Lane and Church in Maine

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The year 1860 saw the creation of two works that are widely recognized today as among the most beautiful of all nineteenth-century American paintings, Fitz Hugh Lane's *Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay* (fig. 1 [cat. 61]) and Frederic Edwin Church's *Twilight in the Wilderness* (fig. 2).[1] The two works seem to have little in common other than the time of day they depict—sunset. Church's painting is an intensely wrought, dramatic image of a hilly, heavily forested inland lake region; Lane's is a quietly contemplative, even poetic, representation of two ships on a calm expanse of water, with only a distant shoreline visible. These paintings seem to embody two commonly accepted polarities within the American landscape tradition, that of "baroque" high drama on the one hand, and calmer, more "classic" order on the other. The artistic personalities of their creators were also distinctly different. Church was the son of a prominent family and the pupil and heir apparent of Thomas Cole. He not only enjoyed financial and critical success early in his career, but went on to become perhaps the most famous American artist of his day. Lane, more than twenty years older than Church, came from somewhat humbler beginnings, served a long and not especially lucrative apprenticeship as a lithographer and producer of topographical views, and only attained what was essentially a local (that is, primarily in Boston and Gloucester) reputation comparatively late in life.[2]

All of these distinctions between the paintings and their painters are real and significant, and it is not the point of this essay to impose on these two very different men a perfectly equivalent artistic vision. But Lane and Church shared one particularly telling common interest. That was the state of Maine, to which they, unlike most of their contemporaries, were irresistibly drawn. Around 1850, both artists visited Maine for the first time, and in each case it was just at the crucial moment when they were moving toward their mature painting styles. What they saw in Maine, the effects of light, the rocks, waves, forests, and mountains, affected them deeply. Each would, over the course of the 1850s and early 1860s, return there often, finding inspiration for many memorable works that, by any measure, rank among their very greatest. Lane's and Church's paintings of Maine from the 1850s and 1860s thus present a compelling record of both decisive artistic change and ultimate aesthetic achievement. At the same time, they provide a remarkably complete picture, both from land and sea, of a state that has retained to this day a well-deserved reputation for having some of America's most distinctive and dramatic scenery. Not until the 1880s, when Winslow Homer turned his attention to the depiction of Maine scenery, would another artist equal the efforts of Lane and Church in capturing the unique character and beauty of the state.

Maine has long had a special place in the American psyche as a land of rugged sea coasts, deeply-channeled rivers, and vast forest wildernesses. Its enduring aura of remoteness has set it apart from the mainstream of American existence, and it has become known for its strongly individual, even slightly eccentric, inhabitants and for such memorable and unusual animals as the moose and the lobster. The state seal (fig. 3; adopted in 1820), with its archetypal Maine elements—waterman, farmer, water, moose, pine tree, and forest—shows that such commonly prevailing conceptions of the state have official sanction.

The Maine visited by Lane and Church in the mid-nineteenth century was an unfamiliar and remote place. Al-

Catalogue 61, detail

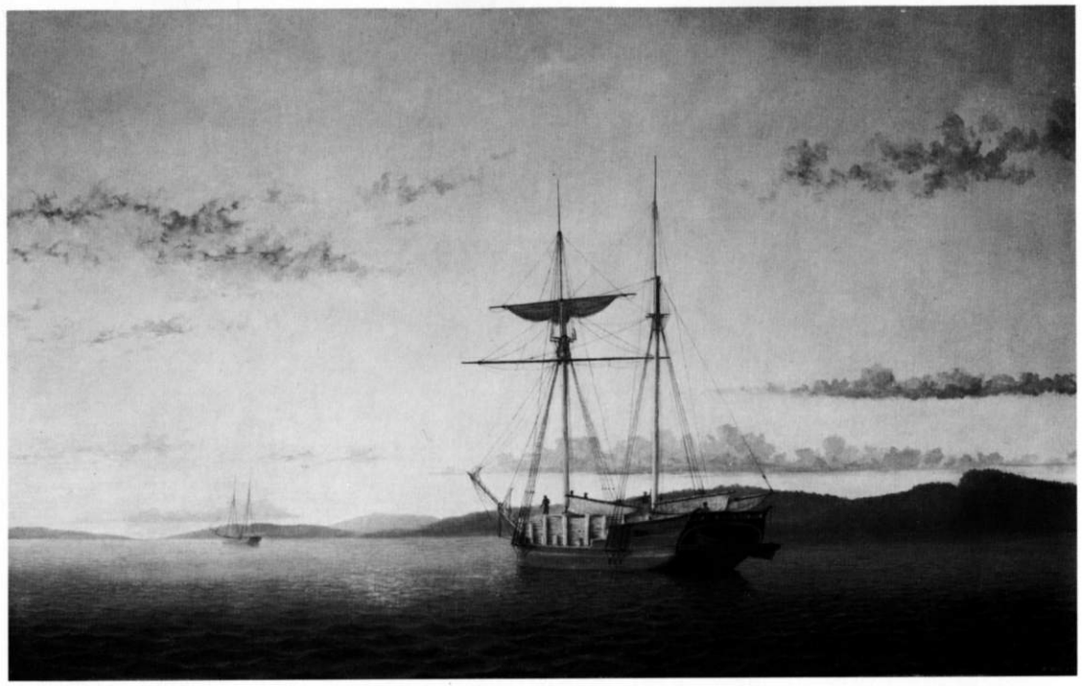


fig. 1. Lane, *Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay*, 1860, oil on canvas, 24 5/8 x 38 1/8 in. [National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Fund and Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Hatch, Sr.]

though a mere recitation of facts and figures cannot adequately convey the character of Maine, it can help us fix an image of some of its more salient aspects.[3] Situated at the extreme northeast of the United States, Maine is the only state adjoined by only one other (New Hampshire), with its other boundaries being the Atlantic Ocean and Canada. The shoreline is extensive, measuring, if one includes the countless bays and inlets, something over 2,300 miles. The actual land of the state, however, does not stop abruptly at the ocean's edge, for hundreds of islands, some quite substantial, lie off shore. Nor is Maine's water restricted to its coast, because some 2,200 lakes and ponds and over 5,000 streams and rivers are scattered throughout the interior. Several major rivers, notably the Kennebec and the Penobscot, are navigable for considerable distances inland, providing important access to regions that in the nineteenth century were virtually impossible to reach by road or trail.

The interior of Maine was originally almost completely covered with pine forests, a fact celebrated in the state's nickname, The Pine Tree State. During much of the nineteenth century, vast tracts of wilderness remained throughout the state; as Thoreau noted on his first visit to Maine in 1846, it was a

> . . . grim, untrodden wilderness, whose tangled labyrinth of living, fallen, and decaying trees only the deer and moose, the bear and wolf, can easily penetrate.[4]

Although inland Maine is not highly mountainous, there are ranges of large hills, and several distinctive mountains rise abruptly from the surrounding forests. The most famous is Mount Katahdin, or, Ktaadn, as it was often spelled in the nineteenth century (see fig. 22), which has an elevation of 5,268 feet, making it the highest point in the state.

The area that became Maine has been inhabited from the prehistoric era on, and substantial populations of various Indian tribes were there when Europeans first arrived. Maine was settled chiefly by people of English, Scotch Irish, French, and German stock, and the population grew at a steady, if not astounding, rate through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By 1800 there were approximately 200,000 inhabitants, and by the late 1840s to the early 1850s, when Church and Lane first visited, there were more than half a million. This is a surprisingly small number for a state of over 33,000 square miles (by far the largest area of any New England state), but most inhabitants were concentrated in coastal settlements.[5] Few people other

fig. 2. Frederic Edwin Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness*, 1860, oil on canvas, 40 x 64 in. [Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund]
fig. 3. Maine State seal, adopted 1820 [courtesy State of Maine, Office of the Governor, Washington, D.C.]

than lumbermen and hunters had ever even set foot into the wilderness areas of the state, and throughout much of the nineteenth century large areas of Maine were still relatively unexplored.

Maine's economy was, from the first, based on wood and water. Its vast resources of white pine (and later, spruce) were exploited early on, providing material for masts (many of which went to England's Royal Navy in the years before the American Revolution), ship construction, and lumber exports. The lumber industry expanded at a prodigious rate throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading Thoreau to remark that its very mission seemed to be "to drive the forest all out of the country, from every solitary beaver-swamp and mountain-side, as soon as possible."[6] Maine, as one mid-nineteenth century lumberman put it, "was made for lumbering-work."[7] It had not only the timber, but also rivers and streams by which to reach it and then float it out, water power to drive sawmills to process it, and good harbors for ships to transport the finished products. Even the climate played an indispensable role.[8] The marshy ground of the forest froze in winter, enabling heavy sleds to operate, and spring thaws caused floods to float the logs.

Shipbuilding and shipping were Maine's other most important economic activities and they, of course, were made possible primarily because of the timber resources and the presence of so many fine harbors. Maine-built ships were found in ports all over the world, transporting lumber, granite, and other goods out of the state and returning with molasses, spices, sugar, and other commodities. Maine led the way in the construction of schooners, a type of sailing vessel much favored by American sailors, and countless other ships, both large and small.

Virtually every visitor to Maine during the mid-nineteenth century would have been aware of the importance of lumbering, ship construction, and shipping in the state's economy, because signs of these activities were apparent in any settled area. Although travel for sightseeing purposes became ever more popular with Americans in the nineteenth century, relatively few visitors ventured as far north as Maine.[9] Long after the Hudson Valley, the Catskills, the Adirondacks, and the White Mountains had become well-known resorts, Maine's reputation for remoteness and ruggedness continued to discourage casual tourists. As Thoreau wrote of the wilderness around Katahdin in 1846, "it will be a long time before the tide of fashionable travel sets that

fig. 4. Lane, *Twilight on the Kennebec*, 1849, oil on canvas, 18 x 30 in. [private collection]

way."[10] Indeed, early visitors to the Maine coast and woodlands, from scientist J. W. Bailey, who ascended Katahdin in 1837, or the artist and writer Charles Lanman, who traveled up the Kennebec to Moosehead Lake in 1845, all agreed that a visit to the wildest areas of the state was equivalent to leaving civilization completely behind.[11] One regressed into a purer form of nature that seemed to exist outside of time, ultimately reaching a land like "that very America which the Northmen, and Cabot, and Gosnold, and Smith, and Raleigh visited."[12] Not everyone was prepared for the force of such an experience; Thoreau, for instance, returned to Concord after his first visit to inland Maine with a new respect for the ameliorating influences of civilization. Neither Lane nor Church initially tried to capture the full impact of the state's most dramatic scenery; most of their early Maine works portray some of Maine's more picturesque locales.

Lane first visited Maine in 1848 on a trip to Castine with his friend Joseph Stevens. Although there is little documentation concerning their visit, at least two paintings resulted, *Twilight on the Kennebec* (fig. 4) and *View on the Penobscot* (location unknown). Both were exhibited at the American Art-Union in New York in 1849, but neither seems to have excited much critical interest.[13] In these two paintings Lane had chosen subjects that very nearly marked the eastern and western boundaries of the area that would receive so much of his attention over the next fifteen years. Between the two rivers were sites such as Owl's Head, Camden, Castine, and Penobscot Bay, which formed the subjects of many memorable works (cats. 52, 59, 61). If one expands the area slightly further eastward to take in Mount Desert and its vicinity, the entire range of Lane's known travels in Maine is embraced. By contrast, Church in his own Maine journeys would venture to many more places and cover much greater distances.[14]

By the mid-nineteenth century the area around the lower Kennebec was one of the more settled in Maine. According to one observer of 1851, it already had seen "advances in agricultural history and wealth" sufficient to "beautify, enrich, and enliven" its banks.[15] Running from Moosehead Lake to the sea, the Kennebec is a river rich in history.[16] The first ship built by Englishmen in the western hemisphere was launched by Popham colonists in 1608, and from that point on the river assumed an ever-increasing importance as a center for the ship building and lumber industries.

We do not know precisely how far Lane traveled on the Kennebec, nor why he did so, but the image he left us of is one of his most striking early works. Indeed, *Twilight on the Kennebec* has been deemed a crucial work in Lane's oeuvre, because of its new dramatic force and compositional simplification that went beyond the earlier, more descriptive Gloucester views (fig. 14).[17] The image is certainly powerful. In the foreground a lumber schooner lies aground; its status is unclear, for one of its bowsprits is broken and its sails and rigging hang loosely. Is this ship awaiting repair, or has it simply been left to molder, a forgotten and abandoned hulk? The painting seems to offer no further clues to its fate. The rocks and undergrowth of the riverbank suggest an area that had not seen many "advances in agricultural history and wealth," and the row of logs and small rowboat at the right suggest the presence of only rudimentary industry. In the river are several other sailing vessels and a pine-forested island; beyond, "The western sky is still glowing in the rays of the setting sun," and only a few clouds are seen.[18]

Without question, *Twilight on the Kennebec* represents a more intense vision of nature than is found in Lane's previous works, suggesting that the initial impact of Maine on the artist was indeed decisive. The force and clarity of artistic expression of *Twilight on the Kennebec* account for its traditional interpretation as a record of Lane's response to a nearly uninhabited

wilderness, but close examination challenges that reading.[19] Two figures are on a rock at the right end of the island, their backs turned to us, suggesting that they, like other figures in Lane's paintings, are lost in the contemplation of nature's serene beauty.[20] In fact, they are contemplating something far more mundane than the glories of transcendent nature, but of considerable interest nonetheless. In the distance, in the channel between the island and the western bank of the river, a large steamboat is heading upriver. That it is a steam-powered vessel is beyond question, because its paddle wheels are churning the water and a smokestack rises from its mid-section. It swiftly passes through the calm waters of the river, in marked contrast to the virtually becalmed sailboats in the middle distance, and in even sharper contrast to the grounded schooner of the foreground.

Was Lane, like Turner in his famous *The 'Fighting Temeraire' tugged to her last Berth to be broken up* of 1838 (National Gallery, London), here giving witness to the passing of the era of sail to the era of steam? Perhaps he was. By 1848 steamships were regularly plying the coastal waters and navigable rivers of Maine, and Lane no doubt traveled on one (as did Thoreau) for at least part of his journey to the state. There was, in fact, steamboat service on the Kennebec as far as Augusta (forty-five miles upriver and at the head of navigation on the river) from 1826, and by the 1840s there was considerable traffic on the river.[21] But more to the point, *Twilight on the Kennebec* suggests that Lane had recognized an essential fact about life in mid-nineteenth century Maine. Signs of the confrontation between American civilization and American nature were found virtually everywhere in the coastal region. In the days before aggressive settlement had reached the lands of the far West, Maine represented the most rugged frontier of the young country, the very battleground where the American course of empire was most visibly enacted. Thoreau, describing the city of Bangor, noted that it was:

> fifty miles up the Penobscot, at the head of navigation for vessels of the largest class, the principal lumber depot on this continent, with a population of twelve thousand, like a star on the edge of night, still hewing at the forests of which it is built, already overflowing with the luxuries and refinement of Europe, and sending its vessels to Spain, to England, and to the West Indies for its groceries,—and yet only a few axe-men have gone 'up river,' into the howling wilderness which feeds it.[22]

In his own terms, as one who knew and understood ships and maritime activities well, Lane expressed a similar vision. He too had ventured near the edge of the "howling wilderness" that lay "up river," and seen the penetration of one of civilization's emblematic machines into it.[23] *Twilight on the Kennebec*, then, is not solely about Lane's personal confrontation with rugged American nature; it is also about his awareness of the inevitable conflict between civilization and the wilderness. Many observers around 1850 were deeply troubled by the implications of that conflict, for they saw that the ultimate triumph of civilization could be achieved only at the expense of nature. But Lane, if we may judge from his art, apparently was unconcerned. After his glimpse of the fringe of the Maine wilderness he went on to more settled areas, painting scenes where man and nature existed in peaceful equillibrium.[24]

One of those who saw Lane's *Twilight on the Kennebec* at the Art-Union in the spring of 1849 was almost certainly Frederic Church. Church himself had seven works on view there, including the highly praised *Evening after a Storm*, and he had emerged as one of the Union's most promising younger artists.[25] He had from the first been drawn to portraying dramatic twilight effects in his own works, and it is easy to imagine that the radiant sky of Lane's work would have caught his eye. By 1849 Church, an indefatigable traveler, had already done extensive sketching in New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont, and had exhibited finished paintings of those areas at both the Art-Union and the National Academy of Design. In the summer of 1850 he set off in search of new material, this time across New Hampshire and into Maine. The experience of seeing Lane's paintings of Maine may well have been a catalyst in this decision, and Church no doubt also had in mind the memory of his teacher Cole's 1844 visit to the state.[26] One contemporary account, however, gives considerable weight to another factor:

> Church, Gignoux, and Hubbard have gone to the coast of Maine, where it is said that the marine views are among the finest in the country. None of these artists, we believe, have hiterto attempted such subjects, and we look forward to the results of this journey. The exhibition of the magnificent Achenbach last year in the Art-Union Gallery seems to have directed the attention of our younger men to the grandeur of Coast scenery.[27]

Andreas Achenbach's painting, *Clearing Up—Coast of Sicily* (fig. 5) was much admired for "the fidelity with which natural appearances have been studied," even though it portrayed a

fig. 5. Andreas Achenbach, *Clearing Up, Coast of Sicily,* 1847, oil on canvas, 32 1/4 x 45 3/4 in. [Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore]

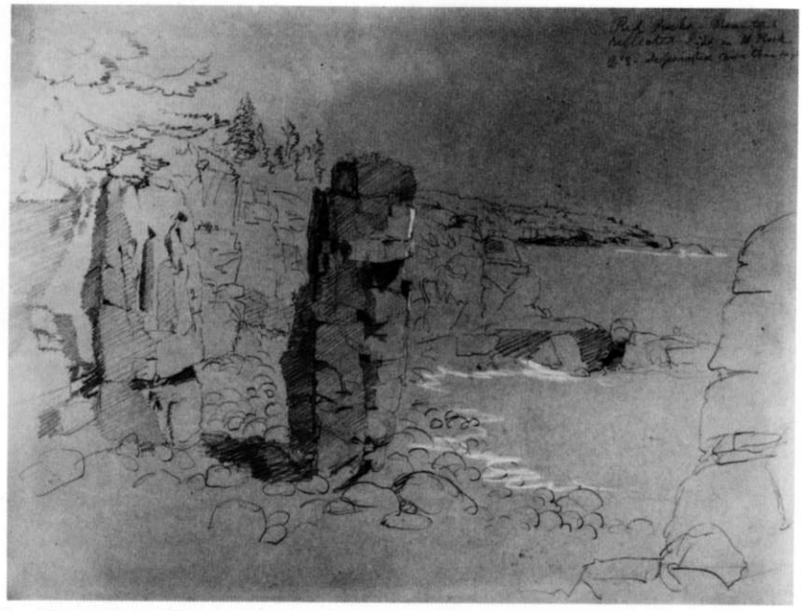


fig. 6. Frederic Edwin Church, *Red Rocks, Mount Desert,* 1850, pencil and white gouache on paper, 11 9/16 x 15 9/16 in. [New York State, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Olana State Historic Site]

place most Americans had never actually seen.[28] Young painters such as Church were cautioned against merely transferring "the warm coloring of the Sicilian shore to the colder rocks and sands" of the American Northeast, and were admonished to study such scenes themselves before attempting their own marine paintings.[29] That was precisely what Church set out to do, making his first trip to Mount Desert in the summer of 1850. And, in one of those intriguing coincidences that suggest far more than available evidence will allow us to document, Lane, too, turned up on the island that summer.

A series of four letters by Church printed in the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* entitled "Mountain Views and Coast Scenery, By a Landscape Painter," enables us to follow him on this trip to Maine.[30] The first two letters, both dated July 1850, described the initial phase of the journey through Vermont and New Hampshire. The third, also dated in July, is postmarked "Mount Desert Island," and recounts how Church and his companions reached the island, via Castine, after traveling by train, fishing sloop, and steamer.

Mount Desert offered artists an unparalleled number of pleasing, and stirring, subjects for paintings:

> It affords the only instance along our Atlantic coast where mountains stand in close neighborhood to the sea; here in one picture are beetling cliffs with the roar of restless breakers, far stretches of bay dotted with green islands, placid mountain-lakes mirroring the mountain-precipices that tower above them, rugged gorges clothed with primitive forests, and sheltered coves where the sea-waves ripple on the shelly beach. . . . It is a union of all these supreme fascinations of scenery, such as Nature, munificent as she is, rarely affords.[31]

Church, who had surely heard Cole extoll the beauties of the island and had certainly seen his paintings of Frenchman's Bay, assured his readers that he had "not come thus far to be disappointed."[32] Within only a few days Church had explored much of the island, "done considerable in sketching and painting," and found himself surprised "that some shrewd Bostonian" had not already "erected some sort of hotel" there.[33]

Church's numerous drawings and oil sketches from his 1850 visit to Mount Desert (figs. 6, 7) reveal that he had a highly productive summer, and they further suggest that his initial experience of Maine had a positive, even liberating, influence on his art. Church had been steadily progressing in his mastery of landscape, showing himself capable of both light-filled, expansive views such as *West Rock, New Haven* (1849, New Britain

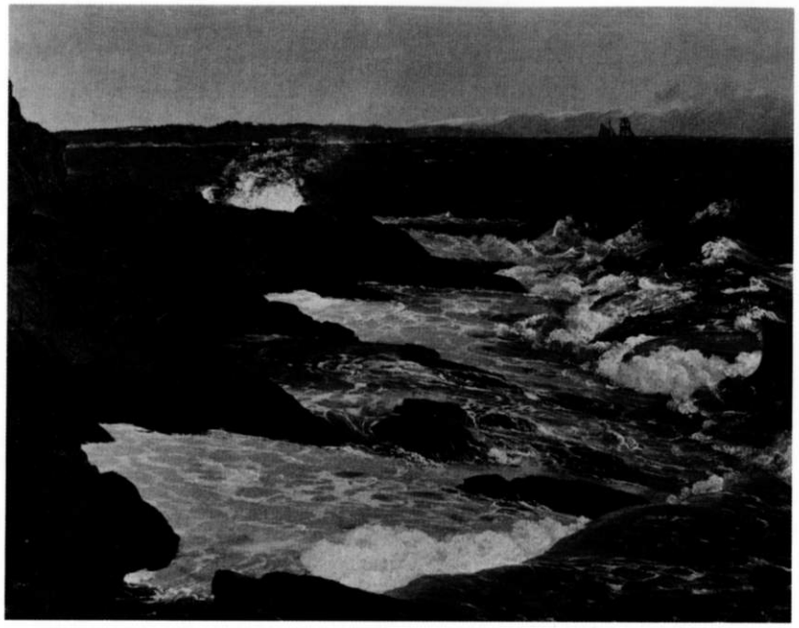


fig. 7. Frederic Edwin Church, *Fog off Mount Desert Island,* 1850, oil on paper mounted on board, 11 1/2 x 15 3/8 in. [private collection]

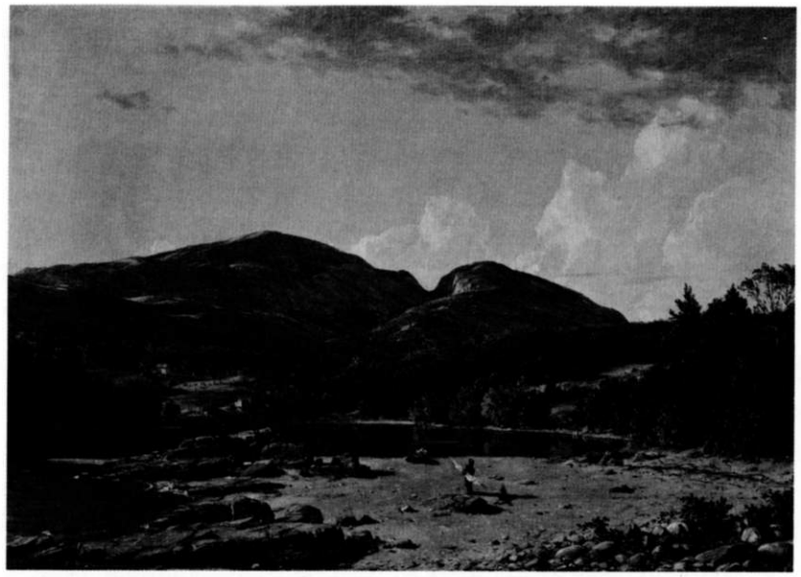


fig. 8. Frederic Edwin Church, *Otter Creek, Mount Desert,* c. 1850–1851, oil on canvas, 17 1/4 x 24 1/4 in. [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Seth K. Sweetser Fund, Tompkins Collection, Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund and Gift of Mrs. R. Amory Thorndike]

Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut) and more brooding, intense scenes such as *Twilight, "Short arbiter 'twixt day and night"* (1850, Newark Museum). But now a new sensitivity to the flickering play of light in the atmosphere and across the land appeared in his work, giving his early Maine paintings a freshness that simply was not present in his art before. This is apparent in his pencil drawings, which often have white highlights (fig. 6), in his oil sketches of waves breaking against rocky coasts (fig. 7), and in many of his first oils of the island, such as *Otter Creek, Mount Desert* (fig. 8) and *Newport Mountain, Mount Desert* (fig. 9). The oil sketches, in particular, show a remarkably accomplished and sure handling of paint for so young an artist, indicating that Church had now reached a new level of confidence in his art. Painting the coast of Maine was obviously a difficult task—Church says as much in one passage in his letters to the Art-Union—but he rose to the challenge. Sketches such as *Fog off Mount Desert,* which Church thought well enough of to send for exhibition to the Art-Union in 1851, are at once wonderfully fluid in their handling and completely convincing in their depiction of the textures of water, sand, and rocks, and in their evocation of light-filled atmosphere.

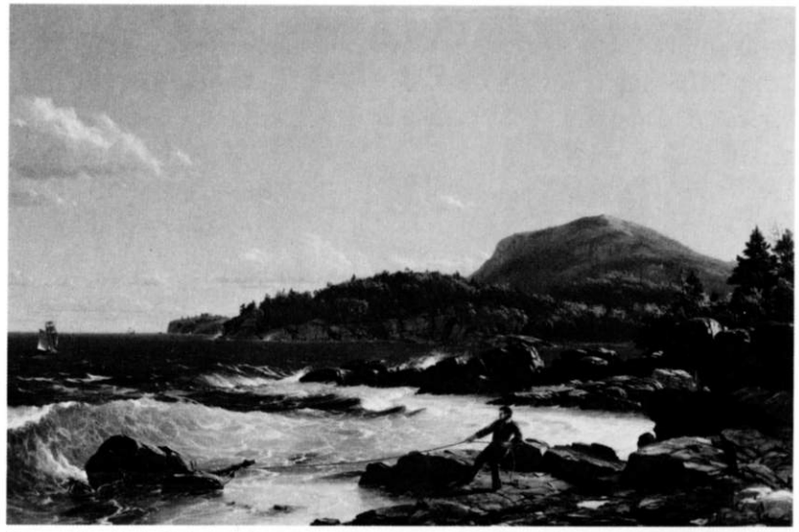


fig. 9. Frederic Edwin Church, *Newport Mountain, Mount Desert,* 1851, oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 31 1/4 in. [private collection]

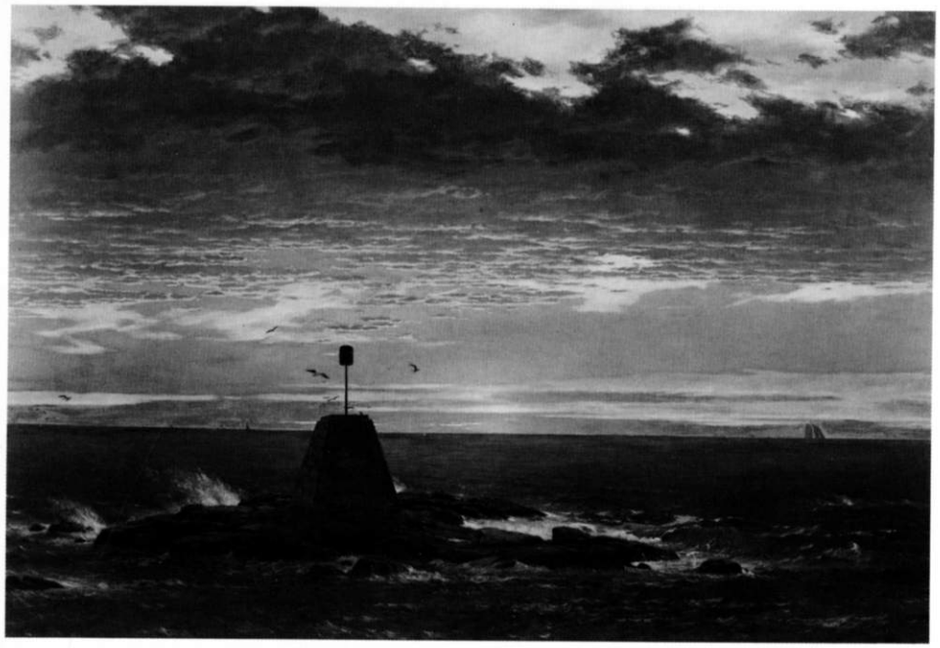


fig. 10. Frederic Edwin Church, *Beacon, off Mount Desert Island,* 1851, oil on canvas, 31 x 46 in. [private collection]

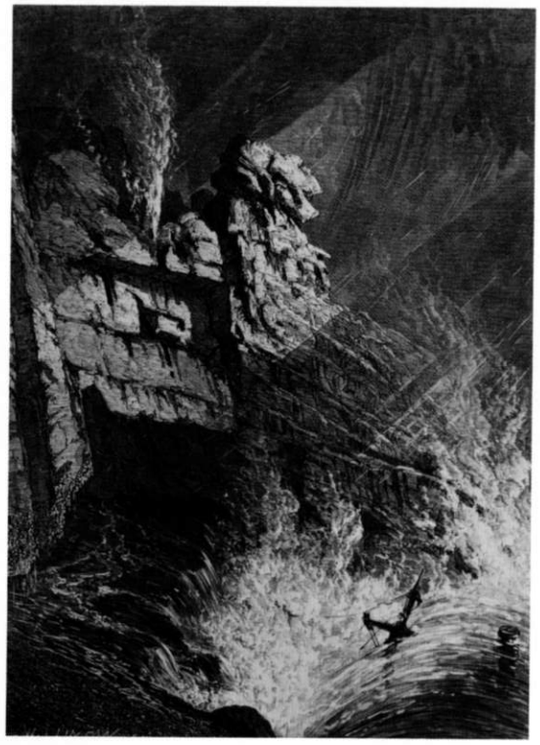


fig. 12. Harry Fenn, *The "Spouting Horn" in a Storm,* c. 1872, engraved by W. S. Linton for *Picturesque America* (New York, 1872)

fig. 11. Frederic Edwin Church, *Study for The Deluge,* 1850, pencil on paper, 9 7/8 x 14 7/8 in. [New York State, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Olana State Historic Site]

Church employed many of the techniques from his oil sketches in finished paintings such as *Otter Creek* and *Newport Mountain,* giving them a corresponding feeling of vibrancy. This was also true, though to a somewhat lesser extent, of the most important Mount Desert oil resulting from his 1850 visit, *Beacon, off Mount Desert Island* (fig. 10). This dramatic painting of the day marker at Bunker's Ledge, near Seal Harbor, set against a fiery sunrise, was a great critical and popular success when it appeared at the National Academy of Design in the spring of 1851 and at the Art-Union that fall. *Beacon,* which was already deemed "famous" by the end of 1851, was larger and more tightly finished than Church's other early Mount Desert oils, and he obviously intended it to make a striking effect on the crowded walls of New York's exhibition galleries.[34] Even so, it did not match the dramatic power of his other major effort for 1851, *The Deluge* (location unknown; see fig. 11).[35] This work was reminiscent of Cole, yet nevertheless also owed much to Maine: it was quite possibly while sketching some "immense rollers" at the base of Schooner Head (see fig. 12) that Church first envisioned painting the subject.[36] Church, like Cole before him, had been awed by this demonstration of the sea's power. There was, he felt, "no such picture of wild, reckless, mad abandonment to its own impulses, as the fierce, frolicsome march of

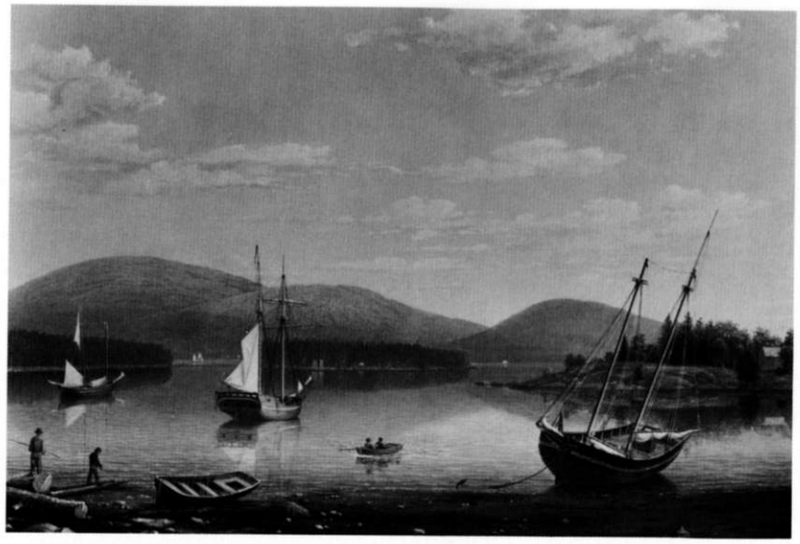


fig. 13. Lane, *Bar Island and Mount Desert Mountains from Somes Settlement,* 1850, oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 30 1/8 in. [Erving and Joyce Wolf Collection]

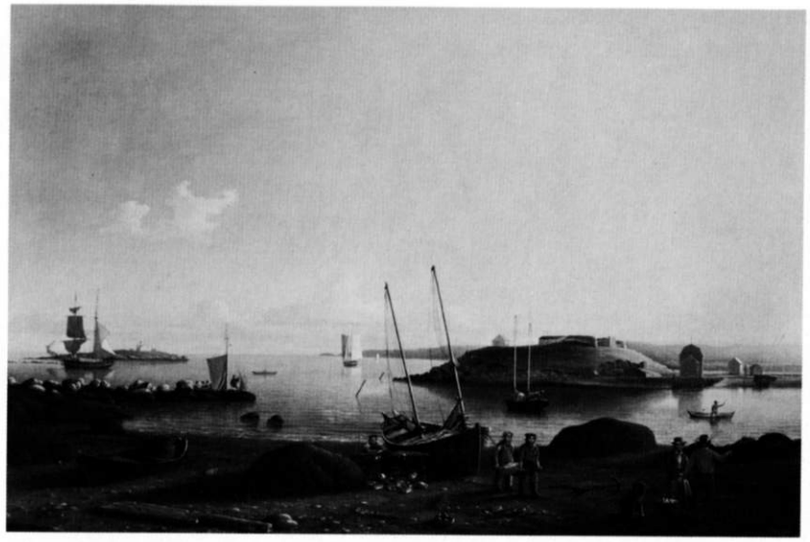
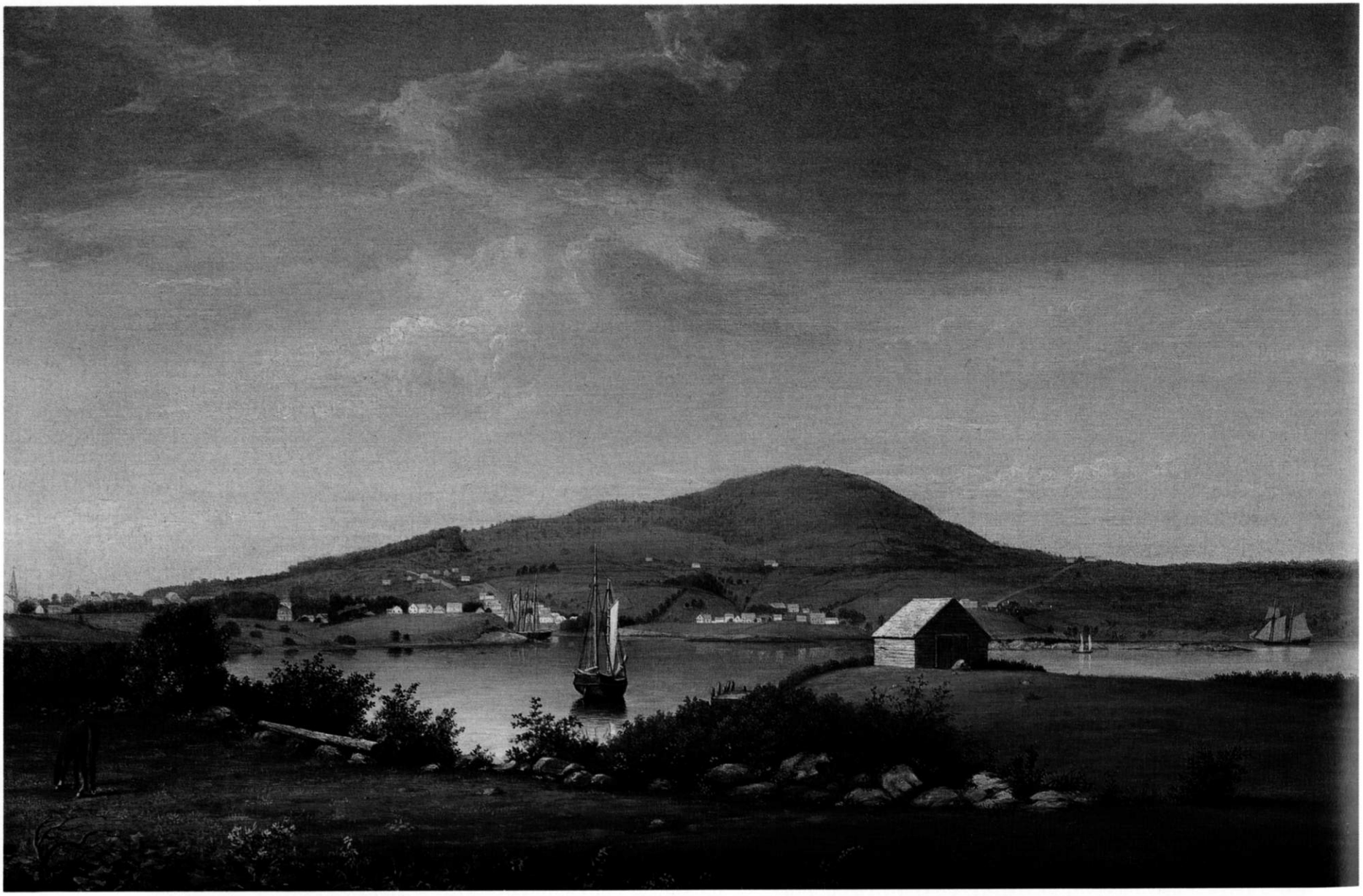


fig. 14. Lane, *Gloucester Harbor,* 1848, oil on canvas mounted on panel, 27 x 41 in. [Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, The Williams Fund]

a gigantic wave."[37] Church's conception of *The Deluge,* which one reviewer found full of "unmitigated horror," centered on a series of rocky pinnacles surrounded by maelstroms and crashing waves.[38] Such an image, in fact, came close to the reality of Maine in one of her more dramatic moods (see figs. 11 and 12). That Church chose not to portray that aspect of Maine's character in a realistic painting suggests that he, like Thoreau and Lane, may initially have been somewhat overwhelmed by such evidence of nature's seemingly unlimited force and wildness.

Lane, as noted, was also on Mount Desert in August of 1850. His travels took him to some of the same spots visited by Church, but he saw most of them from offshore, giving him a decidedly different perspective on the island's scenery. Lane and his friend Stevens were aware of Church's presence, and at one time were sure he was in "the immediate vicinity."[39] Did the two artists actually meet? If so, there is no known record of it. They had, after all, come to Mount Desert in search of somewhat different subjects. Church, the landscape painter, had come seeking dramatic new scenery and to try his hand at painting the coast; Lane, the painter of ships and harbors, sought out examples of Maine's sea-going craft and explored the coves and rivers that sheltered them. Yet, at this moment the movements of Lane and Church were closely aligned. Even though we cannot document any definite artistic interchange between them, and though their actual painting styles were ultimately rather different, the fact remains that each devoted much of his energy over the next few years to portraying the scenery of Maine.[40] This was something that none of their fellow painters felt compelled to do.

Lane's first paintings of Mount Desert, such as *Bar Island and Mount Desert Mountains from Somes Settlement* (fig. 13 [cat. 50]) were of very high quality. They did not, however, depart significantly from the compositional manner he had perfected slightly earlier in his views of Gloucester, which were inspired by Robert Salmon's harbor scenes. *Bar Island and Mount Desert Mountains* and *Gloucester Harbor* of 1848 (fig. 14 [cat. 6]) have obvious similarities, with a foreground beach animated by scattered rocks and pieces of wood, a few figures, a beached rowboat, and a small sailing vessel lying heeled over near the water's edge. The calm water beyond in each work is dotted with other boats and ships, and in each, islands with small buildings rise in the middle distance. The skies in the two are similarly radiant, with only a few clouds. To be sure, *Bar Island and Mount Desert Mountains from Somes Settlement* is less crowded and more spacious than *Gloucester Harbor,* but it does not manifest the extreme simplification and concentration of effect seen in *Twilight on the Kennebec.* In the same way, the view of *Castine, Maine* of 1850 (cat. 56), though open and light-filled, did not



cat. 58. *Blue Hill, Maine,* mid 1850s, oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 30 in. [private collection]

mark a real departure from earlier topographical views such as *Gloucester Harbor from Rocky Neck,* 1844 (cat. 2). Lane at this point was content to rely on well-proven methods to interpret the scenery of Maine, but he would gradually change his approach over the next few years.

Both Lane and Church were in Maine again the following year (1851). Lane returned to Castine for the summer and also

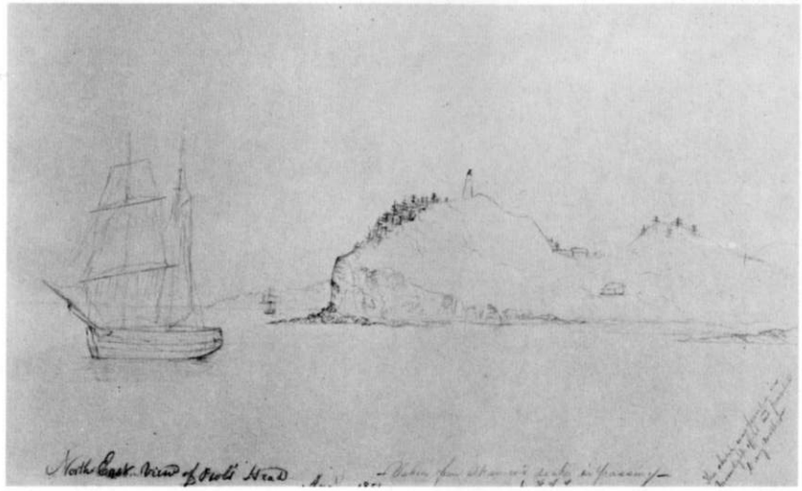


fig. 15. Lane, *Northeast View of Owl's Head,* 1851, pencil on paper, 10 1/2 x 16 in. [Cape Ann Historical Association]

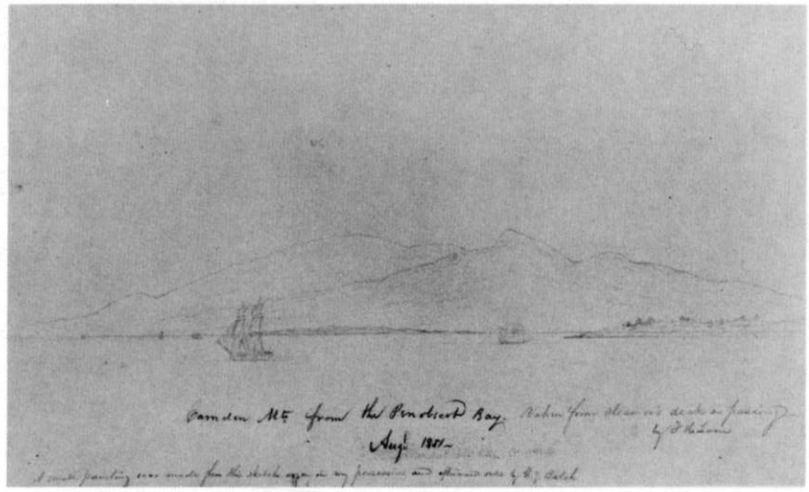


fig. 16. Lane, *Camden Mountains from the Penobscot Bay,* 1851, pencil on paper, 10 1/2 x 16 in. [Cape Ann Historical Association]

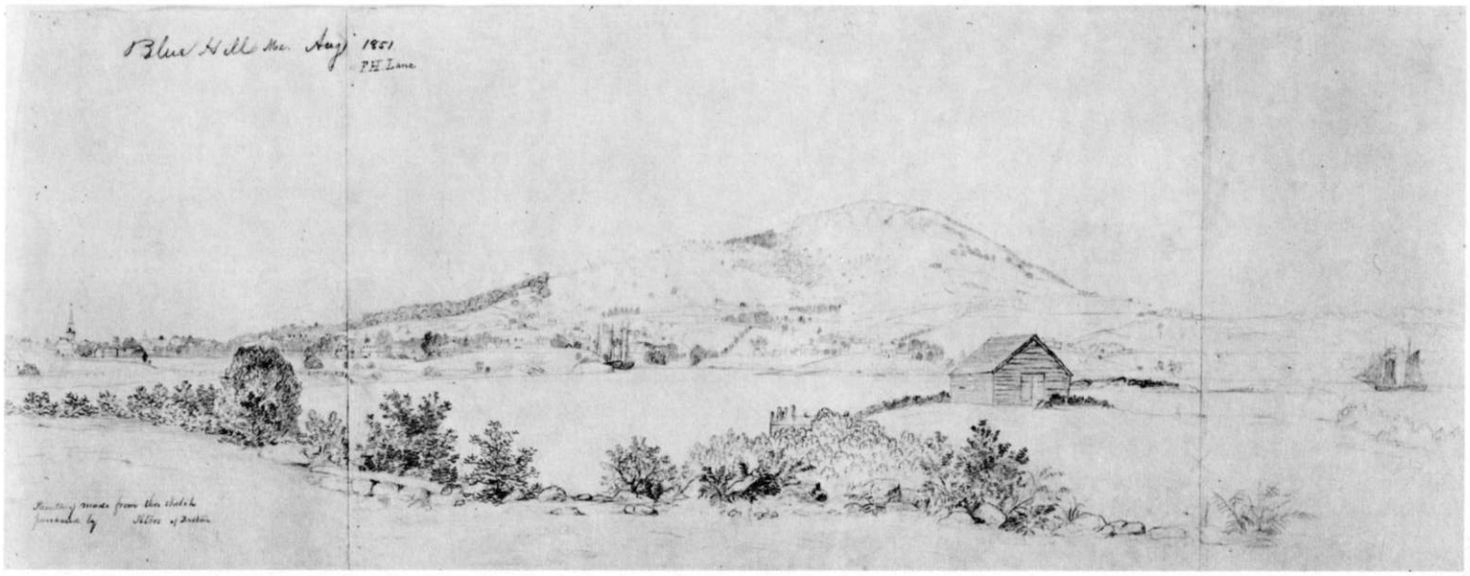


fig. 17. Lane, *Blue Hill, Maine,* 1851, pencil on paper, 10 9/16 x 27 11/16 in. [The Harvard University Art Museums, Bequest of Francis L. Hofer]

made many sketches around Owl's Head (fig. 15), Camden and the lower Penobscot (fig. 16), and Blue Hill (fig. 17). Few works of real consequence seem to have immediately resulted from this trip, but Lane did paint the spirited, though not entirely successful, *Off Owl's Head, Maine* (1852, Cape Ann Historical Association). Given Lane's tendency not to date many of his paintings, we cannot be certain when he produced other works that derived from drawings of 1851, such as *Blue Hill, Maine*

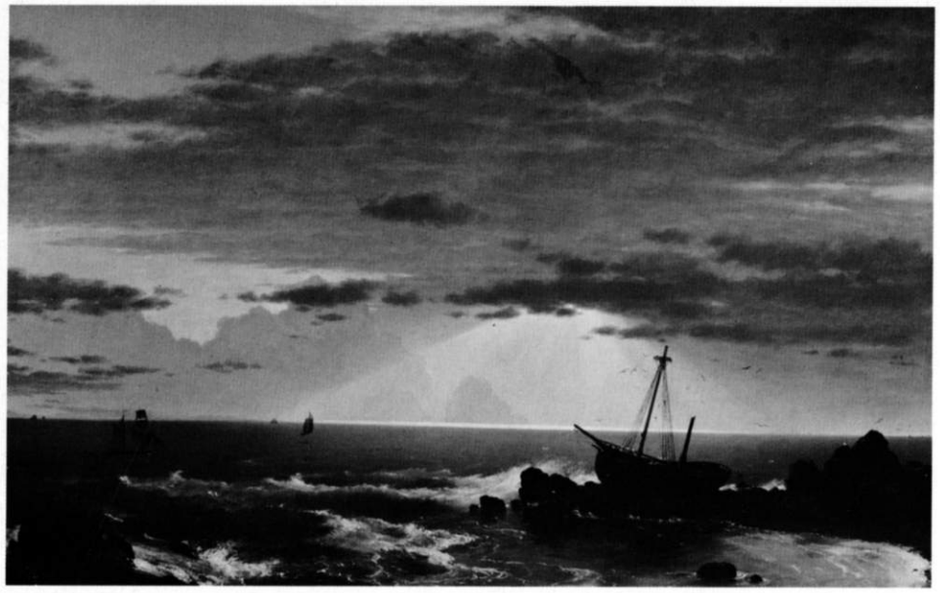


fig. 18. Frederic Edwin Church, *The Wreck*, 1852, oil on canvas, 30 x 46 in. [Cowan Collection, The Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee]

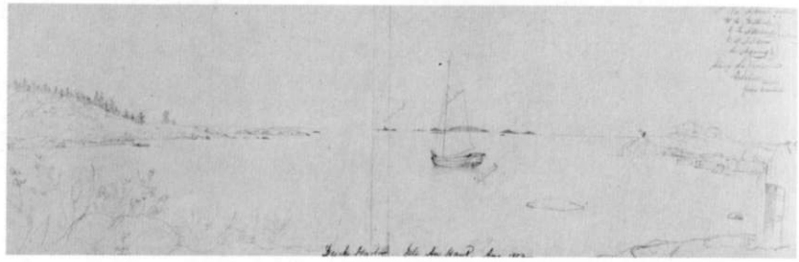


fig. 19. Lane, *Duck Harbor, Isle au Haut, Penobscot Bay*, 1852, pencil on paper, 10 1/4 x 31 in. [Cape Ann Historical Association]

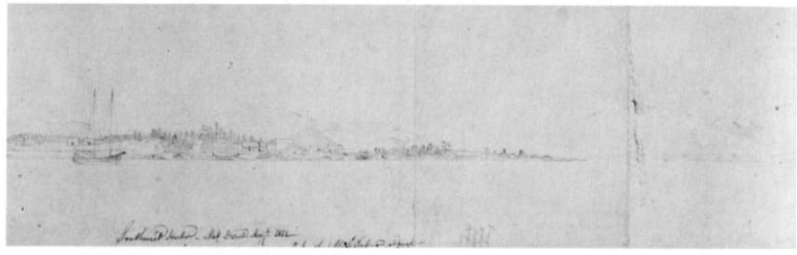


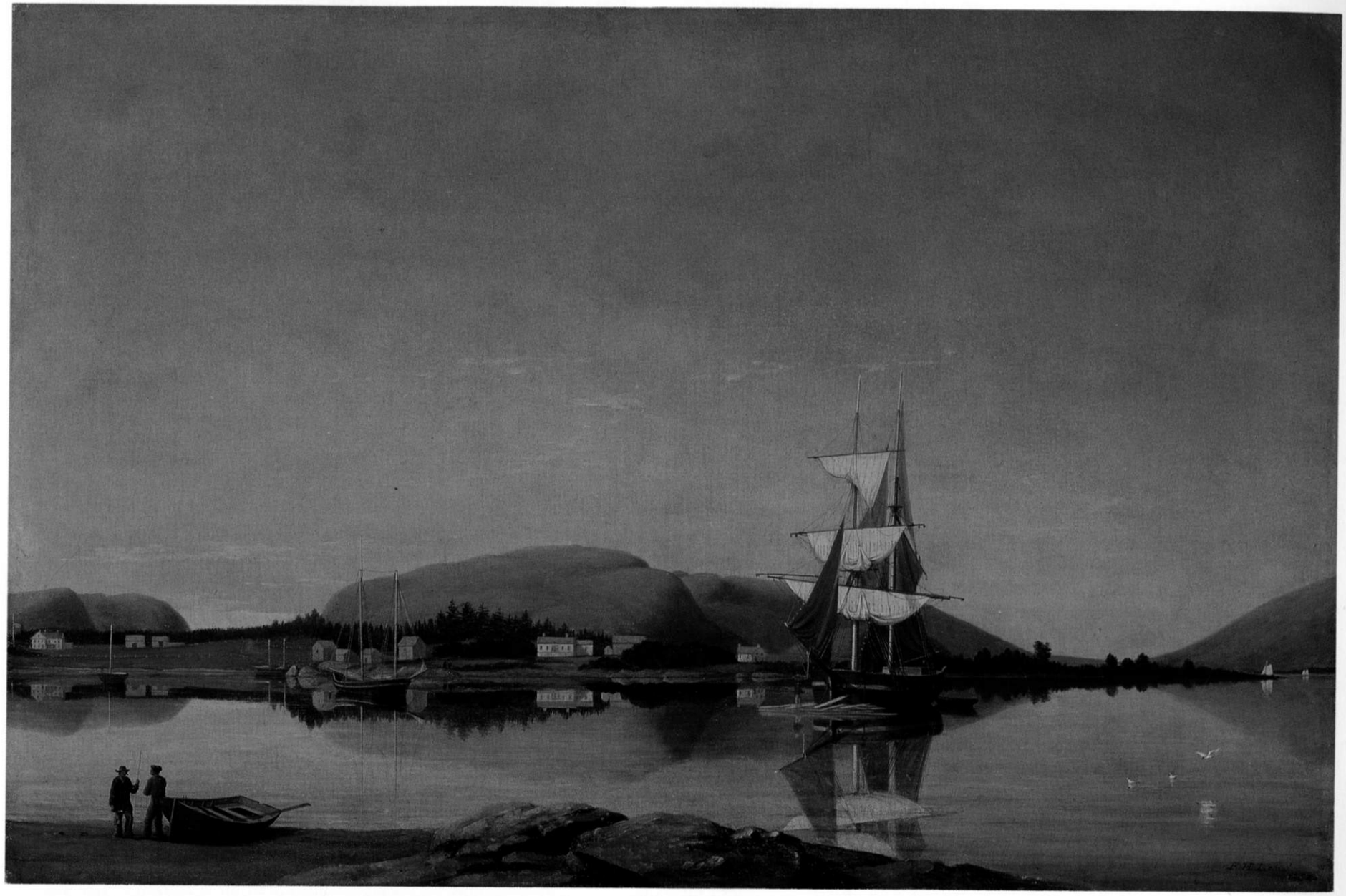
fig. 20. Lane, *Southwest Harbor, Mount Desert*, 1852, pencil on paper, 10 1/2 x 31 3/4 in. [Cape Ann Historical Association]

(cat. 58), but it was doubtless within the next few years.

Church, ever eager to see new scenery and try his hand at new artistic challenges, actually went as far as the Bay of Fundy and Grand Manan Island in Canada in August of 1851 and then returned to Mount Desert in October. The most striking picture to result from this new look at the coast was *The Wreck* (fig. 18). Although not universally admired, as was his *Beacon* of the previous year, *The Wreck* gave sufficient evidence of Church's abilities for one leading critic to deem him "without doubt the first [that is, the best] of our marine painters."[41] We may only guess what Lane would have made of this assessment, but as it turned out, Church painted relatively few marines after this point, having seemingly exhausted his interest in them.

For both Lane and Church the year 1852 marked an important new phase in their visits to Maine. Lane, as usual in the company of Stevens, was back in Castine for the summer. In August Stevens chartered the sloop *Superior,* which was piloted by the same man who had sailed with them to Mount Desert in 1850.[42] The trip took them first to Isle au Haut, where Lane made sketches of Penobscot Bay and its islands from new vantage points (fig. 19). From there the group sailed to Mount Desert Rock, where they saw a wrecked schooner and watched a finback whale chasing fish. After a few hours, they set course for Mount Desert and Somes Sound. They discovered that the steamer *Lawrence* had preceded them into the sound, apparently the first steam-powered vessel ever to sail those waters. Once again, Lane was witness to the intrusion of mechanized civilization into a formerly undisturbed world, but he left us no record of it in his known drawings from the trip.

Only a few paintings can be securely dated to the period immediately after the 1852 trip, making it difficult to establish the evolution of Lane's Maine views. But one signed and dated picture, *Entrance of Somes Sound from Southwest Harbor* (cat. 57) can tell us a great deal. This has long been one of Lane's most admired works, and a close look at how he created it will add to our understanding of its importance in his stylistic development. Fortunately, his drawing of the site survives (fig. 20). Like others from the 1852 cruise on the *Superior,* this drawing was almost certainly made on board the boat, as the absence of a foreground implies. Lane concentrated primarily on recording the buildings of Southwest Harbor, each of which he carefully delineated. The mountains beyond the town and to the right, up the sound, were less thoroughly worked, but their contours were carefully recorded. Other than a schooner lying in the waters off the town and a boat under sail in the distance at the far right, no vessels are present. Like most of Lane's drawings, this



cat. 57. *Entrance of Somes Sound from Southwest Harbor,* 1852; oil on canvas, 23¾ x 35¾ in. [private collection]

is little more than a topographical view, with no particular compositional focus and without any carefully controlled recession into space. It is an accurate record of the scene, but transforming it into a finished work of art would require a number of subtle adjustments and additions.

The most readily apparent change from drawing to painting is the increased verticality of the canvas, which has a height to width ratio of 2:3. Lane tightened the composition by eliminating most of the mountain at the far right. Two-thirds of the painting are given over to sky, providing effective vertical bal-

ance for the lateral sweep of water across the lower section. Lane also added a small strip of beach and a cluster of rocks to the bottom edge, establishing a foreground. Two men, apparently conversing, stand on the beach by a rowboat. The schooner present in the drawing reappears, but it is joined at the left side of the composition by two other vessels, a small sailboat and another schooner. The most prominent addition, however, is the large brig that appears just to the right of the composition's center. Lane obviously gave great care to the placement of this beautifully conceived ship, for it plays the key role in binding together the horizontal and vertical elements of the painting.[43] The brig is located at a point two-thirds of the way across the canvas from the left, and the topmost yard of the forward mast creates a line that bisects the canvas horizontally. In addition, the position of the ship in the water places it perfectly in line with the diagonal running from the foreground rowboat to the distant hills and the setting sun. This insistent diagonal is complemented, and tempered somewhat, by a zig-zagging movement into space established by the play of lines from the figures on the beach, to the sailboat at the far left, to the two small schooners, across to the brig, and finally to the two distant sailboats heading up the sound. One can cite other evidence of Lane's mastery of pictorial structure, such as the way the rocks at the lower center mirror the central mountains, or the way the mountains themselves have been slightly heightened from the drawing, giving them more distinctive profiles. But such analysis cannot fully explain the effect of the painting, nor can recourse to the continually addressed, but perhaps ultimately unanswerable, question of what may or may not constitute a "luminist" painting. *Somes Sound* may be a masterpiece of structural harmony and balance, but it is also masterful in the way it portrays the rich complexity of the natural world.

The pictorial structure of *Somes Sound,* with its contained and controlled space, is paralleled by its content. Nothing in this scene of stasis and calm interrupts the sense of order. Once again, comparison with Lane's earlier views of Gloucester (fig. 14) or his *Bar Island and Mount Desert Mountains* (fig. 13 [cat. 50]) is instructive. In those works many more elements, both natural and manmade (ships, figures, and bits of incidental detail), attract attention and many are obviously in motion (rowboats being rowed, sails being raised or lowered). These early pictures retain the complexity of Lane's purely topographical views, and an attendant narrative element. The implication is that they are but components of a larger world that lies just beyond their edges. One senses, for instance, that the rowboats or sailboats could easily pass out of the picture's space into another area immediately adjacent. By their comparative complexity, and most especially by their evocation of motion (no matter how limited), they remind the viewer of the real world, achieving a kind of verisimilitude that is, in itself, admirable. But *Somes Sound,* by contrast, is virtually self-contained, seeming to exist not as a part of some greater whole of similar scenes that make up a world, but purely, and perfectly, on its own. We sense that things happen in this world—men converse, ships are sailed, lumber is loaded, birds fly, and houses are lived in—but they do not seem to happen before our eyes. Everything is stilled and locked into place, both by the ordering geometry of Lane's composition, which locates objects securely in pictorial space, and by the incisive clarity of his light, which fixes every object indelibly in the implied atmosphere that surrounds it. In *Somes Sound* Lane achieved, arguably for the first time, a compelling synthesis of reality and imagination; from a mundane view of water and land he created a vision of a world so perfectly re-ordered by the process of artistic invention as to transcend altogether the literal and the familiar.

Somes Sound marked the beginning of a new phase in Lane's art. If in the following years he did not consistently pursue the implications of its elegant and spare style, he did begin on the course leading to the superb works of his late style. It has been suggested that Lane's interest in spiritualism might, in some measure, have accounted for the intensity of vision embodied in works such as *Somes Sound,* as if the artist were privy to a world that others simply could not see. But so elusive an idea cannot be proved.[44] Some other scholars, taking their cue more from the paintings themselves rather than from anything actually known about Lane's thoughts and beliefs, have equated his paintings with the transcendentalism of Emerson. That, too, is difficult to prove, although Elizabeth Ellis presents a stimulating case elsewhere in this catalogue that Lane and Emerson did share a common vision of history. Perhaps Lane—at least at this point in his career—was first and foremost a realist invariably concerned with portraying actual places and actual scenes, but one who also understood that the best means for doing so were not always strictly mimetic. As he became more and more famil-

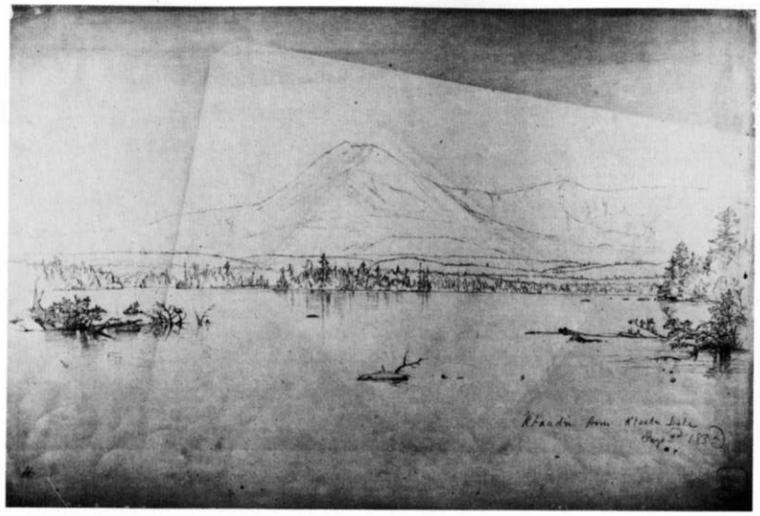


fig. 21. Frederic Edwin Church, *Ktaadn from Ktaadn Lake*, 1852, pencil on paper, 12 x 17 3/4 in. [New York State, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Olana State Historic Site]

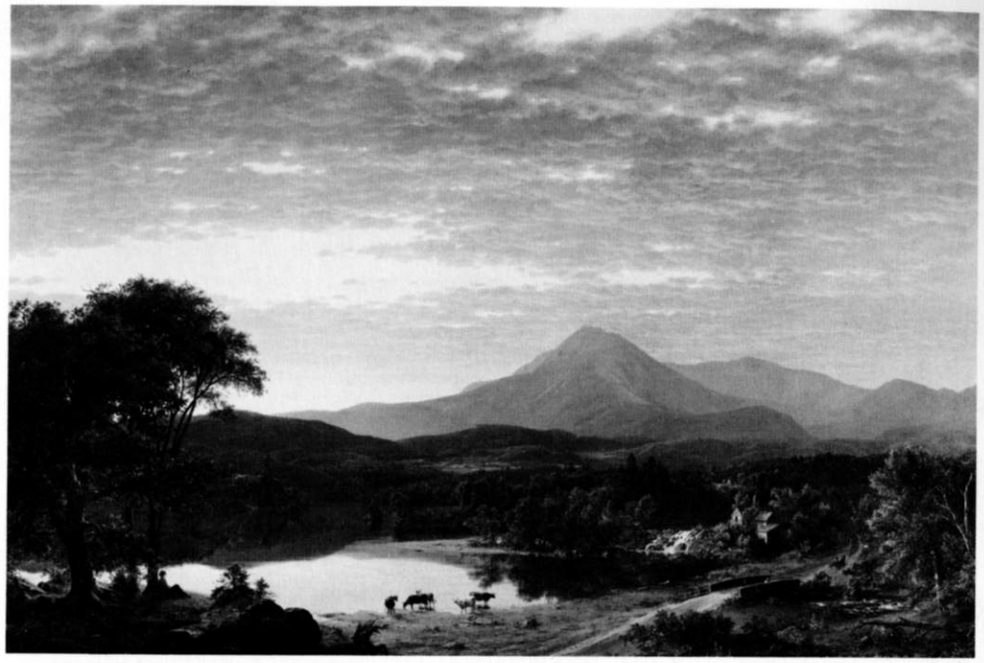


fig. 22. Frederic Edwin Church, *Mount Ktaadn*, 1853, oil on canvas, 36 1/4 x 55 1/4 in. [Yale University Art Gallery, Stanley B. Resor, B.A. 1901, Fund]

iar with his subjects, he began to change his compositions so that they achieved a greater clarity and a more concentrated effect. It cannot be categorically stated that the experience of Maine led him to this new way of seeing and depicting the world. Such a stylistic evolution was not unique to Lane; it also occurred, for example, in the work of John Frederick Kensett. But it is true that Lane's only previous painting that had even approached this intensity of effect and economy of means was another Maine picture, *Twilight on the Kennebec*. Gradually, his efforts to recreate on canvas the special character and beauty of Maine's scenery were leading him to a new style that was, in essence, an elegant refinement of his earlier manner. The effects of the new aesthetic language Lane employed in *Somes Sound* were soon felt in a number of key works, including his classic views of Boston Harbor. That new language would also provide the basis for the finest Maine paintings he would execute during the rest of his career.

Church's 1852 visit to Maine was equally important in his artistic development, but it took him to an area of the state where the scenery was vastly different from that he and Lane had come to know on Mount Desert. After a second visit to Grand Manan in August, Church turned inland and traveled to Mount Katahdin the following month. Unfortunately, we know little about this first visit to the area that would provide the subject matter for some of his most important North American landscapes, including *Twilight in the Wilderness*. According to Church's friend, Theodore Winthrop, he made the trip with "a squad of lumbermen."[45] Church managed to make the difficult ascent of Katahdin, but he and his companions had to spend "wet and ineffective days in the dripping woods."[46]

We know from contemporary accounts that the area Church had chosen to visit was the wildest in all of New England, with virtually no evidence of man other than traces left by loggers and hunters. What most forcibly struck Thoreau, who admitted it was "difficult to conceive of a region uninhabited by man," was "the continuousness of the forest," which he described as "immeasurable," with "no clearing, no house," and "countless lakes."[47] Finding the area "even more grim and wild" than he had anticipated, Thoreau came to the realization that "this was primeval, untamed, and forever untameable *Nature*. . . ."[48]

What had attracted Frederic Church to this rugged and desolate land? Perhaps his experiences on Mount Desert and Grand Manan had whetted his appetite for even more dramatic and sublime scenery. Perhaps, too, he was seeking a great geological wonder that would outshine all others he had previously seen, whether at West Rock, Natural Bridge, or Grand Manan. But

whatever his reasons for going to Mount Katahdin, Church, like Thoreau, found the experience of its "primeval" wilderness overwhelming. His drawing, *Ktaadn from Ktaadn Lake* (fig. 21), records a landscape much like the one Thoreau described, but in the finished painting of 1853, *Mount Ktaadn* (fig. 22), Church completely transformed the scene. Below a rosy sunset sky filled with fleecy clouds the mountain presides over a pastoral scene. A young boy sits musing beneath a tree by a calm lake, dreamily gazing across space to a mill that stands by a stream. At the right a dirt road leads to a bridge with a man fishing, and a carriage drives off into the distance. Areas of cleared land are visible in the distance. One could hardly imagine a more peaceful, bucolic world than this, nor could one easily imagine one more at variance with the truth of the scene it supposedly portrayed. Church had, in essence, imagined on canvas a possible future for inland Maine, one in which American nature and American civilization were perfectly compatible. In the untempered idealism of his youth, Church believed in the primacy of man over nature and that man was capable of using and modifying the New World without destroying it. *Mount Ktaadn*, painted in response to the least civilized, most primeval world he had ever seen, was Church's eloquent statement of that belief. It was a belief destined to change in response to the realities of the later 1850s.

Even though Lane never came face to face with the Maine wilderness that had so deeply impressed Church and Thoreau, he too evolved in the mid-1850s a vision of landscape that celebrated the peaceful assimilation of American civilization into American nature. He did not, however, have to seek recourse in his imagination, as Church had done in *Mount Ktaadn*, for his travels in Maine had taken him to a few places that were the very embodiments of a pastoral ideal. Consider, for example, the radiantly beautiful world seen in *Blue Hill, Maine* (cat. 58), which Lane derived from his drawing of 1851 (fig. 17). Blue Hill was an active port and important shipbuilding and milling center when Lane visited it. As was the case with *Somes Sound*, Lane carefully adjusted the raw material of the drawing and added a few key elements in creating the finished painting. The result was a vision of balanced order in which natural and man-made elements coexist in harmony, a real equivalent of the imagined world of Church's *Mount Ktaadn*. Something of the same mood permeates other Maine works of these years, such

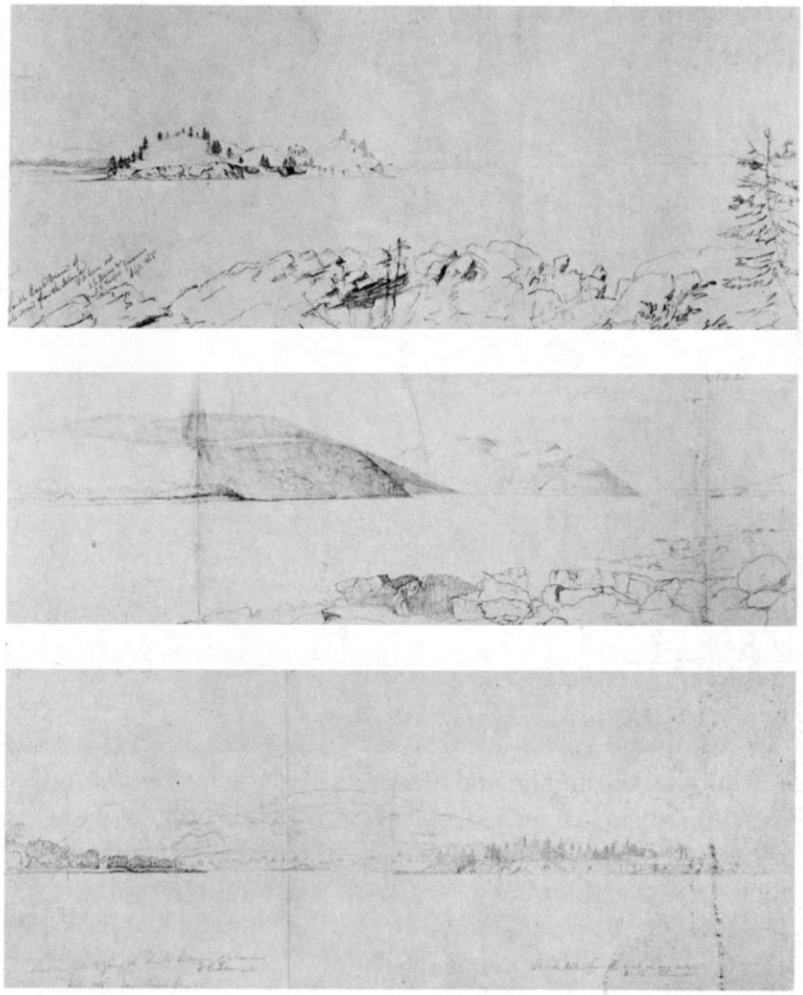


fig. 23. Lane, *South East View of Owl's Head, from the Island*, 1855, pencil on paper, 10 3/4 x 25 1/2 in.; fig. 24. Lane, *Looking Westerly from Eastern Side of Somes Sound near the Entrance*, 1855, pencil on paper, 8 3/4 x 26 1/4 in.; fig. 25. Lane, *Camden Mountains from the South Entrance to Harbor*, 1855, pencil on paper, 10 1/2 x 26 in. [All Cape Ann Historical Association]

as the fine *Castine* (cat. 59), and it also appears in some of his Gloucester paintings, such as *View of Gloucester from "Brookbank," the Sawyer Homestead* (cat. 11).

Lane had by now become thoroughly familiar with his chosen part of Maine, and he knew the scenery of the lower Penobscot and Mount Desert areas so well that he must have been able to paint much of it from memory. But he did not tire of seeing and sketching it anew. In 1855 Lane was once again in

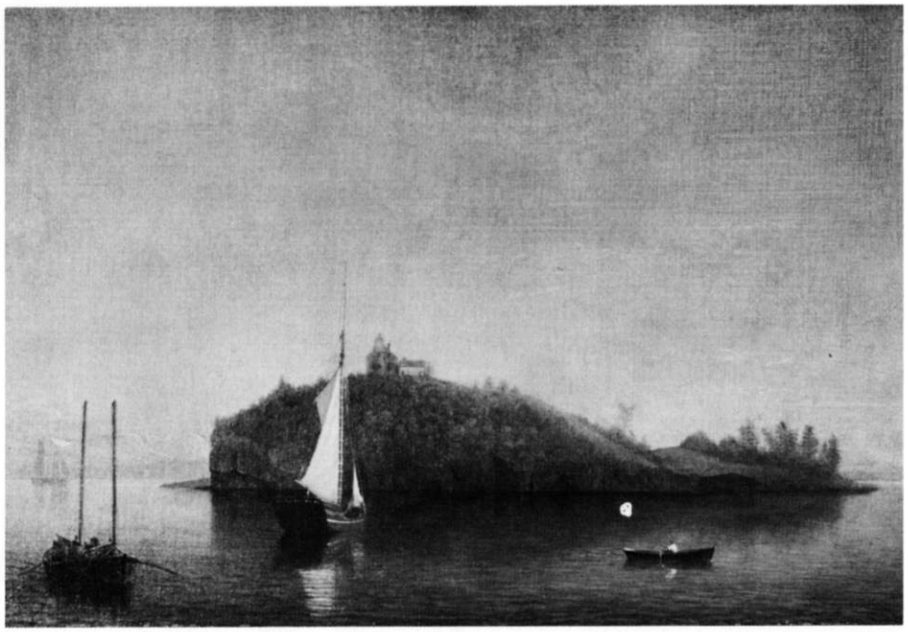


fig. 27. Lane, *Bear Island, Northeast Harbor,* 1855, oil on canvas, 14 x 21 in. [Cape Ann Historical Association]

Castine (cat. 60) and he and Stevens sailed the waters around Camden, Rockland, and Mount Desert.[49] He sketched many places that he had drawn on earlier visits: Owl's Head (fig. 23), Somes Sound (fig. 24), and the Camden Mountains (fig. 25). One new site, however, did attract his attention. This was Bear Island, off Northeast Harbor on Mount Desert (fig. 26), which provided the inspiration for a striking small oil of 1855 (fig. 27) that shows a new interest for Lane in more rugged scenery and in more dramatic effects of light and dark.

Those interests are even more clearly evident in two works of the following year, *Sunrise on the Maine Coast* (private collection) and *Off Mount Desert Island* (fig. 28 [cat. 46]). Both are notable for their starkness, with rocky foregrounds and middlegrounds so sharply defined by contrasting areas of light and dark as to become almost surreal, even ominous. In *Off Mount Desert* dead trees and branches jut jaggedly into space, providing visual echoes of the two ships that frame the right and left sides of the composition. Nature may not have become threatening in these works, as it would in Lane's great *Approaching Storm, Owl's Head* of 1860 (fig. 30 [cat. 51]), but it had undeniably assumed a new, more intense edge.

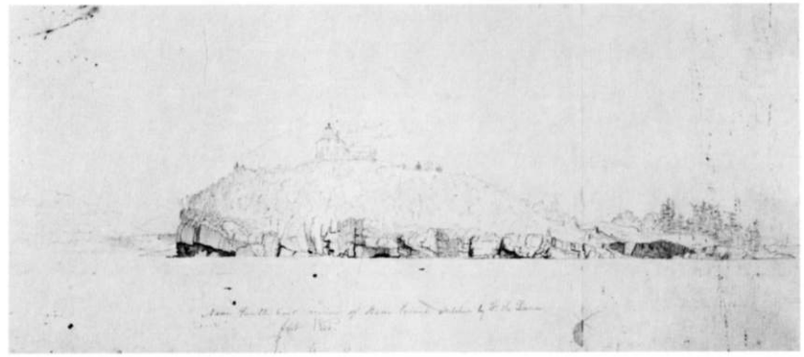


fig. 26. Lane, *Near Southeast View of Bear Island,* 1855, pencil on paper, 10 3/4 x 22 3/4 in. [Cape Ann Historical Association]

For Church, too, the later 1850s represented a period of change and reassessment, and his own Maine paintings took on a markedly different character from that of his earlier works. Much had happened in his life during the intervening years, not the least of which was a visit to South America in 1853. From 1854 to 1856 Church devoted much of his energy to painting spectacular tropical scenery, creating a splendid series of landscapes unlike anything Americans had ever seen. Maine, though not forgotten, was less on his mind. He did visit Mount Desert again in the summers of 1854, 1855, and 1856, but these trips were more and more for spiritual and physical refreshment rather than for new artistic inspiration. Far more important in the implications it held for his art was Church's second visit to Mount Katahdin, made in the summer of 1856 with his friend Theodore Winthrop. Winthrop, an aspiring writer, kept detailed notes during the journey, which were later used as the basis for a fascinating account entitled *Life in the Open Air.*[50]

As we have seen, Church's first experience of Katahdin had left him overwhelmed by the spectacle of so much wild and untamed nature. By the time of his second visit, however, he had seen some of the world's most dramatic scenery, including Andean volcanoes, the Falls of Tequendama, and Niagara. He had also seen many of the places in New England where he had sketched in the previous decade radically changed by the encroachment of civilization. Whereas before he had looked on wild nature and envisioned it tempered by the pastoral benefits of man's coming, he now sought out precisely those areas that were the least disturbed by man. As Winthrop, who described

fig. 28. Lane, *Off Mount Desert Island*, 1856
oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 36 1/4 in. [Brooklyn Museum, Museum Collection Fund]

their visit to Katahdin in terms of a pilgrimage to pristine nature, wrote: "We both needed to be somewhere near the heart of New England's wildest wilderness."[51] No longer fully confident of America's stewardship of its natural heritage, Church reformulated his art so that it expressed a completely new view of nature. That vision found its first, and perhaps its most forceful, realization in new landscapes of Maine, which Church returned to painting after his 1856 trip to Katahdin.

The change is clearly evident in the dramatic *Sunset* (fig. 29). Like Lane's *Off Mount Desert* of the same year, *Sunset* portrays a more rugged and intense side of American nature, making it vastly different from the *Mount Ktaadn* of just three years earlier.[52] Man no longer assumes a dominant role in the landscape; the only hints of his presence are the rough dirt path and the sheep. The left side of the composition, with its blasted tree, spiky spruce, and tangled undergrowth, represents untouched, wild nature, and is emblematic of the world that lies beyond the calm lake. The very structure of the painting, with a middleground of water and wooded hills blocking easy passage into the distance, represents a significant change from Church's earlier works, which generally established clear transitions from one zone of the landscape to the next. In *Sunset*, the viewer instinctively looks to the sky, where ranks of clouds lead a headlong rush into space. We are thus made aware of both the vastness of the American wilderness and of its dense impenetrability.

Four years later, in 1860, Church brought his new interpretation of Maine to a dramatic climax in *Twilight in the Wilderness* (fig. 2), in which all trace of man has been banished. This is an image of a world seemingly unchanged since its creation (like "that very America which the Northmen, and Cabot, and Gosnold, and Smith, and Raleigh visited"), a place with its own immutable laws and its own sensitive balance of forces. Church, like other Americans of his day who were alert to the ramifications of the nation's unchecked expansion, had become a champion of preserving at least a portion of the New World untouched by human change. Thoreau, too, had revisted Katahdin and found himself deeply disturbed now by the "motives which commonly carry men into the wilderness."[53] As he

fig. 29. Frederic Edwin Church, *Sunset*, 1856, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in. [Museum of Art, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York, Proctor Collection]

noted, "For one that comes with a pencil to sketch, or sing, a thousand come with an axe or rifle."[54] Upon his return to Bangor following his visit to the mountain, Thoreau saw vast numbers of trees "literally drawn and quartered" in the mills there, leading him to believe that Maine would "soon be where Massachusetts is."[55] Thoreau now found wilderness "necessary . . . for a resource and a background, the raw material of all our civilization."[56] Frederic Church, to judge from *Twilight in the Wilderness*, would have agreed with that sentiment.

Twilight in the Wilderness was one of the most complex and most richly meaningful paintings of Church's career, a highly public work whose significance went far beyond its expression of the positive value of untouched nature. It reflected the tension of a country on the verge of civil war, and addressed the spiritual trial that faced both the nation as a whole and each individual citizen.[57] In this work, and in others from the late 1850s and early 1860s, Church had perfected a kind of heroic landscape, one with meanings and implications that far transcended the significance of any geographical location. Although *Twilight in the Wilderness* had its genesis in the artist's experiences in Maine, and though it captured the very essence of the state's wild interior, it was ultimately a work about matters of broader national concern.

Lane never attained a scope and ambition comparable to Church's, nor was it likely his wish to do so. He never consciously directed his art to the critics and connoisseurs in New York who in the late 1850s and early 1860s devoted so much attention to explicating the art of Church and other leading painters. Instead, Lane preferred to paint works on commission that went directly to friends and acquaintances in Gloucester and Boston. Even though others encouraged him to send paintings to New York for exhibition, he apparently only did so once after 1852.[58] Consequently, virtually no significant contemporary critical reactions to his works exist today to help us in interpretation. Nor do we know enough about Lane's thoughts and beliefs in his last years to speculate on his views of the developments that had so distressed Church, Thoreau, and many others. He surely saw that Maine, and his native Gloucester, for that matter, were changing under the inexorable pressures of civilization. Once untouched shores were being rapidly

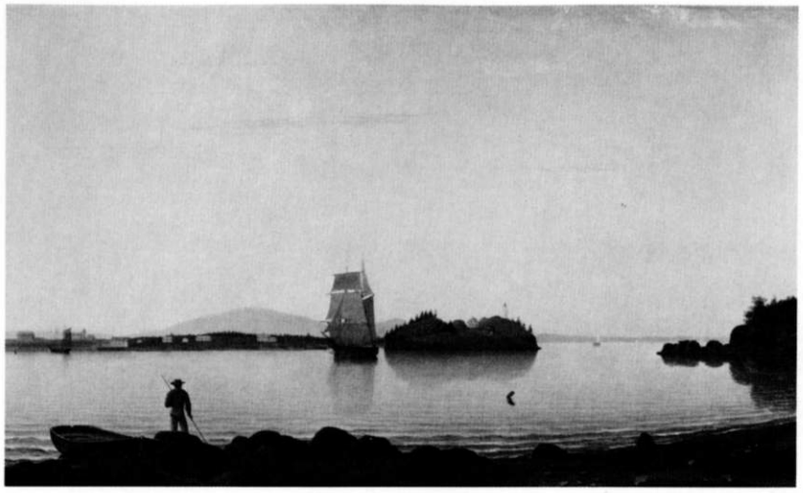


fig. 31. Lane, *Owl's Head, Penobscot Bay, Maine,* 1862, oil on canvas, 16 x 26 in. [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, M. and M. Karolik Collection]

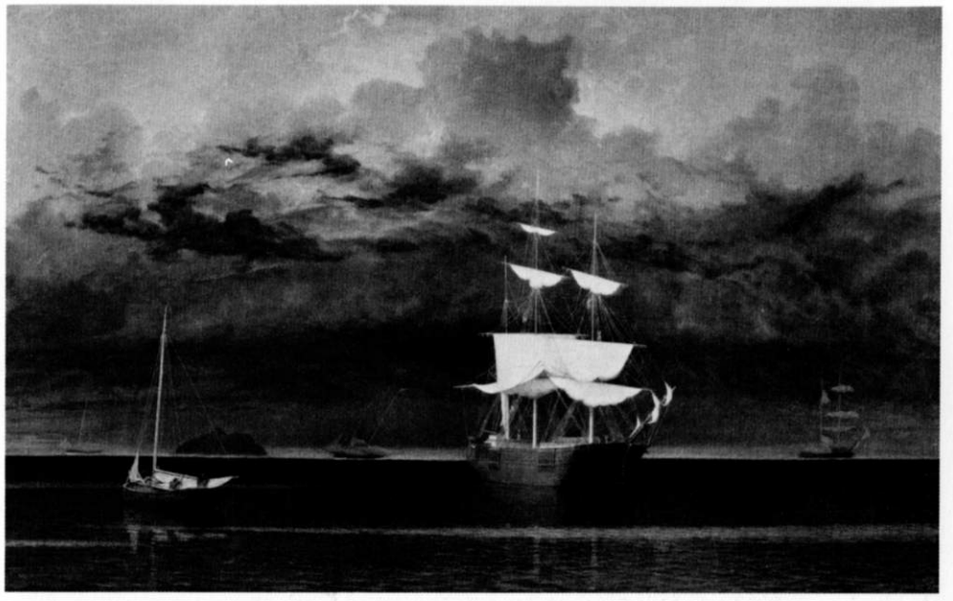


fig. 30. Lane, *Approaching Storm, Owl's Head,* 1860, oil on canvas, 24 x 39⅝ in. [private collection]

developed, and the waters where he sailed and sketched were becoming ever more crowded. Noisy and sooty steamships were beginning to replace the quiet sailing vessels he so loved to paint, and once thriving ports were beginning to lose business to the ever expanding railroads. Not even Maine could offer a refuge from such scenes forever.

Perhaps it was a reaction to the changes of time, or perhaps it was only the logical end of his progression toward simpler, more austere, images, but Lane's late works—those from 1860 on—are characterized by an increased refinement and elegance. Gradually, he distilled the essentials from long-familiar subjects. In *Lumber Schooners at Evening on Penobscot Bay* (cat. 61) Lane reduced the fundamentals of his art to such a minimum that comparable subjects from just a few years earlier, such as *Castine* (cat. 59) seem crowded in comparison. On a quiet expanse of water two lumber schooners, one quite close, the other far off in the distance, lie on a diagonal leading to the setting sun. No other signs of man are present. The shoreline of wooded hills is only minimally described, primarily through contour. The sky, which now takes up a full three quarters of the canvas, is serene, with only a few flattened, stylized clouds. Like *Somes Sound, Lumber Schooners* presents a seemingly self-contained world, but it is a world even further abstracted by the artist's controlling geometry and purified by the suppression of extraneous detail. Made all the more poignant by the rosy hues signifying the close of day and by the implied descent of night upon this peaceful world, *Lumber Schooners* assumes an air of wistful reverie and, ever so slightly, a hint of nostalgia and sadness. In reality, the lower Penobscot had, by 1860, become considerably more crowded with shipping, and its shoreline considerably more developed, than the painting implies. Perhaps Lane, through this spare and evocative image, was indeed reacting to the passing of a world he knew and loved. For him, as for Church in *Twilight in the Wilderness,* the meaning of Maine was now best expressed through an image that said as little about man's impact as possible.

Approaching Storm, Owl's Head, also of 1860 (fig. 30 [cat. 51]) can be read as a stylistic and thematic pendant to *Lumber Schooners,* for it is similarly austere in composition and similarly evocative in mood. It, too, portrays a world poised on the brink of darkness, but under different and more dramatic circumstances. The approaching storm has momentarily stilled water and wind, but it will soon unleash its fury. Men hurry to lower sails and make ready for the bad weather. The viewer, however, is left only to contemplate the tension of those final moments, knowing that the storm will come. We may never know for cer-

tain whether or not this painting expressed Lane's apprehensions about the coming of the Civil War, as has sometimes been suggested, but it undeniably was the most intensely ominous work of his career.[59]

In such works, Lane's vision of Maine, although still grounded in actual experience, no longer represented an attempt to recreate experience, or specific place, in any purely literal or narrative way. These are images of memory based on more than ten years of accumulated experience. Unlike works such as *Somes Sound* or *Blue Hill*, which were closely derived from drawings recording actual sites from Lane's travels, *Lumber Schooners* and *Approaching Storm, Owl's Head* were independently conceived; no preliminary studies are known. The process of editing unnecessary and distracting detail had led Lane to a detachment indicative of an artist who was now painting what he knew and thought, or what he hoped to be, rather than what he saw. For all its calm clarity and all its balanced order, the well-known *Owl's Head* (fig. 31) of 1862 is so consciously reduced to essentials as to approach the ephemeral. Although its composition recalls that of *Somes Sound* of a decade earlier, it is far sparer. Elements such as the large ship and the houses and buildings of the shoreline have been pushed further into space, diminishing their importance. Light and atmosphere, both actual and reflected, dominate. It is no wonder, then, that modern viewers have so often turned to contemporary literature and philosophy in attempting to explain this seemingly eloquent, but curiously silent work. Even the figure in the foreground, which seems precisely the type of surrogate that usually encourages a viewer to identify with it and thus mentally enter the imagined space of the painting, has now become rigid, yet another element of the image's insistent geometry.[60] *Owl's Head* marked the final development of Lane's pictorial treatment of Maine, and it was one so finely perfected as to leave no further room for development.

For Church in the 1860s, Maine's importance as a source of inspiration also gradually began to wane, but he did paint one last superb work, *Coast Scene, Mount Desert* (fig. 32). Based on an oil sketch that probably dated from a visit in the early 1850s (Cooper-Hewitt Museum), this was Church's finest marine, a work of far more power and of far greater quality than the painting that had been its distant inspiration, Achenbach's *Clearing Up—Coast of Sicily.* Church, who would live out the century,

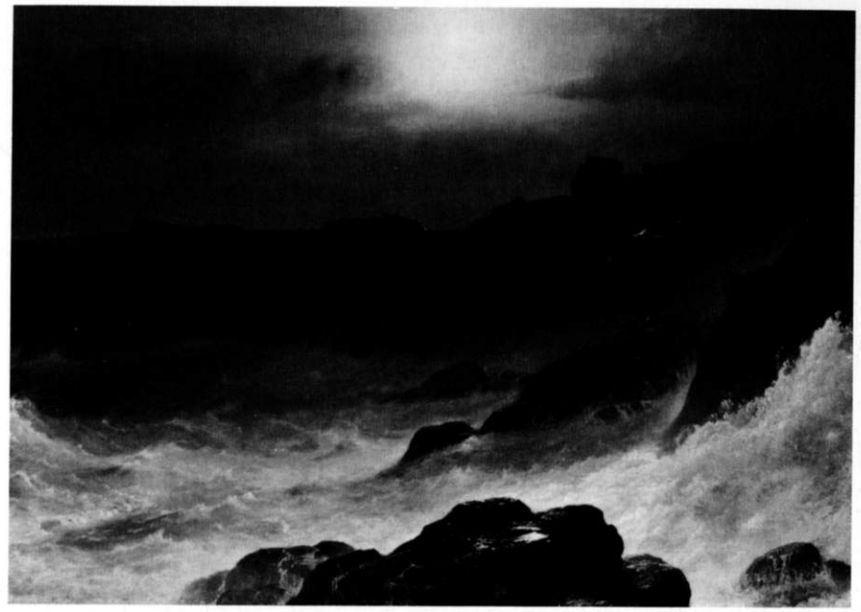


fig. 32. Frederic Edwin Church, *Coast Scene, Mount Desert (Storm at Mount Desert)*, 1863, oil on canvas, 36 1/8 x 48 in. [Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Bequest of Clara Hinton Gould]

continued to visit Maine for much of the rest of his life, especially after 1876, when he acquired a wilderness camp on Lake Millinocket near Katahdin. Although paintings of Maine from the later 1860s and the 1870s do exist, none, unfortunately, carried the conviction and spirit of inventiveness that made his earlier works so memorable.

Lane made a final visit to Maine in 1863, but no significant paintings seem to have resulted. Perhaps he no longer had the strength and stamina for the rigors of coastal travel, for he only went as far as Portland, where he made at least one drawing of the harbor (Cape Ann Historical Association). During the last years of his life he concentrated on the shoreline of his native Gloucester and Cape Ann and in a few surprising instances, such as the *Riverdale* (cat. 19) of 1863, he explored pure landscape. But the lessons of Maine were not forgotten. The steady progression in his art toward a distilled, rarefied vision of the natural world came to a remarkable conclusion in the culminating *Brace's Rock* (cats. 21–23) series. Reducing now even the actual size of his canvases, Lane concentrated on a single motif, as if this one small place embodied the entire reality of the natural

world. The listing boat only hints of man's presence, and the serene environment seems otherwise undisturbed. As in *Somes Sound,* this is a world we can easily comprehend visually, but also one that somehow far transcends ordinary existence. The *Brace's Rock* paintings were the true successors to Lane's last Maine pictures.

For both Lane and Church the state of Maine had been not only a source of vital inspiration, but also one of artistic challenge. In their first Maine pictures, each attempted to move beyond the relatively conservative styles—the Hudson River School for Church, and topographical painting and the art of Robert Salmon for Lane—that had informed their early works. Both had modified their compositions, their handling of light, and their very selection of subjects in response to the Maine landscape. Church, the more restless of the two, traveled more widely, and changed his art perhaps more rapidly and more completely. But for Lane, the experience of Maine worked a slower, more profound, change leading him away from crowded, busy compositions toward the purified vision of his late style. Like Thoreau at Walden, who wished "to front only the essential facts of life," Lane had responded to the challenge of Maine by redefining the very essence of his art.

1. Both works were, for instance, included in the recent exhibition, *A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting, 1760–1910* (Boston, 1983), which purported to represent "the best of early American painting." The Lane was one of four (three of which were Maine subjects) included in the show; Church was represented by twice that number (three of which were Maine subjects).
2. See Clarence Cook's remarks of 1854: ". . . Mr. F. H. Lane, whose name ought to be known from Maine to Georgia as the best marine painter in the country," and ". . . Mr. Lane is not as well known as he ought to be. . . ." Quoted in William H. Gerdts, "'The Sea is His Home': Clarence Cook Visits Fitz Hugh Lane," *The American Art Journal* 17 (summer 1985), 47.
3. Descriptive texts about Maine abound, but a particularly useful one is *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'* (Boston, 1937), which was prepared by writers employed by the Works Progress Administration for the State of Maine.
4. Henry David Thoreau, "Ktaadn," in *The Maine Woods* (New York, 1966). 14. This article originally appeared in *The Union Magazine* in 1848.
5. By way of comparison, Massachusetts (approximately 8,250 square miles) had almost one million inhabitants in 1850; Vermont (9,600 square miles) and New Hampshire (9,300 square miles) each had about three hundred thousand.
6. "Ktaadn," 6. Thoreau's awareness of lumbering in Maine was heightened by the fact that he was traveling with a relative from Bangor who was engaged in the business. For an informative and entertaining account of mid-century lumbering in the state, see John S. Springer, *Forest Life and Forest Trees, Comprising Winter Camp-Life Among the Loggers, and Wild-Wood Adventure, with Descriptions of Lumbering Operations on the Various Rivers of Maine and New Brunswick* (New York, 1851). See also Richard G. Wood, *A History of Lumbering in Maine* (Orono, 1971; first published in 1935).
7. Theodore Winthrop, *Life in the Open Air and Other Papers* (Boston, 1863), 24.
8. Wood, *Lumbering in Maine,* 26.
9. For an overview of American travel during the first half of the nineteenth century, see Hans Huth, "The Poetry of Traveling," *The Art Quarterly* 19 (Winter 1956), 357–379.
10. "Ktaadn," 4.
11. See Bailey's "Account of an Excursion to Mount Katahdin, in Maine," *The American Journal of Science and Art* 32 (July 1837), 20–34, and Lanman's *Letters from a Landscape Painter* (Boston, 1845), 143–156. Bailey wrote that to enter the wilderness of Maine meant "bidding farewell to civilization," (22) and Lanman described Katahdin as "the grand center of the only wilderness region in New England, whose principal denizens are wild beasts" (143).
12. Thoreau, "Ktaadn," 106.
13. Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Art and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816–1852* (New York, 1953), 221. Lane exhibited two other paintings at the Art-Union that year, *View in Boston Harbor* and *New York from Jersey City, New Jersey,* neither of which has been identified to date.
14. Such travel was more feasible for Church, of course, than for Lane, because the latter had only limited use of his legs. We know, however, that Lane was capable of making arduous journeys on land with the aid of crutches; see Witherle's account, reproduced in this catalogue on pages 125-126 as an appendix, of their ascent of "one of the highest Mountains" on Mount Desert.

Nevertheless, travel into the depths of the Maine wilderness would certainly have been impossible for Lane, especially given the frequent number of portages required and the often uneven terrain.

15. Springer, *Forest Life*, 186–187.

16. See Robert P. Tristram Coffin, *Kennebec: Cradle of Americans* (New York and Toronto, 1937).

17. John Wilmerding, *Fitz Hugh Lane* (New York, 1971), 47–50.

18. Cowdrey, *American Art-Union*, 221. The descriptions included in the Art-Union catalogues apparently were often written by the artists themselves, but we do not know if these were Lane's words.

19. Wilmerding, *Lane*, 47.

20. See Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825–1875* (New York, 1980), 191–193, for a brief discussion of the role such figures play in paintings by Lane and Martin Johnson Heade.

21. *Maine: A Guide*, 120.

22. "Ktaadn," 108.

23. That other, and more familiar emblem of civilization, the railroad, reached Augusta in 1851 (*Maine: A Guide*, 120).

24. It would be helpful if we knew more about Lane's other early Maine picture, *View on the Penobscot*, but we lack even a description of it from the Art-Union catalogue. The Penobscot was considerably less settled than the Kennebec, and one can only wonder what "view" Lane selected. However, given his destination—Castine—it was likely a scene in that area, where civilization was already well-established.

25. Cowdrey, *Art-Union*, 70–71. For a discussion of *Evening after a Storm* and its possible identification as the work now in the Amon Carter Museum, see Franklin Kelly and Gerald L. Carr, *The Early Landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church, 1845–1854* (Fort Worth, 1987), 99–107. Much of the information on Church in this essay is drawn from my forthcoming *Frederic Edwin Church and the National Landscape* (Smithsonian Institution Press, *New Directions in American Art* series), which was, in turn, based on my unpublished dissertation "Frederic Edwin Church and the North American Landscape, 1845–1860" (University of Delaware, 1985).

26. Wilmerding, *Lane*, 49. Cole actually stopped in Hartford on his way to Maine in August 1844 and spent a day with Church.

27. "Chronicle of Facts and Opinions: American Art and Artists," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, series for 1850 (August 1850), 81. Although it might be argued that this praise for a painting shown in one of the Art-Union's own exhibitions might have been nothing more than good public relations, there is considerable evidence that the Achenbach was indeed widely admired. William Sidney Mount, for example, thought it "a very fine picture," and "enough to emortalize [sic] any painter;" quoted in Alfred Frankenstein, *William Sidney Mount* (New York, 1975), 187.

28. "Chronicle of Facts and Opinions," 81.

29. "Chronicle of Facts and Opinions," 81.

30. Series for 1850 (November 1850), 129–131. Although these letters are unsigned, David Huntington has convincingly attributed them to Church; see his "Frederic Edwin Church, 1826–1900: Painter of the Adamic New World Myth," unpublished Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1960, 24.

31. O. B. Bunce, "On the Coast of Maine," in *Picturesque America; or, the Land We Live In*, William Cullen Bryant, ed. (Secaucus, 1974; first published in 1872), 1–2.

32. "Mountain Views and Coast Scenery," 130.

33. "Mountain Views and Coast Scenery," 130.

34. "Affairs of the Association," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 4 (December 1851), 153.

35. Even though *The Deluge* has been unlocated since the nineteenth century, we can form an idea of its appearance from contemporary descriptions and the two preliminary sketches that survive; see Kelly and Carr, *Early Landscapes*, 60–61 and figure 26.

36. "Mountain Views and Coast Scenery," 131.

37. "Mountain Views and Coast Scenery," 131.

38. "But this picture is the contemplation of unmitigated horror;" [George William Curtis], "The Fine Arts; The National Academy of Design, III," *New-York Daily Tribune*, 10 May 1851, 5.

39. Stevens, in the *Gloucester Daily Telegraph*, 11 September 1850; quoted in Wilmerding, *Lane*, 54.

40. It has been suggested that one bit of evidence in favor of Lane having influenced Church is the presence of similar figures in their works. Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr., for example, considers the man carrying a pair of oars in Church's *Grand Manan Island, Bay of Fundy* (1852, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford) to represent "homage to Lane"; (*Close Observation: Selected Oil Sketches by Frederic E. Church*, [Washington, 1978], 17). Although it is impossible to rule out such influence, these figures seem more likely to me to have had a common source in the typical staffage found in European marine paintings.

41. [George William Curtis], "The Fine Arts; Exhibition of the National Academy of Design," *New-York Daily Tribune*, 8 May 1852, 5. Church, however, never gave the careful attention to the depiction of ships that Lane did, and the ships and boats in his paintings are often obviously out of scale with the rest of the composition.

42. See pages 125-126 for an account of this trip.

43. For a discussion of the attention American artists paid to such compositional concerns, see Lisa Fellows Andrus, "Design and Measurement in Luminist Art," in John Wilmerding *et al.*, *American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850–1875* (Washington, 1980), 31–56.

44. Gene E. McCormick, "Fitz Hugh Lane, Gloucester Artist, 1804–1865," *The Art Quarterly* 15 (Winter 1952), 295.

45. Winthrop, *Life in the Open Air*, 50.

46. Winthrop, *Life in the Open Air*, 97.

47. "Ktaadn," 91–92, 104, 86.

48. "Ktaadn," 91–92, 104.

49. Frederic Allan Sharf, "Fitz Hugh Lane: Visits to the Maine Coast, 1848–1855," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 98 (April 1962), 118–119. Sharf's article provides a convenient and informative overview of Lane's most important visits to Maine. Much of Lane's activity in the summer of 1855 was devoted to the production of his lithograph, *Castine from Hospital Island*.

50. See n. 7.

51. *Life in the Open Air*, 50.
52. The sky and some of the configurations of the landscape were derived from a Mount Desert pencil sketch from September of 1854, and a subsequent oil study (both Olana State Historic Site, Hudson, New York). However, in painting the finished picture, Church transformed the setting to inland Maine, adding a Katahdin-like peak in the distance.
53. "Chesuncook," in *The Maine Woods*, 156. This article, based on Thoreau's trip of 1853, was published in *The Atlantic Magazine* in 1858.
54. "Chesuncook," 157.
55. "Chesuncook," 197, 201.
56. "Chesuncook," 203. Thoreau made a third trip to Maine in 1857, during which he saw even greater evidence of man's destruction of the wilderness: "Where there were but one or two houses, I now found quite a village, with saw-mills and a store, . . . and there was a stage road. . . ." See "The Allegash and East Branch," in *The Maine Woods*, 364.
57. These issues are more fully addressed in my *Frederic Edwin Church and the National Landscape*, chapter 6.
58. Lane sent a "Gloucester Fish[ing] Sch[oone]r on Georges Bank," owned by H. Hutchings to the National Academy of Design in 1859. Lane's name, however, was mispelled and no address was given; see Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826–1860*, vol. 1 (New York, 1943), 283. Clarence Cook in 1854 urged Lane to send "a picture to New-York for exhibition," where he felt it "could not fail to make an impression and call forth criticism." See Gerdts, "'The Sea is His Home,'" 49.
59. Earl A. Powell, "Luminism and the American Sublime," in Wilmerding, *American Light*, 80.
60. This point has been made by Barbara Novak in *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1969), 121.