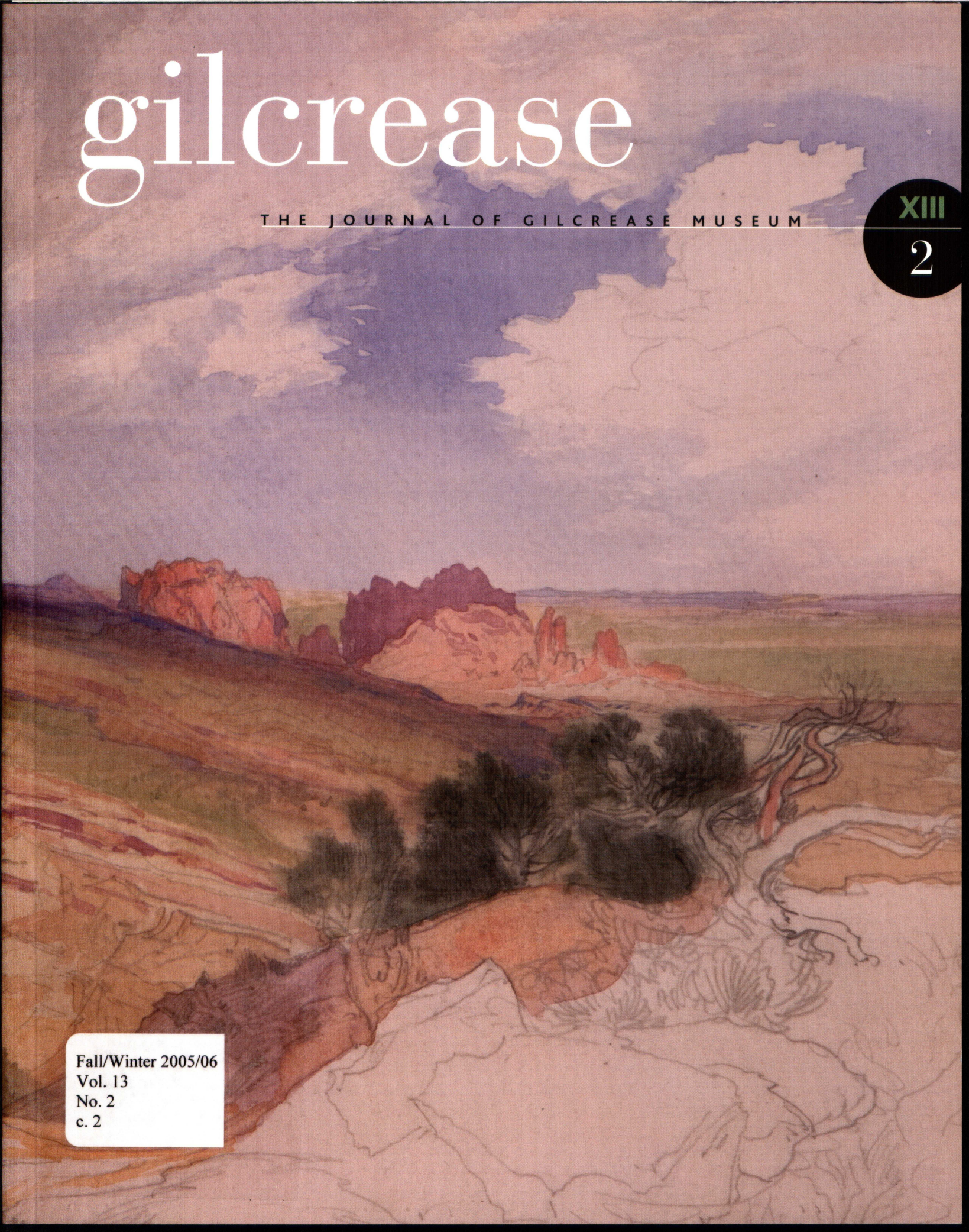
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Thomas Moran
Heywood Hot Springs
pencil and watercolor on paper, 0236.846

Moran typically painted wet-on-dry when working in the field. This use of paint on dry paper held the brushstroke intact and allowed the edges of forms to be crisply defined. In combining wet-on-dry and wet-on-wet (in the green trees near the center of the study), Moran may have been experimenting with ways to replicate surfaces and textures. The white gouache on the mountains and clouds provides a focal point at the center of the image.

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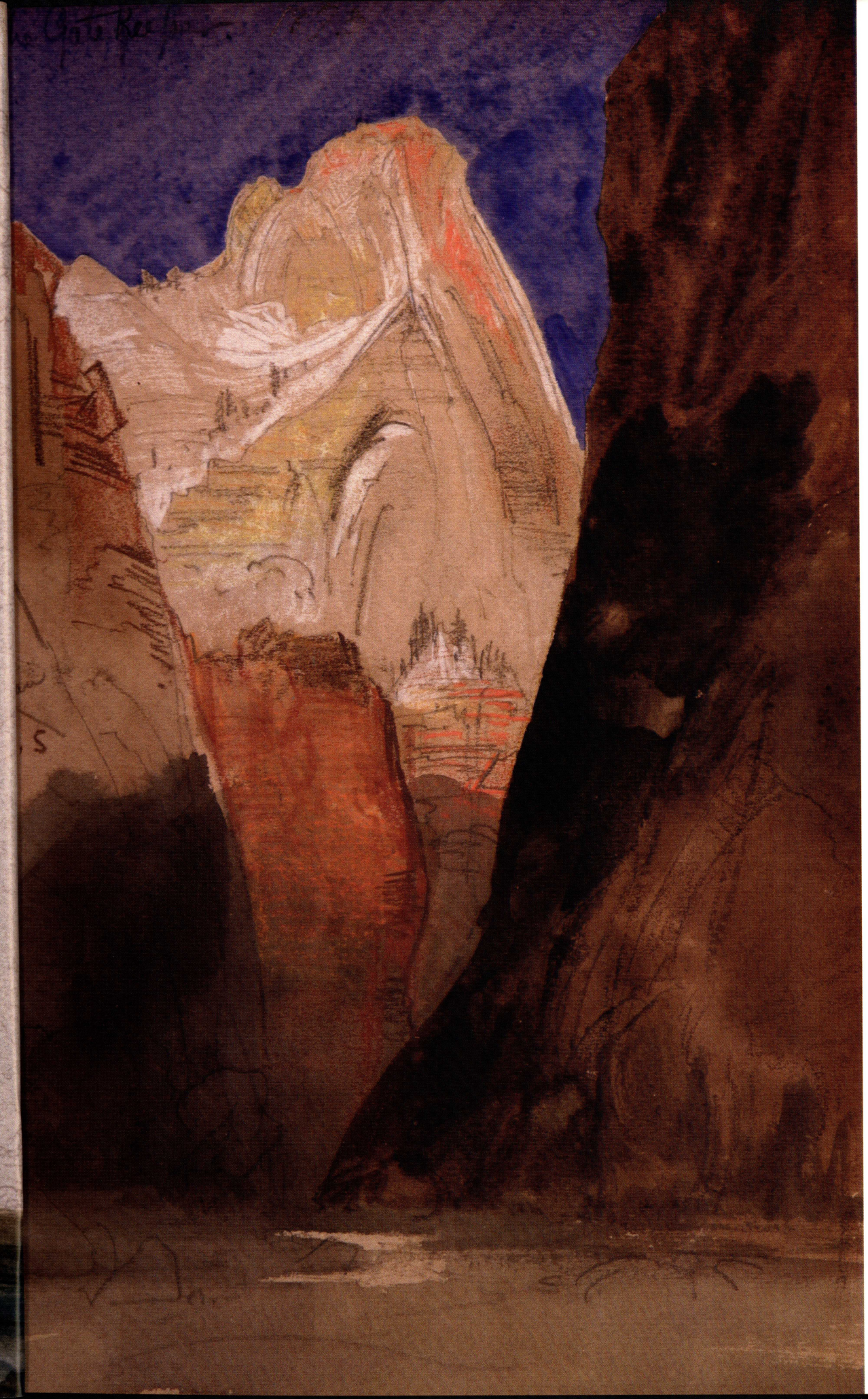
PHOTO PAGE ONE: *Bent's Fort.*

SARAH ERWIN

THOMAS MORAN: FIELDWORK

THOMAS MORAN (1837-1926) traveled and sketched extensively throughout his career, but the work relating to the American West is his most spectacular. He began what became a lifelong custom of sketching from nature in the 1850s, as he first contemplated an artistic career. Traveling on his own initiative, on government expeditions, and for commercial commissions, he made more than a thousand field sketches that, in effect, became an illustrated diary. They were also an essential resource in creating his finished paintings.

Moran never exhibited his field sketches, but they are striking in themselves and in what they tell us about the creative process. Each sketch represents a journey of the artist's eye across the tints, textures, and forms of the visible world.



PREVIOUS, LEFT AND RIGHT

Blue Lakes, Idaho

watercolor on paper, 0237.1578

Moran's mature sketching technique was relatively minimal, documenting vital data in the most economical manner. In this sketch the formations are penciled in place and a brilliant blue-green swath of paint defines the flowing water. At times Moran's field studies can easily be related to his finished paintings and at other times there is only a slight association to finished works. Amazingly, this is one of the sketches that contributed details for the painting *Shoshone Falls on the Snake River.*

In the Narrows, Zion Valley: The Gate Keeper

pencil and watercolor on paper. 0236.878

In summer, 1873, Moran joined John Wesley Powell's group exploring the canyons of the Colorado River. They arrived in what is now Zion National Park in late July. The Narrows, in the northeastern part of Zion Valley, fascinated Moran, and his deceptively simple sketch of the site reveals its characteristic geology accurately. Moran details the soaring light and dark rock pinnacles crowding so closely that in places the passable course narrows to fifty feet. Trees clinging to the steep slopes are recorded as tiny scribbles, emphasizing the height and immensity of the formation.

Pure sunshine all day. How beautiful a rock is made by leaf shadows! . . . . beyond all art in grace and delicacy, now still as if painted on stone, now gliding softly as if afraid of noise, now dancing, waltzing in swift, merry swirls, or jumping on and off sunny rocks in quick dashes like wave embroidery on seashore cliffs. —JOHN MUIR

Index Peak

watercolor and pencil on paper, 0236.849

Moran's second journey to the Yellowstone region, made in the last decade of the 19th century, was tedious and filled with delays. He used the time to sketch possible subjects for future paintings of Wyoming's remarkable landscape. In northeastern Wyoming, near the frontier town of Gillette, Moran composed a hasty study of Index Peak. The rock formations are in subtle shades of brown and rust; distant mountains are highlighted with white gouache. The mountains also show the mauves and purples that became characteristic in many of Moran's paintings.





The Grand Canyon of the Colorado
pencil and watercolor on paper, 0236.931

Throughout his career, Moran returned to the Grand Canyon. Many of his drawings of this area are small and focus on individual formations. This one is a remarkable exception, its large format encompassing miles of terrain. Moran carefully distinguished the varying strata, not with pencil line as in earlier work but with mauve and purple watercolor. He also inscribes notes, such as "The Grand Canon of The Colorado," "Looking West from Hances" is written in the lower left, and "Grand Canon from Higgins Point" in the lower center of the sketch.

The region about our camp is still wild, and higher lies the snow about as trackless as the sky.

—JOHN MUIR



Green River
watercolor on paper, 1879, 0236.891

The Green River in Wyoming was a perennial subject for Moran, who captured a great variety of images of the area's unusual geological formations and glorious natural color. Here the butte is both softly colored and starkly exposed against the sky, set off by a masterly use of white gouache. Bright white represents the mirror-like surface of the river, the chalky cliffs, and the cloud-filled sky.





Lower Geyser Basin

pencil and watercolor on paper, 0236.829

Upon arrival in Yellowstone, Moran (again traveling with William Henry Jackson) revisited familiar locations. At the Firehole River he sketched Lower Geyser Basin using more color, both transparent and opaque, than in many of the works from this trip. An unusual aspect of this study is the paper on which it is done. Moran most often used tan, blue, or green wove paper for his field sketches as well as for his studio watercolors. Here he painted on white laid paper, perhaps his personal stationery. The combination of paper and watercolor forms the reflections in the flat pools of water.



The Cliffs of Green River, Wyoming

pencil and watercolor of paper, 1879, 0236.930

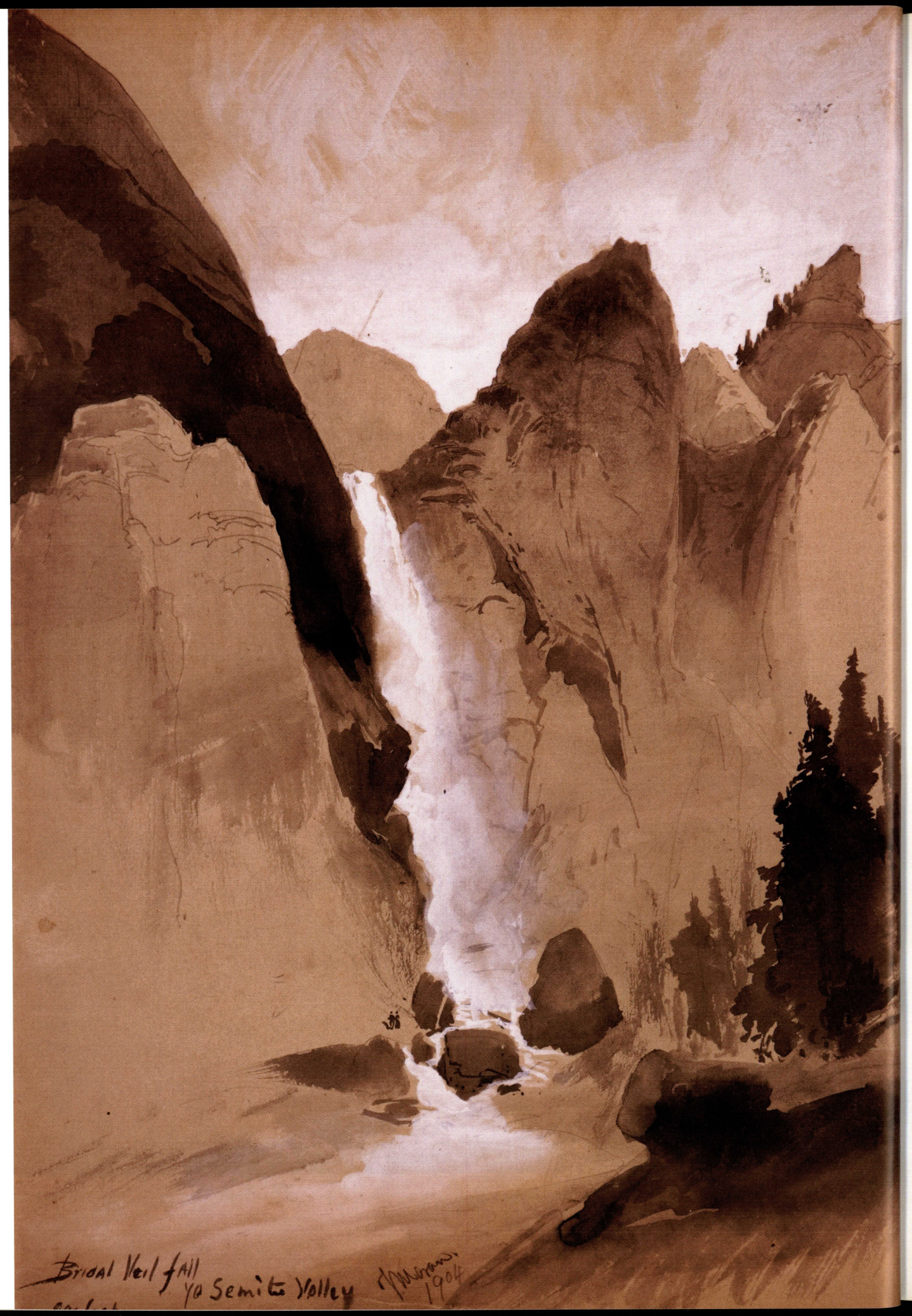
This scene is presented from a low perspective. Instead of focusing on a single formation, as do many of Moran's small sketches of the area, this one creates a panoramic view and was spread over two sheets, which Moran later mounted together. The expansive composition corresponds to the wedge-shaped expanse of the cliffs.

FOLLOWING PAGE

Port Neuf Canon, Idaho

pencil and watercolor on paper, 0236.855

This scene is located near Fort Hall in southeastern Idaho. The site appealed to Moran for its beauty as well as ease of access, and his sketch of it conveys a feeling of enchantment and mystery. The strong dark green of the foreground trees and their reflections, created using a wet-on-wet technique, draw the viewer's eye. The butte dominating the middle ground is washed in a rich spectrum of color that evolves from brown to gold to brick red. In the distance are a hazy violet moon and faraway mountains.



Bridal Veil Falls, Yosemite Valley
watercolor paper, 0237.836

Moran first traveled to California in 1872, sketching in the Yosemite Valley and along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Although it was autumn, when many snowmelt waterfalls diminished, Moran clearly responded to the unusual geology and landscape. He made numerous studies, but did not paint Yosemite in oil until thirty years later. This brief study captures the essence of the place.



When I reached the foot of the fall . . . on its illumined brow a group of yellow spangles of singular form and beauty were playing, flashing up and dancing in large flame-shaped masses . . . rising and falling in accord with the shifting forms of the water. . . . Nothing in clouds or flowers, on bird wings or the lips of shells, could rival it in fineness. It was the most divinely beautiful mass of rejoicing yellow light I ever beheld— JOHN MUIR

JOHN MUIR (1836–1914) EXPLORED THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS MOSTLY ALONE AND ON FOOT, DETAILING HIS ENRAPTURED EXPERIENCE IN JOURNALS. FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE SIERRA CLUB, HE IS CREDITED WITH HELPING TO SAVE THE GRAND CANYON AND PETRIFIED FOREST AS PROTECTED LANDS.

Upper End of Cottonwood Canyon
pencil and watercolor on paper, 0236.884

Fulfilling a commission from the Union Pacific Railroad to promote tourist travel, Moran trekked through Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming. Cottonwood Canyon, a silver-mining region in central Utah, particularly appealed to his color sense. Moran's sketches of Cottonwood Canyon are among the most detailed he made in the field. In this one, gleaming white gouache defines enormous boulders that dwarf two diminutive figures.

James Abert and the Canadian River Exploration of 1845

RANDY RAMER

Bent's Fort, 2 August 1845

The young man emerged from his tent carrying pencils and paper. He walked toward the riverbank, stopped, sat down in the grass. On the other side of the muddy Arkansas the fort rose up like a behemoth. An arid, near empty landscape provided only the faintest backdrop for its mud-brick bulk. Its form was simple yet seemed ancient, its broad walls and turrets reminded him of a medieval fortress. He set pencil to paper and began to draw. As he sketched, he may have thought of the coming months, his mission to explore and map the Canadian. Of that river and how it wound through Comanche and Kiowa lands. He thought perhaps of danger and untimely demise. If those were his thoughts, they did not cause his hand to waver. He was a meticulous draftsman. An image of the fort began to take form on the paper before him.

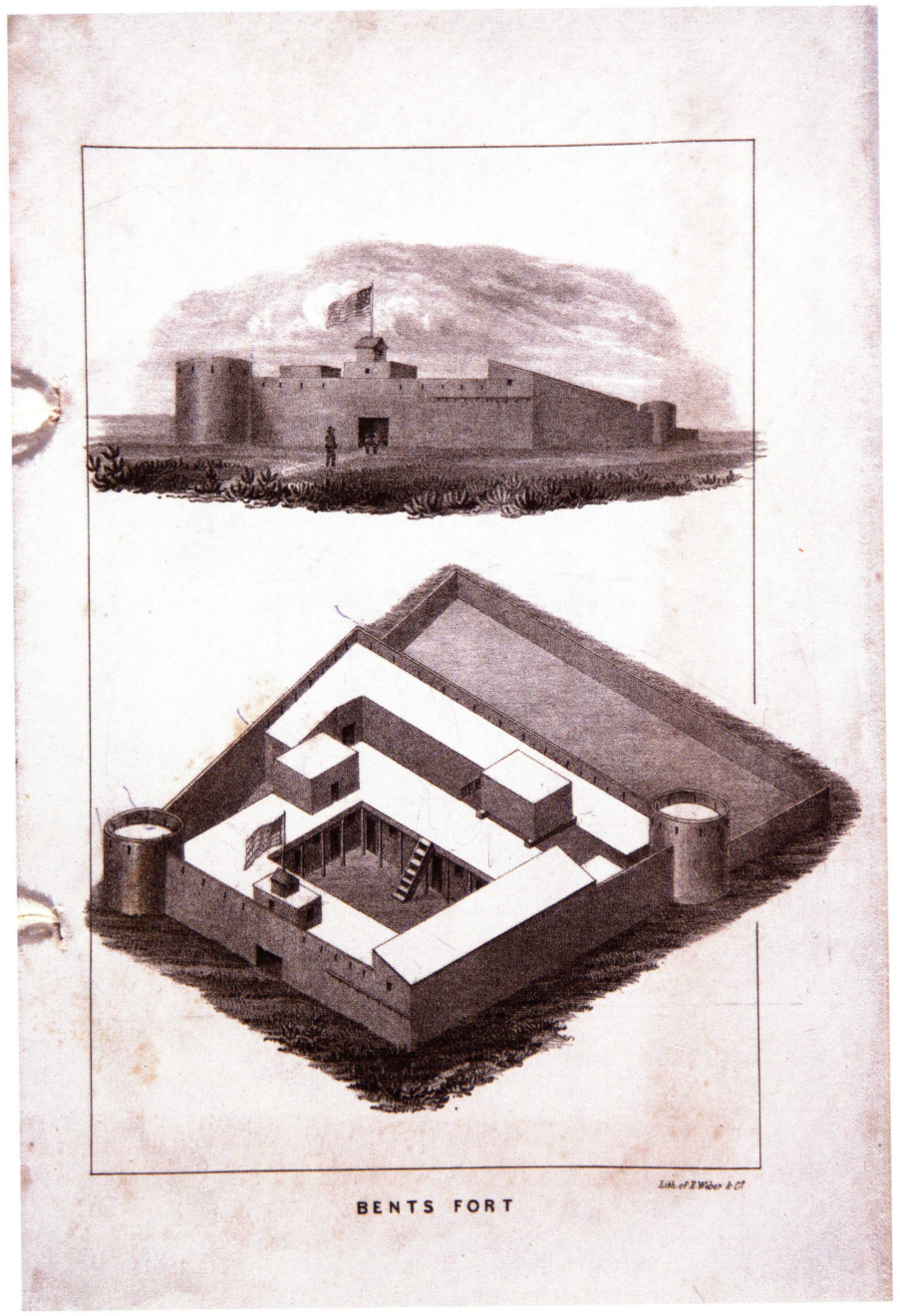
James W. Abert was born in 1820 in Mount Holly, New Jersey, to a military family. His grandfather, John Abert, came to America from France in 1780 with the forces of Comte de Rochambeau, landing in Rhode Island to assist George Washington in his decisive march against Cornwallis at Yorktown. His father, John James Abert, was a graduate of West Point who became chief of the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers in 1838, serving with distinction for well over two decades.

James William Abert continued the family military tradition, entering the academy at West Point upon graduation from Princeton. During his time at the academy, he was surrounded by such notable fellow cadets as William Tecumseh Sherman, Richard S. Ewell, and John Pope. Abert was not notable for academic prowess. In his third year, Cadet Second Class Abert received sixty-two demerits or "brownies," rivaling a young Ulysses S. Grant who had earned sixty-seven. He finished fifty-fifth in a class of fifty-six, just behind



Vincent Colyer
Crossing the Arkansas River, 1867, watercolor on paper, 0266.1375

Facing page: The massive bastions of Bent's Fort were made of adobe over a foot thick.
Photographs of Bent's Fort and the surrounding countryside are by Shane Culpepper, Gilcrease photographer. Shane accompanied Gilcrease curator Randy Ramer on an expedition through the region in August 2005—exactly 160 years to the week after Abert.



J. J. Abert
Bent's Fort, *from Report of an Expedition on the Upper Arkansas and through the Country of the Camanche Indians, 2426.75-4*

James Longstreet. Abert, however, excelled in art. Indeed, his talents were so appreciated at the academy that in 1848, a year after his final western expedition, he would be appointed assistant professor of drawing.

James Abert was brevetted 2nd Lieutenant in 1842, serving with the 5th Infantry until his appointment to the Corps of Topographical Engineers in 1843. In March of 1845, his father, Colonel Abert, informed the young Lieutenant that he was to be appointed to a detachment under the command of the venerable "Pathfinder," Captain John C. Frémont. Frémont's orders for his third and final reconnaissance were to "strike the Arkansas as soon as practicable, survey that river, and if practicable survey the Red River without our boundary line."

Frémont's third expedition was largely organized by the federal government in anticipation of war with Mexico. While making scientific observations and gathering specimens were considered of great importance, learning the physical layout of the land and its waterways would be crucial in the event of open hostilities. The reconnaissance would focus on the demeanor of native peoples as well. The various bands of Comanches living in the Texas border country had warred with Texans for many years. Raids and bloodshed were commonplace all along the Llano Estacado and beyond. Knowledge of Indian attitudes toward Americans would be indispensable, particularly if troops or supply trains were to be dispatched across Indian lands. The Canadian River reconnaissance would also be an exercise in governmental authority. The federal government wanted an accurate account, a reliable survey compiled under its own auspices.

In April of 1845, Colonel John Abert informed Captain Frémont of a minor change regarding the upcoming expedition. In a brief letter, the Colonel suggested that "if you find it desirable, you will detach a Lieutenant and party to explore the Southern Rocky Mountains and the regions south of the Arkansas." A few sentences further in his formal directive, Colonel Abert informed Frémont that his twenty-four-year-old son had been assigned to the expedition. The pieces were set in place. Frémont departed with his men. Upon reaching Bent's Fort, he formed a southern company, with Lieutenant Abert as its chief commander.

In the sun of that August afternoon, Lieutenant James W. Abert was thrilled beyond his own imaginings. To him, the wilderness was rife with potential. The land and its features, its plants and animals were an inspiration. The young Lieutenant considered himself a naturalist as well as an explorer. He carried with him works by both Audubon and Cuvier. He was well acquainted with Thomas Pennant's *History of Quadrupeds* and Richard Harlan's *Fauna Americana.* Abert's father had long been interested in the sciences and his son had obviously been influenced by his example. Young Abert was taken with the Plains bison. He was awed by the vastness of herds Frémont's party had happened upon en route to the Bent brothers' fort. This passion would ultimately result in valuable scientific information regarding the natural environment of the Southern Plains and in a vital record of the West, including literary descriptions as well as artistic renderings of places, landscapes, and animals unknown in the East.

Abert considered himself a "practical artist," a journalist. Like George Catlin before him, Abert was struck with a fascination for native peoples. He wanted to capture their likenesses. He wanted to document the distinct qualities of their physical appearance and the general features of their dress and adornment. He wanted to set down a record of their existence and bring back with him a new understanding of American Indian societies. As he sketched Bent's Fort across the Arkansas, unusual faces appeared to him, the faces of the Indians he had seen just after his arrival, and he recorded their images on paper. While these drawings did not appear in the official government document, Abert inserted the original sketches into a copy that he later gave to his parents.

Abert considered himself a "practical artist," a journalist.

John Mix Stanley
Western Landscape with Buffalo, *oil on canvas, ca. 1855, 0126.1140*



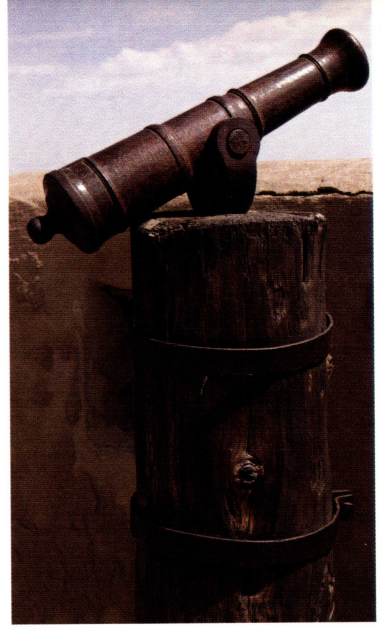
On 15 August, Abert received his official orders from Captain Frémont. He was to proceed immediately southward. His party was to commence its survey of the Canadian "from its source to its junction with the Arkansas, taking in his way the Purgatory River and the heads of the Washita." Frémont had considerable knowledge of the region. He knew the various names of given waterways, Mexican as well as Indian designations. While he relied on the accounts of others, the captain undoubtedly had an idea of what young Abert would find on his journey through Comanche territory. He attempted to secure the services of a well-known Kiowa guide for the lieutenant, but "Tah-kai-buhl, a man of great influence among all the Indians of that region," refused his request. As he continued to make arrangements for the southern detachment, Indian antagonism remained at the forefront of Frémont's mind.

Along with Abert, Frémont assigned another brevet second lieutenant, William G. Peck, to the southern detachment. Peck was the same age as Abert but had graduated from West Point the previous year, first in his class. Peck excelled in mathematics, which would serve the expedition well in the technical aspects of its survey. Both officers were largely inexperienced. Jessie Benton Frémont referred to Abert in a letter as seeming "unskilled in exploration." Regardless of his wife's opinion in the matter, Captain Frémont was confident in both Abert's and Peck's abilities, recording that "It is well to say here that on the journey to Bent's Fort I had been much prepossessed in their favor. They had shown themselves well qualified for such an expedition which as of course was entirely new to them." Frémont also arranged for a pair of hunters, Hatcher and Greenwood, to accompany the southbound party as far as the Bents' trading posts on the Canadian. John L. Hatcher was born in Virginia and spent much of his youth in Ohio. He moved to the Rockies around 1835 to work as a trapper and trader and eventually became one of the Bent brothers' most valuable employees. His exploits and experiences among native peoples greatly impressed young Abert, who later wrote that "Hatcher appeared to be a universal favorite with all the roving tribes that had ever dealt with him." The second hunter, who Abert refers to simply as "Greenwood," is probably John Greenwood, who had fled Fort Hall after the killing of an Indian. He was known as an accomplished hunter and marksman.

Perhaps the most notable member of the expedition, with the exception of Abert himself, was Thomas Fitzpatrick. Born in Ireland near the turn of the century, Fitzpatrick immigrated to America and was working as a trader and trapper by the age of seventeen. His experience and knowledge of western lands and their inhabitants would keep him in constant demand for much of his life. In 1841, he led the first train of emigrants to the Pacific. "Broken Hand," as he was often called, became a trusted guide to both Frémont and Kearny. He later became a government agent to Southern Plains tribes. Significantly, Fitzpatrick would act as chief negotiator in the Fort Atkinson Treaty of 1853, which allowed federal roads and military posts to be placed on Indian lands. Frémont was pleased that his trusted friend had agreed to guide the southern expedition. Fitzpatrick's abilities were immediately recognized. Abert noted his initial impression in his journal, calling his guide "a gentleman eminently qualified in every respect to fill the arduous and responsible station assigned him."

Abert's party consisted of thirty-five men. Except for Abert and Peck, all were civilians from diverse backgrounds. Nearly a third were French, two were African Americans, and the others were Irish and English. While their status as slaves or freedmen is not known, the "two colored men" Raphael Harrison and Silas Sublette are listed separately, as if an addendum to the other members of the party, in Abert's official account. Perhaps tellingly, Frémont's account numbers the party at only thirty-three.

The company's outfit consisted of fifty-six mules, four wagons, seven horses, and eight "prairie-fed beeves," which Abert noted were for "use on the emergency of not finding game." The party would employ four large, circular tents each sleeping up to ten individuals. On 16 August, the mule train abandoned the relative comforts of Bent's Fort and headed south at an enthusiastic pace, making fifteen miles on the first day's march. None was more enthusiastic than the young lieutenant. Abert describes his men as being arrayed in "picturesque costume" which gave "involuntary pleasure to one accustomed to the stiff dress of the American citizen. . ." His journal entry displays his enthusiasm.



Small cannons positioned atop the bastions at Bent's Fort were not used for defense but to signal the arrival of trade caravans and to welcome visitors.

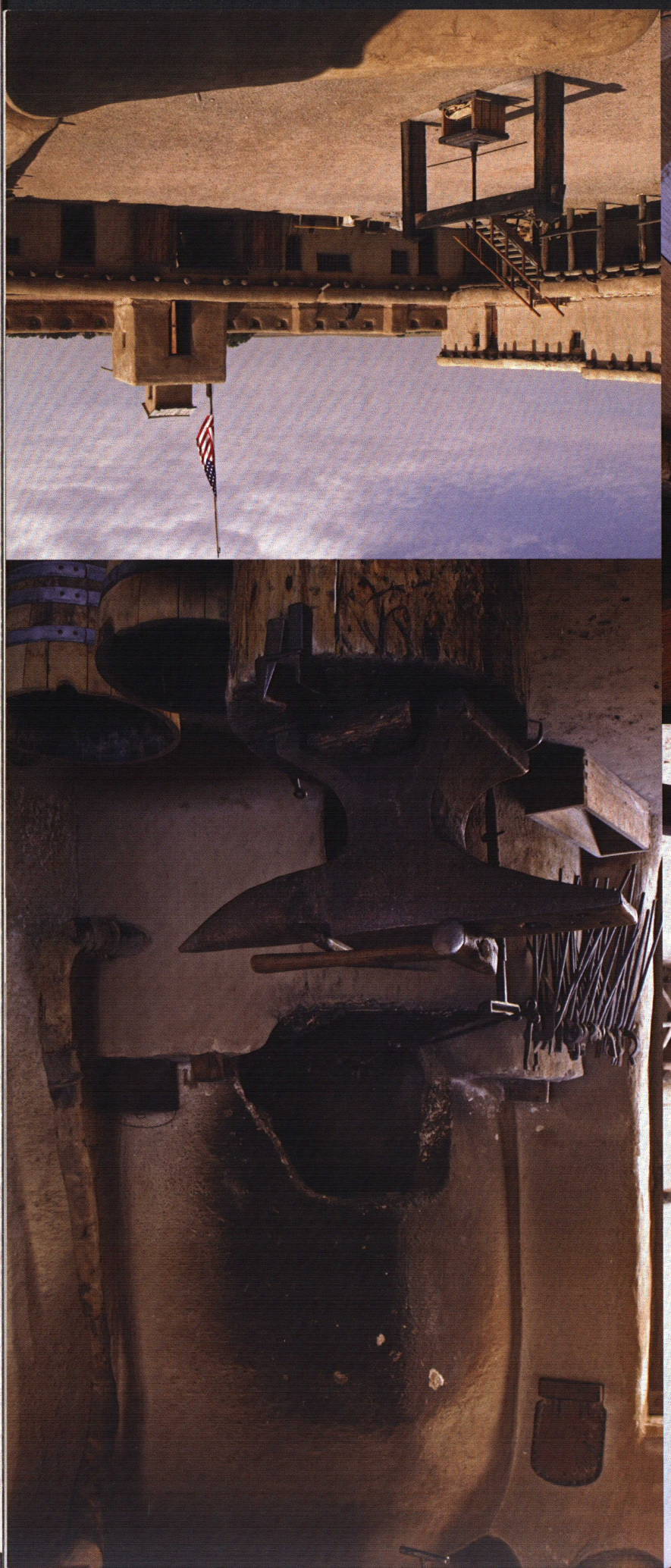


Vincent Colyer
Fort Gibson, Indian Territory in 1869, watercolor on paper, 0226.1372



ABERT'S ROUTE SOUTH OF RATON PASS, NEW MEXICO, PHOTOGRAPHED IN 2005. IN 1845, THE LAND WAS STILL PART OF MEXICO. ABERT'S EXPEDITION ENCOUNTERED SUDDEN RAINS AND HAILSTORMS THAT ARE STILL COMMON IN THE REGION.

BENT'S FORT WAS BUILT IN 1833 BY BROTHERS WILLIAM AND CHARLES BENT AND THEIR BUSINESS PARTNER CERAN ST. VRAIN. ORIGINALLY CALLED FORT WILLIAM, IT BECAME THE HEADQUARTERS OF BENT, ST. VRAIN AND COMPANY, WHICH DOMINATED THE FUR TRADE THROUGHOUT THE REGION. THE FORT WAS ABANDONED IN 1849 AND LATER REPLACED BY A NEW ONE AT BIG TIMBERS SOME 40 MILES AWAY. IN THE MID 1970S IT WAS RECONSTRUCTED AND IS NOW A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.













He is dressed in buckskin breeches with deep fringe along the outer seam, a leather strap across the shoulders to which is affixed the awl and bullet mold and sustaining the powderhorn and bullet pouch. . . Each wears some gaudy colored calico shirt and a belt bearing the scalping knife. The unerring rifle, with its cover and wiping stick, a blanket overcoat, together with a couple of red, blue, or white blankets, constitute his whole equipment when mounted on his untiring mule.

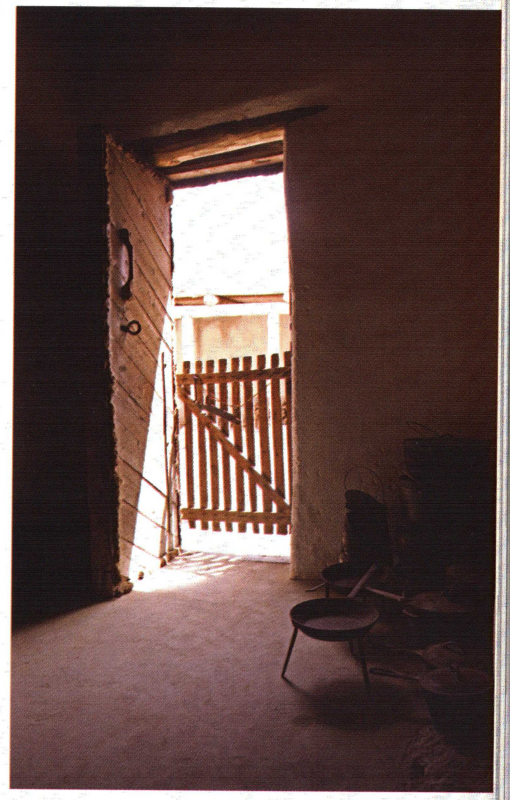
J. J. Abert
Sketch of a Day's Travel,
from Report of an Expedition on the Upper Arkansas and through the Country of the Camanche Indians, 2426.75

While Abert wrote that he was issued both a chronometer and a sextant, "the stock of meteorological instruments brought out by Capt. Frémont had been reduced so low by repeated accidents that he was unable to furnish us with a single barometer." Abert and Peck were in constant concern for the safety of their scant tools. They were concerned about their accuracy as well. Upon citing the longitude and latitude of his first observations, Abert cautions that the precision of later readings would progressively wane. "Although the chronometer might be accurately rated on setting out, it is hardly to be supposed that. . . the rough country we were obliged to pass would not have occasioned some slight irregularity." It was an accurate prediction. Their observations of 16 August would be the only accurate readings of the entire survey, the remainder only what Abert called "very good proximate results."

Abert's journal remains the most comprehensive and reliable account of the Canadian River reconnaissance, but it was not the only written record of the expedition. A second account was kept by Isaac Cooper, a member of Abert's command. Later published under the pseudonym "Francois des Montaignes," Cooper's account was compiled for popular consumption. It was originally published in the mid 1850s, appearing in serial form in the *Western Journal and Civilian,* a monthly magazine printed in St. Louis, under the title "The Plains: Being No Less Than a Collection of Veracious Memoranda Taken During the Expedition of Exploration in the Year 1845, from the Western Settlements of Missouri to the Mexican Border, and from Bent's Fort on the Arkansas to Fort Gibson, Via South Fork of the Canadian-North Mexico and North-Western Texas." Cooper's version provides considerable confirmation of Abert's official report. It typically provides only trivia regarding the expedition yet remains useful in understanding the diverse points of view held by its participants. Cooper speaks highly of Abert's abilities, the lieutenant showing himself to be "a gentleman in every sense of the term. He threw aside the uncondescion [sic] which marked the overbearing exterior of Captain Frémont." According to Cooper, Abert "considered it no disrespect toward himself for anyone to put on a cleaner shirt."

The party descended the Purgatory River to Raton Pass, approaching the headwaters of the Canadian in Mexican territory. Abert diligently made notes of both flora and fauna. While Hatcher and Greenwood shot specimens, he sketched and made notations of findings in his journal. The country quickly became rugged. The wagons began their hindrance of daily progress that would continue throughout the remainder of the journey. But the party remained alive with anticipation. As they passed before the Spanish Peaks, also known as the Wah-to-yah or "Breasts of the World," and neared the great canyon of the Canadian, "we were almost wild with excitement," Abert noted. "While the scenery charmed us, the roughness of the road had quite a different effect on our jaded mules."

The Canadian River, or Guadal P'a to the Kiowa, meaning "Red River," began its movement eastward. Beyond the lush mountain streams of the canyon rolled seemingly endless prairie. The group following the river's course was awed by the vastness of the open landscape. Plants and animals were abundant. Antelope roamed freely in the distance. Wild turkeys thrashed in the brush as they passed. A sudden storm appeared, and the party was forced to take shelter under the wagons and mules. Hailstones as "large as musket balls" pelted them in what "would have been a laughable scene to a disinterested



Doorway to Ceran St. Vrain's quarters, Bent's Fort.



THE SPANISH PEAKS, SOUTH CENTRAL COLORADO, ALSO CALLED THE WAH-TO-YAH OR "BREASTS OF THE WORLD," WERE A WELL KNOWN LANDMARK BETWEEN BENT'S FORT AND RATON PASS ALONG THE SANTA FE TRAIL.

looker-on." The expedition was often forced to leave the river to avoid increasingly rugged terrain. As the wagons passed over gullies and around deep ravines, wild horses appeared. "Our jaded mules looked anxiously after them," Abert wrote. "And doubtless envied their freedom."

The party maintained regular progress without significant misfortune. Abert and Peck continued to make their daily observations. The hunters Greenwood and Hatcher secured a steady diet of meat. Wild plums and grapes were plentiful, with only sandburs to hinder their harvest. Some men of the party captured a skunk. "The French people who were with us caught it and ate it," Abert noted. "The odor, however, was too pungent to suit everyone's olfactories." Then as the party moved further eastward, the availability of suitable grass and water gradually became a concern. Rattlesnakes grew more numerous along a course which continually shifted around one ravine or small canyon to the next. And the men grew increasingly apprehensive for another reason as well. "We were now getting into a country where the utmost precaution became necessary to guard against the surprise attack of the roving Comanches. A day or two previous we had seen the telegraphic signal fires and the answering smoke which conveyed the intelligence of strangers, and perhaps enemies."

As the expedition made evening camp, Fitzpatrick suggested that the men construct a "kraal" (corral) to encircle the party and provide at least a measure of protection against a surprise attack. Thereafter, large trees were felled nightly and stacked to form a circle with the wagons and tents. When trees eventually became scarce, the party camped at the base of a ravine or other natural obstruction. Each night, their apprehension continued to build. They knew a meeting with the native people of the land was coming. As the mule train moved on, they eventually happened on an Indian trail, "the breadth and freshness of which showed that Indians were near, and in great numbers."

On 8 September, Abert wrote, "an Indian showed himself on the hills." The expedition slowed its march. The Indian followed alongside for nearly a half hour "always at a respectful distance." Abert sent out a single rider to meet with the "apparition." The stranger refused the effort at contact and "turned over the hill and galloped away."

The men trudged on, maintaining a tight formation. At the crest of a long sandy slope



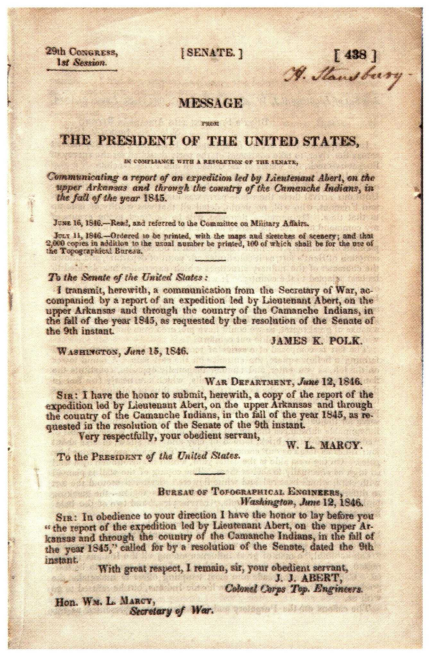
they stopped to peer over a ridge before passing. At the bottom of a deep ravine were hundreds of buffalo, the first they had seen on the Canadian, "quietly feeding on the nutritious vegetation." Dust clouds rose nearby as bulls began "dashing at each other in dread combat." The lieutenant was thrilled by the sight before him and at the prospect of "luxuriating on the fat ribs and tender loins." But as the hungry party crept closer, the herd bolted and quickly disappeared into the distance.

The presence of the herd only reaffirmed their suspicions. Indians were indeed nearby. Fresh tracks appeared as if made by "some invisible being," Abert recalled. Rains came and travel became even more difficult. The expedition made its way along an Indian trail—"always the practicable routes through the country." On the afternoon of 9 September, a group of Indians appeared suddenly along a ridge a short distance from the encampment. The two parties watched each other in silent apprehension. Thomas Fitzpatrick held up a white flag and cautiously rode out to meet the other group. They were Comanches, Abert later noted, from a band known as the "Buffalo Eaters." As the Indians entered the compound, Fitzpatrick made the necessary introductions. Abert offered their guests "such eatables as our camp afforded." He gave them some tobacco, their only worthwhile item of trade. After a brief conversation regarding the "peaceable nature" of the group's mission the Comanches "expressed their satisfaction" and rode away.

Over the next days, the expedition was never out of sight of the new acquaintances. Comanches again appeared at camp, which was always protected by a "kraal." Abert soon found himself "deeply engaged in all the mysteries of Indian diplomacy." With Fitzpatrick translating, he discovered a great deal of information that would ultimately be of interest in Washington. He learned that the Comanches had at last made peace with the Pawnee. He found that they had joined with the Kiowa to "fight the Spaniards and that they intended to overrun the lower country as far as Chihuahua." Abert noticed a Mexican captive among them. As the lieutenant quickly sketched him, the captive assured the artist that he was well treated and had no ready desire to return to his life before captivity.

The following evening, the party was awakened by a sudden commotion among the mules. They had seen "the occasional dark form flitting" against the dusk beyond the edge of the encampment at sunset. John Hatcher crawled from his resting place and took his

Report of an Expedition on the Upper Arkansas and through the Country of the Camanche Indians, prepared under the direction of J. J. Abert. 2426.75



29th Congress, 1st Session. [SENATE.] [438]

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN COMPLIANCE WITH A RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE,

Communicating a report of an expedition led by Lieutenant Abert, on the upper Arkansas and through the country of the Comanche Indians, in the fall of the year 1845.

JUNE 16, 1846.—Read, and referred to the Committee on Military Affairs.

JULY 11, 1846.—Ordered to be printed, with the maps and sketches of scenery; and that 2,000 copies in addition to the usual number be printed, 100 of which shall be for the use of the Topographical Bureau.

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit, herewith, a communication from the Secretary of War, accompanied by a report of an expedition led by Lieutenant Abert, on the upper Arkansas and through the country of the Comanche Indians, in the fall of the year 1845, as requested by the resolution of the Senate of the 9th instant.

JAMES K. POLK.

WASHINGTON, *June* 15, 1846.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *June* 12, 1846.

SIR: I have the honor to submit, herewith, a copy of the report of the expedition led by Lieutenant Abert, on the upper Arkansas and through the country of the Comanche Indians, in the fall of the year 1845, as requested in the resolution of the Senate of the 9th instant.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. L. MARCY.

To the PRESIDENT *of the United States.*

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,
Washington, June 12, 1846.

SIR: In obedience to your direction I have the honor to lay before you the report of the expedition led by Lieutenant Abert, on the upper Arkansas and through the country of the Camanche Indians, in the fall of the year 1845," called for by a resolution of the Senate, dated the 9th instant.

With great respect, I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,
Colonel Corps Top. Engineers.

HON. WM. L. MARCY,
Secretary of War.



Abert was immediately fascinated with the Kiowa. He found them engaging, their language "striking upon the ear like the sound of falling water."...

"They are fond of frolic," he wrote. "They laughed, chatted, and joked, much to the astonishment of some of us who possessed preconceived notions."

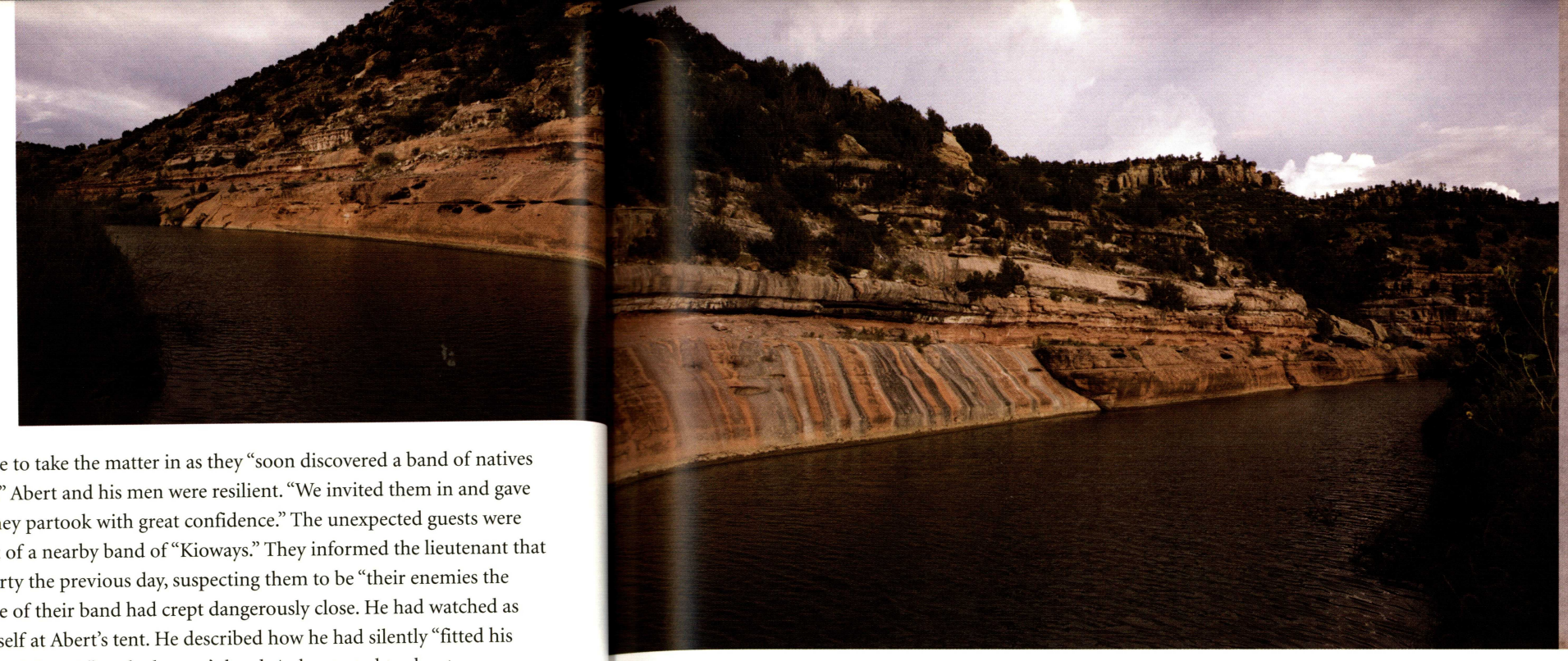
rifle to the door of Abert's tent. The hunter and Indian trader kept watch while the others attempted to sleep. By morning, the weary party eagerly greeted the light of day. Indian tracks surrounded the scanty fortress of the corral. The lieutenant and his party were shaken but had little time to take the matter in as they "soon discovered a band of natives riding toward our camp." Abert and his men were resilient. "We invited them in and gave them breakfast, which they partook with great confidence." The unexpected guests were not Comanches but part of a nearby band of "Kioways." They informed the lieutenant that they had followed his party the previous day, suspecting them to be "their enemies the Texans." In the night, one of their band had crept dangerously close. He had watched as Hatcher positioned himself at Abert's tent. He described how he had silently "fitted his arrow to the bowstring and drew it" to the hunter's head. As he started to shoot, something caused him to hesitate. "My heart whispered to me that he might be an American and I did not shoot."

"This was indeed a dread moment." Abert wrote. "The lives of our whole party hung upon the Indian's bowstring. We were just entering their country; they were around us in numbers and had blood been shed they would have hung about us until every individual was cut off. But the hand of almighty Providence prevented this sad termination. The Great Spirit whispered in the ear of the savage, He may be an American."

The party broke camp and proceeded on a direct march toward the Kiowa village where it was greeted with goodwill. Dozens of women and children "came flocking around anxious to trade." Abert was immediately fascinated with the Kiowa. He found them engaging, their language "striking upon the ear like the sound of falling water." As he and his companions made their way through the Indian camp, an old woman cried out from surprise and flung herself upon the hunter John Hatcher. She was overcome with joy, calling him "her son" as she wept. The surprised mountain man explained that she had long ago adopted him when he first traded among her people. The old woman was so overjoyed that she "insisted on his receiving a bale of tongues" as a sign of her affection.

Abert began making sketches while the men of the expedition settled alongside the Kiowa village. He noted many elements of their material culture. He was impressed with their dress and adornment and with their "noble bearing." The Kiowa were interested in the Americans as well. They were curious about the strangers who, to their disappointment, had nothing more to trade than some strands of tobacco and dried meat. Abert was taken with their good nature. "They are fond of frolic," he wrote. "They laughed, chatted, and joked, much to the astonishment of some of us who possessed preconceived notions."

After an evening's rest, "trade" was eventually completed and the expedition made preparations to take up its course along the river. Their departure was met with considerable sadness among their newfound friends. Abert had asked a "frank and generous" young Indian to accompany them. The young man seemed to "have his whole heart enlisted in our behalf." He reluctantly refused and the expedition left him behind with much regret. At the end of the day's march, however, Tiah-na-zi and his young wife



CANADIAN RIVER, EASTERN NEW MEXICO, AUGUST 2005. THE RIVER FLOWS SLOWLY ALONG THE WELL-WORN WALLS OF THE CANYON OF THE CANADIAN.

appeared on horseback at the party's camp. Abert's men greeted them warmly, the lieutenant assigning a place for their "wigwam" among the circle of tents. As darkness fell, the young man gave "indubitable proof" of his friendship. Ascending a hill overlooking the plain, he spoke loudly into the night, to the world around him, that all should keep away, nor "do us any mischief," Abert wrote. He called into the darkness that they "were Americans and not Texans, and that he, Tiah-na-zi," was their brother.

For the next several days, the expedition continued its survey along the Canadian with its Indian friends alongside. As they pressed on to the Llano Estacado, they were eventually forced to part ways. Many in the expedition presented gifts to the Indian couple, who accepted them courteously and said that "they were now rich." Hatcher and Greenwood also left the expedition, satisfied that the party would now pass peacefully through Indian lands. The "Staked Plain" rose out of the prairie in a seemingly endless expanse before them. In the days that followed, Abert noted the changing landscape, its plants and animals, its occasional bands of native people who appeared friendly yet always remained at a distance. The party traveled steadily, making its astronomical observations with each evening camp. They fed on buffalo as opposed to antelope, though both were prevalent along the course of the expedition. The wagons favored following the buffalo as well, as their wide and well-packed paths always provided "the choicest routes."

As the party continued eastward, they noticed a change in the weather. Autumn had begun and evenings were becoming cool. Small forests of blackjack oak appeared, growing denser along their procession. The "celebrated" Cross Timbers reached out before them in a great thicket of "glorious vegetation." Abert was in constant amazement at the changing flora. Bison herds were still abundant. Despite the cold, the party was content, their single course meal of buffalo "frying over the merry campfires." At last, the fall rains came, causing the expedition considerable delay. Flooded ravines and flowing creeks hindered travel, and forests of scrub oak continually forced detours from the course. On 10 October, the party crossed Chouteau's Creek and was "cheered by the sight of the ruins of Old Fort Holmes."

The expedition proceeded along the old trail that led from the abandoned fort. The forest was thick and they were forced to cut away overgrowth that had nearly reclaimed the



path. The weather continued getting colder, the ground now covered with a morning frost. As the trail became less overgrown, painted signs appeared, fastened to trees, with both pictures and letters of "half-civilized Indians," Abert wrote. "On a large, spreading oak, beneath which we breakfasted, I caused the letters 'U.S.' to be inscribed."

Soon after, the expedition met several Creek Indians tending cornfields alongside their cabin homes. They learned that Fort Gibson was only a day's march away. "As it was desirable to save our mules as much as possible," Fitzpatrick led the main party on to Fort Gibson while Abert and Peck, along with Pierre Balanger, went off to take readings at the mouth of the Canadian. The three almost immediately happened on an Indian trail toward the river valley. The path was rugged and steep, thick with fog as they made their descent. "Sycamore trees seemed to arch the heavens," Abert wrote. At sunset, as they neared Webber's Falls, the three men saw a lone house and approached it to find lodging for the night. The homeowner, a Cherokee Indian, greeted them suspiciously at the door with a gun but then lowered his weapon with a smile. He had mistaken the uncurried threesome for the "Starr Boys," a gang of local outlaws who were wanted dead or alive.

The following day would mark the end of the survey. Unceremoniously, Abert and Peck made the last of their observations at Fort Gibson and crossed the Arkansas River by ferry. By late afternoon, they found themselves "laughing at our cares, seated within the hospitable walls" of the fort and hearing their first reliable news from the East for many weeks. They learned of the annexation of Texas and of the war with Mexico. Abert was relieved, enjoying "those comforts and elegancies from which we had been so long banished."



Left and facing page: Buffalo on the Tallgrass Prairie. Photos by Robert D. Little, 2005

After a few days' rest, the party prepared for its final departure and the eventual disintegration of the group. They had traveled some 600 miles in just over sixty days. It was the first time wagons had traveled east from Bent's Fort along the Canadian River route. Abert and Peck had made the first astronomical observations through the region. While Abert's map incorporates the work of others, his charting of the winding Canadian remains an impressive accomplishment. The lieutenant's sketches and writings were invaluable documentation and remain so even today. They have become vital records of a time and place, of a population and its culture.

As the men went their separate ways, Abert crested a hill and looked out at the country before him. The trail was "literally lined with wagons of emigrants to Texas," he wrote. "The sky was clear with a balmy breeze to the south. The raindrops from the preceding night sparkled in the rays of the morning sun. . . We had a fine view of the surrounding country. After admiring the scene for a moment, we again pursued our route which was now on a good road."

A year after the Canadian River expedition, Abert once again headed west, joining General Stephen Kearny's Army of the West on its journey to New Mexico. There he and Peck participated in a reconnaissance of the region, surveying the Rio Grande pueblos and lands as far as Socorro. Afterwards Abert returned to West Point, where he taught drawing until 1850. By the 1860s, he had been promoted to captain. He served in the Shenandoah Valley during the early years of the Civil War and eventually was brevetted lieutenant colonel for "faithful and meritorious service." He left the army in 1864 after being severely injured by a fall from a horse. He later went into the mercantile business in Cincinnati, served as examiner of patents in Washington, D.C., and taught English literature at the University of Missouri. Abert died in Newport, Kentucky, in August 1897.



THE ANTELOPE HILLS WESTERN OKLAHOMA, AUGUST 2005.

SARAH ERWIN

A Wild and Pictured Country

GEORGE CATLIN (1796-1872), the first to devote his entire career to the West, set the benchmark for artists who came after him. Direct experience became a requirement for those who wanted to make authentic portrayals. The excursions Catlin and other artists made became pilgrimages, as they sought to encounter unknown landscapes and unfamiliar peoples. Writing in *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* (published in London in 1841) Catlin called the West a "wild and pictured country, which no one can realize unless he travels here and looks upon it." As for its inhabitants, he declared, anyone who would "record justly and correctly the character and customs of a people must go and live among them."

Catlin traveled to the Southern Plains in 1834 on what was perhaps the most perilous of his western journeys. The War Department had given him permission to accompany the First Regiment of United States Dragoons when it set out from Fort Gibson, a remote outpost on the Arkansas River, to invite a delegation of Southern Plains people to attend a general council at the fort. The group of 450 men and their commander, Colonel Henry Dodge, suffered greatly from summer heat and tainted water, and many, including Catlin, became seriously ill. More than a quarter died. Before illness forced him to abandon painting during this expedition, Catlin found the Comanche and Kiowa of great interest. The watercolors shown here are from the trip, or inspired by it. Quotes in the accompanying text are from Catlin's *Letters and Notes.*



HÁH-NEE, THE BEAVER
0226.1535

Háh-nee is described by Catlin as a "warrior of terrible aspect, and also of considerable distinction." The Comanches were among the earliest American Indians to acquire horses and use them to enhance the nomadic, bison-based culture. Catlin declared, "I am ready, without hesitation to pronounce the Comanchees the most extraordinary horsemen that I have seen yet in all my travels, and I doubt very much whether any people in the world can surpass them."

KOTS-O-KÓ-RO-KÓ, THE HAIR OF THE BULL'S NECK
0226.1532

Catlin painted Kots-o-kó-ro-kó in the Comanche village in 1834. The objective of the dragoon's expedition was to lessen tensions between the Comanches, along with their allies the Kiowas and Wichitas, and the newly arrived tribes being removed from the East. Catlin's portrait contains significant red highlights; the symbol on the sitter's arm depicts the Plains use of pigments in bodily adornment.

ISH-A-RÓ-YEH, HE WHO CARRIES A WOLF
0226.1531

Ish-a-ró-yeh was named for the medicine bag he carried, which was made from wolf skin. Catlin recorded that he seemed to be the leader of the Comanche war party the dragoons encountered, "and in escorting us to their village, this man took the lead and piloted us the whole way." Ish-a-ró-yeh wears German silver arm bands and a variety of imported trade beads.

QUÁY-HÁM-KAY, THE STONE SHELL
0226.1539

While the dragoon regiment was with the Kiowas, Quáy-hám-kay kept close to the company surgeon, leading Catlin to believe he was a medicine man. Catlin depicted Quáy-hám-kay's face with great care. His intricate necklace reveals much about the extended trade of the 19th century, with beads imported from both Europe and Asia. A shell medallion and unusual feather headdress frame the sitter's dramatic expression.





TA-WÁH-QUE-NAH, THE MOUNTAIN OF ROCKS
0226.1530

Described as "an enormous man, whose flesh would undoubtedly weigh three hundred pounds or more," Catlin declared Ta-wáh-que-nah the largest Indian he had ever seen. The man received his name for saving the lives of a large Comanche group cornered by a powerful enemy. Ta-wáh-que-nah conducted the group to safety along a secret underground passage through a mountain of granite rocks. While his name reflects this event, Catlin commented that the meaning would have been "far more appropriate if it had been a mountain of flesh."



BÓN-SÓN-GEE, NEW FIRE
0226.1501

Catlin noted that this Kiowa leader was "called a very good man." Bón-són-gee is depicted wearing a boar's tusk and war whistle. He sits in front of a prairie landscape with teepees. Catlin seems to have struggled with anatomy here; Bón-són-gee's right arm is overly large and his right hand is misshapen. Yet the design of the squared-off bangs and the right angle of the feather present a pleasing composition.



WUN-PÁN-TO-MEE, THE WHITE WEASEL
0226.1493

According to Catlin, Wun-pán-to-mee and her younger brother Tunk-aht-óh-ye (left, page 37) were Kiowas who were purchased from the Osage. The dragoons were to take them to their tribe to be exchanged for a white captive. The portraits of both Wun-pán-to-mee and Tunk-aht-óh-ye show detailed faces with no backgrounds. Tender colors—soft blue and pale pink—predominate.



IS-SA-WÁH-TÁM-AH,
THE WOLF TIED WITH HAIR
0226.1533

Catlin states that Is-sa-wáh-tám-ah is a Comanche chief "of some standing in the tribe, and evidently of great influence, [being] put forward by the head chiefs, for their likeness to be painted in turn." German silver arm bands and bracelets with bead dangles draw attention away from the sitter's hands, which Catlin has struggled to depict in the proper dimensions. With his hand under his chin, Is-sa-wáh-tám-ah has a relaxed demeanor and pensive expression.



TUNK-AHT-ÓH-YE,
THE THUNDERER
0226.1540

Catlin painted Tunk-aht-óh-ye and his sister Wun-pán-to-mee before the dragoon expedition departed. The Kiowa boy of about nine or ten years of age was "killed at the Fur Trader's house on the banks of the Verdigris, near Fort Gibson, the day after I painted his portrait. . . . He was killed by a ram, which struck him in the abdomen, and knocking him against a fence."



EÉ-SHAH-KÓ-NEE,
THE BOW AND QUIVER
0226.1529

Catlin described Eé-shah-kó-nee as "head chief of his Comanche village. . . a mild and pleasant looking gentleman, without anything striking or peculiar in his looks; dressed in a very humble manner, with very few ornaments upon him, and his hair carelessly falling about his face and over his shoulders. The only ornaments to be seen about him were a couple of beautiful shells worn in his ears, and a boar's tusk attached to his neck."

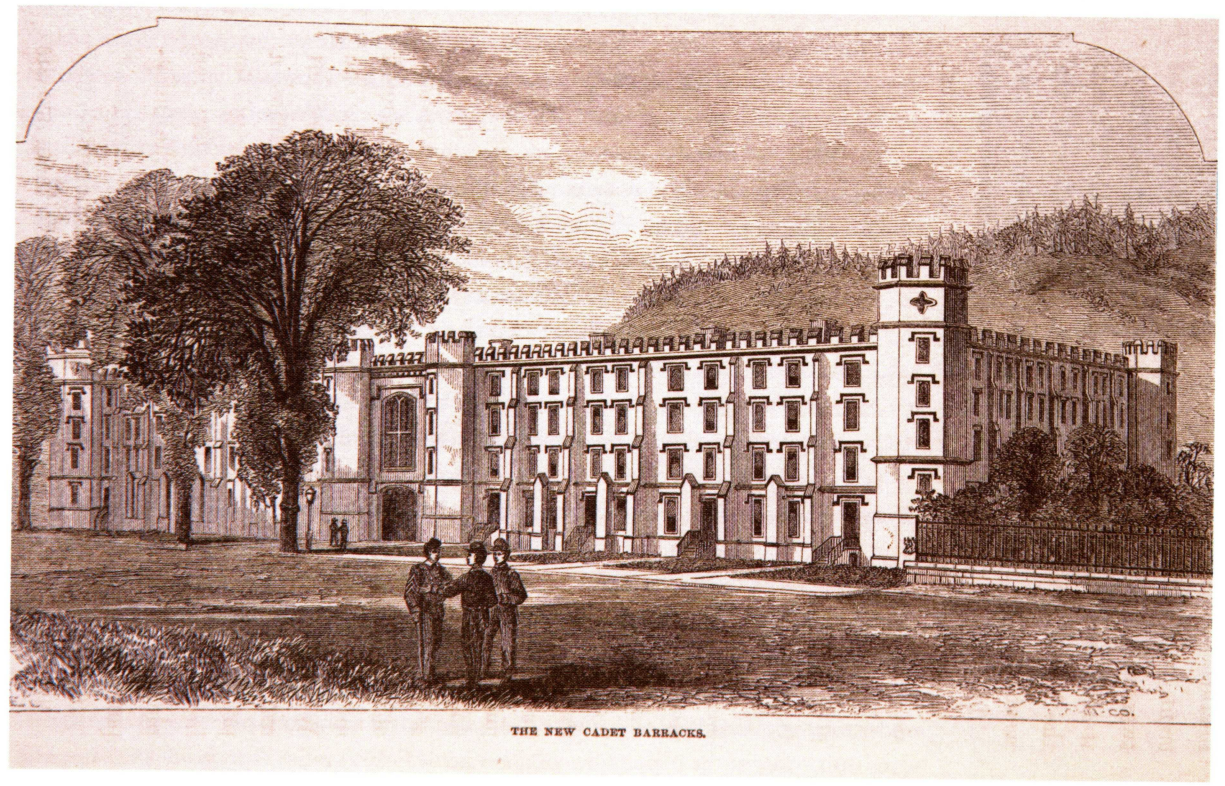


Map drawn by Samuel Lewis in 1804, Louisiana. map.80

Solider-Explorers

Exploring the West from West Point

JAMES P. RONDA THE UNIVERSITY OF TULSA



Captain Edward C. Boynton
The New Cadet Barracks
from History of West Point, 1863, 2626.889



WE THINK WE KNOW THE STORY of the United States Army in the West. After all, isn't this really Fort Apache and the cavalry and the Buffalo Soldiers—and movies like *They Died with their Boots On* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*—and if you are of a certain age, a television series like *Rin Tin Tin* or *F Troop?* This is the standard story, the textbook wisdom. Its stereotypes are everywhere. Glorious heroes, Indian-hating killers, incompetent bunglers.

In truth there were heroes; there were some haters and killers; and the Army did have its share of sub-standard soldiers. But I want to tell you a very different story—not a story that hides the failures and the faults, but one that can help us more fully appreciate the complex role of the Army in the West. It's a largely unknown and largely forgotten story. It begins with Thomas Jefferson and with two young officers named Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, and it continues until the 1870s. At the heart of this story is the United States Military Academy at West Point. The great exploration historian Donald Jackson often talked about "exploring the West from Monticello." We could call this story "exploring the West from West Point."





Jefferson Peace Medal, 1802, *Silver, 65.17*

Peace Medals

Early Spanish and French explorers started the custom of giving silver medals to American Indian leaders for diplomatic purposes. Traditionally, the British presented medals bearing images of their monarchs. Continuing this practice, U.S. presidents from George Washington through Benjamin Harrison (except John Adams who used medals from the Washington administration) had peace medals engraved on sheets of silver. It became conventional to melt down and restrike medals for each new president. Peace medals were produced in three sizes, and the largest ones were given to the most distinguished tribal leaders. Later, medals made of bronze were presented to leaders of lesser rank. During the 18th and 19th centuries peace medals were an important part of the government's relations with American Indians. Native people often regarded the medals as prized possessions. Over time, they also became important objects of diplomacy, history, and art.

Starting three years ago we began to observe a triad of remarkable bicentennials. These bicentennials commemorate events that have shaped our national history. And all of them are part of our story. In 2002 we celebrated Jefferson's founding of the United States Military Academy. In 2003 we took note of the Louisiana Purchase and began a three-year commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Three events—one man—one vision for the United States in the West.

JEFFERSON'S IDEAL: THE SOLDIER-EXPLORER

Thomas Jefferson wrote our national birth certificate—the Declaration of Independence; he was an essential player in the Louisiana Purchase; he sent Lewis and Clark into the West; and he established West Point. In the simplest terms, Jefferson was a creator of the United States, an author of a story in which we are all characters, and he surely invented, for better or worse, the *idea* of the American West.

Early in 1803, as the president made plans for what would become the Lewis and Clark Expedition, he had to make a fundamental decision. Who would lead his Corps of Discovery? Where would the explorers come from? What sort of organization should the exploring party have? Jefferson's choices would have vast consequences. And he did have several choices. He could have hired fur traders like those venturing out of St. Louis. He could have selected civilian employees who worked at federally-operated Indian trading posts. Instead—and here he was guided by his vast reading—he turned to the exploring tradition established by the European nations. Spain, France, and especially Great Britain used military and naval forces for exploring missions.

Jefferson lived in a time when the great explorers were military men—James Cook and George Vancouver, Jean François Galaup de La Pérouse and Alejandro Malaspina, and their success was a lesson not lost on the president. His choice of leaders for the Corps of Discovery placed the United States squarely in the same tradition. His private secretary, Captain Meriwether Lewis would lead the expedition. Lewis then turned to his friend from Ohio army days—William Clark—to become co-leader. What Lewis and Clark (and their senior sergeant John Ordway) fashioned was an infantry company that operated under the Articles of War, with all the drills, details, parades, and courts-martial of any army unit. Most of the men in the company came from frontier army posts; civilians who joined became enlisted soldiers. This was infantry on the move. And much of its survival and success would come from its tight organization.


View of the Wind River Mountains.

View of the Wind River Mountains, *from Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North Carolina in the Years 1843-44, prepared under the direction of J. C. Frémont. 2426.73*

Having assigned the Army the mission of exploring the West, Jefferson then made a second decision. In what would become the charter document for a century of government-sponsored western exploration, Jefferson spelled out his instructions in a letter to Meriwether Lewis in June, 1803. He gave Lewis and Clark one central mission: Find the water passage from the Atlantic to Pacific. And then listed half a dozen others—missions ranging from astronomy to zoology, climatology to Indian diplomacy. Jefferson wanted his army-explorers to be astute observers of the natural world, recording their observations in daily journals, notes, and on topographic maps.

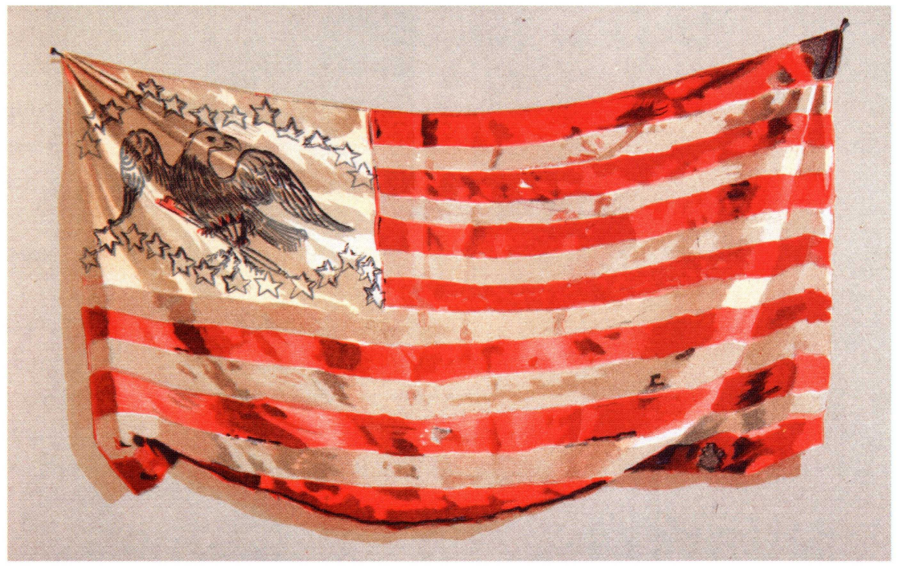
With Jefferson and Lewis and Clark we stand at the headwaters of our story. In 1803 the United States Army became the principal federal agency for the exploration of the West. For the next seventy years Army explorers would be at the forefront of the enterprise. Their intellectual mandate—their marching orders—came directly from the president as commander-in-chief. The Army in the West was not only to advance the American empire but to build an empire of the mind.

What Jefferson established with Lewis and Clark, and to a lesser extent with Zebulon Montgomery Pike, now became the American tradition. But it was soon to be tested in the crucible of war.

We think of the War of 1812 as an Atlantic coast affair— Francis Scott Key's "The Star-Spangled Banner," the burning of Washington, D.C., the Battle of New Orleans. But the war had a devastating effect on American interests in the West. The Sioux and their neighbors allied themselves with the British in Canada and sent American traders running for their lives back to St. Louis. In the Pacific Northwest the American fur trade outpost at Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia ended up in British hands. Simply put, the War of 1812 might have finally secured American independence but it was nearly a disaster for American fortunes out beyond St. Louis.

TROOPS UP THE MISSOURI

The first American foothold in the West—gained by Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Pike, and the Astorians—had been swept away by the winds of war. Once the war was over in 1814 it was plain to government leaders that the United States needed to reassert its presence and authority. In 1818, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun planned a complex set of maneuvers that would send American troops up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers to show the flag in the West. At the same time, Calhoun established a Scientific Expedition



Frémont's Rocky-Mountain Flag, *from Memoirs of My Life, John Charles Frémont, 1887, 2325.695*

View of Pike's Peak from Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North Carolina in the Years 1843-44, prepared under the direction of J. C. Frémont. 2426.73



under the command of Major Stephen H. Long. Long was not a graduate of West Point but he did teach mathematics at the Academy for a year. A professional civil engineer, Long took seriously the Jeffersonian ideal of the soldier-explorer. In 1819, following Calhoun's orders, Long organized the first large-scale American scientific expedition into the West. He recruited artists Samuel Seymour and Titian R. Peale, a botanist, a zoologist, and several other professionals for his journey. For the first time scientists, not gifted amateurs, were part of an American exploring party. In 1819-1820 the Long Expedition put soldier-explorers back into the West, surveying along the Platte River as far as present-day Denver before swinging back to Fort Smith by way of what is now parts of Texas and Oklahoma. Seymour and Peale produced the first visual records of the American West and the scientists published significant results from their observations. With Lewis and Clark and the Long Expedition the pattern was set. The soldier-explorer was in the West to stay.

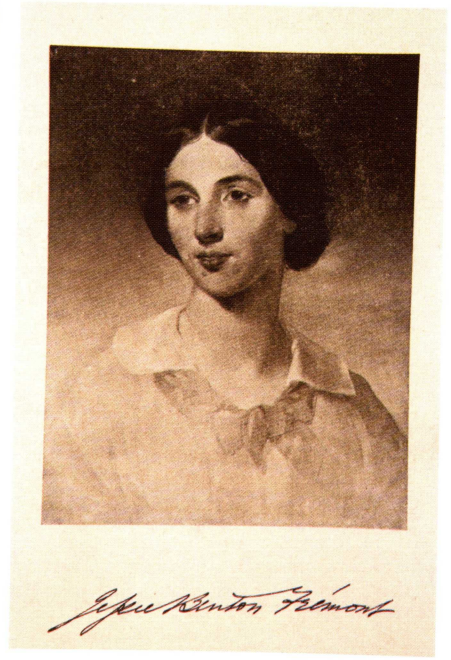
ENGINEERING THE WEST: ABERT AND FRÉMONT

As the United States grows in size and complexity in the 1820s and 1830s, the story takes on a new dimension. Now West Point is at center stage. The Academy had become—thanks to a gifted faculty and a brilliant superintendent—one of the intellectual and educational centers for the young republic. West Point professors were in touch with the best European science, both civil and military. The Academy curriculum was among the finest in the nation, with a heavy emphasis on mathematics, physics, engineering, cartography, and topographic observation. Until the establishment of a full-fledged engineering course at Rensselaer Polytechnical Institute in 1829, West Point was the only institution that offered instruction in civil engineering.

L. Nagel
John Charles Frémont, *engraved after an unknown artist, lithograph on paper, ca. 1856, 1526.139*

Portrait of Jesse Benton Frémont *from Memoirs of My Life, John Charles Frémont, 1887, 2325.695*





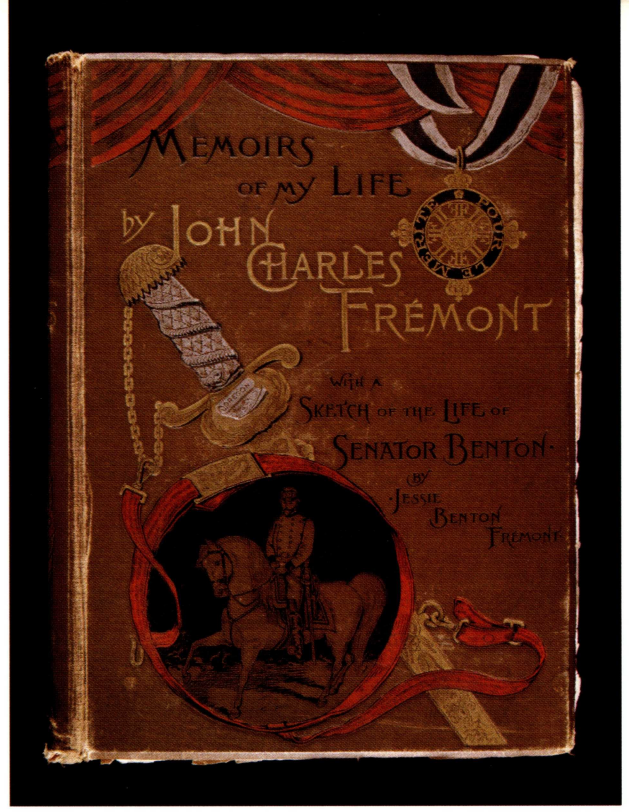
Topographical engineers did everything that civil engineers do today, from surveying and mapping to large-scale civil and military construction projects. By the 1830s—with an expanding number of road, railroad, and canal projects—it was clear that the demand for skilled engineers in both the eastern states and the new western territories was dramatically increasing. And as many senior officers knew, talented engineers were leaving the Army for lucrative civilian jobs. When the entire Army was reorganized in 1838, the Bureau of Topographical Engineers was separated from the Corps of Engineers and given its own status. The guiding spirit for what we now call the Topographical Engineers was its commanding officer, Colonel John James Abert. Abert was a professional soldier, West Point class of 1811, an experienced Washington politician, and a well-trained civil engineer. Under his leadership, Army explorers were ready to fulfill the orders given years before by President Jefferson.

Abert's most famous Topographical Engineer was also his most troublesome officer. John Charles Frémont, known to many as The Pathfinder, was a lieutenant in the Topographical Engineers. Unlike most others, he was not a West Point graduate. But he was carefully trained in the sciences of the day. His teacher was the distinguished French scientist and explorer Joseph Nicollet. Equally important, Frémont was well connected. His wife was the young, smart, and beautiful Jessie Benton Frémont. Her father was Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, the great champion of Manifest Destiny and American empire in the West.

Abert recognized Frémont's exploring talents; and it certainly helped to have Senator Benton as patron and father-in-law. In 1842 Frémont was assigned to map the Oregon Trail as far as the Continental Divide in present-day Wyoming. The following year Colonel Abert sent young Frémont on a much larger and more important exploring expedition. Between 1843 and 1844 the Frémont expedition marched a great swing through the West—from St. Louis to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, then south into Mexican California and back to St. Louis by way of what is now Utah and the Great Basin.

This was the first American circumnavigation of the West. It was also a clear violation of Abert's orders; but Frémont always ignored orders when they did not serve his grand purposes. Frémont's companions included great western scouts like Kit Carson and a gifted cartographer named Karl Preuss. Frémont's western expeditions—he would eventually make three before resigning from the army—were part great adventure, part serious science, and part military reconnaissance. In 1843 there was an American West, a Mexican West, a British West, and a Native American West, and war seemed inevitable somewhere on the frontier.

When Frémont's second expedition was complete, his wife Jessie took his notes and together they wrote a book that became a national bestseller. The government printed thousands of copies and private publishers issued thousands more to a public eager to learn about the frontier and read a good adventure story as well. Whether the Army liked it or not, it now had a national hero on its hands—and more than that, a national icon. John Charles and Jessie loved it, and they danced in the limelight for all it was worth.



Memoirs of My Life by John Charles Frémont, 1887, 2325.695

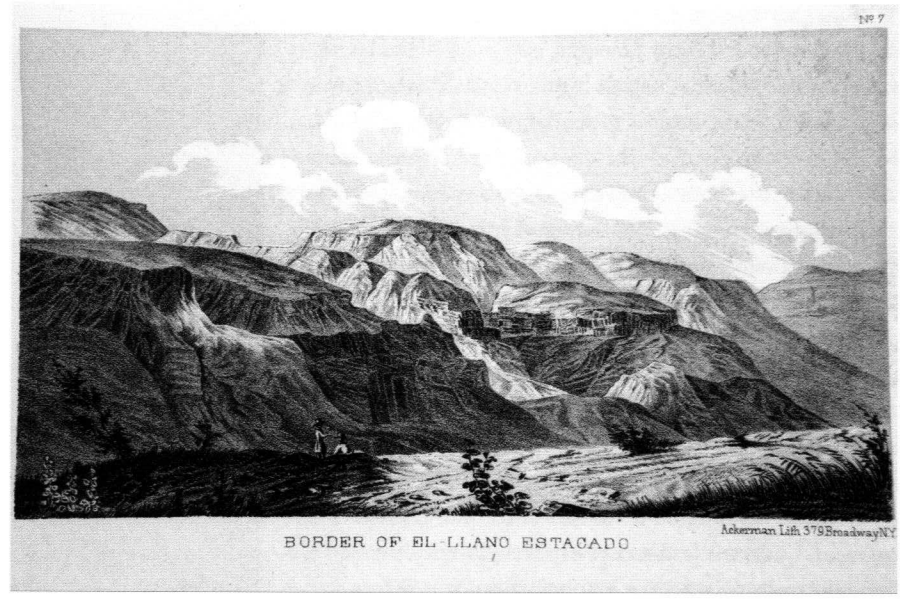
Early Book Illustrations

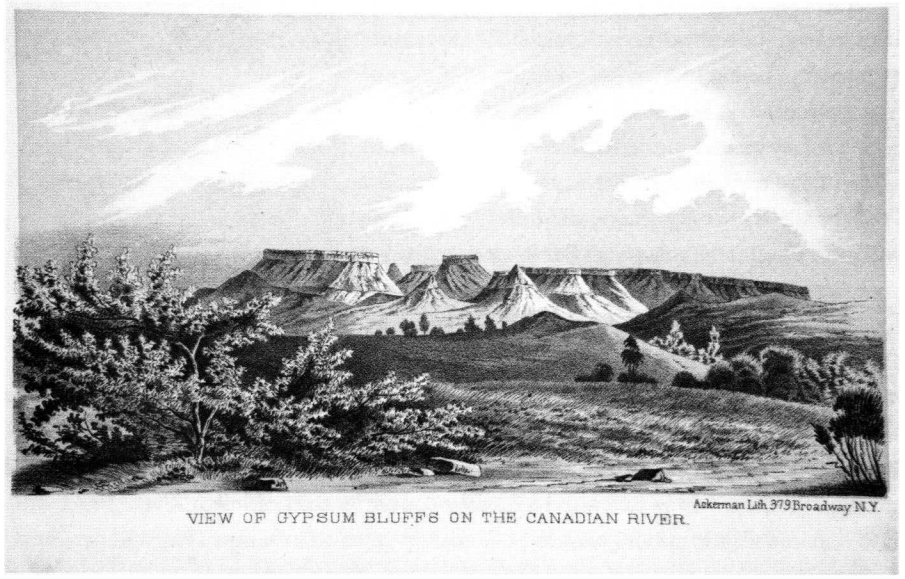
The mass reproduction of images from books and periodicals allowed a greater segment of the public the opportunity to see important people and exotic places. Frémont's memoir contained views of many of the famous people he encountered and the places he traveled. There were also abundant images of John Charles Frémont himself.

In the 1800s, relief printing and lithography were the two main methods for reproduction of images. Relief printing includes woodcuts, engraving, etching, and typesetting. The process involves cutting away areas of the printing vehicle (woodblock, etching plate, etc.) so that the area to be printed remained, but was now raised from what had formerly been a flat surface, then applying ink and pressing the block or plate against paper. Lithography involves drawing an image with a grease pencil, applying a special ink to the surface which only sticks to the drawing, and pressing the inked surface onto paper.

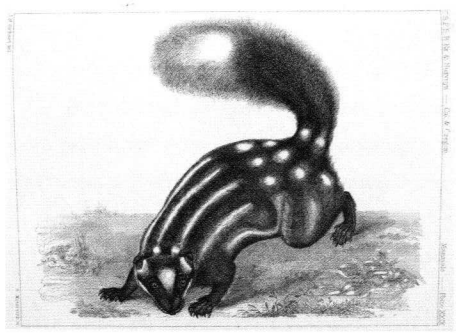
Border of El-llano Estacado, No. 7, *from Exploration of the Red River of Louisana, in the Year 1852, prepared under the direction of Randolph B. Marcy. 2426.84*

View of Gypsum Bluffs on the Canadian River, No. 5, *from Exploration of the Red River of Louisana, in the Year 1852, prepared under the direction of Randolph B. Marcy. 2426.84*





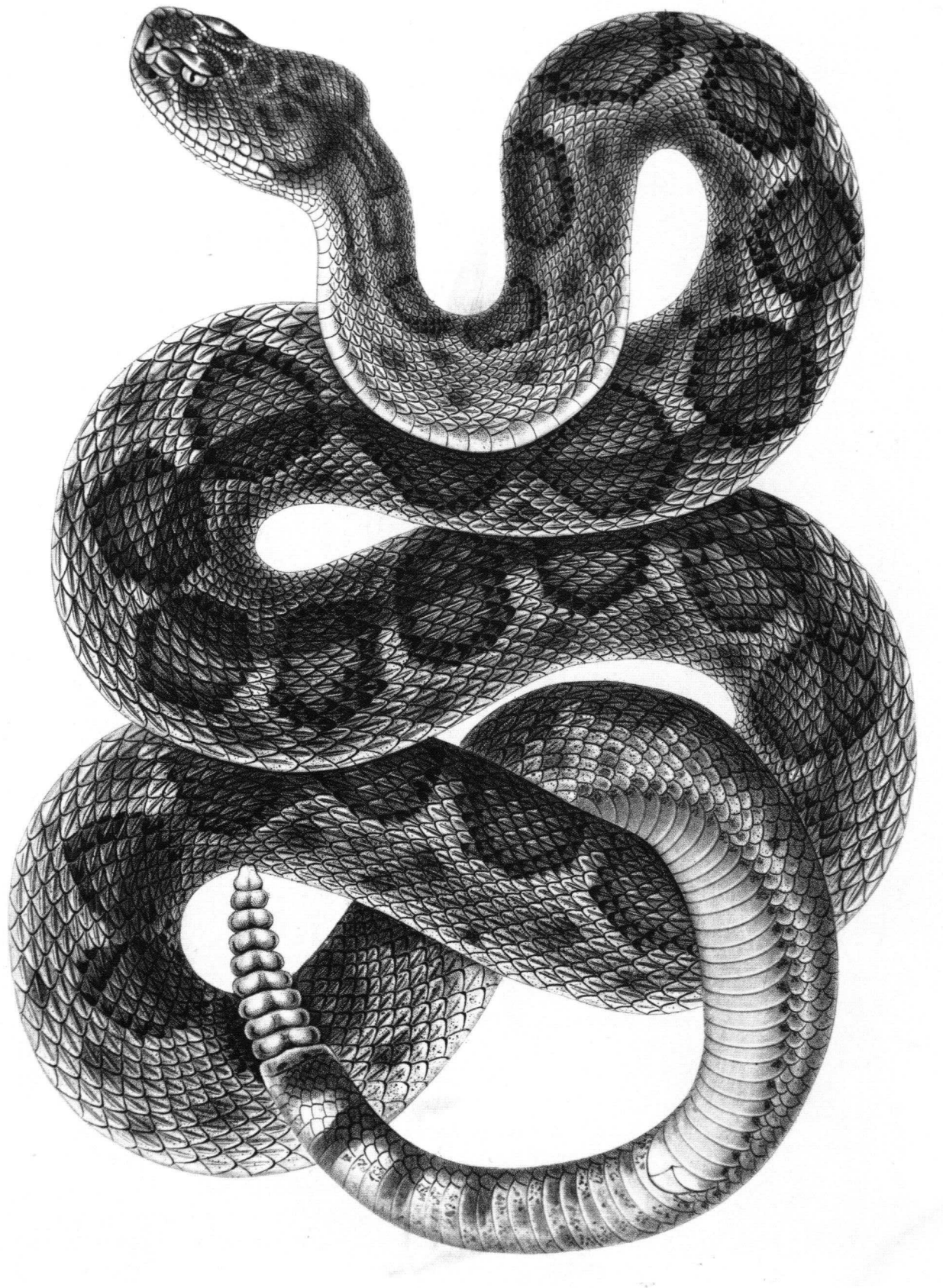
Mephitis Bicolor (Little Striped Skunk), *plate XXIX, from Reports of Explorations and Surveys, Volume VI, 1857, prepared under the direction of Jefferson Davis. 2526.3574*



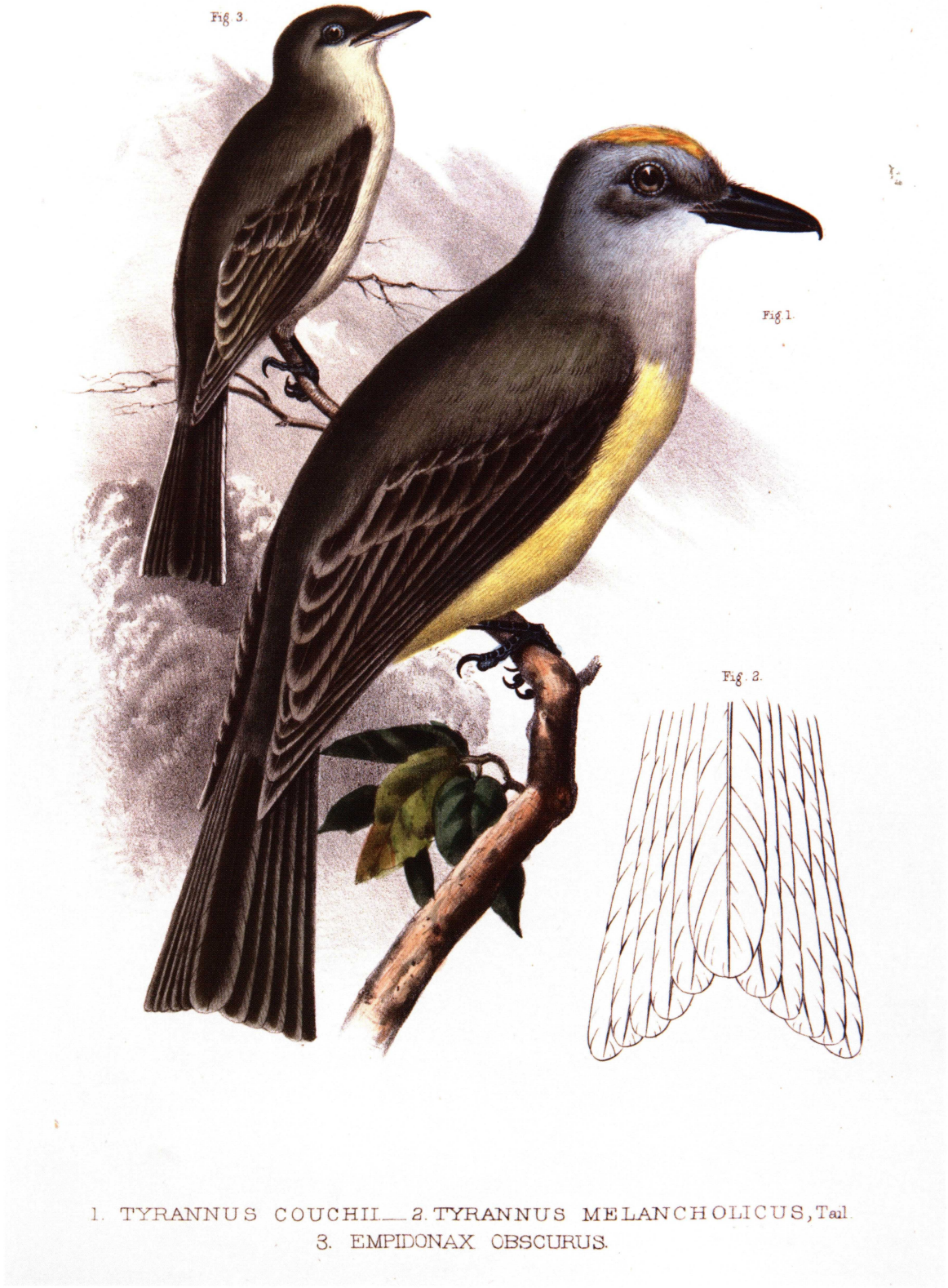
EMORY AND THE DRAWING OF "THE GREAT LINE"

War changes everything, and in the 1840s war came to the West. In 1846 two American republics—the United States of America and the United States of Mexico—waged war on each other. Both sides aggressively sought war, and one nation, Mexico, lost half of its entire land mass as a result of it. In the Mexican-American War, Army engineer explorers reconnoitered and mapped much of what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

The Topographical Engineers were not only soldiers attached to units in the field, they were also scientists engaged in a vast project, the study of the West, its plants, animals, terrain, climate, and native peoples. Perhaps the most important army explorer in the Mexican War period was William H. Emory, West Point class of 1831. Emory was a superb soldier, a keen observer of the natural world, and like Frémont had a well placed wife; she was Benjamin Franklin's great-granddaughter. Emory counted as friends the nation's leading astronomers, mathematicians, and geologists. In 1846 Lieutenant Emory was posted to General Stephen Watts Kearny's Army of the West and began an epic-making



Crotalus Atrox, *plate I, from Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, Volume 2, part 2, 1859, prepared under the direction of William H. Emory. 2426.102*



***Tyrannus Couchii (Couch's Fly-catcher)**, plate XII, from Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, Volume 2, part 2, 1859, prepared under the direction of William H. Emory. 2426.102*

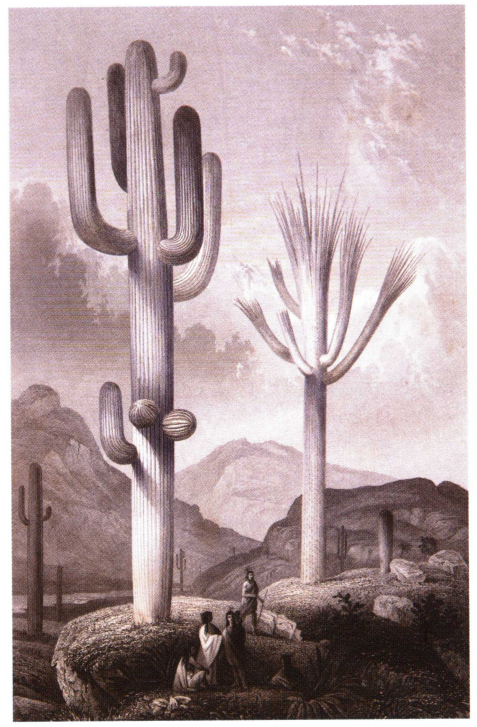
reconnaissance from Bent's Fort in Colorado to San Diego by way of New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Emory wrote a brilliant report and then drew the first American map to accurately portray the geography of the Southwest. And Emory represented an entire generation of soldier-explorers fascinated with the Southwest.

Emory's greatest accomplishment as a soldier-explorer came after the Mexican War. The treaty that ended the war spelled out in vague terms the boundary between Mexico and the United States. And those imprecise words and sentences were based on highly inaccurate maps. Both nations appointed boundary commissions to survey, map, and mark what came to be called The Great Line. The Mexican survey team did its work with considerable skill but the American surveyors were bedeviled by political rivalries, personal animosities, and some world-class silliness. Emory was eventually assigned to command the United States Boundary Commission. It was a job that called for great scientific skill, considerable diplomatic tact, and the patience of Job. Emory had all of that. He completed his work in 1857 to the satisfaction of both governments, prepared a massive three-volume scientific report on the border country, and drafted the first accurate map of the border. It is a testimony to Emory's ability as an explorer that when Mexican and United States diplomats re-negotiated the boundary in 1944 and 1970 they went right to his pioneer work as the initial point of reference.

ROUTING THE RAILS

By the 1850s the Army Topographical Engineers had an unparalleled reputation as the premier scientific explorers of the West. Led by Colonel Abert, the Corps of Topographical Engineers stood alongside the British Royal Engineers as the best frontier explorers in the world. Now Abert's men were about to face their greatest challenge. At the end of the Mexican War the United States had become a transcontinental nation, sweeping from Atlantic to Pacific. It was an age of empire, and an age of railroads. Now there was great enthusiasm for building a transcontinental railroad, an iron road to bind the nation together. But there was one problem that seemed almost beyond solution. It was a political problem, not an engineering one. What city, what section of the nation would be the eastern terminal for the railroad? Obviously that city and section would reap great economic and political rewards. Cities like Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Memphis, and New Orleans all wanted to be the chosen one. But in a time of mounting sectional tensions between North and South, Congress was deadlocked. Then in 1853 there seemed to be a solution. Scientists might do what politicians could not. Congress authorized the Corps of Topographical Engineers to survey all the western railroad routes and report back on the one that best served the needs of the nation. The assumption was that science could make an unbiased decision, one far from the heat of politics.

Colonel Abert, in conjunction with the leading American scientists at the Smithsonian Institution and other places, organized a massive survey of the West. His soldier-explorers would not only pay attention to railroad matters like fuel, water, grades, and distances. They were also ordered to study western plants, animals, climate, geography, and native peoples. The Pacific Railroad Surveys would be Thomas Jefferson's dream come true. Between 1853 and 1855 the Topographical Engineers fielded four large-scale survey expeditions, with two additional California coastal reconnaissances. The thirteen-volume report published by the project was the first great encyclopedia of the American West. The map drafted by a young Topographical Engineer lieutenant proved to be one of the cartographic landmarks for western North America. This was their finest hour, the high water mark for the soldier explorers. But in that moment of great success there was also failure—failure that would haunt the soldier explorers and eventually lead to civilians taking charge of western exploration after the Civil War.



***View Along the Gila, Cereus Giganteus,** from Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey, Volume 2, part 1, prepared under the direction of William H. Emory. 1859, 2426.101*



Entrance of Livermore's Pass, *Plate II, from Pacific Railroad Survey Reports, Volume V, 1856, prepared under the direction of Jefferson Davis. 2526.3573*

Then as now, science is never separate from politics. That was certainly the case in the super-heated decade before the Civil War. And the Topographical Engineers, no matter how professional, were not immune from the virus of sectionalism. Abert was a southerner; Emory was a southerner with shadowy ties to a Texas railroad company; and the Secretary of War was Jefferson Davis, soon to be a senator from Mississippi and then president of the Confederacy. Abert selected the exploration routes. Only one was a northern route; all the others favored southern cities and southern railroads. Not only was the exploration strategy tainted by sectional bias but the Corps itself could not agree on a single best route. When Secretary Davis issued his final report personally supporting a southern route, there was the predictable congressional uproar. On the eve of the Civil War the Topographical Engineers were embarrassed and the unit's reputation tarnished. And in a painful twist of irony, the route finally chosen by the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific between Omaha and Sacramento was one not surveyed by the soldier-explorers.

SOLDIER-EXPLORERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

After two decades of service, Colonel Abert retired in 1861. The soldier-explorers were now caught up in the Civil War. Nine Topographical Engineer officers resigned to join the Confederate Army. William H. Emory remained, like most Topographical Engineers, true to the blue. Eighteen soldier-explorers became line officers, commanding brigades and divisions. In 1863, after two decades of brilliant service, the Corps of Topographical Engineers was brought back into a subordinate position with the regular Corps of Engineers.



Mammoth Tree "Beauty of the Forest" *Geology, Plate XIII, from Pacific Railroad Survey Reports, Volume V, 1856, 2526.3571*



Valley of La Cuesta, Rio Pecos *from Pacific Railroad Survey Reports, Volume III, 1856, prepared under the direction of Jefferson Davis. 2526.3571*

For many Topographical Engineers 1863 was a bitter year. But it was also a year of great triumph. For the Topographical Engineers the high point of the Civil War came at Gettysburg, in July, 1863. His name was Gouverneur Kemble Warren. He was the young lieutenant who drafted the great railroad survey map in 1857. Now he was Chief Engineer to General George Meade, also an old Topographical Engineer. Warren had explored the Sioux country of the Northern Great Plains. He knew terrain; he knew maps; and he knew the value of high ground. Now on a boiling hot day in July Warren's practiced eye, the eye of a soldier-explorer, immediately saw the significance of Little Round Top. It was undefended; it could be taken at any moment by Confederate soldiers and the whole battle might be lost.



Incised powder horn, *ca. 1830, horn, wood, metal, 84.6798*

Warren hastily pulled together some troops and held the high ground. He is there today in bronze, telescope and map in hand. G. K. Warren, Academy class of 1850, Topographical Engineer, soldier-explorer, and on that day a man who helped save the union of the United States.

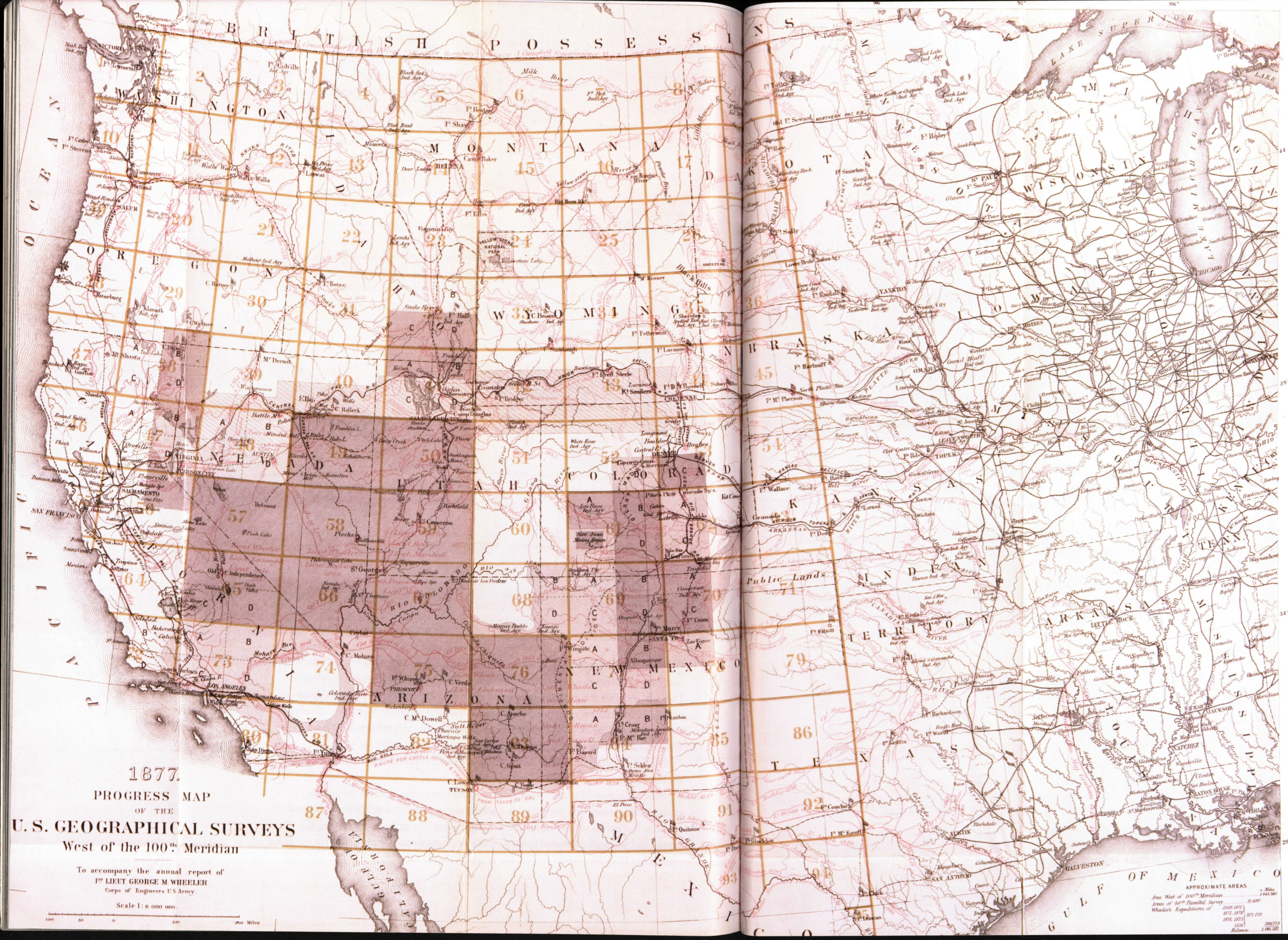
KING AND THE 40TH PARALLEL

War changes everything, but some traditions and ambitions refuse to die. And so it was with the soldier-explorers after the Civil War. As the nation turned its commercial and industrial energies to the Great West, many expected that the Army would continue to play a vital role in western exploration. That was certainly the expectation of General Andrew A. Humphreys, Chief of Army Engineers. In many ways Humphreys was Abert's logical successor. West Point Class of 1831 and one of the original Topographical Engineers, Humphreys ran the Bureau of Western Explorations and Surveys in the halcyon days of the 1850s. He had a distinguished Civil War combat record and possessed a comprehensive understanding of the role of the Army in the post-Civil War West.

When Clarence King came knocking on Humphreys' door in 1866, the general's expectations seemed one step closer to reality. King was educated at Yale in the natural sciences, had practical field experience in California as part of that state's geological survey, and was well connected to the nation's intellectual and scientific elite. He was not a soldier, but Humphreys was prepared to overlook that detail.

Powder Horns

Powder horns—hollow animal horns used to contain gunpowder—were an essential part of an explorer's outfit. They were often decorated with intricate images and designs that telegraphed the identities or concerns of their owners. The federal shield incised on this horn was a popular motif in the early years of the expanding republic.



Map of the western United States, 1877, prepared under the direction of George M.Wheeler. Map.260



The Petrified Forest in the Valley of the Rio Seco, New Mexico, from Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific with a United States Government Expedition, Volume II, 1858, prepared under the direction of Baldwin Molhausen. 2476.98

King and Humphreys shared a common vision—that the West was the mineral treasure house for American economic development. Scientific exploration could find, evaluate, and map those natural resources while at the same time making sure that native people proved no threat to the rising American empire.

King brought the Army a grand scheme for large-scale western exploration and the ambition to make it happen. Humphreys signed on and provided money and manpower for what became known as the United States Geological Exploration of the 40th Parallel. Beginning in the summer of 1867, King and his fellow explorers, including noted Civil War photographer Timothy O'Sullivan, surveyed the West in the present-day states of California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming. Eventually King and his team published seven heavily-illustrated reports, representing the very best of modern scientific exploration.

CIVILIAN EXPLORERS REPLACE THE MILITARY

Despite War Department funding and General Humphreys' patronage, no one could miss the fact that King was a civilian and that the Army no longer had a monopoly on western exploration. What Humphreys needed was another Frémont—someone who was both scientist and adventurer, who could capture the national imagination and brighten the fading image of the soldier-explorer.

Looking for another Frémont, Humphreys found George Montague Wheeler. George Wheeler, West Point Class of 1866, seemed a man born past his time. Too late for Civil War glory and a generation too late for the glory days of the Topographical Engineers, Wheeler was both a Romantic who longed to ride with Frémont and a hard-eyed imperialist who envisioned a West with no place for Indians, Mexicans, or Chinese.

In 1871 General Humphreys prepared a careful exploration plan for young Lieutenant Wheeler. That plan—centering on physical geography and the evaluation of natural resources—eventually took Wheeler and his exploring parties over the present-day states of New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, California, Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, and Montana. The Wheeler survey, grandly titled the Geographic Surveys West of the 100th Meridian, spent ten years in the field. Its findings, published in seven lightly-illustrated volumes, centered mostly on land and economic development.

But in the end Wheeler was no Frémont. And the Army, so long in the vanguard of western exploration, lost pride of place. In fact, it was civilian explorers like John Wesley Powell and Ferdinand V. Hayden who won the battle for intellectual leadership, congressional funding, and public acclaim. As Wheeler himself admitted, the "day of the pathfinder has ended."

Purgatory River, South Central Colorado Called the Purgatoire by French trappers, the river was mistakenly referred to as "the Picketwire" by their English speaking counterparts.

Now, more than a century after the soldier-explorers slipped into the western past, it seems plain that all those journeys left behind a complex legacy, one that links our past to our present. Army explorers were agents of empire. They were the vanguard in a burst of geographic expansion with continental sweep and global importance. From the Ohio Indian Wars of the 1780s to the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, the Army was at the point of the American thrust into the West. Military explorers mapped the country and scouted those who resisted or stood in the way of the American invasion. As the military arm of the United States, the army did the nation's bidding, and never more enthusiastically than in the West. Opening the West for some meant closing it for others.

But to brand the soldier-explorers as simply the advance guard of empire makes for too simple a story. The journeys of the Army explorers marked the foundations of a western empire. Those same journeys expanded the empire of the mind as well.

When the War Department issued its official obituary for Colonel Abert in 1863 it cited the work of the Topographical Engineers as a "proud monument" in the world of science. That "proud monument" was built on scores of published exploration narratives, important descriptions of geological formations and terrain features, landmark maps, memorable drawings, paintings and photographs, comprehensive ethnographic studies, and countless specimens that enriched museums and laboratories.

Soldier-explorers enlarged the boundaries of the American mind, making the West part of the nation's intellectual as well as geographic domain. Trails and tracks, voyages of discovery, and journeys of empire shaped the American West. The soldier-explorers followed those trails and marked those tracks. If so many of their names are lost to us today, it is because their journeys have gone deep into the fabric of American life. We live today in what they built yesterday.



The Texas Stories

BOBBIE LOUISE HAWKINS

Last October for the first time in more than twenty years I went back to Texas.

I went from San Francisco to my mother's house in Albuquerque and the next day about mid-morning the two of us left there driving her three-year-old air-conditioned Buick, headed east.

"We're going to have the sun beating on our backs all the way to Cline's Corners," she said. And, "Honey, get Mama a cigarette. They're in my purse. Do you want to drive?"

"Sure, if you want me to. You sure it won't make you nervous?"

"I'll just get us through the city limits. I know how all these freeways go."

"Are you supposed to smoke cigarettes?"

"Oh, I'm not supposed to but it won't hurt anything. Just, I'm not supposed to smoke so much that I get to coughing. Any kind of a cough plays hell with my throat."

When we were into the Sandias east of the city where the freeway turns into a more old-fashioned highway she pulled over and stopped to let us switch places.

"This car handles *really* well at fifty-five," she told me.

"O.K. Mama."

She began an instantaneous nesting in the midst of Kleenex, brought out chewing gum, put her purse where she could get it.

I put the seat back a couple of inches, checked the rear view mirror, pulled out onto the tartop.

"You're just used to those *little* cars that don't have much power," she said. "This car'll creep right up on you if you don't pay attention. You'll think you're just poking along and if you look at the speedometer it'll be on eighty or ninety."

She pulled a plastic package of slippers out of the glove compartment and exchanged her high heeled shoes for them. She clicked the radio on.

The radio has a way of acting like a messenger. They play so many songs that if you're in any kind of a particular "catch" there's bound to be one that rises up above the rest like it's got your name on it.

If the song is at all popular it seems like that's the only thing they're playing after awhile.

Merle Haggard came in on us singing that song that has the line in it *Sing me back home, turn back the years. . .* That song was number one all the time we spent driving around. We kept car company for just under three weeks, me, Mama, and Merle. It was like old times.

USED CAR SALESMEN, ITINERANT PREACHERS AND FRY COOKS have a hard time getting credit: bad risks, too mobile.

Amarillo, Lubbock, Abilene, San Angelo, Sweetwater, Houston, Galveston; my daddy was a six-foot-three Irish frycook. We followed the general rule. On short notice or no notice at all he'd have Mama and me in the car and gone. When he ran out of towns he'd just start over.

Traveling in memory can be as real as trekking over physical terrain—but on an expedition that maps the country of the past.

BOBBIE LOUISE HAWKINS was born in Texas. She studied painting in London and presented one-woman shows in New York, acted in radio and stage in Tokyo, Japan, and has taught and traveled widely. She is the author of fourteen books, including *Bijoux,* a recent volume of poems published by Farfalla Press/McMillan & Parrish. Since the mid-1980s, Hawkins has taught at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, where she initiated the MFA program in prose concentration. "The Texas Stories" is drawn from a book-length sequence of linked tales and vignettes set in Texas.

It wasn't until many years later, I mean quite recently, that it occurred to me to wonder how many of those abrupt departures had to do with jealous husbands or a woman whose demands were finally strong enough to override his charm.

"Are you feeling carsick, Jessie? Jack, Jessie's feeling carsick! Here honey, trade places with me. Hang your head out the window. The wind on your face'll do you good. Pull over, Jack! She's going to vomit! You better stop the car!"

There I'd be, shoved out the window of the car as it veered to the side of the road. . . my mother pushing me farther out and at the same time clutching my skirt. My father, resentful and swearing, would slam the car to a stop and I'd stand beside the road in the settling dust, retching green bile.

"She's bilious! I told you in Brownfield that we should stop and eat something!"

Jack looks disgusted, pulls up a young cotton plant to wipe at the side of his car. His name was Walter but he called himself Jack. It was the current hero name. Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy was a radio favorite. A current song was "Cowboy Jack":

Your sweetheart waits for you, Jack
Your sweetheart waits for you
Out on the lonely prairie
Where skies are always blue.

And she always did. In every town.

Breaded veal cutlets, flour and milk gravy, shrunken pies, a wilted lettuce leaf with a slice of tomato and a big dab of mayonnaise going a darker yellow at the edges. . . all over Texas.

(You know, nobody wanted that place. Time and again the U.S. turned it down. Aaron Burr wanted it for awhile but Jefferson ruined him. James Monroe let Texas go by to get Florida. Daniel Webster resigned as secretary of state when President John Tyler started considering it. That great patriot-author Edward Everett Hale wrote a sixteen-page pamphlet against "the introduction into the Union of a state of naturalized citizens." The title of that pamphlet was How To Conquer Texas, Before Texas Conquers Us.)

MINERAL WELLS: Jack takes the tablecloth (one of many times) and with a pull crashes breakfast onto the floor; dishes, eggs, bacon, gravy, biscuits, and a full pot of coffee.

Galveston: Handsome Jack springs to the aid of the young blonde woman ("I know that type," Mae snorted to a friend of hers en route to the lake, "she's going to move two inches into the water and say I wish somebody would teach me to swim") . . . ankle deep in the water, looking at him archly, her arms wrapped around herself, pretending to shiver. "I wish somebody. . . "

Abilene and Austin: Handsome Jack breaks his wife's nose two separate times in different towns.

Lubbock: Jack looks back to see the meat cleaver thrown by his wife quiver in the door frame inches from his head.

And in which of those towns did Jack go down on one knee and hold his arms open toward me, saying, "Are you going to leave your daddy, honey?" And I came flying back while Mae stood at the door with her suitcases packed.

"All right then," she said into my tears, "but someday you're going to want to leave him and when you do we'll go."

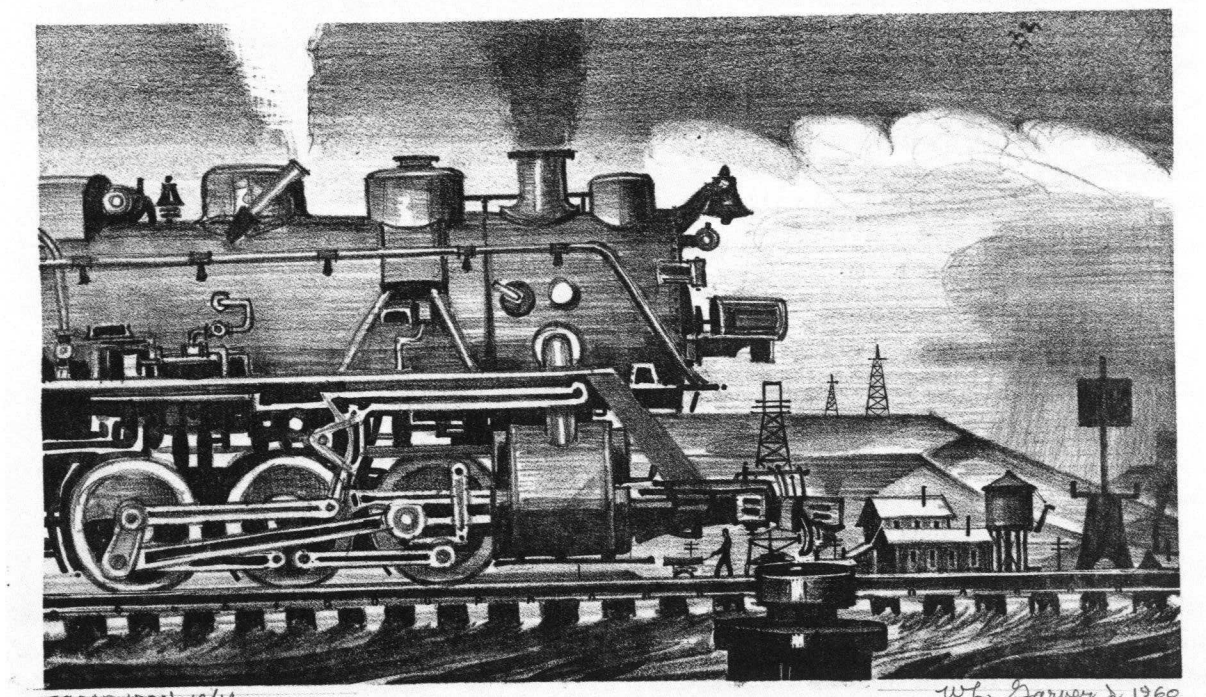
Children are so easy to get around. . . .

THE IRISH CAME TO TEXAS building the railroads as they came, the cheapest labor available. There were some Chinese and some Negroes but mostly that company of men was filled out of the latest wave of Irish to hit the country. Hardly arrived, eyes still full of. . . think of the pictures you've seen of Ireland if you've never been there. All that soft green and blue hazed over by mists. . . deep valleys with fog. . . lakes. . . all that growing green stuff.

And think of the Great Plains, land flat as a table and immense, far as the horizon; the sky an inverted bowl to hold the tiny work gang in, like ants; the sky huge and pale blue with chicken hawks gliding in slow circles, helped up by the rising heat.

For another instance: St. Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland, but Texas has all four of the poisonous snakes to be found in the U. S. (rattlesnake, coral snake, water moccsasin and copperhead.)

That is, as it's clear, a fantasy of that time and place and those persons but few things are probable. They lived in a mess of shacks and material, in the simple fact of backbreaking work. And every morning a huge sun rose to blast them; the rails too hot to touch, the muscles and haul of getting them into place. And when a man straightened to ease his back he must have had that perspective line of the rail that had already been laid stretching back from a perfect point, himself on the balance end of it, lips cracked, dry skin turning to leather in a sirocco sandstorm, still heat with twisters on the horizon in season. ("The old man was so scared of tornadoes that he'd have us kids and mama all crammed



together in the storm cellar most of the night all through the season. We wouldn't no more than get to sleep before he'd be dragging at the covers and swearing at us.")

Many of them took Cherokee women. That nation, the Cherokee nation, got dispersed so early and the women weren't secured.

What I really have on my mind just at this minute is how that Irish-Cherokee got seeded out across that vast distance by the time they had stopped. There's a high percentage of residents across the Texas plains who've got that mix in them.

There must have been a lot of interplay. . . I mean that both those lots of people believed in visionary realities at least part of the time. And it hangs on. The Hardshell Baptists, the Holy Rollers, the snake handlers. My grandmother has second-sight and my Aunt Ethel has the gift-of-tongues.

But there are other aspects to it. My Aunt Ethel waited to claim her own son in a dime store in a one-street Texas town some forty years ago because two women, as they passed by him, said, "Look at the cute little Indian boy." She waited until they were at the far end of the store and couldn't see her hurry him out and home. One of her younger sisters was there and saw it all, got hustled out as well. There was at least the looseness to let it turn into a family joke.

"EVERYBODY KNEW how to cure their own hams and bacon, "Mama is saying, "and how to put up their own sausages and can their vegetables and kill and dress out their own beef. Had their own eggs and chickens and milk, butter, and about the only thing they'd have to bother with would be sugar and coffee and flour.

"We always grew a big corn crop. After the ears dried we'd take the husks off and stack it in the corn crib. . . take it easy, babe. You're letting the speedometer creep up. I don't know why Buick stopped putting those beepers on the speedometer! You could set them, you know, at the speed you didn't want to go over and they'd make a real racket."

"I don't need a beeper, Mama. I've got you."

"Well. . . anyway, when we wanted cornmeal we'd get out and work the corn off those ears, rubbing them against an old rub board, and put it in baskets. Then my stepdaddy would take it to the corn mill. They'd stone-grind it. Then they'd bring it back. Mama would sift it. The fine stuff that would go through the sifter she kept to make bread with and the coarse stuff that wouldn't go through the sifter, well, that went to the chickens and pigs.

"That was the best cornmeal you ever ate! It just made the *best* cornbread!

"Another thing we used to do, we had a rub board that the boys had put nails through from the back side so it made a real rough surface, a kind of grater, and before

the corn got too hard and dry we'd rub ears over that grater. Then you'd have to sift it. When you did it that way you saved the price of the mill but you got a lot more big rough pieces in it. But none of it was ever wasted because it went to the pigs and chickens. People didn't waste anything! Everything was put to good use.

"There was lots of neighbors. Of course, they lived quite a way apart from one farm to the next. Everybody had cattle and calves growing up. The neighbors would all take turns butchering a beef. The men would divide it up equally between so-many families because there was no way of keeping it. In the wintertime you could keep it. But in the summertime if you'd get hungry for fresh beef. . . they'd kill one at our place, butcher it out. Then next week they'd kill one at the next place. . . . It was so much better than the meat you get now! It was so good.

"Then every winter we'd put up two or three hogs."

"I thought that after Grandmama and the old man got married that he wasted that farm of hers. I thought you never had that place long after they got married."

"No, I think that Mama . . . my mother wasn't a good manager, honey. As Mama said, she was raised up to sit on a silk pillow and sew a fine seam." The phrase had a ritual cadence.

"How was that? You mean her family was better off or something?"

"Well, you see she was raised by an old aunt. . . whatever she called her . . . I can't remember her name. And they had plenty.

"She taught Mama how to do fine sewing. Hand-sewing because they didn't have any sewing machines. Everything was made by hand.

"In fact they even took the cotton and carded it. Have you ever seen a cotton carder? They would card this cotton and then they'd get it to rolling long strings and they'd keep spinning it out some way until it made a thread.

"Then they'd weave their own material and they'd cut those materials to make whatever by hand. Even the men's suits and their own petticoats and dresses and all that.

"Mama knew how to do all that. My mother said that when she got married she had ten quilts that she had pieced and quilted as well as all her own linens and things."



THE HOUSES WHERE MY GRANDMOTHER and the old man lived when I was little were various but the same, one story high, weathered and tired, used up. What paint still clung was only a further complication of the rotting wood.

There was usually a sagging wooden porch for taking the evening air after supper and a rocking chair for Grandmama and the babies.

She would start with the youngest and rock it to sleep, then she'd carry it to bed. She'd rock and sing, cradling the children against her, moving up the line through the older ones until there would be a rebel who could stop it all by declaring fiercely, "I'm too *old* to be rocked to sleep!"

Inside those houses there would be a smell throughout of too many lives, as if animals lived in the walls. A memory smell that stayed into present time as a woman's hair will take the smell of frying onions while her hands still smell of the fresh onions she sliced to be fried.

Oilcloth covered the table, flowers or checks, cracked and worn through to the fabric, the pattern spoiled by the overwhelming pattern of wear. On the floor the linoleum had been used into islands of patternless brown at the sink, the stove, around the table.

The kitchen chairs were wired together, some became stools with a row of broken bits along one edge like teeth to show where the back had been. Straw chairs burst through underneath remained a static explosion, fixed, under the board that was laid across to be sat on.

The corrosion of time is accelerated by poverty.

Things grow old faster. Cheap dresses hang unevenly from their first washing. Plastic buttons melt against the iron. Cheap bright colors fade and run. Cheap shoes begin to curl up at the toes the first wearing, reaching for that fetal position old shoes take when they die. The shoestrings break, are taken out, knotted, returned to the shoe, a blot marring the clear *x*'s.

All the rooms except the kitchen held beds, iron and brass bedsteads that moved from house to house with mattresses made of feathers or of stuffed cotton turned hard as rock.

All the appurtenances, called by name, often travesties of the original intention, were there. The *rug* worn to rags, trails walked through to the floorboards, was there to be swept. A lumpy shape, humps and hollows of displaced batting, springs a threat, was the *couch,* or the *sofa* or even the *davenport.*

And boxes of old clothes, old toys, old objects no one could throw away because there was still some good left in them, the *belongings* were stacked under the beds and along the walls.

The pride and blindness of the poor, their persons as their houses, *worn,* worn down to the thread. Lined hands, lined faces, none of that ease of muscles a little money gives.

In all that grubbiness and unspoken despair the children were the joy. They were fresh. Their necks nuzzled, their sides and feet tickled to make them scream. They slept and waked in poverty's matriarchy. All those daughters, my grandmother's daughters, with husbands who came and went, had babies who came and stayed.

If my grandmother passed her childhood without feeling loved, the children and grandchildren who grew up near her had no such problem.

It was so intimate, ripe with reality.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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THOMAS GILCREASE
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Art treasures
of the Gilcrease Collection
and literature
of the American West

THOMAS MORAN
Garden of the Gods
watercolor and pencil on paper
0236.844

To fulfill a publication commission a small group, including Moran and photographer William Henry Jackson, utilized the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad from Denver to its southern terminus in Española, New Mexico. They then trekked through New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. The Garden of the Gods in southern Colorado captured both Moran's and Jackson's attention. Moran's work includes a foreground that is a much abbreviated graphite sketch. The color has been added as a wet-on-wet application, in which a very liquid color is applied to wet paper. This technique has created a softened landscape in certain passages.

