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# VIEWS OF AMERICAN CITIES
# 1800-1850

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## PREFACE

The rather long and somewhat peculiar form of this Master's dissertation has been determined at least in part by the rather general, and to a certain extent, contrary, nature of its aims. Because the subject, "views of American cities," is not one which has been widely investigated or published by art historians, the writer has felt a need to establish some kind of basic groundwork, a common understanding with the reader which will provide an intelligible context for further discussion of the works of art themselves. To do this the dissertation had to be first of all somewhat introductory in character, attempting to trace the origins, the climax, and the post-climax of the artistic interest in the Americans cities in the first half of the nineteenth century, and supplementing this somewhat bare outline with a compilation of the available bibliographical sources pertinent to this general area of study.

At the same time, however, the dissertation aims to be as analytical and critical as possible, discussing the individual works of art in as much detail as space will allow, the writer hoping thereby to aid in the understanding and appreciation of the works themselves, though meanwhile realizing that this attempt to be introductory and analytical at the same time is inviting difficulty and possibly, criticism.

From a number of standpoints, this subject, "Views of American Cities, 1800-1850," is in itself extremely open-ended, demanding at the outset certain limitations in order to remain at all manageable. Obviously, as the country expanded westward during this period and new cities and towns came into being, these too would be depicted by the artists of city views, necessitating an almost endless search from locale to locale for anyone wishing now to survey all views of American cities. This dissertation makes no claims to such completeness. Its geographical scope has been confined to the major eastern coastal cities, New York in particular, the reasons being rather simple. These were the cities which existed from the beginning, this longevity providing a history of urbanism which can be followed from earliest colonial times directly through to the cut-off date of 1850, within which context one can trace both the development of the cities and the art which depicts them. Little value would be added to this account by extending the study to the inland and other lesser cities since the art which developed there is little more than an outgrowth of traditions as they developed originally on the east coast. Among these cities the particular concentration on New York stems from two causes. First, the pre-eminence of this city, in size and cosmopolitanism, during most of the period tended to make it the most oft-depicted of all American cities. Second, the historical institutions and libraries of New York have been particularly zealous in preserving and cataloging such views of their city, making it feasible to study and compare them there to an extent not possible in any other one location.

Once having established these geographical limitations on the problem it was still necessary to be further selective and more or less arbitrarily to exclude many of the available works of art. The criteria for doing this were as follows. First, since this is a study of artistic development in relation to urban development and contemporary attitudes toward the cities, the views which best reflect these relationships are close-up views, views within the streets of the city. The many general, or distant, panoramic views of the cities have therefore been almost entirely excluded. Within the area of street views, further selection and exclusion has been made on the basis of the relevance of the individual works to the story as a whole, and finally, on the basis of their individual interest to us as works of art or vehicles of urban attitudes and feelings.

The discussions of the various periods in the development of this art have been prefaced in each case with a discussion of the state of the cities themselves and some of the contemporary literary sources which might help to furnish indications of current attitudes toward the subject, the intention being to thereby shed some light and sympathetic interest on the works of art, their reasons for being, and the reasons for the particular forms which they took. Many of the views are not particularly strong qua art, but it is hoped that when they are seen in the broader context of contemporary conditions and attitudes their value might be somehow augmented.

This is not to say that many of the works do not have an independent artistic appeal of their own. On the contrary, many

of them exhibit a remarkable freshness and candour of observation and ingenuity of composition which make them pure delights as works of art. To our eyes and imaginations, sometimes wearied of the endlessly repeated forms and hackneyed moral and aesthetic theories of much of nineteenth century American art, the simplicity and forthright observation of some of these views come as a breath of fresh air. If the following paragraphs and photographic reproductions accomplish nothing else but to delight the reader occasionally through contact with these relatively unexplored works of art then at least part of the writer's underlying motives will have been satisfied.

In the preparation of this dissertation the author has been particularly aided and encouraged by Mr. Joshua C. Taylor of the Department of Art. Acknowledgment of gratitude is also tendered to Miss Carolyn Scoon and her staff at the New-York Historical Society, Miss Elizabeth Roth of the New York Public Library, and Mr. A. K. Baragwanath of the Museum of the City of New York, for their very great assistance in the collection of pictorial material for the dissertation and for making many of the originals available for study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

# CHAPTER I

## THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The practice of depicting towns and cities in America began almost coincidentally with the establishment of the hamlets themselves early in the seventeenth century. At first glance and considering only the traditional applications of this practice, its appearance here at such an early date may seem a rather curious thing. When a town consisting of only a few hundred inhabitants and a sprinkling of more or less primitive dwellings appears on the fringes of a wilderness and a vast ocean why would anyone wish to record its appearance in a picture? It is not a city; it has no local traditions, no architecture, no soaring cathedral spires or picturesque ruins, in short, nothing which would interest the antiquarian or invite the curiosity of a tourist. It is a crude little village freshly sprung from the earth and as yet barely distinguishable from it, not at all like London, Paris, Rome, or Venice, the traditional targets of the travelling view painters.

Yet, to the European mind of the eighteenth century, the very existence, however crude, of such outposts of civilization was an intriguing and highly romantic idea to contemplate. To the European, always interested in the progress of civilization, it was fascinating to be a witness to the establishment and subsequent survival and growth of these little American towns. As the

years passed and more people for one reason or another made the Atlantic crossing, pictures of the towns assumed a practical as well as a romantic value. In addition to stimulating the mind and imagination through the subjective association of "Civilization vs. Nature," they also presented factual material by depicting the developmental state and physical condition of the towns. The existence of such pictures in the earliest years therefore, is less a reflection of the artistic interest aroused by the appearance of the towns than it was indicative of the preoccupations of a European patronage.

As the art of city view painting developed in the eighteenth century along with the American towns themselves, the compositions of these views generally followed one of two approaches. They usually either presented the city in a nautical context, i.e., as seen from the harbor or bay; or they presented it in a rural context, as seen from the countryside, an element in a landscape scene. Very seldom did the artists of the first part of the century take their viewers <u>inside</u> the city, through its streets and buildings or among its people.

Illustrative of the "nautical" approach are the plates from the "Atlantic Neptune," a series which was originally conceived as informational aids to navigation and the military. The drawings for the scenic plates having been made by Colonel Des Barres over a ten year period from 1763-1773, the British King in 1774 commissioned the engraving of the plates, which in the complete set numbered 257 in all, to which were added the many nautical charts and engineers' surveys.[1]

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[1] I. N. P. Stokes, <u>Iconography of Manhattan Island</u> ( 6 vols.; New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915-28), I, 347.

Because of the technical function which the scenic plates were to serve in the ensemble, great care was supposedly taken in the drawing and engraving to insure the utmost accuracy. Such "scientific" accuracy is well camouflaged in the example reproduced here, "A View of New York from the North West" (Fig. 1). In this work at least, and in most of the "Neptune" plates which I have seen, there is scarcely a trace of the stiff and cold topographical description which one might expect to find in a commission of this kind. The city in the background, with its topographical features obscured by distance and by the placement of the ship at anchor, seems almost a secondary concern of the artist. The placid sheen of the wide expanse of bay, the rather poetic treatment of the sky, the shaded foreground and the boats, all seem intended to camouflage the offical motive of the work. But such a treatment also tends to remove the spectator further away from the city; it adds little to his knowledge of the city, and at the same time the city per se adds little to his pleasure in the work of art.

The other approach commonly used, the placement of the city in a landscape, is illustrated here by Archibald Robertson's "New York from Brooklyn Heights" (Fig. 2), a watercolor and pen and ink drawing from 1778. Here the city is dominated by nature. The idyllic quality of the landscape in the foreground, with its gently undulating hills and meadow, the studied variety of natural tree forms, and the shrubbery of the immediate foreground, engages the attention of the spectator while the distant prospect of the city adds little to his knowledge or pleasure. The work as a whole is pleasant to look at and rather restful to the spirit, but,

like the view from the harbor it provides no knowledge or acquaintanceship with the topography or the inner life of the city itself. In this case the artist may have been attempting a treatment of the theme, "the city emerging from the wilderness," but if so, his "wilderness" has a curious resemblance to an English gentlemen's estate, while his city is too far removed from the spectator to provide any information on the state of civilization within its precincts.

While these two approaches were most commonly used, there are a few scattered instances from throughout the eighteenth century where artists worked within the city. William Burgis, for instance, worked mainly in the vein of harbor views, such as his large engraved panoramic views of New York (1716-1718) and Boston (1722), but he also worked closer to the subject on occasion, such as when he did his historic view of Harvard College (Fig. 3). Though this is a somewhat special case in that it is a view of a college and not a city, a fact which gives it an independent kind of documentary value, it does qualify as a prototype of a city view in that it furnishes a more detailed knowledge of at least one architectural and cultural monument of the town of Cambridge, as well a conveying an idea, albeit somewhat stilted, of the genre common to the locale. Another "college" view which is perhaps more successful or more interesting because it is less formally composed is the Tennant and Dawkins view of Princeton College of 1764 (Fig. 4). Here the artist has shown just a little more of the immediate neighborhood of the college than Burgis, with the result being that the main subject is seen in relation to a more

natural environment and less as a purely architectural study. This is an important step, but it is one which is not often repeated before the 1790's, judging from the existing art.

It is really not until the last decade of the century that the cities themselves--as distinguished from the colleges which have their own independent importance and appeal--begin to attract artists into the streets. Part of the reason for this distinct change of emphasis probably lies in the state of physical and social development of the cities, since such a change indicates at least in part that the city itself was now beginning to present something of interest to the artists. How large were the cities? What part were they playing in the social and cultural development of the nation? What were the people like, how did they fit into the life of the city, and how did they feel toward their urban environment? Answers to these questions are fundamental in appreciating the art of the 1790's, and may thereby help to establish a background for the art of the early nineteenth century which will follow.

Answers to the question on population are the easiest to find, 1790 being the year of the first United States Census. Though its figures are not always trustworthy at this early date, this census is indicative enough for our purposes here. First, it indicates that what we would properly term "cities" were not yet very numerous in the United States. Only five cities had populations in excess of 8,000: Philadelphia (42,000), New York (33,000), Boston (18,000), Charleston (16,000), and Baltimore (13,000). Such urban concentrations amounted to only 3 per cent of the nation's total population, not a large percentage when

compared with the situation which will develop later in the nineteenth century.[1]

However, it would be wrong to conclude from this that the cities had a proportionately negligible influence, socially or culturally, on the nation of the time. On the contrary, because American society did tend to be predominantly agrarian in interests and occupation, this fact only served to heighten the relative importance of the role which urban life and cultural institutions played in the over-all complex. As one noted American historian has observed,

> Urban life then, perhaps more largely than today . . . formed the substance of American civilization. It was in the cities that men by mutual imitation changed toward what they considered improvement.[2]

For this reason, he continues, "in picturing American social life toward the close of the eighteenth century it is necessary to give the towns far more than 3 per cent of our attention."[3]

Most Americans of the period had very little to say about their own cities one way or the other except when the city figured in a political or economic dispute. They seldom took the time to reflect on the state of the city itself, either its physical appearance or aspects of its social and cultural life. While they must have had some idea as to what constituted "improvement,"

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[1] From J. D. B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States (Washington: Beverly Tucker, Senate Printer, 1854), p. 192. (Figures rounded off to nearest thousand.)

[2] John A. Krout and Dixon R. Fox, The Completion of Independence: 1790-1830, Vol. V of Arthur Schlesinger and Dixon Fox, A History of American Life (12 vols.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 9.

[3] Ibid.

they seldom took stock of their situation and expressed these observations in writing. For accounts of this type one must turn to the writings of the European travelers who visited the cities in their journeys through the United States.

The travelling commentators served a very utilitarian function in coming to the New World and describing their observations and experiences. Their writings, which were subsequently published and read in their homelands provided the inquisitive European with the latest information on a relatively unknown and rapidly changing land. Because of this function, their reports had contemporary value only insofar as they appeared to be factual and not merely empty and prejudicial opinion, since it was often on the strength of such accounts that many Europeans weighed the advantages or disadvantages of such things as investment and emigration. Therefore, it is seldom in these early commentaries that we find the kind of unreflective and biased criticism that characterized the later period of Mrs. Trollope. And since they wished to provide as complete a picture of the new nation as possible, it is only natural that they would include description and comment on the cities, which were, after all, the most recognizably "European" of the places which they could visit.

In order to make their observations on the cities more meaningful to their European readers than straight topographical descriptions, the commentators would resort to a number of devices. One of these was to compare the American cities with their closest European counterparts. For example, Thomas Cooper, an English scientist and educator who visited here in 1793 and 1794 and who

eventually settled here permanently, compared our cities favorably with some of the larger provincial towns of Great Britain:

> In Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore the state of society is much the same as in the large towns of Great Britain, such as Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool and Manchester.[1]

Not only did he find that their aggregate population was nearly equal in the two cases, but they also had many other features in common:

> New York, for instance, is a perfect counterpart of Liverpool: the situation of the docks, the form of the streets, the state of the public buildings, the inside as well as the outside of the houses, the manners, the amusements, the mode of living among the expensive part of the inhabitants--all these circumstances are as nearly alike in the towns last mentioned, as possible.[2]

Most of the commentators, however, were quite content to fill their books with lengthy descriptions of the topography of the cities, and with statistics to indicate their present conditions and promise of growth. The topographical observations are valuable in the present study in that they give the fresh viewpoint of outsiders as to the physical appearance of the cities, presented "impressionistically" sometimes, generalized and summarized in terms of the tastes and preferences of the observer. One such commentator was the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, who journeyed through the country in 1795-1797, stopping at several cities, including New York and Philadelphia. He was among the first to note the interesting rivalry which existed between these two cities

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[1] Thomas Cooper, Some Information Respecting America (London, 1795), as quoted in Bayrd Still, Mirror for Gotham (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 64.

[2] Ibid.

in the period. Moreover, he was able to foresee the eventual outcome of this rivalry, predicting, despite the fact that "Philadelphia has hitherto had the advantage," that New York, because of the greater economic potential given it by its "fine situation," would "sooner or later gain the superiority." So clear and descriptive are his comments on the topography of the city of New York that one could almost draw a picture from them.

> The town had formerly been built without any regular plan, whence everywhere almost, . . . the streets are small and crooked; the foot-paths, where there are any, narrow, and interrupted by the stairs from the houses, which makes the walking on them extremely inconvenient. Some good brick houses are situated in these narrow streets; but in general the houses are mean, small and low, built of wood, and a great many of them yet bear the marks of Dutch taste.[1]

The locale he describes thus would have been in the very oldest part of the town, south of Wall Street and East of Broadway. Other sections which were newer seemed to be more appealing to his taste, as he says,

> The new part of the city built adjoining Hudson's River, and parallel with its course, is infinitely more handsome; the streets there being generally straight, broad, intersecting with each other at right angles, and the houses much better built.[2]

La Rochefoucauld was among the first in a long string of writers who lavished praise on Broadway. Of this street he exclaims,

> There is not in any city in the world a finer street than Broadway; it is near a mile in length, and is meant to be still farther extended; it is more than a hundred feet wide from one end to the other. Most part of the houses are of

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[1] François Alexandre Frederic, duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada in the Years 1795-1797; with an Authentic Account of Lower Canada (2 vols.; London, 1799), as quoted in Still, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

[2] Ibid.

> brick, and a number of them extremely handsome. From its elevated situation, its position on the river, and the elegance of the buildings, it is naturally the place of residence of the most opulent inhabitants.[1]

From these remarks one could conclude that in the 1790's the city of New York, at least, presented a well varied appearance, ranging from the irregular and picturesque lanes of the old town to the broad avenue and sturdy, brick mansions of the new: not an unappealing prospect for an eighteenth-century travelling view artist.

Among the inhabitants of the city of New York, the merchant class already stood out, both economically and socially. This wealthy class was colorfully caricatured by another foreign commentator, John Bernard, an English actor-manager who appeared during the 1797 season in that city at the Greenwich Street Theatre. His merchants may strike us as being a bit barbarous in their unbridled zest for life, and it is a little surprising to find men in the top echelons, socially, doing the work of a dock-hand, but apparently Bernard had been previously conditioned to their ways, for he says,

> The habits of the New York merchants reminded me of my friends at Guernsey. They breakfasted at eight or half past, and by nine were in their counting-houses, laying out the business of the day; at ten they were on their wharves, with aprons round their waists, rolling hogsheads of rum and molasses; at twelve, at market, flying about as dirty and as diligent as porters; at two, back again to the rolling, heaving, hallooing, and scribbling. At four they went home to dress for dinner; at seven, to the play; at eleven, to supper, with a crew of lusty Bacchanals who would smoke cigars, gulp down brandy, and sing, roar, and shout in the thickening clouds they created, like so many merry devils, till three in the morning. At eight, up again, to scribble, run and roll hogsheads.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] John Bernard, Retrospections of America, 1797-1811, ed. Mrs. Bayle Bernard (New York, 1887), as quoted in Still, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

At least two important conclusions can be drawn from this passage. First, that urban life, even in a town like New York with a population of only about fifty thousand by this time, had a distinctly urban flavor, colorful characters, and a pace of living all its own; and second, that under a perceptive eye and given a little imagination and literary treatment a very delightful sense of this urbanness and great vitality and movement can be communicated. In other words, if seen by an eye predisposed to look for color, atmosphere, life, and movement, and acted on by a mind educated in the technical means of expressing these qualities, the genre as well as the topography of the American cities of the 1790's had a definite artistic potential.

Unfortunately, the perceptiveness and literary ability demonstrated by Bernard were rare, particularly among native writers. Such literary adaptations of urban people and scenes, had they been done more often, would be much more interesting and in many ways more informative than the topographical accounts because they would approach the city from an essentially artistic viewpoint, thus coming nearer to the problem to be encountered in the visual arts. But a search of the literature of the period is fruitless from this standpoint. For instance, the few novels produced during this decade, the period of naissance of the American novel, make few and meager references to the cities. Hugh Brackenridge's Modern Chivalry (1792) is one minor exception to this; and Charles Brockden Brown's writings contain references to situations and events in Philadelphia, such as the disastrous plague of 1793, perhaps best expressed in his Ormond (1799) and Arthur

Mervyn (1799-1800). But in the violently romantic, fantastic, and highly personal fiction of Brown, such references are more in the nature of aids to the development of plot and of means for creating dark moods, reflecting more of Brown's literary backgrounds and personal feelings than the prevailing atmosphere and individuality of any particular city such as Philadelphia. This is true of most novels of the period which purport to have an urban setting; they fail to characterize the setting succinctly enough to make it identifiable or even convincingly real. After Brown, who died in the first decade of the next century, the city plays almost no part in American fiction until 1830, when a more general awakening of interest in the city issues in such works as Mrs. Sedgwick's Clarence: A Tale of Our Own Times.[1]

The general indifference of Americans toward their own cities is also apparent in the origins of the pictorial arts of the period. Very few American-born artists and craftsmen practiced this art before 1830 either. The vast majority of the existing views were done either by travellers who worked also as amateur artists, or by professional, immigrant artists already trained in the techniques and traditional formulae and styles of contemporary view painters and engravers. Those few native artists who occasionally ventured into the field usually learned their trade from the immigrant artists and by the imitation of

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[1]See George Dunlap, The City in the American Novel, 1789-1900 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Dissertation, by the author, 1934), pp. 7-9. For a very concise account of the development of the American novel see Herbert Brown, The Sentimental Novel in America (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1940.

engravings which were common in such periodicals as the Copper Plate Magazine. In only a few rare instances they learned their art by actual schooling abroad. That most of the artists who viewed the city in the period were European in origin explains in great part both the reason for being and the character of the art which appeared.

Curiously enough, however, this explanation does not apply to the first work to be discussed in the 1790's. This is a "View of City Hall," New York, which was drawn and engraved by Cornelius Tiebout, probably about 1791-1793 (Fig. 5). One of the earliest street views of the decade, it is rather strange that it should have been done by a native American. Tiebout was born in New York City about 1773 and began his career as an artist and engraver about 1789, contributing a number of engravings to the New York Magazine during the next four years, including a few crudely done street views. Following this, in 1793 he went to London for three years, chiefly to study engraving with James Heath.[1] After 1799 his chief occupation consisted of banknote engraving in Philadelphia until, in 1825, he migrated to the famous communal living colony at New Harmony, Indiana, where he served as a high-school teacher, finally dying there in 1832.[2] He is less remembered today as an

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[1]Heath was best known as an engraver of illustrations for books. Tiebout, having begun his career making engravings for magazines, chose a teacher prominent in this field. During his stay in London (1794) Heath was made Engraver to the King. From George C. Williamson, Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers (5 vols.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1904), III, 25.

[2]From George Groce and David Wallace, The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America 1564-1860 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 630.

artist of urban views than as one of the earliest American artists to do landscape scenery and views of country estates for magazines. This plate is, therefore, rather exceptional in his work.[1]

Tiebout's subject, "City Hall," is the old city hall of New York, also called "Federal Hall" after its enlargement and remodelling to the state depicted here by the French architect L'Enfant in 1788-89. In this capacity the building housed the United States Congress for some of its earliest sessions; but most of its historical and souvenir value derives from its having been the scene of George Washington's first inauguration. Architecturally and historically then, it was probably the most notable landmark in the city of that time, and as such, attracted a number of view artists to that locale.

The best features of Tiebout's frankly topographical view stem from his initial choice of a vantage point. The fact that he has worked close to the subject, narrowing the field of his vision to concentrate on one small locale and architectural monument instead of attempting a general view of the whole city, shows the beginning of the new way of viewing the city. Though the work has many faults it has at least this much to its credit: it is a view from the street, and as such, shows a specific interest in a particular part of the city. The existence of such a view represents one of the first applications of what will amount almost to a fundamental principle in this study: that when a particular locale or building achieves a certain significance or

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[1]See Frank Weitenkampf, "Early American Landscape Prints," Art Quarterly, VIII (Winter, 1945), 40-68.

curiosity value for the city or the nation, sooner or later views will be made of it.

The weakness of the Tiebout view stems from the fact that he failed to make full use of his potentially more fruitful vantage point. An adaptation of the work published by Hatch and Smillie some fifty years later (Fig. 6) illustrates by its differences from the original some of the Tiebout failings.[1] First, the direction of the light has been reversed. Tiebout, for some unknown reason, had obscured the facade of the building, its most important feature both architecturally and historically, by bringing his light from the right side and throwing the facade into a deep shadow. While his sharp contrast of light and dark sides gives a large and simple unity and plastic force to the mass of the building, it emphasizes the least attractive parts of the building, architecturally, while it neglects the facade; and it was on the colonnaded loggia above the street that Washington took his oath of office. Realizing these shortcomings in the original, the later artist reversed the light and illuminated the facade. He also made other changes of a similar sort, such as conveniently enlarging the tree at the right to mask some of the architectural irregularities at the rear of the building, and shifting the frame of the composition toward the left and down, thereby achieving a more comfortable balance of masses and relieving some of the crowding in the left side of the Tiebout. His more numerous and less stiffly arranged figures also improve on the austerity of the

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[1] Another version in lithograph, also based on Tiebout's composition, appeared as frontispiece to Valentine's Manual of the Common Council of the City of New York in 1847.

Tiebout, while his addition of the conventional dark foreground shows a dependency on compositional formulae of which as yet Tiebout was unaware.

Among several views of this building dating from the 1790's is a rather good one by Archibald Robertson (Fig. 7) from about 1798. Comparing it with the Tiebout, this work seems much freer and facile, much softer and atmospheric, and much better thought through. While the perspective vantage points are very similar in the two works, the foreshortening of the Robertson is less abrupt, creating for it a greater ease and naturalness in the way the buildings "sit" on the receding plane of the ground. This facility and improved judgment are to be found throughout the Robertson composition, as in the manipulation of the right-hand buildings and the enlargement and addition of the trees to cover the weakest part of the architecture of the main subject, and in the addition of the carriage and horses, and improvement of the figures to create a lifelike foreground. Though his chief aim is still amost wholly topographical, Robertson has composed the picture in such a way that it has more interest and purposefulness than a coldly observed and rigidly descriptive portrait of a building. Over-all there is a quality of "wholeness" of vision, broad enough to include not only the primary subject but its natural and human environment as well.

Robertson, of course, had considerably more artistic preparation than the New York-born Tiebout, which explains the more mature qualities of his view. The son of a Scottish architect and draftsman, he was trained as a painter in Aberdeen,

Edinburgh, and London before coming to this country in 1791. In New York he maintained, rather successfully it seems, a drawing and painting school along with his brother Alexander who arrived in 1792. He was also a member and director of the American Academy of Fine Arts in that city for a number of years before his retirement in 1821.[1] He was not primarily a painter of urban views, therefore, but a teacher and painter of portraits and miniatures. His urban views seem to have constituted a sideline, motivated more by interest than by assurance of a sale, another commentary on the developmental state of the cities and the interest they were generating in the artist, if not in the public.

A quite different approach to the same architectural subject is shown in John Joseph Holland's "Broad Street and City Hall" (Fig. 8), which probably dates from around 1797, if Stokes is correct in his research.[2] Here the artist has placed the principal subject, if it now can be called that, in the background, giving greater attention to the buildings lining the street leading up to it. His emphasis is distributed in such a way that the real subject may indeed be the picturesque Dutch houses so near in character to the descriptions of La Rochefoucauld of the old town. Holland may have been aiming for a contrast of the old and the

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[1] From Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 540.

[2] The painting is unsigned and undated. A lithograph of it was made in 1847 with the name "George Holland" added by the lithographer. Since no such person is listed in contemporary sources scholars have assumed that this is a mistake for "John Joseph Holland," who was well known at the time. The dating of 1797 was attributed to it by I. N. P. Stokes, who identified the buildings visible in the painting from old records (Stokes, op. cit., I, 445-49).

new, the sophisticated "new taste" amidst the semi-rural remnants of the old colonial settlement, a conventional combination of ideas. He was obviously delighted with the old and picturesque features of the scene, rendering all the rough bricks in his scratchy style of watercolor, and emphasizing all of the irregularities and sudden variations of outline and light and dark in the rows of old facades and stepped gables. By this means he has created a very broken rhythmic pattern leading into depth to the distant but important facade of City Hall, but the combination of distance and distracting interests make the small facade hard to see. It is interesting that Holland exploited the very qualities which La Rochefoucauld had found unpleasant in the locale, showing that he cared less for utilitarian matters than for seeking the timeworn qualities of Europe in the relative newness of New York.

Holland had a rather unusual career as an artist, one which makes the great scarcity of his works a matter of some regret. Born in England about 1776, he came to the United States in 1796 as a scene painter for the Philadelphia Theatre. In 1807 he moved to New York City where, besides continuing his work as a designer and painter of scenes at various theaters, he was the architect responsible for the extensive remodelling of Park Theatre. Among his students were Hugh Reinagle and John Evers, scenographic artists and view painters, who were later to become charter members of the National Academy of Design, when it was founded in New York in 1826.[1]

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[1]From Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 322.

Thomas Cummings, the chronicler of the National Academy, mentions the trio as having designed and painted a panorama of New York which was in operation on Broadway as late as 1813, four years before the opening of Vanderlyn's Rotunda.[1] This sketch may be a study for that panorama, but if so, it would more likely date from 1807-1812 when he was in New York rather than in 1797 as stated by Stokes. It may also have been done for a stage backdrop, rather like Thomas Girtin's "Rue St. Denis" (Fig. 9), which is thought to have been done for the theater. Like the Girtin, Holland's composition has an emptiness about it, an absence of human life and activity which needs the stage to complete it.

Another subject with souvenir value similar to that of City Hall or Federal Hall is the so-called "Government House" or "Custom House." Situated on the Bowling Green near New York's Battery, this building shared the fate of Federal Hall when the seat of national government was moved to Philadelphia in 1790. Designed to be the official residence of the President and not quite complete yet when the government moved, the house then became the state governors' mansion until 1797 when the state government was moved to Albany. After this double disappointment the house was used for a time as a tavern, until 1799, when it was converted for use as the Custom House, retaining this function until 1815 when it was demolished.

A provocative little watercolor drawing of this building was made in 1797 by one C. Milbourne (Fig. 10). Although the

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[1] Thomas Cummings, Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design (Philadelphia: Geo. W. Childs, 1865), p. 31.

identity of this artist has been confused by his use of an initial instead of a first name, and by the fact that his last name was spelled in a number of ways by contemporary writers, the similarity of his style to that of Holland and the adoption of some of his motifs lend credit to the belief that he is probably the same Milbourne who was painting stage scenery in Philadelphia in 1794-1795, and in New York with Holland and his students in 1797-1811.[1]

He probably painted this view of Government House shortly after the removal of the state government to Albany. The cow placidly reclining in the now unused driveway leading to the lofty Ionic portico and the empty house rising in forlorn isolation above the street seem to symbolize the ironic fate of this aspiringly grand monument.

His manner of watercolor is similar to that of Holland; the same dry niggling with details, and lustreless color is common to both. There is also a similarity in such particulars as the man pushing the cart and an otherwise general absence of figures in the two compositions. The two artists also tended to look for the same qualities in the city, qualities which accord with the European vogue for the Picturesque, qualities the source of which can be seen by comparing them with nearly contemporary works by such English view artists as Edward Dayes (Fig. 11), F. Nicholson (Fig. 12), and another (English) Reinagle (Fig. 13), works which are rather typical of the engravings in Copper Plate Magazine during the decade. Even a very new building such as Government House

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[1]See Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 443.

seems to grow in years and quaintness simply by the way Milbourne saw and drew it. However, such a treatment rather "goes against the grain" in a country which measured its progress in the architectural arts by each such new example of the pretentious "new taste." Old buildings here, except when viewed by the immigrant artist, would be regarded as eyesores to be torn down, not as objects of picturesque delight. So the procedures of Holland and Milbourne are a rather curious transplantation of an approach strangely out of popular context in the American city, and it is doubtful for this reason that they would be able to find buyers for such paintings as these.

A more indigenous interpretation, perhaps, of the same subject, Government House, is represented by the sepia drawing of Figure 14. Painted around 1795, probably by William Rollinson,[1] the work fairly abounds in the kind of underlying comment which Milbourne had suggested by the reclining cow, but achieved by different methods. Rollinson has attempted to use people, juxtaposing their activities against the starkly isolated architectural monument, with little to relate the two except the single figure of a man who stands looking at the building in seemingly dejected contemplation. The rest of the participants seem to have little concern for the landmark which seems for its own part to beg for the attention of everyone by the rather crudely suggested grandeur of its architecture. Unlike Robertson's "City Hall," in which the topography and the genre of the street were so deftly organized

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[1] There is an aquatint of this drawing which is signed by William Rollinson, who probably did the drawing also.

into a logical whole, this picture is the forerunner of many "primitive" urban views to be seen in the course of this study in which topography and genre are presented as separately conceived elements, usually with a great deal of naive directness and forcefulness, as in this example. The drawing of the parts may have faults in perspective and scale, etc., but the directness and naiveté of the composition, the note of humor in the combination of ideas, the forthright simplicity of the over-all arrangement, all tend to give the work a much greater appeal than its purely technical qualities would in themselves allow.

St. Paul's Church in New York was another of the more distinguished examples of local architecture which were beginning to attract the artists of street views. Actually, the building was quite old by the 1790's, having been built in 1764-1765; but it contained two features of current interest which would lend value to views of it, one being the fact that Washington had occupied a pew there in 1789-1790, and the other being the recent addition of the tall and splendid steeple which now made the church among the most prominent and distinguished of the city. The church, located on Broadway just below City Hall Park and still surviving today, stands in an area which provided the settings for a great many urban views in the nineteenth century, a number of which will be seen later in this study.

A view of the church by Milbourne, signed and dated 1798, (Fig. 15) shows it in a well-developed environment, surrounded by houses and trees, the whole scene bathed in a warm sunlight. Park Theatre is the large building at the left, a reminder of the

artist's theatrical connections, and the street in the foreground is Park Place, which meets Broadway at an angle near the church, forming the triangular Park on the right where the new City Hall was later built. The shadowed mass of the buildings at the left and the diagonal shadow they cast across the foreground create the inevitable dark repoussoir. The diagonal direction relative to the picture plane of this light and dark scheme is an important feature of the composition, since it deviates somewhat from the usual method of maintaining the rays of light parallel to the picture plane, a method which always results in the formation of shadows whose lines repeat the horizontals of the frame, providing a more static arrangement and a more gradual entry into the pictorial space. Milbourne's method, by its use of diagonals, encourages somewhat freer movements into depth, while at the same time producing an effect of partial silhouetting of the figures, with accompanying diagonally trailing shadows, a rather unusual effect for its time and place.

Less daring in the use of the light but more resourceful and interesting in other respects is Archibald Robertson's treatment of the same subject done in the latter half of the decade (Fig. 16). Robertson's choice of a vantage point at a greater distance from St. Paul's enables the inclusion of the Brick Presbyterian Church at the corner of Park Place and Nassau Street, an intersection on an acute angle. Robertson has used the acute angle of this intersection as the dominant motif in a very unconventional composition, allowing the apex of the angle to touch the bottom of the frame, while the steeple of the Brick Church reaches

almost to the top edge, thus dividing the composition near the middle, neither part of which is then as prominent or as heavy as the center. His light is more diffused than Milbourne's, and there are no diagonal shadows to encourage the penetration of the pictorial space. Rather, depth is achieved directly, literally by broad avenues, and the diverging arrangement of the streets reverses the usual effect of perspective. The hastily constructed and ineffectual repoussoir at the left is interesting because the principle of such a repoussoir as a means of providing a gradual and controlled visual entry into the space of a picture is so completely at odds with the principle which Robertson has more or less created for his own use in this composition: free and unimpeded access to deep space, with entry near the center and diffusion toward the sides, rather than the more conventional arrangement of entry at the sides and concentration by steps toward the center. Had Robertson assumed the same vantage point as Milbourne the chances are that his composition would have seemed much more conventional due to the converging character of the layout of the streets at that point. His unthinking repetition of the repoussoir motif not only demonstrates the strength of this tradition, but also indicates that he was unconscious of the difference in composition which had been forced on him by his less conventional choice of a site.

These are but a few of the sites chosen by the artists of the 1790's as subjects for street views. It is significant that such select sites were becoming rather numerous and that a few of them were beginning to attract more than one artist, for this in-

## CHAPTER II

## THE EARLY PERIOD: 1800-1830

The patterns of growth and adjustment taking shape in the American cities of the 1790's continued with little interruption or radical change after the turn of the century, until the War of 1812 and the events which led up to it temporarily "froze" the commercial life of the cities. Even the changes in the political climate which resulted in the defeat of the Federalists by Jefferson in 1800 did not affect the urban scene immediately, though this turn of events ultimately had its influence in the formation of democratic customs and manners in the city as in all areas of the American social scene.[1]

Under the combined influences of high birth rates, foreign immigration and urban migration, the major east coast cities continued the pattern of rather rapid growth. The population of New York, for instance, increased by 350 per cent from 1800-1830, rising from 60,000 in 1800, to 202,000 in 1830. The population of Philadelphia increased 230 per cent, from 69,000 to 161,000, while Boston, now ranked fourth in population behind Baltimore, increased by 250 per cent, from 24,000 to 61,000.[2]

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[1] See Krout and Fox, op. cit., chapter viii, "The Quickening of Nationalism."

[2] From DeBow, op. cit., p. 192.

Not only did the major cities add greatly to their populations during the period; there was also a substantial growth in the number of urban centers which could claim rank as "cities." Whereas in 1790 there were only five cities with population in excess of 8,000, representing only 3 per cent of the total population of the nation, by 1800 there were 6 such cities, representing 3.97 per cent of the total population, and by 1830 this figure had increased to 26, with 6.72 per cent of the nation's people living in cities.[1]

Foreign immigration was an important factor in this growth, though not so vital during this period as it was to become later. The total number of foreign arrivals during the first thirty years of the century was approximately 320,000, a very substantial figure by eighteenth-century standards. But during the year 1846 alone this figure was 220,000, which by comparison makes the immigration factor of the earlier period seem moderate.[2] The social effects of large numbers of immigrants, by the same token, were much less of a problem in the earlier period than in the years toward mid-century.[3]

Of course, not all of the arrivals stayed on in the cities. Many moved westward to enjoy the agrarian benefits of Jeffersonian

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[1]From Adna Weber, The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century; Columbia University Studies, Vol. XI (New York: Macmillan Co., 1899), pp. 20-40. By comparison with American cities, London increased from 864,000 in 1801 to 1,471,000 in 1831; Paris, from 547,000 to 774,000 during the same period (ibid., pp. 46 and 73).

[2]DeBow, op. cit., p. 127.

[3]See Krout and Fox, op. cit., chapter xiv, "Urban Influences."

democracy, the lure of cheap land on an expanding frontier. The exact numbers of those who did remain to swell the populations of the cities is not known precisely.[1] Of these, however, the greatest proportion, certainly, settled in New York where the majority of immigrants arrived, this being the chief port of entry for people as well as goods.

New York, having surpassed Philadelphia in population about 1810, began to assume the characteristics which have made it the foremost American city. Its favorable location, already remarked by La Rochefoucauld in the nineties, blessed the city with commercial advantages which proved particularly lucrative during the years before and after the War of 1812, interrupted only temporarily by Jefferson's embargo of 1807. While in the opinion of many, Philadelphia remained the most beautiful, elegant, and English of the cities; and Boston the most advanced culturally; New York was admittedly the most cosmopolitan of the cities, with an animation in its social and commercial life which could not be found to the same degree in any of the other large cities. The feverishness with which New Yorkers attended to business gave the entire urban atmosphere there a peculiarly animated tone.

Foreign and native visitors alike seldom failed to remark this tumultous character of New York life, usually singling out the preoccupation with commerce as the basic cause. This was the opinion of Perrin du Lac, for instance, a Frenchman who visited New York in 1801 and observed, "primarily these people are com-

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[1]The official tables in DeBow, op. cit., do not list these figures.

mercially minded; all their thoughts are directed toward making a fortune, which almost always stifles the love of science and abstract learning."[1] This opinion was echoed in 1815 by the Baron de Montlezun who declared, "New York . . . is uniquely a city of business . . . One finds nothing unusual there, in literature or the arts."[2]

This rather harsh criticism is moderated somewhat, however, by the observations of the Englishman John Lambert, who visited New York both before and soon after the Embargo. While he agrees that "New York is the first city in the United States for wealth, commerce, and population," he does not seem to feel that this has hindered the growth of cultural refinements among the inhabitants, for in another place he says,

> Much has been said of the deficiency of the polite and liberal accomplishments . . . in the United States. Whatever truth there may have formerly been in this statement, I do not think there is any foundation for it at present, at least in New York, where there appears to be a great thirst after knowledge. The riches that have flowed into that city, for the last twenty years have brought with them a taste for the refinements of polished society; and though the inhabitants cannot yet boast of having reached the standard of European perfection, they are not wanting in the solid and rational parts of education; nor in many of those accomplishments which ornament and embellish private life. It has become the fashion in New York to attend lectures on moral philosophy, chemistry, mineralogy, botany, mechanics, etc.; and the ladies in particular have made considerable progress in those studies.[3]

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[1]François M. Perrin du Lac, Voyage dans les deux Louisianes [etc.] . . . en 1801, 1802, et 1803 (Lyon, 1805), quoted in Still, op. cit., p. 62.

[2]Barthelemi Sernin du Moulin de la Bartelle, baron de Montlezun, Souvenirs des Antilles: voyage en 1815 et 1816 aux Etats-Unis, [etc.] (Paris, 1815), quoted in Still, op. cit., p. 63.

[3]John Lambert, Travels through Canada, and the United States of North America in the Years 1806, 1807, and 1808 (London, 1814), quoted in Still, op. cit., p. 72.

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[2] Berthelard Bernin de Montlezun de la Berelle, baron de,
ltespun, Souvenirs des Antilles: Voyage en 1815 et 1816 aux
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[3] John Lambert, Travels through Canada, and the United
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It would seem that Lambert's observations on New York life generally are somewhat colored by a predisposition for things "fashionable." Thus he equates what "has become fashionable in New York" with a "great thirst for knowledge." That knowledge could become fashionable is typical of New York beginning with this period of its history. This city was the center of everything that was currently "à la mode" in Europe, from the latest French styles in wearing apparel to the latest in Continental slang, all of which entered the United States by way of New York harbor. The realization that this vibrancy and vitality of New York life was largely a by-product of the commercial quest was driven home to Lambert when he returned to the city in 1808, shortly after the Embargo took effect.

> But on my return to New York the following April, what a contrast was presented to my view! And how shall I describe the melancholy dejection that was painted upon the countenances of the people, who seemed to have taken leave of all their former gaiety and cheerfulness.[1]

Only the sailors belonging to the idle shipping in the port preserved any of the former gaiety, having, according to Lambert, "a holiday, and while their money lasted, amused themselves with fiddling, dancing and carousing with their girls." This is a far cry from the fashionable enjoyments observed in more prosperous times!

New York under such an economic and mental climate as seen in times of prosperity began increasingly to be characterized as a "city of pleasure." In spite of Lambert's opinions, there is little concrete evidence before the 1820's to indicate

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[1] Ibid., p. 74.

[1] Ibid., p. 74.

that any large portion of the city's wealth was being utilized to further abstract learning and the fine arts. Rather, all classes of society seem to have indulged wholeheartedly in business by day and amusement by night. Self-indulgent pleasure was one's reward for diligence and success in business; as Senator Jonathan Mason of Boston said in 1804, New Yorkers "live well and are hospitable. . . . They are wealthy; . . . feel conscious of all their advantages, and . . . rate them full high."[1] Timothy Dwight declared that their professional amusements occupied "as much time, attention, and expense as would ordinarily be pleaded for by the veriest votary of pleasure."[2] For the wealthy this meant elegant soirées, exclusive gaming clubs, and fashionable saloons; for the other classes of people it meant less refined entertainment such as could be found in the familiar "oyster cellar" or the corner "green grocery." Still, both upper and lower classes often enjoyed the amusements of the theatres, the panoramas, Vauxhall, Ranelagh, weekend picnics, horse racing, and the free promenades in Broadway and the parks, though class distinctions based on wealth and social position were already beginning to segregate the crowds at many of these places.[3]

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[1][Jonathan Mason], "Diary of the Honorable Jonathan Mason," in Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, 2d series, II (1885-86), 5-34, quoted in Still, op. cit., p. 60.

[2]Timothy Dwight, Travels: in New-England and New-York (New Haven, 1821), quoted in ibid.

[3]Still, op. cit., p. 60. See also Krout and Fox, op. cit., chapter ii, "Republican Aristocrats." George Odell's Annals of the New York Stage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927), carries in Vols. II and III a running account of the amusements in New York during this period.

One might suppose that this tempo of life in New York would have inspired the local artists and writers to make that city and its life the subject of a literature in the Baudelarian sense of "the romance of modern life." Such, however was not the case. We are obliged to wait until the thirties and later to see the city viewed in this way. The present period, like the 1790's, was still the age of "topographical commentary," both in literature and the pictorial arts, relieved by only a very few and insignificant excursions into a more imaginative treatment of the city.

Not until the 1820's and the activities of the Knickerbocker writers is there any indication that an American city was capable of having a direct influence on a literary school.[1] Yet even in this case the influence from the city itself was rather general, only rarely before 1830 emerging in the form of an imaginative treatment of recognizable urban material. The New York Mirror was probably the most cosmopolitan and urban-conscious of the contemporary magazines,[2] containing as it did many of the short writings of the Knickerbocker authors,[3] and publishing occasional engraved topographical views of city landmarks.[4] But these

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[1]Kendall Taft, The Minor Knickerbockers (New York: American Book Co., 1947), pp. xiii-cx.

[2]Began publication in 1823. Frank Mott in his History of American Magazines (New York: D. Appleton, 1930), p. 330, states, "Despite its inglorious end, let it be admitted that the Mirror did, in its best days, reflect entertainingly and as truly as could be expected the life of New York and the nation."

[3]Such as Theodore Fay, N. P. Willis, Charles Fenno Hoffman, Fitz-Greene Halleck, William Leggett, William Cox, and Gulian Verplanck, to name a few.

[4]These, however, did not begin to appear until 1827, before which time the magazine contained no illustrations. Some of the

come rather late in the period, representing more of an early manifestation of the spirit of the thirties and forties than the common attitudes of the period now under discussion.

In the pictorial arts the period is rather "unified" historically in that for nearly thirty years native artists were almost completely inactive in the field of city views. Though we have quite a number of works from the period for study, most of them are the productions of temporary visitors, some of them professional artists; some, amateurs. Of the remainder of the artists, the majority are very recent arrivals in the United States, and as such, their attitudes now, as in the preceding decade, reflect a lingering of the attitudes and commercial expectations, as well as the styles, of the European view painters, rather than providing a true indication of the state of the art at the time in this country. Most of the earlier native artists and engravers such as Tiebout and Rollinson, along with the earlier immigrant artists introduced in the last chapter, seem to have become discouraged by the general indifference of the public to their work and by now have shifted their activities to other more lucrative fields. For instance, we find them now teaching drawing, painting portraits and views of estates, engraving portraits and historical paintings, and making engravings of nearly any subject but the city for magazine and book illustration.

For these reasons, in studying the art of this period one must still accept the fact that we are still dealing with "views

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artists at that time were James Eddy, V. Balch, and A. J. Davis, with Anderson, Mason, and others doing the engraving.

of American cities," since an indigenous art based on the American city has not yet appeared. This fact should not, however, preclude any of the enjoyment of the works that are available to us. Though they are not particularly numerous, they are wonderfully varied in authorship and artistic approaches, and contain some interesting innovations on the art of the nineties.

The first and most significant of these innovations is a great increase in the number and importance of figures in the compositions. The earlier artists in most cases had neglected the figure, concentrating most of their attention instead on the topographical subject. The figure, where it was used, served mostly as embellishment of the main subject, and had little meaning as a part of the actual street scene. The transition from this treatment to the more populous views of the nineteenth century occurred rather suddenly around 1800, a fact noted by other historians but apparently never studied for an explanation.[1] Undoubtedly the explanation lies somewhere in the history of the analogous art of Europe, most likely of England. It may have been one phase of a reaction against antiquarianism and the by now overworked recipes for picturesque views. Whatever the reason for it there does seem to have been in England, at least, a growing appreciation at this time of a type of art which found its inspiration in the scenes and events of contemporary life, though the tendency was confined mostly to the minor arts of book illustration and en-

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[1] E.g., John Kouwenhoven in his Columbia Historical Portrait of New York (New York: Doubleday, 1953).

graved views.[1] This tendency is perhaps best represented by the caricatures of life in and around London by Thomas Rowlandson and the brothers Cruikshank, but the same tendency appears in the work of some of the watercolor painters, such as Dayes and Malton. The existence of a large number of books on costume,[2] and the many so-called "microcosms" of places and people is also an expression of this tendency.[3] It may well have been this influence which was imported by the artists who came to this country around the turn of the century and rather suddenly began to people their city views with multitudes of figures doing things. The fact that the cities themselves were becoming more populous probably had little to do with this since the growth in urban populations as we have seen, though rapid, was nowhere near as sudden as would be suggested by the change in the art.

Perhaps the first immigrant artist to follow this new approach to painting the American city was Francis Guy, an Englishman who came to this country in 1795 as a tailor, calenderer and dyer. At the age of eighteen Guy had run off to London to establish himself in this trade and apparently became successful in

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[1] Richard Koke in an article on John Hill, "Master of Aquatint," New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin, XLIII (January, 1959), 51-117, says (p. 63), "Two cardinal facts emerge from any prolonged research into the artists and engravers of the early nineteenth century English Print world: their prodigiousness of output and their great interest in the life of their times."

[2] E.g., William Henry Pyne's The Costumes of Great Britain (London: William Miller, 1808).

[3] E.g., Henry Pyne's Microcosm of the Arts, Agriculture, Manufactures, Trade and Amusements of Great Britain (London, 1803-1806), and Rudolph Ackermann's Microcosm of London (London, 1808-11?).

it, though trouble with bill collectors may have been a factor in his deciding to immigrate to the United States. He arrived in this country by way of New York where he remained for two years, moving to Philadelphia in 1797, and, in 1798 to Baltimore, where he remained until 1817, finally settling in Brooklyn, where he remained until his death in 1820. Until the year 1800, when he was listed in the directory for the first time as a "Landscape Painter," Guy apparently painted only as a sideline to his main business as a tailor.[1]

According to Rembrandt Peale, who knew the artist in Baltimore, Guy was self-taught as a painter. He learned to draw from nature with the aid of an optical device[2] which he had fashioned for his own use, and which he ported from one site to the next like a true eighteenth-century amateur. Peale thought this an ingenious procedure and declared that

> whilst he continued this mode of study, his pictures were really good--but, excited by the reputation that he was gaining, he afterwards manufactured landscapes with such vigor that I have known him to display, in the sunshine, on a log contiguous to his residence . . . forty large landscapes, which were promptly disposed of by raffle.[3]

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[1] J. Hall Pleasants, "Four Late Eighteenth Century Anglo-American Landscape Painters," American Antiquarian Society Proceedings, LII (October, 1942), 239-300.

[2] His use of this device was recorded by Rembrandt Peale in his "Reminiscences--Desultory," The Crayon, III (1856), 5, quoted in Pleasants, op. cit., p. 263. The optical device consisted of a tent in which the artist sat facing a window covered by gauze stretched on a frame, a typical camera oscura. With his eye in a fixed position in respect to the window he would make his drawing in chalk on the gauze, then transfer this image to a canvas and paint the picture, sometimes on the site, sometimes in the studio. It is interesting to note that his "Tontine Coffee House," though probably painted this way, has little of the thin qualities so often associated with drawings made with the help of optical devices.

[3] Ibid.

This disciplined study of nature through the window of his "tent" may explain some of the merits of the earliest known painting done by Guy in this country, the "Tontine Coffee House" (Fig. 17). Painted in 1797-1798, the work falls somewhat before the turn of the century, but its use of many figures allies it with the nineteenth-century approach, its early date making it one of the first along this line. Though Guy was still an "amateur" painter at the time, the work shows a great deal of observation and confident handling; actually, much more than many of his later landscapes. The topography of the site, with the converging streets coming into the large and spacious foreground with the Tontine building at the left, appears to have been studied carefully from nature in such a way that everything is in correct relationship, from the over-all perspective and the atmospheric effects down to the finest details.

The drawing and grouping of the figures and their arrangement within this site seem, however, somewhat less the result of close study through the optical device. These seem much more arbitrarily contrived by the artist. The figures themselves are drawn with much less observed "truth" than their environment and freely manipulated by the artist to form a composition. Yet in spite of a certain inability to draw the figure convincingly, he has nevertheless achieved in his groups a definite spriteliness and movement. They do not move "anatomically"; rather, the sense of movement is expressed abstractly by the rhythm of contours and by a certain spatial rhythm between the various groups as they are arranged in depth.

Thus, the artist has adopted two basically different procedures in the same painting; there is the physical environment, the urban backdrop, which has been closely observed and drawn from nature; then there is the human element, the genre content, which has been drawn from formulae and manipulated freely to fit the physical situation and to enrich the composition. This in itself is not too different from the procedure of Robertson in his "Federal Hall," discussed in the last chapter. The important difference in Guy's painting is the much larger number of figures and the proportionately greater role they play in creating a sense of life, movement, and physical activity. The figures have actually become the subject of the painting; the topographical study only serves as a backdrop for the activity of the foreground and middleground. Yet, in contrast to the naively conceived composition of Rollinson's "Custom House," the two elements in Guy's composition have been blended so adroitly that one is not particularly bothered by the fact that there is a rather distinct line of demarcation between the parts which have been studied directly from nature and those which have been invented by the artist. The success of this blending is partly the result of the composition itself which is at once so diversified and yet unified, and partly the result of the intense interest generated by the activity of the figures.

Guy did not finish this painting until after he moved to Philadelphia in late 1797 or early 1798.[1] At about this same time William and Thomas Birch were beginning work on a series of views

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[1] Ibid., p. 274.

of this city entitled, The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania, which appeared in book form in 1800 consisting of twenty-eight hand-colored line engravings and descriptive text.[1] William, an Englishman who arrived in this country in 1794 at the age of thirty-nine, was probably the guiding hand in the work, while his son Thomas, who was less than twenty at the time, probably served as his apprentice.

The Birch views, in addition to illustrating the use of figures around the turn of the century, also serve to show the ever widening acceptance of the street view as the most effective means of approaching the city. According to the author of the preface and text, "the choice of subjects are those that give the most general idea of the town; the scenery is confined within the limits of the city, excepting the first and last views."[2] Stated simply, the plates are street scenes instead of the old distant views from the harbor and countryside. This statement is the first to imply a conscious distinction between the two types of approach, proposing that a general idea of the town could be conveyed by a selection of individual scenes within the limits of the city. To do this Birch adopted the common "view book" arrangement of a pictorial tour through the city's streets, selecting the subjects judiciously and capturing as much life and picturesqueness of the

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[1] W. Birch and Son, The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania, North America; as it appeared in the Year 1800 (Springland Cot, Pa.: W. Birch, 1800). The individual plates range in date from 1798 to 1800. Later editions published by Birch (1806) and Desilver (1841) indicate that the work was not without popular demand in its day.

[2] Ibid., preface.

city as possible. Thus, the "general idea" which he conveys rests on a number of representative but particularized locales and activities which, when taken together by the viewer are designed to evoke a mental image of the city's chief topographical and sociological features.

Much of the effectiveness of Birch's engravings is the result of a very charming and personal approach to the pictorial possibilities of a given scene. For instance, in his "High Street with the First Presbyterian Church" (Fig. 18), the unusual treatment of the side of the market at the left gives force and distinction to an otherwise rather dull topographical view. This dark, roughly textured, and boldly shaped pattern serves somewhat the same function, compositionally, as the more familiar "grotto," the use of which by Birch can be seen in his view of Washington's funeral procession passing this same market (Fig. 19). In comparison, the boldly thrusting diagonal of the eave in the first example seems rather daring, and is quite pleasing in its effect on the whole composition.

Two other plates from the book illustrate further this tendency in Birch to enhance the topographical with a fine sensitivity to the abstract qualities suggested by the subject itself. In the "High Street Market" (Fig. 20) the over-all design consisting of an elongated "grotto" is quite conventional and of little interest in itself. The composition is brought to life, however, by the abstract linear and textural interplay of the verticals and horizontals which form the sides of the "grotto." Against these heavy brick pillars and jutting hanger beams with

their rude meat hooks the artist has placed his beautifully attired and elegantly proportioned figures, thus achieving another of the contrasts so fundamental to the concept of the picturesque.[1] Even more unconventional in composition is his "Preparation for War to Defend Commerce" (Fig. 21). Here the interest of the artist has been spent almost equally on the pictorial possibilities of the long, inclined ramp leading up to the ship[2] and on the genre activity of the busy workmen. A lesser artist would probably have focused his attention on the ship which was being built. Birch was more interested in the picturesque and pictorial than practical matters, however, and has consequently included only enough of the ship to explain the presence and function of the ramp. In line with his intention to give a "general idea" of the town he has here emphasized the forms which best distinguish the area of the riverfront from the rest of the city. The vivid and engaging pictorial experience he has created by his selection and emphasis of interesting forms and activities helps to impress this locale on the memory of the viewer as he makes his pictorial "tour" through the book.

Birch's engravings are further enhanced by a rather personal touch with the burin. He mixes line and stipple quite freely, varying the thickness of the lines from quite heavy in the rendering of inanimate objects, to a very fine and delicate quality in the figures and trees, the stippling serving here and there to

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[1] In its theoretical purity as posited by Uvedale Price in 1794 in his Essay on the Picturesque (London: J. Robson, 1794).

[2] "Scaffolding," interestingly, was one of the things listed by Price as having the qualities of the Picturesque.

give textural variety and a softening effect of atmosphere. Certain "crudities" often appear in the crosshatching; little deviations from conventional style such as can be seen in the rendering of the foreground of this shipbuilding scene. Whatever the sources of these deviations, whether ineptitude or intention, they only serve to heighten the personal quality of the work, giving further evidence of the artist's intense interest in what he was doing.

Most historians who have made passing note of Birch's work as an artist and engraver seem to have overlooked the relative significance of this series in his work as a whole. Richardson, for instance, singles out Birch as "one of the first landscape artists of interest," citing as an example "The Sun Reflecting on the Dew, A Garden Scene, Echo Pennsylvania, a place Belonging to Mr. D. Bavarage" (Fig. 22) from Birch's Country Seats of the United States, a book of engravings published in 1808. While he attaches considerable importance to this engraving as being among the earliest evidences of a "romantic" attitude in American landscape, he sees Birch's Philadelphia views as merely "a delightful record of the most beautiful of American eighteenth century cities."[1] Yet are the two works so different in spirit? In this single work of landscape Birch has departed from the "norm" by subordinating topographical description to a feeling about nature, a mood. But in the Philadelphia views the artist has done almost the same thing: by his selection and treatment of urban pictorial motifs

[1]Edgar Richardson, Painting in America (New York: Crowell, 1956), p. 128.

he suggests something of a general feeling about the scenery of a city, an evocation which goes beyond mere topographical description and which comes about from a certain rapport between artist and subject.[1] The real difference between the two is one more of subject than of anything else. Given this difference, the attitudes and artistic approaches are very similar.

It is interesting to note further that the urban portrayal antedates the rural by almost ten years. This suggests that American cities were beginning to capture the fancy of artist and public much earlier than American scenery or landscape. However, while landscape eventually developed into a major strain of American painting, urban art such as we are considering here never attained a parallel status. It is probably this failure which has tended to dim the relative brilliance of Birch's Philadelphia views in the eyes of historians.

For a period of over twenty years following this promising attempt by Birch nearly all street views in American cities were done by visitors to the United States. One of the first and certainly among the most charming of these was the Baroness Hyde de Neuville, who resided in this country off and on from 1807-1822. She and her husband first came to this country as political exiles from the reign of Napoleon, remaining here until the restoration of the monarchy in 1814. During this first period they resided

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[1]This, however, is not an argument for any "romantic" qualities in Birch's city views. In these, and I think in his landscape print as well, the "feeling" evoked by Birch stems from his fine sensitivity for the picturesque in any given subject and something of a naiveté of attitude toward the subject itself, if these can be thought of as going together.

in the emigré colony in New York City for a time, later moving to a farm near New Brunswick, New Jersey. They returned again in 1816, the Baron having been sent by the king as French minister to this country. In this capacity he and the Baroness were here from 1816-1820, and again from 1821-1822. While in this country they travelled a good deal, visiting and residing in such places as Utica, Angelica, and Ballston Springs in New York State; Montpelier, Virginia; and Washington, D. C. Wherever they went the Baroness made her charming little watercolors.[1]

The Baroness was obviously an amateur artist. In most of her works she has set down her visual impressions as nearly verbatim as her limited technical ability would allow. In a few instances, however, she has handled her subjects in such a way as to suggest ability as a composer of pictures as well as sensitivity as an observer. This is the case in the "Bridewell, and Charity-School, Broadway, Opposite Chamber Street, February, 1808" (Fig. 23), a work done during their first stay in New York City. One might suppose from the vitality of the arrangement of the abstract elements in this picture that the artist was more of a designer than her other works suggest. There would seem to be in this picture a very select variety and controlled placement of shapes, forms, and spaces, all very consciously and purposefully interrelated. But this is probably the result of "happy circumstance" in the

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[1]Wayne Andrews, "The Baroness was never Bored: The Baroness Hyde de Neuville's Sketches of American Life, 1807-1822," New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin, XXXVIII (April, 1954), 105-17; and I. N. P. Stokes and Daniel Haskell, Historical Prints (New York: New York Public Library, 1933), pp. 49-50.

subject itself; a fortuitously built-in order which has no doubt been "limned" by the Baroness just the way she saw it.

Much less of an amateur was Pavel Petrovich Svin'in, who visited Philadelphia as secretary to the Russian Consul General from 1811-1813. Born of noble Russian parentage in 1788, Svin'in had studied at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg before joining the Russian civil service. He was elected member of this Academy in 1811, just before coming to the United States. He wrote and illustrated a number of descriptive and historical commentaries on the United States which were published soon after his return to Russia, first in the magazine, Son of the Fatherland (1814), and a year later in a book entitled An Essay of a Picturesque Voyage in North America, the latter containing six reproductions of his watercolor sketches made in America. Svin'in was much less adept as a writer and historian than as an artist; most of his writings are rather clumsily arranged collections of commentary on a wide variety of non-related subjects.[1] By contrast, his drawings reveal a probing eye, a curiosity for the incidental aspects of life, and a hand well trained in figure drawing and the techniques of the quick watercolor sketch.

As a delineator of the American city, particularly the genre of city life, Svin'in was well in advance of most of his contemporaries here. Such lively sketches as "A Winter Scene in

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[1]For full biographical and critical accounts of Svin'in and his works see Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Picturesque United States of America . . . a Memoir on Paul Svin'in (New York: W. E. Rudge, 1930) and D. Fedotoff White, "A Russian Sketches Philadelphia, 1811-1813," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXXV (January, 1951), 3-24.

Philadelphia, with the Bank of the United States in the Background" (Fig. 24), and "Night Life in Philadelphia--An Oyster Barrow in front of the Chestnut Street Theater" (Fig. 25), give evidence of a type of interest in city life which did not become common in this country until over twenty-five years later. It is much more sophisticated than the approach seen earlier in the Rollinson view of the Custom House, New York, both in the complexity of genre situations and in the relationship of the genre to its urban environment. Though the architecture is still used as more or less of a backdrop, the figures seem much more naturally a part of the scenes, and the development of the social comment, a single unified incident which belongs to that time and place alone, is entirely new and ahead of its time in this country. However, while his placement of genre in an identifiable time and place is rather particularized, there is no suggestion of any preoccupations with actual story-telling such as we find later in the rural genre of William Mount and others.

Philadelphia was also the center of activity for John Lewis Krimmel, a German artist who lived in this country from 1810-1817, and a visitor on two other shorter occasions before his death in 1821. Krimmel was known by his contemporaries as the "American Hogarth," an ill-chosen analogy considering that he was about as "American" as the Baroness Hyde de Neuville and as "Hogarthian" as Carle Vernet. However, since Svin'in was practically unknown at the time, Krimmel remained as the only artist concerned with the genre of that city, and in this context it is interesting to find that his contemporaries should liken him to

the famous English master of the social comment.[1]

The work by Krimmel which is reproduced here, "Centre Square, Philadelphia" (Fig. 26), dates from 1812 and is one of the best known of his works. Krimmel's approach to genre is somewhat the same as that of Svin'in. However, Krimmel does not concentrate and unify the activity to the extent that the Russian did. True, Krimmel selects a particular time and place to depict, but his observations are rather distilled and his inventions rather timid and undramatic, giving the effect of a slow-moving pageant of life without focusing attention on any one particular event or characteristic genre subject. In this picture, and perhaps even more so in his "Election Day at the State House, Philadelphia, 1815" (Fig. 27), he indulges in more "readable" anecdote than Svin'in. But these little pockets of activity are spotted throughout the composition in tapestry-like fashion, and the gestures by which the figures tell their stories are so thoroughly refined and graceful that they add little impact to the composition or vitality to the anecdotes.[2]

Another visiting artist was the Swedish Baron Axel Klinkowström, who toured this country in 1818-1819, publishing his observations and aquatints of his watercolor sketches in his Letters About the United States in 1824 after his return to Stockholm.[3]

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[1]Joseph Jackson, "Krimmel, the American Hogarth," International Studio, XCIII (June, 1929), 33-36 passim.

[2]See the copy by Svin'in of Krimmel's "Centre Square" in Yarmolinsky, op. cit., Plate XX.

[3]The Letters carried with it an Atlas published at the same time by Klinkowström, which included, among others, the aquatint made from this sketch, the original now belonging to the Museum of the City of New York.

The original watercolor for one of these aquatints is reproduced here, "Broadway and the City Hall," in New York (Fig. 28). This composition compares interestingly with Krimmel's handling of the urban view. Like Krimmel, Klinkowström favored a generalized, pageant-like composition, but lacking the former artist's artful grace in the drawing and grouping of the figures, he has spotted his rather ineptly drawn figures in non-contiguous groups with a very open and generous space, the result being that the eye of the viewer is led rather abruptly from one point to another in the picture rather than in the flowing manner of Krimmel. At the same time, however, Klinkowström's picture seems more "true" than any of Krimmel's simply because it lacks this affected grace. His approach to nature is much more of the amateur sort seen in the Baroness Hyde de Neuville, consisting of a candid transcription of what is seen rather than a consciously artful arrangement of compositional elements or bits of anecdote. His approach differs from that of Birch also in that he is less concerned with the abstract motifs created by urban topography and is much less selective in what he includes within one composition. His picture is designed to include as many as possible of the varied activities and scenes of this locale at the time. These intentions are clear from the statements which he makes in the book in reference to this picture:

> As I have made a correct drawing of this place [City Hall] and of Broadway and Chatham [Street] you will get a good idea of this part of New York, which really is attractive. In the same drawing you will see the costumes in use here, and also all the vehicles, from the elegant coach down to the modest pushcart, on which the licensed porter is busily transferring the traveller's belongings to the harbor.[1]

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[1]Klinkowström, as quoted in Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

Of the pigs that dotted the scene on New York's busiest street then, and still did so when Charles Dickens came to the city in 1842, Klinkowström says, they "have on several occasions been the cause of remarkable scenes, jumping about here and there and bowling over richly dressed ladies."[1] His main concern is one of description of the city, but by this time artists were recognizing that people and their activities were as much a part of the city as its buildings and streets. His approach is essentially the same as that of Guy in his "Tontine Coffee House," the main difference being that Guy was better able to arrange his observations into an effective composition.

A number of other traveling artists viewed American cities during the period prior to 1830, these being a selection of only the most interesting and significant. To cover this whole field in detail would only exaggerate its importance in this study as a whole. Mention might be made, for instance, of the lithographs after drawings by Jacques Milbert, a member of a French scientific expedition studying American flora and fauna during the years 1815-1824. His Picturesque Views of North America and Itinéraire Pittoresque du Fleuve Hudson[2] both include a number of views of cities and towns in the United States. Mention might also be made of the charming watercolor and gouache drawings by Bouquet de Woiseri done about 1810 which fall into the category of the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Both written and illustrated by Milbert and published in Paris in 1825 and 1828-29, respectively.

old distant views, hence, despite their charm, adding nothing significant to the present study.[1]

Some of the most fascinating views of cities of this period were done by artists who, for all practical purposes, remain anonymous. One of these, "Foot of Cortlandt Street," New York (Fig. 29), is by a little known artist by the name of "Jenny."[2] In this work the artist has probably departed very little from the actualities of the site, but the resultant composition has a number of interesting features. Instead of insisting on a stable balance of architectural masses, as, for instance, Milbourne had done in his view of St. Paul's, and which was so often done, Jenny has weighted one side of the picture with a heavy, dark building, and has balanced this mass with figures and lighter details. Much of the charm of the work arises from the compositional activity produced by this unconventional arrangement which at first glance seems no more sophisticated than the composition of Klinkowström. Perhaps Jenny intended no more by the work than Klinkowström, and, as in the case of the Baroness, what seems like a very knowingly arranged composition may be simply the result of a fortunate choice of site. Yet, to be able to choose a site having such interesting pictorial potential is something of an art in itself, as Birch has already

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[1] In one plate, "A View of the First Cities of the United States," Woiserie arranged distant views of Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Boston, Richmond, and Charleston. Two of his works can be seen in Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., p. 53 and Plates XXXVIII-b and XL.

[2] The New-York Historical Society, owners of the painting, know nothing of the artist beyond the name Jenny, Yenni, or Ienny, but Groce and Wallace, op. cit., list a Johann Heinrich Yenni, a Swiss, in N. Y. C. Directory in 1820, later an exhibitor at the Apollo Association, but the first names are probably a mistake.

shown. Furthermore, the amateur artists such as Jenny appears to be, less tied to tradition and limited by commercial motives in what they select, often exhibit an uncanny ability to find interesting subjects, upon which they almost always assume a very fresh and individual viewpoint. Such is the case in this composition certainly, with its carefully delineated architecture, the well distributed groups of quaintly stiff figures, and jaunty horses and carriages, all enveloped in a warm atmosphere somewhat reminiscent of Guy's "Tontine Coffee House."

Another example of this same thing by a practically unknown artist is the frequently reproduced "Interior of Park Theatre," New York, painted about 1822 by one John Searle (Fig. 30). This watercolor is very precious because it is unique at this early date in its depiction of the interior of a theater during a performance, showing in one view the actors on the stage and the people in the audience.[1] William Dunlap, the painter, art historian, and playwright, had painted a few scenes from his plays, such as the "Screen Scene from the School for Scandal" (Harvard Theatre Collection), as well as a number of individual portraits of actors and actresses in their dramatic roles, many of which were engraved and published,[2] a practice which had long been popular in England. But Searle's painting, though stamped

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[1] Painted by Searle for William Bayard, the painting came to the New-York Historical Society through the Bayard family along with a key to the identity of the spectators depicted, among whom are many of the most prominent citizens of New York of the time. See I. N. P. Stokes, New York Past and Present (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1939), p. 29.

[2] John Neagle also did a number of these, which along with Dunlap's painting, can be seen in Odell, op. cit., II, 370.

with the distinctive handling of a non-professional, attempts much more than this. As a linear pattern alone the composition is delightful, with its sweeping curves and counter-curves derived naturally from the architectural forms of the theater but reduced to a flat, planar treatment. Equally rhythmic and delightful is the spritely dance being performed on the stage with a tinge of the awkwardness which was probably rather common during this epoch of the American theater.[1] Above all, perhaps, the picture is particularly fascinating for its penetrating study of the individual members of the audience. Each physiognomy has been traced with the discerning eye and patient hand of a professional silhouette cutter. Taken as a group they show all of the degrees of attention and inattention of the New York theater audiences which were so often remarked by contemporary visitors. The original of the painting, in watercolor and gouache on a cheap, yellowed paper, is a rather disappointing visual experience compared to its reproduction in black and white. Even so, the painting as it stands evokes regret that we do not have more of the same by Searle, or by other artists attached to the theatre. It is rather strange that artists like Holland, Milbourne, and Reinagle, who worked so close to the theatre, never attempted anything to compare with this little work.

With the exception of this work and Birch's "Funeral Procession," and possibly Krimmel's "Fourth of July in Centre Square," social comment in pictures of the city has been quite general in

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[1]The play being performed is Moncreiffe's farce, Monsieur Tonson, with Charles Mathews and Miss Johnson on stage (Stokes, New York Past and Present, p. 29).

content. Specific historical events or incidents have seldom served as the subject of a work. Even the "advanced" compositions by Svin'in never centered themselves on specific events, but rather, as in Krimmel, were depictions of a general way of life, interspersed lightly with anecdote. Eventually, as figures became more identified with the urban scene, artists began to depict them in concrete historical situations. They began to search for episodes in city life which were of such a nature as to be capable of capturing the popular imagination. One such event, the "conflagration," an all-too-familiar phenomenon of the time,[1] became a very popular subject for depiction. Such depictions eventually formed a very profitable occupation for artists and print-publishers, Nathaniel Currier and the firm of Currier and Ives being the most famous example.[2]

As early as 1814 at least one artist, John Rubens Smith, was already experimenting with this subject. His "Fire at St. George's Church, New York" (Fig. 31) of that date is perhaps the earliest example available of an attempt to recreate the excitement and drama of a fire in the city. While Smith could not resist putting in the traditional dark foreground and conventionally balanced composition, he has nevertheless succeeded fairly well in conveying an idea of the expectant crowd gathered to gape in

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[1]See, for instance, the accounts of New York fires by the English commentator, Capt. Basil Hall from his Travels in North America in the years 1827 and 1828 (Edinburgh, 1829), quoted in Still, op. cit., pp. 107-08.

[2]Nathaniel Currier's "Ruins of the Merchants Exchange, New York," and "Ruins of the Planters Hotel, New Orleans," both published in 1835, are considered the firm's first successful works.

fascination at the destructive spectacle and to witness the frantic efforts of the ill-trained and ill-equipped fire company. Though his foreground follows the standard formulae for the delineation of views, the lighter middleground where most of the excitement and action is concentrated gives evidence of more direct observation.

Though he later became a rather prominent figure in New York artistic circles, Smith had not yet been there long when he did this painting. Born in London, the son of John Raphael Smith the mezzotint engraver, he had already exhibited portraits at the Royal Academy before migrating to this country in 1809. Arriving by way of Boston, he moved in 1814 to Brooklyn, where he established a drawing academy which included such pupils as Thomas Cummings and Frederick Agate.[1] Long associated with the old American Academy of Fine Arts in New York, he was refused membership by the rival National Academy of Design in a bitter incident soon after its formation in 1826.[2] Later, he settled in Philadelphia, publishing drawing books and teaching drawing, one of his pupils being Emanuel Leutze.

Smith's "fire picture" represents the prototype of a later tradition rather than the initial work in an unbroken development.[3] Curiously enough, the real development and popularization of this type of picture, along with the depiction of other current events,

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[1] From Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 589.

[2] Cummings, op. cit., p. 32.

[3] Koke (op. cit., p. 74) mentions a "Conflagration of the Masonic Hall" by Shaw and Hill, 1819. This work (which I have not seen) is the only other fire picture that I know of before 1830, though there may easily be others.

coincides with the growth of the "penny newspapers" in the thirties. Such art then served the same popular hunger for "late news" and sensationalism that brought these lively journals into existence. But that is a matter for later consideration.

A very important event from the standpoint of the development of an American urban art was the arrival in 1816 of John Hill. Though he was not strictly concerned with the art of city views, Hill brought with him from England a mastery of aquatint hitherto unknown in this country,[1] creating a market for prints in aquatint which was eventually to spread to the art of city views. Besides this technical knowledge which he brought with him Hill is important to the present study for the kinds of artistic influences he represented in England, and for the transmittal of these influences to his son, John William Hill who, beginning in the next decade, was to be active for twenty-five years as a painter of American cities.

In England Hill had been steadily employed in the aquatinting of book illustrations for a number of prominent publishers: books of the kind mentioned earlier as demonstrating the current English trend toward interest in contemporary life. One of his first experiences of this kind was in the aquatinting of 25 plates for Bath: Illustrated by a Series of Views from the Drawings of John Claude Nattes, published in 1806. At about the same time he

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[1] There had been scattered attempts in the medium before 1816 by Edward Savage, Otis, Kidder, J. R. Smith, Kearny, Rollinson and others, but nothing quite comparable to what Hill was doing. See Frank Weitenkampf, American Graphic Art (New York: Macmillan Co., 1924), pp. 99-111.

was employed by William Henry Pyne, aquatinting 121 plates for Pyne's Microcosm (1803-1806) and 60 plates for his Costumes of Great Britain (1806-1807). From 1807-1815 Hill was in contact with Rudolph Ackermann, the London publisher of the famous "Dr. Syntax" series. For Ackermann he engraved 10 plates for the highly successful Microcosm of London, published around 1810, with illustrations by Rowlandson and Augustus Charles Pugin. In addition to these artists, Hill, at one time or another, aquatinted plates after Morland, De Loutherbourg, Turner, Daniell, Havell, and others. Thus, he was exposed to the work of some of England's most competent draftsmen and illustrators and made contact with one of the main sources of this influential English taste for contemporary subject matter.

Hill's chief fame in this country, of course, is in connection with Joshua Shaw's Picturesque Views of American Scenery, 1820, and the Hudson River Portfolio, 1821-1825, both of which are key works in the history of the development of American landscape. For the latter series, which he began for Henry J. Megarey, the New York counterpart of Rudolph Ackermann, Hill eventually assumed the entire technical production, making the plates, printing, and, with the help of his wife and daughters, hand-coloring each print. At that time Hill was the only aquatinter available who could have accomplished such a task while maintaining the level of quality insisted upon by Megarey. It is undoubtedly this high degree of craftsmanship, so unusual in contemporary work of this type, which gave the work such a lasting success.[1]

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[1]See Koke, op. cit., for a definitive study of John Hill.

Of the few urban views which can be associated with Hill himself, either as engraver or artist, two are reproduced here. The first, a view of Boston from one of the hills above the town (Fig. 32) is thought to be a Hill aquatint after a Shaw drawing dating in the early twenties.[1] This view, which is of a type not previously encountered in this study, illustrates a way of looking at a city which will be found in the work of the younger Hill in the next chapter. It is neither a street view exactly, nor a distant view; but rather, a combination of the two. Its treatment shows a familiarity with the English watercolorists of the late eighteenth century, such as the Sandbys or Thomas Malton, in its crisply drawn architecture, sure handling of planes, and a certain freshness and lightness in the atmosphere of the work, a way of working which the younger Hill also absorbed, apparently through contact with his father's work.

The other city view by Hill reproduced here is a wash drawing by the etcher himself which is inscribed, "A View from my Work-Room Window in Hammond Street, 1825" (Fig. 33). An unusual study, abounding in intimacy and close observation, it is similar in composition to a drawing by one of the Sandbys, "View from the Back of Paul Sandby's Lodging at Charlton, Kent" (Fig. 34), done much earlier, around 1770. A certain Milbourne-like dryness in Hill's rendering which becomes apparent in comparison with the looseness and ease of the Sandby is probably the influence of Wall, whose watercolors Hill had by that time been looking at for four years.

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[1]According to Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., p. 64.

With the introduction of John William Hill and this brief indication of the influences imported by his father and others, and adopted by the son, we are beginning to encroach on a treatment of the problems of the thirties which will shortly be given a treatment more proper to the later periods. During the early period, 1800-1830, we have seen a fair sampling of individual approaches to some of the basic problems of city view art, paintings and prints. Since most of this art was created by temporary visitors and immigrant artists freshly arrived, with little indication of the furtherance of native craftsmanship and interest, one cannot help feeling that the period did not contribute very substantially or in any lasting manner to the development of the art in America. However, the rather sudden quickening of interest as the thirties opened suggests that gains, however intangible or in whatever form, were made during the course of the early period. Importations of styles and subjective influences continued to pour in, partly due to the numbers of these travelling artists who came and went and in looking at the cities, preserved that spark of interest which was evident even in the late eighteenth century; and partly due to those well-trained and experienced craftsmen like Hill who came here to stay, spreading ideas and attitudes through the powerful medium of the print. For the present, the art of the American cities was a thing imported; it remains to be seen whether or to what extent this thing became "naturalized" during the decades to follow.

## CHAPTER III

## THE THIRTIES

In the year that marks the beginning of this chapter Philip Hone felt moved by the circumstances of his times to remark ebulliently in his diary:

> What a strange, eventful period in the affairs of this world has been the brief fifty years during which I have been in it, and how interesting a moment in its history is the present.[1]

Although the immediate causes for such an exclamation from the genial New Yorker remain a mystery, it is true that when he wrote these words his environment was undergoing many transformations. Urban life, along with most other areas of American life and culture, was entering a new epoch, an epoch characterized by fervent Americanism, isolationism, territorial expansion, booming commerce and industrialization, and an increasing assertiveness of the middle and lower classes of society.

These transformations, rather than introducing new institutions and ideas--though this happened too--were more often in the nature of an acceleration of tendencies already present, a "modernization" process. In the cities there was simply more of what had already been: more people, more commerce, more industry, more wealth, more poverty, and a generally more hurried

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[1] Bayard Tuckerman (ed.), The Diary of Philip Hone (2 vols.; New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1889), I, 22.

pace of living. The atmosphere of the cities was now changing noticeably, tending to become more complex and diversified as a result of these increases in the elements which make up urban life. This had the effect of making the cities much more interesting, more animated, colorful, and exciting to the sensitive eye. Both the topography and the social life of this period assume a sort of glitter and glamour, a bewitching charm not present to the same extent in the earlier period, but which men like Hone and others were now beginning to sense. The social problems which accompanied the increased complexity of urban life were largely ignored during the period until the latter years of the decade, when the prevailing optimism was shattered by the Panic of 1837.[1]

Writers of the period are now for the first time in this study beginning to take an active interest in the city, discovering in the diversity of its life and atmosphere a picturesqueness and a kind of romance, a feeling of pleasant excitement such as had moved Philip Hone. "Variety" and "diversity" are the key words in this literature, and it is interesting to find the writers now rather suddenly becoming conscious of these qualities as being distinctive and essential elements of the urban scene so largely non-existent or ignored earlier.

To some writers these qualities suggested analogies with the theatre and its pageantry and successive changes of scenery. This, for instance, was the approach taken by Mrs. Sedgwich, an author mentioned earlier as being one of the first American writers

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[1]See Carl Fish, The Rise of the Common Man, 1830-1850, Vol. VI of Schlesinger and Fox, op. cit.

after Brown to take an interest in the literary possibilities of the city. The opening paragraphs of her novel, Clarence, are set in the streets of New York, and are handled in a manner much different from the rest of the book which as a whole follows the usual feministic recipes of the time for sentimental tales of romance, villainy, and heroism. Broadway is the street, described somewhat poetically in terms of nature's embellishment of it; the bits of landscape still existing here and there, trimmed with the glittering ice and frost of winter, an "ostentatious brilliancy, that harmonized well with the art and glare of a city." With this as a setting, she then describes the daily pageant of the street:

> The day has its successive scenes, as life its seven ages. The morning opens with servants sweeping the pavements--the pale sempstress hastening to her daily toil--the tormented dyspeptic sallying forth to his joyless morning ride--the cry of the brisk milkman--the jolly baker and the sonorous sweep--the shop-boy fantastically arranging the tempting show, that is to present to the second sight of many a belle her own sweet person, arrayed in Flandin's garnitures, Marquand's jewels, Goguet's flowers, and . . . Manuel's "ornamental hair-work of every description."
>
> Then comes the business hour--the merchant, full of projects, hopes, and fears, hastening to his counting-house. . . .
>
> Then come forth the gay and idle, and Broadway presents a scene as bustling, as varied, and as brilliant as an oriental fair. There, are graceful belles, arrayed in the light costumes of Paris, playing off their coquetries on their attendant beaux--accurately apparelled Quakers--a knot of dandies, walking pattern-cards, faithful living personifications of their prototypes in the tailor's window--dignified, self-complacent matrons--idle starers at beauties, and beauties willing to be stared at.[1]

A similar set of viewpoints is shown by another urban writer, William Cox, in an essay which he wrote originally for the New York Mirror in the late twenties. Entitled "A Walk in Broad-

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[1]Catherine Sedgwick, Clarence; Or a Tale of Our Own Times (Belfast: Simms and McIntyre, 1846), p. 10. First published in 1830.

way," the essay begins with a topographical description of the street which differs little from the accounts of the travelling commentators. But this is followed by much more imaginative and somewhat romantic reflections on the life of the street. Though Cox, like Sedgwick, is attracted to the scene by its variety and movement, and tends to take a "theatrical" viewpoint on it, he differs from the feminine author in that he sees a psychological variety instead of an aesthetic one, and instead of conceiving its dramatic content in terms of a silent parade or pageant of colorful people in typical scenes during the successive phases of the day, Cox conceives of it much as a dramatist would, in terms of the interaction and conflict of human passions and desires within a given situation and given individuals. Speaking of Broadway he says,

> It is pleasant to stroll along it; or, indeed, the principal street or any large city. What a motley group of beings--alike, yet how different--are daily pressing and hurrying over its pavements!

In this much he differs very little from Mrs. Sedgwick; but as he continues the differences become more apparent:

> What a multiplicity of hopes, and fears, and petty plans, and lofty schemes, are unceasingly fermenting in the bosom of every individual that moves along the narrow footwalks! Yet it is not the variety of human passions that makes the wonder, for joy and sorrow, love and hate, pride, vanity, interest, and ambition are common to all; but the endless combinations formed by those passions according to the different degrees in which they preponderate and act on different individuals, and on the same individuals in different situations.

Yet, in spite of all this complex variety, Cox detects a certain sameness or uniformity in the life of New York, and very little difference between New York and any other city. As he says,

> The hopes, and cares, and joys, and sorrows of one day are like the hopes, and cares, and joys, and sorrows of the next; and the drama that is hourly felt and acted in the streets of New-York, is played with equal animation amid the wealth and smoke of London, and the sunshine and poverty of Naples--the gravity of Madrid, and the gaiety of Paris.[1]

The American city of 1830 was also beginning to feel the effects of industrialization, and writers were becoming conscious of the fact that the cities that were now encroaching more and more on the farmlands, while polluting the rural air with their smoke and stench, were but a very few years before quiet and peaceful villages, hardly discernible from the countryside that surrounded them. Cox expressed this new consciousness in tones of regret in another of this series of essays, this one entitled "Steam."

> Suddenly the scene changed. The quiet, smiling village vanished, and a busy, crowded city occupied its place. . . . I looked upon the surrounding country, . . . where vegetable nature had ceased to exist. The neat, trim gardens, the verdant lawns and swelling uplands, the sweet-scented meadows and waving corn-fields were all swept away, and fruit, and flowers, and herbage, appeared to be things uncared for and unknown. Houses and factories, and turnpikes and railroads, were scattered all around, and along the latter, as if propelled by some unseen, infernal power, monstrous machines flew with inconceivable swiftness.[2]

Under these conditions Cox also observes a change in people, largely a change in their pace of doing things:

> People were crowding and jostling each other on all sides. I mingled with them, but they were not like those I had formerly known--they walked, talked and transacted business of all kinds with astonishing celerity. Everything was done in

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[1][William Cox], Crayon Sketches by an Amateur, ed. Theodore S. Fay (2 vols.; New York: Conner and Cooke, 1833), I, 99-100. The essays published originally in the Mirror in the late twenties were collected and edited by Fay and republished in this form.

[2]Ibid., p. 108.

> a hurry: they eat, drank, and slept in a hurry; they danced, sung, and made love in a hurry; they married, died, and were buried in a hurry, . . . Whatever was done, was done upon the high-pressure principle. . . .
>
> These things astonished, but they also perplexed and wearied me. My spirit grew sick, and I longed for the old world again, and its quiet and peaceable modes of enjoyment.[1]

Many of the prototypes for these ideas are to be found in the literature of England of a period when that country and its cities were experiencing the difficulties of adjusting to industrialization and when the alignment of social classes was being shaken by the forces of democratization. For instance, Cox's regret at the "passing" of the old, rural existence is similar to that expressed sixty years earlier by Oliver Goldsmith, when in "The Deserted Village" he wrote,

> But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
> Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;
> Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
> Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;
> And every want to opulence allied,
> And every pang that folly pays to pride.
> Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
> Those calm desires that asked but little room,
> Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
> Lived in each look, and brightened all the green--
> These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
> And rural mirth and manners are no more.[2]

On the other hand, Cox's observations on the hurry and hustle of the new life have a prototype in Smollett's Humphrey Clinker, though it is characteristic of Matthew Bramble, the speaker in the following quotation, to take an aristocrat's disdainful attitude in the interpretation of these developments:

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Taken from George Anderson et al., The Literature of England (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1953), p. 548.

> There is no distinction or subordination left. The different departments of life are jumbled together--the hod-carrier, the low mechanic, the tapster, the publican, the shopkeeper, the pettifogger, the citizen, and courtier, all tread upon the kibes of one another, actuated by the demons of profligacy and licentiousness, they are seen everywhere, rambling, riding, rolling, rushing, jostling, mixing, bouncing, cracking and crashing in one vile ferment of stupidity and corruption--all is tumult and hurry. . . . The foot passengers run along as if they were pursued by bailiffs. The porters and chairmen trot through the streets at full speed. . . . The hackney-coachmen make their horses smoke, and the pavement shakes under them.[1]

The more realistic treatments of the "low life" of the streets of London which had formed the substance of the "Grubstreet hacks" of the early eighteenth century, such as Ned Ward and Tom Brown, and their counterparts in the nineteenth, Pierce Egan and Charles Westmacott,[2] were not widely imitated by writers on the American cities until the 1840's. When vice and low life of the American cities were treated during the thirties, such treatment usually became very sentimental and moralistic in tone. This, for instance, is the flavor of the essays which appeared occasionally in the Philadelphia Casket, such as "Philadelphia Displayed,"[3] or perhaps even more typical, "The Victim of Gaming,"[4] a melodramatic and moralistic account of a successful New York merchant ruined in a New Orleans gambling house who, rather than face his disgrace, ends his life by suicide.

The Grubstreet writers had enlivened their otherwise

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[1]Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker, first published in 1771; as quoted in Thomas Burke, The Streets of London (New York: Scribners, 1940), p. 85.

[2]See Burke, op. cit., pp. 57-90, "The Eighteenth Century."

[3]The Casket, I (June, 1826), 161.

[4]Ibid., I (July, 1826), 201.

not-too-distinguished writings with a lusty and ribald sense of humor. Though Ned Ward, for instance, professed to do good by the exploits and exposés of his London Spy, nevertheless, he sees the city and its low life and vice through roguish eyes. For the most part, this quality is lacking when writers come to treat this kind of life in the American cities.

One writer who forms the exception to this rule, however, is the dramatist Robert Montgomery Bird, whose satire on Philadelphia life, The City Looking Glass, was written and performed in 1828,[1] at about the same time that Cox was beginning to publish his essays in the New York Mirror. Though underlying the work as usual is a didactic motive, Bird approaches the problem through the use of satire and humor, indicating somewhat more mature attitudes than those suggested by the sentimental moralists and serious reformists. While he utilizes the standard plot and stereotyped characters of the sentimental novels, his treatment of them is radically different and quite unusual for the time. Something of both his purpose and approach can be ascertained by this passage from his "Prologue":

> So not to increase our follies and our crimes,
> We've only made a "mirror for the times;"
> Where ye may look, and see such knaves and asses
> As, we hope, can't be seen in your own glasses,
> Playing before ye certain tricks and capers,
> Such as you look for daily in the papers.[2]

Although the writers and writings concerned with the American cities in the thirties are not large in number or repre-

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[1]Robert M. Bird, The City Looking Glass; A Philadelphia Comedy in Five Acts, ed. Arthur Quinn (New York: for the Colophon, 1933). The play remained in manuscript for over a century.

[2]Ibid., p. 4.

sentative of any major literary or dramatic trends, they at least provide some indication of a growing interest in the city, its people and sights. They provide evidence that the cities were becoming more diversified and stimulating to the imagination, and that new modes of literary expression were being revived or imported to convey the new ideas and feelings which this greater diversity of the city aroused.

Something of this same interest and feeling also begins to be manifest in the parallel visual arts of this period. Views of the city were gradually becoming more popular, reflecting by this both a broadening interest of the public in its urban environment and a growing number of artists and engravers who were specializing in the field of city views. It is true that the topographical view still remained the chief embodiment of these interests and artistic abilities, but it was a way of viewing the city which reached a very high stage of development and achievement during this decade. Most of the views are pleasant and uncritical in what they attempt to show and their manner of showing it, only rarely suggesting anything of the "rough and rude" realities of the slum conditions which even now existed but a short distance from the neat facades of the main streets. Such "harsh prose misery," as William Cox termed it,[1] was as yet too indelicate a subject to appeal to an idealistic public, nor were there many artists who would be inclined to lead public taste in this direction.

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[1] Cox, op. cit., II, 6; "There is a vast deal of difference between fanciful or poetical unhappiness and harsh prose misery--plain, unvarnished, substantial misery, arising from tangible wants and physical sufferings."

The artists, on the contrary, concentrated almost exclusively on the positive beauties of the city, its panorama of varied and picturesque locales and characteristic scenes, thus conveying the impression that all was progressing smoothly in America's large cities.

Now, as before, New York was the city most often depicted by the artists. New York was continuing to fulfill its role as "the metropolis of the western world."[1] Even the usually hypercritical Frances Trollope felt at home there, praising it as "one of the finest cities I ever saw, and as much superior to every other in the Union (Philadelphia not excepted) as London to Liverpool, or Paris to Rouen."[2] New York was cosmopolitan; its streets were alive with activity day and night, in contrast to Philadelphia where Mrs. Trollope said "after sunset . . . scarcely a sound is heard; hardly a voice or wheel breaks the stillness."[3]

The artists who depict the city come from a variety of backgrounds and influences. Though in comparison with the situation in the early period visiting artists are now a rarity, most of the artists are still recent immigrants or at least European born, and as such, still tend to work in the styles and formulae of their native lands. Some, like John W. Hill, arrived at a very early age and developed their artistic ideas on American soil, con-

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[1] A title bestowed on the city by Mrs. Sedgwick, though she may not have been the first.

[2] Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1832), p. 268.

[3] Ibid., p. 218.

sidering themselves "American" even though foreign born and trained in this country by English artists.

Enough has been said already to indicate the sort of environment in which John W. Hill grew up and developed his style. Having been brought to this country in 1819 at the age of seven by his father, and later serving a seven-year apprenticeship with the elder Hill, by the late 1820's he had begun work on his own with the New York State Geological Survey, during which time he painted a number of pleasant watercolor views of scenes along the Erie Canal. His watercolors of city scenes were interspersed with semi-rural and rural landscapes during the years from 1830 to the early 1850's, most of them done "commercially," either as commissioned views or as independent works done with the hope of having them published. Some of these were published by H. J. Megarey and L. P. Clover, while a long series of "bird's eye" views of many American cities were commissioned and published by the Smith Brothers lithography firm.

By 1855 Hill had quit the "business" of city view painting, having at that time come under the influence of John Ruskin's writings while at work on the Smith Brothers series in Portland, Maine. In a strange reversal of objectives he thereafter devoted himself to the study of landscape, and along with his son, John Henry Hill, became associated with the American "Pre-Raphaelite" movement.[1] The writer of his obituary in the New York Tribune

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[1]See David Dickason, The Daring Young Men (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953), pp. 259-67, for the relationship of John W. Hill and son to this movement. Also, John H. Hill, John William Hill: An Artist's Memorial (New York, 1888), salient passages from which are quoted by Dickason.

credited John W. Hill with being one of the leaders of this movement, mentioning as co-leader, Thomas C. Farrer, a student of Ruskin himself.[1] Hill's "conversion" came when he was already an old man who, as this writer states, "had been struggling all his days to keep poverty from his door, working after the old conventional receipts in his watercolor painting, to suit the public and get bread for himself and his children in the easiest way." After this conversion Hill abandoned this mode of study and thereafter, "all pictures were begun and completed in the open air, in the immediate presence of the subject."[2] The public, however, was not attracted by this later work, and Hill was reduced to peddling his pictures from house to house. Yet, interestingly enough, it was this phase of his _oeuvre_ for which he was most highly praised at the time of his death, his earlier city views having by that time gone out of favor and dismissed as "conventional."

The remarks of this writer imply that Hill's earlier works did not involve close study of nature; that they were products of the studio. Certainly, the earlier works involve a different _kind_ of observation than his later works. In the latter he was seeking to transcribe as directly as possible, undistilled by thought or conscious "arrangement," the purely visual appearances of nature. In the earlier works he dealt with forms and architectural structures and pictorial space, arranging "facts" gained by observation into pleasing and effective compositions. Though in this he obviously depended a great deal upon the English "receipts" as taught him by his father, the precise forms and lines

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[1] New York _Tribune_, September 27, 1879. [2] _Ibid_.

of the cities, in many ways more challenging to draftsmanship and design sense than a hazy landscape, are nonetheless observed and rendered convincingly.

Both close observation and the use of "receipts" are apparent in two small watercolor drawings of New York street scenes which he did about 1830, probably in hopes of publishing them. In the first, "City Hall and Park Row" (Fig. 35), he has shown the broad junction of Broadway and Park Row, looking in the opposite direction from the earlier Milbourne and Robertson views of St. Paul's. A fire is burning in the distance on Park Row, and the foreground of the picture is crowded with firemen and fire apparatus threading their way through the promenaders and vehicular traffic to reach the fire. The general arrangement is similar to Klinkowström's "Broadway and City Hall," with the wide, almost panoramic view, carefully delineated architecture, and the seemingly random placement of the figures and other objects. Hill's strength consists primarily in the rendering of the topographical setting; this he was able to "wash in" with great ease and accuracy. He was not strong as a figure draftsman or composer; most of his figures are downright bad, and his arrangement of individual figures or groups within the composition as a whole often lacks a sense of dominance and subordination, like the Klinkowström, being more inclusive than selective. As a result, the picture falls short of the drama and excitement suggested by the nature of its subject, the fire. The scene has been "observed," to be sure, but weaknesses in the figures, and in the artist's ability to interpret, select, and compose, prevent the work from saying all that it

might have. Instead of expressing the tension and excitement of a fire the work shows little more than a colorful and moderately enlivened scene at an attractive street corner.

These remarks are generally true also of the second of these two watercolors, "Broadway and Trinity Church" (Fig. 36). In this case, however, there is no fire or other dramatic event to tax the artist's imaginative capabilities. In more typical fashion he has here attempted a straightforward representation of a picturesque section of this famous street. The view, apparently taken in mid-morning, shows a sampling of the varied genre described by Mrs. Sedgwick promenading in front of the long rows of fashionable, glass-fronted shops. In the arrangement of the composition Hill has followed rather closely the dictates of the site again, with the simple view down a rather symmetrically sided street creating a perspective motif that divides the composition into almost equal halves. The morning light provides the excuse for the traditional pattern of alternating darks and lights, with deep, cool washes in the darks, and brighter, warmer tones on the opposite side of the street. The resultant subordination of detail in the shadows and heightening in the lights, along with the simplification of the over-all value scheme, lends more unity and force to this composition than was present in the preceding one. This may be criticized as a conventional solution perhaps, but the rendering of the various parts as well as the inspiration for the compositional scheme have their basis in the observation of nature.

A much less conventional subject, and hence less conventional solution is Hill's untitled view of a rotary windmill or

air turbine which stood at that time beside the Hudson River near the present Houston Street in New York (Fig. 37). This is one of Hill's simplest and most effective compositions. This is due mainly to the interesting construction and abstract shape of the subject itself. The prominence which Hill has given to it in the design of the whole recalls Birch's attachment to the scaffolding in his shipbuilding scene. It is surprisingly seldom in this history that one finds artists looking for striking pictorial motifs such as this. The motives of Hill and Birch in so doing are quite personal, and stem from a pure conception of the picturesque. They seem to have been motivated almost entirely by the delight in the forms and a fascination with curious mechanical functions of forms like the ramp and air turbine, with the usually potent topographical motive being in these cases of only secondary consideration.

On several occasions during the 1830's and later, Hill collaborated with William J. Bennett in the production of aquatinted views of cities. One of the finest products of this collaboration is the "New York from Brooklyn Heights" (Fig. 38), issued by the firm of L. P. Clover in 1837. This work is one of a series of plates aquatinted by Bennett under the title, "Views of American Cities." These plates, most of them of large size and very fine quality, were praised by Stokes as "perhaps the finest collection of folio views of American cities in existence."[1]

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[1] Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., p. 72. The authors also reproduce an interesting announcement by L. P. Clover regarding these plates and their prices. This one sold for four dollars, while the most expensive sold for five.

Hill's composition in this view is an adaptation of the type of composition seen earlier in the view of Boston by Joshua Shaw and the elder Hill: the same high vantage point, with a prominent foreground and middleground forming a repoussoir to a panoramic view of the distant city. The motif of the "lookout balcony" is a new arrangement of the old device used by many of the European view painters: a jutting, foreground "platform" on which the figures are placed as a means of reference for the spectator viewing the picture, similar to what is so often to be found in views of famous cascades, like the oft-repeated views of the falls at Tivoli. It is both a physical and an associative reference, indicating by the scale of the figures the magnitude of the natural wonder, and providing the spectator with a means for intellectual and emotional identification with the scene and the moods associated with such scenes. In the present case, however, the spectator is not being invited to witness the sublimity of nature, but the grandeur and sparkling beauty of a man-made city. Such an approach to the city as is represented by this view falls outside of the class of "street views," to be sure, but within its type it is something of a "tour de force," both in the drawing and composition by Hill and the aquatint of Bennett.

This work illustrates a tendency which eventually was to become almost a trademark of Hill's. That is the tendency to view the city from a high vantage point, e.g., "bird's eye" fashion. Essentially, this is the approach of a panorama painter, for in a panoramic view, particularly of a city of any great size, it would be necessary for the artist to station himself above the rooftops

for his view to be at all inclusive. As noted in passing above, his vision tended to be somewhat panoramic in scope even in his street views. This tendency becomes even more pronounced after 1840, and in his work as a whole it is this "inclusiveness" rather than "intimacy" which distinguishes his work as an urban painter. And it was probably Hill more than any other artist who popularized this way of looking at a city, the approach most commonly used as the art of city views spread westward to newer towns.[1]

From the standpoint of Bennett this series represented one of his most ambitious and successful essays in aquatint in this country, corresponding in scope and quality to the achievement of the elder Hill on the Hudson River Portfolio. It embraced views of most of the major cities of the time as well as a number of the smaller towns of the nation. It included plates after paintings by a number of artists besides Hill and Bennett, among whom were J. G. Chapman, G. Cooke, F. Grain, A. Mondelli, and W. Todd. The last plate in the series, a view of Mobile, was published by Megarey in 1842, just two years before Bennett's death and over a decade after the project was begun. Most of the views of the series are of the distant type, often as seen from a river or harbor, and sometimes through a landscape foreground. Though for this reason they have little application to the present study, they do, however, indicate the directions in which the interest in published city views was spreading, as well as furnishing a pic-

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[1]Some of the other artists who adopted this method of depicting cities are J. Bachmann, E. Whitefield, B. F. Smith, Jr., and E. Sachse, of whom perhaps Bachmann comes closest to matching the facility and perspective accuracy of Hill.

torial idea of the state of development of some of the towns and cities of the United States other than the major ones of the east coast.

Before he began working on this long series, Bennett had already been working on a series of street views which, had it been carried to completion, might have been very important in the history of this art. In 1834 Henry Megarey began publication of a series of plates drawn and aquatinted by Bennett entitled "Street Views in the City of New York." This was to be complete in four numbers, with three plates per number; but for reasons unknown, the project was abandoned after the publication of only the first number.

Of the three plates that were issued, the first, "Broadway from the Bowling Green" (Fig. 39), was designed and possibly aquatinted much earlier than 1834, probably as early as 1826. This is a view taken in the lower end of Broadway, with Battery Place emerging at the left foreground, and with the little Bowling Green with its iron fence at the right, looking north toward Grace and Trinity Churches in the distance. This was at that time still a neighborhood of fashionable residences for many of the old and prominent families of New York. It is this character which Bennett has tried to capture, and has fairly well succeeded in doing, in spite of the traces of awkwardness here and there in the draftsmanship. The long, curving street fronted by somewhat uniform townhouses facing the park and extending up Broadway probably reminded the artist of some of the fashionable crescents of Bath and London. The composition and general quality of the aquatint rendering is

not much different than the work of Thomas Malton (Fig. 40) and the school of English book illustration spoken of earlier, tending to be a bit hard, rather lacking in atmosphere and textural variety. Nevertheless, it is an interesting composition; Bennett was not simply drawing facades. It is almost as deftly managed as the earlier Jenny, but undoubtedly conceived with less naiveté. The balancing of the long row of light buildings with the small touch of dark trees is quite different from the usual static balance of mass against mass. This unity is carried into depth by the concentric curves of the facades and street which seem to revolve gracefully and easily around the pivot formed by the small, circular park. The figures, though in many instances badly drawn, are sensitively grouped and placed, and do much to suggest the character of the locale: elegant, refined, urbane, rather detached from the bustle and noise of the business parts of the city.

The next plate in the series, "South Street from Maiden Lane" (Fig. 41), drawn about 1828, takes the viewer to one of the most interesting and colorful sections of the city, the East River waterfront in lower Manhattan. Here the composition is based on harsh contrasts: the linear activity of the ships' rigging and jutting bowsprits set against the heavy mass of the long row of buildings, and the heavy objects and sprawling workmen of the foreground set against the elegance of the group walking behind them. While there is a simple unity based on these few opposing subjective and formal elements, there is also a wonderful variety of things and a rich interplay of lines and volumes, light and shade, textures and movement to add to the visual enjoyment in the work.

The rendering is much less restrained than usual, and even the figures are better drawn and more freely grouped and placed.

However, in the last of the three views, "Fulton Street and Market" (Fig. 42), drawn about 1834, the artist seems to be avoiding the intimacy of the first two and moving instead in the direction of Hill's panoramic vision and his own later distant views. Here the composition is quite conventional, the elements spread out and unconnected, and the statement quite generalized. Had he approached the market in the same way that he interpreted the character of the last two locales he would probably have had more interesting results, since the market surely must have been a much more picturesque and colorful place than his composition suggests. However, at this time Bennett had already begun his other series, the "Views of American Cities," the style of which is beginning to show even in this street view. In spite of the numerous figures and diverse activities of this view, it is clear that by 1834 he was already beginning to lose his earlier rapport with the life and pictorial possibilities of the streets so apparent in the other two views. Nevertheless, Bennett's technical achievements in the field of published views of cities were instrumental in raising the craft to a level of respectability, thus, like the elder Hill in the field of landscape, helping to arouse public interest and support for the efforts of other artists of city views.

Bennett is of added interest to the present study for the simple reason that we know more about him than almost any other artist in this field. One of the immigrant artists, his European

experience was similar in certain respects to that of the elder Hill. Born in 1787 in London, some seventeen years younger than Hill, he developed his talents under Westall and in the classes of the Royal Academy. At the age of eighteen he was appointed to the medical staff of the army, travelling to Egypt and Malta, and later to Italy where he was granted leaves of absence to study and work in Naples, Florence, and Rome. He then worked for a time in London, like Hill, as an aquatinter of book illustrations, contributing to such works as Combe's History of Oxford (1814) and History of the Colleges of Winchester, Eton, Westminster, Etc. (1816), Pyne's Royal Residences (1819), Ralfe's Naval Chronology of Great Britain (1820), and Naylor's Coronation of George IV (1824). During this time he was a member and treasurer of the Associated Artists in Watercolors (1808-1812), and an associate member of the "Old Watercolor Society" from 1820-1825.[1]

There exists some disagreement as to the year in which Bennett came to the United States. The most commonly accepted date of 1816 seems to derive from Dunlap, who states unequivocally, "Mr. Bennett's first appearance on the theatre of American arts was in 1816."[2] However, his earliest known activity in this

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[1]From various sources, including William Dunlap, A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States (2 vols.; New York: George P. Scott and Co., 1834), II, 274-75; Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 45; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker (eds.), Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Kunstler (37 vols.; Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1907-1950), III, 333; S. T. Prideaux, Aquatint Engraving (London: Duckworth and Co., 1909), pp. 358 and 389; and John Roget, History of the Old Watercolor Society (2 vols.; London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1891), I, 270-71, 401, and 514.

[2]Dunlap, op. cit., p. 274.

country did not occur until 1826,[1] leaving a gap of ten years during which it is assumed that he did nothing.[2] Roget, in his History of the Old Water-Color Society, records Bennett's election to Associate membership in that group in 1820 and has this to say of his subsequent activities:

> This Associate exhibitor merely fluttered about the Society for some half-dozen years . . . he showed seven works only between 1819 and 1825. In 1826 his name disappears from the catalogue and nothing is recorded of him after that date.[3]

These facts make it at best improbable that he could have been in America as early as indicated by Dunlap. Moreover, it seems rather unlikely that an engraver of Bennett's ability and experience would have remained inactive here for a decade, at a time when, as John Hill's experience indicates, good aquatint engravers were in demand here. The more probable date of his arrival, therefore, should be 1826, ten years later than Dunlap thought.

Bennett's affiliation with the National Academy of Design provides us with some knowledge of his activities and character while in this country. Elected an Associate Member in 1827, he became a full Member of this group the following year. In 1830 he was given the appointment of "Keeper" of the Academy's school, a position which he held until 1839, when the Academy relieved him of these duties. Of this removal Cummings remarks:

> Although an artist of considerable and varied ability, he was found entirely unsuited to the charge and it became necessary

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[1] The probable date of the view of Broadway and the Bowling Green discussed above.

[2] An assumption voiced as recently as 1959 by Koke in his article on John Hill, op. cit., p. 68.

[3] Roget, op. cit., I, 514.

> to remove him. Frederick S. Agate was appointed in his place; an equally unfelicitous appointment, but from a very different cause--too much amiability.[1]

Bennett's reaction to all this shocked Cummings, who continues:

> The removal of Mr. Bennett brought forth a display of his natural disposition--selfishness. . . . He had no sooner been removed than he put in a claim for a thousand dollars, stating "that squeamishness and false shame" [italics his] had been the causes of his not having sooner called for his salary. It was well understood that he accepted the rooms he occupied as compensation as Keeper. Yet surprising as it may seem, the Academicians awarded him two hundred and fifty dollars in settlement of his claim, which he accepted.[2]

Hence, when the Academy observed Bennett's death in 1844 Cummings states rather curtly, "suitable resolutions were passed, and forwarded to the friends of the deceased; and the members wore the usual badge of mourning."[3] Though Bennett seems to have been respected, generally, for his abilities as an artist and craftsman, his negative personal qualities seem to have tainted the memory of him in the minds of certain academicians: a rather unfortunate circumstance in view of the fact that he was one of the few city view artists to be so closely and actively associated with any of the academies.

Bennett's two series, though probably largest in the size of the individual plates, were not the first to appear around 1830. C. G. Childs in 1830 published a book, Views in Philadelphia, with twenty-five views and descriptive text.[4] More interesting than Child's topographical plates, however, is the series of views

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[1]Cummings, op. cit., p. 158. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 181.

[4]Cephas G. Childs, Views in Philadelphia from Original Drawings taken in 1827-1830 (Philadelphia: C. G. Childs, 1830).

which was issued a year later, in 1831, by George M. Bourne of New York. This series consisted of nineteen double plates in line engraving, along with two unnumbered plates. The views were drawn by C. Burton, James Smillie, and William Wall, the water-colorist of the Hudson River Portfolio, while among the engravers were James Smillie, George Hatch, Archer, Gimber, and Fossett.[1]

The drawings by Burton are by far the most interesting of the group. The biographical background of this artist is quite obscure. Probably of English origin, he was active in the United States from 1819 to 1842. In 1819 he exhibited two landscapes at the American Academy of Fine Arts. A view of the Battery, New York City, exists from 1820, and a view of the Capitol, Washington, D. C., was dated 1824. In the latter year he drew also a series of New York views for a memorial album presented to LaFayette by the city of New York. From 1828-1831 he was listed in the New York directories as a "draftsman," during which time he did the drawings used in the Bourne series and a similar set for a series on Philadelphia published by Fenner and Sears.[2] Shortly thereafter he made drawings which were engraved for the New York Mirror, and several which were used in Hinton's History and Topography of the United States, as published in Boston in 1834.[3] The New-York Historical Society owns a number of Burton's original sepia drawings for the Bourne series, from which the following three reproductions were taken.

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[1]Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., p. 71.

[2]Ibid.; and Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 98.

[3]John Hinton, History and Topography of the United States (2 vols.; Boston: Samuel Walker, 1834).

The first of these, "Landing Place, Foot of Barclay Street" (Fig. 43), shows one of the ferryboat docks on the Hudson River at a point just a few blocks north of the area depicted in the earlier, Jenny view. Burton, like William Birch, was consistent in his ability to grasp the whole view. He accomplishes this by working close to the subject and organizing the composition around some dominant motif. In this example he has exploited the interesting shape and mechanical structure of the overhanging awning and its vertical supports as the dominant pictorial element, the pattern of which he has repeated further down the street, introducing a glimpse of light sky and background to separate the two. The figures, rather summarily suggested, move in and out of the shadows created by these forms, creating in turn, engaging alternations of light and dark, full volumes and flat, coulisse-like shapes. With this activity serving to insure a strongly organized "core," the large, more open area at the left, with its many small details, could be drawn freely and candidly without weakening the composition as a whole.[1]

The same methods can be seen in his interior view, "Council Chamber, City Hall" (Fig. 44). Here the design is organized around the motif of the circular colonnade which rims the chamber. Burton has allowed the columns nearest the viewer to cut across the view vertically, thus serving somewhat the same function as the awnings in the preceding composition. These columns, along

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[1] Cf. Bennett's "Fulton Street and Market" (Fig. 42), which also contains awnings similar to these. Whereas Bennett failed to take advantage of the pictorial possibilities of these forms, Burton has exploited them fully.

with the figures and elaborate railing, establish a strong and satisfying foreground through which the minutiae of the interior can be seen without becoming "lost."

In his "City Hall" (Fig. 45), the artist has varied these methods somewhat, perhaps realizing that the main subject was more purely topographical than usual. The dominant element in this composition is created by genre activity rather than by the activity of the abstract elements themselves as seen in the preceding examples. The foreground has been devoted to figures engaged in charming bits of anecdote, establishing an interest in the foreground which, along with the white fences and scattered trees, slows the transition to the very descriptive view of City Hall. This is essentially the same problem encountered by the artists of the 1790's in their views of the Old City Hall. It is interesting to note that with the thirties and Burton the earlier compositional formulae have almost completely disappeared.

Burton's "Broadway and Fulton Street" (Fig. 46), engraved by R. Lowe and included as one of the "extra plates" in the Bourne series, is one of his most intricate and subtle compositions. The angle from which the view was taken is unique for this particular locale and is such that it excused the artist from a complete delineation of any one architectural feature, such as had characterized the previous example. He has shown the portico only of St. Paul's Church at the left; part of the City Hall in the center background; Scudder's "American Museum" at the right; and just a sampling of the other buildings on the east side of Broadway. He has further subordinated these by placing

them behind the prominent foreground fence and protruding corner of Fulton Street. The figures enliven the composition, both by their prominent activity in the foreground and by their loose suggestion in the distant parts. The wonderfully arranged posters fixed to the wall of the churchyard add a mildly satirical touch with their blatant announcements of lotteries and gambling.

The remaining view by Burton, "Wall Street" (Fig. 47), was the second in a series of "Street Views" published in the Mirror in 1832, and has been included here to illustrate the sort of urban art published by this, the most urbane of contemporary periodicals. The intention here is clearly more flatteringly topographical than the above examples, as might be expected. Yet even here there remain suggestions of the candid observation and purposeful design which in combination make Burton's compositions so delightful to look at.

Another series of views that preceded Bennett's "Street Views" formed a picture-book entitled Views in New-York and its Environs, a work which appeared in 1831-1834, with "Topographical and Critical Illustrations by Theodore S. Fay," and drawings "taken on the spot expressly for this work" by an architect, J. H. Dakin (see Fig. 48, a reproduction of the original title-page). Besides the drawings by Dakin the book also contained views drawn by A. J. Davis, Lundie, Dick, Fossette, Osborne, and an unknown artist who signed himself "J. H." The plates for the book were engraved by Barnard, Dick, Fossette, Osborne, Hooker, Kearny, and Harris.[1]

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[1]Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., p. 74.

The plates were issued serially over a period of three years, the book to be complete after ten numbers. However, as usual, the project was never completed; only eight numbers were actually published, comprising in all thirty-eight small views on sixteen plates. The Mirror, of which Fay was then associate editor, carried this interesting notice of the work when the first number made its appearance:

> A very pretty quarto pamphlet has just appeared, published by Peabody and Co., Broadway. It forms the first number of a series of views illustrating New-York and its environs, and, with several pages of letter-press, contains four engravings . . . It is got up in a creditable manner, and although topographical illustrations are generally dry matters, and, in this particular instance, not likely to throw any extraordinary light on the early affairs of the city, we are told the work meets with a rapid sale.[1]

The work was indeed "topographical," and the above writer's observation that these are "generally dry matters" is in this case particularly apropos, since only a very rare few of the plates attempt anything beyond portraiture of buildings.

One of the exceptions to this, however, is the "Navy Yard" (Fig. 49), a curious composition showing a group of figures, possibly a family, standing on a rotting wharf, silhouetted against a very bright sun. The shadows created by the direct lighting of the scene obscure most of the other physical features of the place and produce a rather eerie effect not too different than Allston's "Moonlight Scene" or of Caspar David Friedrich's "Two Men in Contemplation of the Moon." This conception of lighting is entirely foreign to American city views of this period, this and the general treatment of the composition suggesting inspiration from

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[1] New York Mirror, June 4, 1831, quoted in ibid., p. 74.

Naples and its by-now conventional treatment of city views.[1] Such a different approach encountered so suddenly in views of American cities is immediately recognized as something quite out of the ordinary, for the whole approach contrasts so strikingly with the usual melange of English and American styles with their pale lights and shallow darks, and their dogged insistence on exact descriptiveness.

Public support for the city view painters in America seems to have expanded rather dramatically around 1830, for along with these series and soon after their appearance, a large number of separate plates in aquatint and lithography began to be published for popular sale. These were of all types: street scenes, topographical views, distant views, depictions of current events, genre, and even some caricature. In addition to these published works there were also a number of independent works, oils and watercolors, which were apparently done with no thought of publication. It would be too lengthy a task to illustrate and discuss all of them, but a selection of some of the more interesting and representative must be given a place in this study, for altogether they show the ways in which interest was spreading and the progress and problems in the development of the art.

Fairly representative of the period are two lithographs of New York scenes by Hugh Reinagle, the scene-painter and student of J. J. Holland mentioned earlier. The first of these, issued in 1832 by Pendleton, shows a "View of St. Paul's Church and the

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[1] Cf. Fig. 59, a view by Nicolino Calyo, a Neapolitan view painter who immigrated during this period.

Broadway Stages" (Fig. 50). The site depicted here will recall the Milbourne view from 1798 of this same subject, and shows that the landmarks which interested the artists of that earlier period still attract the artists. But how quiet and empty the Milbourne now looks by comparison! The uninhabited topography of Milbourne's view is now milling with human life and diversified activity, for which the architectural features serve merely as background. Particularly effective is the suggestion of the tremendous rush and crush of the omnibuses, one of the most prominent and characteristic features of the New York streets of this period, coming on the scene as the city's pattern of growth spread rapidly toward the rural pastures of upper Manhattan.[1]

The other work by Reinagle is entitled "View from Trinity Church looking down Wall Street" (Fig. 51), a lithograph issued in 1834 by Peter Maverick. It has in addition to the main perspective view of Wall Street, an elaborate border filled with detailed sketches of each side of the street and a distant view of the Heights of Brooklyn. In spite of the fact that the composition of the main view is divided symmetrically by the directly centered perspective, the work is nonetheless unconventional and remarkably fresh with its brittle linear effects and contrasting patterns of dark and light, patterns formed by the crisply drawn architecture and bare trees against the white snow of the streets

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[1] Stokes, New York Past and Present, p. 34, quotes an article in the New York Gazette and General Advertiser (August 5, 1834) as follows:

"Omnibuses, exceeding a hundred in number, roll incessantly over the paved streets, administering equally to the purposes of business and pleasure, adding to noise and bustle, and forming an object of such prominent attraction as to cause New York not inaptly to be termed 'The City of Omnibuses.'"

and rooftops. To this the prancing animals and quaintly decorative sleighs add a further touch of gaiety and buoyancy; so too the other figures and vehicles spotted against the white ground. Reinagle's depiction of Wall Street could easily recall the picture of Broadway in the opening paragraphs of Mrs. Sedgwick's Clarence:

> The atmosphere was a pure transparency--a perfect ether; and Broadway, . . . presented its gayest and most brilliant aspect.[1]

In most of the works of the decade of the thirties the artists were striving to "mirror" the city just as it was, as Reinagle has done, showing not only the architecture of the city but the genre as well. For the most part the common aim has changed little since Guy painted his view of the Tontine Coffee House in 1797-1798. Sometimes, as in the cases of Reinagle, Burton, Hill, and Bennett, the technical problems involved in such realistic attempts were rather well matched by the abilities of the artists, issuing in more or less successful works of art. In many cases, however, the artists struggled with these problems with obvious difficulty, the results sometimes coming closer to the old Rollinson view, "Custom House and the Bowling Green." Some of these attempts are almost as interesting as the more successful and accomplished essays.

Thomas Hornor was one of these "strugglers." An English topographical painter, engraver, and etcher, Hornor arrived in the United States shortly before 1828. Little is known of his English work except that in 1823 he was recorded as having painted a pan-

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[1]Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 9.

orama of London from the steeple of St. Paul's Cathedral.[1] In this country he was plagued by troubles, both pecuniary and, as we shall shortly see, artistic.[2] Among his projects were a number of ambitious views of New York City, but perhaps because of the inadequacy of his talents these projects seem to have brought him little income.

Hornor's work, at least in what it attempts, is in much the same tradition as the younger Hill's. For instance, his "Broadway, New-York" (Fig. 52), drawn and etched by the artist himself about 1834 and aquatinted by Hill's father (published in 1836), shows some of the panoramic qualities of J. W. Hill's street views: a kind of "backing away" from the scene in order to be inclusive. At first glance, the work seems rather attractive with its great profusion of genre activity and the interest generated by the closely detailed architecture and the prominent signboards, unified somewhat by the hand-coloring. But closer inspection, particularly in the foreground, reveals many weaknesses, such as the sloppiness of the figures and the discrepancies of scale of figures and objects within the perspective scheme, all of which indicate the difficulties that Hornor was undergoing as a draftsman.

Perhaps these woes can be seen more readily, however, in another view of Hornor's, an unfinished "bird's eye" view in watercolor from about 1842 showing the familiar City Hall and Park, and a panoramic view of the city to the north (Fig. 53).

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[1] Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 327.

[2] Stokes, Iconography, III, 616-17.

In this curious combination of panorama and close up view, Hornor has clearly lost control of the perspective problem, a rather unexpected failure considering the fact that he was supposed to have been a panorama painter before coming to this country. The streets at either side of the foreground are Broadway and Park Row, which in actuality converge at a point just below the Park, as we have seen in a number of other views of the area. The figures encircle what was probably to be the main feature of the picture, the fountain erected for the Croton Water Celebration of 1842. A more correct bird's eye view by Bachmann from about 1849 shows the area as it should have looked to Hornor, with exception of some of the details of the fountain and its surrounding fence which were changed in 1842-1843 (Fig. 54).[1]

One of the rare oil paintings of cities from the period is James Pringle's "Smith and Dimon Shipyard" (Fig. 55) dated 1833. Against the ship shown under construction can be seen a pair of inclined ramps similar to those seen earlier in the Birch view. Pringle, however, has not exploited the abstract quality of their forms as Birch had done. Instead, he has made a large and powerful repoussoir of the dark pile of lumber, which is arranged so as to produce a visual thrust into space. This thrust, re-

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[1]Stokes and Haskell, op. cit., p. 84, in their dating of this work at "C. 1837" and identification of the right hand street as Nassau, have overlooked the layout of the park which in this form dates from the construction of the fountain in 1842, and the building at the extreme right, the well known Park Theatre, which stood on Park Row, not Nassau (cf. Fig. 35).

Examination of the original drawing reveals hundreds of tiny pin-pricks apparently put there by Hornor in an attempt to construct the perspective by some mechanical means or other. They are particularly evident in the foreground where they seem to measure the heights of figures, posts, buildings, windows, etc.

peated in the left middleground, carries the eye to the ship anchored in the river, and thence via the other ship and its ramps back to the sunlit middleground with its many scattered figures and activities, and bits of lumber. The basic pattern arrangement of the dark foreground and alternating light middleground and dark ships, though conventional, gives unity and strength to the composition and succeeds in holding the many scattered elements together.

One of the most intimate and imaginative street views of the period is the "Nightfall, St. Thomas' Church, Broadway, N.Y." (Fig. 56) by George Harvey. Harvey painted this view about 1837 as one of a series of watercolors with the unusual title for this period, "Atmospheric Views," composed mostly of landscapes, which the artist intended to publish by subscription. The artist was serious in his intention to be atmospheric; some of the titles of the individual paintings, such as "Misty Morning," "An Autumnal Fog," "Spring Scene After Rain," and "Subsiding Storm--Mountain Scene," more suggestive of the period of Inness and Cropsey than the 1830's. However, only three out of the forty drawings intended for engraving were views of cities: this one of "Nightfall"; another entitled "Afternoon Rainbow--Boston Common from Charles Street Mall"; and the third, "Sun Near Setting--Jersey City, from the Foot of Courtlandt Street, N. Y.," a distant view across the Hudson River with a soft, sunset effect, ships, and three men in a rowboat casting a reflection on the glassy water in the foreground. The view of Boston Common is almost like a farm scene, showing men with scythes mowing the tall grass of the Common, a rainbow stretching overhead; only the buildings of the background,

seen through the trees of the Common, indicate that the scene is part of a city. The New York view, "Nightfall," is the most intimate and unmistakably urban of the series. The project as a whole, despite the fine and unusual quality of the drawings and the generally favorable comment on them, failed after the first number, apparently from lack of subscriptions.[1]

In his "Nightfall" Harvey has been far more successful than most of the other artists in conveying a true sense of presence in a view of the city. He has achieved seemingly with ease what artists like Hornor strove for with obvious effort. His figures are drawn easily, in uncontrived poses, effecting a very natural relationship with their physical surroundings. There is no attempt to single out architectural features by detailed description; rather, everything sits firmly in its place, enveloped in the late-afternoon atmosphere and half hidden from view by trees, figures, and vehicles. His fascination with a particular time of day and concentration on atmosphere are an unusual approach to the city at this early date, particularly in the United States: very mature and charming; but like so many of the promising beginnings in this study it is one which, before 1850 at least, was never repeated.

More characteristic of the time and place than Harvey's professional mastery are the many amateur works of the period such

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[1]Harvey received encouragement from Queen Victoria, Washington Allston, Samuel Morse, Thomas Sully, and probably from his friend Washington Irving, whose estate, "Sunnyside," he had helped to remodel. See Donald Shelley, "George Harvey and his Atmospheric Landscapes," New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin, XXXII (April, 1948), 104-13.

as the small view of New York Bay and Battery by Thomas Millington, painted about 1835 (Fig. 57). In the usual manner of the early amateurs, this artist has reduced the essentials of the view to a simple, decorative pattern, in this case consisting of the prominent row of flatly designed trees. The main pattern interest is created by the variations in the shapes of these trees and the lighter, negative shapes of the background which appear between the trees and branches. These form a well designed screen through which one views the loosely suggested background and the promenading figures, similar to the treatment noted in Burton, but with more naiveté and less conscious refinement than in Burton.

As mentioned earlier, it was during the thirties that the American people developed a great craving for "the news." This development was particularly apparent in the large cities, since it was there that most of the news originated or filtered through, and it was there that the first economical daily newspapers originated and were made accessible to the public. The first really successful "penny daily" was the New York Sun, established in 1833 by Benjamin Day. When this experiment proved profitable it was soon followed by a great number of such attempts, many of them in New York, but some in other cities as well. The New York Transcript, important in the history of sensationalist journalism, began in 1834, and the New York Herald under James Gordon Bennett, began in 1835 and eventually outstripped the Sun in circulation, to the dismay of conservatives like Philip Hone who often were the targets of Bennett's journalistic barbs. Other "penny dailies" of the period were the Boston Daily Times, the Philadelphia Ledger, and

the Baltimore Sun. Besides the information which these journals provided on national affairs and economic matters, they also created a new interest in local news and everyday events, with such things as police reports and the more sensational court processes providing favored reading for the masses.[1] Such journals tended to become vehicles of urban attitudes and as such, helped to establish an individual identity of the city or cities which fostered them, as for instance, Bennett's Herald becoming in time almost synonymous with New York, and the "newsboy," who arose as an answer to the problem of distribution, becoming in time almost a symbol of the modern age in the city.[2]

The eagerness with which the public awaited the latest newspaper was soon extended to the field of city views, creating a new demand for depictions of contemporary events and miscellaneous urban topics of current interest. The usual medium for mass reproduction of such depictions was lithography, which by this time was widely practiced and which represented the fastest and most economical means of producing prints.[3]

One of the first firms to specialize successfully in this field of "news reporting" was established in 1835 in New York by

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[1]Frank Mott, American Journalism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1941), pp. 220-52.

[2]See for instance, Joseph C. Neal, "The News-Boy," from "Pennings and Pencillings in and about Town," in U. S. Magazine and Democratic Review, XIII (July, 1843), 89-96, where Neal exclaims, "our clarion now . . . is the shrill voice of the newsboy, that modern Minerva, who leaped full-blown from the o'erwraught head of journalism . . . the type of the time--an incarnation of the spirit of the day."

[3]See Weitenkampf, American Graphic Art, pp. 152-78; and George Eckhardt, "Early Lithography in Philadelphia," Antiques, XXVIII (December, 1935), 249-52, on development of lithography.

Nathaniel Currier. It is probably not a coincidence that this was also the year when New York experienced what until that time was its most destructive and spectacular fire, for it was this great disaster which provided the substance for Currier's first successful print, "Ruins of the Merchants' Exchange, N. Y." (Fig. 58), the drawing for which was by J. H. Bufford.

For the most part, it is beside the point to discuss the works of Currier and Ives and the other early, popular lithographers from the standpoint of their intrinsic artistic merits. As Harry T. Peters, one of the most knowledgeable collectors of American lithographic prints, remarked,

> Currier and Ives pictured their own times with meticulous accuracy of detail without "artiness," and with no thought of appealing to any but their own immediate market. They gave the public pictures that were easy to understand and appreciate, pictures that were typically American, and pictures not only with subjects that were within the knowledge and experience of the average man but at prices that were within the range of his pocketbook.[1]

The success of Currier, like that of Day's "penny daily," gave impetus to a whole new competitive field for the art of city views. Competition per se between publishing firms was not new, of course; it was the content of the pictures that was new, and the immediate character of this content gave a new aspect to the competitive effort. The prints sold best "before the ashes cooled,"so to speak, and the rush to create marketable souvenir prints left little time for reflection on artistic questions. The publishers seemed to know instinctively what the public would buy. The artists would study the subject hurriedly, grasping the

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[1]Harry T. Peters, Currier and Ives, Printmakers to the American People (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1929-31), p. 2.

essentials with more or less accuracy, and interpolating the rest from memory and general experience. With this procedure, prints which had formerly taken weeks, months, or years to prepare and publish through subscription, now were on the counters of the well-known printsellers' shops in a matter of three or four days after the event and could be had for almost nothing.

Not all of the artists who depicted current events were in the employ of Currier and his species, however. Perhaps the artist who was the farthest from their tradition was the Neapolitan, Nicolino Calyo, a former student of the Academy of Naples, who arrived here in the early thirties, living first in Baltimore and settling in New York in 1835.[1] His arrival in New York coincides with the year of the great fire, and of this fire he left a number of interesting pictorial records, two of which are reproduced here.

The first of these, "View of New York, Governor's Island, taken from Brooklyn Heights, Evening of the Fire" (Fig. 59), shows the brilliant glow of the fire against the night sky as viewed from a comfortable distance across the East River. It is a curious composition, like the plate from Fay's Views, containing many elements entirely alien to city view painting as commonly practiced in this country. The artist was obviously enamored with the strong, directly visible, light source, and has delighted in silhouetting and highlighting the foreground figures who stand in rapt attention to the fire which casts long shadows behind them,

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[1]Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 104.

a motif remarkably similar to that seen in the Fay view. The immediate foreground, with the fragment of a classical temple at the right casting an illogical shadow toward the repoussoir at the left, was undoubtedly created from remembered formulae brought from Naples. The device of the direct lighting, common in European view painting by this time, was still relatively untried in this country, the Fay view and several Calyo views being the only examples of city views in this manner which the present research has discovered.

Besides this painting and a similar one viewing the fire at night from Williamsburg, Calyo also did a number of street views showing the destruction of the fire. Some of these were aquatinted by William Bennett and published, hand-colored, by L. P. Clover. The "View of the Ruins after the Great Fire in New York, Dec. 16th and 17th, 1835" (Fig. 60), similar in subject to the Currier print, indicates, however, a good deal more artistic pretentiousness than Bufford was able to attain in his drawing. Calyo probably had to devote little more time or thought to his drawing than Bufford did to his, however, since there is little in it that appears to have been closely observed by the artist. Most of it, particularly the arrangement of contrasting values and "ruin-like" shapes, seems to be pure convention. Yet it is the artificiality of this arrangement which makes the composition seem artful at first glance, in contrast to Bufford's straightforward presentation. The element of drama, often so meagerly conveyed by the local artists, seems to have come naturally to Calyo, who had at his grasp the whole gamut of artistic idioms for the expression of such states

of feeling, a formal language almost unknown to the local artists and craftsmen.

The preoccupation of artists and public with conflagrations seems to have been but one manifestation of a general fascination in destruction and ruins. Such ruins, of course, were not the picturesque, weed-covered ruins so dear to European poets and landscape gardeners, but rather, these were the everyday ruins from fires and architectural collapses, or the intentional demolition of old buildings to make room for new. Whether accidental or intentional, such destruction was almost always spectacular and awe-inspiring to behold, inherent with an excitement which pictures could preserve and recall time and again even after the ruins had been cleared away. Sadistic as it may seem, such events seemed to grow in fascination with the public in proportion to the extent that they brought death or injury, desolated valuable property, and necessitated the investment of capital and labor.

A suggestion of these underlying motives is reflected in a rather pictorially striking lithograph, "The Ruins of Phelp's and Peck's Store" (Fig. 61), drawn by E. W. Clay and issued by Pendleton in 1832. Some men are removing a body from the scene, followed by what appear to be undertakers, and scrutinized by a motley group of spectators, some of whom have the attributes of politicians and capitalists. In the right middleground a chain brigade appears to be either extinguishing a small fire or salvaging some of the merchandise from the ruined store. At the sides other figures are completing the destruction of the building,

while other scattered figures climb about on the wreckage or gape from nearby windows. Though there is a bit of humor and ridicule in all this, the artist has been careful to present all of the exciting features that normally draw people to such a scene, as well as providing a description of the individuals who typically form such a congregation.

The design of the picture is also quite interesting. The most salient element is the pattern of squares formed by the exposed skeleton of the remaining structure, with its spaces variously filled with warehouse merchandise. The stairs hanging precariously against the blank wall of the left hand building continues this interest in pattern. The pile of rubble itself shows more design than accident, with its planks laid rather uniformly and bags distributed in semi-regular clusters in conformity with the needs of the composition. The main groups of figures have been simplified almost to flattened, planar areas, while the conveniently diagonal planks of the foreground provide design emphasis for the key group.

The development of an urban genre progressed very little during the thirties over what it had been in the days of Guy, Svin'in, and Krimmel. Though figures are now more consistently a part of every view of the city, they are still almost always a part of a larger, more inclusive concept of a descriptive, topographical view. Few artists would dare to reverse this procedure, to make the figures and story, or identifiable human activity, the primary reason for a work. Svin'in and Krimmel, working much earlier than the thirties, had come as close to this ideal as any artist since then. The ultimate ideal of such a development of

genre would be attained if an artist were to isolate his figures completely from the representation of any specific and identifiable urban site, organize the composition entirely in terms of the figures, and yet by some means or other retain the unmistakable urbanness of the figures and the incident or anecdote which they enact, such as a Rowlandson or Cruikshank were often capable of doing.

In the thirties, Clay approaches this ideal as nearly as anyone. A good example of his handling of genre is his "Skating on the Delaware at Philadelphia" (Fig. 62), a lithograph issued in Philadelphia by Childs and Inman in 1831. Clay knew how to suggest individuality in facial types and how to express character in costume and physique. He also had a fine instinct for the effective placement of figures and groups, for varied relationships of space, movement, and rhythm. These qualities can be seen, for instance, in the treatment of the three skaters of the right foreground. Not only are the peculiarities of face and form of these figures well suggested, but there is also a wonderful efficiency in the way the members of the group function together and with respect to the rest of the composition. The two nearer figures complement the movements of each other and the movements of the amusing skater with spread legs whom they frame. The negative spaces formed by the three skaters have as much movement and variety of shape as the figures themselves. This group is in turn joined to the left hand group, not just physically by the crossing of their bodies, but through the repetition of movements and line. These two figures also function together as did the others, while the sprawling skater of the left foreground is woven into their pat-

tern, filling the empty spaces, and emphasizing the immediate foreground by his incongruous position and ruffled contours. The crossed poles of the vending stand at the right seem to repeat consciously the diagonals and criss-cross movements of the skaters, while the activities of the background, glimpsed through the arms and legs of the foreground skaters, are also delightfully varied, and in almost all instances related abstractly to the main pattern.

There may be some Cruikshank influence in the work of Clay, though Clay is never as thoroughgoing a caricaturist as either of the Cruikshanks. Some of their similarities and differences can be seen by comparing a Cruikshank plate from Pierce Egan's Life in London (Fig. 63) with Clay's well known lithograph, "The Times, 1837" (Fig. 64). In this picture Clay is giving a foretaste of the forties by the heavy social-consciousness of the work, a dramatization of the economic and moral repercussions of the Panic of 1837. In the narrowest sense it is more a political cartoon than a work of genre, with its many captions and literary "clues," but Clay, by virtue of his sensitivity as a designer and his sympathetic understanding of the subject has created a work of art, which, though unconventional, could be classed as genre. His strong points are to be seen in the foreground, in the bold division into separate scenes and the expression of character and pathos in the figures. Note that he does not exaggerate physical features in the manner of Cruikshank. On the contrary, Clay has selected ready-made types who are expressive enough in themselves without the necessity of further caricature, simply drawing them as they are. Clay seems to have been quite sensitive to his times and environment, and in the very few works we have by him he has presented his re-

actions in very direct and personal terms, not at all timid in the use of genre and the human figures of the city. This last composition, though close to the approach of the political cartoonist, brings us rather close to the genre ideal as stated above.

The few other instances of city genre which could be mentioned in connection with the thirties also seem to take most of their inspiration from the English caricaturists, a tradition which seems never to have fallen out of favor in America during the period covered by this study. Some of these influences are apparent, for instance, in James Akin's "Philadelphia Taste Displayed; or Bonton below Stairs" (Fig. 65), a lithograph published around 1830 which in the rather light and decorative drawing recalls the Englishman Robert Dighton (see Fig. 66), though the gross exaggeration of faces and actions are more akin to the work of the Cruikshanks. The theme here treated is not at all usual for its date and place in America though it is common in the satirical literature of London of the time; Robert Montgomery Bird, mentioned earlier in this chapter, being about the only American counterpart of Pierce Egan in this period. The artist Akin has followed the common English tendency to satirize such urban vices, even to the point of becoming a bit coarse in the portrayal of human ills. The satirical element is much more important here than in Svin'in's "Night Life in Philadelphia," which had tended rather to stress more of the gaiety and conviviality of the scene instead of poking fun at the habitués of the oyster stall.

With the exception of Clay's dismal view of the "Times"

there has been little in the pleasant views of the cities of the thirties to indicate that the cities were faced with any serious social problems. That problem areas did actually exist during this decade can be seen in a Brueghel-like composition by an unidentified artist which depicts New York's notorious "Five Points" district in about 1827 (Fig. 67). This portrayal takes the viewer through the squalor and poverty of one of the period's worst slums. There is in this rare composition no attempt to beautify or poeticize; there are no decorative embellishments; there is not a hint either of approval or satire. The poverty of the locale shows in every building, every crude signboard, every figure, and every object in view.[1]

By the 1840's such socially conscious presentations as this become much more common, both pictorially and in literature. But as we have seen here in the vast majority of examples, the artists and public were not yet ready for this in the thirties. This was an age of optimism and glamour, of beautiful and refined, even flattering, topographical views--perhaps the "golden age" for such art in America. The artistic vision as seen in the thirties tended to dwell only on the surface of the city, the artists not being prepared as yet to penetrate the subject in any great depth. Perhaps this is due in part to the strongly commercial motive which almost always tends to dictate and control the scope of the art of city views by the imposition of the tastes and demands of public patronage. Yet even the existence of this shallow

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[1]A much "corrected" and beautified lithographic copy of this painting entitled "Five Points in 1827" appeared in Valentine's Manual in 1855.

interest on the part of the public indicates at least some advance over the complete indifference toward the cities in the earlier period. And even though the art of the period may be lacking in depth, it can scarcely be justly criticized for a lack of variety.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE FORTIES

The period of the 1840's is one of the most complex and fascinating decades in the history of the American cities. The period was complex because it saw the introduction of so many new factors and new problems in urban society, factors which were strange and disconcerting to the people, and problems too large to be ignored, but for which the diagnosis and treatment had yet to be discovered. It is a fascinating period because of the wide array of attitudes which the new conditions engendered among writers and artists. The city was suddenly becoming a moral force for evil or good, a thing more and more detached, in reality and in the conception of men, from the pastoral existence so long equated with America.

The decade began under near-chaotic conditions, economically and politically. The thirties, still rocking under the effects of Jackson's economic policies, the crisis of 1837, ended very badly. As Philip Hone remarked on New Year's Day, 1840, as he was crossing off the old year, 1839,

> It has been marked by individual and national distress in an unprecedented degree, the effect of improvidence and a want of sound moral and political principles on the part of the mass of the people, and bad government and a crushing down of everything good and great to subserve party objects on the part of the rulers.[1]

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[1] Tuckerman, op. cit., II, 1.

The conditions thus outlined at the end of the thirties were further aggravated by the developments of the forties. At the same time that the cities were struggling with the stubborn economic depression inherited from 1837, urban populations were mushrooming. Immigration was taking place at an unprecedented rate, adding people where they were least needed in the cities: at the lowest economic levels.

New York City of this period provides a good illustration of the quantity and kind of urban growth which was taking place. In 1840 the city had a population of 313,000, by far the most populous of American cities. But by 1850 this figure had grown to 516,000, and of this half-million people, 236,000, or over 45 per cent, were foreign born. Of these, 134,000 were from impoverished and famine-plagued Ireland, and 55,000 were from Germany, many of them recent arrivals, refugees from that country's political turmoil of the last years of the decade.[1] Most of these immigrants arrived in the seaport cities too poor to move on to the West and with little to contribute to the city other than a bountiful supply of cheap labor and a willingness to take almost any kind of a job. Unfortunately, their arrival coincided with a relative scarcity of profitable work in the cities, and as a result, many of them were pushed in a semi-dependent state into the expanding slum areas of their port of entry, where they lived in extremely unwholesome conditions, adding to the crime problem, filling the jails and poorhouses, and falling easy prey to a growing breed of corrupt city politicians. When the economic depression

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[1] DeBow, op. cit., pp. 192 and 399.

began to abate in the late forties their condition did not improve a great deal. The continued acceleration of immigration tended to neutralize the gains in prosperity at the low economic levels, while the resumption of prosperity in the middle and upper classes had the negative effect of encouraging the evils of the lower by providing patronage for vices which already existed in abundance.[1]

This was not always true, however. To the extent that for some people it provided a means of escape from the confinement of poverty, the arrival of prosperity created something of a social revolution in the city. This was particularly true in New York, where, as we have already seen, social status was more directly geared to commercial success than in the other cities. "Society," the exclusive circle in which men and women such as the Philip Hones moved, began, much to its dismay, to feel the effects of the Jacksonian democratizing of the thirties; now other families often quite accustomed to the ways of such "society," by dint of their new-found wealth and financial credit began to have pretensions to "nobility" and "fashionability." Despised by the "true nobility" for their crude manners and lack of proper taste, and scorned by their former equals of the lower classes because of their ambitions and pretensions, these people comprise a curious and rather pathetic group, highly symbolic of urban civilization, and the object of endless satire and derision from all sides.

With these raw materials--the wretched but often colorful life of the slums, and the revolution created by new wealth among

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[1]See Fish, op. cit., pp. 109-36.

the upper classes--a literature dealing directly with current urban themes came into being. Furthermore, the literature is rather abundant in comparison with the earlier periods in this study. But it is curious that in almost all instances it centers on these two themes.

Attention to both these themes was drawn by the visit of Charles Dickens to the United States in 1842 and the subsequent publication of his controversial and widely read American Notes. His criticism of the "hickish" and plebeian character of American society is well known and reflects the democratizing tendencies which were infiltrating the upper classes at the time. He also visited the slum areas of the cities, such as the "Five Points" district of New York, likening this area to London's St. Giles and Seven Dials districts, the centers for much of the literature of the low life of that city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His remarks on Five points not only suggest the appearance of the place early in the decade, but also suggest that Dickens may have been the inspiration for a good deal of the literature which followed. Even here Dickens was to find the pervasive symbols of American self-pride, as he says,

> Here, too, are lanes and alleys, paved with mud knee-deep: underground chambers, where they dance and game: the walls bedecked with rough designs of ships, and forts, and flags, and American Eagles out of number: ruined houses, open to the street, whence, through wide gaps in the walls, other ruins loom upon the eye, as though the world of vice and misery had nothing else to show: hideous tenements which take their name from robbery and murder: all that is loathsome, drooping and decayed is here.[1]

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[1]Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation (London, 1842), quoted in Still, op. cit., p. 123.

Based on these themes and this district one of the first and most thorough native treatments is provided in Edward Judson's ("Ned Buntline") Mysteries and Miseries of New York which appeared in five separate parts in 1847-1848.[1] The pseudonym taken by the author, along with his avowed aim in the work, the exposition of vice in the city, have obvious reference to Ned Ward and his London Spy of a century and a half earlier.[2] Like the London Spy, this book was also issued in parts, growing and changing directions in each part according to the reactions which the preceding publication had aroused in his readers, reactions which were advertised in a preface to each new part. The book is a curious combination of attitudes and literary approaches; of shocking realism (for its time and place) and sentimentality; and of luridness and sensationalism at one moment and fervid reformism and evangelism in the next. To awaken and reform are his professed aims; as he says in his first preface,

> I have an aim in this work--it is to do good. I wish to lay before you all the vice of the city, to lay open its festering sores, so that you and the good and philanthropic may see where and how to apply the healing balm: I wish to show where and how our young men are led away and ruined in the glittering gambling palaces; how many a poor, now wretched and degraded female, has been driven into the paths of infamy, by neglect, when one kind word and one helping hand would have saved her.[3]

The opening lines of Judson's story may remind one of Mrs. Sedgwick's opening sentences in Clarence: the description of

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[1]Published in New York by Berford and Co.

[2]Ned Ward in his preface states, "my Design . . . is not to Affront or Expose any Body; for all that I propose is, to Scourge Vice and Villainy," London Spy (a reprint of the edition of 1700; London: The Casanova Society, 1926), n. p.

[3]Judson, op. cit., Part I, p. 7.

Broadway, the effects of the weather on the scenery and mood, and so on. But the material that follows, though often utterly sentimental, is a far cry from the chaste romance and standard intrigues of Clarence. After this noncommital introduction, Judson goes quickly to the heart of the matter:

> The day closed thus, and the bright street lamps were lighted. Then could be seen the miserable street-walkers taking their nightly round up and down Broadway: poor, painted, tinseled creatures, now pausing before the large-windowed hotel to show themselves to the cigar-smoking loungers who occupied the big arm-chairs within, then smiling with a faint and sickly smile upon some country-looking promenader, thus throwing out a bait to induce him to turn aside at the next street corner to speak to them, or to make him follow them to the theatre of their nightly infamy.[1]

Judson's later insistence on the realism of his portrayal is interesting. He had apparently done a good deal of research on his subject, even to the point of including a "Glossary of 'Flash Terms' and 'Slang Language' used in this Work" to make the dialogue of the city "below stairs" more understandable.[2] The variety and the depths of the immorality that he probed apparently aroused doubts as to the truth of his statements among his readers and critics, an attitude which he was anxious to dispel, in one place declaring, "I pledge myself, if you will take the trouble to go with me, to show you an original, or counterpart for every scene which I have described,"[3] and in a later passage declaring:

> This book is intended to be a mirror of life as it is in this city; we are guided entirely by life as we have seen it here, and will be natural and true to that life. . . . We pride ourself not so much on making this a pretty or an interesting novel, as we do in giving true pictures of our charac-

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[1] Ibid., p. 9.

[2] Ibid., pp. 113-16.

[3] Ibid., Part II, p. 4.

> ters. We would like to please everyone--but those who cannot be pleased with this, must go displeased.[1]

By the time the fourth part was published (1848) the work was assuming the earmarks of a crusade. Judson, through the book, was effecting an exposé, and by means of his succeeding prefaces and appendixes was carrying on a heated correspondence, with charges and challenges, with the mayor and other city officials, all open to the public eye. After introducing a veritable crowd of colorful characters and involving them in several plots simultaneously, the narrative was cut off by Judson quite suddenly in the fifth part, the reader being directed to follow the adventures of most of the same characters in a forthcoming sequel by the same author, The B'Hoys of New York.[2]

In his final "Appendix" Judson attempted to account for the increase in crime and vice conditions. One cause, he thought, was the "laxity of administration of the laws," a reply to the people who thought that more laws would solve the problem. The other cause, interesting enough, was "immigration." Judson was not against immigration per se; it was only that it was distressing to see a preponderance of foreigners appearing on the police files and on the rolls of the almshouses, or begging in the streets. As he says:

> We have plenty of room in this country for immigrants, if they would seek the unsettled parts; but it is to be regretted

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[1] Ibid., Part III, p. 123; italics his.

[2] I believe this work did appear in 1851, but I have not seen it.

> that most of the new comers either lack the means or the inclination to go to the interior, and thus become a burden to the inhabitants of the sea-port towns.[1]

The later parts of Judson's book introduced several characters who had recently become popular legends in New York. Among these were "Mose," the rough-and-ready "Robinhood" of the slums, vociferous leader of the legendary "Bowery B'hoys," head runner of one of the fastest fire pumpers in the city, invincible behind a fast trotter on the Bloomingdale Road, unpredictable, often arrogant and destructive and anxious for a "muss," but basically virtuous, thoroughly American, and quick to come to the aid of a just cause; and "Big Lize," Mose's "G'hal," a flashy dresser and frolicsome girl, sometimes, as in Judson, depicted as a tough and vice-hardened but deeply kind-hearted prostitute who protects the innocent seamstresses from the rude advances of the nocturnal street rowdies; she is, in short, the female counterpart of Mose. These two were among the leading characters in a pair of local dramas by Benjamin Baker which, according to Odell, developed into what was "one of the greatest successes ever known in the history of the New York stage."[2] The first of these to appear was A Glance at New York in 1848, which featured Francis S. Chanfrau in the part of Mose, played, according to Judson, "as no man living but he, can play it."[3] This skit, which played twenty-four times in its original form at Mitchell's Olympic Theatre, is described by Odell as follows:

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[1] Judson, Mysteries and Miseries, Part V, p. 89.

[2] Odell, op. cit., V, 373.

[3] Judson, Mysteries and Miseries, Part V, p. 14, footnote.

> The piece was . . . an attempt to put on stage scenes from the slums, the rough districts, and the criminal precincts of New York. George Parsells, a young countryman, comes to town to visit Harry Gordon, and in the course of a few days and nights is subjected to the tricks of every kind of sharper known to the world of 1848. In these proceedings, Mose, the fireman and strong man of his hands, takes a prominent part, and succeeds in beating every criminal at his own game. The vogue of the fireman of those days, and Mose's complete exemplification of the type, with his red shirt, his soap-locks, his "plug" hat and his boots, into which the trousers were tucked at will, made an unforgettable triumph of Baker's skit.[1]

The original version was soon expanded, one of the additions being "Lize," played by Mary Taylor, and in this new form the play ran for fifty more performances. Meanwhile Chanfrau, who was manager of the Chatham Theatre, introduced there the second of Baker's skits, New York as It Is, with equally great success, playing both parts in different theatres on the same nights. The latter play had no "Lize," but it made up for this by the antics of "Loafer Joe," a waterfront thief played by John Winans, who won almost as much popularity as Chanfrau by this portrayal. In the course of the "Mose craze" that followed these successes, even Judson's Mysteries and Miseries of New York was adapted for the stage (by H. P. Grattan) and presented in late 1848 at the Chatham, now renamed Chanfrau's New National Theatre, by this time one of the most popular playhouses in the city. As Odell says, "Mose, Mose, Mose! how completely he must have satisfied something in the broad human sympathies of 1848!"[2] Baker's plays, inspired originally by the real exploits and character types of New York's fire companies, were largely responsible for the creation of the first full-blown city legends, and the colorful char-

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[1] Odell, loc. cit. [2] Ibid., p. 456.

acters thus popularized and the way of life that they caricatured figured subsequently in almost all writings on the city in the late forties and fifties.[1]

Other similarly intimate glimpses into New York's low life are to be found in George Foster's New York in Slices, published in book form in 1849.[2] Foster, however is more philosophical in approach than Judson; he lacks Judson's evangelistic fervor and much of his associated sentimentalism, and places no great emphasis on reform. Rather, his book, a collection of essays rather than fiction, takes the form of astute observation and critical commentary, written with a good deal of shrewd insight and technical facility. His philosophical approach is most apparent in his introduction, which he begins with the general and widely accepted proposition that

> A great city is the highest result of human civilization. Here the Soul, that most perfect and godlike of all created things, the essence and spirit of the visible world, has put forth all its most wonderful energies--energies developed to their utmost power, and excited to their highest state of activity by constant contact with countless other souls, each emulating, impelling, stimulating, rivalling, outdoing the others.[3]

He may sound very much like Cox and the writers of the thirties when he says, "to our eye nothing appears but a panorama of palaces,

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[1]Chanfrau took A Glance at New York all over the country in the fifties, including Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Louisville, and Chicago. In Chicago he played at Rice's Theater where, in the same year, another performance featured J. H. McVicker, interestingly, in the part of Mose.

[2]George Foster, New York in Slices, by An Experienced Carver, the Original Slices Published in the New York Tribune (New York: William H. Graham, 1849).

[3]Ibid., p. 3.

variegated by eager groups of men apparently engaged in the discussion of lofty themes, upon which hang most momentous issues."[1] But times have changed; Foster lives in the forties. Nowhere is the change of attitude made more manifest than when Foster suddenly changes his tone and says, Dickens-like, in the same passage,

> But let us leave this false magnificence . . . and go among the naked and apparent miseries of the metropolis. . . . Let us turn a little to the right--or left, for it is the same for our purpose--and now stop your nose! For the horrible stench of the poverty, misery, beggary, starvation, crime, filth, and licentiousness that congregate in our Large City, of which we were just now so boastful, as being the highest work of human mind and genius, comes reeking round the corner, and in a moment we shall stand by the very rotting skeleton of City Civilization.[2]

The city is a civilization in decay says the pessimistic spirit of the forties. Far from being the crowning achievement of man, the highest of creatures, Foster queries, "Is it not infinitely inferior to a Beaver-Dam?"[3]

Curiously, these attitudes only occasionally darken the essays which follow. Foster's pessimism colors only those essays which deal with questions of poverty, injustice, and the like (i.e., moral questions). In other matters he is very much like Cox in his ability to give color and character to a wide variety of themes, to touch with imagination and art things that most people of the time must have considered as commonplace or nuisances. His essays cover such items as the prominent streets and districts of the city (now, however, dwelling particularly on the slums instead of equating Broadway with New York as the earlier writers had done), prisons, gambling dens, mock auctions, the needlewomen,

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 4. [3] Ibid., p. 5.

the press, omnibuses, eating places, theaters, liquor groceries, newsboys, and many other themes.

Foster's treatment of the "B'hoy" provides interesting insight on this legendary character. He criticizes Baker's portrayal as false because it "gave only the more conspicuous deformities of the character."[1] He sees underneath the B'hoy's rowdyism and dissipation a more domesticated nature which Baker had ignored. He likens the B'hoy in this respect to the "wild animals" who "reserve all the nobleness and susceptibility of their natures to lavish it upon their mates and offspring, while to all the rest of creation they show nothing but teeth and claws."[2] In the opinion of Foster, society is responsible for the objectionable features of the B'hoy's character; his fundamentally virtuous tendencies have been perverted and subordinated by unfortunate circumstances:

> They are good, unselfish, frolicsome creatures, whose misfortune is that a rude contact with society, under unfavorable auspices, has served to ripen and bring out only a certain class of functions and attributes, while the intellectual and moral faculties which could alone have given them value or useful direction, have been repressed and stunted. Thus, their courage is quarrelsomeness; their frankness is vulgarity; their magnanimity subsides to thriftlessness; their fun expands to rowdyism; their feeling of friendship and brotherhood seeks dangerous activity in mobs and gangs who conspire against the public peace.[3]

One of the B'hoy's most colorful and characteristic means of expressing this "frolicsome" nature was the breakneck race down the avenue behind a "crack trotter," a pastime which dated at least as far back as the late thirties in its origins.[4] This

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[1] Ibid., p. 43. [2] Ibid., p. 44. [3] Ibid.

[4] The earliest reference to this practice which I have found is a cartoon and article in the New York Herald-Tribune, April 29, 1840, entitled "Drives on the Avenue - a Smash"; but the sport itself is probably older than that.

was but one manifestation of his penchant for excitement which took him to horseraces and prizefights, and which traditionally linked him with the fire companies. In some ways, the whole legend of the fellow is symbolized in these road-races as described by Foster.

> If you would see the B'hoy, however, in his glory--at the top of his career--in the ne plus ultra of his mundane state--you must see him taking a drive with his G'hal on the avenue. Get out of the way, common people, and stand aside, slow nags, till the elephant passes. Whoorah! here he comes, shouting and singing with a sort of Titanic jollity, like Cyclops on a bender, and calling with whip and voice upon his "crab" to "go it or break a leg!"--while LIZE, clinging to the seat with a deathgrip in either hand, lowers her Bowery cut-water so as to present the smallest possible space to the atmosphere, and setting her teeth hard and bracing her feet firmly against the foot-board, is prepared for any emergency.[1]

Foster sees the workings of democracy in this scene, in which the B'hoy seems to symbolize the cause of all the underprivileged sections of society:

> Here everybody is on an equality, save that whoever has the fastest horse is the best man. The aristocratic dandy of the Opera, the spendthrift clerk from Front-street, the flashy sporting-man with his unimpeachable turn-out, all go the same road and appear upon the same level. Social inequalities are, like the avenue itself, Macadamized. . . . Of a fine afternoon it swarms with veritable specimens of the B'hoy, arrayed in outre vest and funnel-legged panties, and with an enormous crape band around the hat, on their way to Cato's, or the Red House, or Stryker's Bay, or the High Bridge.[2]

Another legendary character of the city of the forties was the newsboy. Born in the preceding decade along with the penny newspaper, within ten years he had become almost an incarnation of the modern age, the subject of such imaginative prose, and an almost inevitable accompaniment to any pictorial view of the streets,

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[1]Foster, op. cit., pp. 45-46. [2]Ibid.

particularly of New York, the city which, according to Foster, had exclusive claim to him:

> The genuine Newsboy, in his full development and activity, does not exist, except in New York. Your Philadelphia Newsboy, now, has a sort of slow-and-easy, deliberate sing-song, which inspires you with any thing but a desire to read the news. But in New York, the quick, snapping cry, uttered while under a full run, and trailing along like the smoke of a steam-pipe with the boat at the top of her speed, communicates a sort of excitement to the dullest laggard in the street, and sets the whole city in a state of effervescence directly.[1]

In some respects the Newsboy is a sort of "miniature B'hoy." Left to the mercy of "street society" at an early age, often without any kind of a home, he seems to have patterned his life after that of the B'hoy: swearing freely, drinking, fighting, staying out late at night, gambling, even sometimes pooling finances with other newsboys to purchase a light "rig" for "afternoon rides on the avenue."

Having achieved legendary or symbolic status the Newsboy was credited with extraordinary powers. According to Foster he was

> the pearlash dropped into the sour cider of everyday life, making it hiss and bubble with an importance not its own. Without him, the Archimedean lever, the Press, would lose much of its power and half its activity. He is the antennae which feel, and forewarn the community of approaching news--the taster of the great cup of Newspaperism, which everybody quaffs. . . . We wonder whether it has ever occured to any Newsboy of reflecting turn, what a mighty instrument for good or evil, he has in that voice of his--the peace of how many families he has broken or cheered by his loud and long cry of Steamer or Packet--what mischief he has wrought by false alarms--how many ears have been strained to catch its far-off sound, whose all of weal or wo in this life, hung suspended on the Newsboy's breath.[2]

It was during the decade of the forties that New York's Bowery began to rival Broadway in its own way, the "great white

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[1] Ibid., p. 120. [2] Ibid.

way" of the immigrants and tenement dwellers of the east side, the "grand parade-ground of the 'b'hoys' and 'g'hals,' the arena where 'high-life below stairs' makes its grandest demonstrations." Life there had a distinctive beauty all its own, demanding of the spectator only a few allowances for differences in taste to take its place alongside any other "fashionable" section of the city. Foster saw and appreciated this lusty beauty:

> The Bowery has its "fashionable side," too, as well as Broadway; and here, in fine weather, you may see a procession of absolutely the handsomest women in America. Red cheeks and lips, eyes sparkling, and round ripe forms palpitating with health, and that exuberant fullness of life which makes the chief fascination in woman, and which fashionable dissipation so soon destroys--these are the characteristics of Bowery beauty. It may be true that these plump and hearty divinities betray some little bizarrerie in the selection of colors and the cut of their dresses, yet they believe that it is exactly the thing; and whenever they take the trouble to think of the poor pale-faced creatures of Broadway, they actually and heartily pity them.[1]

Perhaps one of the most revealing and entertaining treatments of the theme of "fashionability" is Anna Mowatt's farce, Fashion: or, Life in New York, first performed in New York in 1845.[2] This is a satire on the manners and morals of the "Tiffanys," a nouveau-riche merchant family striving to make its mark in New York society. The satire is achieved by pitting the "fashionable," up-to-date, and utterly French manners of "Mrs. Tiff" against the homely and thoroughly American philosophy of "Adam Trueman," a country bumpkin and former equal of "Mr. Tiff," who is visiting the Tiffanys in their opulent and heavily mortgaged New York home.

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[1] Ibid., p. 120.

[2] Published in London: W. Newberry, 1850.

Before the arrival of Adam Trueman and "Jolimaitre," a fraudulent confidence man posing as a French count seeking a marriage with one of the Tiffany daughters, Mrs. Tiffany seems to have been winning her battle for recognition, though in the process, Mr. Tiff had been forced to resort to embezzlement to support her extravagant tastes. However, from "Millinette," the Tiffany's French maid, we soon learn the true source of Mrs. Tiff's "fashionability":

> I am the Madame's femme de chambre--her lady's maid, . . . I teach Madame les modes de Paris, and Madame set de fashion for all New York. You see, Monsieur Zeke, dat it is me, moi-meme, dat do lead de fashion for all de American beau monde![1]

Adam Trueman enlists the democratic sympathies of the audience by virtue of his common-sense philosophy and his outspoken attacks on "Fashion" and all that it entails. He is the personification of American honesty and forthrightness, of "straight talk" and honest emotions. Disturbed by the forced and guilt-laden laughter of Mr. Tiffany he exclaims,

> What on earth do you mean by that ill-sounding laugh, that has nothing of a laugh about it! This fashion-worship has made heathens and hypocrites of you all! Deception is your household God! A man laughs as if he were crying and cries as if he were laughing in his sleeve. Everything is something else from what it seems to be. I have lived in your house only three days, and I've heard more lies than were ever invented during a Presidential election![2]

Later, in conversing with Mrs. Tiff, Trueman gives this rather existentialist definition of "Fashion":

> Fashion! And pray what is fashion madam? An agreement between certain persons to live without using their souls! to substitute etiquette for virtue--decorum for purity--

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[1] Ibid., p. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 17.

> manners for morals! to affect a shame for the works of their Creator! and expend all their rapture upon the works of their tailors and dressmakers.

to which Mrs. Tiffany gives this classic reply:

> You have the most ow-tray ideas Mr. Trueman--quite rustic, and deplorably American![1]

Not even such a scant treatment of the literature as I have attempted here would be complete without some mention of Lydia Maria Child's Letters from New York.[2] In some ways this work illustrates even better than the others the peculiar brand of social-consciousness that developed during the few years after the crisis commemorated by E. W. Clay's "The Times, 1837." Lydia Child's viewpoint is essentially reactionary, "anti-urban," a fact which would tend to bring her in line with the writers of the thirties, with Cox in his essay, "Steam," or Mrs. Sedgwick and her ambivalent attitudes on city and country as revealed in Clarence. There is in Child, however, a seriousness, a true reformer's zeal which stems, it would seem, from the disruptive social conditions of the forties, a force with which she constantly felt the necessity of coping, though often confessing that the need was frustratingly beyond her means. She is the Oliver Goldsmith of the 1840's when she confides,

> My spirit is weary for rural rambles. It is sad walking in the city. The streets shut out the sky, even as commerce comes between the soul and heaven. The busy throng, passing and repassing, fetter freedom, while they offer no sympathy.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 39.

[2] Lydia Maria Child, Letters from New York (3d ed.; New York: C. S. Francis, 1846), first published in 1844.

[3] Ibid., p. 94.

It is significant that Child cannot admire the picturesqueness and variety encountered in the streets which had so thoroughly delighted Cox and Sedgwick. The difference in attitude between the two periods is again made explicit by Lydia Child as she says,

> There was a time when all these things would have passed by me like the flitting figures of the magic lantern, or the changing scenery of a theatre, sufficient for the amusement of an hour. But now, I have lost the power of looking merely on the surface. Everything seems to me to come from the Infinite, to be tending toward the Infinite. Do I see crowds of men hastening to extinguish a fire? I see not merely uncouth garbs, and fantastic flickering lights of lurid hue, like a tramping troop of gnomes--but straightway my mind is filled with thoughts about mutual helpfulness, human sympathy, the common bond of brotherhood, and the mysteriously deep foundations on which society rests; or rather, on which it now reels and totters.[1]

Underlying almost all of this literature there seems to be a deep and fervent humanitarian concern and a vitality of expression which comes directly from the milieu of the city. The writers, even Lydia Maria Child, are inextricably involved with the life of the city, troubled by the new developments and the seemingly insoluble problems and strange complexities which were tending to darken the atmosphere there. It is to their credit that in an age of escapism and nature worship they remained with the city, and though critical of many of its ways, and though hampered by limited literary talents in many cases, often substituting and sentimentality and melodrama for art and intellect, they nevertheless managed to convey, sometimes in surprisingly poignant terms, a good idea of many of the conditions and concerns of the city of that day.

Many of the same social and moral themes that occupied the

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[1] Ibid., p. 14.

writers of the period appear again in the visual arts. There is a similar social-consciousness, a fascination with the life of the lower classes, the same tendency toward caricature of social types, and quite often the same characters or legendary types which had formed the subjects of the literature. The artists are now more closely allied with a literary tradition than formerly, assuming somewhat the role of illustrators dependent upon the body of iconographical knowledge which was being developed and disseminated by the writers.

This dependency has two important consequences for the present study: first, it stresses the importance of the subject, making the work of pictorial art somewhat literary in character; and second, it makes the works more difficult to judge objectively, the tendency to become absorbed with the subject having the potential effect of either obscuring or exaggerating the value of the piece as a work of art.

With the 1840's we are at last dealing with a locally inspired and native urban genre. For the first time in this study there are sufficient examples of this kind to permit some arrangement and comparison of works within this interesting class. Only a few of the many topographical views of the period are reproduced here. This should not be interpreted as an indication of the availability or quality of such examples; on the contrary, street views continued to grow in popularity and many of those arbitrarily omitted from the study of this period equal or surpass in quality many already discussed here. But the real developmental stage for street views ended with the thirties; most of what comes later is,

from the artistic standpoint, merely repetitive. The artists of the thirties had developed the ability to depict street scenes and architecture and had included enough genre to make their portrayals true to life. But the art of the city which most truly distinguishes the forties from the earlier periods focuses with new clarity on people.

The foundation for any tendency towards genre depiction is a complex structure of subjective factors. Genre, whether urban or rural, depends as much on legend and tradition as on historical fact. The genre of William Mount, for instance, depends on the legends of eastern farm life; that of Bingham depends on the legends of frontier or Mississippi life; that of Woodville and Browere on the life of the rural villages. The characters we find in their pictures are not real people, they are types; caricatures and fabrications of a popular concept; legends created by a romantic public over a period of years nearly coexistent with the history of the nation itself.[1]

As discussed above, the city by 1840 was beginning to create its own distinctive legends and legendary characters. That this development happened to coincide with a critical period in the history of the city tended to place special connotations on urban genre. The city represented civilization in moral decay. Unlike the countryside and the frontier where all was free and in its natural state, hence close to God, the city was a thing built

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[1]This familiarity with legendary types was essential to the appreciation of such works of genre in the nineteenth century. Only thus could their anecdotal content be "read," and without this peculiarly literary mental operation the works would have had but little interest to contemporary viewers.

by man, unnatural, where people chose to crowd together and forfeit their human freedom and dignity. Whereas the poverty of rural genre could be "aestheticized" and viewed as picturesque or charming, poverty in the city, particularly for the mind antagonistic or uncommitted to city life, held only negative connotations. Hence, the impoverished and homeless little newsboy could be viewed as picturesque or charming only by the most confirmed urban romantic. For someone like Lydia Maria Child, who represented somewhat rural or transcendentalist attitudes transplanted in the city, the newsboy was both real and symbolic, a pathetic, deprived child whose very existence stood as a symbol of the moral decay and perverseness of the city.[1] In order for one to see him as the object of delight which he was capable of being, it was first of all necessary to sublimate this moral stigma. This was most often accomplished by exaggerating his heroic qualities, his "rugged individualism," his cheerfulness in the midst of hardships, his importance in the dissemination of the news, his unselfish generosity with his meager wealth, and so on. Foster, a bona fide urban spirit despite his occasional pessimism, approached the subject of the newsboy in this way; Lydia Maria Child could not. Sentimentality and idealism played a heavy role in these characterizations, to be sure; but this is part of the construction of the urban legend, and as such should not be ignored now simply because it grates on our current sense of taste. For when a writer would say of a character such as the lowly newsboy,

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[1]See Child, op. cit., p. 95.

> the nineteenth century, thirsting for information and excitement, finds its Ganymede in the news-boy. He is its walking idea, its symbol, its personification. Humanity, in its new shape, is yet young and full of undefined energies, and so is he. The first generation of his race not having outgrown their business, the important part which youth thus trained is destined to play in human affairs, is yet too imperfectly developed even for the meditations of the most speculative philosopher . . . but as nature does nothing in vain, it is but fair to infer that the news-boy is destined, in one way or another, to fix the period which gave him birth, in the niche of history. Too many powerful elements combine in him not to be productive of grand results.[1]

it can be seen that the preoccupation with types like the newsboy has something more profound than sentimentality behind it. To portray such a boy pictorially would be to give form to an idea, to compose a veritable allegory wherein each physical attribute would have subjective significance.

Artists working under the influence of such ideas were restricted by the nature of their art to little more than a portrayal of the physical attributes of the character. Significantly, they never attempt to de-humanize the newsboy in order to arrive at the allegorical idea; this is done by the writers. All the artist had to do was represent the newsboy, or any of the familiar urban characters for that matter, in some recognizable form, and whether the artist wished it so or not, the representation was bound to become the initial impulse in a long string of literary and sentimental associations.

Strangely enough, even in the forties the art of urban genre never attained major proportions as an artistic movement, but rather, remained generally on a small scale, issuing most often as prints and drawings and only seldom taking the form of

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[1]From Neal, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

a finished painting of the kind and quality produced by the rural genre painters.

Fairly typical in scope and quality are the illustrations for the Joseph Neal articles from which the above quotation was taken. Drawn by F. O. C. Darley, these were among the first published illustrations in his long career as an illustrator. His "Newsboy" (Fig. 68) is interesting to compare with Neal's idealistic verbal portrait, for it shows the relative limitations of the two arts. It is difficult to see either charm or heroism in Darley's boy, nor does the drawing appear to have been studied from any particular model. Rather, it is a put-together of remembered fragments, specific in detail but unconvincing in the ensemble. His clothes are a bit too tattered and irregular even for the picturesque, and the ill-defined masses and awkward stance suggest more clumsiness than character. The facial expression of the boy is too sickly and pathetic, and the head too stooped and small to express any of the heroism or inner fortitude extolled by Neal. Darley was so complete in delineating the pitiful aspects of the legend that he left himself no room to express the other side of the newsboy's character, a treatment more fitting in Lydia Maria Child than in Joseph C. Neal. Yet, if the work is conceived as an adjunct to, and not an embodiment of Neal's ideas it suffers less from its faults and fulfills at least part of its role as an illustration.

The difference between an illustration and a self-sustaining work of art can be seen in passing from Darley's "Newsboy" to William Page's "The Young Merchants" (Fig. 69), painted in 1842.

This painting, which from the purely artistic standpoint is one of the most ambitious and impressive examples of urban genre, really needs no literary narrative to complete its meaning; this is contained within the work itself, in its formal and painterly qualities, and in the vivid characterization of the sitters. By simply relying on his perceptions Page has captured a good deal of the individuality of appearance of the two young street urchins, while the boldly sculptural forms and their unusual arrangement in depth convey a sense of the solidity of character and almost adult independence of these children. In contrast to the ugliness of Darley's "Newsboy," with its oppressive message of poverty, not only do Page's figures seem relatively affluent, but also a positive delight to the eye because of his sensitivity in defining and arranging their picturesque qualities, the different materials and textures, and the delicate play of light and shade and color. Even the strongly individual quality of the portraiture, so true to nature and detached from any necessity to generalize or flatter, is part of this purely visual delight which Page has discovered in a very commonplace subject.

In this painting Page is both a part of his milieu and in advance of it. He is certainly aware of and sympathetic towards the current urban social themes; this is demonstrated by his choice of this particular subject and the attitudes which he seems to be expressing in respect to it. Yet he is in advance, pointing the way, as it were, by the painterly means and artistic judgment by which he interprets the subject. Unfortunately, neither Page nor anyone else followed this lead. Furthermore, as Joshua Taylor

has shown in his study of Page,[1] the subsequent purchase and engraving of the work for The Gift (1844), along with the sentimental but rather typical "libretto" by Seba Smith, perverted the real significance of the painting.[2] Page was prostituted by the same public taste which had probably called his attention to the subject in the first place.

Page himself was not without blame in this matter, however. His choice of a subject which was "close to the hearts of the people," and the clear identification of it with a specific locale in the "wickedest of cities," combined with the provocative title, "The Young Merchants," and its exhibition in the most plebeian of art galleries, the Apollo Association, constituted an open invitation for misinterpretation of the painting by the public. Although, as stated by Mr. Taylor, the subject and the painting in themselves do not make a histrionic appeal to our sentiments, Page's representation, whether he was aware of it or not, does contain sufficient clues to establish a simple narrative which the sentimental mind could in turn expand into a full-length novel. For example, the fact that the girl in the painting has one of the boy's newspapers and the boy has one of her boxes of strawberries suggests that they have negotiated a trade. Add to this simple action the fact that most of these street urchins

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[1] Joshua Taylor, William Page (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 39-40.

[2] It is interesting to note that Elizabeth Smith, the wife of Seba Smith, later wrote a very trite and sentimental novel entitled The Newsboy (New York: J. C. Derby, 1854), which brings together in a work of fiction hundreds of anecdotes and incidents relating to the newsboy at mid-century.

could not read and you begin to explain certain other facts such as the way the girl holds the newspaper and the unmoved expression on her face, and the way the newsboy, who traditionally "drove a hard bargain," stares out at the spectator while he slowly dumps the strawberries into his hat. These are things that a person very likely would be conscious of as he viewed the painting on the wall of the Apollo Association. While such a simple narrative motive such as this is not at all sentimental in itself, there is enough of the anecdotal in it to aid the sentimental mind in recalling any number of related anecdotes and banal associations from literature and life. Such a disillusioning experience with the American art public would be enough to encourage a man like Page toward transcendentalism and expatriation, and was probably one of the reasons that this fine painting is the only one of its kind in his oeuvre.

Other artists attempted much less in a single work, but they make up for it in some measure by greater quantity then Page affords. Such an artist is Nicolino Calyo, the Neapolitan artist who was mentioned in the thirties in connection with his unusual views of the New York fire of 1835. By 1840 Calyo had dropped most of his Neapolitan mannerisms, the direct lighting, the silhouetting, and the false "stage props," and had begun painting a series of quite "American" genre sketches in watercolor. In these sketches he has isolated the various sidewalk merchants of New York, showing each undramatically engaged in his trade of selling meat or oysters; or showing the girls hawking their "hot corn," a summer luxury still proffered in New York today. Two of

these sketches are reproduced here, "Charles Brown's Butcher Stall" (Fig. 70), and "Patrick Bryant's Oyster Stall" (Fig. 71). The naive, almost primitive simplicity of these sketches is a long way from the dramatic cliches of his earlier work. The unidealized figures, the homely subjects, the concentration on unsophisticated social types, bring him directly in line with the local developments of the forties. This is particularly evident in the "Patrick Bryant's Oyster Stall," in which the unpretentious figures differ very little from the early work of Darley just seen, or the figures in some of Bennett's best street views of the early thirties. It is curious to note that these essentially indigenous approaches, now only remotely influenced by English mannerisms of drawing, could influence such a thoroughgoing change of attitude and style in this artist who stood out in the last chapter for his qualities so obviously foreign to local developments.

Something of the local quality of this new style of Calyo can be seen by comparing these works with those of another Italian, Cesare Capelli, who probably arrived in this country about 1845. Actually, almost nothing is known about this artist beyond the two sketches reproduced here which are signed with this name and the note, "Reminisenze de Nuova York, 1845." It is possible that he is the "Cappelli" whom the New York Herald in 1847 mentions as just having painted some fresco decorations in the large hall of Castle Garden.[1] The notes on the drawings suggest that he was a temporary visitor in New York.

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[1]New York Herald-Tribune, April 24, 1847, referred to in Groce and Wallace, op. cit., under "_____, Cappelli," p. 108.

The drawings are untitled, but the first (Fig. 72) depicts a scene in front of a corner house, while the other (Fig. 73) shows a crowd in front of a house bearing a sign, "Mr. J. Easy's School for young Ladies and Gentlemen," and another sign with the words, "Wrong Place," the whole probably intended as a critical commentary on this local school system. As compared to the sketches of Calyo, Capelli shows a great deal more sophistication, a greater naturalness and ability to grasp a whole scene. In comparison with the drab and rather clumsy realities of Calyo, his figures seem quite consciously artful and graceful. One cannot look at them without being aware of, and somewhat delighted by, the very decorative quality of the artist's manner. For instance, in Figure 72 this decorative sense expresses itself particularly in the spritely grace of the two boys running arm in arm, and in the contours and rendering of folds in the group of the man and woman at the right. The ability of the artist to translate what he sees, even such unattractive matters as these, into a decorative scheme or schemes, is what separates him from the style that Calyo now represents.

It is difficult to isolate this "local style" and narrow it down to a definition. Part of its essence seems to lie in a sort of amateur directness; not the directness of the limner who always tended to translate his visual sensations into a simple pattern arrangement, but a naiveté in the conception of the subject, and an unadorned and often unpleasant realization of this subject in pictorial terms. As in the writings of Judson, the artists were attempting in their frequently crude way to "mirror"

reality, a reality which for the most part was not at all delightful, which seemed to demand forcefulness, plasticity, a three-dimensional truth, or at least a suggestion of it.

This is the attempted solution of a talented amateur, Eugene Didier, an exhibitor at the National Academy of Design in 1843-1845 and listed as a French commission merchant in the New York directory from 1846-60.[1] His "Street Auction in Chatham Square" (Fig. 74), about 1843, illustrates most of the foregoing stylistic hypotheses. One of the most overtly anecdotal of urban genre paintings, only the touches of humor in the subject are calculated to delight; the summarily drawn but heavily plastic figures emerging from the murky background are anything but pleasant to visual or tactile senses. Having become fascinated with the street life in this "off Broadway" district noted for its cheap dry-goods stores and high pressure salesmanship,[2] he wished to show it just as it was. This he has done in the most direct terms available to him, placing the important figures and action well forward in the composition, emphasizing their gestures and facial expressions, and organizing their movements around the simple device of the rather crazily tilting table, while the middleground and background space is treated indistinctly, further emphasizing the relative plasticity of the foreground treatment. The people and what they are doing, however, is the chief concern of the artist, and it is this intense concentration on genre which makes the work so typical of the period; a long way from the con-

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[1] From Groce and Wallace, op. cit., p. 179.

[2] See Foster, op. cit., pp. 13-16.

ception of the city in J. W. Hill's "Broadway" or Hugh Reinagle's "Wall Street."

Didier's painting, while it coincides with some of the literary works in its content, does not seem to imitate or draw from the literature directly. Most of its characters, though obviously types and not individuals, seem to be taken from the artist's own general fund of experience; they are types of his own making, not references to literary personalities or other legendary characters.

Other works, such as the Darley already discussed, are interesting because they have an obvious dependence on or topical relationship to urban fable. Particularly interesting among these, and indicative of the influence and popularity of its source is the lithograph, 1848, by James Brown illustrating a scene from Baker's play, New York as it Is (Fig. 75). The composition, entitled "Dancing for Eels," shows an impromptu bit of street entertainment being enjoyed by a motley group of riverfront characters before a backdrop of the East River. The imposing figure seated on the barrel will be recognized immediately as the famous "Mose," the Fire Laddy and Bowery B'hoy, identifiable from his fireman's uniform and "outré" top hat with the wide, crepe band, and his facial expression mixed of remarkable arrogance and monumental stupidity. The two figures at the left are probably Mose's friends, "Harry Gordon," a legendary playboy who could pass unimpeded in a fashionable drawing room or a Bowery oyster cellar, and "George Parsells," a "verdant" country boy just arrived in the city and soon to be initiated by Harry into the ways of the

big city. Counterparts of Page's young merchants are here too, flanking the dancing minstrel, the newsboy at the left and the "segar" girl at the right. The impish ragamuffin at the right, about to steal a string of fish from the unsuspecting Mose, is "Loafer Joe," the waterfront thief played by John Hinans.

Artistically, the work is quite uneven but rather typical of the sort of work usually to be found in these souvenir prints. The Mose is undoubtedly a faithful portrait of Francis S. Chanfrau, as is the thief a portrait of John Hinans.[1] Most of the rest of the characters, including the two dandies who have their backs turned, seem to be interpolated from memory, merely filling in the less definable but necessary members of the cast. There is a very definitely theatrical feeling to the arrangement of the figures; it is easier to imagine the scene taking place in this particular form on the stage than on the street. The portrait of Mose is rather good for the period, both in the very perceptive characterization and the rather sculptural solidity and weight of the forms, and the impishness of the tattered thief is rather well expressed and probably thoroughly delightful to the contemporary viewers with whom Hinans had made such a hit in the part.[2]

Foster's New York in Slices was lavishly illustrated with genre scenes and caricatures of urban characters. No credits are

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[1] See Odell, op. cit., V, 370, for a separate portrait of Hinans by Brown, and other illustrations from Baker's plays.

[2] The same theme appears later in a Currier and Ives print, "Cuffee Dancing for Eels" (1857), in which the portrayal of Mose is almost identical to Brown's, but a different composition in other respects (see reproduction in William Murrell, A History of American Graphic Humor [2 vols.; New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 1933], I, 187).

given to the illustrators, and only a few of the plates are signed but a number of illustrators seem to have contributed to the work. The essay on "The B'hoys" is illustrated with an engraving showing one of these characters taking the legendary drive on the avenue (Fig. 76), the rather grotesquely caricatured b'hoy seated heavily on a very light sulky, pulled by a spirited horse in a sort of "flying trot." The subject is by far the most interesting part of the work, the drawing itself and the rather crude engraving having little to recommend them, artistically. Another of the illustrations which is quite similar in style to this one is the caricature of the cynical "Peter Funk" (Fig. 77), illustrating Foster's essay on the "Mock Auctions." This work is signed "Strong," probably Thomas H. Strong, a New York illustrator and cartoonist of the period. The initials "OK" scrawled on the engraving also appear on the preceding illustration of the B'hoy, suggesting that both works probably originated with Strong, the same style without these signatures also appearing on several other illustrations in the book. The "Peter Funk" caricature is a rather acid treatment of this undesirable city slicker who planted himself at the street auctions to excite higher bidding, a confidence game designed to claim greenhorns like the George Parsells in Baker's Glance at New York, interesting, again, more for its subject and its reflection of a growing tradition than for any other reason, its style still showing the influence of the English caricaturists such as the Cruikshanks, and the journalistic illustrations then beginning

to appear in the Illustrated London News and similar attempts in this country.[1]

An example of work which depends on the literary tradition to a certain extent but does not specifically illustrate any literary work is the Serrell and Perkins lithograph of the later forties, "New York by Gaslight: Hooking a Victim" (Fig. 78). The work seems to have been inspired by Judson's literary depictions of the nocturnal street-walkers of Broadway. Nearly all of the interest in the work is literary, in its presentation of a message which, with the help of the title, becomes almost as readable as William Mount's "Coming to the Point," a horse-trading anecdote of 1854. The work certainly has but little artistic appeal or originality; the figures look as if cut out of one of Sartain's fashion pages, and the setting for them is austerely simple. Only the idea of depicting a night time activity under the hard glare of the gaslights is unusual as a motif, but even this is rather poor in execution. It is primarily in the unusual frankness of the subject, rather a bold commentary for the mid-nineteenth century, that the work saves itself from an otherwise deserved oblivion. It serves to show further, by the intense concentration on people and the subordination of topographical setting, the directions which genre depiction of the forties was taking with respect to the earlier periods.

The interest in local historical events such as fires and other catastrophes mentioned earlier as a manifestation of the

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[1]Probably most apparent in the comic almanacs, such as Old American Comic Almanac, Yankee Doodle, or T. W. Strong's monthly Yankee Notions.

growing news hunger of the thirties also found expression in the genre of the forties. In the more volatile social climate of this decade, local riots became a somewhat familiar occurrence, providing new and exciting fodder for the makers of popular prints. The C. M. Jenkes watercolor drawing and Currier lithograph of the "Great Riot at the Astor Place Opera House, New York," 1849, which grew out of the infantile Forrest-Macready disputes and ended in the deaths of twenty-two people, have been widely published and are rather well known.[1] Perhaps less well known is H. R. Robinson's lithograph depicting a riot of 1840 in New York, "The Soap-Locks' Disgraceful Attack Upon the Germans" (Fig. 79). The history of this riot is related by Marshall Davidson:

> The Germans apparently had come to the scene to serenade the celebrated dancer Fanny Ellsler whom they claimed as their own. Hoodlums from the Five Points broke up the ceremony, and with it the heads and instruments of the musicians, in a protest against such "un-American demonstrations."[2]

In the representation of the large crowd the artist has followed what were by this time conventional formulae for the printmakers, suggesting the great masses of heads with little shorthand bumps and dots and caring little for the rest of the bodies and the space in which they supposedly would stand, and placing a few more carefully drawn and full-rounded figures in the immediate foreground to enact the principal role. The relationship of this foreground to the background is in this case, however, a particularly curious one. The composition of the fore-

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[1] For an account of the riot and a reproduction of the Currier print, see Odell, op. cit., V, 481-84.

[2] Marshall Davidson, Life in America (2 vols.; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1951), II, 151.

ground, with its figures compacted within a very shallow space extending forward to the very baseline of the picture, is suggestive of an antique sarcophagus relief or one of the early Greek gigantomachy friezes. The figures have an almost primitive sculptural quality, and the seemingly conscious repetition of diagonals and right angles displaced from the normal vertical and horizontal is a very old formal solution for the suggestion of strife and conflict. The artist, who under the circumstances of the 1840's probably learned to draw and compose from antique casts, seems actually to have conceived of the action as just such a relief. Within the composition there is a very effective abstract suggestion of pent-up fury being or about to be released; a machine-like, heavy, and powerful rhythmic pattern which, in the drawing of the individual figures here and there retains echoes of the generalized and patent contours of antique casts, now curiously adapted to modern costumes and "weapons," and presented with more than a touch of ribald humor. The artist has not "mirrored" reality; rather, he has taken a subjective idea, "conflict," and has consciously or unconsciously through his training, expressed this idea through appropriate and familiar formal relationships, without, however, losing sight of the very real and contemporary subject, the riot between the "Soaplocks" and the Germans.

Such violent subjects as this were only one side of the historical genre of the forties, however. Depictions of a kind of everyday history also became quite common during the decade, and artists very soon developed considerable skill and technical facility in the rendering of such scenes. Illustrative of this de-

velopment of technical means, and fairly typical in style and approach are Thomas Matteson's "Distribution of the Art-Union Prizes, 1847" (Fig. 80) and Samuel Wallin's woodcut, "American Art-Union" (Fig. 81), the latter taken from Foster's essays. Both of these examples show a great deal of advance in the ability of the artist to draw figures and complex groups and to arrange them convincingly in any kind of an architectural environment: abilities which were lacking in the earlier periods in the few instances where such genre scenes were even attempted.

A few artists, however, still continued to work in the charming manner of the earlier days. For instance, B. J. Harrison's "Interior of Niblo's Garden during the Annual Fair of the American Institute" (Fig. 82), a watercolor from around 1845,[1] retains many of the same qualities that made Searle's "Interior of Park Theatre" so attractive. The fairs of the American Institute featured exhibits of all manner of things, from paintings and rugs to flowers and household utensils. Though all of this is difficult to see in the reproduction, Harrison has attempted to show all of these intricate displays. His method follows the old limner tradition of flat forms and decorative patterns, particularly reminiscent of Searle in the rich patterning of the architecture of the interior. This archaic tendency is carried even further by the use of gold metallic paint here and there in the picture, as on some of the picture frames and the organ pipes of the far wall, a treatment which adds to the richness and sparkle of the pattern, and emphasizes its essential flatness. The people who form the

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[1]According to Groce and Wallace, Harrison exhibited paintings in the American Institute Fairs of 1844 and 1845, but so far as I know, this is his only surviving work.

genre content of the painting receive this same flattened treatment, an unusually antiquated approach for this period in urban genre, when even most of the amateurs conceived of the figure in terms of volume.

With the awakening of interest in the people of the city and their activities which comes in the forties, themes which had long been an essential but unnoticed part of urban life now began to be depicted. The fairs and art exhibits now depicted by artists like Harrison and Wallin are examples of such formerly neglected areas of urban genre interest. Another example of this awakening is illustrated by a painting from around 1840, "Moving Day in the City" (Fig. 83), done by an unidentified artist.

Moving day, or May-Day as it was called, since it always came on the first day of May, was a theme that had long intrigued visitors to New York. A city ordinance dating from the days of the Dutch required anyone who desired to move after the expiration of their lease to do so by May the first so that the city directory would always give accurate and true listings. Most city dwellers would wait until the deadline to move, with the result that May-Day would find three-fourths of the city's residents in the streets along with all their household goods, as though the city had been invaded by the enemy or the plague. As early as 1787 the theme of moving day had been put to drama in Royall Tyler's May-Day in Town; or New York in an Uproar.[1] William Cox in the thirties said of the "House Hunters,"

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[1]See Arthur Quinn, A History of the American Drama (New York: Harper and Bros., 1923), p. 71. The work, if ever published at all, is no longer extant.

> They never regard a house as a kind of inanimate friend--one who has protected them from cold, and rain, and tempest, and by whose hearth they have spent many happy hours, and enjoyed many comforts; but merely as a temporary covering, under whose roof it would be a sin, shame, and a folly to live two years in succession.

Accordingly, on the first of May,

> those that live up town come down, and those that live down town go up; and amidst disjointed furniture, broken crockery, dust, dirt, and vermin, they hail the genial approach of May.[1]

The artists before 1840, less interested in the possibilities of urban genre, seldom if ever attempted anything on this theme, even though it appealed to the imagination of Cox. This anonymous work, therefore, is among the earliest depictions of the theme. It is a marvelous composition, similar in the general layout and treatment of figures to the view of "Five Points" seen in the last chapter, also by an anonymous painter.[2] Almost every inch of the painting is filled with the frantic human activity of May-Day, from the comic and well realized mishaps of the foreground, to the workmen climbing walls and removing and replacing signboards in the background--apparently nothing was stationary on moving day. Some of the individual figures are extraordinarily expressive of the almost comic frenzy of these people caught with their worldly possessions in the street, unprotected, as heavy storm clouds approach and darken the scene: the woman at the lower left being catapulted from her cart along with her goods, with arms outstretched and feet bare; or, the woman at the right, grop-

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[1] Cox, op. cit., I, 129-30.

[2] The only reproduction or reference to this work which I have seen is in Davidson, op. cit., II, 365. The artist, whoever he is, may have portrayed himself at the lower left with palette in hand.

ing on hands and knees for something lost, behind whom a man is locked in a struggle with the wheel of his wagon, the braces of which point pathetically skyward above the waiting mule because of the unfortunate shifting of the load of miscellanies. There is in all of this a vague suggestion of broader meanings, undefined and intangible, of a dark, unseen force peculiar to the city that makes men run about in senseless confusion, somehow epitomized by the scene on this frantic "May-Day." This painting is probably one of the most complete realizations of the general spirit of the decade; it is also one of the more successful works of art discovered in this study, not only because of its unusual treatment of an unusual subject, but because of these other more implicit connotations, somehow suggested but not defined.

While this and the other foregoing works of urban genre show the development of a consciousness of people and their interaction within the environment of the city, the art of topographical views was continuing with few important variations along the lines established in the thirties. Since this approach to the city held the most promise of financial reward for artists it tended to remain their chief preoccupation. Such views are never without their own individual interest for the student of American city life, and the period of the forties is probably almost as varied in this respect as the thirties. Sometimes the genre interest of the period almost hides the architectural motive, as in Robert Kerr's "Customs House," New York (Fig. 84), where the Doric portico of this grand edifice standing on the site of the old Federal Hall can be reached only by threading one's way through

the ruts and obstructions of old Broad Street. At other times there is a return to the picturesque conviviality of Hill's "Broadway" as in the German August Köllner's gaily colored view of the same street (Fig. 85), a sketch for one of the many fine, hand-colored lithographs published in Paris by Goupil's in the forties. J. W. Hill was at the peak of his activity during the decade, continuing with his "bird's eye" panoramas, among the finest of which is his "New York from the Steeple of St. Paul's Church" (Fig. 86), a very large, hand-colored aquatint etched by Henry Papprill and published by Henry Megarey in 1849. The amateur artists were still active, producing topographical views of remarkable freshness and charm such as the very large (57x73) oil painting of Castle Garden in 1847 in the New-York Historical Society (Fig. 87) and the "Number 7-1/2 Bowery" (Fig. 88), from about 1845, both of which are by anonymous painters.

Except for these amateur works which always seem to have an individual freshness and originality, there is little in the topographical views of the forties or even the fifties which illustrate any new basic problems or solutions. With the increased publication of guidebooks, such as Appleton's and Beldens, such views become very cheap and commonplace, and exceedingly repetitive in what they depict and their manner of doing it.

From the cities of the forties one passes easily and with few major changes to the cities of the fifties. The social problems created by the depression and the sudden upsurge in immigration during the decade of the forties had lost a good deal of their novelty by 1850. Though the production of urban literature

continued to accelerate, its substance had lost much of the earnestness and vitality of Judson and Child, and the thoughtfully philosophical turn of Foster. People had come a long way toward adjusting to the new kind of city, though many of the former evils continued to grow as a threat to the communities.

After 1850 the major change in views of the American cities is one of refinement. The often crude but forceful art of the forties is now polished and made more agreeable. For Darley's ragged and pathetic "Newsboy" we now have one like John Falconer's, about 1860 (Fig. 89): suave, self-composed, and relatively well-to-do. Instead of the dark atmosphere and heavy figures of Didier's "Street Auction" we now have Thomas Benecke's vivid and accomplished lithograph, "Sleighing in New York" (Fig. 90) with its superbly drawn figures and rather "baroque" composition. Technical advances and the ability of the artists to depict what they observe continue to be made in the fifties, encouraged by the emergence of the "illustrated weeklies," such as Harper's and Leslie's, and their demands on the arts of drawing and engraving and their emphasis on the contemporary scene. Fairly typical of the new dexterity of these illustrators is Carl Döpler's vignette from Putnam's, "Liberty Street in Process of Rebuilding, 1852" (Fig. 91). The economic and social crisis which had colored much of the art of the forties struck again in 1857, but now in place of Clay's very eloquent "The Times, 1837" we have the documentary portrait of a moment in James Cafferty and Charles Rosenberg's "Wall Street, half past two o'clock, Oct. 13, 1857" (Fig. 92). The period produced seemingly endless topographical views, most of them more

interesting historically than artistically by this time, such as Fanny Palmer's "New York Crystal Palace" (Fig. 93) for Currier and Ives, or the inevitable "bird's eye view," represented here by B. F. Smith's "New York 1855 From the Latting Observatory" (Fig. 94). From the artistic standpoint, however, the age of invention and experimentation in such views of the city was long since past.

By the 1850's, with the success and widespread influence of the illustrated weeklies, the cheapened and mass-produced lithographic views, and a certain diffusion of interest in the cities of the east as national interests spread rapidly westward, views of the American cities are entering a new phase. While cities like New York continued to become ever more complex and diversified, physically, socially and culturally, the views tended more and more toward a facile anonymity: brilliant but monotonous. It was during the earlier years, when large cities were relatively uncommon and the object of a certain fascination and curiosity, and when the artists were not quite so sure of themselves, that depictions of urban topography and genre had their most revealing and vital developmental phase.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When views of American cities first began to appear rather frequently, during the eighteenth century, the towns which they depicted were quite small, provincial, and in most respects quite undistinguished. Interest in these colonial towns came almost entirely from Europe and not from the towns themselves. Artistic interest in them remained quite general, the majority of the views revealing the subject only from a distance, testifying to its existence but telling little more.

Toward the end of the century, after the founding of the nation, a more particular artistic interest in the cities developed, partly as a result of the physical development of the subject itself. This particularizing of interest was reflected in the street views which began to appear in the last decade of the century, focusing on the more prominent architectural and historical monuments of the city. Most of these were done by artists very recently arrived in the country, mainly of English origins, and as such their styles differed little from the usual English topographical views of the period.

These conditions prevailed generally through the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. While native interest in the cities, either artistic or otherwise, was largely lacking, European inquisitiveness continued, evidencing itself in the accounts of the travelling commentators and in the paintings and

drawings of visiting artists from a number of countries. With the development of the cities, their streets, architecture, and expanding populations, the subject gained in potential, but the artistic impulse and much of the artistic mode still derived strongly from European interests and traditions.

The thirties provided the first break in this dependence on Europe. In a social climate of narrowing, nationalistic and localistic self-identity, and aroused by a sense of the growth of the cities in population and physical attractiveness, a timid but native interest, somewhat superficial in scope, began to be evinced. This fascination with the diversity and richer coloration of urban topography and street life provided the motives and encouragement for the first sustained and fruitful development of street views. The increased sense of local self-importance of the individual cities and an attendant preoccupation with contemporary life and events gave rise to a limited kind of genre. Though the artistic means still retained a European, particularly English, stamp, the instigation and encouragement now seemed to come more from the cities themselves than formerly, which tended to obscure somewhat the "foreign" flavor of the art, the artists becoming "acclimated" somewhat through contact with a culture which now vehemently renounced foreign ties.

In the forties the depiction of urban topography continued with little change, utilizing the artistic formulae of the thirties, and directing itself toward many of the same local themes. However, in the vastly more rapid growth and attendant social upheavals of the forties, attitudes in regard to the city

turned from the gloss of the surface to a concern over the fundamental unit of the city, man; and within this humanitarian context mixed of sentimentality, sensationalism, religiosity, and realism, and its legendary characters, exploits, and locales, an urban genre of somewhat greater dimensions developed.

In the topographical views, which throughout the period remained the chief artistic manifestation of interest in the city, the artistic approaches varied widely, ranging from extremes of lyricism and rigid formality in the earliest distant views, to extremes of topographical descriptiveness in some of the early street views. The descriptive motive was soon expanded to include larger numbers of figures, arranged naturally as part of a typical view of the streets, and this attempt to render environment and figures convincingly as part of the same view remained throughout the period the chief artistic problem of most of the topographical artists. Occasionally, however, compositional motives took preeminence, usually in the case of more mature artists who were able to take the other problems for granted. These were achieved by a search on the part of the artist for unusual and abstractly engaging motifs, or through an individualistic ingenuity in the arrangement of compositional elements, or a combination of these two. As such, these examples showed the most purely artistic influence of the cities, being the most original, imaginative, and artistically motivated interpretations of the appearance of the cities. On the other hand, in addition to a general repetitiveness of much of the art, a retrogressive tendency arose in the form of bird's eye, panoramic views, which, like the still-popular distant view, tended to <u>include</u> rather than <u>reveal</u>.

The human figure was put to a number of uses, first used meagerly as embellishment, then multiplied as part of the candid view, sometimes placed in the composition as a pictured viewer of the scene, an empathetical function, and toward the end of the period grouped into more intimate genre compositions. When the long-awaited interest in genre arrived, such compositions were more often than not illustratory of the literary-inspired situations and characters, usually more interesting as illustrations of a familiar literary subject than as examples of self-sustaining art. Instances of more independent conceptions of urban genre painting were found but they were regrettably uncommon. A conception of urban genre which would parallel the rural genre of the period either in its anecdotal conception or as a major movement of nineteenth century American painting never developed during the period covered by this study.

Neither during this period did popular or artistic interest in the cities match that held by the American landscape. Curiously, urban art was always predominantly linked to the minor arts of the view artist: the quick sketch, the watercolor drawing, and above all, the print; much the same as it had been in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Dimension was always the missing element--pure physical size equal to that of the landscape painters. Such a lack of ambition suggests that the urban art simply lacked a basis of popular support. Even in the forties when the potential seemed to be so great, judging from the appearance and reception of the literature, the art of the cities retained, despite great quantity, its usual

meager, physical proportions. For some reason or other, the city was never quite identified with national ideals during this period to the extent that the rural genre was, and it lacked the deep-seated basis in American moral and religious ideology which enthusiastically supported the painting of landscape while reveling in the natural wonders of the American countryside. To the vast majority of Americans, the city, far from being an object of romantic fascination and delight, was little more than a necessary evil.

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Fig. 1--Anonymous, "A View of New York from the North West."

Fig. 2--Lt. Gen. Archibald Robertson, "New York from Brooklyn Heights, 6th Aug. 1778."

Fig. 5--Cornelius Tiebout, "A Perspective View of City Hall in New York taken from Wall Street."

Fig. 6--George Hatch and James Smillie, "View of Old City Hall, Wall Street."

Fig. 7--Archibald Robertson, "Federal Hall."

Fig. 8--John J. Holland, "A View of Broad Street, Wall Street, and the City Hall."

Fig. 9--Thomas Girtin, "La Rue St. Denis."

Fig. 10--C. Milbourne, "Government House, Bowling Green."

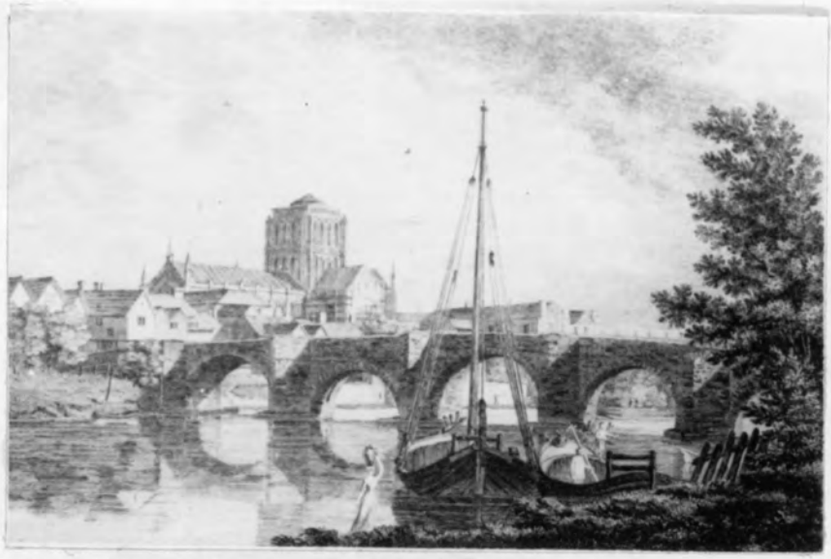

Fig. 11--Edward Dayes, "Hereford."

Fig. 12--F. Nicholson, "York, from the Manor."

Fig. 13--Reinagle, "Chelmsford."

Fig. 14--William Rollinson, "Government House and Bowling Green."

Fig. 15--C. Milbourne, "St. Paul's Chapel."

Fig. 16--Archibald Robertson, "St. Paul's Chapel."

Fig. 17--Francis Guy, "Tontine Coffee House."

Fig. 18--William Birch, "High Street with the First Presbyterian Church."

Fig. 19--William Birch, "High Street from the Country Market-Place, Philadelphia" (with the funeral procession of George Washington).

Fig. 20--William Birch, "High Street Market."

Fig. 21--William Birch, "Preparation for War to Defend Commerce."

Fig. 22--William Birch, "The Sun Reflecting on the Dew, A Garden Scene."

Fig. 23--Baroness Hyde de Neuville, "Bridewell, and Charity-School, Broadway, Opposite Chamber Street, February, 1808."

Fig. 24--Pavel P. Svin'in, "A Winter Scene in Philadelphia with the Bank of the United States in the Background."

Fig.25--Pavel P. Svin'in, "Night Life in Philadelphia-- An Oyster Barrow in Front of the Chestnut Street Theater."

Fig. 26--John Lewis Krimmel, "Centre Square, Philadelphia."

Fig. 27--John Lewis Krimmel, "Election Day at the State House, Philadelphia, 1815."

Fig. 28--Baron Axel Klinkowström, "Broadway and City Hall."

Fig. 29--Jenny (or Yenni), "Foot of Cortlandt Street."

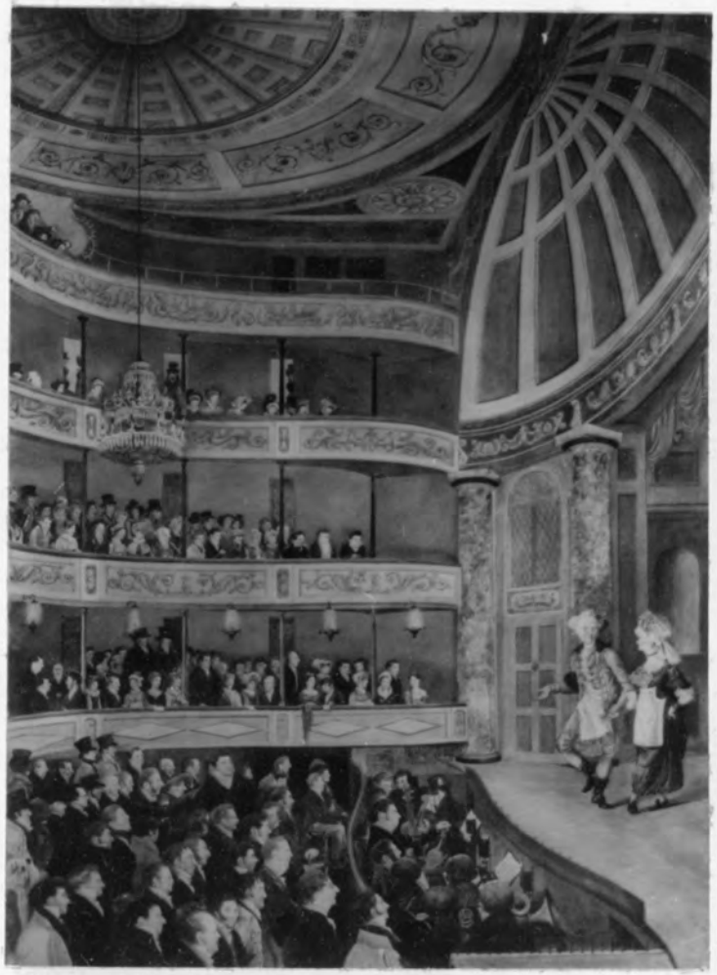

Fig. 30--John Searle, "Interior of Park Theatre."

Fig. 31--John Rubens Smith, "View of Fire at St. George's Church, Jan. 5th, 1814."

Fig. 32--Joshua Shaw and John Hill (?), "City of Boston."

Fig. 33--John Hill, "A View from my Work-Room Window in Hammond Street, 1825."

Fig. 34--Paul or Thomas Sandby, "View from the Back of Paul Sandby's Lodging at Charlton, Kent."

Fig. 35--J. W. Hill, "City Hall and Park Row."

Fig. 36--J. W. Hill, "Broadway and Trinity Church."

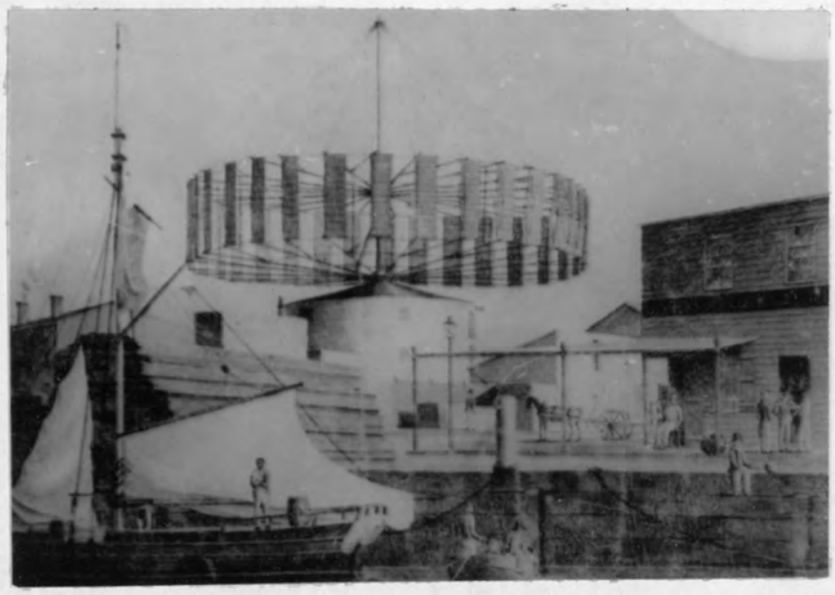

Fig. 37--J. W. Hill, "Rotary Windmill or Air Turbine."

Fig. 38--J. W. Hill, and W. J. Bennett, "New York from Brooklyn Heights."

Fig. 39--W. J. Bennett, "Broad Way from the Bowling Green."

Fig. 40--Thomas Malton, "Near the Bank."


Fig. 41--W. J. Bennett, "South Street from Maiden Lane."

Fig. 42--W. J. Bennett, "Fulton Street & Market."


Fig. 43--C. Burton, "Landing Place, Foot of Barclay Street."

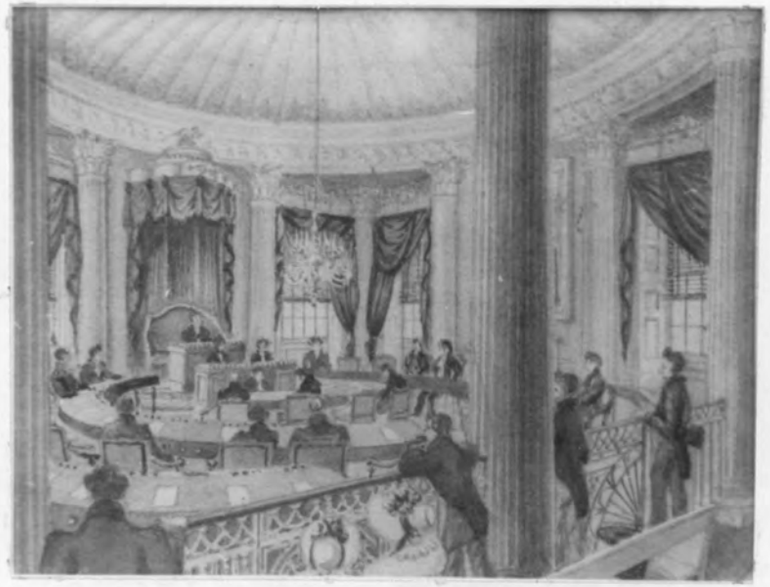

Fig. 44--C. Burton, "Council Chamber, City Hall."

Fig. 45--C. Burton, "City Hall."


Fig. 46--C. Burton, and R. Lowe, "Broadway and Fulton Street."

Fig. 47--C. Burton, and W. Hoagland, "View of Wall Street."


Fig. 48--Title page from Fay's Views in New York.

Fig. 49--Anonymous, "The Navy Yard," from Fay's Views in New York.

Fig. 50--Hugh Reinagle, "View of St. Paul's Church and the Broadway Stages."


Fig. 51--Hugh Reinagle, "View from Trinity Church looking down Wall Street."

Fig. 52--Thomas Hornor, "Broadway Looking North from Canal Street."

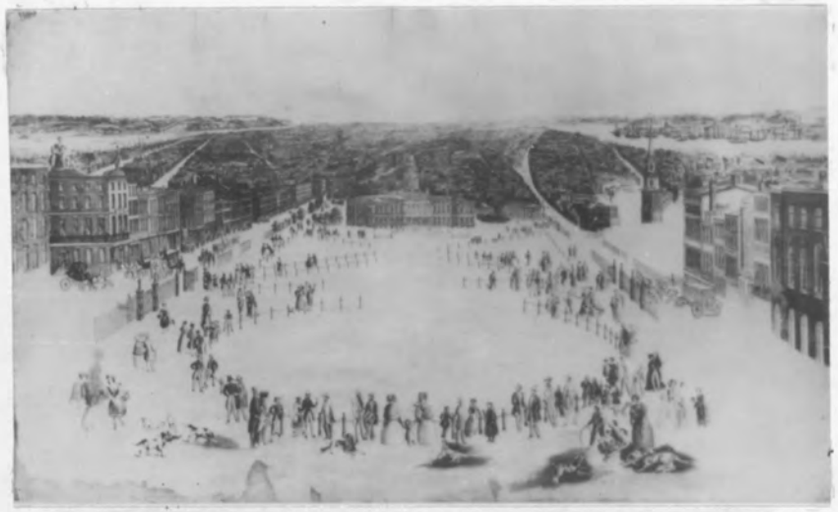

Fig. 53--Thomas Hornor, "Bird's Eye View of Lower New York."

Fig. 54--John Bachmann, "New York City Hall, Park, and Environs."

Fig. 55--James Pringle, "The Smith and Dimon Shipyard."

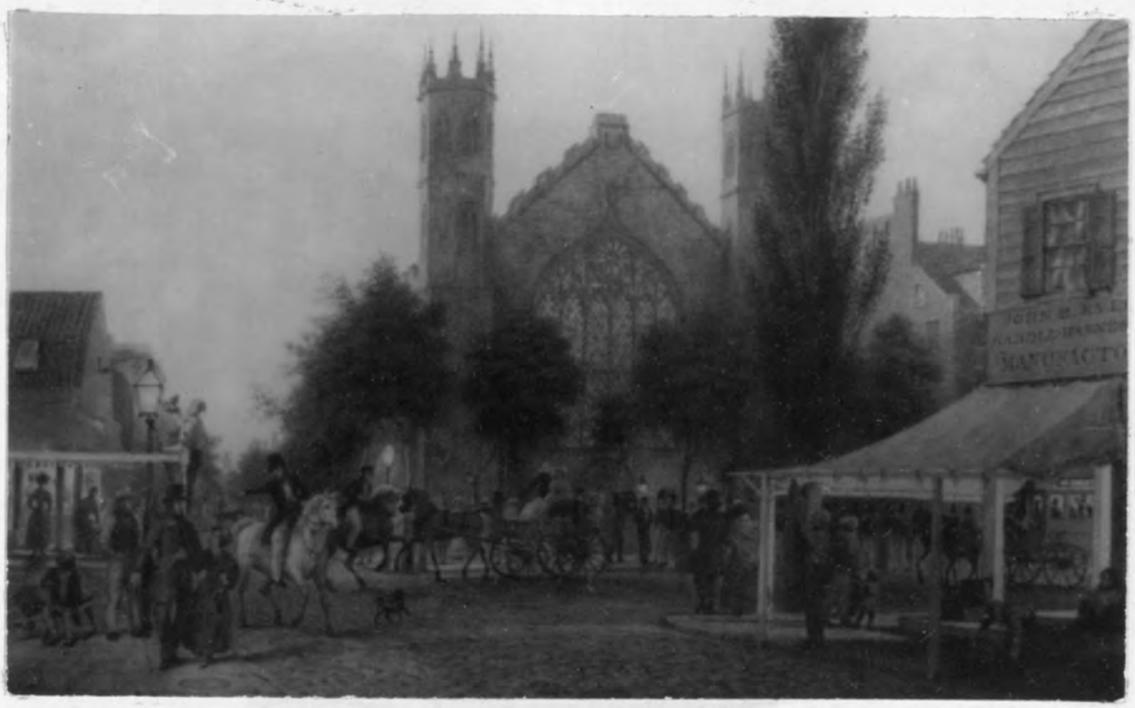

Fig. 56--George Harvey, "Nightfall, St. Thomas' Church, Broadway, New York."

Fig. 57--Thomas Millington, "New York Bay and Battery."

Fig. 58--J. H. Bufford, and N. Currier "Ruins of the Merchants' Exchange, New York."

Fig. 60--Nicolino Calyo, and W. J. Bennett, "View of the Ruins after the Great Fire in New York, Dec. 16th & 17th, 1835."

Fig. 59--Nicolino Calyo, "View of New York, Governor's Island, taken from Brooklyn Heights on the Evening of the Fire."

Fig. 61--E. W. Clay, "The Ruins of Phelp's and Peck's Store."

Fig. 63--I. R. and G. Cruikshank, plate from Pierce Egan's Life in London.

Fig. 62--E. W. Clay, "Skating Scene on the River Delaware at Philadelphia, Feb. 12th, 1831."

Fig. 64--E. W. Clay, "The Times, 1837."

Fig. 65--James Akin, "Philadelphia Taste Displayed; Or, Bonton below Stairs."

Fig. 66--Robert Dighton, "One of the Advantages of Gas over Oil."

Fig. 67--Anonymous, "Five Points, New York."

Fig. 68--F. O. C. Darley, "The Newsboy."

Fig. 69--William Page, "The Young Merchants."


Fig. 70--Nicolino Calyo, "Charles Brown's Butcher Stall."


Fig. 71--Nicolino Calyo, "Patrick Bryant's Oyster Stall."



Fig. 72--(Left) Cesare Capelli, "Street Corner Scene."

Fig. 73--(Right) Cesare Capelli, "Mr. J. Easy's School for Young Ladies and Gentlemen."

Fig. 74--Eugene Didier, "Street Auction in Chatham Square."


Fig. 75--James Brown, "Dancing for Eels," A Scene from Baker's New York as it Is.

Fig. 76--Thomas Strong (?), A B'hoy on the Avenue.


Fig. 77--Thomas Strong, Caricature of "Peter Funk."

Fig. 78--Serrell and Perkins (lithographers), "New York by Gaslight. Hooking a Victim."

Fig. 80--Thomas Matteson, "Distribution of the Art-Union Prizes, 1847."

Fig. 79--H. R. Robinson (lithographer), "The Soap-Locks' Disgraceful Attack upon the Germans."

Fig. 81--Samuel Wallin, "American Art-Union."

Fig. 82--B. J. Harrison, "Interior of Niblo's Garden during the Annual Fair of the American Institute."

Fig. 83--Anonymous, "Moving Day in the City."

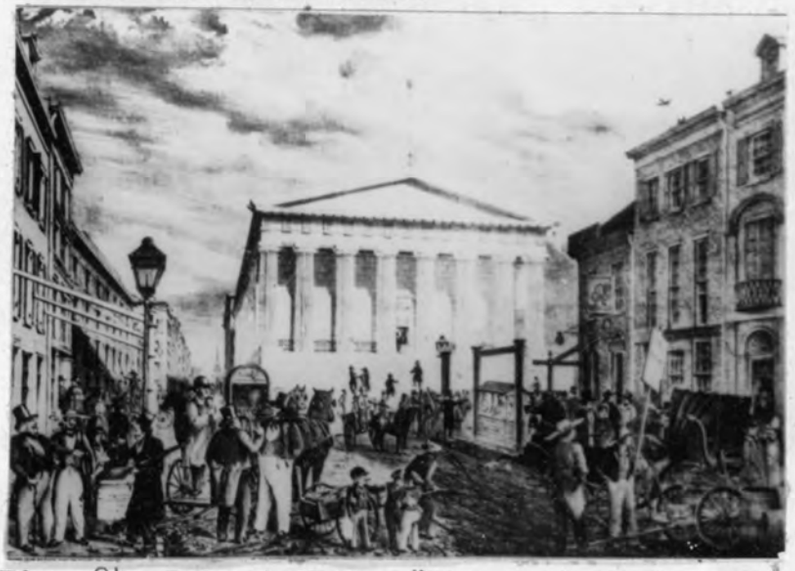

Fig. 84--Robert Kerr, "The Customs House, N. Y."

Fig. 85--August Köllner, "Broadway"

Fig. 86--J. W. Hill, "New York from the Steeple of St. Paul's Church, looking East, South, and West."

Fig. 87--Anonymous, "Castle Garden."


Fig. 88--Anonymous, "No. 7½ Bowery."

Fig. 89--John Falconer, "Newsboy."


Fig. 90--Thomas Benecke, "Sleighing in New York."

Fig. 91--Carl Döpler, "Liberty Street in Process of Rebuilding, 1852."

Fig. 92--James Cafferty and Charles Rosenberg, "Wall Street, half past 2 o'clock, Oct. 13, 1857."

Fig. 93--Frances Palmer, Currier and Ives, "New York Crystal Palace."

Fig. 94--Benjamin F. Smith, "New York 1855 from the Latting Observatory."