



As Time Passes over the Land

White Mountain Art

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As Time Passes over the Land is published on the occasion of the exhibition
As Time Passes over the Land presented at the Karl Drerup Art Gallery,
Plymouth State University, Plymouth, NH
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This exhibition showcases the multifaceted nature of exhibitions and collections
featured in the new Museum of the White Mountains, opening at Plymouth State University in 2012

The Museum of the White Mountains will preserve and promote the unique history,
culture, and environmental legacy of the region,
as well as provide unique collections-based, archival, and digital learning resources
serving researchers, students, and the public.

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Front cover
The Crawford Valley from Mount Willard, 1877
Frank Henry Shapleigh
Oil on canvas, 21 x 36 inches
From the collection of P. Andrews and Linda H. McLane

The logo for Plymouth State University features a stylized, dark, wavy line above the text "Plymouth State" in a large, bold, serif font. Below "Plymouth State" is the word "UNIVERSITY" in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

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Mount Washington from Intervale, North Conway, First Snow, 1851
Wilhelm Heine
Oil on canvas, 6 x 12 inches
Private collection



Haying in the Pemigewasset Valley, undated
Samuel W. Griggs
Oil on canvas, 18 x 30 inches
Private collection

Introduction

Plymouth State University is proud to present *As Time Passes over the Land*, an exhibit that celebrates New Hampshire's splendid heritage of White Mountain School of painting.

As Catherine Amidon, director of the Karl Drerup Art Gallery and interim director of PSU's new Museum of the White Mountains, notes, this exhibit is especially meaningful. It is the first jointly sponsored by the Drerup Gallery and the new Museum of the White Mountains, a significant, exciting addition to our campus. The museum will be a premier center for research, reflecting PSU's growing role as a gateway to and center for the study of the White Mountains.

The museum also will be interdisciplinary, as is this wonderful exhibit. White Mountain School artwork revealed the natural beauty of the region, but the paintings reflect mid-nineteenth-century logging and growing industrialization as well, leading to questions about the era:

about rural villages and urban perceptions, about stories and historical events that shaped the region, about environmental change—*As Time Passes over the Land*. Collaborators on this exhibit include historian Marcia Schmidt Blaine and environmental scientist Mark Green.

Finally, the exhibit reflects an important wider collaboration with those who love this region and collect White Mountain School art. We are enormously grateful to the knowledgeable and committed collectors who have graciously loaned pieces so all of us may enjoy this exhibit. We thank each of you and look forward to additional partnerships, and subsequent exhibits, as we celebrate the joy of this heritage we are fortunate to share.

Sara Jayne Steen, President
Plymouth State University



On the Saco, North Conway, 1861
Benjamin Champney
Oil on canvas, 9 x 13 inches
From the collection of John H. and Joan R. Henderson

Foreword

The White Mountain Art exhibition *As Time Passes over the Land*, a collaborative exhibition by the Karl Drerup Art Gallery and the Museum of the White Mountains, marks the naissance of the Museum of the White Mountains. Opening in 2012, the new museum will be dedicated to exhibitions, collection preservation, and educational programming. The growing collection already includes a wide array of images and objects that promote and preserve the unique history, culture, and environmental legacy of the region.

The museum also will be a “museum without walls,” as the collection will be digitized and posted online, making it available worldwide to casual visitors and researchers alike. The museum, the collection, and the exhibition would not be possible without the generosity and support of many friends and partners.

Foremost, I would like to thank P. Andrews and Linda H. McLane, John J. and Joan R. Henderson, Sam and Sheila Robbins, and Michael D. Mooney and Robert S. Cram.

Other advocates of this exhibition include Leslie and Warren Schomaker, Dick Hamilton, the New Hampshire Historical Society, Steve Barba, and Cynthia Vascak. I would also like to thank Marcia Schmidt Blaine for her curatorial work and both Marcia and Mark Green for the catalogue essay. The exceptional design work of Sandy Coe and the educational materials by Jason Swift also contribute to the impact of this project.

President Sara Jayne Steen and Provost Julie Bernier’s leadership in establishing the Museum of the White Mountains and this inaugural exhibition have ensured forward movement for both projects.

Catherine S. Amidon

Director, Karl Drerup Art Gallery

Interim Director, Museum of the White Mountains

Plymouth State University

They rise before me! Last night's thunder-gust
Roared not in vain: for where its lightnings thrust
Their tongues of fire, the great peaks seem so near,
Burned clean of mist, so starkly bold and clear,
I almost pause the wind in the pines to hear,
The loose rock's fall, the steps of browsing deer.
The clouds that shattered on yon slide-worn walls,
And splintered on the rocks their spears of rain
Have set in play a thousand waterfalls,
Making the dusk and silence of the woods
Glad with the laughter of the chasing floods,
And luminous with blown spray and silver gleams,
While, in the vales below, the dry-lipped streams
Sing to the freshened meadow-lands again.

*From John Greenleaf Whittier's Civil War poem
"Franconia from the Pemigewasset," 1862*



Mount Washington Carriage Road and Presidential Range, undated
Samuel Lancaster Gerry
Oil on canvas, 20 x 27 1/8 inches
Private collection



View of Jackson, undated
Samuel Lancaster Gery
Oil on canvas, 12 x 20 inches
Private collection

As Time Passes over the Land

Mountain tops reflect the sun, catch the clouds, and capture the attention of viewers. Hikers gaze across their soaring cliffs, and admirers look up to watch light chase shadows across the face of their highest slopes. Artists look across a valley to find the best angle to see the mountains.

The best views of the mountains may often be found in the valleys, where tourists gather and people and businesses interact. There, both visual and functional landscape change is most readily apparent. Nineteenth-century artists of the White Mountains used valleys as the setting for many of their most popular scenic paintings.

Philip Carrigain's 1816 map of New Hampshire included woodcut images of the White Mountains that exaggerated their height and steepness. It was Carrigain who first called the White Mountains region the "Switzerland of America." In terms of the beauty of the area, it was an apt nickname. From his map and the reports sent by the early explorers and settlers, the mountains were portrayed as majestic yet terrifying

in their wild beauty. Eventually, roads were cut along the river valleys, lessening the isolation of the mountains.

In 1806 a state road finally pushed through what would become known as Crawford Notch and connected the Maine side of the mountains to the one along Connecticut River. Scientists, traders, and other travelers followed the road into the mountains, often seeking shelter with local families.

Professional artists did not arrive in the valleys of New Hampshire's mountains until the late 1820s, by which point farmers, traders, and loggers were relatively well established in the Pemigewasset, Androscoggin, and Saco valleys. From the earliest years of the nineteenth century, farmers changed the landscape by clearing woodlots, opening fields, and farming the lower hillsides. To feed the growing downstream textile industry, more acres were opened, and towns grew as White Mountains farmers joined the frenzied sheep market of the early nineteenth century.



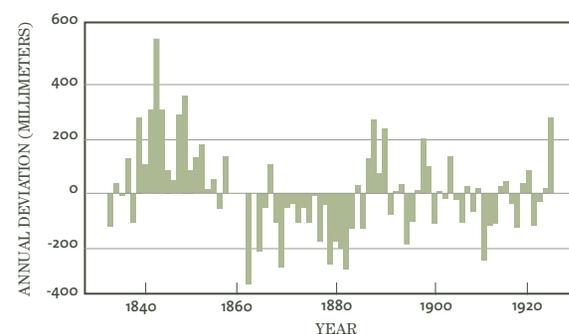
Mount Chocorua and Chocorua Lake from Tamworth, 1873
John White Allen Scott
Oil on canvas, 30 x 50 inches
From the collection of John H. and Joan R. Henderson

The Willey family lived in a house along one of the notch roads. After a dry summer and a three-day rainstorm in August 1826, an immense rockslide spilled down from the mountains. The slide wiped out the entire Willey family as they tried to flee, but their house escaped unscathed. Nathaniel Hawthorne immortalized the tragedy, observing:

They had quitted their security, and fled right into the pathway of destruction. Down came the whole side of the mountain, in a cataract of ruin. Just before it reached the house, the stream broke into two branches—shivered not a window there, but overwhelmed the whole vicinity, blocked up the road, and annihilated everything in its dreadful course. Long ere the thunder of the great Slide had ceased to roar among the mountains, the mortal agony had been endured, and the victims were at peace.



The amount of forested land (as percent of the county) covering White Mountains counties reached a low in the mid-nineteenth century, followed by slow reforestation in the next decades. The secondary low point in 1890 is due to intensive timber harvests in the region. The trend in Coös County appears quite different, largely because of its geographic isolation. The U.S. agricultural census was used to construct these trends.



Annual precipitation has been measured in Hanover, NH, since 1835. The deviation from average precipitation shows that the 1840s were quite wetter than normal and the following decades were much drier. Data from the NOAA Global Historical Climatology Network were used to construct this figure.



Mount Washington from Intervale, North Conway, 1868
Samuel Lancaster Gerry
Oil on canvas, 6 x 8 inches
Private collection



Perkins Farm, Jackson, NH, 1870
Frank Shapleigh
Oil on canvas, 10 x 19 inches
Private collection

A morbid fascination with unexpected destruction characterized the early nineteenth century sense of the romantic, and the Willey family's story became a cause célèbre. Tourists flocked to see the "lonely and awe-inspiring place of the disaster," and made the White Mountains an increasingly popular tourist destination.

Along with the attraction of destruction, tourists were drawn by the scenery that farming, logging, and travelling combined to expose. New roads inadvertently opened new vistas. Each farmer cut timber from his woodlot and opened new acres for livestock. While New Hampshire's sheep population hit its height in the 1830s, when more than 465,000 sheep dotted the hillsides, sheep continued to play an important part in the family farm economy. Cattle joined them on the landscape, and both worked to keep the fields open. Easier transportation access to the forests of the southern White Mountains promoted earlier deforestation than the northern White Mountains. Therefore, early census records show heavy deforestation experienced in Grafton and Carroll counties, compared to Coös County, by the mid-nineteenth century.

The first artists to come to the White Mountains were Thomas Cole and Henry Cheever Pratt. Drawn in by the Willey disaster, they traveled to the White Mountains in 1827 and 1828. Cole wrote, "[t]he most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wildness," noting that "the silent energy of nature stirred the soul to the inmost depths." In New Hampshire, "the bare peaks of granite, broken and desolate, cradle the clouds; while the valleys and broad



Above *Tuckerman Ravine and Lions Head*, undated
Samuel Lancaster Gerry
Oil on canvas, 14 x 20 inches
Private collection

Below *Horseback Rider at Echo Lake*, 1879
Edward Hill
Oil on canvas, 16 x 12 inches
Private collection



Presidential Range with Sheep, 1877
Edward Hill
Oil on canvas, 12 x 20 inches
Private collection

bases of the mountains rest under the shadow of noble and varied forests.” His art awakened other artists to the potential appeal of the “sublime” and “magnificent” White Mountains region. This American wilderness transcended the savagery of nature; it was a wilderness that seemed to many to be close to the original Eden.

The artists and tourists found lodging in farm homes and boarding houses even in the midst of wilderness. Some of the tourists most taken by the wildness of the area were among America’s best-known transcendentalists. They sought the mountains as a way to transcend earthy reality. Margaret Fuller visited the area in 1842 and there saw an eagle “soaring” through the Notch: “It was a glorious sight.” Each new scene awakened wonder for her. “Mountains crowd one sensation on another, till all is excitement, all is surprise, wonder, and enchantment.” In 1839, Henry David Thoreau stayed at an inn in West Thornton, a location that seemed, to him, to be totally isolated. He was surprised

that so many had discovered the apparently wild region. “Sometimes we lodged at an inn in the woods, where trout-fishers from distant cities had arrived before us, and where, to our astonishment, the settlers dropped in at night-fall to have a chat and hear the news, though there was but one road, and no other house was visible—as if they had come out of the earth.” Along with the artists increasingly coming to the White Mountains, writers like Fuller and Thoreau along with Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Francis Parkman, Thomas Starr King, and John Greenleaf Whittier helped to popularize the area.

The reputation of the White Mountains grew, and small inns like the one Thoreau stayed in were replaced by increasingly larger hotels. Wealthy travelers from Boston and New York arrived by train beginning in the 1850s, but even the less-well-to-do came on short trips. After the Civil War ended in 1865, an influx of tourists arrived who



Thorn Mountain from Conway Meadows, 1878
John White Allen Scott
Oil on canvas, 12 x 20 inches
Private collection



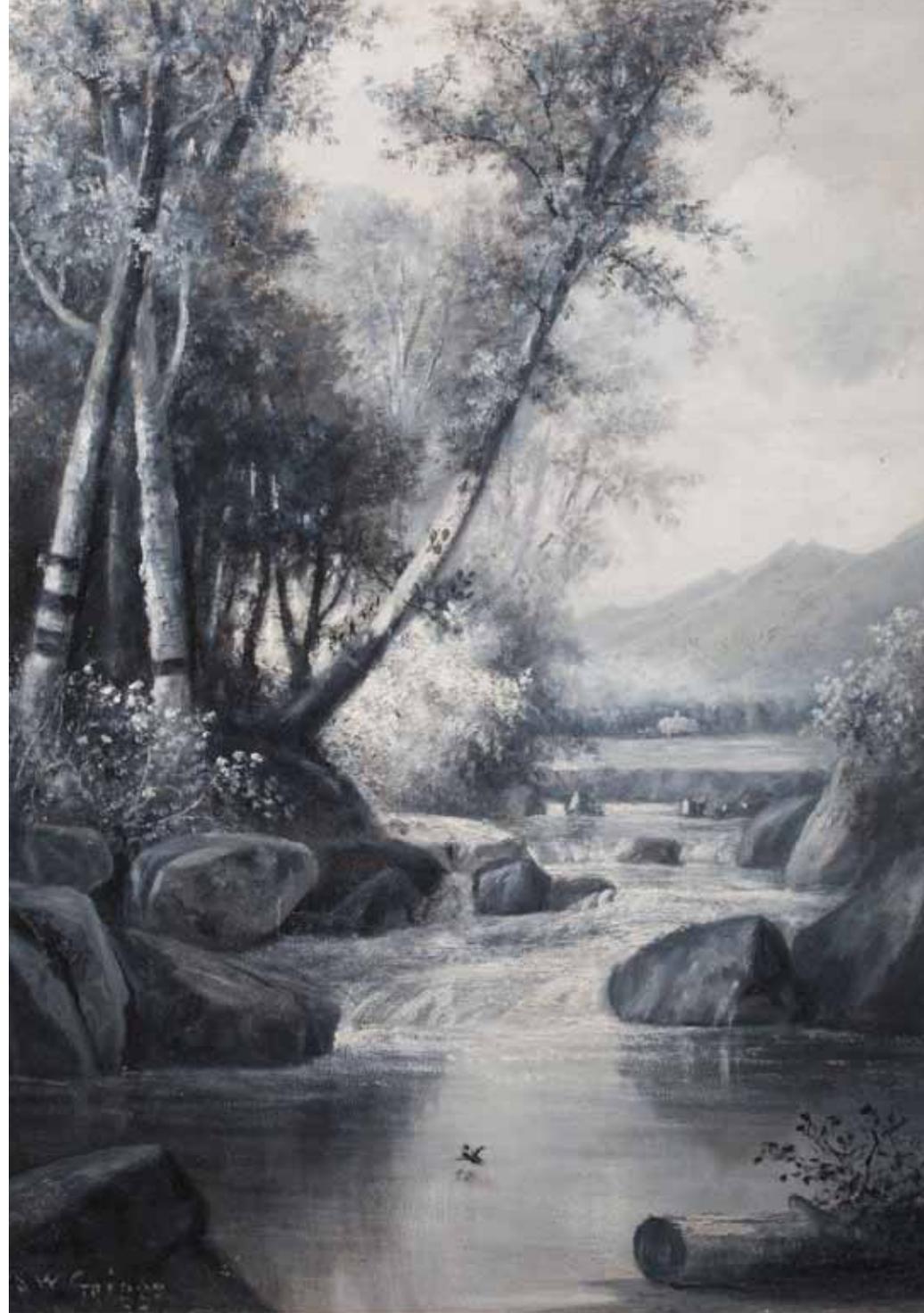
Androscoggin River and Mount Madison, 1869
David Johnson
Oil on canvas, 14 x 22 inches
Private collection

wanted to see the natural world but preferred comfortable accommodations. Hotel owners built increasingly larger hotels with more amenities. They even built a large hotel on the site of the Willey disaster.

The climate of the White Mountains experienced major shifts as the human presence in the region peaked. Early monitoring of precipitation at Hanover, New Hampshire, shows an extended drought through the mid-nineteenth century. Tourists visiting this water-rich region may have enjoyed drier and presumably warmer conditions throughout the 1860s to 1880s. The impact of the drought on farming and logging is difficult to discern, especially given the rapid social and technological changes throughout the U.S.

One possible business reaction to the dry period was initiating the monitoring of river flows at the Pemigewasset River in Plymouth, New Hampshire. The Proprietors of Locks and Canals on the Merrimack River controlled waterpower for the mills downstream from the White Mountains and, in the 1880s, began monitoring water volumes flowing from the White Mountains to the Lowell area. The decision was certainly driven by the water-powered textile milling industry reaching a maximum; however, the role of the mid-1800s dry period in the White Mountains may have been an important factor. Without a significant dry period, there could have been less motivation to monitor the Pemigewasset.

The White Mountains provided the most accessible mountain scenery in the country, and tourists flocked to the region. More artists followed



Pemigewasset River in West Thornton, 1883
Samuel Lancaster Griggs
Oil on canvas, 12 x 6 inches
Private collection



Mounts Madison and Adams from Gorham, 1863–65
Horace Wolcott Robbins
Oil on canvas, 30 x 54 inches
From the collection of John H. and Joan R. Henderson

the movement of people and painted scenes of wildness and beauty. The view seen by the artists also benefited from the people who lived among the mountains. Farmers opened the valley floors and low hillsides, set their sheep out to graze, and harvested hay for their cattle. Loggers opened the views and attracted new tourists as they moved into more remote regions and sought profitable tracts to cut. Hotel operators bought and protected acres of land near their hotels, preserving the illusion of wilderness for their clientele.

The popularity of the White Mountains contributed to the changes farmers, traders, and loggers made. Even as farmers began leaving the high, rocky valleys to move to more open farmland out west, hotel owners bought the old farms and increased their White Mountain business by consolidating their holdings and adding trails for hikers and carriages. In 1851, the first railroad line traveled along the valleys between Portland, Maine, and Gorham, New Hampshire, and more railroad lines followed. Bridges crossed valley streams and traversed rivers.

By the mid-1850s, there was a wide diversity of tourists: travelers from Boston and New York arrived on the trains into the mountains, but even laborers came on short trips. Thomas Starr King published *The White Hills: Their Legends, Poetry and Landscape* in 1865. A clear attempt to lure Americans to the mountains, it was an immediate best seller. In his book, King proclaims:

Every triumph of a human artist is only an illusion, producing a semblance of a real charm of air or foliage, of sunset cloud,



Above *Mount Jefferson, on route from Gorham to the Glen House*, undated
Alvan Fisher
Oil on canvas, 24 x 20 inches
Private collection

Below *Saco River at Sunset*, undated
Benjamin Champney
Oil on canvas, 10 x 14 inches
Private collection



Hart's Ledge and Echo Lake near North Conway, 1867
Thomas J. Fenimore
Oil on canvas, 22 x 12 inches
Private collection

or dewy grass, or mountain splendor, which Nature offers. If a man could own all the landscape canvasses which the first painters of the world have colored, it would not be a tithe so rich an endowment, as if Providence should quicken his eye with keener sensibility to the hues of the west at evening, the grace of trees, and the pomp of piled or drifting clouds.

The developing tourist industry attracted all sorts of individuals to the mountains, crowding some of the most popular valleys. According to

King, “the ‘commonly travelled routes to the summit’ no longer supplied the ‘loneliness and wildness ... and ... adventure’ they had formerly promised.” Jackson, Bethlehem, Campton, Gorham, and North Conway became busy centers that catered to tourists.

Tourism was not, however, the only large industry in the mountains. Logging had been a small trade, primarily a winter job for farmers, but things changed in the 1880s. Logging kicked into high gear with the development of a new chemical process that combined spruce, poplar,



White Mountain Scenery, undated
William H. Titcomb attributed
Oil on canvas, 22 1/2 x 30 inches
Private collection



Mount Washington and the Village of North Conway, circa 1860s
Bradford Freeman
Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 inches
From the collection of John H. and Joan R. Henderson



Jefferson Highlands, 1883
John Ross Key
Oil on canvas, 44 x 20 inches
Private collection

and other soft woods with various chemicals, generally sulphide or sulphate, to produce cheap paper. The White Mountain landscape changed as loggers cut even small spruce on the higher slopes of the mountains. They were able to do so relatively easily because small logging railroads moved into the more remote valleys and opened them to cutting. While there were responsible logging operations, there were many that were not. The most infamous example is J.E. Henry. In the 1880s and 1890s, Henry controlled and devastated a 10,000-acre tract in the Zealand Valley. In many places including Zealand, fires followed, scarring the land.

White Mountain artists did not depict the devastation left in the wake of large-scale logging operations. Artists catered to the tourists. The

tourists bought as souvenirs paintings that depicted the best of their vacation experiences. Painters often excised what they did not want in a scene, such as a hotel or a clear-cut hill, or added elements that they did want to highlight, such as another mountain slope or a nostalgic take on a stagecoach. Individual artists painted the same scene multiple times—if it sold.

The paintings after mid-century seldom represented the rugged country seen by the early tourists. The landscape had been tamed. After the Civil War, artists focused less on nature and more on people, light, and atmosphere. They depicted the landscape as a calm countryside, dotted with the occasional cow or sheep; they outlined small towns



romantically against the distant hills; they portrayed a river's majestic sweep through a valley. Artistic license held sway. Like artists, writers too ignored the growing desolation under the lumber speculators' control, although a small group began to protest the treatment of "their" scenery. Scenery was marketable, and artists produced scenery for consumption. If scenery were destroyed, many would suffer.

Artists long recognized what the rest of late nineteenth-century society was beginning to acknowledge: the forest was a public resource. Romantic scenes of small villages nestled in valleys dominated by towering mountains may not have always portrayed reality, but their work helped Americans realize that the White Mountain region was a special place and worth preserving. As the landscape was sculpted and transformed by logging, tourism, and commerce, artists reminded people of the beauty of the White Mountain region.



Above *Mount Washington from the Valley of Conway*, undated
George Smillie after John Kensett
Steel engraving, 14 x 18 inches
Private collection

Below *View of a Mountain Lake II*, circa 1870
Granville Perkins
Oil on canvas, 10 x 13 7/8 inches
Private collection



Moat Mountain, circa 1868
Sanford Robinson Gifford
Oil on canvas, 20 x 10 3/4 inches
Private collection



Upon the highest mountains my young feet
Ached, that no pinions from their lightness grew,
My starlike eyes the stars would fondly greet,
Yet win no greeting from the circling blue;
Fair, self-subsistent each in its own sphere,
They had no care that there was none for me;
Alike to them, that I was far or near,
Alike to them, time and eternity.
But, from the violet of lower air,
Sometimes an answer to my wishing came ...

*From Margaret Fuller's poem
"Ganymede to His Eagle," 1843*



View of Mount Chocorua, 1851
William Newton Bartholomew
Oil on canvas, 16 1/2 x 12 3/4 inches
Private collection

Opposite *Echo Lake, Franconia Notch*, 1858
Sylvester Phelps Hodgdon
Oil on canvas, 34 x 48 inches
From the collection of John H. and Joan R. Henderson



Androscoggin Valley, White Mountains (Mount Madison), 1876
Lemuel D. Eldred
Oil on canvas, 22 x 36 inches
From the collection of John H. and Joan R. Henderson

... We had come since sunrise from Bartlett,
passing up through the valley of the Saco,
which extends between mountainous walls,
sometimes with a steep ascent, but often as level
as a church-aisle. All that day and two preceding ones,
we had been loitering towards the heart
of the White Mountains—those old crystal hills,
whose mysterious brilliancy had gleamed upon our
distant wanderings before we thought of visiting them.
Height after height had risen and towered one above another,
till the clouds began to hang below the peaks...
We had mountains behind us and mountains on
each side, and a group of mightier ones ahead.
Still our road went up along the Saco, right towards
the centre of that group, as if to climb above the clouds,
in its passage to the farther region.

*From Nathaniel Hawthorne's essay,
"Sketches from Memory," 1835*



Mount Washington from the Saco River, 1851
Benjamin Champney
Oil on canvas, 12 x 16 inches
Private collection

... all natural objects make a kindred impression,
when the mind is open to their influence.
Nature never wears a mean appearance....
In the woods, we return to reason and faith.
There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, —no disgrace,
no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair.
Standing on the bare ground, —my head bathed
by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, —all mean
egotism vanishes.... I am the lover of uncontained and
immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something
more dear and connate than in streets or villages.
In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant
line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful
as his own nature.

*From Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay
"Nature," 1836*

Museum of the
WHITE MOUNTAINS
Plymouth State University