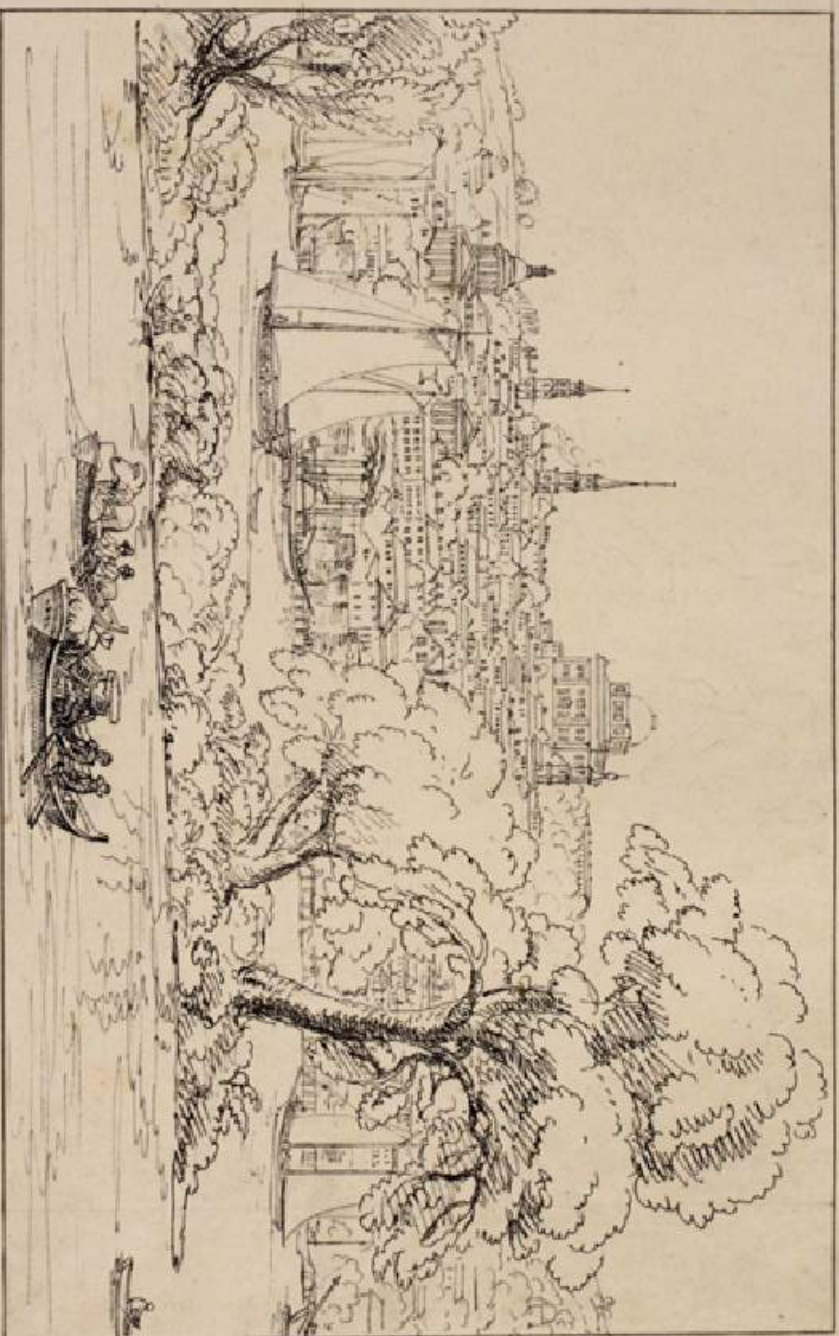


Painting Analysis



View of Hudson, NY; Henry Ary (1807-1859), 1852

Sketch 1



Albany

View from the east side of the river

1844
10/28/17/11

Albany, Taken from the East Side of the River; Thomas Cole (1801-1848), c. 1844



Albany, NY; Google Earth, 2015

Sketch 2



Long Dock or Catskill Landing on the Hudson River; Thomas Cole
(1801-1848), 1847



Catskill Landing; Google Earth, 2015

mirror; the flight of the eagle can be seen in the lower sky; and if a leaf falls, the circling undulations chase each other to the shores unweary by contending winds.

There are two lakes of this description, situated in a wild mountain gorge called the Franconia Notch, in New-Hampshire; they lie within a few hundred feet of each other, but are remarkable as having no communication, one being the source of the wild Ammonoosuck, the other of the Pemigewasset. Situated in by-stand mountains, which rest on crags that tower more than a thousand feet above the water, whose rugged brows and shadowy breaks are dotted by dark and tangled woods, they have such an aspect of deep seclusion, of utter and unbroken solitude, that the lonely traveller, when standing on their brink, is overwhelmed with a emotion of the sublime. It is not that the aged precipices are lofty; that the ascending woods are of the deepest shade; or that the waters are profoundly deep; but that where earthquake and convulsion once strewn together in their rage, and read these gigantic precipices; over rocks, woods, and waters brooded the deep spirit of repose, and the silent effort, nature stirs the soul to its utmost depths.

There are lakes like these lakes take a far different expression—when the torrent is abroad; but in scenes like these, the richest choruses are those struck by the gentle hand of nature.

And how I must turn to another of the beautifiers of the earth—the waterfall, which, in the same object at once presents to the mind the beautiful, but apparently incongruous idea of hardness and motion—a single existence, in which we perceive unceasing change and everlasting duration. The waterfall may be called the voice of the landscape; for unlike the rocks and woods which utter sounds as the passive instruments, played on by the winds, the waterfall strikes its own chords, and rocks, and mountains reach its rich harmony. And this is heard abounding in cataracts; have we not Kearsarge, Treadwell, the Flame Falls, Genesee, stupendous Niagara, and a host of others named and unnamed ones, whose exceeding beauty must be acknowledged by all who behold them? In the Kearsarge-hill we have a stream, diminutive indeed, but throwing itself headlong over a precipice into a deep gorge of densely wooded mountains, and possessing a singular feature in the vast arch cavern, that extends beneath and behind the cataract. At Treadwell, there is a chain of waterfalls of remarkable beauty, where the foaming waters, shut in by steep cliffs, break over rocks of architectural formation, and tangled and picturesque trees mantle abrupt precipices, which it would be easy to imagine crumbling and in time disappearing. At Treadwell, the Genesee precipitates itself in several cascades beneath precipices, some of which are seven hundred feet in perpendicular height. And Niagara! that wonder of the world! where the sublime and beautiful are bound together by an inseparable chain. In gazing at it we feel as though a great veil had been filled in our minds; our conceptions expand; we become a part of what we behold! At our feet the floods of a thousand rivers are poured forth; the contents of vast inland seas. In its volumes we conceive immensity—in its course, exulting in its impetuosity, in its impetuosity, in its untrollable power. These are the elements of its sublimity. Its beauty is galvanized around in the varied hues of the water, in the spray that ascends the sky, and in that unrivaled flow which forms a complete circle round the unresisting floods.

The river scenery of the United States is a rich and boundless theme. The Hudson, for natural magnificence, is unsurpassed. What can be more beautiful than the lake-like expanses of Tappan and Haverstraw, as seen from the rich orchards of the surrounding hills? What can be more imposing than the precipitous Highlands, whose dark foundations have been rent to make a passage for the mighty river? And ascending still, where can be found scenes more exulting? The lofty Catskills stand afar off; the green hills gently rising from the flood, recede like steps, by which we may ascend to a great temple, whose pillars are those overhanging hills, and whose dome is boundless vault of heaven. The Rhine crosses, its vine-clad hills and ancient villages has its wooded mountains, its rugged green undulating shores, and an unobscured improvement by art. Its shores are not a venerable ruin, or the remains of grandeur, are flourishing towns and neat villages, and taste has already been at work. With stretch of the imagination, we may attend when the simple water will reflect them, and dome in every variety of picturesque nobleness.

In the Connecticut, we behold a river that from the Hudson. Its sources are small, it tains of New-Hampshire; but it soon luxuriates in valleys, and flows for more than a hundred miles, sometimes beneath the shadow of and sometimes glancing through the green elm-bespinkled meadows. Whether we behold Northampton or Hartford, it still presents a noble aspect, and the imagination can give Arcadian views more lovely or more the valley of the Connecticut.

Nor ought the Ohio, the Potomac, the St. Lawrence, with the tributaries, be forgotten in the American rivers. They are a glorious volume would be insufficient for a description.

In the forest scenery of the United States

which occupies a vast space, and is not the least remarkable, being primitive, it differs widely from the European. In the American forest we find trees in every stage of growth and decay—the slender saplings rise in the shadow of the lofty tree, and the giant in his prime stands by the hoary patriarch of the wood—on the ground lie prostrate decaying trunks that once moved their verdant heads in the sun and wind. These circumstances productive of great variety and fulsomeness. Green untrampled masses, lofty and scathed trunks; unroofed branches thrust athwart the sky; the mouldering dead below, surrounded in moss of every hue and texture, form richer combinations than can be found in the trimmed and planted wood. Trees are like men, differing widely in character; in shelter, in soil, or under the influence of culture, they show very contrasting points; peculiarities are pronounced and trained away until there is a general resemblance. But in exposed situations, wild and uncultivated, battling with the elements and with one another for the possession of a morsel of soil, or a favoring rock to which they may cling—they exhibit striking peculiarities, and sometimes original grandeur.

For variety, the American forest is unrivalled; in some districts we find oaks, elms, birches, beeches, planes, hemlocks, and many other kinds of trees commingled, clothing the hills with every tint of green, and every variety of light and shade. There is a peculiarity observable in some mountainous districts, where trees of a genus stand together; there often may be seen a mountain whose foot is clothed with deciduous trees, while on its brow is a table crown of pines, and sometimes dark belts of pine encircle a mountain horizontally; or are stretched in well defined lines from the summit to the base. The nature of the soil, or the position of the trees, are the causes of this variety, as it is a beautiful instance of the exhaustiveness of nature; often where we might expect unvarying monotony, we behold a charming diversity. There will we permit me to speak of American trees individually, but I must notice the elm, that paragon of beauty and shade; the maple, with its rainbow hues; and the hemlock, the sublime of trees, which rises from the gloom of the forest like a dark and ivy-mantled tower.

There is one season when the American forest surpasses all the world in gorgeousness—that is the autumnal; then every hill and dale is riant in the luxuriance of color; every hue is there from the liveliest green, the deepest purple, from the most golden yellow to the richest crimson. The artist looks despairingly on the glowing landscape, and in the old world his truest imitations of the American forest, at this season, are called fairly bright, and scenes in Fairy Land. The sky will not demand our attention. The soul of all scenery, in it are the fountains of light and shade and color. Whatever expression the sky takes, the features of the landscape are affected in unison, whether it be the serenity of the summer's blue, or the dark tawny of the storm. It is the sky that makes the earth so lovely at sunrise, and so splendid at sunset. In the one it breathes over the earth the crystal-like ether, in the other the liquid gold. The climate of a great part of the United States is subject to great vicissitudes, and we complain; but nature offers us compensation. These vicissitudes are the abundant sources of beauty— as we have the temperature of every clime, so have we the skies; we have the blue unsearchable depths of the northern sky; we have the upheaped thunder-clouds of the torrid zone; we have the silver haze of England and the golden atmosphere of Italy. And if he who has travelled and observed the skies of other climes, will spend a few months on the banks of the Hudson, he must be constrained to acknowledge that for variety and magnificence, American skies are unsurpassed. Italian skies have been lauded by every tongue, and sung by every poet, and who will deny their wonderful beauty? At sunset the serene arch is filled with alchemy that transmutates mountains, and streams, and temples into living gold. But the American summer never ceases without many sunsets that vie with the Italian

and legendary associations; the great struggle for freedom has sanctified many a spot, and many a mountain stream and rock has its legend, worthy of poet's pen or painter's pencil.

But American associations are not so much of the past as of the present and the future. Seated on the pleasant knoll, look down into the bosom of that secluded valley, begirt with wooded hills, through these emerald meadows and verdant fields of grain, a silver stream winds languishing along—here seeking the green shade of trees—there glancing in the sunshine; on its banks are rural dwellings shaded by elms and surrounded by flowers; from yonder dark mass of foliage the village spire beams like a star. You see no ruined tower to tell of outrage, no gorgeous temple to tell of idolatry; but freedom's offspring—peace and plenty dwell there, the spirits of the scene. On the margin of that gentle river the village spire may ramble un molested, and the glad school-boy, with book and line, pass his bright holiday; those neat dwellings, unpretending to magnificence, are the abodes of plenty. And in looking over the unexcultivated scene, the mind may travel far into futurity. Where the wolf roars, the plough shall gleam; on the gray crag shall rise temple and tower; mighty deeds shall be done in the yet pathless wilderness; and poets yet unborn shall sanctify the soil.

It was my intention to attempt a description of several districts remarkable for their scenery.

Yet I cannot but express my sorrow that much of the beauty of our landscapes is quickly passing away; the ravages of the axe are daily increasing, and the most noble scenes are often laid desolate with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a people who call themselves civilized. The way-side is becoming shadeless, and another generation will behold spots now rife with beauty, bleak and bare. This is a regret rather than a complaint. I know, full well, that the forests must be felled for fuel and tillage, and that roads and canals must be constructed, but I contend that beauty should be of some value among us; that where it is not necessary to destroy a tree or a grove, the hand of the woodman should be checked, and even the consideration, which, alas, weighs too heavily with us, of a few paltry dollars, should be held as nought in comparison with the pure and lasting pleasure that we enjoy, or

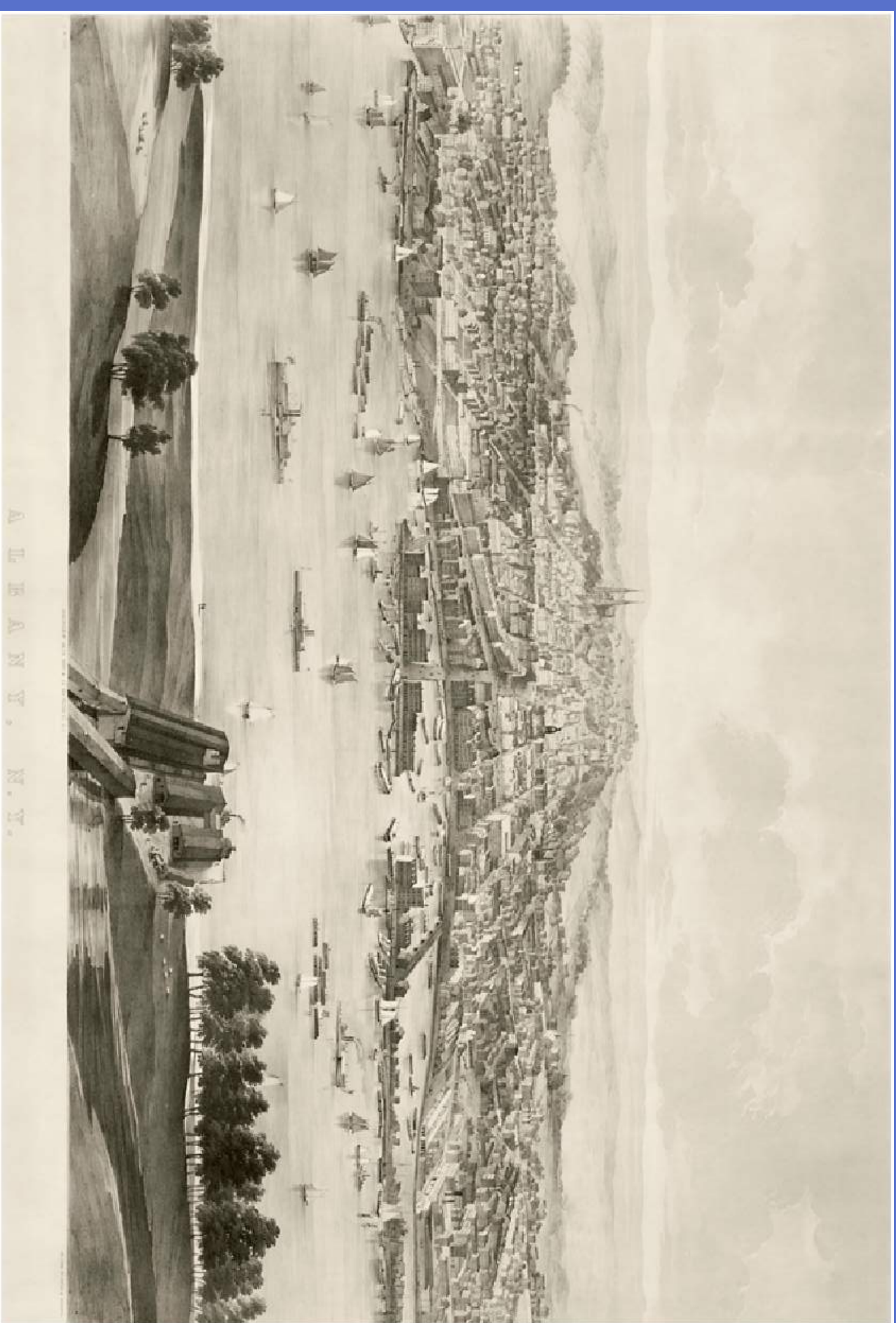
lose our most precious possessions of the sunniness. Among the inhabitants of this village, be must be dull indeed, who has not observed how, within the last few years, the beauty of its environs has been sacrificed. In the year the groves that adorned the banks of the river were fast being swept away; but in one year more fatal than that, the whole of that noble grove by Van Nest's, through which wound what is called the Snake, and at the same time the ancient grove of cedar, that shadowed the Indian burying-ground, were cut down. I speak of these in particular, because I know that many of you remember them well; they have contributed to your enjoyment as well as mine; their shades were long the favorite walk and ride. After my return from Europe, I was proud to speak of that delightful spot, to walk there with my friends, and whenever opportunity offered to take persons of taste to view it, and as we trod the velvet grass beneath those noble trees, and pointed out the distant mountains, and the quiet stream below, to say, "This is a spot that Europe would be considered as one of the gems of the earth; it would be sought for by the lovers of the beautiful, and protected by law from desecration. But its beauty is gone, and what remains? Steep, arid banks, incapable of cultivation, and stained by unsightly gullies, formed by the waters which find no resistance in the loamy soil. Where once was beauty, there is now barrenness. But I will now conclude, and in the hope that, though feebly urged, the importance of cultivating a taste for scenery will not be forgotten. Nature has created for us a rich and delightful inheritance, and

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Thomas Cole, excerpt from his "Lecture on American Scenery" published in The Northern Light, 1841



Albany from the East Side of the River; William Hart (1823-1894), 1846



Albany, NY; Drawn by John William Hill (1812-1879), 1853