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Thomas Moran in Utah

Gaell Lindstrom
Utah State University

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THOMAS MORAN in UTAH

by Gaell Lindstrom
A basic objective of the Faculty Association of Utah State University is, in the words of its constitution:

> to encourage intellectual growth and development of its members by sponsoring and arranging for the publication of two annual faculty research lectures in the fields of (1) the biological and exact sciences, including engineering, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Natural Sciences; and (2) the humanities and social sciences, including education and business administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

The administration of the University is sympathetic with these aims and shares, through the Scholarly Publications Committee, the costs of publishing and distributing these lectures.

Lecturers are chosen by a standing committee of the Faculty Association. Among the factors considered by the committee in choosing lecturers are, in the words of the constitution:

> (1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; (2) publication of research through recognized channels in the field of the proposed lecture; (3) outstanding teaching over an extended period of years; (4) personal influence in developing the character of the students.

Gaell Lindstrom was selected by the committee to deliver the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities. On behalf of the members of the Association, we are happy to present Professor Lindstrom's paper.

*Committee on Faculty Honor Lecture*
THOMAS MORAN
in
UTAH

by
Gaell Lindstrom

68th Faculty Honor Lecture
Utah State University
Logan, Utah
TO: Utah State Board of Regents; Utah State University Institutional Council; Scholarly Publications Committee; Faculty Honor Lecture Committee; and Utah State University Administration

FROM: Linda E. Speth, Director

Enclosed is your personal copy of the Sixty-eighth Faculty Honor Lecture, which was presented by Gaell Lindstrom, on November 29, 1983. The lecture, "Thomas Moran in Utah," was well-received. I hope you enjoy reading Professor Lindstrom's fine presentation.

LES/aw

Enclosure
Acknowledgments

The author wishes to thank the following for permission to include in this publication illustrations that appeared in their publication and/or library holdings:

Published by arrangement with Lyle Stuart, Inc., 120 Enterprise Avenue, Secaucus, New Jersey, from Volume 2 of *Picturesque America*, "The Plains and the Sierras":

*Castle Rock, Echo Cañon*
*Monument Rock, Echo Cañon*
*Devil's Slide, Weber Cañon*

Also, Volume 2, "The Cañons of the Colorado":

*Kanab Cañon*

Published by arrangement with Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, Utah, from the *Aldine: The Art Journal of America*, 1874 and 1875:

*Moore's Lake, Utah*
*Springville Cañon*
*A Storm in Utah*
*Colburn's Butte, in Kannarro Cañon*
*The Narrows, North Fork of the Rio Virgen, Utah*
*Valley of the Babbling Waters, Utah*
*Temple of the Virgin, Mu-Koon-Tu-Weap Valley, Utah*
Thomas Moran In Utah

by
Gaell Lindstrom*

On July 9, 1873, Thomas Moran wrote to his wife Mary from Salt Lake City: "In the afternoon Powell and I went to Brigham Young's house and I was introduced to all the leading Mormons. There was Brigham Young, Geo. A. Smith second man in power, Bishop Nusser [Musser], Bishop Cannon. The editor of the Mormon paper and delegate to Congress. Bishop Hooper and some other Mormon high priests. They are very much like the rest of mankind and all smart fellows." Moran came to Salt Lake via the Union Pacific Railroad to meet John Wesley Powell of Colorado River fame. It had been less than four years since Major Powell started his first trip down the Green to the Colorado and through the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Powell was on good terms with the Mormons, and as the Indian commissioner, he was charged with investigating the welfare of the Indians in Utah. Brigham Young and Powell shared this common interest in further exploration of the Utah Territory, Powell for the sake of science and personal curiosity and Brigham Young for the sake of extending Mormon colonization. Moran, Powell, J. E. Colburn, a writer for the New York Times, and James C. Pilling, Powell's secretary, were headed south to the Grand Canyon. All had interests in the unknown and the scenic. Moran had commissions for illustrations from eastern publishers, and Colburn was on assignment for the New York Times. For some reason, Colburn preferred not to meet Brigham Young and stayed in his room at the Walker House.

The group left Salt Lake on the Utah Southern Railroad and rode it all the way to Lehi, a grand total of 30 of the almost 400 miles ahead of them. In describing Salt Lake City's extraordinary setting, including Mount Olympus, Twin Peaks, and Lone Peak, Colburn wrote as they travelled:

The ride over this road is not without interest. South of Salt Lake is a chain of snowy peaks of the Wasatch range of mountains, rising abruptly from the level plain to a height of over 11,000 feet above the sea, or 6,500 feet above the valley. There are no more picturesque mountains in the world than this cluster, and the road runs toward its western angle, affording constantly changing views and revealing new beauties in the landscape as the traveler approaches.8

*Professor, Department of Art
Moran would later penetrate this part of the Wasatch Range through Little Cottonwood Canyon and execute several watercolors and drawings in the present-day Alta area.

From Lehi south, Moran and his companions travelled by stagecoach, team and wagon, and horseback. They ascended Spanish Fork Canyon a short distance and then scaled its northern side and looked down into Springville Canyon. From this vantage point, Moran made a sketch that later appeared as an illustration in the *Aldine: The Art Journal of America*, an eastern periodical, and in the *Deseret News*, a Salt Lake City newspaper. The text accompanying the illustration in the *Aldine* noted:

> Great interest is felt in all parts of the world in Rocky Mountain scenery. The material it furnishes for the pencil of the artist is inexhaustible. Mr. Thomas Moran has visited some of the most picturesque places in Utah Territory, and his pencil has faithfully reproduced them for the *Aldine*...

Springville Cañon, the subject of one of our illustrations, is in the Wasatch Range, about two miles from Springville, a Mormon town, situated on the southeast border of Utah Lake.... The Cañon is a deep and gloomy gorge cut by the action of water into the mountain side. The almost perpendicular strata has been worn into numberless needle-like forms, giving it a peculiarly horrible aspect. Such a cañon, anywhere east of the Mississippi River, would be regarded with universal wonder, and annually visited by thousands of tourists. Such gorges are numerous in the grand Wasatch Range, but this is one of the most characteristic. 

Moran was pleased with the Springville Canyon illustration that appeared in the *Aldine* as a wood engraving and considered it one of his finest.

As the party continued and approached the city of Nephi, they decided to hike to the top of Mount Nebo. Moran wrote home again on July 17, 1873:

> Nebo is the highest mountain in Utah or Nevada being 12000 feet. [King's Peak was not yet named nor had its altitude been determined.] Before sundown we ascended about 2000 feet and made our camp for the night, cooked supper, played a game of Euchre, wrapped our blankets round us and went to sleep. We were up and off again by 6 o'clock. It was an awful climb but we made the top by 12 1/2 o'clock having mounted 6500 feet. We made coffee from the snow and remained up about two hours. It was the most magnificent sight of my life and no person who has not ascended to such an elevation can have the faintest conception of the glorious sight. It seems as if the whole world was laid out before you; and although I do not think I would undergo the labor of another ascent, I would not have missed this for ten times the fatigue. I stood it first rate but Powell, Colburn, and Pilling were sick and vomited when we got down. I was all right and I believe stood it much better than any of them. We came to this point by private team. We are just 160 [80] miles south of Salt Lake City. We leave here
tomorrow morning and shall make a bee line for the Grand Cañon which we shall reach in 5 days.... We go the rest of the distance on horseback, and Powell has the animals all ready.... It is an awful country that we have been traveling over and I cannot conceive how human beings can stand to live on it. The Mormon towns that we have passed through are made of unbaked brick that you saw at Green River [in 1872] and are all situated in the Sage Plains. Mormonism is a beastly institution and ought to be wiped out.... I.... send you a flower from the summit of Mount Nebo. It is called the heavenly Columbine and is perfectly beautiful when growing, in fact the most beautiful flower I ever saw I think.4

At Fillmore, Powell left the party to take care of some Indian business. The others proceeded to Kanab via Beaver and Cedar City. About twenty miles south of Cedar City, they caught a glimpse of massive, brilliantly red buttes of Navajo sandstone, and they ascended what is now Taylor Creek for a closer view. This general area, now a part of Zion National Park, was called the Kolobs by the local Mormons. It is not clear how far the party entered into the Kolobs, but one of the buttes, probably the first encountered, was named in honor of Colburn, the writer for the Times. Apparently the name did not "stick." Several people in Kanarraville, the closest town, were recently asked where "Colburn's Butte" was but none had heard of it. Moran sketched the butte, and a wood engraving of the sketch later appeared in the Aldine. The text accompanying the illustration paid tribute to southern Utah's scenery:

The subject of another of Mr. Moran’s superb illustrations is Colburn's Butte, in Kannarro Cañon. Kannarro [Kanarraville] is a small Mormon village in Southern Utah, nestling at the foot of lofty mountains, and near the terminus of the ranges extending south from Salt Lake City, Kannarro Cañon is a pass in the mountains, some five or eight miles south of the village; and it is this cañon that the visitor receives the first hint of that glorious region to the south, viz., the cañon of the Colorado River to the West. Here are first seen the wonderful masses of red sandstone that, a little further south, become overwhelmingly stupendous, staggering belief in their vastness and magnificent forms. The butte in the illustration is two thousand feet high, and of a brilliant vermilion hue. It is equally grand and beautiful in storm or sunshine.5

After leaving the Kolob area, the party journeyed to Toquerville, arriving on July 23. Moran made a small pencil sketch, Toquerville 1873 S Utah. The sketch contained detailed notations about the rich colors of the area—yellow clouds, blue skies, yellow horizon, crimson cliffs, yellow grass, and a black canyon. Moran also noted that the foreground should be in shadow and include lava rocks.

Leaving Toquerville, Colburn and Moran took a four-day excursion into "Little Zion Valley." They were guided by one of Powell's men who had met
them at Sheep Trough Springs, a short distance from Toquerville.

In an article for the *Times*, Colburn wrote:

> ...Moran and myself, with a guide and pack horse, took an excursion of four days into and through the most interesting and beautiful region we have ever seen. It is called by the Mormons "Little Zion Valley"...at the foot of the valley, on the west, stands a mass of cliffs, 4,500 feet above the valley, called the Temple of Virgin, which alone is worth the trip from Washington to Southern Utah.\(^6\)

As the party passed through the settlements of Virgin, Grafton, Rockville, and Springdale, they saw the early attempts at farming along the Rio Virgin by the Mormons.

Moran made several sketches of the Valley of the Virgin, much of which is now Zion National Park. Moran reported climbing to a ledge about 2,000 feet above the valley, evidently above the town of Rockville, where he made a sketch for a later watercolor painting, *The Cliffs of the Rio Virgin*, with the great West Temple as the painting's focal point. It is perhaps the finest watercolor of Moran's Utah subjects. All the various cliffs, mountains, and "temples" depicted are close to relative proportions, scale, and colors. Moran was more than excited by his newly discovered area, which was the most colorful he had yet seen in the West. The *Aldine* published three of Moran's sketches as large wood engravings under the title of "The Scenery of Southern Utah."

The *Aldine* writer suggested that

> it is in Southern Utah...that the grandeur of the Territory may be said to culminate....It is in that marvelous region of rock and water, at and about the Rio Virgin, a confluent of the Colorado, that Mr. Thomas Moran, to whom the lovers of the natural grandeur of American scenery owe so much for the previous efforts in the same direction, has found the material for the three pictures which we present in the current number and which may be classed as the most remarkable of scenic developments. The mind of man cannot conceive anything in nature more truly blending the beautiful and the awful than "Valley of the Babbling Waters"....\(^7\)

The three pictures were *Valley of the Babbling Waters, Utah; The Narrows, North Fork of the Rio Virgen, Utah*; and *Temple of the Virgin, Mu-Koon-Tu-Weap Valley, Utah*.\(^8\)

At the end of the present-day trail leading to the Zion Narrows, Moran made a sketch and ultimately a watercolor painting entitled *Canyon of the Rio Virgin, S. Utah, 1873*. The painting is now owned by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of New York City. It is easy to locate the actual view-site for this
work, which indicates Moran's concern for careful drawing, which often closely followed the actual scene.

Moran's interest in and love for southern Utah was evident in his remarks:

...southern Utah is where Nature reveals herself in all her tumultuous and awe-inspiring grandeur — and I include in Utah all that country North of the Colorado River; it does not properly belong to Arizona. There is a canyon off the Rio Virgin known in the local Indian vernacular as Mu-Koun-Tu-Weap, that for glory of scenery and stupendous scenic effects cannot be surpassed. Its cliffs rise up in rugged massiveness for 5000 feet, with some of the most peculiar formations believable toward the top. It is a marvelous piece of nature's handiwork that is worth going a long distance to see. I think southern Utah is unsurpassed in the class of scenery that characterizes it, and anyone who admires desert landscape need go nowhere else to see it in all its weird, fantastic attractions. 9

After their extraordinary first experience into “Little Zion Valley,” the group made their way to Kanab where they rested for two days and then headed back toward the Rio Virgin. This time the group was accompanied by Professor A. H. Thompson, Powell's topographer, and the photographer, John K. Hillers, who had learned to use the camera on Powell's 1871 Colorado River trip.

Thompson had them take a different route back to the Rio Virgin, which ultimately placed them on the ridges above Parunuweap Canyon through which flowed the East Fork of the Virgin. They made no attempt to descend the difficult canyon as Powell had previously done. Instead, they returned to Kanab. Moran's illustration, Pa-Ru-Nu-Weap Canyon, appeared in Powell's *The Exploration of the Colorado River and its Canyons*. The illustration was probably based on a sketch from a photograph by Hillers. 10

Moran and Hillers early developed a satisfactory working relationship. Hillers was the second photographer with whom Moran was closely associated; William Henry Jackson was the first. Moran relied on Hillers's photographs for details in many of his illustrations and paintings. Moran helped Hillers photograph the local Paiutes living near Kanab, or at least Moran helped pose the Indians, who seemed more than willing to cooperate.

Hillers, under the instruction of Thompson, took Moran and Colburn south of Kanab through the Toroweap Valley (still called "Toroweap" and now included in the Grand Canyon National Park). The trail led to a spectacular straight-down view of the Colorado River.

On August 13, Moran's letter home referred to the trip. He wrote that much of the drinking water "was thick and red with mud, but was good, and when you want water you are not particular about the color of it." After skir-
ing the eastern side of Mount Trumbull and reaching the brink, Moran
added:

...the whole gorge for miles lay beneath us and it was by far the most
awfully grand and impressive scene that I have ever yet seen. We had
reached the Cañon on the second level or edge of the great gulf. Above and
around us rose a wall of 2000 feet and below us a vast chasm 2500 in perpen-
dicular depth and a 1/2 mile wide....I made an outline [a pencil sketch on
gray paper]...but had not time nor was it worth while to make a detailed
study in color. We made several photos which will give me all the details I
want if I conclude to paint the view.\textsuperscript{11}

Moran, again, apparently never used his sketches for a finished painting,
but some illustrations of the general area were published, such as \textit{The Brink
of the Inner Gorge} in Powell's \textit{The Exploration of the Colorado River and its
Canyons}. Hillers's photographs probably served as the basis for Moran's illus-
trations.\textsuperscript{12}

When the group arrived back at Kanab, Major Powell was waiting for
them. Powell had made plans to take a party of eight, including Moran and
Colburn, onto the Kaibab Plateau for a different view of the Colorado River,
to a place he had named for himself, Powell's Plateau. The plateau was a
large promontory jutting into the canyon where the river could be viewed for
miles upstream or downstream.

In his letter home on August 13, Moran had also written:

\begin{quote}
Tomorrow morning...[we] start for the Ki-Bab [Kaibab] plateau to see the
Grand Cañon at that point. It is 3500 feet deep at that point and I am
inclined to think it is a finer subject for a picture than the To-Ro-Weap
view....You would just go wild over what there is to see here and it is per-
fectly safe though a pretty hard trip to make....Work hard to improve your
drawing dear as I shall have plenty of work for you this coming winter. 70
drawings for Powell, 40 for Appleton, 4 for Aldine, 20 for Scribners all from
this region beside the water colors and oil pictures.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

Moran had taught his wife to draw and etch competently and was antici-
pating a busy winter for both of them in filling the commissions he men-
tioned.

Moran was so awed by the view from Powell's Plateau that he decided that
it was from this vantage point that he would create a companion piece for his
earlier painting, \textit{The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone}. Its title would be
\textit{Chasm of the Colorado}. It was a quite different canyon from the canyon of
the Yellowstone and considerably more vast and complicated. The view,
toward the San Francisco Mountains near Flagstaff, was primarily down into
a "dark and gloomy" amphitheatre. Colburn, carried away by the view, wrote:

Here we beheld one of the most awful scenes upon our globe. While upon the highest point of the plateau, a terrific thunderstorm burst over the cañon. The lightning flashed from crag to crag. A thousand streams gathered on the surrounding plains, and dashed down into the depths of the cañon, in water-falls many times the height of Niagara. The vast chasm which we saw before us, stretching away forty miles in one direction and twenty miles in another, was nearly seven thousand feet deep. Into it all the domes of the Yosemite, if plucked up from the level of that valley, might be cast, together with all the mass of the White Mountains in New Hampshire, and still the chasm would not be filled.14

Powell planned another trip to follow Kanab Creek to its junction with the Colorado. However, Moran was already full of ideas and images and wanted to return East to begin work on his current commissions. Hillers's photographs were once again available to Moran and from them came several wood engravings and the handsome oil painting, Mists in Kanab Canyon, Utah, now owned by the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Moran began work on the Chasm of the Colorado as soon as he returned to his home and studio in East Hampton, New York. He felt that the grand, the sublime, and the epic made the best paintings, and certainly the view from Powell's Plateau suited his tastes very well. The Chasm of the Colorado, however, received much criticism, one critic saying, "There is no use in trying to paint all out-of-doors.‖15 Moran explained that he placed

...no value upon literal transcripts from Nature. My general scope is not realistic; all my tendencies are toward idealization. Of course, all art must come through Nature; I do not mean to depreciate Nature or naturalism; but I believe that a place, as a place, has no value in itself for the artist only so far as it furnishes the material from which to construct a picture. Topography in art is valueless.16

However, in spite of Moran's "idealization" his subjects may be easily identified, although they are often emotionally heightened and nature's "compositions" are improved.

Not all of Moran's subjects were grandiose nor given a romantic treatment. He could also find interest in the nonscenic and deal with it somewhat dryly. Consider, for example, his The Ruby Range, Nevada; Beaver Head Cañon, Montana; The Upper End of Little Cottonwood Cañon; and Shin-Au-Au-Tu-Weap or "God Land" Cañon of the Colorado, Utah Territory, a small yet jewel-like watercolor of simply another butte across what seems like
a canyon of still more rocks. We wish there were more of these less "grand" views, but we must remember that interest in the West did not center on its less spectacular aspects. It is difficult to wax romantic about a dry gulch or a field of Russian thistle or a sagebrush flat.

Nine wood engravings from Moran's sketches appeared in Captain Clarence E. Dutton's classic in art, literature, and geology, *The Tertiary History of the Grand Canyon District*, which was published in 1882. The work consisted of a well-illustrated text of 264 pages and the most handsome "atlas" ever printed. One of the Moran wood engravings is of a Utah subject and is entitled *Jurassic Terrace.—The Kolob*. In addition, the text contained two watercolors, *Smithsonian Butte—Valley of the Virgin* and *Sunset on the Kanab Desert*. They were painted by Moran's artist-complement, William H. Holmes. Holmes, the geologists' artist is also represented by nine double sheets (about twenty by thirty-three inches) in the atlas. They are magnificent monochromatic lithographs of the Grand Canyon and its environs. Also in the atlas is a double sheet of a view in the Grand Canyon by Thomas Moran called the *Transept*, also a monochromatic chromolithograph.17

Moran was born into a family of weavers in Bolton, England, in 1837.18 When Thomas was only seven years old, the family moved to the United States and settled in Philadelphia. When only sixteen, Thomas was apprenticed to the engravers, Scattergood and Telfer. He served only three of his seven-year apprenticeship and spent most of that time drawing for the engravers.

Wood engraving was probably the most popular technique for illustrating the many fine journals, magazines, and books of the 1870s and 1880s. The engravings were made on a block, type-high, of end-grain maple, boxwood, or some other hard and fine-grained wood. The blocks were then placed in the printer's chase with any accompanying hand-set type. When printed, it gave a direct print from the original engraved block. Engraving on wood was a time-consuming, difficult task and as a result only the finest original art was selected. Moran was not interested in doing the actual engraving, but he enjoyed preparing his drawings for the engraver and frequently drew on the block itself.

By the time Moran was thirty years old, he was a recognized and accomplished artist. In 1861, he was in London studying the works of Joseph Mallord William Turner and Claude Lorraine. He was in Europe again in 1866 and with his wife Mary spent a year studying and painting. Moran developed a taste for the works of Turner but said he cared nothing for Turner's later works. Despite this, Moran seemed to follow Turner's use of
Utah

Illustrations

by

Thomas Moran
MONUMENT ROCK, ECHO CAÑON.
A STORM IN UTAH.—THOMAS MORAN.
COLBURN'S BUTTE, IN KANNARRO CAÑON.—THOMAS MORAN.
THE NARROWS, NORTH FORK OF THE RIO VIRGEN, UTAH.
KANAB, CAÑON.
TEMPLE OF THE VIRGIN, MU-KOON-TU-WEAP VALLEY, UTAH.
color in his more abstract later works. So great was Moran's admiration for Turner that he spent much time making firsthand copies.

A fortunate series of events brought about Moran's 1873 visit to Utah. Moran had a friend, Richard Watson Gilder, an editor for the new (1870) *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*. Gilder was eager to fill the publication with as many articles as possible about the West, an area of growing interest for easterners and for the world. Gilder felt that by publishing the account of Nathaniel P. Langford's recent journey through the Yellowstone region in northwest Wyoming, the magazine would attract more readers.

Langford was an enthusiastic Montanan eager to promote the Yellowstone area and had been there on a government expedition led by General Henry D. Washburn. Gilder wanted the article illustrated, but no artist or photographer had been to the Yellowstone. Nevertheless, Gilder persuaded Moran to do the illustrations from Langford's vibrant descriptions and the rough sketches made by two of Washburn's men. Gilder used twelve drawings by Moran for the wood engravings in two illustrated articles entitled "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," written by Nathaniel P. Langford.

Shortcomings in the illustrations must not be blamed on Moran. The *Upper Falls* seems quite reasonable as does the *Tower Falls*. Some of the smaller "wonders" such as the *Grotto Geyser* looked like a battle between the *Monitor* and the *Merrimack* while the *Crater of the Giant Geyser* looked, as Wallace Stegner noted, as if "...the cones...had been cut out of sheet metal with tin shears."

Dr. Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden was about to conduct another government-sponsored expedition, this time to locate the source of the Yellowstone River. Moran somehow managed to join the expedition but at his own expense. After making the drawings for the Langford articles, Moran had developed an urge to actually see the place he had illustrated.

On his way to join Hayden, Moran came to Utah in 1871 via the Union Pacific Railroad from Omaha, which passed through Echo and Weber canyons (both in Utah), to Ogden and then Corinne. Later, Moran would make drawings from subjects in both Echo and Weber canyons. At Corinne, he took the stage for Virginia City, Montana, where he met the Hayden expedition. It was the same year that John Wesley Powell was starting his second Colorado River voyage.

Moran soon became a good friend of William Henry Jackson, a photographer from Denver, who had been invited to join the party. Moran could carry in one hand all his equipment; a sketch pad, a small set of watercolors, and a few pencils. Jackson, on the other hand, needed at least one pack horse and an assistant. The assistant had to load and unload the pack horse, set up the tripods, cameras (sometimes called field howitzers), and the
"darkroom" tent, prepare "wet plates" for immediate use, and then develop them. Glass for the plates was a source of great and fragile weight.

Jackson, in describing the slight, thirty-four-year-old Moran said that "despite his lack of horsemanship, he made a picturesque appearance when mounted. The jaunty tilt of his sombrero, long yellowish beard, and portfolio under his arm marked the artistic type, with something of local color imparted by a rifle hung from the saddle horn."²⁰

It was important to have a painter accompany an expedition as well as a photographer because the painter could deal with color and the photographer could not at this time. Hayden felt that illustrations in black and white were much like watching "Hamlet with the part of Hamlet omitted."²¹ Also, the photographic plates prepared in the field were highly sensitive to the blue part of the spectrum, and distant mountains, subjects, and skies almost faded away.

Captain J. H. Simpson, who explored in the Great Basin area in 1859, felt that "...the camera was not really too satisfactory....In my judgment, the camera is not adapted to explorations in the field, and a good artist, who can sketch readily and accurately, is much to be preferred."²²

Entering the area to be explored through Gardiner, Montana, and the present-day northern entrance to Yellowstone National Park, the Hayden group followed the same route as the Washburn Expedition. They first saw the spectacular Mammoth Hot Springs. Moran sketched and Jackson photographed. Moran's initial work was done with pencil on tinted paper often with opaque watercolor added. His sketches caught the spirit of Yellowstone with freshness and spontaneity and showed Moran's excitement for his new western experience.

A great painting resulted from Moran's Yellowstone experiences. It was called The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Epic in size as well as in concept and subject matter, it was an overwhelming seven by nine and one-half feet. In 1872, the Atlantic Monthly printed: "We believe we are right in saying that this picture [Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone] introduces Mr. Thomas Moran to the public: it is his first important work....He must be compared with men more known,—with Church and Bierstadt; there are no others with whom it would be worth while to compare him. Setting aside, however, Church's Niagara, the noblest landscape yet painted in this country, we judge Moran's picture worthy the second place..."²³

Hayden was pleased with the work and ultimately named the most majestic mountain in the Tetons after Moran. Congress was pleased with the painting and complimented Moran by purchasing it for $10,000. Congress was urged by Hayden and Langford as well as by a display of Moran's watercolors and Jackson's photographs to set aside a vast area of northwestern Wyoming
as a national park, which they did on March 1, 1872, the bill being signed by President Ulysses S. Grant. Moran was soon dubbed "Thomas Yellowstone Moran" and began signing his works with a "T" and superimposed "M" in such a way that a "Y" was also formed.

Moran followed no master or teacher. He was a product of an age that was ending and as such needs no apology. Gifted with an unmatched sensitivity and memory for the "wilder image," his memory for facts relating to visual experiences was incredible. He could, from small watercolor sketches formulate complete and detailed and "geologically accurate" large paintings. It may be true, however, as Thomas S. Fern aptly mentioned, "His imagination never quite equalled his eyesight as an artistic force."

Although Moran's contributions to art are difficult to discuss and measure, his work spoke directly to all and is still popular today. A gallery in Santa Fe recently listed a modest-sized Moran of the Grand Canyon in Arizona at $250,000.

Creative or not, Moran did speak of his work as experiments:

My life [painting] so far, has been a series of experiments and I suppose, will be until I die. I never painted a picture that was not the representation from a distinct impression from Nature. It seems to me that the bane of American art is that our artists paint for money, and repeat themselves so that in many instances you can tell the parentage of the picture that moment you look at it. It is not true that the public require such a repetition on the part of the artist. Men who are constantly rehearsing themselves do so from sheer inability to do otherwise. If a man's studio is simply a manufactory of paintings which shall tickle the ignorant in Art; if he is continually repeating himself in order to sell his pictures more rapidly or easily, this fact will go into his work, and he cannot have pleasure in being a mere copyist of himself—in producing paintings which are not the offspring of his own fresh and glowing impressions of Nature.

His daughter, Ruth B. Moran, reported that "he was never at any time interested in making any money, and always was the worst possible salesman for his pictures; almost anyone could get a picture cheapened in price, if he would only stay long enough in his studio, for my father was always aching to get back to work, to get to his easel, and get rid of the buyer."

John Ruskin, the English critic and writer, was an acquaintance of Moran and for a time Moran painted as Ruskin thought he ought to paint. Ruskin wanted "...the pure and holy hills treated as a link between heaven and earth." There was always a link between the earth and sky in Moran's works especially in the Chasm of the Colorado where similar forms and colors unify the sky and land masses with nature cooperating fully by bringing in a furious storm. Later, Ruskin admonished Moran "...of the necessity of giving up flare and splash. Force yourself to draw leaves and stones such as God means us all
to be shaded by, and to walk on ... and be buried under...." 28

At times, there seemed to be a humorous element in Moran's relationship with Ruskin. Moran had shown Ruskin a sketch, Bad Lands of Utah. Ruskin exclaimed, "What a horrible place to live in." "Oh," replied Moran, with a twinkle in his eye, "we do not live there. Our country is so vast that we keep such places for scenic purposes only." 29

Ruskin thought enough of Moran's work to purchase several etchings and some Louis Prang chromolithographs from watercolors by Moran. Prang published a volume entitled Yellowstone National Park, and the
Regions of Portions of Idaho, Nevada, Colorado and Utah.
The text was written by F. V. Hayden, and the publication included a portfolio of fifteen Moran watercolors reproduced in color by lithography. Two of the chromolithographs were of Utah scenes—The Great Salt Lake and the Valley of the Bubbling Waters. The latter chromolithograph is a somewhat idealized view from the heart of Zion National Park along the Virgin River.

A commission for illustrations from the Union Pacific Railroad took Moran and his brother Peter to Donner Lake and Lake Tahoe in 1879. On their return trip, they stopped in Salt Lake City and visited upper Little Cottonwood Canyon.

Moran sketched not only the mountains but some of the structures in the old mining town of Alta, including the Emma and Toledo mines. Aside from the sketches, Moran painted a finished and handsome watercolor entitled The Upper End of Little Cottonwood Canyon. The watercolor is owned by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of New York City.
Another time, Moran provided six illustrations from Echo and Weber canyons for *Picturesque America*, a collection of articles later forming two large volumes handsomely illustrated and dealing with scenic areas from many parts of the United States. The Moran illustrations included *Castle Rock, Echo Cañon; Witches' Rocks, Weber Cañon; Monument Rock, Echo Cañon; Weber River—Entrance to Echo Cañon; Devil's Gate, Weber Cañon;* and *Devil's Slide, Weber Cañon*. Also included in this article, "The Plains and the Sierras," were three other Utah subjects as well as illustrations ranging from the plains in Wyoming to scenes in Oakland, California.

The article accompanying the illustrations was written by E. L. Burlinghame, who waxed eloquent about Castle Rock:

> Near the head of Echo Cañon stands Castle Rock, one of the noblest of the great natural landmarks that are passed in all the route—[Omaha west] a vast and ragged pile of massive stone, fantastically cut, by all those mighty forces that toil through the centuries, into the very semblance of a mountain-fortress....

> It has stood alone longer than whole races have been in the world. Its lines were shaped with no thought, it seems, of those that were to see them; the purposeless wind and sand and rain have been busy at it for vast cycles of time, and at the end is a thing of art—a great lesson of rude architecture. 

Echo and Weber canyons were favorites of travellers to the West and provided a welcome contrast to the plains of Nebraska and the southern Wyoming sage.

Francis M. Bishop, a topographer on Powell's second expedition on the Green and Colorado rivers, came West also on the Union Pacific from Omaha but one year before Moran first passed through Utah. Bishop wrote in his journal for August 17, 1870 that

> after passing through many grand and beautiful valleys we at last enter upon one of Nature's masterpieces of wild grandeur—"Echo Cañon", and "Weber Cañon". Here grand old rock lift their stately heads, giving weird shapes. Devil's Slide, Devil's Gate, Pulpit Rock, Brig.[ham] Young's forts on the summit of the lofty sandstone cliffs. At Auburn Station a car of observation was attached to the train which greatly added to the beauty of the scenery. 

Moran was often given free passage on the railroads. The companies thought that his sketches of views from their tracks would entice more travellers to their lines. It may be of interest to note that the latest use of Moran's Echo and Weber Canyon illustrations is in the 1981 edition of Wallace Stegner's *The Gathering of Zion*.
In June 1900, Moran and his daughter Ruth were in Salt Lake City on their way to see Shoshone Falls on the Snake River near Twin Falls, Idaho. Moran had previously illustrated the falls for the *Aldine* and produced a watercolor for Louis Prang but, following a now-repeated pattern, he had never actually seen the subject—he had used Jackson’s photographs. The falls were considered the most scenic attraction in southern Idaho and had already been painted and sketched by others. From sketches and on-the-scene observation, Moran produced a great work, an oil six by eleven feet, *Shoshone Falls*.

While in Salt Lake City just prior to the Idaho trip, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported: “Mr. Moran called on Harry Culmer [Henry L. A. Culmer] yesterday morning, and was shown a reproduction in art journals of Mr. Culmer’s marine and other views. The great artist was very much pleased and stated to a Tribune reporter afterward that marine views especially marked the true artist. He regretted that Mr. Culmer was prevented by commercial ties from giving his attention wholly to the fine arts.”34 In *Utah: A Guide to the State*, it is stated that “…Moran exhibited his work in Salt Lake City and that Culmer followed Moran in his taste for grandiose subjects and for large picture sizes. His [Culmer’s] copy of Moran’s *Shoshone Falls* is as spirited as the original, though the luminosity which marked the master’s painting is lacking in the pupil’s.”35 Probably, the copy made by Culmer is the one now hanging in the Wilkinson Center at Brigham Young University.

Thomas Moran was a favorite of many Utah artists and likely most Salt Lake painters were personally acquainted with him. Alfred Lambourne, the Utah painter and poet, wrote an article entitled “Thomas Moran, N.A., and Utah. A Tribute to His Paintings of Western Scenes.” It appeared in the *Deseret News* on November 4, 1922.

To all the lovers of American art, the name Thomas Moran, suggests a series of remarkable landscape paintings the subject matter of which extends from the Gulf to the northern Rockies, from the Atlantic to the Pacific…. But it is of his pictures of our own western scenery, that we wish at the present to write…. he [Moran] said none of the wonderful scenery of the interior west, impressed him more than the multi-colored sandstone heights of our southern Utah.

*The Temple of the Rio Virgin, The Heart of the Rock Rover’s Land,* and the *Valley of Bubbling [Babbling] Waters* are among some of the more noted pictures executed by the famous artist of our Utah Dixie. These are pictures in which Moran is unexcelled, or ever approached. The poetry of the wild cliffs and desolate mesas of “The Land of Many Colored Sand-
stone," impressed the artist to the utmost and his brush transferred to canvas, for the first time, those scenes expressive of primal ages....

The Deseret News article also included the Moran illustration of Springville Canyon and mentioned that it was also known as The Wild Rock. The same illustration had appeared in the Aldine for January 1874.

Evidently, there are but few of Moran's works in Utah. Even though he was greatly admired by Utah artists at the turn of the century, he likely made very few sales in Utah. It must be remembered that he came to Utah to sketch and paint, not to sell his work. However, Brigham Young University owns several paintings among which is a handsome oil of a Utah subject. On the back is written in Moran's writing, "Mary's Veil" and "Bullion Cañon, Utah" and "T Moran." No date is visible. The site for the painting is west into the mountains into Boullion Canyon immediately west of the present town of Marysvale, Utah. The subject is Mary's Veil Falls in the rugged Tushar Mountains.

The painting is approximately twenty inches and is similar to the wood engraving Mary's Veil: The Upper Falls on Pine Creek, a Small Tributary of the Sevier, which appeared in an 1875 issue of Scribners in Powell's article, "An Overland Trip to the Grand Canyon."36

Perhaps there are other Morans in Utah, but considering that conditions in Utah at the turn of the century did not allow many to accumulate wealth and that American tastes were generally turning toward European art, we may understand the difficulties that beset art and artists.

The Salt Lake Herald late in the nineteenth century reprimanded Utahns for not supporting or attending art exhibits.

Over a hundred good pictures have been on exhibition in this city during the past week....Only two in a thousand of our population have entered the doors since they were thrown open to the public. Some veritable gems of landscape painting (better than any that Appelles or Praxiteles ever did) are being offered at $6 a piece—original studies, carefully painted, of scenes in the neighborhood of this city. Up to this writing only two small pictures have been sold....

Why, more people spent 25 cents to see a rocky minstrel show at a second-class theatre last week than have paid to see a collection of one hundred and twenty original paintings by some of our best artists. We sincerely hope that this [is] not to continue, but that an interest in this venture will be awakened, and that henceforth the attendance will at least approach the merits of the undertaking.37

George M. Ottinger, a Salt Lake artist, was earlier discouraged with the plight of the artist in Utah and entered in his journal in June 1872: "In the last
eight years I have painted 223 pictures which have been sold for $3,415, or a little more than $15 each. Now deducting $7.00 each for supplies and framing, it leaves me $1,752, or a little over half. My work is worth only $219 a year. When I look at my family and our wants I grieve...."

Even though Salt Lake City and Utah were not fertile areas in which to sell paintings, Moran made many trips to Utah because of the great variety in subject matter that seemed to suit his tastes for the "picturesque" very well. Robert Allerton Parker in March 1927, the year after Moran's death, put it this way: "For Moran no region was too inaccessible, too dangerous, provided it might provide a new thrill. We have the evidence...to show that he discovered for himself the rugged majesty of Wyoming cliffs, the exotic extravagant color of Utah and the deserts of Nevada...." Moran himself explained his interest in the West. "I decided very early that I would be an American painter. I travelled the country over, and the West appealed to me. There is no phase of landscape in which we are not richer, more varied and interesting than any country in the world."

It seems appropriate to end this paper with Wallace Stegner's apt summary of Moran as a western artist. "He was an artist, a good one; and though the galleries may neglect him and historians of art pass him with a polite or condescending paragraph, and though his mountains may be a little overgrand, his canyons overawesome, his skies unnecessarily dramatic, his art is recognizably of this earth and this West." Moran, as much as any writer, photographer, explorer, painter, or artist, helped explain the West to the East and to the world and demonstrated that much of the West was worth setting aside as places for enjoyment and preservation. We owe it to Thomas Moran to know him and his work better and to recognize what he did in and for Utah and the West.
Footnotes


   The *Aldine* was a publication of great beauty, which was profusely illustrated with wood engravings. Between the years 1872 and 1878, it published thirty-nine of Thomas Moran's illustrations. Edward and Peter Moran were also often invited to supply illustrations to this publication which dealt with travel, music, and poetry as well as painting. The *Aldine* received high praise not only for the quality of its wood engravings and articles but for its typography and layout as well. The production process involved 250,000 impressions per month.

4. *Home-Thoughts from Afar*, pp. 31-33.

   "Kannarro cañon" probably refers to what is now called the Kolob Canyon through which Taylor Creek flows. Today, Kannara Canyon refers to the canyon immediately to the east of Kanarraville.


8. *The Valley of the Babbling Waters* is an "idealized" version of the features found in the main part of what is now Zion National Park along the Virgin River. "Angels Landing," a large red butte, is evidently the model for the center of interest. Each cliff and butte in the picture is similar to what one may actually find, although the Virgin River has been widened and the composition somewhat generalized.
   This was often Moran's way of "constructing" a picture. The *Temple of the Virgin, Mu-Koon-Tu-Weap Valley, Utah* illustrates the great West Temple from a point high above the river. "Mukuntuweap" is an Indian name that refers to the North Fork of the Virgin River, while "Parunweap" refers to the East Fork of the Virgin River.


   Twenty years after the government published Powell's work, he revised it for a new edition which appeared in 1895. The 1961 Dover edition is an
unabridged and unaltered republication of the work first published by Flood and Vincent in 1895 under the title *Canyons of the Colorado*. The *Canyons of the Colorado* contains over 250 illustrations. Powell felt they were vital to the subject.

Realizing the difficulty of painting in world colors a land so strange, so wonderful, and so vast in its features, in the weakness of my descriptive powers I have sought refuge in graphic illustration, and for this purpose have gathered from the magazines and from various scientific reports an abundance of materials.


John K. Hillers was recruited as a boatman by John Wesley Powell in Salt Lake City just prior to the second run of the Green and Colorado rivers. However, Hillers was helpful to E. O. Beaman from New York and James Fennemore from Salt Lake City, the two professional photographers who were hired by Powell. After Beaman quit, Fennemore became ill, and Powell’s cousin could not continue photographing. Hillers was asked to take over. He did so with great success and ultimately became one of the great photographers of the Southwest as well as chief photographer for the U.S. Geological Survey until 1900. Hillers was the first to photograph southern Utah and the Paiutes.


13. *Home-Thoughts from Afar*, pp. 41-42.


17. Clarence E. Dutton’s *Tertiary History* has recently been reprinted by Peregrine Smith Books, Layton, Utah. The size and colors are very similar to the original 1882 edition. The William H. Holmes illustrations in the *Tertiary History* and atlas are quite opposite in character from Moran’s emotional and romantic approach. Holmes felt Moran was the greatest of landscape painters. The Holmes illustrations are meticulously drawn with
fine lines and given a very modest coloring which seemingly only enhances the lines. Holmes later had a career as a geologist but ultimately was appointed the first director of the National Gallery of Art, director of the Bureau of Ethnology, and curator of Anthropology at Chicago's Field Museum. Mount Holmes, the smallest peak in Utah's Henry Mountains, is named for William H. Holmes.

18. The Moran family moved to the United States in April 1884. Edward, Thomas, and Peter became painters and John, a photographer. After living a year in Baltimore, the family moved to Philadelphia where the rich cultural atmosphere of the city provided a fertile environment for the four boys and their two sisters.

19. From 1871 to 1879, Moran supplied Scribners with approximately 339 sketches for illustrations.


28. Quoted by Fern, *Drawings and Watercolors*, p. 15.


An illustration probably derived from a side trip off the main Union Pacific tracks between Green River and Evanston and south into the Uintah Mountains to Moore's Lake, the head of the Bear River. The Aldine published the illustrations and then reproduced it again in the centerspread.


34. *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 9, 1900.


