

Fitz Henry Lane
(1804-1865), Gloucester
Harbor from Rocky
Neck, 1844, oil on
canvas, Cape Ann
Museum, Gloucester,
MA. Gift of Mrs. Jane
Parker Stacy (Mrs.
George O. Stacy), 1948.



Gloucester's Celebrated Artist

Fitz H. Lane's ships, boats, and harborscapes at the Cape Ann Museum.

BY MARGARETTA M. LOVELL

Fitz Henry Lane
(1804-1865), *Three
Master in Rough Seas*
[A Ship in a Stormy
Sea: A Smart Blow],
1856, oil on canvas,
Cape Ann Museum,
Gloucester, MA. Gift
of George O. and Jane
Parker Stacy, 1948.



Fitz Henry Lane
(1804-1865), *Babson
and Ellery Houses*,
Gloucester, 1863, oil
on canvas, Cape Ann
Museum, Gloucester,
MA. Gift of Roger W.
Babson, 1937 (779.02).





Fitz Henry Lane,
Three-Master on the
Gloucester Railway,
1857, oil on canvas,
39 ¼ x 59 ¼ in. (99.7 x
150.5 cm), Cape Ann
Museum, Gloucester.
Deposited by the City
of Gloucester, 1952.
This painting was
commissioned as a
shop sign for ship
painter John Trask.



Above: Fitz H. Lane,
Three-Master on the
Gloucester Railway,
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City of Gloucester,
1952 (DEP. 202).
This painting was
commissioned as a
shop sign for ship
painter John Trask.

Left: Fitz Henry
Lane (1804-1865),
Gloucester Harbor,
1847, oil on canvas,
Cape Ann Museum,
Gloucester, MA. Gift
of Estate of Samuel
H. Mansfield,
1949 (1332.2).

When Fitz H. Lane

was painting in Gloucester in the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s there were no commercial galleries or museum exhibition spaces for art in the city. One could see his work in the bank, in the town hall, in the stationary store, tacked to the outside of at least one tradesman's shop as signage, even paraded through the street on political banners, but there was no publicly available venue to see Lane's paintings as there is at the Cape Ann Museum. This institution has a collection of dozens of his paintings and over a hundred of his drawings in the archives. The result of the efforts of generations

Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *Norman's Woe*, Gloucester Harbor, 1862, oil on canvas, Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester. Bequest of Margaret Farrell Lynch, 1999 (1999.76).



Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), *On the Wharves*, Gloucester Harbor, 1847, oil on panel, Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester. Gift of George O. and Jane Parker Stacy, 1948 (1289.1b).



of Gloucesterites, this treasure trove of the work of one of America's most important 19th-century painters is one of the prides of the city.

How the Cape Ann Museum, established in 1875 as the Cape Ann Scientific and Literary Association, came to own, exhibit, and publish this remarkable group of Lane's works, is a tribute to the artist's achievement, and equally, to the long-term efforts of a series of art-loving locals over the intervening 150 years.

Born in Gloucester in 1804, Fitz H. Lane spent most of his 20-year painting career creating landscapes, seascapes, and ship portraits for his neighbors in the stone Gothic cottage he designed in 1848 overlooking the harbor. In his third-floor vaulted-ceilinged studio he painted scenes recording the booming economic activity of coastal New England—vignettes of the fish, granite, and lumber industries. He also recorded traces of the region's distant trading partners—Surinam, China, California, and Puerto Rico. He painted sites redolent of Gloucester's history such as the Revolutionary-era fort visible on the right of Gloucester Harbor (1852), and the very newest element in Gloucester's economy and landscape, the Pavilion hotel, pictured on the left edge of the same painting. The hotel was built in 1849 by Sidney Mason, one of Lane's most important patrons, to accommodate summer visitors seeking beach views and salutary cool salt air and thus it represents the newest economy in Gloucester, tourism.

One element that makes Lane's paintings distinctive is this emphasis on daily life, labor, and vernacular structures, so very different from the subjects created by New York City landscape painters at the same time. These Hudson River School artists focused on the drama of precipitous mountains, thunderous waterfalls, and, in general, a seemingly uninhabited wilderness. Secondly, while the very successful New York artists arranged their canvases with foreground trees or cliffs bracketing a central void—often a flat water feature, reaching back into a distant brightly-lit point of focus—Lane

often placed his dominant foreground feature at the very center of the canvas, as we see in *Three-Master on the Gloucester Railway*. Alternately, he dispensed with the bracketing features and opened the image to seemingly endless horizontal extension well beyond the rectangle of the canvas. These differences in subjects and style separate his work from that of his well-known New York contemporaries. Additionally, Lane's patrons often selected transitional times of day—morning, twilight, storm coming on—adding drama especially in the skies of his works.

One of the most important dimensions of the CAM collection is a portfolio of drawings that gives us a rare window into the artist's process: on the lower edge of these small sheets we find annotations made by the artist's friend, Joseph L. Stevens, Jr. These concern the name of the site, the date of the drawing, the names of patrons who ordered paintings from the sketch, the initials of people who accompanied the artists when he did the drawing, and other details. For instance, poignantly Stevens records on one drawing "Folly Cove—Lanesville—Gloucester/ F H Lane del. July 1864" and "Lane and [fellow artist Benjamin] Champney took a drive around the Cape. . . This was his last excursion in that vicinity. He made one painting from the sketch" (Fig. 3).

Residents of Gloucester valued

Lane's paintings. They bought them, hung them in their sitting rooms, and passed them on to their descendants. In each generation certain individuals recorded Lane's paintings, exerted themselves to learn about Lane's works and kept them in the city. Early journalists researching Lane's work include Susan Babson and Helen Mansfield who, together with Fred Tibbets, wrote newspaper articles and inquiries about Lane in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, popularizing a desire "to secure for this city in some public building . . . Lane paintings" that they were ready to donate. Lane's friend and legatee, Joseph Stevens annotated the drawings and gave them to Samuel H. Mansfield who gave them to Alfred Mansfield Brooks of the C A S & L A, both these men, descendants of Lane's original patrons, gave family pictures to the institution.

Early in this century the CAM staff—especially Sarah Dunlap and Stephanie Buck—made great strides in clarifying the facts of Lane's life, correcting confusing errors. Most recently, Sam Holdsworth and Melissa Trafton created an extraordinary digital catalogue raisonné of Lane's works, expanding knowledge and creating a resource for people everywhere interested in Lane's life and works: fitzhenrylaneonline.org ■

*Fitz Henry Lane
(1804-1865),
Dolliver's Neck and
the Western Shore
from Field Beach,
1857, oil on canvas
mounted on panel,
Cape Ann Museum,
Gloucester. Gift
of Helen Stevens
Babson, 1933.*

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