

Introduction

DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, Americans celebrated their towns and cities through lithographic landscapes. In Maine, these prints were the work of such leading artists as Fitz Henry Lane and talented, lesser-known local artists, such as Cyrus William King. Bringing many of these remarkable works together for the first time, this exhibition commemorates the bicentennial of Maine statehood and Bowdoin College's 225th anniversary. It also provides an opportunity to explore Maine's antebellum art and architecture and the role that lithography played in promoting the state and its early artistic and economic aspirations.

From the American Revolution to statehood, the District of Maine, governed by Massachusetts, experienced a significant increase in population, from 65,000 residents in 1780 to 298,000 in 1820. Images of its growing towns included John Seymour Jr.'s 1786 drawing of Portland and the Reverend Jonathan Fisher's 1824 painting of Blue Hill.¹ Such town views were original artworks known only to a small circle of viewers. However, the arrival in America in 1819 of the new German invention of lithography made it possible for pictures of communities to be reproduced inexpensively in large numbers for a wide audience. This major innovation in printmaking came to New England in 1825 when John Pendleton opened his shop in Boston. Describing Pendleton's work in 1828, art critic John Neal of Portland wrote of his astonishment "at the vigor and beauty of lithographic prints and at the hidden capacities of the art."²

Lithography's rapid rise in popularity coincided with the first decades of Maine statehood. Between 1820 and the eve of the Civil War, the state's population grew by 330,000 residents to a total of 628,000 in 1860, fueled in part by Irish immigration to commercial and industrial centers. The traditional economic activities of fishing, farming, lumbering, shipbuilding, and maritime trade expanded and were supplemented by manufacturing, especially in the form of a thriving new textile industry. With the end of the Northern Boundary Dispute in 1842, Aroostook County became attractive for agricultural development. Four hundred miles of railroad tracks joined towns and cities and connected Maine to Boston and Montreal. Steamboat travel became common along the coast and on major rivers. In their *History and Description of New England*, A. J. Coolidge and J. B. Mansfield wrote optimistically in 1859 that Maine's "extent of territory, rich soil, long line of sea-coast, excellent harbors and navigable rivers, the enterprise and ingenuity of her people, . . . are sure precursors of an exalted destiny."³

This unprecedented period of economic expansion for Maine was also a time of dynamic social reform. Public education, mental health, prison reform, temperance, and the abolition of slavery were debated from town houses and churches to the halls of the State House in Augusta. As a result, Maine adopted the nation's first prohibition law and built one of the country's first mental hospitals, as well as one of its first boys' reform schools.

The call for abolishing slavery gave birth to the Republican Party in Maine in 1854 under the leadership of Israel Washburn Jr., who would serve as a Civil War governor of the state. The party's new leaders quickly took their places on the national stage, establishing a tradition of Maine's influence in Washington. During the Civil War Hannibal Hamlin served as Abraham Lincoln's first vice president, and William Pitt Fessenden (Bowdoin College, class of 1823) as secretary of the treasury in his cabinet. After the war, James G. Blaine became Speaker of the US House of Representatives. A Democrat, Nathan Clifford, sat on the Supreme Court as an associate justice.

Made in Boston and New York, the lithographs of Maine towns and cities helped forge the young state's identity. Between 1832 and 1866, prints depicted Maine's capital, Augusta; the lumbering and shipbuilding communities of Bangor and Bath; and the textile manufacturing centers of Saco-Biddeford and Lewiston. Portland, the state's largest port, was depicted along with the coastal towns of Bath, Rockland, Belfast, Bucksport, and Castine. These pictures enlivened homes, offices, and public spaces as expressions of pride of place. They were also sent to relatives, friends, and business associates in other parts of the country to convey the image of Maine's prosperous communities. The Maine prints were part of a national phenomenon in which town and city views ranked as the most popular form of nineteenth-century American lithography. Between pre-Civil War panoramic prints and postwar bird's-eye views, twenty-four hundred communities across the country were recorded through one or both of these means.

Maine town and city views were published primarily by subscription, whereby patrons committed funds in advance to underwrite production costs. In the case of Castine, Fitz Henry Lane was invited by his friend Joseph L. Stevens Sr. to create a view of the town. However, most prints were initiated by the artists or lithographers themselves. The process usually began with an artist's drawing being displayed at public loca-

tions along with a subscription list. Appealing to community pride, the local newspaper would promote the sale of subscriptions, promising that if enough payments were collected, a print would result. Views of Augusta, Bangor, Belfast, Castine, Lewiston, Portland, Rockland, and Saco-Biddeford all relied on this method to secure their publication. Lane's Castine lithograph required one hundred subscribers each paying two dollars, while Edwin Whitefield's Portland view needed 250 backers investing three dollars each. Ranging in cost from one to five dollars, these lithographs were the ultimate democratic art form, priced within the reach of many.

Lithographs of American colleges and universities are an important form of town and city views. Between the Revolution and the Civil War, four major institutions of higher learning were established in Maine: Bowdoin College in 1794, Waterville College (Colby College) in 1813, the Maine State Seminary (Bates College) in 1855, and the Maine State College of Agriculture and the Mechanical Arts (the University of Maine) in 1865.

As the oldest, Bowdoin College appeared frequently in prints from the 1820s to the 1880s. Esteria Butler's paintings of the Bowdoin and Colby campuses in 1836 served as the basis for lithographs by Thomas Moore of Boston. A. J. Coolidge and J. B. Mansfield included wood engravings of Bowdoin and Colby in their 1859 *History and Description of New England*.

Bates College opened in the fall of 1857. *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* (March 28, 1857) featured a wood engraving of its new campus, with Hathorn Hall and Parker Hall, even before students matriculated. The college published a similar view as a steel engraving in its 1860 catalogue.

One of the earliest depictions of the University of Maine's Orono campus is a full-page lithographic illustration in the *History of Penobscot County* (1882), fourteen years after the first classes were held. The print shows a student military practice in the foreground, a row of classroom buildings and dormitories, and a vignette devoted to agricultural structures.

The W. T. Littig Company represented all four Maine institutions in its series of photogravures of American colleges and universities. Published in the first decade of the twentieth century, these attractive bird's-eye views of the campuses have been reprinted in recent years. Both the originals and restrikes are prized by alumni of their respective schools.

Based on a landscape tradition, Maine town and city views went out of fashion after the Civil War, eclipsed by the novelty of bird's-eye views and the growing popularity of photography. By the early twentieth century, many of these panoramic prints had been discarded or consigned to attics and barn chambers. Yet their period of neglect was brief, for the first decades of the twentieth century experienced an enthusiasm for collecting American antiques that included old lithographs. Dealers, collectors, museums, and historical societies discovered the artistic and historic values of town and city views. A growing appreciation of their importance was reflected in the New York Public Library exhibitions of early views of American cities held in 1917 and 1927.⁴ The second exhibit was followed in 1933 with a publication by I. N. Phelps Stokes and Daniel C. Haskell. In their introduction, they declared, "Few have realized that the individuality of towns and cities is just as pronounced and interesting as that of persons, and the study of the changes

which have taken place during the development throughout the centuries, as illustrated by successive plans, views, and historical data, quite as revealing as the portraits and biographies of distinguished citizens."⁵

More than a century after their rediscovery, the enthusiasm for American town and city views remains high among museums, historical societies, libraries, and collectors. Each year Maine's pre-Civil War town and city prints and their post-Civil War counterparts, bird's-eye views, increase in scarcity and value. The state is fortunate for the commitment of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Maine Historical Society, the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education, and other institutions to actively collect these images for the public to study and enjoy. Historical record and artistic quality merge in these lithographs of Maine in another time. Scholars Peter Marzio and Milton Kaplan observed in their article "Lithographs as Historical Documents" that "they reveal fleeting glimpses of the real world, and they teach us to see with the eyes of a century past."⁶

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NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Laura Fecych Sprague, “John Seymour and His Family in Portland, Maine,” in Robert D. Mussey Jr., *The Furniture Masterworks of John and Thomas Seymour* (Salem, Mass.: Peabody Essex Museum, 2003), 17; Kevin D. Murphy, *Jonathan Fisher of Blue Hill, Maine: Commerce, Culture, and Community on the Eastern Frontier* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), plate 1. Between 1830 and 1900, when lithographs of Maine towns and cities were being produced, artists continued to paint local topographic views that were not made into prints. Four examples are *Bath from a Hill to the Southward of the Eastern Steam Ferry Wharf—1844* by John Hilling (Maine Maritime Museum); G. R. Hall’s *Upper Part of East Machias from the Academy Hill*, 1858 (Colby College Museum of Art); *View of North Monmouth* by Elizabeth Bradbury Stanton Robinson, 1862 (Bowdoin College Museum of Art); and G. J. Griffin’s *A View of Freeport, Maine*, 1886 (Colby College Museum of Art).

2. John Neal, “Three Days in Boston,” *Yankee and Boston Literary Gazette* 1, no. 50 (December 10, 1828): 398 (see extract 30).

3. A. J. Coolidge and J. B. Mansfield, *A History and Description of New England, General and Local* (Boston: A. J. Coolidge, 1859), 1:19.

4. *Historical Prints and Early Views of American Cities, etc.: Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition Held at the New York Public Library, April 19 to October 15, 1917* (New York: New York Public Library, 1917); Daniel C. Haskell, *American Historical Prints: Early Views of American Cities* (New York: New York Public Library, 1927).

5. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes and Daniel C. Haskell, *American Historical Prints: Early Views of American Cities, etc., from the Phelps Stokes and Other Collections* (New York: New York Public Library, 1933), ix.

6. Peter C. Marzio and Milton Kaplan, “Lithographs as Historical Documents,” *Magazine Antiques*, October 1972, 669–74.