

The Big Picture

Thomas Moran's *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* and the Development of the American West

Diana Seave Greenwald

The success of Thomas Moran's The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone (1872) was linked not only with tourism and Yellowstone Nation Park's foundation but with the national debate about Western development. Formal analysis contrasts Moran's sublime landscape in flux with Bierstadt's and Gifford's depictions of frontier landscapes as habitable wilderness. Although the Northern Pacific Railroad promoted settlement as a reliable source of revenue, the spectacular painting resulting from its support of Moran's 1871 trip to Yellowstone instead showed the limitations of the homesteading model in a mountainous and arid Western landscape more suitable for mining and logging than for farming.

MEASURING 7 feet tall by 12 feet wide, *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* (1872; fig. 1) is monumental. Only a handful of tiny human figures stand in the foreground of the painting. The men are dwarfed by their surroundings, indicating that, despite its size, the canvas only hints at the colossal proportions of the actual site. However, Moran does not sacrifice detail for scale. Distinct veins of pink, orange, and yellow run through rock formations; individual needles are visible on the pine trees' branches; and the mist around the waterfall is not a uniform color but a range of whites tinged gray, blue, and yellow. This painting—just like the site it depicts—is marvelous. Moran affectionately called it his “Big Picture.”

The existing secondary literature describes *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* as an image of spectacular wilderness, of a wondrous landscape ready-made and destined to be packaged as a tourist attraction and a source of voyeuristic enjoyment. This theory is compounded by the Northern Pa-

cific Railroad's (NPRR) sponsorship of Moran's trip to Yellowstone in exchange for several watercolors depicting the area.¹ Scholars assume that this transaction was intended to cultivate the image of Yellowstone—declared the country's first national park in 1872—as a tourist destination. This article argues that the NPRR sent an artist to Montana Territory to create images of both spectacular wilderness for tourists and of habitable wilderness for settlement—images resonant of the ideals expressed in the 1862 Homestead Act. To suit its own commercial goals, the NPRR needed to portray the Yellowstone Valley as a Western Eden that one should not just visit, but settle.

After a brief literature review and discussion of methods, the article introduces the Homestead Act—the principal blueprint for the settlement of the West from 1862. This blueprint—an extension of land policies dating to the end of the eighteenth century—came into question as it was applied to environments in the mountainous West not suited for arable agriculture.² The Northern Pacific Railroad's attempts to develop the Yellowstone Valley despite its geographic and geological challenges are considered using period maps. The

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¹ Joni L. Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 190.

² “Homestead Act,” *Homestead Act of 1862* (January 7, 2009), 1. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost.



Fig. 1. Thomas Moran, *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, 1872. Oil on canvas; H. 84", W. 144 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". (Smithsonian American Art Museum, lent by the Department of the Interior Museum; photo, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY.)

article examines the specific artistic needs of the NPRR and the process by which it selected an artist to paint Yellowstone in the light of this legislative and railroad-building framework for development. It then compares Moran and his depiction of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone with Albert Bierstadt's paintings of the Rocky Mountains and Yosemite Valley and the latter location's initial railroad development. The article concludes with extended formal analyses of *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* and close readings of contemporary critical reactions to further explore connections between legislative debate over Western development and Moran's painting. In particular, this article argues that Moran created an image of a frontier in flux that reflected the debated and heterogeneous plans proposed for the development of the American West during and in the decade after the Civil War.

Beyond Tourism and the National Park

In the sizable secondary literature dedicated to *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* and its extraordinary popularity, most scholars have reached some

permutation of the same conclusion: Yellowstone is a wonderland, an American treasure to be preserved, admired, and celebrated. The painting acted as a stand-in for the site it portrayed and was, therefore, a flashpoint for awestruck and patriotic emotions.

Scholars have reached this common conclusion because they approach the painting equipped with a common vision of its historical context. They primarily situate *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* in one distinct narrative—the development of nature tourism in the United States. The story proceeds roughly as follows: the first natural attractions were the Catskills, White Mountains, and Niagara Falls beginning in the 1830s; tourism-related activity then moved West to the Yosemite Valley in the late 1850s–60s. Tourism arrived in Montana in 1872 when Congress passed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act (hereafter National Park Protection Act) establishing Yellowstone as the first national park.³ At each of these stages, there was

³ An overview of this literature is presented in Gail S. Davidson, "Landscape Icons, Tourism, and Land Development in the Northeast," in *Frederic Church, Winslow Homer and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape*, ed. Barbara Bloemink,

a “Great Picture”—an enormous oil painting viewed in a dramatic solo exhibition complete with curtains and pamphlets—to portray and publicize the latest natural phenomenon.⁴ According to this narrative, the development of nature tourism and the success of Great Pictures share a common root. They are linked to an emerging interest in spectacular viewing experiences. This pursuit of the spectacular is fueled not only by an interest in travel and novel landscapes, but also by a growing sense of patriotism grounded in the magnificent American landscape. As Barbara Novak first argued, the history of the United States could not rival the glories of the European past, but the mountains, waterfalls, valleys, and canyons of the West were grander and more wondrous than their European counterparts.⁵

This scholarly narrative is not without merit. Americans’ interest in seeking out spectacular natural phenomena—either by traveling to sites in person or traveling virtually by viewing a Great Picture—increased exponentially during the nineteenth century.⁶ This trend in nature tourism is relevant to the creation of Yellowstone National Park and the success of Moran’s painting, but it is not the only relevant historical context.

In the early 1870s, the Yellowstone Valley’s fate was uncertain. No one actively tried to encourage and accommodate Yellowstone tourism until years after the debut of *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* and the passage of the National Parks Protection Act. One reason was a lack of federal funding; an-

other was lack of transportation infrastructure. The new law preserved “all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition” and established the park area as a “pleasuring-ground” for the public.⁷ It did not, however, allocate any money to do this. In 1872 tourism may have been on the minds of Moran and other men involved with the painting and the establishment of the park, but given the area’s isolation and lack of infrastructure, it is unlikely that tourism was the primary focus of those developing the Yellowstone Valley in the 1870s. The NPRR did not reach nearby Garrison, Montana, until 1883.⁸ In 1871, after traveling to Montana to report on mining development, US Commissioner of Mine and Mining Statistics Rossiter Raymond concluded: “When it is considered with what difficulty and expense communication, travel and transportation are maintained between the Territory of Montana and the rest of the world, it seems marvelous that anyone should come there or stop there at all.”⁹ The tourism narrative is not sufficient to account for the valley’s development.

Yellowstone National Park is just one corner of the Yellowstone River Valley, a fertile and mineral-rich area surrounded by arid and mostly desolate territory. The NPRR, which had a federal charter to lay track from Minnesota to Washington Territory, could profit enormously from the valley’s development. Large amounts of sustainable revenue for the railroad would come from establishing agriculture, logging, and mining—and settlements created by people working in these industries—on land only made accessible by rail. The NPRR would make most of its money by facilitating the exchange of goods and commodities between the fertile and resource-rich West and the vibrant industrialized markets on the coasts.¹⁰ Compared to the business of interstate commerce, promoting tourism in a distant Western territory in the 1870s

Sarah Burns, Gail S. Davidson, Karal Ann Marling, and Floramae McCarron-Cates (New York: Bulfinch, 2006), 3–75; John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Kenneth John Myers, *The Catskills: Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Mountains, 1820–1895* (Yonkers, NY: Hudson River Museum of Westchester, 1987); Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*; Joni L. Kinsey, *Thomas Moran’s West: Chromolithography, High Art, and Popular Taste* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 60–61, 118–23, 214–22; Sue Rainey, *Creating Picturesque America, Monument to the National Cultural Landscape* (Nashville, TN: Applewood, 2001); Nancy K. Anderson, Thomas P. Bruhn, Joni L. Kinsey, and Anne Morand, *Thomas Moran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), particularly the essay by Kinsey, “Moran and the Art of Publishing,” 300–21.

⁴ The concept and history of the “Great Picture” was first explored in Gerald L. Carr’s scholarship, notably Carr, *Frederick Edwin Church: The Icebergs* (Dallas: University of Texas Press, 1980), and Carr, “Albert Bierstadt, Big Trees, and the British: A Log of Many Anglo-American Ties,” *Arts Magazine* 60, no. 16 (June 1986): 60–71.

⁵ Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825–1875*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶ Davidson, “Landscape Icons, Tourism, and Land Development in the Northeast,” 3–75.

⁷ US Statutes at Large 17, chap. 24, “An Act to Set Apart a Certain Tract of Land Lying Near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a Public Park,” 32–33, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=017/llslo17.db&recNum=73>.

⁸ Paul Schullery and Lee H. Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 13–30; Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 74.

⁹ Quoted in Rodman Wilson Paul, *Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848–1880*, rev. exp. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 142.

¹⁰ John Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke’s Gamble: The Northern Pacific Railroad, the Sioux, and the Panic of 1873* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 65–79.

was a peripheral revenue stream.¹¹ This article, therefore, examines *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* within the context of NPRR attempts to develop the entire Yellowstone Valley as a productive and profitable region.

Examination of *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* from the perspective of the development and settlement of America's Western frontier straddles the disciplines of art history and social history. This project, therefore, demands a blended methodological approach that combines formal analyses of artworks with primary sources, such as maps, historic demographics, articles in nationally circulated periodicals, and the passage of legislation. This approach is linked to T. J. Clark's concept of the "social history of art." Clark argues that art historians should engage in formal critique while also working to establish "an account of how the work took on its public form—what its patrons wanted, what its audience perceived."¹² In placing *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, its patrons, and its audience in a context linked to Western expansion, this article engages with a large historical and art historical literature dedicated to the visual culture of the American frontier. Beyond the scholars writing on Moran and other artists specifically discussed in this article, those whose ideas have been most influential are art historians William Truettner and Angela Miller and historians Alan Trachtenberg and Richard Slotkin.¹³ Miller writes: "the wilderness ideal of critical Romanticism, the middle landscape ideal of harmony between na-

ture and culture, and the turn to preservation through federal protection (setting apart undeveloped nature from development) follow a rough historical progression extending from the early to the later nineteenth century. Any understanding of the meaning of wilderness in the nineteenth century must take account of this changing intellectual, aesthetic and social history."¹⁴ Within this rough progression, this article focuses on the aesthetic and social history of a transitional period when distinguishing undeveloped nature from development—and what form development should take—was not clearly delineated.

During an approximately fifteen-year period between 1862 and 1878, Congress passed a series of laws that created varying mandates for managing westward expansion—including a turn to preservation. These debates over land use were reported and echoed in periodicals and civic debates outside of Washington.¹⁵ In the midst of these debates, the *Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* was created and debuted. This article ultimately places Moran's aesthetic accomplishment in the broader social historical context of contested Western land use.

The Homestead Act Moves West

By the 1870s, Americans had approximately a century of experience with westward expansion and had particular preferences for a certain kind of frontier settlement. In art, literature, and legislation, the West was often treated as a space that could be made open for settlement adhering to a Jeffersonian agrarian ideal.¹⁶ The third president believed that farmers should be independent yeomen and that these men would be the backbone of the American citizenry. He wrote in 1785, "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. . . . They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous & they are tied to their country & wedded to the liberty . . . by the

¹¹ See Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), Kindle location 342–72; Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), Kindle location 710–943; Alfred Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Railroads and the Legacy of Our National Parks*, 5th ed. (Plymouth, UK: Roberts Rinehart, 2011). Runte writes on the history of trains for tourism—the vast majority of his examples come from the 1880s or later.

¹² From "The Conditions of Artistic Creation," *Times Literary Supplement*, May 24, 1974, 561–62. See also T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), and Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), for examples of social histories of art.

¹³ See William Truettner, "Ideology and Image: Justifying Westward Expansion," in *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920*, ed. William Truettner (Washington, DC: Smithsonian, 1991); Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825–1875* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Angela Miller, "The Image of Nature in American Landscape Art: The Dilemmas of 'Nature's Nation' and the Art of Landscape," in *American Wilderness*, ed. Michael Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93–94.

¹⁵ Jeremy Atack, Fred Bateman, and William N. Parker, "Northern Agriculture and the Westward Movement," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, vol. 2, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman (London: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 285–328.

¹⁶ Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 330–61.

most lasting bonds."¹⁷ Jefferson's vision was translated into the Land Ordinance of 1785. According to this law, unsettled territory was to be divided into rectangular 160-acre plots for farmers to eventually settle and own. Permutations of this grid were imposed across the United States for most of the century to come. This is demonstrated by an early example from the Ohio River Valley (fig. 2).¹⁸ In the map, the neatly divided grid of plots to be apportioned evenly among new settlers is imposed on top of the irregular borders and divisions created by waterways delineating and permeating this tract of land. The grid supersedes geography. The Pre-emption Act of 1842 reaffirmed this programmatic model for Western settlement. It allowed men to move onto 160-acre plots of unclaimed public land throughout the United States for the price of \$1.25 per acre.¹⁹

Also beginning in the 1840s, Western settlement along the Jeffersonian plan became intimately linked to the "free soil" question: the support of Western expansion without the expansion of slavery.²⁰ The emerging Republican party—officially formed on a national scale in 1854—was dedicated to slave-free settlement and generally supportive of providing Western migrants with free public land for homesteading.²¹ As regional tensions mounted in the 1850s, the decision to provide free land for settlers became a flashpoint for the broader debate over the continued existence of slavery. Republicans believed that homesteaders could literally crowd out the potential extension of plantation agriculture to the southwest while providing an outlet for the impoverished inhabitants of overcrowded Eastern cities.²²

The 1862 Homestead Act first came up for debate during the Civil War, when Republicans over-

whelmingly controlled Congress.²³ In debating the law, advocates cited the popularity of the measure with the general public, the use of the act for combating greedy land speculators, and the role of the noble yeoman farmer in America's development. Speaker of the House and Pennsylvania Representative Galusha A. Grow declared during the debate of the bill, "The best disposition . . . of the public domain is to . . . consecrate it forever in homes for freemen . . . secure in all their earning with which to develop the elements of a higher and better civilization."²⁴ President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act on May 20, 1862, and it became effective on January 1, 1863.²⁵ The act granted 160 acres (of surveyed but unclaimed public land) to individuals who were the heads of households or twenty-one years of age. The method of transfer stipulated that individuals who had entered on a homestead were required to pay a few nominal fees to live on the land and cultivate it for five years, at which time title would transfer to them.²⁶

Unfortunately, however, this blueprint for settlement did not work within the geographic realities of much of the West, particularly the far West. Most territory beyond Missouri or Iowa was arid and required modern irrigation technology to farm.²⁷ Life as a family farmer west of the Mississippi was precarious and not necessarily profitable.²⁸ The Homestead Act was best suited for farms that resembled the idyllic 1868 Currier and Ives series of prints of the "American Homestead."²⁹ In the depiction of the homestead during spring (fig. 3), the majority of the homesteaders are lounging on a manicured lawn outside of a quaint wooden house. Fat ewes with their lambs eat the lush grass, and the only reference to hard farm work is a distant vignette of a man at a plow behind two oxen. The scene is idyllic—and very far from reality. A series of photos taken of homesteaders in the early 1880s gives a better idea of

¹⁷ Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61.

¹⁸ Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 62–63.

¹⁹ Benjamin Todd Arrington, "Free Homes for Free Men": A Political History of the Homestead Act, 1774–1863" (PhD diss., University of Nebraska, 2012), 105–6. Another important theme in the history of land development is the contested role of the "land speculator"—rich owners of large tracts of land who invested in cheap federal land and held it for later resale. Advocacy of homesteading—well-enforced homesteading—was considered a way to combat these profit-seekers who sold land to Western migrants at inflated prices. Finally, one should note that military veterans were always an exceptional class in land-use debates. They were given priority for land under military "warrants" throughout the century.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 82–120.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 147–50.

²² Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776–1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 185.

²³ In fact, a similar bill was passed in 1860 but vetoed by President James Buchanan, a Democrat. Arrington, "Free Homes for Free Men," 192–93.

²⁴ Speech of Galusha Grow, February 21, 1862, *Congressional Globe, House of Representatives, 37th Congress, 2nd Session*, 909–10.

²⁵ Arrington, "Free Homes for Free Men," 223.

²⁶ Lisi Krall, *Proving Up* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2010), 42.

²⁷ Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, 330–61.

²⁸ Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 133–35.

²⁹ The Library of Congress lists the date of this series of prints of a homestead across the seasons as 1868, <http://www.loc.gov/resource/pgs.05780/>. However, Frederic A. Conningham, *Currier and Ives Prints: An Illustrated Checklist*, updated ed. (New York: Crown, 1983), lists the date of the series as 1869 (see 9–12).

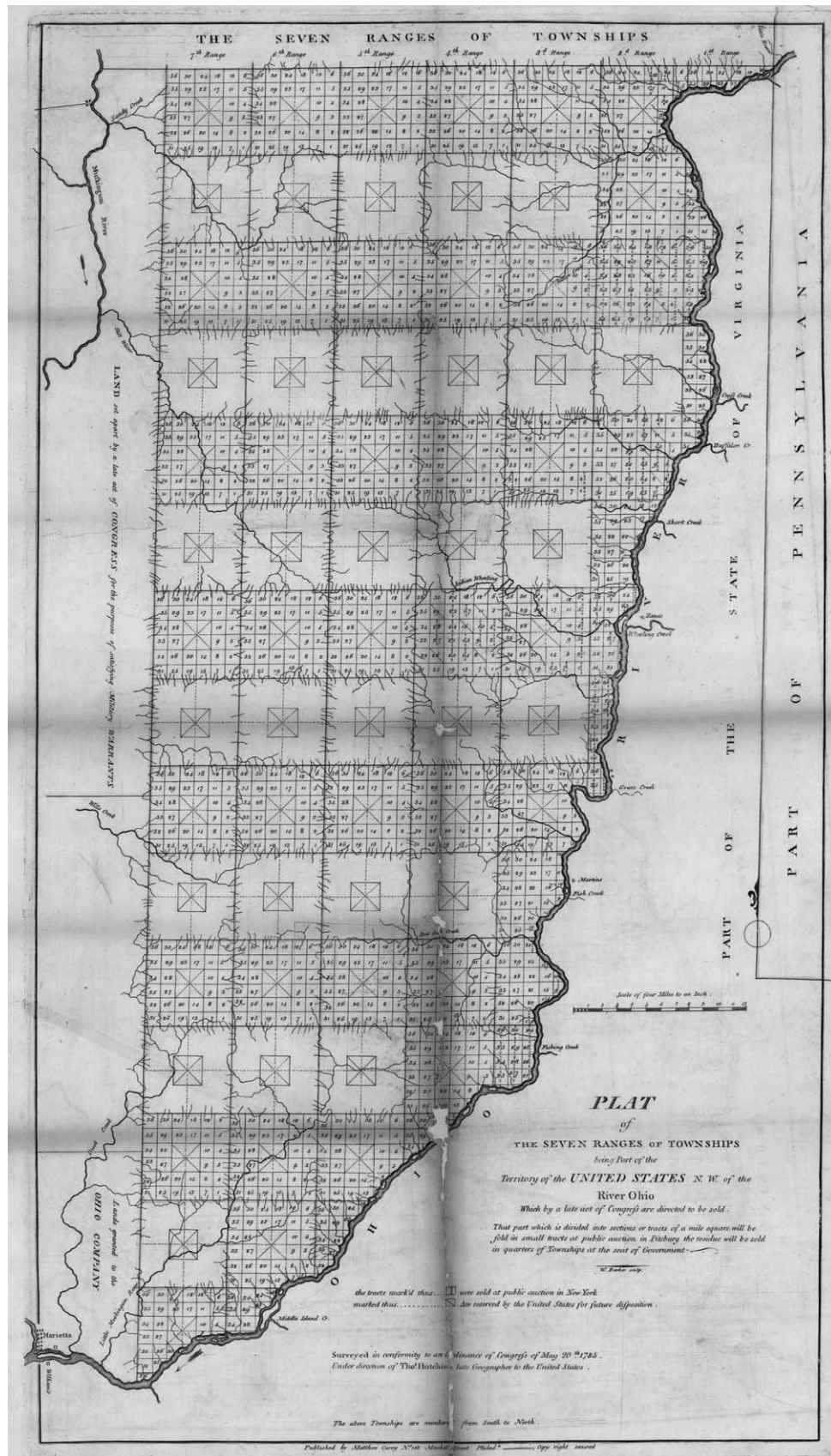


Fig. 2. Thomas W. Hutchins, surveyor, "Plat of the seven ranges of townships being part of the territory of the United States, N.W. of the River Ohio," 1796. Engraving by William Barker, published by Matthew Carey, Philadelphia. (Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.)



Fig. 3. Currier and Ives, *American Homestead: Spring*, New York, ca. 1869. (LC-USZC2-1902, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.)

what it was like to farm in the far West during the nineteenth century.³⁰ In the 1886 picture of “Rural Life in Neb[raska]” (fig. 4), a family sits outside a rudimentary one-room house made of sod. The surrounding grasses seem sparse and unlike the richly forested scene in the Currier and Ives print; the only tree in sight is a small sapling apparently planted by the family pictured. Much of the newly opened Western land was not suitable for farming. Instead, it was rich in minerals or perhaps better suited for producing timber. Mining and logging did not fit well into relatively small gridded plots; they were spatially extensive activities demanding itinerant labor that could follow strikes and venture into unused forest.³¹ The Homestead Act had little relevance for these industries.³²

Ignoring the geographic and economic realities of the West in the passing of the Homestead Act grew problematic within just a few years of the bill’s enactment. Different Western legislators and representatives agitated for adaptations to the act for their home states. For example, Minnesota’s legislature asked for exceptions to be made for new settlers in the state because “the emigrant arriving [in] the spring or early summer can raise no crops for the first year from the fact that prairie must be broken in the months of June and July.”³³ The Territory of Colorado asked for homestead-like claims to be awarded for working mineral resources rather than cultivating crops. Its legislators asked Congress to consider “the passage of

³⁰ Information about the photos is available on the Library of Congress website, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005693382/>.

³¹ Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 116–33.

³² *Ibid.*, 234–73.

³³ “Resolution of the Legislature of Minnesota, asking an amendment to the Homestead Act,” Referred to the Committee on Public Lands, 42nd Congress, March 20, 1871. Similar documents were submitted by Kansas, California, and Nevada representatives.



Fig. 4. Solomon D. Butcher, *Rural life in Neb[raska]*, 1886. Albumen print. (LC-USZ62-16084, Library of Congress.)

an act granting titles to lodes or veins whenever sufficient improvement has been made to establish the fact of discovery in good faith.”³⁴

In response to these requests and with the support of geological survey reports, Congress created legislation recognizing the geographic challenges and heterogeneity of the West. Though the Homestead Act remained intact, legislators passed additional acts to deal with divergence from the original ideal; the Timber Culture Act (1873), the Timber and Stone Act (1878), and the Desert Land Act (1878) are notable examples.³⁵ In the early to mid-1860s, homesteading along the Jeffersonian model was the undisputed blueprint for developing the American West. However, by the early 1870s, the suitability of this model was in question and would soon be amended.

³⁴ “Memorial of the Council and House of Representatives of Colorado Territory,” Referred to the Committee on Mines and Mining, 42nd Congress, February 20, 1872.

³⁵ For discussion of the Timber Culture Act, Desert Land Act, and the role of survey information in informing legislation, see Paul W. Gates, *History of Public Land Development* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 399–434. For information about the Timber and Stone Act and mining policies, see Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (New York: Peter Smith, 1939), 496–501.

The Northern Pacific Railroad and the Homesteading Ideal

Railway development proceeded in tandem with the sweep of free homesteading along the frontier as Western communities grew. The idea for a northern transcontinental route running from the Great Lakes to Washington or Oregon Territory first emerged in the 1850s.³⁶ However, political tumult prior to the Civil War made the construction of any transcontinental railroad impossible. In the 1860s, railroad technology profited from a wartime boom—track became more durable, rail gauges were standardized, and locomotives were made more efficient. Riding this wave of technological improvement and a surge of political impetus, construction of the first transcontinental railroad along a south central route began in the early 1860s and was completed in 1869 when the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads were connected at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory.

With the focus on joining the Central Pacific to the Union Pacific, the previously proposed route from Minnesota to Washington Territory was al-

³⁶ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke’s Gamble*, 65–79.

most forgotten. Two primary advocates of the northern rail route during the 1850s and 1860s were engineer Edwin Johnson and career railroad manager Thomas Canfield.³⁷ Johnson and Canfield published reports about the merits of the northern route and lobbied Congress to grant the land needed to construct the railroad. Johnson's *Railroad to the Pacific, Northern Route, Its General Character, Relative Merits, etc.* (1854) begins with a warning that "it is very important that the best route or routes . . . should be selected, any error or mistake in this respect cannot, from the magnitude of the undertaking be easily remedied."³⁸ After this warning, the report discusses the economic merits of connecting Washington Territory to the Eastern seaboard via the northern Midwest. These include connections to large cities in East Asia via Pacific trade routes from the Puget Sound, providing access to "the copper region of Lake Superior," and abundant timber within the region of the "Great Bend of the Missouri."³⁹ Johnson then focuses on—or rather downplays—the physical challenges of construction of the Northern Pacific's proposed route, like altitude that would need to be gained and lost and the quality of ground on which the rail would be built.

Concluding the introduction to the report, Johnson writes, "The population along and near to the located portion [in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota] is already large, and is very rapidly increasing. Irrespective of the continuation to the Pacific, the importance of several lines . . . to accommodate the region lying West of the Great Lakes, is such as to place them in the very first class of main trunk Roads."⁴⁰ This statement is not an honest one. And its placement as the final statement of the introduction to the report perhaps indicates Johnson's recognition that the greatest obstacle to the Northern Pacific's proposal was demographics. According to the 1860 census, only 237,000 Americans lived along the proposed northern route, while almost 1.5 million people already lived along the central transcontinental rail line. Though the number living along the proposed northern route climbed to 593,000 by 1870, it was not until after 1880 that population levels

along the northern rail line surpassed the 1860 population levels along the central line.⁴¹ The elaborate and colorful "American Union Railroad Map of the United States" from 1872 (fig. 5) shows these two routes. The in-progress Northern Pacific is the thick black line running from the center of Minnesota across northern Dakota Territory, through Montana, and looping through Idaho and Washington. The Central Pacific is the black line dotted with dozens of named stations running from the Nebraska-Iowa border through southern Wyoming, northern Utah, Nevada, and terminating in California (fig. 6). In its margins, the map hints at the population dynamics along these lines. Montana's largest city—then "Lewis & Clark," later Helena—had 5,041 residents. By comparison, in Nevada—along the recently completed Central Pacific Railroad—the largest city listed had more than 11,000 inhabitants; the new state had a total population more than double that of the geographically larger Montana Territory.

Why did the United States need a railroad through no-man's land? Johnson and Canfield never successfully answered this question—and never had to. Gold was discovered in Montana Territory in 1862. After this find, Montana was expected to experience a post-gold-strike population boom. In anticipation of the boom, President Lincoln signed an act in July 1864 creating the Northern Pacific Railroad. The act provided no financial subsidies but endowed the railroad with roughly 50 million acres of land to develop and sell.⁴² On the American Union Railroad map, the forthcoming NPRR is surrounded by names of barely populated locations in Montana suggesting mineral riches: Silver City, Silver Bowey, and the Beaver Head Valley Gold Mines.

While lobbying Congress for their charter, Johnson, Canfield, and their partners presented the future railroad to legislators as the "People's Pacific Railway."⁴³ They planned to fund the project by selling bonds to thousands of small-denomination purchasers, rather than to a small number of banking houses and speculators. The "People's Pacific Railway" pitch—when considered alongside frequent questions about whether there was a sufficient local population to make the NPRR viable—suggests that, from its inception, the Northern Pacific sought to connect with potential Western

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15–17.

³⁸ Edwin Ferry Johnson, *Railroad to the Pacific: Northern Route, Its General Character, Relative Merits, etc.*, 2nd ed. (New York: Railroad Journal Job Printing Office, 1854), iii. Accessed via *Sabin Americana*, Gale, Cengage Learning.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5–10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴¹ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble*, 32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 32–33.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 33.

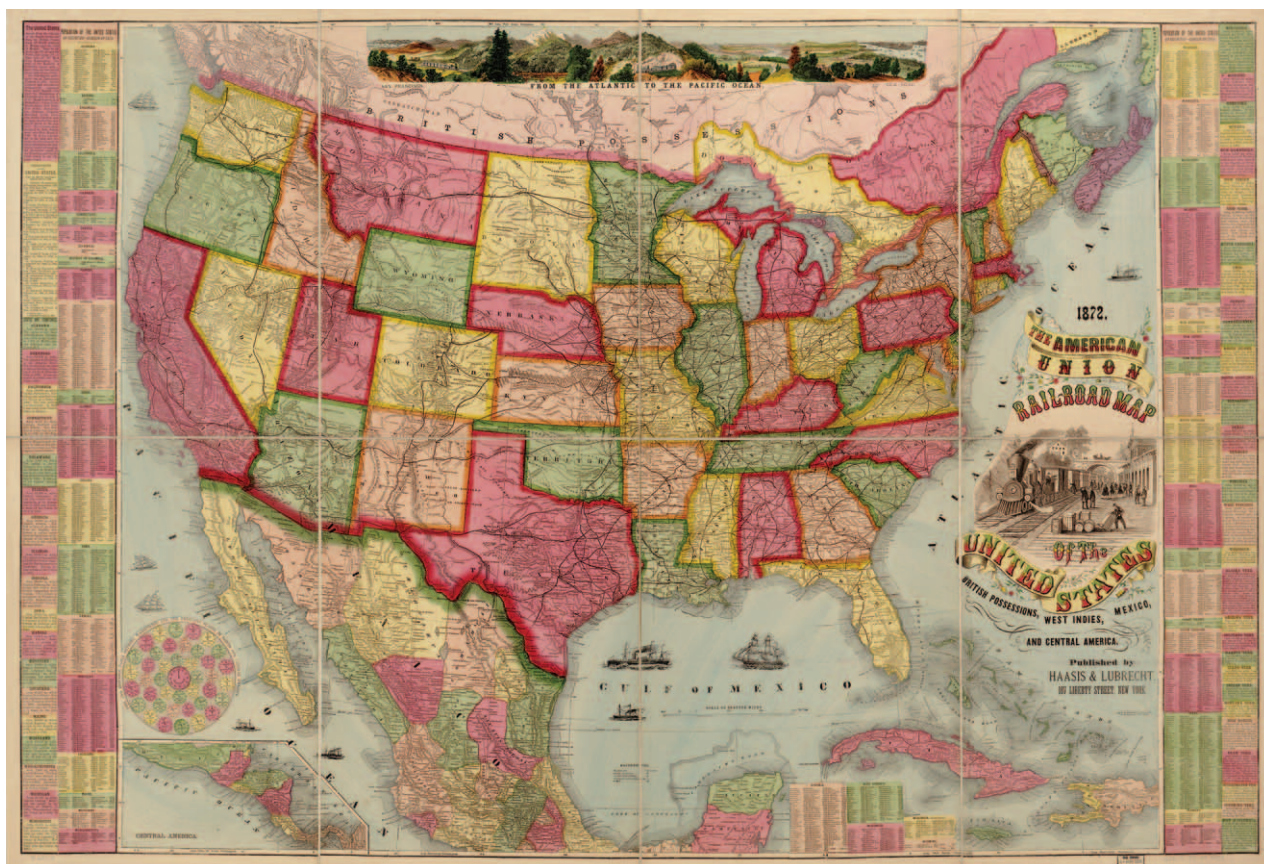


Fig. 5. Haasis and Lubrecht, publisher, "The American Union Railroad Map of the United States, British Possessions, West Indies, Mexico, and Central America," New York, 1872. (Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.)

immigrants. The future success of the railroad was predicated on a future population boom and that population's sustained success in mining, farming, and other sectors dependent on the railroad for access to major markets. In one 1866 appeal to Congress, ten Western senators and congressmen declared: "Much of . . . the Northwest is practically waste . . . for the want of such facilities for intercourse with, and transportation to, the commercial centres of the country. . . . Lands now unprofitable, because inaccessible, will be peopled by millions by the building of this road, and the agricultural and pastoral wealth of the country will only be exceeded by the production of precious metals. . . ." ⁴⁴ From the outset, the NPRR was selling one dream and one promise: economically profitable Western set-

tlement. An "if you build it, they shall come" approach was integral to the Northern Pacific's business plan. A map of the proposed route from 1868 (fig. 7) subtly reinforces this business plan with annotations about the resources on and in the land the NPRR would open for settlement. Close examination reveals notes such as "Lignite" (a type of coal) throughout the route and "Gold" in Western Montana, Idaho, and Washington territories.

In the late 1860s the NPRR floundered. It was short of cash and poorly managed. ⁴⁵ Despite new financial support from Congress, the railroad did not have the resources to start laying track and had barely begun land surveying, a prerequisite for construction to start. It was at this stagnant point in NPRR history that the project attracted the attention of Jay Cooke. Cooke—the founder of Philadelphia bank Jay Cooke and Co.—made

⁴⁴ Alexander Ramsey, D. S. Norton, G. H. Williams, et al., "An Appeal to Congress on Behalf of the Northwest in Connection with the Construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad and Telegraph" (Washington, DC: Intelligencer Printing Establishment, 1866), 4.

⁴⁵ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble*, 35.

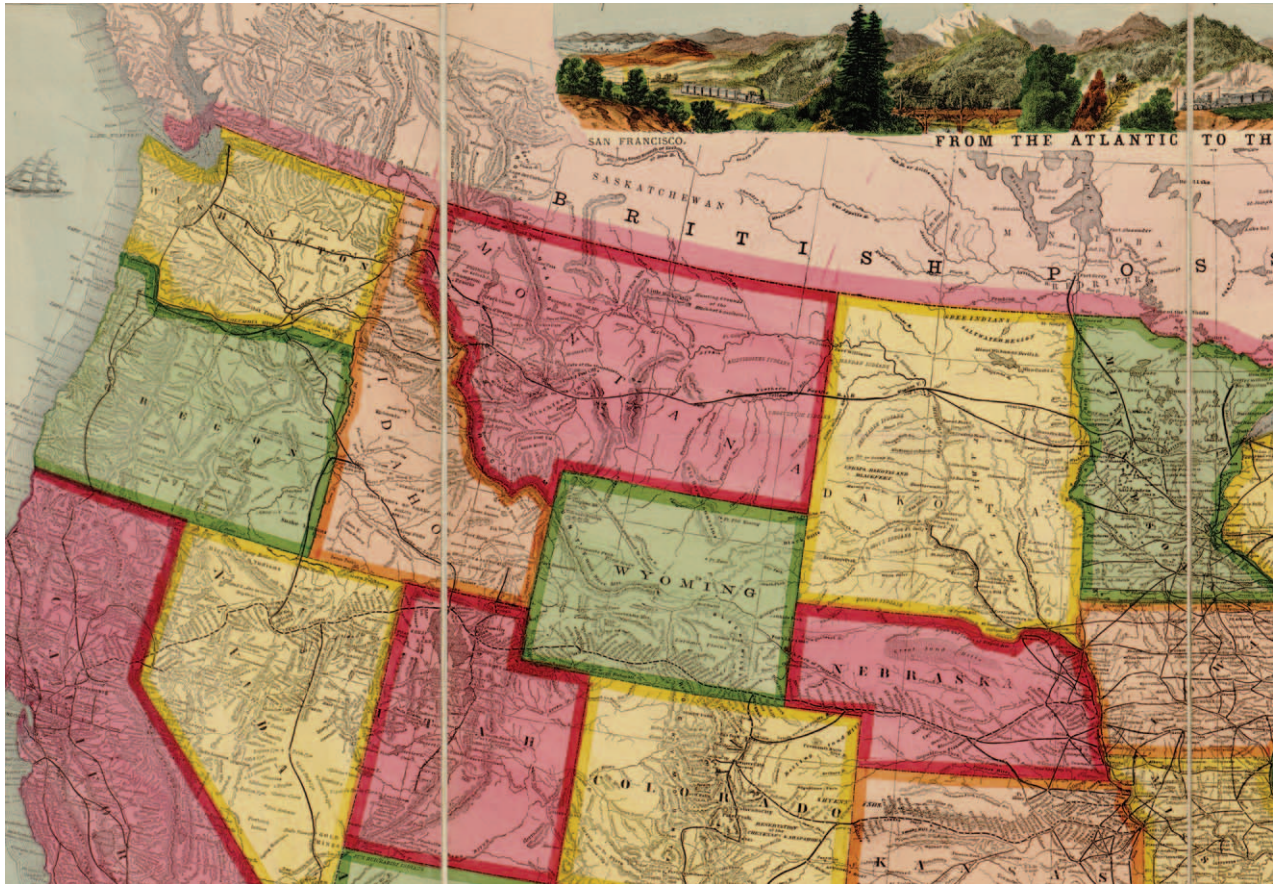


Fig. 6. Haasis and Lubrecht, publisher, "The American Union Railroad Map of the United States, British Possessions, West Indies, Mexico, and Central America," New York, 1872. (Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.)

his fortune during the Civil War. Within roughly a month of the attack on Fort Sumter, he sold \$3 million in Union bonds. In March 1862, the Secretary of the Treasury appointed Cooke the "Subscription Agent for the National Loan," making him responsible for the sale of all US bonds. In 1863, he and his agents sold \$511 million in bonds; in 1864, they sold \$830 million worth. "With over 500,000 people purchasing bonds, Cooke's success came not just from advertising . . . or from his sales force, but rather his feel for the country's mood, public relations creativity and receptiveness to new sales ideas."⁴⁶ His methods for selling war bonds in small denominations to large numbers of people resembled the proposed plan for selling bonds to middle-class and working-class people to support Canfield and Johnson's "People's Pacific Railway."

Cooke emerged from the war as a millionaire and at the height of his influence. He was personal

friends with President Ulysses S. Grant and was almost appointed Secretary of the Treasury. Flush with cash and political connections, Cooke went searching for postwar investments, and in 1869 he found the struggling Northern Pacific Railroad. In the past, Cooke had successfully invested in transportation infrastructure, such as regional railroads and municipal trolleys. He was a fastidious businessman, a hands-on and risk-averse manager. For example, he refused to invest Cooke and Co.'s funds in oil fields in the process of being developed, but would invest in a railroad leading to those fields once they proved productive.⁴⁷ Considering this precedent, his speculative investment in the NPRR is surprising. However, before investing, Cooke took numerous precautions and sent a reconnaissance party to inspect the route in the summer of 1869. The group reported that the route was navigable

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁷ Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs, 1907), 2:81–82.

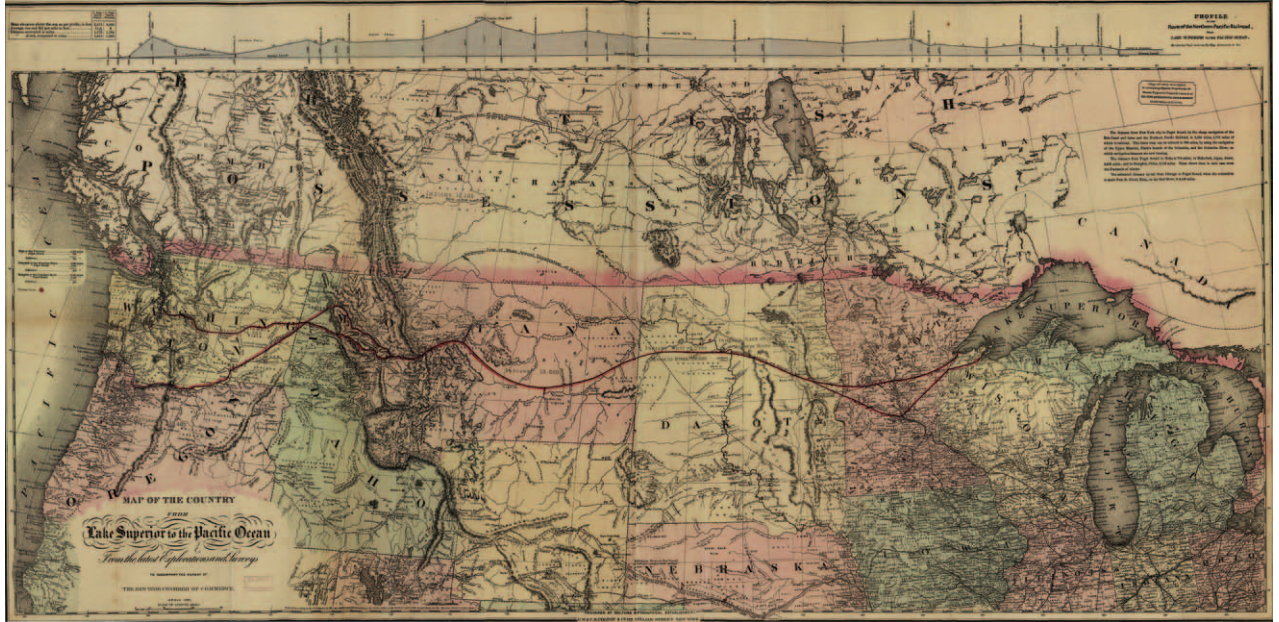


Fig. 7. G. W. and C. B. Colton and Co., publisher, "Map of the Country from Lake Superior to the Pacific Ocean from the Latest Explorations and Surveys to Accompany the Report of the New York Chamber of Commerce," showing railroad route in red, New York, 1868. (Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.)

and that the areas it led to—once mined, logged, or under cultivation—were capable of earning back the large amounts of capital needed to create the railway.⁴⁸ In the autumn of 1869 Cooke became the primary financial backer of the Northern Pacific.⁴⁹ The arrival of Cooke and Co.'s capital and management team dramatically accelerated construction. While Cooke and his staff were generally critical of existing NPPRR management, they embraced the railroad's public image. Cooke's message was the same as the one that led Congress to create the railroad in 1864. The West was ripe for settlement and economic profit; all that was required for the region to recognize its potential was a transportation system linking it to the northeastern marketplace.⁵⁰

Cooke and the Northern Pacific were not, however, wedded to an exclusively agrarian vision of the West. NPPRR publicity portrayed the northwestern United States as a catchall Eden. A publication advertising the Northern Pacific stated, "this whole region may be characterized as one of great fertility and capable of immense production under cultivation. . . . While the soil is so prolific, below it are

minerals and metals in such abundance as to be a sufficient source of wealth to any people."⁵¹ While Cooke was willing to invite any and all profitable development to lands opened by the NPPRR, one aspect of the homesteading ideal was necessary: permanent settlement. Long-term income, stability, and success for the NPPRR could only come from a settled population that sold and received goods and produce shipped by rail.⁵²

Accordingly, Cooke and his aides expanded the publicity campaign for territory that would be accessed by their railroad. In 1871, a visitor to Cooke and Co.'s New York office described NPPRR press secretary Samuel Wilkeson as "engaged ten to twelve hours a day . . . arranging materials for newspapers, circulars, pamphlets and books" extolling the value and fertility of the land along the Northern Pacific route.⁵³ An 1871 map (fig. 8) replaces the small notations in the 1868 map (see fig. 7) with large statements written across Mon-

⁴⁸ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble*, 25.

⁴⁹ Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War*, 2:157–60.

⁵⁰ Ramsey et al., "An Appeal to Congress on Behalf of the Northwest," 4.

⁵¹ Lorin Blodget, "The Opening of the New Northwest" (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1857), reprinted in *New Englander*, July 1871, 367, American Periodicals Series Online.

⁵² Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble*, 68.

⁵³ "Letters from Gotham," *Helena Daily Herald*, May 26, 1871, quoted in Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble*, 19. There is an extensive description of these marketing and advertising operations in Sig Mickelson, *The Northern Pacific Railroad and the Selling of the West: A Nineteenth-Century Public Relations Venture* (Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies, 1993).



Fig. 8. E. H. Knight, surveyor, and Northern Pacific Railroad Company, “Map of the Country Tributary to the Northern Pacific Railroad Compiled from English, Canadian, and American Official Sources and Original Surveys,” 1871. (Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.)

tana and Washington territories: “the grazing perennial [*sic*] and unlimited all through this region” and “covered with Bunch Grass which is cured hay in summer and winter,” respectively. The former notation referred to the Yellowstone Valley, one of the most common and exalted topics of these pamphlets and promotional materials.

The NPRR’s land grant stretched from Duluth, Minnesota, to the Puget Sound and was of varying value. Swampy northern Minnesota was unfit for farming; lake areas could be cleared for timber, but only with great difficulty. However, moving into western Minnesota and North Dakota, the route entered the Red River Valley, which was well watered and perfect for farming.⁵⁴ Continuing westward,

deep topsoil around the Red River gave way to the sandy and agriculturally useless badlands. The arid and nonarable environment continued for hundreds of miles until the Yellowstone River Valley. The Yellowstone River flows for 692 miles from present-day northwestern Wyoming through southern and eastern Montana to northwestern North Dakota, where it empties into the Missouri River. The US Geological Survey denotes the Yellowstone River Basin as an approximately 70,000-square-mile area across these three states.⁵⁵ The Yellowstone region was considered to be just as fertile as the

⁵⁴ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke’s Gamble*, 145.

⁵⁵ Kirk Miller and Tom Quinn, “National Water Quality Assessment: Yellowstone River Basin, United States Geological Survey Fact Sheet, 149-97, 1997, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/FS-149-97/fs-149-97.pdf>.

Red River Valley and home to valuable mineral and metal deposits—this was an essential economic opportunity for the NPRR. According to one railroad pamphlet from 1870: “Some valleys are beautiful. [The Yellowstone valley] *is grand*. It abounds in magnificent scenery, most excellent farm-sites and water-powers. The soil is very rich and fertile, timber very convenient, coal and iron cropping out in abundance at different points, and other evidence of rich deposits of copper [and] the surrounding mountains are full of gold and silver-bearing quartz.”⁵⁶ The vision for the Yellowstone Valley was in lockstep with the vision for the rest of the land opened by the railroad—it was meant to be settled, worked, and perpetually serviced by the NPRR. However, in the center of this Eden was a geographic anomaly: the approximately 3,750-square-mile volcanic basin and plateau where Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho meet that would become Yellowstone National Park (fig. 9).⁵⁷

Colter’s Hell in the Heavenly Valley

Yellowstone National Park is a caldera, a large crater formed by a massive volcanic eruption. The area is one of the most volcanically active sites in the world. It is home to approximately 10,000 thermal features, including 300–500 active geysers—about twice as many as the next largest geyser field in the world.⁵⁸ Yellowstone is unique, otherworldly, and explosive. Accordingly, the area’s first Euro-American name was “Colter’s Hell,” in honor of a frontiersman who wandered through it around 1808.⁵⁹ Systematic exploration of the area began with the 1869–70 Washburn and Cook-Folsom-Peterson expeditions.⁶⁰

In the early 1870s, Washburn party member Nathaniel Langford became the most prominent reporter of the Colter’s Hell phenomena. With financial and logistical support from Cooke, Lang-

ford—a Montana politician and booster—published and gave public accounts of his trip through the volcanic corner of the valley. He lectured both in Montana and major East Coast cities.⁶¹ He also wrote a two-part feature for *Scribner’s Monthly* called “The Wonders of the Yellowstone” (fig. 10). In his lectures and articles, the Montana politician presented a wondrous but often hellish picture. An example is his description of the Grotto geyser (fig. 11): “So named from its singular crater of vitrified sinter, full of large, sinuous apertures. Through one of these . . . one of our company crawled to the discharging orifice; and when, a few hours afterwards, he saw a volume of boiling water . . . shooting through it to the height of sixty feet, and a scalding stream of two hundred inches flowing from the aperture he had entered a short time before . . .”⁶² Langford’s writing is dramatic and meant to pique readers’ curiosity and fascination with the bizarre. The overall impression created by “The Wonders of the Yellowstone” is that the area is a fascinating but threatening place. In addition to the story about the potentially deadly geyser, the text of Langford’s article dedicates several pages to the harrowing plight of Truman Everts, a party member lost in the Yellowstone area for thirty-seven days.⁶³

Yet Langford’s characterization of the future park as a “remarkable region of natural wonders,” rather than simply Colter’s Hell, was a paradigmatic shift in the area’s reputation.⁶⁴ Its threatening features were recast as components of a wonderland. Cooke sponsored and endorsed this transformation by supporting Langford’s publicity work.⁶⁵ The public—and later lawmakers—actively consumed his articles and lectures.⁶⁶ And Langford, an important figure in Yellowstone history, became the first superintendent of the national park.

Langford concluded his “The Wonders of the Yellowstone” article with an optimistic advertise-

⁵⁶ *The Northern Pacific Railroad’s Land Grant and the Future of the Road*, March 11, 1870, quoted in Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 69.

⁵⁷ National Park Service, “Park Facts—Yellowstone National Park,” <http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/parkfacts.htm>.

⁵⁸ Thermal Biology Institute, “Overview of Yellowstone Geologic History” (Bozeman: University of Montana, 2006), <http://tbi.montana.edu/outreach/hotsience/materials/resources/YNP%20Geology.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Marlene Deahl Merrill, “Introduction,” in *Yellowstone and the Great West: Journals, Letters and Images from the 1871 Hayden Expedition*, ed. Marlene Deahl Merrill (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 11.

⁶⁰ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke’s Gamble*, 76.

⁶¹ Merrill, “Introduction,” 10–13.

⁶² Nathaniel P. Langford, “The Wonders of the Yellowstone, Part II,” *Scribner’s Monthly* (June 1871): 113–28.

⁶³ Truman Everts, “Thirty-Seven Days of Peril,” *Scribner’s Monthly* (November 1871), American Periodicals Series Online.

⁶⁴ Langford, conclusion of eastern lectures on Yellowstone, quoted in Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 71.

⁶⁵ Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 71–72; Mark Daniel Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 13–15.

⁶⁶ Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone*, 13–15.

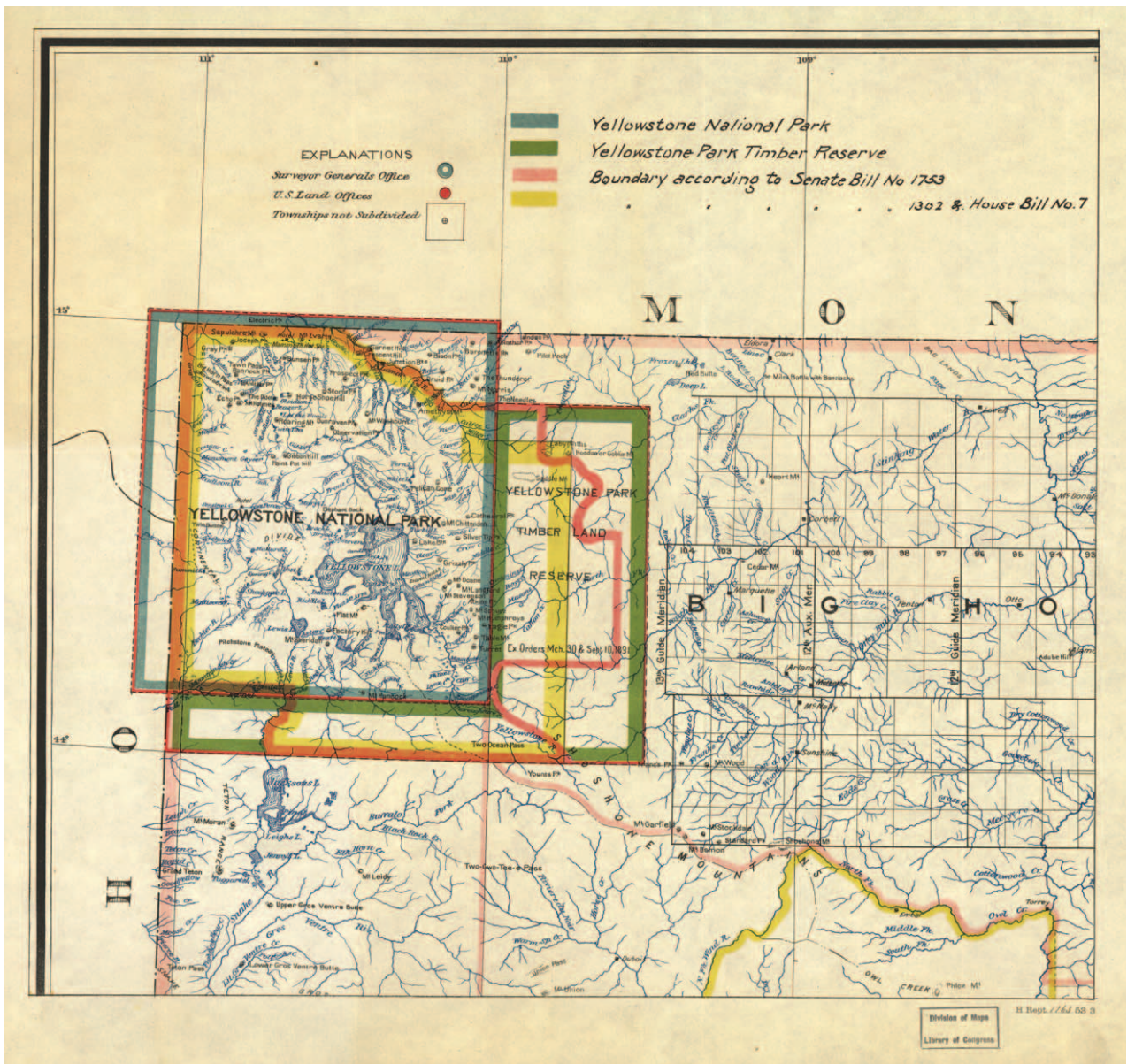


Fig. 9. Map, Yellowstone National Park boundaries, 1895. (Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.)

ment for the Northern Pacific: “By means of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which will doubtless be completed within the next three years, the traveler will be able to make the trip to Montana from the Atlantic seaboard in three days, and thousands of tourists will be attracted to both Montana and Wyoming in order to behold with their own eyes the wonders here described.”⁶⁷ Despite that final

prediction, Langford’s characterization created a public relations problem for the NPRR. His description of the volcanic southwesterly section of the Yellowstone Valley was anathema to the image of the valley created by the effusive Yellowstone-related NPRR propaganda aimed at settlers. In 1871 there were essentially two popular images of the valley: one to settle and one to wonder at. Thus, the Northern Pacific was faced with a bifurcated vision of Yellowstone that needed to be reconciled. To resolve this paradox, the valley needed to be portrayed as a place that was simultaneously

⁶⁷ Langford, “The Wonders of the Yellowstone, Part II,” 113–28.

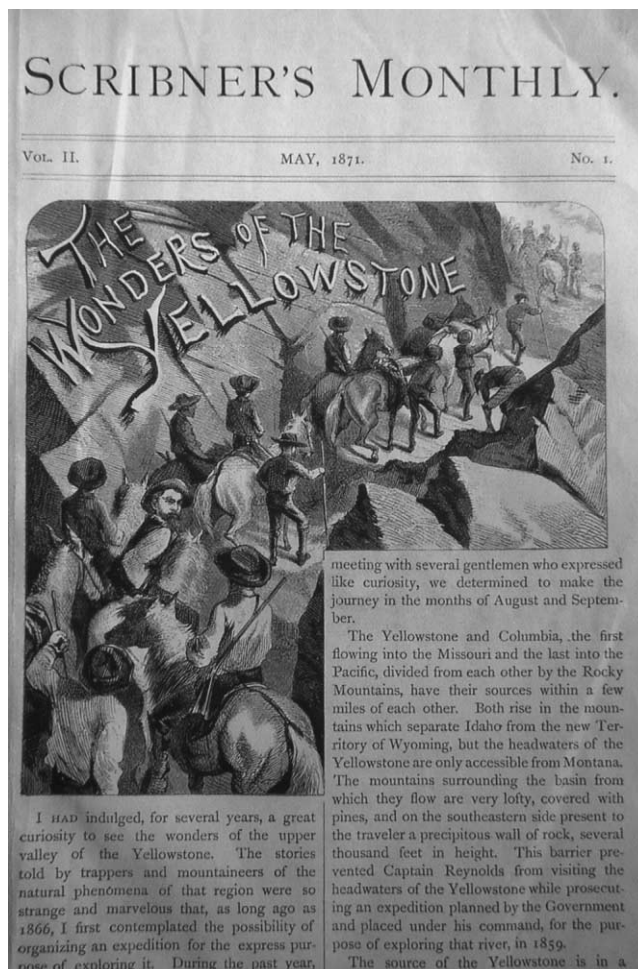


Fig. 10. Thomas Moran, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," 1871. From Nathaniel P. Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* 2, no. 1 (May 1871): 1.

wondrous and livable—and the railroad wanted to hire Albert Bierstadt to create this image.⁶⁸

Both Sublime and Beautiful, Bierstadt's Wild Pastorals

Though they have their origins in antiquity, the concepts of the sublime and the beautiful as they are presently understood can be traced to eighteenth-century enlightenment England—specifically to philosopher Edmund Burke's (1729–97) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas*

of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757).⁶⁹ Roughly summarized, Burke defines beautiful things—primarily women in his discussion—as objects that “inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us.” Beautiful objects can be possessed and are pleasurable to behold.⁷⁰ This is in distinct contrast to the sublime, experiences and environments that provoke “passions which belong to self-preservation,

⁶⁹ Andrew Wilton, “The Sublime in the Old World and the New,” in *The American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States 1820–1880*, ed. Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 11. It should be noted that Burke's aesthetic philosophy was formed as part of a dialogue with a number of other commentators, notably Joseph Addison.

⁷⁰ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 37.

⁶⁸ Thurman Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 80.



Fig. 11. Thomas Moran, "Grotto Geysers," 1871. From Nathaniel P. Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* 2, no. 1 (May 1871): 124.

turn on pain and danger . . . they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances."⁷¹

Burke himself applied these concepts of the sublime and the beautiful to art, which he categorized as "imitation." He asserted, "painting and many other agreeable arts have laid one of the principal foundations of [the sublime and the beautiful's] power."⁷² Other scholars have since followed Burke's lead in applying the framework of sublimity and the beauty to art. These include philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In his treatise on aesthetics and taste—*The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790)—he refined Burke's concept of the sublime by defining it as the mental experience of a viewer or spectator forced to confront his or her own insignificance and insecurity in the face of the incomprehensible vastness of the world or universe. Kant believed this feeling could be evoked by natural phenomena and by art.⁷³ American landscape painting has been frequently described with the terms sublime and beautiful in reference to the aesthetic experiences defined by Burke and refined by Kant. Beautiful landscapes are the de-

picture of nonthreatening natural scenes and of scenes easily comprehended—like calm settled valleys—and the sublime are depictions of large, incomprehensible natural phenomena—like enormous mountains, canyons, and arctic icebergs.⁷⁴ Often, images of sublime landscapes are large-format Great Pictures whose size evokes the scale of the scenes depicted.⁷⁵

There is also a compromise position between the sublime and the beautiful: the picturesque. Developed by Reverend William Gilpin (1721–1804)—an aesthetic theorist, *plein air* sketching advocate, and avid fan of the landscape painter Claude Lorraine (1600–82; fig. 12)—the picturesque was an aesthetic that balanced the implied vastness of distant mountains and incomprehensibly old crumbling ruins with beautiful calm bodies of water or sunny fields. Albert Bierstadt's art from the 1860s conforms closely to the picturesque; it balances the sublime and the beautiful. This compromise aesthetic suited the needs of the NPPR,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷³ Immanuel Kant, trans. Eric Matthews, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁷⁴ The application of this framework can be found in the earliest studies of American landscape painting, like Novak's, *Nature and Culture*. Notable recent applications include Wilton and Baringer, *American Sublime*, and Jennifer Raab, *Frederic Church: The Art and Science of Detail* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

⁷⁵ Wilton, "The Sublime in the Old World and the New," 28–30.



Fig. 12. Claude Lorrain, *Coast View with the Abduction of Europa*, Rome, ca. 1645. Oil on canvas; H. 37⁷/₈" , W. 66". (Open Content Program, Getty Museum.)

which needed to portray its lands as both spectacular and habitable.

Albert Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* (1863; fig. 13) is the artist's most famous painting and is considered a Great Picture.⁷⁶ It received generally favorable critical reviews and was a massive commercial success after its debut. In *Lander's Peak*, Bierstadt presents the viewer with a rich and varied picturesque Western landscape. A lush field populated by Native Americans engaged in quotidian activities dominates the foreground. Behind the field is a pristine lake disturbed only by a luminous waterfall colliding with its own mirror image when it hits the surface. This interface between waterfall and lake—between re-

ality and reflection—serves as a transition point between environments in the painting. In front of the waterfall is a habitable oasis that glows green, yellow, red, and brown; above the waterfall is wilderness, and the palette shifts to cooler blues, whites, and purples. The colder palette simultaneously denotes distance from the viewer and indicates that the background of the painting is forbidding.

Bierstadt presents his viewer with an enticing Western Eden that is welcoming and insulated—rather than threatened—by the surrounding mountain chain. The large group of Native Americans in the foreground further emphasizes the habitability of this oasis in the mountains. In the lower right-hand corner of the canvas, a group is gathered around a dead bear and half a dozen dead deer or mountain goats; this place is full of game ready to be hunted. With their teepees pitched, these no-

⁷⁶ Linda Ferber, "Albert Bierstadt: The History of a Reputation," in *Albert Bierstadt: Art and Enterprise*, ed. Nancy Anderson and Linda Ferber (New York: Hudson Hills, 1991), 21–68.



Fig. 13. Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, 1863. Oil on canvas; H. 73 $\frac{1}{2}$ "', W. 120 $\frac{3}{4}$ "'. (Rogers Fund, 1907, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; photo, © Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY.)

madic people show no signs of leaving anytime soon. If the natives can recognize the value of living in this place, should not the Euro-Americans standing in front of the painting recognize it as well? As the *memento mori* in the center of the foreground indicates, white settlers can easily displace and replace the Native Americans in this scene.

Bierstadt's painting figuratively issued an invitation to migrate. The pamphlet accompanying the canvas concluded, "on the plain [in the painting's foreground] . . . our descendants may rise."⁷⁷ Typical of critical reactions to *Lander's Peak*, the review of the painting in *Harper's Weekly* stated: "It is a purely American scene. . . . It is the curtained continent with its sublime natural forms and its rude savage human life . . . [yet] this work of Bierstadt's inspires . . . cheerfulness and promise of the region it depicts and the imagination contemplates it as the possible seat of supreme civilization."⁷⁸ Debuting within one year of the passage of the Homestead Act, Bierstadt's image of a landscape

that was simultaneously wild and pastoral—and that conformed to a picturesque ideal—coincided with the passage of legislation that sought to tame the wild frontier with a grid and flood of yeoman farmers.⁷⁹

In the summer of 1863—as *Lander's Peak* toured the United States—Bierstadt traveled to California's Yosemite Valley.⁸⁰ Upon his return, Bierstadt began to produce paintings of the valley, including several Great Pictures. *Looking Down Yosemite Valley, California* (1865; fig. 14) and *The Domes of the Yosemite* (1867) were heavily publicized and attracted attention to Yosemite and its status as a natural wonder.⁸¹

Bierstadt's paintings also benefited California generally and the Central Pacific Railroad (CPRR) that soon connected it to the rest of the continent.

Albert Bierstadt," in *Albert Bierstadt: Art and Enterprise*, ed. Nancy Anderson and Linda Ferber (New York: Hudson Hills, 1991), 75.

⁷⁹ Kate Nearpass Ogden, "California as Kingdom Come," in *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, ed. Amy Scott (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁸¹ Ferber, "Albert Bierstadt: The History of a Reputation."

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷⁸ Review in *Harper's Weekly*, quoted in Nancy Anderson, "Wondrously Full of Invention," *The Western Landscapes of*



Fig. 14. Albert Bierstadt, *Looking Down Yosemite Valley, California*, 1865. Oil on canvas; H. 64½", W. 96½". (Gift of the Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham Museum of Art.)

First, Bierstadt helped transform Yosemite into a tourist destination.⁸² In 1864 the growing tourist interest in Yosemite was federally recognized and encouraged when President Lincoln ordered California to protect the area as a state park. Second, Bierstadt's paintings not only popularized Yosemite, but also propagated California's reputation as a Western Eden. One review of *Looking Down Yosemite Valley* declared, "It looks as if it were painted in an Eldorado, in a distant land of gold . . .

⁸² See Peter J. Blodgett, "Visiting 'The Realm of Wonder': Yosemite and the Business of Tourism, 1855–1916," *California History* 69, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 118–33; Angela Miller, "Albert Bierstadt, Landscape Aesthetics, and the Meanings of the West in the Civil War Era," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 40–59. One reporter describing the route of the new (railroad-controlled) carriages remarked, "this line passes over the Mariposa Road, which runs through some of the most enchanting views of the valley, including that of Inspiration Point, rendered world-renowned by the pencil of Bierstadt." In the late 1860s and early 1870s, a flourishing tourism industry developed around the valley. Journalist Ambrose Bierce grumbled that Bierstadt's paintings "incited more unpleasant people to visit California than all our conspiring hotel keepers could compel to return." See Anderson, "Wondrously Full of Invention," 95–98.

dreamed of but never seen. Yet it is real."⁸³ Not just Yosemite, but California in general was a distant land of gold. "If California was 'a second Canaan for the impoverished and oppressed,' then Yosemite Valley was the symbolic heart of the new Promised Land."⁸⁴ Bierstadt's "simultaneously wild and pastoral" portrayal of Yosemite not only beckoned tourists, but also migrants who would power and participate in California's economy, which was sagging in the period between the slowing mining profits of the mid-1850s and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869.⁸⁵ This dual-purpose image suited the in-progress California railroad, which maintained a position that "if California's farms could be secured with parks, which themselves would attract thousands of tourists, the

⁸³ Anderson, "Wondrously Full of Invention," 97.

⁸⁴ Ogden, "California as Kingdom Come," 23–31.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 24; Richard B. Rice, William Bullough, Richard Orsi, and Mary Ann Irwin, *The Elusive Eden: A New History of California*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).

railroad was not about to slight either benefit and in fact vigorously campaigned for both.”⁸⁶

The CPRR—and its subsidiaries, most notably the Southern Pacific Railroad—aggressively promoted agricultural settlement in the land it controlled and opened for development. Yet the same men who promoted agriculture on the railroad’s land were also champions of the preservation of Yosemite and its transformation into a tourist attraction. Cooke perhaps hoped that images of the Yellowstone Valley could serve the same dual purpose that Bierstadt’s paintings had for Yosemite and California. Not only would Montana gain a tourist attraction, but the region could also be depicted as the next “Canaan for the impoverished and oppressed,” with its geological wonders serving as the symbolic heart of a new promised land.⁸⁷

The Hayden Survey: Choosing an Artist, Choosing an Image

In the spring of 1871, Cooke—with the help of NPRR public relations chief A. B. Nettleton—searched for an artist to accompany geologist Ferdinand Vanderveer Hayden, the head of the US Geological and Geographical Surveys of Territories, on his government-sponsored survey of Colter’s Hell.⁸⁸ Though a respected geologist interested in scientific discovery, Hayden believed publicly funded expeditions should serve the American people. Consequently, his survey reports addressed areas’ suitability for farming, mining, or other development—their potential profitability for Americans migrating West.⁸⁹ He was an ideal ally for the NPRR, and by leading the survey he benefited from the enterprise’s informal patronage.

Hayden was never officially employed by the railroad, but an exchange of favors occurred. The NPRR—and Cooke’s extensive political contacts—helped Hayden lobby for a \$40,000 federal

grant to survey Colter’s Hell, an area he had been fascinated with for nearly twenty years.⁹⁰ In exchange, Hayden lent his credibility and reputation as a trusted scientist to the NPRR’s various causes and booster campaigns. He did this both in the popular press and in Washington, DC, where he was well connected and well liked.⁹¹ This casually defined favor-based relationship was typical of agreements that Cooke formed with associates who were potential allies of the railroad, but who did not need to be—or for public relations reasons should not be—its employees.⁹²

Although NPRR executives were not noted art collectors or connoisseurs, Cooke and Nettleton’s contact with art through their immediate families suggests that each man had exposure to judging art and its effects on an audience. A. B. Nettleton’s eldest daughter, Caroline (1863–1950), was a portrait, figure, and landscape painter.⁹³ Though Caroline was not yet an artist when Nettleton was considering which painter to send west with Hayden, the fact that her family supported her artistic ambitions and later career is indicative that the Nettleton household was not devoid of artistic sensibilities and sympathies. Jay Cooke’s father, Eleutheros Cooke (1787–1864), was a supporter of the fine arts. He was a founding director and later president of the Cosmopolitan Art and Literary Association, established in Sandusky and New York City in 1854.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Hayden had a long-standing interest in the Yellowstone Valley, specifically in its seismically active areas. His fascination began when he met frontiersman Jim Bridger on a Montana survey in 1856. Bridger had previously explored the area and liked to tell “wonderful tales” about what he had seen. Hayden was also a member of the Reynolds expedition (1860), the first organized—but ultimately weather-thwarted—attempt to explore Yellowstone. See Merrill, “Introduction.” In the 1860s–80s, large geological surveys moved across the Western United States every summer. These were ambitious projects, and their leaders—Hayden, Clarence King, John Wesley Powell, and others—often competed for money and notoriety. Hayden’s alliance with the NPRR could give him an advantage in accomplishing his survey goals and in this ongoing competition. See Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 1–2; Hine and Faragher, *The American West*, chaps. 9–10.

⁹¹ Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 43–67.

⁹² Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 80.

⁹³ Mary Sayre Haverstock, Jeannette Mahoney Vance, and Brian L. Meggitt, comp. and ed., *Artists in Ohio, 1787–1900: A Biographical Dictionary* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2000), 633.

⁹⁴ In its inaugural catalog, the association declared that its primary mission was “to encourage and popularize the Fine Arts . . . throughout the country.” The “Gallery of Art [was] located at Sandusky” and featured a “splendid collection of Statuary and Paintings.” See *The Cosmopolitan Art Association illustrated catalogue*,

⁸⁶ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade, 2010), 53; Orisi, *Sunset Limited*, Kindle locations 793–806, 4846–49. Runte discusses dual sponsorship of tourism and agricultural development in the course of a discussion of the “worthlessness thesis”—that protected land was commercially useless for other forms of development.

⁸⁷ Ogden, “California as Kingdom Come,” 23–31.

⁸⁸ Merrill, “Introduction,” 216–17. The US Geological and Geographical Surveys of Territories was the predecessor to the US Geological Survey, established in 1879.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

The NPRR's first choice to accompany Hayden was Bierstadt. However, other commitments prevented the painter from joining.⁹⁵ Sanford Gifford (1823–80) was the second choice.⁹⁶ Gifford also declined. Moran was Cooke and Nettleton's third choice. Determining how and why Moran got the job requires consideration of the work of the two artists selected ahead of him. Formal analysis and comparison of Bierstadt's and Gifford's contemporary works sheds light on the railroad executives' possible selection process and criteria. This simulation demonstrates that NPRR managers were looking for a particular idealized image to become Yellowstone's public face: an image of habitable wilderness that one could simultaneously marvel at, live in, and profit from.⁹⁷

Bierstadt's particular expertise at reconciling these images of settlement and wondrous wilderness was demonstrated by *Lander's Peak* and his Yosemite work. That Gifford was second choice behind Bierstadt corroborates the railroad's intention to sponsor images of Yellowstone as an inviting wilderness. Most of Gifford's American landscapes are Eastern mountain scenes lit by permeating warm and hazy sunlight. *A Home in the Wilderness* (1866; fig. 15)—a subject Gifford painted multiple times—is typical of his work. Showing a mountain lake in autumn, warm reds, yellows, and pinks dominate the palette of the painting. Like Bierstadt in *Lander's Peak*, Gifford presents a tranquil body of water that reflects the surrounding scenery and denotes the central horizontal axis of the painting. Pointed mountains surround Gifford's lake, but lollipop-like trees and a warm purple- and pink-hued light smooth their crags. A small cabin bathed in a golden glow is placed between the lake, trees,

and mountains. While the cabin is dwarfed by its surroundings, it is not overwhelmed, but rather embraced by them.

Gifford had a reputation for rendering landscapes intoxicatingly scenic and infusing them with warmth. One of the most descriptive contemporary reviews of Gifford's oeuvre compared the artist's paintings to the world described in *The Lotus Eaters* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The critic quoted: "A land of streams! Some like a downward smoke, / Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go; / And some through wavering lights and shadows broke; / Rolling a slumberous sheet of foam below."⁹⁸ Gifford, like Bierstadt, presented images of inviting and habitable wilderness. The railroad could not, however, hire either painter. Just weeks before Hayden's departure, the NPRR managers still had not found an artist to accompany the survey. They eventually selected Moran, sent him West, and, in the words of Nettleton, hoped he would "surpass Bierstadt's Yosemite."⁹⁹

Thomas Moran (fig. 16) was born in Bolton, England, in 1837 and immigrated with his family to the Philadelphia area in 1844.¹⁰⁰ Moran became an apprentice to a wood engraver at the age of fifteen, and in 1856, he became the informal student of marine painter James Hamilton (1819–78). Hamilton extolled the virtues of British painter J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), valorized travel and sketching in the field, and subscribed to Ruskinite principles of truth to nature.¹⁰¹ Moran took only one trip to the wilderness before his 1871 trip to Yellowstone—an 1860 expedition to the Pictured Rocks of Lake Superior. He spent the month of August sketching and rowing in a canoe during the day and camping on the shores of the lake at night. The challenging trip was productive; *The Wilds of Lake Superior* (1864) was one of Moran's largest and most successful paintings prior to 1872.¹⁰²

Thomas Moran's oeuvre prior to 1871 shows no tendency by the young artist to create a wild pastoral—a picturesque scene—à la Bierstadt. Instead, his work conformed more closely to the concept of the sublime. The central element of *The*

1854: *For the encouragement and general diffusion of literature and art* . . . (New York: W. H. Tidson, stereotyper, John A. Gray, printer, 1854).

⁹⁵ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 80.

⁹⁶ Hayden likely influenced the decision to invite Gifford after Bierstadt declined—the artist had spent the summer of 1870 on a survey with Hayden and proved himself to be capable and friendly in the field. See Applegate, "A Traveler by Instinct," 67.

⁹⁷ With respect to Bierstadt and Gifford, I chose relatively well-known canvases featuring American subjects that are also representative of the artists' larger bodies of work. With respect to Moran, it is known that Cooke and Nettleton saw and liked his illustrations for the "Wonders of the Yellowstone" articles. It is, however, difficult to know what other Moran work the two men saw. Therefore, the pre-1871 canvas that I chose was—according to the artist's own notes, secondary sources, and provenance research—exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in the late 1860s and was a critical success. As they were wealthy and socially prominent Philadelphians, it is likely that Cooke and Nettleton would have visited the academy.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Franklin Kelly, "Nature Distilled: Gifford's Vision of Landscape," in *Hudson River Visions*, 14.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 80.

¹⁰⁰ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 9.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Moran, "Autobiography of Thomas Moran," ca. 1890, Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, Gardiner, MT, 1–2.

¹⁰² Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 29–34.



Fig. 15. Sanford Robinson Gifford, *A Home in the Wilderness*, 1866. Oil on canvas; H. $30\frac{3}{16}$ "', W. $53\frac{3}{8}$ "'. (Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund, Butkin Foundation, Dorothy Burnham Memorial Collection, and various donors by exchange, Cleveland Museum of Art.)

Wilds of Lake Superior (fig. 17) is water rushing toward the viewer and falling off the bottom edge of the canvas. Steep cliffs bound the water on the left side and in the distance. Though the land shown in the right side of the painting is flat, it is populated with a stump, a bare tree, and what appears to be dying grass. The sky is tumultuous and shows either an approaching or departing storm. The landscape is treacherous and unpredictable—it is sublime. *Children of the Mountain* (1866; fig. 18), another of Moran's most successful early paintings, is also not a picture of happy fields or cozy mountain homes.¹⁰³ The vertically oriented canvas features a sort of staircase of gray and slick-looking boulders that form a steep and uneven diagonal. A rushing whitewater stream further accentuates the precarious line of rocks, and turbulent multicolored clouds dominate the center of the canvas. The scene does not present nature as a warm and welcoming place. Why—despite Moran's demonstrated aesthetic interest in sublime tumultuous nature—did Cooke and Nettleton send the young artist west?

The first answer to this question is practical. Moran was recruited when Hayden was already in Utah.¹⁰⁴ Presumably, as the survey neared, the railroad managers had to relax their criteria for which artist they hired. Moran was well respected in Philadelphia—where the main Jay Cooke and Co. office was located—and was ready, willing, and able to go to Montana for a low price.

Another reason is that, in addition to his rising reputation as a painter, Moran already had experience illustrating Yellowstone. In the mid-1860s, Moran became a commercial illustrator. Having avoided conscription into the Union Army, he took on reliable and lucrative work illustrating poetry books and articles for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Within a decade, he was one of the most respected and sought-after landscape illustrators.¹⁰⁵ He also displayed paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and sold them in galleries around Philadelphia. The American fine art submission to the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris included two of his works. Though he continued his commercial work, inclusion in the Exposition

¹⁰³ Nancy Anderson, *Thomas Moran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 43.

¹⁰⁴ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 80–81.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

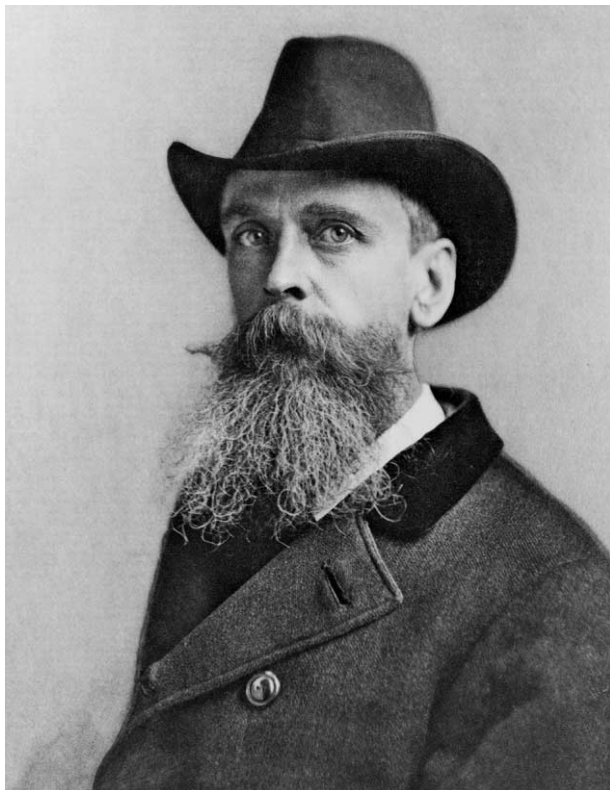


Fig. 16. Napoleon Sarony, *Thomas Moran*, ca. 1895. (Adoc-photos/Art Resource, NY.)

boosted Moran's career and reputation as a fine artist.¹⁰⁶ In 1869, *The Spirit of the Indian*, a large canvas depicting a scene from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha*, won a prize at the National Academy of Design in New York.¹⁰⁷ Moran was young artist on the rise in December 1870 when his friend Richard Watson Gilder, poet and editor-in-chief of *Scribner's Monthly*, asked him to provide fourteen illustrations for Langford's "The Wonders of the Yellowstone."

The tone of these illustrations also suggests an aesthetic reason for Cooke and Nettleton's selecting Moran. Before sponsoring him, the NPRR men presumably discussed the relative merits of his work. This discussion may have included a conversation about his illustrations for Langford's "The Wonders of the Yellowstone" (see figs. 10 and 11).¹⁰⁸ Even though the focus of the article

was the valley's geologically bizarre and dangerous features, Moran's illustrations—based on Langford's rough recollections and field sketches by a member of the party—strike a balance between adventure and approachability. There were pictures of men gathering specimens from geysers, mischievous fat ponies, majestic waterfalls, and members of the party falling asleep on nighttime watch. The tone of Langford's article is one of awe and risky adventure, but in Moran's pictures, the sights are not overwhelming. The phenomena are weird and otherworldly, but the men in the pictures stand right next to them (fig. 19).¹⁰⁹ While Moran did not create images of habitable wilderness, in the illustrations he portrays it as approachable. Running out of time to send an artist with Hayden at all, this hint of an ability to transform Colter's Hell into something entertaining and not totally resistant to human existence may have supported Moran's selection for the job.

As in its relationships with Hayden and Langford, the NPRR became Moran's informal patron in exchange for partial financial support and the expectation of mutual benefit. In the same letter to Hayden where Nettleton expressed his hope that Moran would "surpass Bierstadt's Yosemite," the press secretary explained that Moran "expects to pay his own expenses and simply wishes to take advantage of [the] cavalry escort for protection . . . [and] have six square feet in some tent." Nettleton then notes that accepting Moran as the artist-in-residence on the survey would "be a great accommodation to our house [Cooke and Co.] and the road [the NPRR]."¹¹⁰

The railroad dealt with Moran, Hayden, and other beneficiaries of the railroad's patronage by creating a clear, if informal, expectation of *quid pro quo*. Moran granted both the NPRR and *Scribner's Monthly* a stake in his Yellowstone work in exchange for money to go west. He borrowed half of the \$1,000 needed to travel from *Scribner's* publisher Roswell Smith and half from Jay Cooke. Moran gave Smith *Children of the Mountain* (see fig. 18) as collateral and planned to provide *Scribner's* with illustrations of Yellowstone after his return. The specifics of the agreement between Moran and Cooke are unknown.¹¹¹ However, the financier commissioned at least sixteen watercolors from the artist and planned to integrate

¹⁰⁶ Leading American art critic Henry T. Tuckerman praised *The Children of the Mountain* and even included the work in his *Book of the Artists*, an 1867 who's who of American painters and sculptors. Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 66–67.

¹⁰⁷ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 66–67.

¹⁰⁸ Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 70–71.

¹⁰⁹ Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone, Part 1 and Part 2," *Scribner's Monthly* (May–June 1871).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*



Fig. 17. Thomas Moran, *The Wilds of Lake Superior*, 1864. Oil on canvas; H. 30¹/₈" , W. 45¹/₈" . (Charles F. Smith Fund, New Britain Museum of American Art.)

these into advertising for the NPRR and the regions it made accessible.¹¹² On the back of one of Moran's Yellowstone watercolors, a note reads: "Made for Jay Cooke to repay loan of money for Yellowstone trip."¹¹³ Neither the NPRR nor *Scribner's* commissioned *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* or explicitly paid Moran to create a Great Picture. Instead, the ties between the painting and the NPRR were linked to an understanding between artist and corporation that they could help one another succeed.

Moran joined the Hayden expedition in Virginia City, Montana, in early July 1871.¹¹⁴ The party included eighty-three expedition members, who often splintered into smaller parties, each with their own objectives. One of these groups included Moran and survey photographer William

Henry Jackson (1843–1942). The artists followed the survey's general itinerary but lingered at sites of particular interest to them—such as Tower Creek and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.¹¹⁵ They began the expedition from base camp in Paradise Valley to the north of the present-day park. From there, they went to Mammoth Springs, Tower Creek through the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone (fig. 20), and then to Yellowstone Lake. In the course of circumnavigating the lake, the party visited geyser basins. Moving back to base camp, the group traveled through Mirror Plateau in the northeast corner of the future park, returned to the banks of the Yellowstone River, and followed the waterway out of what would become the park area.¹¹⁶ According to Jackson, "Moran's enthusiasm [for the canyon] was greater than anywhere else."¹¹⁷ During the four days at the site, Moran

¹¹² Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 190 n. 2.

¹¹³ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, chap. 5, 332, n. 19.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹¹⁶ Merrill, "Introduction," 18.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 91.



Fig. 18. Thomas Moran, *Children of the Mountain*, 1866. Oil on canvas; H. 62 $\frac{1}{8}$ " , W. 52 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". (Anschutz Collection, American Museum of Western Art.)

and Jackson hiked in, above, and around the cataract and spent an extended period of time at what is now known as Artists' Point, where Jackson took many pictures of the canyon (see fig. 20).¹¹⁸

After five weeks in the Yellowstone Valley, Moran had documented almost thirty sites and returned home with dozens of sketches. Moran

did not, however, only use his sketches as an *aide-memoir*; he also had copies of Jackson's photographs.¹¹⁹ As a result, Moran's sketches are not as detailed as work from earlier trips. They are contour drawings recording topographical details that are occasionally colored and usually include handwritten notes about which color should go

¹¹⁸ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 91.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

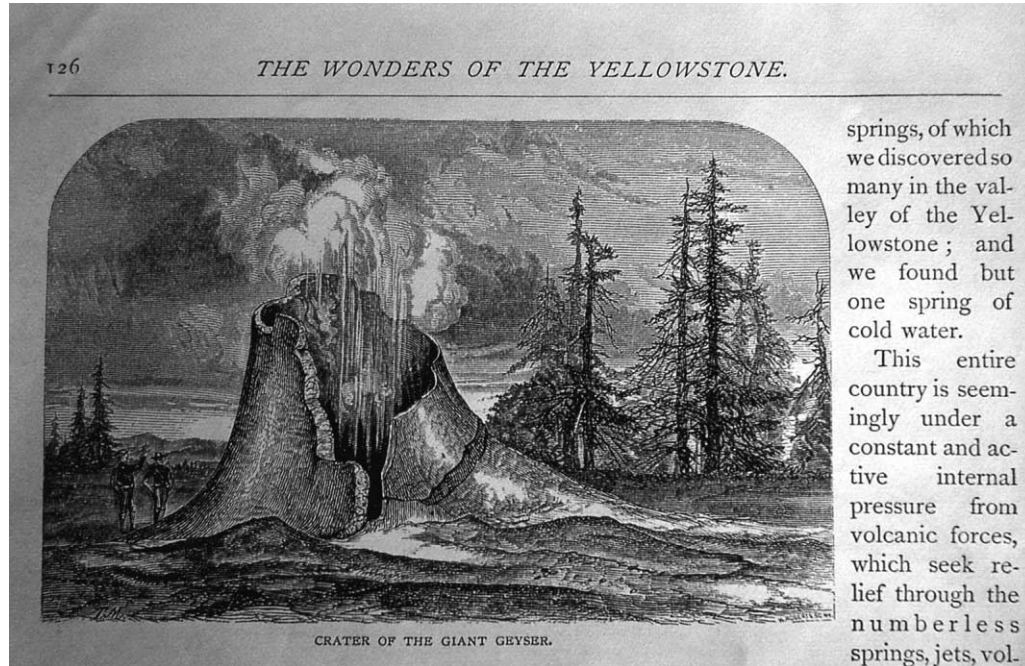


Fig. 19. Thomas Moran, "Crater of the Giant Geyser," 1871. From Nathaniel P. Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* 2, no. 1 (May 1871): 126.

where.¹²⁰ Having Jackson's records of geological detail appears to have freed Moran to focus on committing colors to memory. For example, though Moran's *Mammoth Hot Springs* (fig. 21) is looking away from the geological phenomenon at the center of Jackson's *Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone Park* (fig. 22), one can still see geological details apparently transposed from Jackson's work. The lips of the springs in the lower left quadrant of Moran's watercolor record the dripping candle-like shape, structure, and texture of the formation central to Jackson's photograph. Nonetheless, Moran uses this detail as only a frame for the dramatically colored geyser field and mountains beyond. Jackson's photographs—along with the artist's own quick sketches—provided a documentary platform from which Moran could create dramatically colored and topographically varied scenes in oil and finished watercolor.

As soon as he arrived back East, Moran began the work owed to those who had financed the trip. He created illustrations for a *Scribner's* article about the Hayden expedition and began the watercolors for Cooke although they were not finished until

¹²⁰ Thomas Moran, summer 1871 sketchbook, acc. no. YELL 23061, Museum at the Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, Gardiner, MT; Anne Morand, *Thomas Moran: The Field Sketches, 1856–1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 36.

springs, of which we discovered so many in the valley of the Yellowstone; and we found but one spring of cold water.

This entire country is seemingly under a constant and active internal pressure from volcanic forces, which seek relief through the numberless springs, jets, vol-

1873, and only two survive.¹²¹ Moran also began *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*.¹²² The oil painting was the artist's largest work to date, but he completed it in just two months. It was unveiled in New York City on May 2, 1872.¹²³

After the expedition, the visual culture of Yellowstone in circulation increased dramatically from just Moran's original *Scribner's* illustrations predating his visit to Yellowstone. Throughout the 1870s Moran produced images of Yellowstone in several media—including watercolor, chromolithography, and oil painting—and Jackson published his photographs. The results were the circulation of a Great Picture, documentary photographs, and paintings produced and reproduced in a variety of other media. This article focuses on *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, but it is important

¹²¹ Moran's biographer, Thurman Wilkins, believes that Moran finished the work, but the series became "dispersed following the failure later that year of Cooke & Co. . . . Thereafter fourteen of the Cooke aquarelles seem to have disappeared. Only two are now known to exist for certain, one having turned up [in the 1930s] in the attic . . . of the former Cooke estate." Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 97. Moran also may have stopped working on the commission once Jay Cooke and the NPRR went bankrupt and no longer had a need for them. Either way, while Moran painted many Yellowstone watercolors during his career, that particular 1873 series is unaccounted for.

¹²² Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 95–99.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 100.



Fig. 20. William Henry Jackson, *Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, 1872. (Royal Photographic Society, London; photo, SSPL/National Media Museum/Art Resource, NY.)

to recognize that, contemporaneous with the display of the painting, other images of Yellowstone in a variety of media were circulating.¹²⁴ Importantly, these images in other media—from Jackson's photographs (see figs. 20 and 22) to Moran's

illustrations for the article on the Hayden expedition (fig. 23)—show canyon or thermal feature landscapes that were distinctly nonpastoral. However, Moran's use of huge scale and dramatic color in the Big Picture make that depiction of Yellow-

¹²⁴ Anderson, *Thomas Moran*; Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*; Kinsey, *Thomas Moran's West: Chromolithography, High Art, and Popular Taste*; Douglas Waitley, *William*

Henry Jackson: *Framing the Frontier* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press, 1998).



Fig. 21. Thomas Moran, *Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone*, 1872. Watercolor and pencil on paper; H. $14\frac{1}{4}$ " W. $10\frac{3}{8}$ ". (Gift of Mrs. Armistead Peter III, Smithsonian American Art Museum; photo, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY.)

stone more unsettling for the viewer than smaller, often black-and-white images.

The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone: A Dynamic Landscape

The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone (see fig. 1) depicts a dynamic landscape. The canyon walls, waterfall, and even the ledge where the few tiny human figures stand are sliding, falling, or sinking. Moran creates this sense of seismic motion by engaging with but subverting a number of conventions of landscape painting.

The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone does not have a clear focal point. At first glance, it seems like the misty white and turquoise waterfall is at the center of the painting. However, the rushing white water of the Lower Falls is not actually along the central vertical axis of the canvas. It is left of center and

located well below the horizon line along the top of the canyon. And while the tumbling water and clouds of spray it creates are eye-catching, the falls' somewhat awkward position in the composition means that they do not hold the gaze. The surrounding canyon demands the viewer's attention.

The right side of the canyon is bright and sunlit. It creates a strong diagonal beginning in the upper right-hand corner of the painting and sliding out of sight just below the rocky gray outcropping where two miniscule human figures stand. The canyon is painted in yellows, oranges, reds, and pinks dotted with passages of white and brown. The warm palette makes the canyon wall seem as if it is advancing toward the viewer. Its progress toward the foreground is, however, impeded by the detailed rock formations that Moran painted against the front of the picture plane. The very tops of these formations appear to just touch the brightest yellow part of the canyon wall, a dramatic stroke of color that highlights the crevasse's diagonal descent to the river. The rocks, therefore, emphasize the downward slope and the impression that the top of the canyon is slowly but surely sliding down to the bottom.

The formations themselves (fig. 24) are dense and seem ready to be touched, even grasped. The smaller of the two collections of rocks is maroon marbled with a cool off-white. It looks like raw meat that has been frozen solid and echoes a similar outcrop in the sunlight behind it. Flush to the picture plane on the right side and just in front of the maroon rocks is a meticulously rendered collection of dark gray boulders piled upon one another and crisscrossed with languishing fungi and vegetation. Mosses and lichens, ranging from black and burnt sienna to a cool blue-green, cover the boulder. A small and scrubby pine clings to the top of the outcropping. Part of a tree that is cracked, dry, and obviously dead protrudes from the right-hand side of the canvas and in front of the boulders. This passage of delicate coloring, shading, and tiny geological and botanical details catches and entertains the eye—making the boulders the most tactile element of the painting. The viewer could grip the rocks, like the mosses and plants that cling to them. This small cluster of tangible solidity contrasts with the sliding canyon wall behind it, emphasizing that the sides of the cataract are in motion.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Precise attention to detail and use of close observation in the service of the broader composition is central to the American tradition of landscape painting. In *Nature and Culture: American*

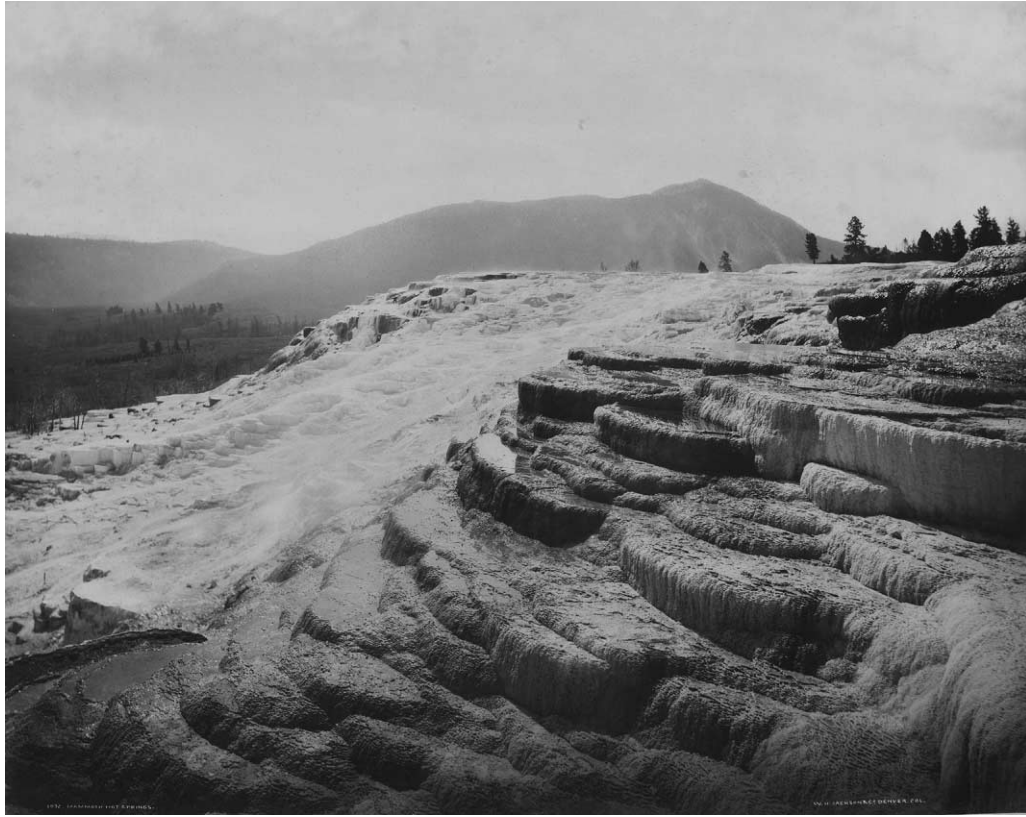


Fig. 22. William Henry Jackson, W. H. Jackson and Co., *Mammoth Hot Springs*, Yellowstone Park, 1871. Albumen print; H. $16\frac{15}{16}$ " , W. $21\frac{1}{16}$ ". (Musée d'Orsay, Paris; photo, Hervé Lewandowski, © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.)

Permutations of the palette used to create the gray boulders are repeated throughout the foreground of the painting. Specifically, this collection of colors is used to create the ledge where the human figures and their packhorses stand. The space the horses and humans inhabit is bleak. Its surface is uneven and includes an area of swirling sand that seems to be swallowing a rotting log. The stand of trees perched on the left side of the ledge is painted in a range of greens that contrast with both the black interior of the copse and the pale yellow of the canyon behind it. The largest tree of the group is also closest to the viewer. Contorted branches topped with tufts of green leaves stretch out from its thick trunk, reaching over the canyon rim to create a gothic silhouette against the background of the lilac gray sky.

Landscape Painting, 199, art historian Barbara Novak writes, "A strong empiricism shaping original solutions to the landscape problem had always been part of the American sensibility." This belief is echoed in Jennifer Raab's recent book on Frederic Edwin Church (see note 74).

Considered altogether, the small stand of trees, ledge, and boulders combine to form a V shape. This creates a frame for the scene that echoes and emphasizes the V shape formed by the diagonal and downward-sloping lines of the canyon walls. A series of receding V-shaped planes continue back to the mouth of the canyon and the top of the waterfall. However, the interaction between these planes is disconcerting and a deviation from convention. Other American landscape painters often engaged in a practice emulating Claude Lorrain (see fig. 12)—and other painters inspired by Claude—of framing and then constructing a landscape's depth with a successive series of planes. In these Claudian depictions, "trees fram[ing] the picture's lateral edges, as well as by the dark foreground coulisse, the middle-ground scoop of water, and the distant mountain [are] a set of motifs endlessly permuted."¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting*, 196–97.

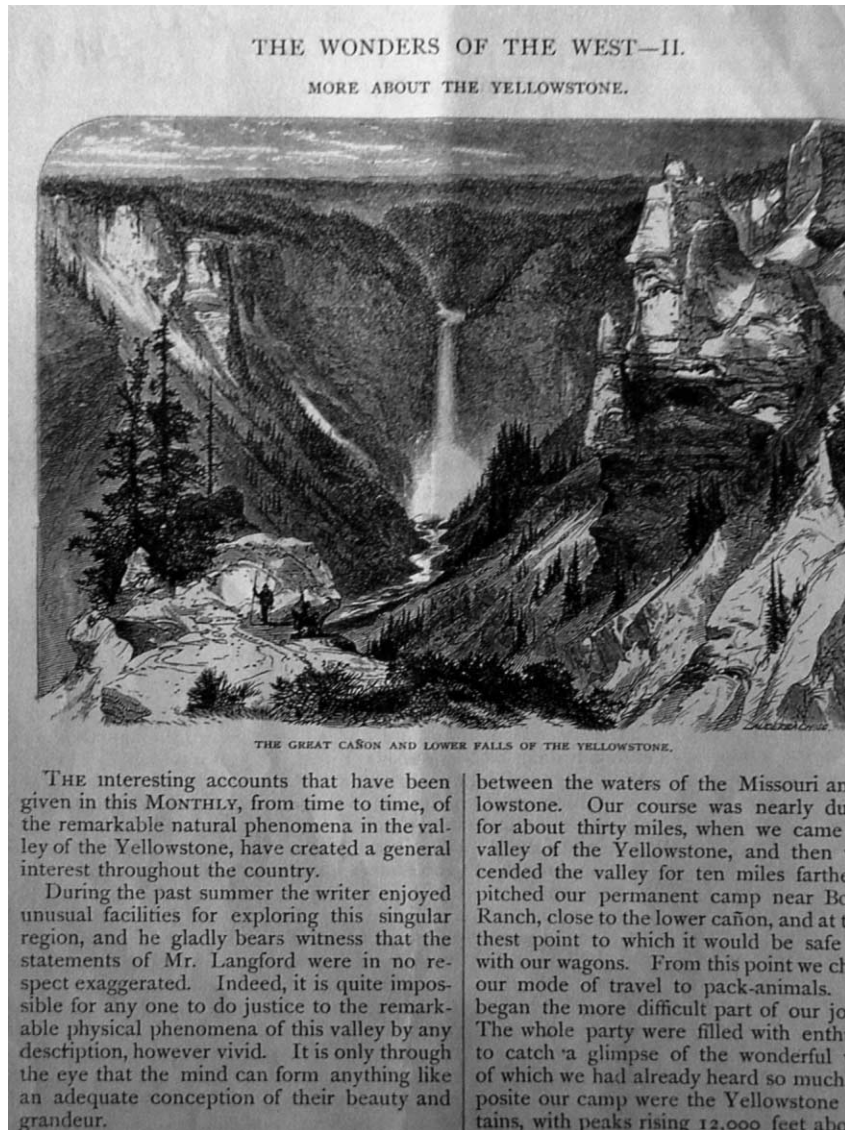


Fig. 23. Thomas Moran, "The Great Cañon and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone," 1872. From F. V. Hayden, "The Wonders of the West, Pt. II: More about the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* 3, no. 4 (February 1872): 388.

Bierstadt's *Lander's Peak* (see fig. 13) adheres to this blueprint of framing trees, tranquil scoops of water, and distant mountains; Gifford's *Home in the Wilderness* (see fig. 15) conflates the trees and mountains, but centers around a tranquil lake. Moran's painting uses framing trees, but where there should be tranquil water surrounded by lush greenery in a Claude-like landscape, Moran places a churning turquoise river surrounded by sliding rocks. While there are peaks in the distance, they are small and barely visible unless one is both right in front of the painting and looking for them. Instead, where one would expect to see a series of peaks—in the space just above the canyon and be-

yond the waterfall—there is a grassy plain. Moran engages with the concept of framing and successive planes, but he modifies the model by placing more tumultuous features, like churning water and falling rocks, where tranquil ones should be.

The interaction between the planes in *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* is also unsettling because of Moran's color choices. The frame formed by the boulders and ledge is flush against the picture plane. These elements are painted in a cool palette of primarily blues, grays, and greens—a palette that recedes from the viewer's eye. The canyon walls, which form the plane behind the boulders and ledge, are painted in a warm palette



Fig. 24. Thomas Moran, *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, 1872. Oil on canvas; H. 84", W. 144 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". (Smithsonian American Art Museum, lent by the Department of the Interior Museum; photo, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY.)

that moves toward the viewer. If Moran wanted to create a completely legible image of the space of the canyon, he would have painted the foreground primarily in a warm color and made the palette progressively cooler to denote depth and increasing distance from the viewer. Instead, he makes the foreground cool and receding while making the middle ground warm and advancing. This inversion flattens and compresses the space of the canyon, creating tension between space that the viewer intellectually knows is there and space that the eye can actually detect.

Moran also experiments with disconcerting combinations of warm and cool colors on the area of the back wall of the canyon hollowed out by the waterfall. This almost heart-shaped space in the

center of the canvas is a mix of reds, blues, maroons, and grays. Neither clearly warm nor clearly cool in tone, the depth of this part of the canyon is particularly obscured. The chaotic mix of reds and blues, and even bits of bright yellow, echoes the churning of the water as it gushes over the falls and then collides with the canyon floor.

Forming the right edge of the outcropping where the people and pack animals stand is a snaking path of large and flat-topped boulders. This rock path extends from the very center of the bottom edge of the painting and reaches partially into the canyon. A white man and a Native American guide stand at its terminus, at the precipice. Where an entire Indian camp existed in the foreground of Bierstadt's painting, Moran has a single

male guide with his back turned toward the canyon. If the native settlement in *Lander's Peak* denoted that landscape's habitability, the Native American in Moran's painting denotes the inaccessibility of the canyon—a savage guide is necessary to even find it. The winding shape of the rocky outcropping echoes the meandering path of the bright turquoise river cutting through the canyon. The eye should travel along the winding edge of the outcropping to the river and then up the falls to the horizon. However, a portion of the canyon wall interrupts this clear path back into space. This leaves the viewer with disjointed glimpses of turquoise sandwiched between the protruding canyon walls and the mist at the bottom of the falls.

This painting is, after a few minutes, disorienting. The viewer's focus oscillates primarily between the river and the canyon walls. When the eye is pulled to the sides of the cataract, it immediately follows the diagonals down to the river along the canyon floor. However, the sliding canyon walls interrupt the progress of the river. It is a cycle that forces the eye to be in constant motion, which, in turn, creates the sense that the landscape is in motion.

Fallen or falling pine trees on the cataract's sides further emphasize this sensation of downward motion and collapse. The general aesthetic and aura of collapse reaches a crescendo in the area around the top of the waterfall. The green plateau just above and beyond the canyon appears to slip and sag under the force of the falls. In fact, if one were to draw orthogonal lines from the lower corners of the painting, they would converge on a vanishing point just above and to the right of the falls—just at the point where the tree line begins to turn down and into the canyon. The space behind the falls and behind the vanishing point is obscured by mist, and the viewer is left with the impression that the land beyond the canyon is also sagging and falling into the crevasse.

Even the grassy parts of the plain above the cataract (fig. 25) are not free from the dynamism that pervades the scene. Mist extends upward from the waterfall and cuts into the green and verdant-looking space above. Echoing the shape of this vertical column of mist, three geysers to the left of the falls send up steam and boiling water. Bursting from the plain, the steam and water ultimately lead the eye to rolling clouds. Every element of this painting is in flux. This sense of seismic movement, the scale of the painting, and the restriction of the human presence to a small precipitous ledge conform wholly to the aesthetic of the sublime.

An Artistic, Legislative, and Economic Frontier in Flux

On April 6, 1872, Moran wrote to Hayden, "The picture is all that I ever expected to make it, and the indication is that it will make a sensation wherever it is exhibited."¹²⁷ Moran was right. The painting was a huge success from the moment it debuted in May 1872. Even though Moran created an image of the West radically different from Bierstadt's, the railroad did not reject the canvas. *Scribner's* arranged the painting's debut in New York, and Nettleton and several other NPRR officials attended. Cooke was scheduled to appear but did not make it to the gathering of "press . . . literati . . . artists [and] rich people."¹²⁸ It is unclear how Cooke, Nettleton, and the rest of the NPRR felt about *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* and its ability to help the railroad.

Reviews were overwhelmingly positive. Consensus among critics was that "Mr. Moran's 'Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone' [would] . . . be received by the best judges in America as the finest historical landscape yet painted in this country," or at least would "rank with the great landscapes of Church, Bierstadt, and Gifford."¹²⁹ The majority of reviewers focused on the dynamism of the landscape. They described the shifting and seismically moving canyon in dramatic language. One reviewer quoted a particularly evocative passage from Hayden's official survey report: "The entire volume of [the waterfall] seems to be . . . hurled off the precipice with the force which it has accumulated in the rapids above . . . and as it strikes the rocky basin below, it shoots through the water."¹³⁰ Another reviewer addressed how Moran treated the sky above the canyon: "There is . . . atmosphere so puzzling to the artist from the ruthlessness with which it denies him those convenient grays . . . and over all, there is the violent sky."¹³¹ Describing the canyon walls and the processes of how the cataract was formed, the reviewer for *Scribner's* wrote: "Disintegration also sends . . . floods, of pulverized

¹²⁷ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 101.

¹²⁸ Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 64.

¹²⁹ Clarence Cook, "Fine Arts," *New York Tribune*, May 4, 1872, ProQuest Historical Newspapers; "Art Notes," *Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science and Art* 7, no. 166 (June 1, 1872), American Periodicals Series Online.

¹³⁰ "The Grand Cañon and Falls of the Yellowstone," *Oneida Circular*, March 17, 1873, American Periodical Series Online.

¹³¹ "Literature and Art," *Christian Union*, July 31, 1872, American Periodicals Series Online.



Fig. 25. Thomas Moran, *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*, 1872. Oil on canvas; H. 84", W. 144 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". (Smithsonian American Art Museum, lent by the Department of the Interior Museum; photo, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY.)

drift, glowing with all the hues of red and yellow . . . sweeping in long river-like avalanches . . . lodging and curdling like snow-wreaths in the ledges and crannies of the firmer basalt."¹³² The American West as portrayed in *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* is full of "water . . . hurled off the precipice," "avalanches," "pulverized drift," "violent sky," and "disintegration." Moran's image of the most recently explored frontier is of a world entirely in motion. Earth, wind, and water are all shifting while fire-hot geysers and glowing red rocks pervade.

The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone debuted amidst the active national debate about the future of the frontier exemplified by the Homestead Act and its modifications passed by Congress between 1862 and 1878. Bombastic claims pervaded both civic debates over these acts and commentary on land use in the popular press. News and magazine articles asserted that one Western territory or an-

other was "the best wheat-growing region in the world" or had potential for "rapidly increasing volume of mining," or both.¹³³ *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* resonated with and reflected this atmosphere of debate about the frontier's future. Viewed through the lens of the debate over the future of the West, certain passages in contemporary reviews of Moran's painting take on new significance. Their emotive descriptions of flux and churn can be read as metaphors for the uncertain and variable future of the frontier.

Amidst all the midcentury land-use commentary—both propagandistic and circumspect—there is a discernible trend: after 1865, lawmakers, bureaucrats, and popular commentators increasingly criticized the Homestead Act. The reaction against the law further accelerated in the early 1870s, as is illustrated by comparing the annual report of the US Commissioner of Public Lands—

¹³² "Thomas Moran's 'Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone,'" *Scribner's Monthly* 4, no. 2 (June 1872), American Periodicals Series Online.

¹³³ For example, "Gen. Hawley on the Pacific Railroad," *New York Evangelist*, November 30, 1871, American Periodicals Series Online; "Article I—The Opening of the New Northwest," *New Englander*, July 1871, American Periodicals Series Online.

which was reproduced each year in a number of periodicals—from 1867 to the one from 1877. In 1867 the commissioner said that the Homestead Act is a “great original measure [that] should stand unimpaired in its full vigor, and its results will continue to increase the producing power of the country.”¹³⁴ By 1877, the commissioner wrote: “Congress should . . . withdraw all lands chiefly valuable for pine timber from the operation of the Homestead . . . laws . . . [and] the Homestead . . . laws [should] be expressly amended so as to be applicable only to arable agricultural land.”¹³⁵ Faced with the geography of the Far West, American devotion to the Homestead Act began to crumble.

These legislative and public attitudes were bad news for an enterprise that wanted Bierstadt to paint its lands and staked its future on a boom of permanent settlement in the Northwest. The Northern Pacific Railroad went bankrupt eighteen months after the debut of *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*. Even under Cooke’s fastidious guidance and with his extensive marketing experience, construction on the NPRR was inconsistent. The railroad was unable to sell and settle enough land to generate revenue to offset the costs of surveys, construction, and management; this inability to develop land had a negative effect on the sale of NPRR bonds.¹³⁶ The well-publicized violent disruption of survey efforts by Sitting Bull’s Native American warriors—which included the 1872 death of Lieutenant Louis Dent Adair, President Grant’s nephew—further damaged Cooke’s NPRR. After the publication of reports of violent encounters during an 1873 NPRR survey through Montana and Dakota Territories—commonly called the Yellowstone Expedition of 1873—these problems became more pronounced. The *New York Times* published an editorial on September 11, 1873, that began: “Our correspondence from the Yellowstone Expedition . . . shows that difficulties lie before the construction of the North Pacific Railroad, and indeed the settlement and civilization of the northern portion of our central territory. If several thousand of our best soldiers . . . can only hold the ground on their narrow line of march for

a hundred and fifty or two hundred miles west of the Upper Missouri, what will peaceful bodies of railroad workmen be able to do, or what can emigrants accomplish in such a dangerous region?”¹³⁷ Investors soon began to flee from Northern Pacific bonds; they were convinced that the route was too leveraged, had unproven economic potential, and was subject to consistent Native American hostilities. At 10:30 am on Thursday, September 18, 1873, Jay Cooke and Co. shuttered. The closing of the large and reputable banking house helped trigger the Panic of 1873.¹³⁸

Neither the *Grand Cañon* nor any other Moran artwork is featured in extant official NPRR promotional literature from the 1870s.¹³⁹ This failure to appear in materials was not, however, necessarily for artistic reasons. The railroad apparently failed before Moran could finish the Yellowstone watercolors that Cooke commissioned.¹⁴⁰ The day that Cooke and Co. and the Northern Pacific went bankrupt, shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt said, “You can’t build a railroad from nowhere to nowhere.”¹⁴¹ The business plan of the NPRR relied on a conviction that, in the West, the presence of a railroad could transform nowhere to somewhere and that people wanted to settle a habitable wilderness. In the early 1870s, this business plan—and the image it was predicated on—failed. Regular construction on the road would not begin again until after lawyer Frederick Billings took control of the company in 1879. Under the direction of Henry Villard, the railroad was finally completed with a golden spike in September 1883.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Editorial, “The Yellowstone Expedition,” *New York Times*, September 11, 1873, 4, accessed via TimesMachine, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1873/09/11/79046623.html?pageNumber=4>.

¹³⁸ M. John Lubetkin, *Before Custer: Surveying the Yellowstone, 1872* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), Kindle locations 2634–3481, 4140.

¹³⁹ This assertion is based on the author’s reading of the secondary material and examination of primary sources. There is, however, a Northern Pacific Railroad brochure from around 1890 based on a Moran watercolor of a Yellowstone subject. It reads “Northern Pacific R.R., the Wonderland Route to the Pacific Coast.” Kinsey reproduces and discusses this image in *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 75.

¹⁴⁰ Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, 103.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁴² For the later history of the railroad, see Peter J. Lewty, *To the Columbia Gateway: The Oregon Railway and the Northern Pacific, 1879–1884* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1987); Jan Taylor, “The Northern Pacific Railroad’s Last Spike Excursion,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 60, no. 4 (2010): 16–35.

¹³⁴ “Public Lands of the United States,” *Merchants’ Magazine and Commercial Review*, September 1, 1867, American Periodicals Series Online.

¹³⁵ “About Our Public Lands,” *New York Evangelist*, November 15, 1877, American Periodicals Series Online.

¹³⁶ Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke’s Gamble*, 283–93.

Moran and the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act

After its debut, Moran sent *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* to Washington, DC. It was first displayed at the Smithsonian and then in the Capitol, where Congress had passed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act (1872)—the foundation of the first national park—just two months earlier.¹⁴³ It is not clear how Moran arranged for his painting to be displayed in the Capitol, and it is possible that railroad officials facilitated the exhibition. Once it was in the Capitol, however, Moran asked Hayden to help lobby Congress to purchase the painting. Ultimately, the government bought it for \$10,000, inaugurating Moran's long career as a renowned painter of the American West.¹⁴⁴

More than this purchase links the artwork of Thomas Moran and the passage of the National Park Protection Act. Moran's watercolors and Jackson's pictures were used as evidence in support of the bill.¹⁴⁵ This relationship between Moran's art and federal preservation has been a central component of arguments linking *The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* and the development of tourism. However, the creation of the first national park—and a Great Picture's link to it—must also be situated in the context of broader contemporary debates over land use.

Preservation is an alternative form of land use. Homesteading is predicated on working the land

and making it productive, thereby earning private ownership of it.¹⁴⁶ The new Yellowstone National Park was permanently “reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States.”¹⁴⁷ This was a radical departure from the agrarian ideal. However, preservation—as it is legislated in the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act—is stagnant. Though “dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground,” Congress failed to allocate any money for the management of the park or development of surrounding areas for at least four years.¹⁴⁸ In the context of the controversy surrounding questions of Western land use, declaring that the land should stay the same—and underlining this fact by failing to allocate funds—effectively postponed making a decision about land policy.

Today, Yellowstone National Park is a tourist mecca. Moran's painting helped to publicize the park and turn it into a destination. The significant growth of nature tourism in Montana, however, happened only after transportation infrastructure was in place and should neither overshadow nor be conflated with the early history of Yellowstone and its place in broader debates and concerns about Western development. Moran's calling the *Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone* his Big Picture was unexpectedly prescient.¹⁴⁹ Moran's Big Picture—an image of a geologically dynamic corner of the frontier undergoing constant seismic transition—is indeed a reflection of the big picture, one of a much wider historical context.

¹⁴³ Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 60–62.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Krall, *Proving Up*, 9–29.

¹⁴⁷ “Yellowstone National Park Protection (1872),” <http://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/management/yellowstoneprotectionact1872.htm>.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; Schullery and Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation in Yellowstone National Park*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, 65.