in a menagerie. But these are Bierstadt's lay figures, you must remember, and the "properties" of a landscape painter differ necessarily from the draperies, costumes and bric-a-brac of the figure-painter . . . .

In the $600,000 fireproof Art Palace designed by C. B. Atwood for the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, there were twenty-four thousand square feet devoted to art in the United States. Although one thousand seventy-five paintings by American artists were shown, Bierstadt's The Landing of Columbus was not exhibited. The paintings which were chosen for the White City art building had been first screened by juries of selection and then again by a hanging committee. Great indignation

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arose on the part of many people about the choices which were made in January prior to the spring opening of the exposition.

Being refused permission to exhibit was in itself another serious blow to the artist's reputation. The refusal, though, had greater implications. It was understandable that Bierstadt's style at the end of the century was obviously that of an older generation. Yet, one segment of the American section in the Art Palace was devoted to a retrospective glance at American art history. That Bierstadt was eliminated from this part of the exhibition was a value judgment that has carried over into the twentieth century. It meant, for the future, Bierstadt's name would not be associated with West, the Peales, Stuart, Trumbull, Allston, Neagle, Sully, Vanderlyn, Bingham, Woodville, Inman, and others, including Thomas Cole.

The Landing of Columbus, which for the nation was a symbol of a great beginning, was for Bierstadt paradoxically a symbol of his final demise from public esteem.

One tragedy after another fell upon the artist during that eventful year of the Chicago exposition. A letter of the artist written in 1893 reflects the dilemma of his financial situation, which was paralleled by an even more tragic personal misfortune. He requested from a man named Cooke in Washington that he use his White House paintings as collateral for a loan. He urgently begged assistance at that time, stating that he was "in a condition unfit to go out into the world."¹ What Bierstadt was referring to was his sorrow over the death of Rosalie. Bierstadt had

received a cablegram from the Governor of the Bahamas in March, 1893.¹

The message told of Rosalie's death at the Royal Victoria Hotel in Nassau on the first of the month. Her body was being sent to New York on the steamer Cienfuegos. Death was attributed to "lingering consumption."

Just one year previously, Bierstadt had painted her portrait wearing the costume of Mary Queen of Scots, the figure she had personated at the famous Dufferin Ball of 1876.

In March, 1894, just one year following his wife's death, Bierstadt married again. Rosalie's relatives explained it frankly as a marriage of "convenience." The new Mrs. Bierstadt was the former Mary Hicks Stewart, the widow of David Stewart, the millionaire banker, who had left his vast estate and amassed fortune to his wife. Mr. and Mrs. Bierstadt's wedding journey was to Europe, where they were honored by a luncheon given by the Princess Louise. They had arranged passage on an ocean steamer in order to be in London at the time of the coronation of King Edward.

It would seem that for Bierstadt's continually pressing financial difficulties, the new matrimonial venture might well be a most convenient arrangement. Nevertheless, on January 17, 1895, the press announced that Albert Bierstadt was in "financial difficulties." The next day, January 18, a newspaper article carried the following heading:

SHERIFF AT BIERSTADT'S

The Artist's Paintings Seized on two Executions. Thought to be Worth $100,000, and Owes About $40,000 —

¹Undated and untitled clipping, ROM Scrapbook, p. 32.
Albert Bierstadt had gone into bankruptcy. A sheriff's deputy had taken possession of the artist's studio at 1271 Broadway. The newspaper reporter stated that all creditors were to be paid in full and that Mr. Bierstadt would have a comfortable balance to his credit. The nominal assets which amounted to about $100,000, included not only Bierstadt paintings in a storehouse, but real estate in Irvington-On-Hudson, Minneapolis, and California.

Following his second marriage Bierstadt supposedly lived in Europe five months of every year. Although not as active as in the past, he did continue to paint and exhibit. The artist's tireless energy was now devoted to various enterprises. These efforts included activities such as the acquisition of patents, the promotion of a National Gallery in Washington, and involvement with international relations.

In 1895, Bierstadt was issued a patent for a movable fort. Also called an Expansion Car, it was a railway vehicle which, by an ingenious cranking device, expanded into a full-size dwelling or barracks. Seeking financial assistance from Henry Hurtleston Rogers of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, Bierstadt wrote Rogers and sent along a portrait of Martha Simon (last surviving Narragansett Indian in the New Bedford area). Rogers,

1"Sheriff at Bierstadt's," unidentified clipping, January 18, 1895, Columbia School of Journalism Library clipping files, Columbia University, New York City.


who had given financial assistance to Mark Twain and later helped in the education of Helen Keller, was supposed to possess a fortune of $60,000,000. In his letter, the painter-inventor claimed he had been issued five patents, and said, "I cannot afford to waste my time making money," and that he was merely seeking an honest man to develop the invention.¹

Other large fortunes of wealthy philanthropists were to be hopefully touched by the aging yet enterprising landscape painter. This time they were to be used for the establishment of a National Gallery in Washington. Earlier in his career, Bierstadt had helped promote the founding of the Metropolitan Museum. Enlisting the aid of Washington columnist Kate Field in the capital city, he now formulated grandiose plans for tapping wealthy women for millions of dollars. He advised Kate Field that a female benefactor might enjoin the cause of this cultural project. Bierstadt personally guaranteed that the lady's image would be sculptured in marble for the deserved commemoration of her deed.²

There were others in Washington who heard from Bierstadt. President William McKinley received correspondence from him in February, 1899, about the desirability of having the United States purchase a coaling station on the island of Corfu.³ Bierstadt claimed to have confidential information concerning the means and process of such an acquisition. The

¹Letter of Albert Bierstadt to Henry Huttleston Rogers, [1895] (in the files of the Millicent Library, Fairhaven, Mass.)

²Letter of Albert Bierstadt to Kate Field, May 14, 1893, The Boston Public Library, Boston, Mass.

³Letter of Albert Bierstadt to President William McKinley, February 4, 1899 (in the files of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.)
cost was to be about one million dollars, even though eight or ten million had already been spent on the property. The role of Greece and the position of Great Britain in such a transaction had been studied by Bierstadt. The artist also wrote the Secretary of the Navy about the island purchase and urged him to "push the matter" through by advising the Secretary of War to make an offer.¹

At the age of sixty-nine, the painter was obviously as shrewd as he had ever been. Yet, there should be mentioned another move on Bierstadt's part that was certainly a coup de grâce for any artist with an exceptional talent for making money.

The Rocky Mountains, which had been so important in popularizing Bierstadt's grand style both in America and Europe, and which had been purchased by the Englishman, James McHenry, for $25,000, was returned to New York in 1898.² Bierstadt had purchased it himself for $5,000. The artist was now investing in his own works and taking advantage of the deflated value of the late Hudson River school of painting! He again owned what was perhaps one of his major works. The circle was completed.

Albert Bierstadt died of heart disease on February 18, 1902. The seventy-one year old painter was then living at 322 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Obituary notices appeared in many eastern newspapers. They listed his foreign medals, the exorbitant prices he had received for his works, his wealthy patrons, and his major works. They noted that he was

¹Letter of Albert Bierstadt to John D. Long, February 4, 1899 (in the files of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.)

²Undated [1907] letter of the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to Mr. Frederick Dielman, New York City (in the files of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)
a member of the National Academy of Design, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Century Association, Union League, Boone and Crockett Club, Musical Art Society, and American Geographical Society; they pointed out that he probably was America's most popular painter in the 1860's and '70's.

There was one obituary notice which gave due credit to Bierstadt's fortune and fame, but served the critical function of being the final entombment of the artist's significance. William Howe Downes, art critic for the Boston Evening Transcript, authored this ode to the passing Bierstadt. Downes believed that Bierstadt's name and fame by 1902 had been relegated to obscurity. His death, said the Boston critic, "caused the merest ripple on the surface of the art pool." He quoted one of his artist friends as saying, "I did not know he was alive until I saw he had died." ¹

Downes believed that Frederick Church was a great painter, but that Albert Bierstadt was a literalist of the driest and most prosaic nature; consequently, the latter's work could only be as good at the time of the writing as it had been when it was painted. The author believed that Bierstadt lacked imagination and that his grandiose mountain subjects would never be a substitute for an initial inadequacy of talent. Although he thought the name of Bierstadt would always be entitled to a certain prominence, he believed that the artist and some of his contemporaries were as remote to Downes' era as were such artists as Cimabue and Giotto. That to which Downes objected particularly about Bierstadt's style was the "niggling pettiness" and lack of color associated with the

¹William Howe Downes, loc. cit.
Figure 26 - Sunset on the Coast
Düsseldorf technique. Such qualities in conjunction with sublime subjects were completely incongruous to the Boston writer. "It was like a ten year old schoolboy's attempt to write a composition on the Immortality of the Soul or a drummer boy's explanation of how Napoleon should have fought the battle of Waterloo."\(^1\)

The comments of Downes have been repeated by numerous American art historians of the twentieth century. Yet, those who accept such judgments must recognize that the author of this criticism of Bierstadt (as Downes admits in his own writing) was a staunch critic of John Ruskin's esthetic theory - a theory that no longer was popular in 1902, during the advent of Impressionism. Moreover, when Downes was writing, the great western frontier had already been closed. The great epic of expansion that had excited the imagination of the mid-nineteenth century generation was being transformed. Just seven years prior to Downes' article, Frederick Jackson Turner had delivered his lecture in Chicago on the significance of the American frontier. Following Turner's thesis of 1895, American history was rewritten in terms of the impact of the West upon the American mind. In *Virgin Land* by Henry Nash Smith, the Turner thesis is discussed in terms of American literature of the period of expansion.\(^2\) The significance of the frontier in terms of American painting remains to be written.

Downes' funeral ovation to Albert Bierstadt failed to take into consideration that his works embodied an iconography, a meaning, or even a poetic visionary dream that was best understood and experienced by those audacious, expansive dreamers and builders of empires in mid-nineteenth century America.

\(^1\)Ibid.

APPENDIX

CATALOG

This catalog is not intended to be a complete listing of all known works by Albert Bierstadt. Instead, it lists chronologically both paintings and sketches which the author of this study considers significant for purposes of biography, style, and criticism. So that representative examples from all phases of the artist's career can be noted, a number of works are included which may have been destroyed or cannot be located. When the date of a painting is enclosed in parentheses, the date was determined by stylistic analysis or authenticated by documents.

The following abbreviations are employed in recording the exhibitions of the listed works:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAD</td>
<td>National Academy of Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAA</td>
<td>The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAA</td>
<td>The Royal Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB Cat. 1905</td>
<td>Catalog of the Anderson Auction Company, 5 West 29th Street, New York City, April 27, 1905, called Choice and Valuable Paintings from the Collection of Mr. Edward Bierstadt and the estate of the Late Hon. John H. V. Arnold and Edward Dexter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EB Cat. 1908</td>
<td>Catalog of sale of Mr. A. G. Hunt and Edward Bierstadt Estate, January 22-23, 1908, American Art Galleries, Madison Square South, New York City.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **VIEW OF HUDSON RIVER**  
1847  
Lewis Gouverneur Morris, N.Y.C.  
Bought at N.Y.C. auction, 1927,  
by Mrs. Lewis Gouverneur Morris,  
N.Y.C., bequeathed by her in  
Jan. 1935 to present owner. 

Date inscribed on back of painting. If correct, the earliest surviving sketch by the artist.

2. **MARTHA SIMON**  
1851  
Millicent Library, Fairhaven, Mass.  

Inscription LL "Martha Simon, the last of the Narragansetts, 1851."

3. **A CAVALIER**  
1852  
Mr. and Mrs. Glenn N. Lempereur,  
Weston, Mass.  
Sold by Vose Galleries, Boston,  
Mass., to present owner. 

Exhibition: EB Cat. 1905, lists a work with this title.

4. **APPROACHING STORM**  
1854  
Arnot Art Gallery, Elmira, New York  
Purchased 1956 from Miss Agnes Betts,  
Elmira, New York.

5. **A RIVER LANDSCAPE**  
1855  
Vose Galleries, Boston, Mass.  
With Swain School of Design,  

Painting damaged in fire at Swain School of Design. Restored in 1960 by Vose Galleries. A Westphalian landscape produced in Germany during artist's student days.
6. Sketch for SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW  
(1855)  
Newark Museum, Newark, N. J.  
Gift, 1920, J. Ackerman Coles.  


Probably sketched in 1855, at Cassel, Germany.

7. COTTAGE NEAR LAKE LUCERNE  
(1856)  
M. Knoedler & Co., N. Y. C., 1958

Probably painted near Brunnen, Switzerland, in 1856, while artist was on sketching tour.

8. LANDSCAPE  
(1856)  
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, R. I.  
Gift, 1940, Miss Ellen D. Sharpe.

9. CAPRI BEACH  
(1857)  
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.  

Probably painted in June, 1857, when Sanford Gifford and Albert Bierstadt were on sketching tour of southern Italy.

10. FISHING BOATS AT CAPRI  
1857  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.  
In artist's studio at time of death; with Rolf's, Brooklyn, N. Y., c. 1937; Miss Frances Tarbox, N. Y. C., 1946; John Nicholson Gallery, N. Y. C., 1946.
11. **ITALIAN COSTUME STUDIES**
   (1857)
   Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Conn.
   Gift, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Macauley, Old Lyme, Conn.; with Ralph Thomas, Historical Society, New Haven, Conn., 1948.

   Probably painted in Italy in March, 1857, when artist was on a sketching tour near Rome.

12. **OLEVANO**
   (1857)
   City Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo.
   Purchased from Edward Hale Bierstadt, Orangeburg, N. Y.

13. **ARCH OF OCTAVIUS**
   1858
   Acquired by Boston Athenaeum, 1858; loaned in 1876 to Boston Museum of Fine Arts.


14. **LANDING OF GOSNOLD AT CUTTHUNK**
   1858
   Gift, Miss Eunice B. Hathaway, Fairhaven, Mass.

15. **THE BLACK HORSE**
   (1859)
   Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

   Probably painted when artist accompanied Lander expedition in 1859.
16. **INDIANS NEAR FORT LARAMIE**  
(1859)  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.  
Collection: Hiasis, New Haven, Conn.;  


Probably painted when artist accompanied Lander expedition in 1859.

17. **THE MARINA GRANDE IN CAPRI WITH THE FARAGLIONI ROCKS IN THE BACKGROUND**  
1859  
Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, N. Y.  
Gift from artist, 1863.  

Exhibition: Probably NAD, 1859, as CAPRI, BAY OF NAPLES; Detroit Institute of Arts and Toledo Museum of Art, "Travelers in Arcadia, American Artists in Italy, 1830-1875," 1951.

18. **SKETCHES OF INDIANS (No. 1)**  
Oil on academy board  
13 1/2" x 19"  
LR, ABierstadt  

New York Historical Society, N. Y. C.  
Gift, Adelaide Milton de Groot, 1941.

19. **SKETCHES OF INDIANS (No. 2)**  
Oil on academy board  
13 1/2" x 19"  
LR, ABierstadt  

New York Historical Society, N. Y. C.  
Gift, Adelaide Milton de Groot, 1941.

20. **THUNDERSTORM IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS**  
1859  
Gift, Mrs. Edward Hale and Mrs. John Carroll Perkins in memory of their father, Elias T. Milliken, 1943.  

21. THE TROUT BROOK
1859
Gift, Mr. G. M. Leonard.
Oil on cardboard
9 1/8" x 11 3/4"
LL, AB 59
(AB in monogram)

22. INDIAN ENCAMPMENT, SHOSHONE VILLAGE
1860
New York Historical Society, N. Y. C.
Purchased by Robert L. Stuart in "Pro Patria" sale, 1861. On permanent loan to Society from New York Public Library.
Oil on panel
24" x 19"
LR, A. Bierstadt


23. ON THE SWEETWATER, NEAR THE DEVIL'S GATE, NEBRASKA
1860
National Academy of Design, N. Y. C.
Oil
12 1/4" x 18"

24. SCENE IN WESTPHALIA
1860
Miss Alice Delano Weekes, N. Y. C.
Oil on canvas
42 3/4" x 36 1/2"
LR, A. Bierstadt, 1860
(AB in monogram)

25. VIEW FROM THE WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS, WYOMING
1860
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.
Oil on canvas
30 1/4" x 48 1/4"
LL, A. Bierstadt 1860
(AB in monogram)


Inscription by artist on back of canvas identifies subject.
26. **SUNSET**
1861
Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.
Oil on canvas
27 1/8" x 44 1/8"
LR, A. Bierstadt, 1861

27. **SUNSET LIGHT, WIND RIVER RANGE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS**
1861
Free Public Library, New Bedford, Mass.
Oil on canvas
39" x 60"  
ABierstadt, 1861

28. **WASATCH MOUNTAINS—WYOMING**
1861
Art Museum of the New Britain Institute, New Britain, Conn.
With Vose Galleries, Boston, Mass., 1944.
Oil on canvas
26 1/2" x 40 1/2"  
LR,  
(AB in monogram)

Exhibition: City Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo., 1954; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minn., 1955.

29. **ASCUTNEY MOUNTAIN FROM CLAREMONT, NEW HAMPSHIRE**
1862
With S. S. Pierce family, Boston, Mass.; Vose Galleries; Miss Clara Endicott Sears, 1946.
Oil on canvas
41 1/2" x 71"

30. **BOMBARDMENT OF FT. SUMTER (1862)**
Union League, Philadelphia, Pa.
Gift, Art Association of Union League.
Oil on canvas
26 1/2" x 68 1/2"  
LR, ABierstadt


31. **UNION SHARPSHOOTERS FIRING ON CONFEDERATES**
1862
Century Association, N. Y. C.
Presented by artist as initiation fee, 1862.
Oil on academy board
17 3/4" x 15"
LL,  
(AB in monogram)
32. **WIND RIVER MOUNTAIN, NEBRASKA**
   1862
   Milwaukee Art Center, Milwaukee, Wis.
   Purchased by Layton Art Gallery, 1897.


33. **ASCUTNEY MOUNTAIN FROM CLAREMONT, NEW HAMPSHIRE**
   (1863)
   Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.
   Gift, estate of Z. Marshall Crane.

34. **NIAGARA**
   1863
   (present location not known)
   Sold at Anderson Galleries from paintings in Stokes Collection on April 9, 1929.

35. **RIVER PLATTE, NEBRASKA**
   1863
   Jones Library, Amherst, Mass.
   On loan to Amherst College, Amherst, Mass. Gift, family of W. A. Burnett.

36. **THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS**
   1863
   Metropolitan Museum of Art, N. Y. C.
   Purchased by James McHenry and taken to London, 1865; remained in his collection until death. Returned to the United States in 1898.

37. **ROCKY MOUNTAINS; LANDER'S PEAK**
   1863
   William Hayes Fogg Collection.

38. **SURVEYORS' WAGON IN THE ROCKIES**
   City Art Museum of St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo.

   Oil on panel
   11 3/4" x 18"
   **ABierstadt 1862**
   (AB in monogram)

   Oil on canvas
   27" x 44"
   **Albert Bierstadt**

   Oil on canvas
   50" x 36"
   LR, signed and dated

   Oil on canvas
   58" x 36"
   LR, Bierstadt
   1863 below signature

   Oil on canvas
   73 1/4" x 120 3/4"
   LR, ABierstadt 1863
   (AB in monogram)

   Oil on canvas
   43 1/2" x 35 1/2"
   LR, ABierstadt 63
   (AB in monogram)

   Oil on paper
   7 3/4" x 12 7/8"
   LR, Bierstadt
39. **STORM IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS**
   1864
   Print Division, New York Public Library, N. Y. C.
   Original painting destroyed by fire, 1869.

40. **VALLEY OF THE YOSEMITE**
   1864
   Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

41. "**YOSEMITE SCENE** OF BRIDAL VEIL FALLS"
   1864
   Gift, 1864, to J. I. Bowditch from American Insurance Company. Perhaps purchased from artist by firm.

42. **THE GOLDEN GATE: SAN FRANCISCO**
   1865
   (present location not known)
   Originally in collection of Jessie Benton Fremont.
   Exhibition: NAD, 1865.

43. **PORTRAIT OF JOHN TYNDALE** (1820-1893)
   1865
   Now in the Treasure Room in Widener Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
   Inscription on back of painting which identifies subject, painter, and date.

44. **IN THE YOSEMITE VALLEY**
   1866
   Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.
   Gift, Elizabeth Hart Jarvis Colt.

Chromolithograph
18 3/4" x 30 1/4"
AB

Oil on cardboard
11 3/4" x 19 1/4"
LR, ABierstadt 64
(AB in monogram)

Oil on canvas
33 1/2" x 26 1/2"
LR, ABierstadt
(AB in monogram)

Oil on canvas
41 1/2" x 65 1/2"
LR, Bierstadt, 1865

Watercolor
5 1/4" x 3 1/2"
45. MERCED RIVER, YOSEMITE VALLEY
1866
Metropolitan Museum of Art, N. Y. C.
Gift, Sons of William Paton.

Exhibition: College Art Association, N. Y. C., traveling exhibition, 1932-33.

46. ROCKY MOUNTAINS
1866
International Business Machines, N. Y. C.

Exhibition: Painting with same title shown at RAA, 1869.

47. STARR KING MOUNTAIN, CALIFORNIA
1866
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, O.


48. SUNSET ON THE COAST
1866
Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Meyer, Ft. Wayne, Ind.

Exhibition: Painting with same title shown at RAA, 1869.

49. AMONG THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS
1867

Exhibition: Painting with same title shown at RAA, 1869.
50. **THE BUFFALO TRAIL**  
(1867)  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.  
Owned in England; private collector,  
N. Y. C.; with Parke-Bernet, N. Y. C.,  
1947; with Charles D. Childs, Boston,  
N. Y., 1947.

Exhibition: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass., circulating,  
1957-59, "American Paintings, 1815-1865."

51. **COUPLE DRIVING**  
1867  
H. Knoedler & Co., N. Y. C.  

52. **DOMES OF THE YOSEMITE**  
1867  
St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont.  
Collection: LeGrand Lockwood, Norwalk, Conn., 1867; A. S. Hatch of New York City,  
c. 1873; Horace Fairbanks, donated by him to St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, 1873.

53. **DOMES OF THE YOSEMITE**  
(1867)  
Miss Amelia Peabody, 120 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Mass.  
With Vose Galleries, Boston, Mass.,  
1957. (Purchased in England)

A smaller version of **DOMES OF THE YOSEMITE** at the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

54. **EMIGRANTS CROSSING THE PLAINS (OREGON TRAIL)**  
1867  
Cleveland Automobile Club, Cleveland, 0.  
Purchased by Amasa Stone in Paris, 1868.  
Owned by Mrs. Samuel Mather, daughter of Amasa Stone. Purchased from Mather Estate in 1940.

Oil on canvas  
32" x 48"  
LR, A.Bierstadt  
(AB in monogram)

Oil  
19 1/2" x 13 1/2"  
LR, AB '67

Oil on canvas  
116" x 180"  
LR, A.Bierstadt  
(AB in monogram)

Oil on canvas  
21 1/2" x 33 1/4"

Oil on canvas  
60" x 96"  
LR, Bierstadt 67
55. **LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA**
1867

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.
With Howard Scribner (name on label on stretcher); N. Y. C. art market; Victor Spark, N. Y. C., 1945.


56. **THE YOSEMITE VALLEY**
1867

Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.
Gift, 1923, John J. Morgan.

57. **SNOW SCENE WITH BUFFALOS**
(1867-68)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.


58. "**Landscape**"
1868

Gift, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic H. Curtiss.


59. **MOUNT AETNA**
1868

Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, O.
Gift, S. Livingston Mather, Philip Mather, Katherine Hoyt (Mather)
Cross, Katherine Mather McLean, and Constance Mather Bishop, 1949.
| 60. | BUFFALO TRAIL 1869 | Oil on canvas 29 1/2" x 49 1/2"  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.  
Acquired from Graham & Sons, N. Y. C.  
Exhibition: Des Moines Art Center—10th Anniversary exhibition, 1958. |
| 61. | THE BURNING SHIP 1869 | Oil on canvas 30 1/4" x 50"  
Private collection: Maxim Karolik, Boston, Mass.  
Bierstadt 1869 |
| 62. | THE COMING STORM 1869 | Oil on cardboard 9 1/2" x 13"  
Addison Gallery of Art, Andover, N. H.  
Gift, Mrs. Leon Bascom, Waterford, Conn.  
Exhibition: HRS, Chicago, N. Y. C. |
| 63. | MOUNT HOOD 1869 | Oil on canvas 36 1/8" x 60 1/4"  
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Ore.  
Gift, Mr. Henry F. Cabell  
Exhibition: Painting with same title shown at PAA, 1867. |
| 64. | THE OREGON TRAIL (EMIGRANTS CROSSING THE PLAINS) 1869 | Oil on canvas 31" x 49"  
Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.  
Purchased from the artist by H. K. Fulton, Washington, D. C.; left to his daughter, Florence Fulton; bought from the widow of her son, Robert; purchased from Vose Galleries, Boston, Mass., 1946.  
LR, AB, 1869 (AB in monogram)  
LL, 1869 |
65. **WIND RIVER, WYOMING, 1870**

1870

Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Cody, Wyoming.


Oil on canvas

54" x 84"

LR, ABierstadt '70

(AB in monogram)

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66. **SEAL ROCKS, FARALLONES**

1872

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

In artist's studio at time of death; with Rholf's, Brooklyn, N. Y.; George Good, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Miss Frances Tarbox, N. Y. C., 1946; John Mitchell, N. Y. C., 1946.

Subject and date determined by inscription on back of panel before restoration.

Oil on paper

13 1/2" x 19"

LL, ABierstadt

(AB in monogram)

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67. **VIEW OF DONNER LAKE, CALIFORNIA**

(1872)

New York Historical Society, N. Y. C.

Gift, Archer M. Huntington, 1909.

Painted in artist's San Francisco studio in 1872.

Oil on canvas

72" x 120"

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68. **ROCKY MOUNTAINS, COLORADO**

(1873)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.

In artist's studio at time of death; with Rholf's, Brooklyn, N. Y.; George Good, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Miss Frances Tarbox, N. Y. C., 1946; John Mitchell, N. Y. C., 1946.

Oil on paper

13 3/4" x 19 1/2"

LR, ABierstadt

(AB in monogram)

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69. **DISCOVERY OF THE HUDSON RIVER**

(1874)

U. S. Capitol, Washington, D. C.

Originally occupied position near Speaker's desk in House of Representatives, U. S. Capitol. Now located in Member's private stairway, House Side, near Speaker's Lobby.

Oil on canvas

72" x 126"
70. EL CAPITÁN, YOSEMITE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA
1875
Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio.
Gift, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Rike, 1959.
Oil on canvas
32 1/4" x 48"
LL, ABierstadt

71. GIANT REDWOODS OF CALIFORNIA
1875
Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass.
Gift, Zenas Crane
Exhibition: HRS, Chicago, N. Y. C.
Oil on canvas
52 1/2" x 43"
Albert Bierstadt

72. MT. ADAMS
1875
The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, N. J.
Gift, prior to 1925, by Mrs. Jacob N. Bean (Mrs. Willard Humphreys).
Oil on canvas
49" x 63"
LR, ABierstadt 1875
(AB in monogram)

73. MT. CORCORAN
1875
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.
Purchased from artist, Jan. 18, 1878.
Oil on canvas
61" x 96 1/4"
LR, ABierstadt
(AB in monogram)

74. HETCH HETCHIE CANYON, CALIFORNIA
1876
Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass.
Exhibition: HRS, Chicago, N. Y. C.
Oil on canvas
57" x 42"

75. ENTRANCE INTO MONTEREY
(1877)
U. S. Capitol, Washington, D. C.
Originally occupied position near Speaker's desk in House of Representatives, U. S. Capitol. Now located in Member's private stairway, House Side, near Speaker's Lobby.
Oil on canvas
72" x 126"

76. ESTES PARK, COLORADO
(1877)
Public Library, Denver, Colorado.
Exhibition: RAA, 1878.
Oil on canvas
55" x 94"
77. **BOATS IN A MISTY LAKE**  
1879  
Mrs. Joyce Edwards, Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.

Oil on canvas  
14 1/2" x 19"  
LR, AB 1879

78. **COLUMBIA RIVER**  
(1880)  
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon.  
Gift, Mrs. Lester R. Brooks.

Oil on canvas  
8 5/8" x 15 7/8"  
LR, ABierstadt

79. **GEYSER, YELLOWSTONE PARK**  
(1881)  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.  
In artist's studio at time of death;Rholf's, Brooklyn, N. Y.; George Good, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Miss Frances Tarbox, N. Y. C., 1946; John Mitchell, N. Y. C., 1946.

Oil on paper  
14" x 19 1/2"  
LR, ABierstadt  
(AB in monogram)

Probably painted when the artist visited Yellowstone Park for the first time in 1881.

80. **THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER FROM THE CITADEL**,  
QUEBEC  
(1881)  
Karolik Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.


Oil on paper  
22" x 30 1/2"  
ABierstadt

Probably painted when the artist went salmon fishing with the Governor General of Canada.

81. **ENCAMPMENT IN THE ROCKIES**  
(1889)  
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N. Y.  


Oil on paper  
19 5/8" x 25"  
LL, ABierstadt  
(LAB in monogram)

Probably painted when the artist visited Alaska and the Canadian Rockies in 1889.
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>82</td>
<td>THE LAST OF THE BUFFALO</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>Gift, Mrs. Mary Bierstadt, 1909*</td>
<td>Oil on canvas 71 1/4&quot; x 119 1/4&quot; LR, Albert Bierstadt</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td>THE LANDING OF COLUMBUS</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Museum of Natural History, N.Y.C.</td>
<td>Gift, Mrs. Mary Bierstadt, 1906.</td>
<td>Oil on canvas 108&quot; x 191&quot;    Signed and dated 1894</td>
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| 85  | THE HORSTRAISCHE GLACIER, UPPER ENGADINE, PONTRESINA      | 1895     | Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, N.Y.               | Gift, Mrs. Mary Bierstadt, 1903.      | Oil on canvas 72" x 121"     LL, Albert Bierstadt  
Merry Christmas to Mary, 1895. |
| 86  | THE GOLDEN GATE, CALIFORNIA                               | 1898     | (Location not known)                          | Exhibition: EB Cat. 1908.             | Medium not known 38" x 61"  R, ABierstadt 1898 |
| 87  | DESTRUCTION OF POMPEI                                     | 1899     | (Location not known)                          | Exhibition: EB Cat. 1908.             | Medium not known 38" x 61"  L, ABierstadt 1899 |
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AUTobiography

I, Richard Shafer Trump, was born on December 11, 1922, in Greenville, Ohio, where I received my elementary-school education. My high school education was in the public schools of Lima, Ohio. During World War II, I served in the United States Army for three years, two of which were in Europe. From the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, I received the B.F.A. degree in 1949. The M.F.A. degree was granted to me by the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, in 1951.

In 1957, I became a doctoral candidate at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, and that same year traveled for six months in England, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Italy. I taught at the State University of Iowa from 1951 to 1952 as a graduate assistant; was an instructor at the College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, from 1952 to 1954; and joined the staff of the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, in 1959 as the Curator of the Museum of Art. In 1960, I was appointed Assistant Professor at Kent State University, where I now am Chairman of the Division of Art History within the School of Art.