

On July 3, 1859, members of the artists' mess awoke near Grass Springs in Nebraska Territory. Their covered wagon, part of Colonel Frederick Lander's road-building expedition, had halted just east of the Green River, within sight of the Wind River Mountains. Nearby, a crowd of nearly three hundred emigrants shared the same dry piece of sage plain. At least three landscape painters in what Lander called his "full corps of artists" were about to record one of the largest July Fourth celebrations on the plains, augmented by Chief Washakie and eight hundred Shoshone Indi-

ans, who would set up camp in time to share speeches, fireworks, and gifts on this Independence Day eve.

By nightfall, one of the artists noted, "the chief appeared in a United States uniform, which was presented him by Col. L., and the gaudy costumes of the rest as they danced to the sound of the 'tum-tum,' a sort of tambourine, all together was a magnificent sight to us. At dark we sent up a few sky-rockets, which terrified the Indians so that some of them ran away. They evidently thought we were a great people to send fire up so high."¹

The 1859 Lander Expedition Revisited

'Worthy Relics' Tell New Tales of a Wind River Wagon Road

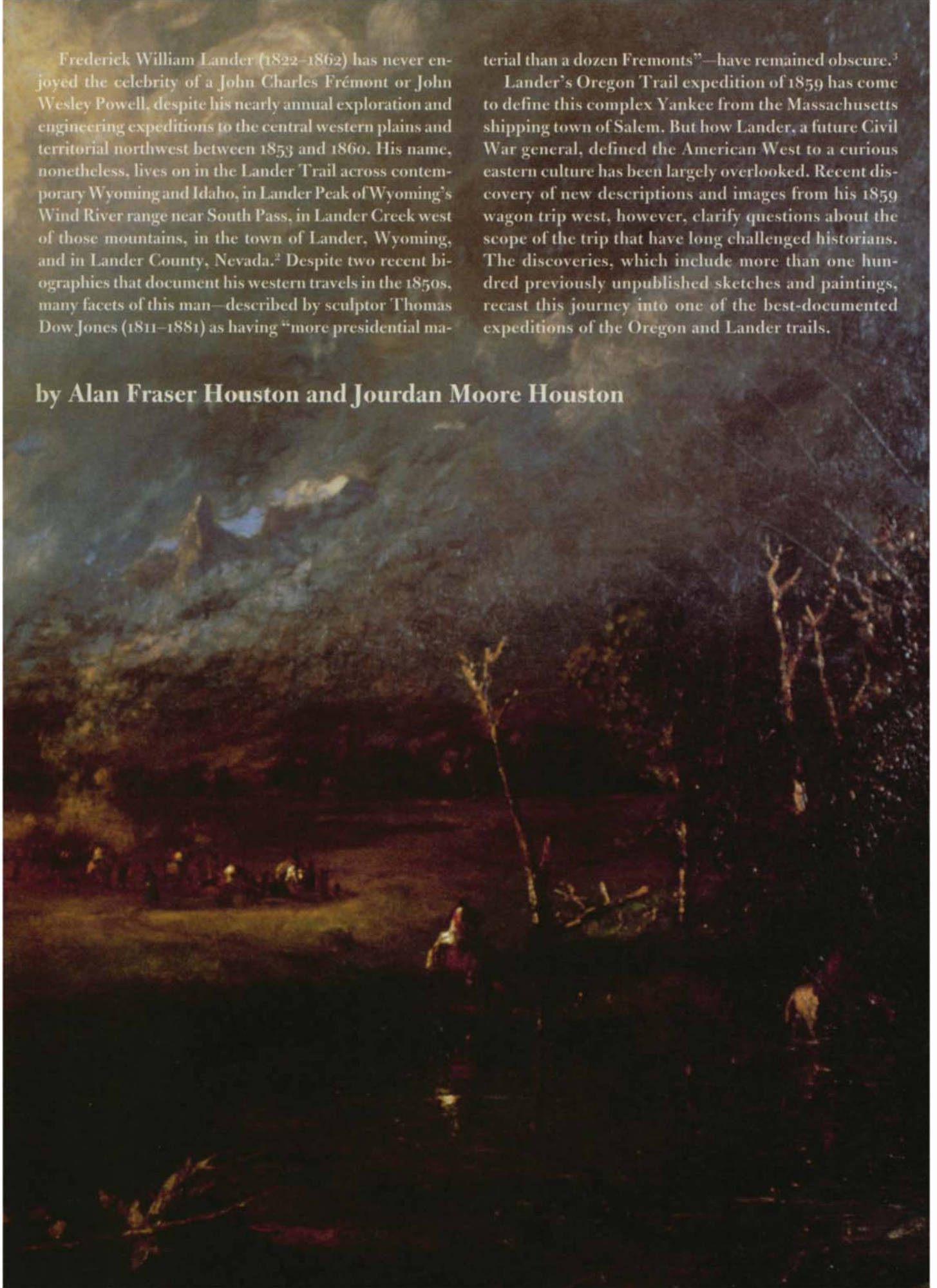
When Frederick W. Lander led a wagon road expedition west in 1859, he took along what he called a "full corps of artists," including Francis Seth Frost, a Boston-area painter in his mid-thirties. Already known as a prolific artist, Frost captured the survey's July 3 meeting with some eight hundred friendly Shoshones led by Chief Washakie in *Indian Procession* (circa 1862, oil on canvas, 28" x 50", detail).

Frederick William Lander (1822–1862) has never enjoyed the celebrity of a John Charles Frémont or John Wesley Powell, despite his nearly annual exploration and engineering expeditions to the central western plains and territorial northwest between 1853 and 1860. His name, nonetheless, lives on in the Lander Trail across contemporary Wyoming and Idaho, in Lander Peak of Wyoming's Wind River range near South Pass, in Lander Creek west of those mountains, in the town of Lander, Wyoming, and in Lander County, Nevada.² Despite two recent biographies that document his western travels in the 1850s, many facets of this man—described by sculptor Thomas Dow Jones (1811–1881) as having “more presidential ma-

terial than a dozen Fremonts”—have remained obscure.³

Lander's Oregon Trail expedition of 1859 has come to define this complex Yankee from the Massachusetts shipping town of Salem. But how Lander, a future Civil War general, defined the American West to a curious eastern culture has been largely overlooked. Recent discovery of new descriptions and images from his 1859 wagon trip west, however, clarify questions about the scope of the trip that have long challenged historians. The discoveries, which include more than one hundred previously unpublished sketches and paintings, recast this journey into one of the best-documented expeditions of the Oregon and Lander trails.

by Alan Fraser Houston and Jourdan Moore Houston



Colonel Frederick W. Lander (right, no date), a civil engineer from Massachusetts and enthusiastic champion of the arts, made his first trip west in 1853 with Isaac Stevens.

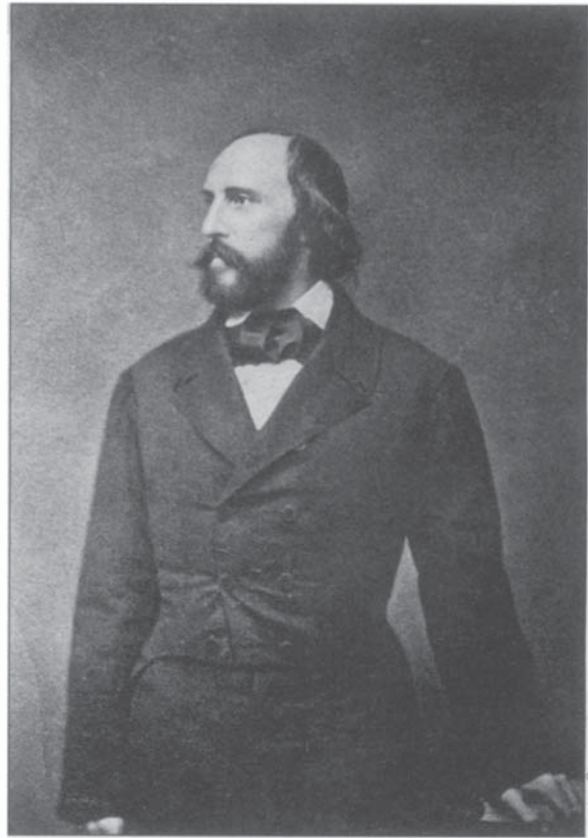
Well connected politically in Washington, he worked to survey, engineer, and build what would be known as the Lander Trail across Wyoming and into Idaho in the late 1850s. His career was cut short when he died early in 1862 from battle wounds sustained in the Civil War.

Launched in May from Saint Joseph, Missouri, Lander's 1859 expedition is also known for establishing the reputation of Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902), a twenty-nine-year-old German American from Massachusetts who traveled with Lander. With the new findings, however, the perspective of the journey shifts. Long known as a wagon road construction project and less as an Indian peacekeeping mission, Lander's expedition of 1859 was invested much more broadly in the arts than previously perceived, a commitment to the arts understood and sanctioned from the federal cabinet level down.

Previously unrecognized letters from the trip (including one from Bierstadt), a newly discovered 1859 sketchbook, clues linked to one Bierstadt stereograph, the location of paintings by expedition artist Henry Hitchings (1823–1902), and the location of paintings of these travels by a third artist on the trail—Bierstadt's student, Frances Seth Frost (1825–1902)—vastly expand our knowledge of the expedition. The rediscovered oils, watercolors, sepias, pencil sketches, and stereographs from the expedition fulfill Bierstadt's admonition that "the artist ought to tell his portion of . . . history as well as the writer; a combination of both will assuredly render it more complete."⁴ Given the likelihood that more artists, still to be identified, traveled with Lander, the 1859 expedition may have been the premier visual outing of the pre-Civil War trans-Mississippi West.

Certainly, artists had joined government expeditions before. Since the time of Lewis and Clark, explorers knew the value of visual documentation—but how were Lander and the government linked to these artists? How far did they really travel? What is the significance of the works they produced? The answers begin with Lander and his eastern origins.

Frederick William Lander was born in the seaport of Salem on December 17, 1822, the son of Edward Lander and Eliza West and great-grandson of Elias



Hasket Derby, the first shipping merchant in the colonies to trade with India and at one time the richest man in America.⁵ Related on his mother's side to Pennsylvania-born artist Benjamin West (1738–1820), Lander grew up in a home where, according to one observer, "artistic talent [had] shown itself."⁶ Lander became a civil engineer after studying at Dummer Academy in Massachusetts and Norwich University in Vermont.

For about fifteen years thereafter, Lander worked for the emerging Eastern Railroad of Massachusetts. One of the busiest lines in the Bay State, the Eastern ran north from Boston along the coast and eventually into New Hampshire and Maine. Lander made his first trip west in 1853 with the Pacific Railroad surveys under the auspices of Isaac Ingalls Stevens (1818–1862). Stevens, then governor of Washington Territory, was a native of Andover, Massachusetts, located a few miles from the Lander home in Salem. Two artists took part in the surveys: Gustavus Sohon (1825–1903), a young Prussian recruit in the corps of Lieutenant Rufus Saxton, and John Mix Stanley (1814–1872), whom Lander would meet again several years later in Wash-

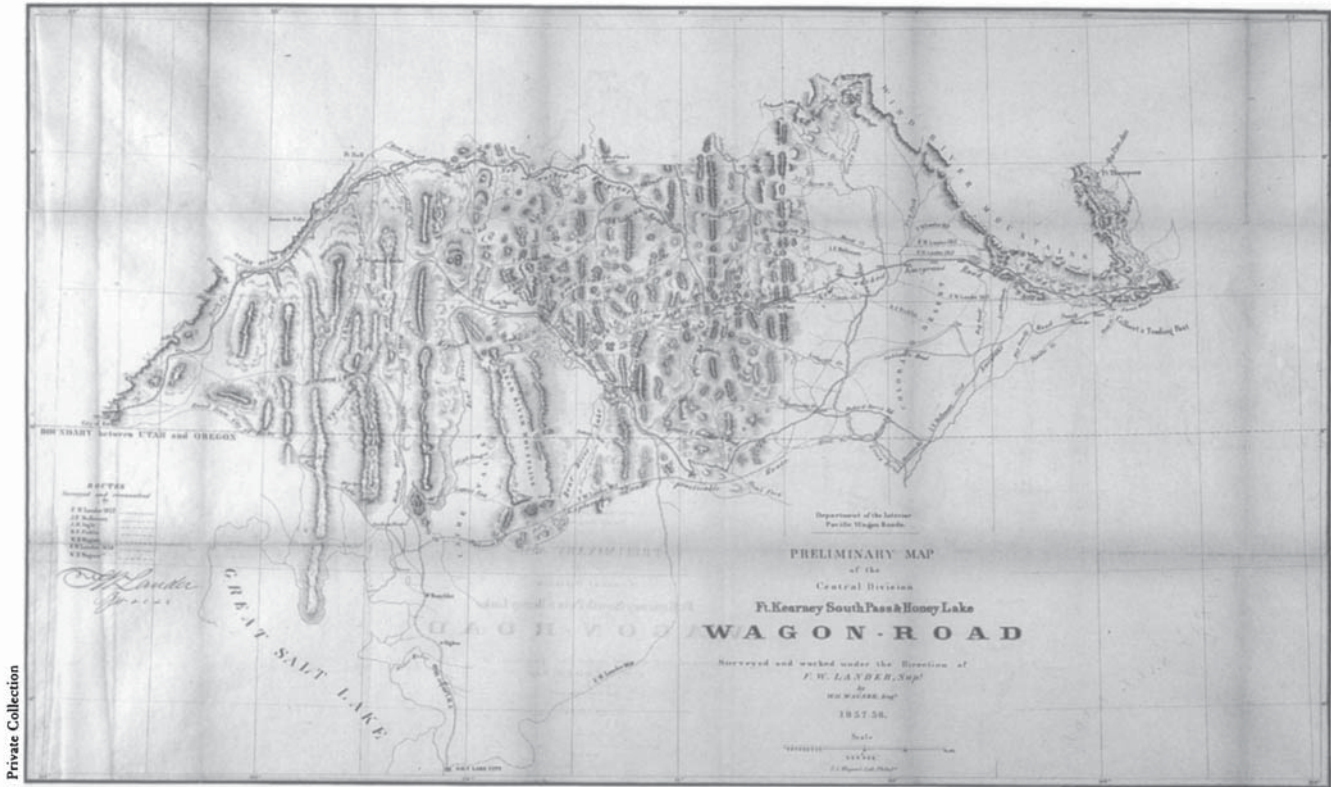
1. New Bedford *Daily Mercury*, August 10, 1859, Bierstadt letter dated July 5, 1859.

2. Camp Lander, a Civil War training ground in Wenham, Massachusetts, was also named in Frederick Lander's memory.

3. See Joy Leland, *Frederick West Lander: A Biographical Sketch* (Reno, Nev., 1993); and Jermy Benton Wight, *Frederick W. Lander and the Lander Trail* (Bedford, Wyo., 1993).

4. Letter from Albert Bierstadt, July 10, 1859, to *The Crayon: A Journal Devoted to the Graphic Arts and the Literature Related to Them*, 6 (September 1859), 287 (hereafter Bierstadt letter).

5. Sources, including Leland, give Lander's middle name as West. One source lists it as William with date of baptism, March 10, 1824. *Salem Births*, 2 vols. (Salem, Mass., 1916), 1:505. Lander's brother, Edward, referred to it as William. Alumni records at Dummer Academy and Norwich University used William, as did the Salem, Massachusetts, *Register*, obituary, March 8, 1862.



Officially known as the “Ft. Kearney South Pass & Honey Lake” wagon road, Lander’s Trail led west over South Pass within sight of the Wind River Mountains. The map above, dated 1857–1858, depicts the road’s central division, which Lander had explored and surveyed in those years. His goal in 1859 was to complete the road from South Pass to Fort Hall.

ington, D.C. A third, Stevens’s protégé William Henry Tappan (1821–1907), had grown up in Newburyport, Massachusetts, near Salem, and had settled in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1850s. Pessimistic about a northwest route Stevens favored, Lander financed his own exploration of a route from Puget Sound to the Missouri by way of South Pass the following year. Of six men who set out, only Lander and one other, John Moffitt, managed to reach the Missouri River.⁷

In 1857, Lander became chief engineer of the “Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road.” The wagon road’s central division, also known as the Lander Trail, was an emigrant trail being built in sight of the Wind River range from South Pass, in what was then Nebraska and Oregon Territory (now Wyoming and a small portion of Idaho). Lander quickly hired some of the West’s best men to carve his new route, including scout Ned Williamson, who observed that “the ‘Old Man’ cares as much about these dern pil-

grims getting a lame steer to water as ever an old ‘Hudson Bayer’ did for a black ox skin.”⁸ Williamson, who served as scout for General Albert Sidney Johnston’s command in the 1857 “Mormon War,” was sent to Montana by Johnston in a failed attempt to buy beef in the Bitterroot Valley. After the Lander expeditions, Williamson worked as a Montana guide and expressman and later as a scout for John Gibbon’s column in the 1876 Sioux campaign.

In 1858, Colonel Lander, with a commission from the United States Interior Department as “Special Agent to Shoshonees, Eastern and Western, and the Pannachs,” became superintendent of the road.⁹ He remained in that position until 1860, the year he married the queen of the American stage, Jean Margaret Davenport, and made plans to move to California.

Described by a contemporary as “six feet of bone and muscle which rides at the head of our long train,” Lander was a negotiator—in the field and at home.¹⁰

6. Elizabeth F. Ellet, *Women Artists in All Ages and Countries* (New York, 1859), 326–27.

7. Isaac Stevens appointed Edward Lander Chief Justice of Washington Territory. John Moffitt died three weeks after their return. Lander sent his widow money for years thereafter. No mention is made of how the others (six or seven individuals) died other than from extreme hardship. Frederick W. Lander Collection, #7545, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (hereafter Lander Coll.).

8. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859.

9. *Boston Atlas and Bee*, August 4, 1859.

10. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859. Lander’s brother said he was as tall as Lincoln. Letter of Thomas Dow Jones, San Francisco *Alta California*, May 18, 1860. Jones said Lander “stands six feet two inches in height and weighs over two hundred pounds . . . not an ounce of spare flesh on him—all bone and muscle.” Jones was credited at his death with having made more portrait busts “than any other artist in the country.” T. D. Jones, obituary, *Boston Evening Transcript*, February 28, 1881.



Private Collection



Private Collection

Among newly discovered sketches, paintings, and stereographs were such works as *Near Grass Springs*, *Wind River Mountains—Oregon* (above, 1867, watercolor, 10¼" x 18½") by Henry Hitchings, and *Indian Encampment near Fort Laramie* (left, 1865, oil on panel, 12" x 10") by Francis Seth Frost. The inset above is Hitchings's field sketch, *Wind River Mts Oregon July 7 1859* (from sketchbook), which he used as a basis for *Near Grass Springs* to depict the site of Lander's July 3 meeting with Oregon Trail emigrants and Washakie's Shoshones. Hitchings, like Frost, was from Boston. His sketchbook was donated recently to Yale University.



Francis Seth Frost's *South Pass, Wind River Mountains, Wyoming* (above, 1860, oil on canvas, 28½" x 50⅞") and Albert Bierstadt's *Nebraska Territory: Wasatch Mountains, View of South Pass, Wyoming* (below, 1859, oil on paper, 13" x 19") offer two views of South Pass, Wyoming. South Pass, a relatively flat, nondescript passage through the Rocky Mountains, was nonetheless highly symbolic to Oregon-bound emigrants who, once beyond it, were halfway to Oregon yet faced the most challenging part of their journey.

Courtesy Arthur J. Phelan



In addition to its contributions to knowledge of the far West, Lander's 1859 wagon road expedition also helped establish the reputation of landscape artist Albert Bierstadt (right, circa 1859). Bierstadt's work from 1859 and from two subsequent trips west in the 1860s challenged the Alpine landscapes of the European masters, bringing him acclaim and fortune.

He was vocal in advocating peace rather than federal force with both the Mormons and Indians. In 1860, he negotiated the end to the 1860 Pyramid Lake War with the Paiute Indians. His courage and great physical strength led him to a knockdown slugfest with his 1857 boss, William H. McGraw, a former plains freight contractor and Buchanan supporter. They fought at Willard's Hotel in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1859, in a no-win encounter widely covered in the press. Both men, the Washington, D.C., *Evening Star* reported, "left the scene of action terribly cut and disfigured."¹¹ The pair met again in the same city on March 7, 1860, at the entrance to the Kirkwood House (also known as Kirkwood's Hotel), where Lander stood down the irascible McGraw, whose pistol was leveled at the unarmed Lander's chest.

In April 1860, Lander offered himself as a substitute for Wisconsin representative John F. Potter in a duel challenge issued "in consequence of certain words uttered in the House of Representatives between Messrs. [Roger] Pryor and Potter." Lander chose Bowie knives, but the affair ended when the volatile and short-statured Pryor, a South Carolina congressman, wisely declared he had no quarrel with Lander. Lander's fearlessness later earned him the acclaim of General George B. McClellan and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, as well as the fate of being one of the first Union brigadier generals to receive a hero's funeral in the Civil War.¹²

The Lander family had connections to Boston artists. Lander's sister, Sarah, was a Boston writer whose description of the Boston Athenaeum sculpture and painting galleries indicates that she was no stranger to that institution or to Boston artists. Another sister, Louisa Lander (1826-1923), was a nationally acclaimed Boston sculptress and painter, who had been a pupil of American sculptor Thomas Crawford in Rome in the 1850s—"the only one he ever consented to admit



Old Dartmouth Historical Society-New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts

into his studio."¹³ Louisa exhibited at the Boston Athenaeum and at other Boston galleries in the company of artists who included Bierstadt, Frost, and Hitchings.

Bierstadt, Frost, and Hitchings were from eastern Massachusetts near Boston, and all were active in the art world prior to 1859. Although born in Germany, Albert Bierstadt lived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and exhibited both there and in Boston. Seth Frost was a native of West Cambridge, now Arlington, Massachusetts. Henry Hitchings lived first by the wharves in Boston and then in Dedham, another Boston suburb. Lander's relationship with Washington, D.C., art and artists, never before examined in detail, shows that he played an outspoken and popular role, especially as a member of the Washington Art Association (WAA).¹⁴ In Washington City, as the national capital was then called, disinterest in the arts was giving way by 1857 to something close to fervor.

Founded that year, the Washington Art Association was underwritten by W. W. Corcoran, a banker whose fortune had been built on financing the Mexican War for the United States government in the late 1840s. The organization sought to encourage artists and to lobby for a national commission for the arts, a national gal-

11. Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, March 5, 1859.

12. *Ibid.*, April 16, 1860. Lander died March 2, 1862, in Paw Paw, western Virginia, after being wounded at Edward's Ferry on the Potomac in an engagement with Confederate troops. He had two funerals, one in Washington, D.C., on March 6, and the other in Salem, Massachusetts, on March 8.

13. See Sarah W. [Lander], *Spectacles for Young Eyes*, 12 vols. (New York, 1862), 1:182-85; Ellet, *Women Artists*, 328.

14. Membership records in Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.

15. Washington, D.C., *Daily Union*, March 7, 1857.

16. R. S. Chilton, Washington Art Association corresponding secretary, to F. W. Lander, February 11, 1857, ms 334, p. 25, Washington Art Association Letterbook, Historical Society of Washington, D.C.; *Daily Union*, March 19, 1857; Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events*, 11 vols. (New York, 1862), 3:17, 19; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Under the Snow," *Atlantic Monthly*, 9 (May 1862), 625-26.

17. Boston *Evening Transcript*, August 23, 1861. Undated newspaper clipping, vol. 9, Lander Coll.

lery, and a national school of arts, and it sponsored the city's first art exhibition in March 1857.¹⁵

In February, Lander was invited to give an address before the WAA, where he spoke on the "aptitude of the American mind for the cultivation of the fine arts." The Washington press lauded Lander for his "just appreciation of art in its more elevated manifestations," and as "a writer and orator to whom" the public "will listen with profit and deep gratification." Lander also wrote poetry, some of which appeared in Boston newspapers and some posthumously in the *Rebellion Record* and the *Atlantic Monthly*.¹⁶ When he sought the advice of Nathaniel P. Willis, Boston-born poet and editor for the *Home Journal* in New York, however, Willis considerably advised Lander that "poetry was not his trade." Still, Lander was on a first name basis with noted New York sister-poets Alice and Phoebe Cary, and corresponded with both.¹⁷

In 1859, Lander wrote and delivered several essays on the fine arts while in Washington. He was present at the WAA's sumptuous entertainment on January 13, attended by political notables and forty artists, and was referred to as "artist-engineer."¹⁸ The dinner party, noted one observer, "comprised more men of mind than are usually found together." Six weeks later, Lander was asked to speak extemporaneously before the same association due to the scheduled speaker's illness. Eloquently merging his experience on the plains with his sentiments on art, he observed:

Often on the prairies, where the setting sun shone upon the cheerful campfires of a train of emigrants, the morrow showed no trace to mark their resting-place save, perhaps, the gravestone of some wayworn woman buried in the night. And so it was with Art. The nations of the earth as they passed away, too often left no worthy relic to tell the tale of their existence, except the monuments of their art. We are too prone to forget the Past, to discourage sentiments of reverence for those who have gone before us; and hence the need of Art to quicken those sentiments and give them worthy expression.¹⁹

18. "A Sketch of General Frederick W. Lander, Contributed by His Brother, Judge Edward Lander," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 40 (October 1904), 320; Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, February 9, 1859.

19. Washington, D.C., *Daily Union*, January 15, March 1, 1859.

20. Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, April 1, 1859.

21. *Ibid.*, February 10, 16, 1859; Washington, D.C., *National Intelligencer*, April 7, 1859. Leutze went west to Colorado for the first time in 1860.

As Lander spoke, an unofficial plan was already taking shape to give "worthy expression" to the West by gathering a party of artists to accompany the thirty-six-year-old engineer on his next expedition along the emigrant road to California.

The art association membership included artists, statesmen, poets, painters, and soldiers, several of whom would help shape the 1859 expedition. One was Albert Henry Campbell (1826–1899), the Pacific wagon road superintendent, avocational landscape artist, and Lander's immediate superior. Campbell, like Lander, was a civil engineer, and his wood engravings and lithographs of New Mexico Territory and California had appeared in the thirty-second and thirty-fifth parallel Pacific Railroad reports of the mid-1850s. The superintendent would not accompany Lander on the coming trip, but his brother, James C. Campbell, would as a guide. Campbell's superior, Secretary of the Interior Jacob Thompson, frequently spoke at regular art association meetings, as did Secretary of War John B. Floyd. Thompson, addressing the WAA in April 1859, expressed "assurances of the good wishes" toward the association by the president and his cabinet.²⁰ Floyd, a former Virginia governor whom the North would despise during the Civil War, was responsible for the statuary, frescoes, and hangings in and on the still unfinished Capitol Building. He would provide Bierstadt with a letter of introduction for the trip.

Artist Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868), a German-born Philadelphian, also assisted the artists' preparations for Lander's journey. Leutze had arrived in New York on February 4, 1859, after seven years in Dusseldorf, Germany. Twelve days later, he checked into the national capital's Willard's Hotel, which was Lander's home during his winters between expeditions west. Leutze, a prolific painter of historic—and, soon, western—scenes, was lionized.²¹ Invited to speak at the art association's March banquet, he declined, though he would later become a director of the organization.

Leutze had known Albert Bierstadt when the younger artist had been a student at Dusseldorf, site of Europe's most successful school of landscape art, from 1853 to 1857. Bierstadt's talent as an artist was not highly regarded initially by his fellow Americans in Germany, including Leutze, but after several years of study and sketching across Europe, his work was considered promising. Even so, Bierstadt listed his occupation as "carpenter" in an uncharacteristic act of modesty when making his return to the United States in August 1857.²²

22. Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, NY, 1820–1897, July 22–August, 1857, list nos. 885–1015, microcopy 237, roll 177, RG 107, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War (hereafter RG 107), National Archives, Washington, D.C. (hereafter NA).



Private Collection

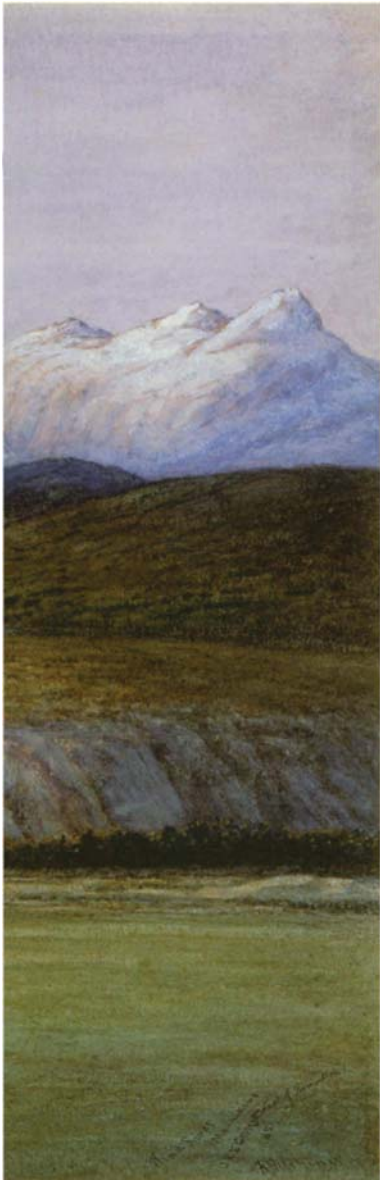
Salt Creek Canyon (above, 1859, watercolor, 4½" x 11") by Henry Hitchings is but one of the numerous sketches and drawings he made in 1859 that help document Lander's travels west across the plains and through southern Wyoming. Hitchings's presence with the survey has long been supposed but could not be confirmed until recent discovery of his sketchbook.



Private Collection, Courtesy North Point Gallery, San Francisco, California



Private Collection



Historians and art scholars have long debated how far Bierstadt and other Lander artists actually traveled beyond South Pass before turning east. In addition, they have discounted Bierstadt's claims to having reached the modern Wasatch Range, or what was commonly referred to then as the "Wahsatch Mountains," which embraced a far larger territory than the range of mountains immediately east of Salt Lake City. Henry Hitchings's sketch book, which includes *Blackfoot Creek [Oregon July?] 26 '59* (top, 1859, watercolor, 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ ") and *Near Rock Creek, Nebraska Territory, June 24, 1859 Our first view of The Wind River Mts* (above, watercolor, 12" x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ "), combined with an expanded definition of "Wahsatch," suggests an advance well beyond Green River.

For his part, Henry Hitchings continued on to Fort Hall before turning east. On his return trip, Hitchings recorded the scene near Fremont's Peak in *Wind River Mountains Oregon West of Fremont's Peak* (left, 1859, watercolor and pencil on paper, 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ ").



In sketching both in watercolor and black and white, Hitchings recorded and dated the Lander expedition's advance with each piece. He had been a month on the trail when he created *Scott's Bluff, June 4th 1859* (above, from sketchbook).

On April 8, 1859, Bierstadt registered at Willard's Hotel, less than three weeks before his appearance with the Lander party's artists' mess in St. Joseph, Missouri.²³ The same day, Secretary Floyd sent a letter of introduction to Bierstadt via Leutze. "The bearer of this note, Mr. A. Bierstadt," Floyd wrote,

who proposes to accompany Colonel Lander's wagon road party, has been introduced to me as an Artist and a gentleman of character, and as such I commend him to the courtesy and kind attention of the commanders of such military posts as he may visit.²⁴

Floyd's letter, one of several he wrote for VIPs traveling west into potentially hazardous Indian country, has been quoted often, but its delivery via Leutze has only now come to light. Bierstadt, who had exhibited at the Washington Art Association in January, probably used both Leutze and Lander's influence to procure the letter from Floyd. Lander had more than just official ties to Floyd. Socializing on New Year's Day 1859, the two had conferred about western exploration to take place later that year.²⁵

Lander, described by an admirer as both a leader

and a driver of men, felt an urgency to complete the road from South Pass to Fort Hall, which he and his engineers had explored, surveyed, and built in 1857 and 1858. Officially called the "Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road," it bypassed the long, arid, alkaline desert crossing southwest of South Pass and avoided Mormon settlements which, with road and bridge tolls and restricted grazing, had become an increasing problem for emigration.

The expedition—including the artists and a photographer hired by Bierstadt—left St. Joseph on May 5, 1859, crossed the Missouri to Bellemont, Kansas, and headed west on May 6.²⁶ It took nearly two months to arrive at the Lander Road, an advance recorded by the artists in newly found sketches, paintings, and stereographs of their campsites, of Fort Kearny, of Sioux families at Fort Laramie, and of the milestones they passed as they approached their goal, the Rocky Mountains.

As before, Lander had hired experienced hands to assist him, including Benjamin F. Ficklin, who later went to work for Pony Express founders Russell, Majors, and Waddell. (Ficklin Station was a stop on the Pony Express route.) Another of the hands, whose eponym was "Outfit," described the Lander team for the St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*:

23. Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, April 8, 1859.

24. John B. Floyd to Albert Bierstadt, November 1, 1858–September 30, 1859, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, 1800–1889, L-4 (93), microcopy 6, roll 41, vol. 41, RG 107, NA.

25. Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, January 13, 1859; Lander to Floyd, January 10, 1859, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, microcopy 221, roll 186, RG 107, NA.

26. Lander's letter to Bierstadt, introducing Utah territorial representative John Bernhisel, and the Floyd letter to Bierstadt suggest Bierstadt spoke for the artists. Lander to Bierstadt, May 4, 1859, St. Joseph, Missouri, Henry Francis Du Pont Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware (hereafter Du Pont Coll.). Site for the former Bellemont, Kansas, is now five miles inland from the river.



Hitchings portrayed scenes of camp life along the trail as well as scenic vistas of the western expanse. His preferred medium was watercolor, although he believed composition should hold sway over color alone. Above is his camp scene, *May 22d 1859 Nebraska Territory* (from sketchbook).

Images this page and opposite, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Gift of Elisabeth Hitchings Rothschild and daughters

Hitchings also found fascination with the already-crumbling buildings of Fort Kearny, established in 1848 on the south side of the Platte River to protect travelers on the Oregon Trail. Below is his depiction of one of them in *May 24th 1859 Ruined Barracks Fort Kearney NT* (from sketchbook).



All of our men are excellent fellows, a good many of them old mail riders from this and the Santa Fe road. We have all faith in our leader, who, although a strict and firm man, is a generous and eminently just one. He is one of the few who inevitably says “come” instead of “go” whenever a crisis occurs.

Encounters with starving miners leaving Pike’s Peak delayed the heavily loaded Lander wagon train. So did mud. “The present year we have been fairly drowned out of our blankets by a series of terrific thunder storms,” noted Outfit, “everything is under water.” After forty-five days, they reached South Pass on June 24, a far slower pace than the thirty-day passage of 1857. “The whole secret of travel,” Outfit said:

is in knowing where to camp and how fast to move. Thus we sometimes go twelve miles per day, and

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Gift of Elisabeth Hitchings Rothschild and daughters



camp once, and others forty miles per day and turn out four times. Where the grass is scanty we move very fast, where it is good, move very slow. All this may sound tedious, yet perhaps not so uninteresting to some of your readers about to go West. Whenever practicable our train always goes at a jog trot rather than a slow walk, giving more time for feeding grass.

On July 3, the party arrived just short of the Green River, about one thousand miles west of St. Joseph. To the east were the Wind River Mountains, still heavily snowcapped after the unusually wet spring. To the west lay the Wahsatch range, known as the Wyoming, Salt, and Bear ranges today.²⁷

By chance, three hundred emigrants were camped nearby. Most would not travel that day but instead remained in camp to celebrate the Fourth of July holiday. Lander was solicitous of the pioneers, publishing a guidebook to promote his new road, which was one hundred miles shorter than competing ones. Observed scout Ned Williamson, who had first worked for Lander in 1857,

business are good: we used to ketch black crickets for to git our supper of trouts in 1857, for the Old

27. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859. The Wahsatch range, known and spelled "Wahsatch" in 1859, was not the Wasatch of today's Utah.

28. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859.

29. "Journals and Field Books Relating to the Eastern and Central Divisions of the Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road, 1857-1859 [specifically (A)4]," no. 95, roll 7, RG 107, NA.

One observer said Frederick Lander was six feet, two inches tall and weighed more than two hundred pounds, "not an ounce of spare flesh on him." In his way, Henry Hitchings described Lander similarly in the sketch at left, titled *Oct 1859 Iowa Frederick Lander* (from sketchbook). Albert Bierstadt's stereograph, "Unpacking Indian Goods, Nebraska" (below, 1859), bears out Hitchings's depiction, if indeed as suspected, the tall man on the right wearing a hat is Lander.



From the Collection of Leonard A. Wallé

Colonel never gives a man time to hunt, and now a man can jist git a drink of whiskey *every time* telling the Pilgrims about the road.

To which Outfit wryly added, "Mountaineer's paradise, certainly."²⁸

Farther west, Lander's advance engineering party of nine men had halted at Thousand Spring Valley, near present-day Twin Falls, Idaho. Among them was a twenty-one-year-old cartographer and artist, John Ross Key. The Baltimore-born grandson of Francis Scott Key, the young Key, who became a prominent New England and California painter, traveled all the way to California with the Lander party in 1859. The most frequent remarks in the party's terse daily log signaled "clouds of mosquitos" and "streams full of trout." On July 3, a Sunday, the advance party remained in camp, mended wagon wheels, rested the mules, and contemplated passing emigrants. The following day, July 4, the advance party, still far to the west of Lander and

30. This 28" x 50" work is in possession of the Sheldon Swope Museum of Terre Haute, Indiana.

31. New Bedford *Daily Mercury*, August 10, 1859. This letter seems never to have been noted by Bierstadt historians.

32. Boston *Atlas and Bee*, August 4, 1859.

the Shoshones near Green River, knocked off four bottles of champagne in commemoration of the holiday.²⁹

Before the Lander expedition and most of the emigrants rolled out on the morning of July 4 to cross the Green River and enter the Wahsatch Mountains, they participated in an elaborate and crowded celebration held near Grass Springs on July 3. The event, described in previously unrecognized letters by several authors (one from Bierstadt), was also captured on a large surviving canvas, also unrecognized, by companion artist Seth Frost.³⁰ The letters, the little known Frost canvas, and the recently discovered sketchbook and paintings of artist Henry Hitchings do more than just document the Fourth of July gala; they challenge a widely held assumption that Bierstadt and Frost turned around at South Pass. In fact, the artists were far to the west.

As the morning fires of July 3 were warming hands and coffee in camp, dust clouds from the north signaled the approach of eight hundred Shoshones. Bierstadt wrote:

It was very picturesque to see them coming across the plain with hundreds of horses, all packed with their dwellings and all they possessed. Their lodge poles are packed on each side of the horses with one end resting on the ground, and across them they rig a seat which they call a buggy; it will accommodate two persons. In about an hour after their arrival their lodges were all set up, and their families seated inside. An ox was slaughtered and they had a grand feast.³¹

Frost captured the scene on canvas. The expedition's encounters with begging Pawnees in Kansas or with Oglala Sioux Chief Dog Belly and his band

on the banks of the South Platte did not compare to the scene Frost painted. In this large work, hundreds of Shoshone advance on horses whose hooves stir the dust. The Indians ride toward the viewer, hauling travois; the Wind River Mountains lie in the background, a stream in the foreground. Leading the advance was the Shoshone chief Washakie, an advocate of peace with the whites. Because the largest overland emigrant traffic to California and Oregon passed through Shoshone country, the federal commissioner of Indian affairs was anxious to see Washakie's policy succeed.

A second observer at the July 3 gathering wrote about Lander's attentions to such concerns. "The talk with Washikeek and the warriors lasted three hours," he noted, "and in honor of the old chief, who is the best specimen of the Native American I have yet seen in these mountainous regions, I took a few whiffs of the peace pipe, although I have religiously eschewed smoking for some years past." He added: "Col. Lander deserves high commendation for the success with which he has treated with Washikeek."³² In his mid-fifties at the time, Washakie would live another four decades. When he died on February 21, 1900, the United States government gave him a military funeral.

The talks over, according to Bierstadt, "Col. Landers [sic] then addressed the emigrants, telling them to treat the Indians kindly, and to live in peace together. The chief then came forward and received the presents, and distributed them among his men." Lander had ample gifts for the Shoshone tribesmen. The expedition included four wagons loaded with Indian presents worth five thousand dollars, a dramatic increase from the Office of Indian Affairs' five hundred dollars in 1858. The presents, from muskets to blankets, cotton shirts,



Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Gift of Elisabeth Hitchings Rothschild and daughters

Hitchings also seems to have portrayed Lander in the sketch at left, titled *July 6 1859 Oregon* (detail, from sketchbook), in which the expedition leader is seated with several others a few days after meeting with the Shoshones. Lander, who was "Special Agent" to the Indians, treated well with Washakie at Green River.

Francis Seth Frost (right, no date) had studied with Albert Bierstadt and in 1855 was actually better known as an artist.

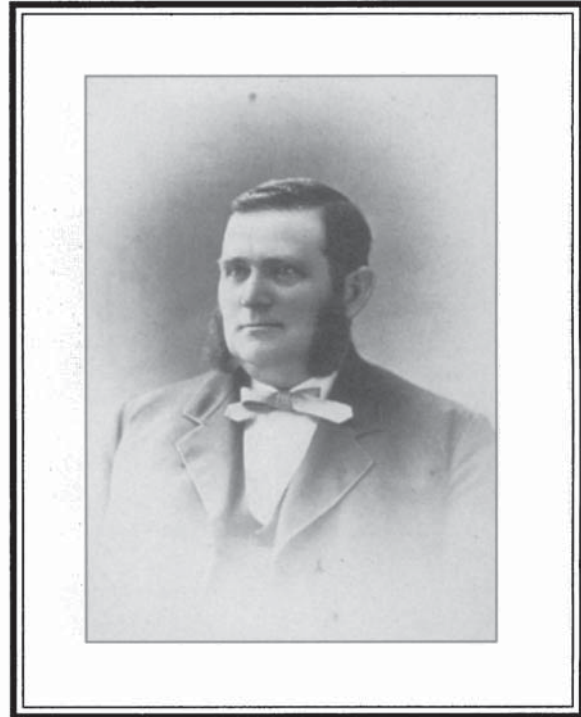
A good friend of Henry Hitchings, he exhibited oils of scenes from his trip upon his return to Boston in 1859 and continued to paint landscapes until his death in 1902.

and cooking utensils, were so numerous that Lander grumbled to Secretary Thompson that “our Indian goods are in excellent order, although from their bulk, and the state of the roads we have been compelled to load four, instead of the three wagons with them.”³³

A surviving Bierstadt stereograph, titled “Unpacking Indian Goods, Nebraska,” pictures four wagons. A tall man in the right foreground is almost certainly Lander. Two sketches from the trip by Henry Hitchings assist interpretation: one, titled “Col. Lander,” portrays the same tall man wearing a broad brimmed hat; the other shows him seated with several other men. Civil War-era photographs suggest the reason for Lander’s hat: he was fair-skinned and balding. “Towards evening [the Shoshones] amused us with music and dancing,” Bierstadt wrote. Washakie, dressed in the United States uniform Lander gave the chief, watched his fellow tribesmen dance to the “tum-tum.” It was, in Bierstadt’s words, “all together a magnificent sight,” augmented by the Yankee fireworks.³⁴

On the morning of July 4, Lander’s party and the emigrants broke camp to begin the several days’ work of crossing the Green River. Two emigrant wagons were lost in the crossing, and one man drowned. “Hundreds of families of what we call the West, are all bound still further West,” Bierstadt observed, “truly a progressive people and a progressive country.”³⁵ He then closed his letter and passed it to the man readying the mail’s eastbound start. That morning, Bierstadt wrote that he anticipated another month’s traveling before turning eastward.

Lander, the artists, and the Shoshones had just missed a major publicity bonanza. Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Tribune*, was on the stagecoach to Salt Lake City, only two days behind the expedi-



Bostonian Society, Boston, Massachusetts

tion. From Big Sandy River, a few miles east of Green River, Greeley wrote on July 6: “I missed seeing Col. Lander, to my regret; but I am sure he is doing a good work, for which thousands will have reason to bless him.”³⁶

After leaving Green River, Lander’s train entered Piney Canyon at the eastern foot of the Wahsatch Mountains, climbed toward Thompson Pass (named for the secretary of the interior), and arrived at the Salt River Valley in mid-July. The expedition’s progress had slowed somewhat west of South Pass. In the wake of both a flood of emigrants and unseasonable rains, sections of the road had to be relocated from wet terrain to higher ground. “Ned Williamson was showing me a few days since a favorite camp ground of the Pannocks during the summer; it is now a miniature lake,” Outfit reflected, adding, “Ned is an old mountaineer, a clever fellow, and fearless as a bull terrier.”³⁷

The steeper terrain past Labarge Meadows slowed the expedition, undoubtedly allowing the artists time to sketch—and probably take photographs—of some of the finest scenery west of St. Joseph. The works of Bierstadt from this, his first trip west, have gained lasting prominence, but those of his companions—Seth Frost and Henry Hitchings—have only lately

33. Lander to Thompson, May 30, 1859, microfilm, Records of the Secretary of the Interior Relating to Wagon Roads, M95, roll 4, NA.

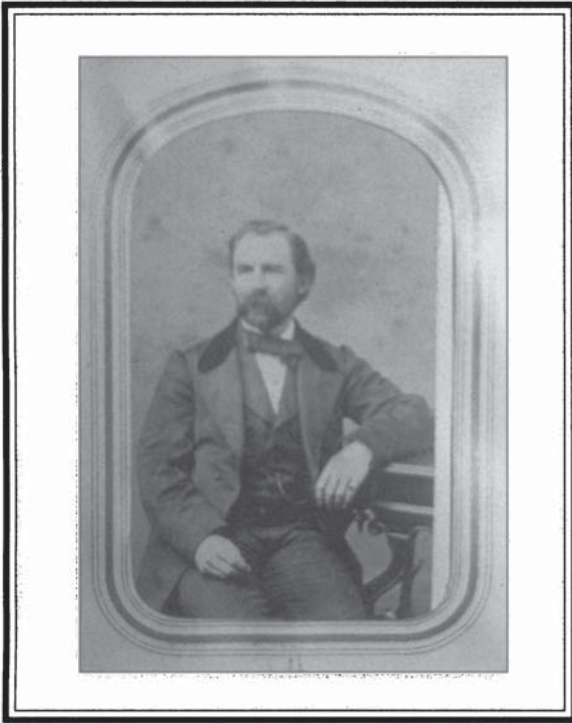
34. New Bedford *Daily Mercury*, August 10, 1859.

35. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859; New Bedford *Daily Mercury*, August 10, 1859.

36. Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* (New York, 1964), 160.

37. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859.

38. At the time, Bierstadt advertised as an art teacher on Washington Street in Boston, and Frost was recovering from an illness contracted in the goldfields. One source cites Bierstadt as Frost’s teacher. See William Cutter, *Historic Homes and Places and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs Relating to the Families of Middlesex County*, 4 vols. (New York, 1908), 2:491; “Gossip About Pictures,” *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 9 (October 27, 1855), 269.



been located and identified, despite their reputations as artists of merit in their own day.

Francis Seth Frost was the son of a former trapper-turned-wealthy market gardener in the outskirts of Boston. Often mistakenly referred to as Francis Shedd Frost, the artist left Boston on one of the first ships bound for the California gold rush in February 1849, traveling around Cape Horn to California while most of his fellow artists were touring Europe. One of his first exhibited works in Boston, *Pacific Coast Scene* (1855), recalled his adventurous gold rush experiences, which have survived in part thanks to a journal he kept. Frost studied with Bierstadt, his only known art teacher, although by 1855 he was better known than Bierstadt in the Boston art community. That year the press noted of Bierstadt: "This artist is evidently a careful student of nature and probably paints much in the field."³⁸ In an equally prominent review, a critic the same year described Frost as "a young landscape painter of great promise. We shall be disappointed if this young man does not prove himself one day one of the first landscapists of the age." In 1855, Frost was among the founders of the Boston Art Club. Consisting of both businessmen and artists, the club proved a springboard for the nascent White Mountain school of landscape artists.³⁹ When Frost left his wife and two young daugh-

39. "A Glance at the Gallery," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion*, 9 (September 22, 1855), 189; Jourdan Houston, "Francis Seth Frost (1825–1902): Beyond Bierstadt's Shadow," *American Art Review*, 6 (August–September 1994), 146–59.

40. *Boston Atlas and Bee*, March 21, 1859.

Henry Hitchings (left, carte de visite, no date) would produce and exhibit numerous watercolors from his trip west in 1859. During the 1860s, he taught at the United States Naval Academy and later was instrumental in establishing the nation's first arts education curriculum.

ters to join the Lander expedition, he was a prolific artist known familiarly in the press as "Frost."

To finance his trip with Lander, Frost auctioned nearly one hundred of his works. The press considered the works "in all probability one of the most complete and desirable collections ever offered here, and is disposed of simply because Mr. Frost leaves Boston in May for the Rocky Mountains."⁴⁰ It would be four years before he presented Boston with another major sale of his work, and when he did, the collection was replete with canvases of Kansas, the Wind River range and South Pass, Shoshone villages and processions, and the Green River, headwaters of the Colorado.

Frost's paintings from the trip bear his distinctive skies, a tonal mix of blue and white struck by a visible sun. His mountains are not Bierstadt's, which are often granted an Alpine hyperbole.⁴¹ Where his teacher favored mountains and often exaggerated them, Frost fancied the sky and kept his mountains to scale.

Henry Hitchings's presence with the 1859 Lander expedition has been conjectured but not confirmed until recently.⁴² Born in Boston, he was the eighth child of Elizabeth Dexter Wade and Daniel Hitchings, a paperhanger and mason with roots in Lynn, Massachusetts. Henry attended the Eliot School in the North End of Boston. In the mid-1840s, the family moved to the western suburb of Dedham, Massachusetts.

Hitchings was the protégé of English-born artist Edward Seager (1809–1886), a trained engraver and, possibly, lithographer, who began teaching in Boston in 1844. By 1848, Hitchings emerged skilled in lithography, a relatively new printing method.⁴³ Hitchings may have been the first of the three known artists of the expedition to explore photography. In 1850, the federal census listed his occupation as "Daugerotype." Part of the Boston art community for the next decade, Hitchings joined Frost as an early member of the Boston

41. Bierstadt returned to America with his Alpine perspective. The Alps and Rockies have similar absolute elevations, but Alpine valleys are lower than the mountain valleys of the Rockies, and thus make the Alps appear higher in relative elevation, which they are.

42. Patricia Trenton and Peter H. Hassrick, *The Rocky Mountains: A Vision for Artists in the Nineteenth Century* (Norman, 1983), 120.

Art Club. He moved to New York City in 1858 and left for the Lander expedition soon after supervising a large exhibition of “some of the best productions of our artistic world” at Gurney’s, a gallery on Broadway.⁴⁴

Hitchings taught drawing at the United States Naval Academy from 1861 to 1869—where Edward Seager had become drawing master—and for the remainder of his career was an artist, drawing master, and important factor in establishing the nationally emulated art education program in Boston schools. Hitchings clearly valued his western tour. His obituary referred to him as “an artist all his life, an early devotee of landscape art, and one of his achievements being a tour with Bierstadt over the Rocky mountains in the fifties, the spoil of which in sketches was always one of his most valued possessions”—sketches unrecognized until identified by the authors several years ago.⁴⁵

When not drawing in black and white, Hitchings’s preferred medium was watercolor, and the several dozen views from the Lander trip that survive reflect his perception that composition held sway over color. Hitchings saw color in art as “the language of sentiment . . . more especially addressed to the feelings.” He warned against its “charms,” saying: “Though the *fascinations* of the painter’s art lie in color, yet the great essentials consist of form, composition, and light-and-shade; the latter may be comprehended alone; but colour unaccompanied by these is incapable of conveying a single idea.”⁴⁶

Hitchings’s images of the Lander trip begin at St. Joseph, continue to near Fort Hall in present-day Idaho, and then follow his return from Fort Hall. Almost every drawing is identified by date and location, providing both a valuable chronology and a visual record for the 1859 expedition. His sketchbook, which survived in the possession of his family, indicates Bierstadt and Frost traveled beyond South Pass in 1859.⁴⁷ Modern historians discount Bierstadt’s presence west of South Pass. Considering his paintings of the Wahsatch range

past South Pass as mislabeled, they suggest that Bierstadt was confused about his location.

It is true that the artists could not have even seen, much less traveled in, the *present-day* Wasatch Mountains lying east of Salt Lake City. But the Wahsatch Mountains of 1859 included not only the Utah range but also the Wyoming, Salt, and Bear ranges, which today lie west of Green River and the Wind River mountains. Early maps of the area, as well as Lander’s official report to Congress, clearly identify this extended “Wahsatch.” In his letter to the *Boston Atlas and Bee*, “Rover” wrote: “The valley through which the Green River seeks its way to the Colorado is bounded by the rugged peaks of the Wahsatch range . . . and the whole scenery of the valley is sublime beyond description. The South Pass Wagon Road runs directly across it to Piney Canon, the main entrance to the mountains.”⁴⁸

When critic Henry T. Tuckerman interviewed Bierstadt for Tuckerman’s seminal 1867 work, *Book of Artists, American Artist Life*, Bierstadt had indicated that “he left Lander’s party while it was still . . . in the Wasatch range, in Southern Oregon.” Gordon Hendricks, a prominent Bierstadt scholar, wrote that Bierstadt “did not get very much farther than the vicinity of South Pass, and perhaps a few miles west and north along the way that Lander took on his Cut-Off.” Hendricks concludes that “Bierstadt’s own account, recorded eight years later by art historian Henry T. Tuckerman, is incorrect, either as a result of the artist’s faulty memory or Tuckerman’s bravura.” Hendricks, believing Bierstadt “got his geography mixed up,” noted, as have others, that Bierstadt could not possibly have seen the Wahsatch from the vicinity of South Pass.⁴⁹

Evidence now shows that Bierstadt, his photographer, and his artist friends traveled well west of South Pass and into the Wahsatch. Some of them reached the Salt River Valley before turning homeward. Tuckerman’s account was accurate, and Bierstadt’s memory was not at all faulty. Bierstadt’s own words help establish the fact. In his oft-cited letter to *The Crayon* of July 10, Bierstadt said:

43. Hitchings contributed more than a half-dozen scenes to at least three volumes titled *View in New England: Series of Drawings from Nature, by Various Artists, Part First* (Boston, 1849) and *New England Scenery from Nature, Series 3 and 4* (Boston, 1852). He drew the covers for the later series and was lithographer for a number of drawings by other participating artists, including Seager, Benjamin F. Nutting, William Henry Tappan (who traveled the Oregon Trail a decade before Hitchings), and publisher M. J. Whipple. A lithograph from the 1859 trip with Lander surfaced in 1997.

44. United States Census Office, *Seventh Census, 1850, Massachusetts, Vol. 18, Norfolk County, Section Two, Part 1* (Washington, D.C., 1850), 239 (the census was taken in late July); *The Crayon*, 6 (January 1859), 27.

45. Dedham, Massachusetts, *Transcript*, January 25, 1902.

46. Henry Hitchings, “True Principals of Art Founded in Nature,” unpublished manuscript, p. 79, Henry Hitchings Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

47. The Hitchings sketchbook was recently donated to Yale University by the artist’s granddaughter, Mrs. Elisabeth Hitchings Rothschild, and her daughters, Christina Sekaer and Anne DeMunn.

48. *Boston Atlas and Bee*, August 4, 1859.

49. Henry T. Tuckerman, *Book of Artists, American Artist Life, Comprising Biographical and Critical Sketches of American Artists* (New York, 1867), 390 (the Wasatch spelling is Tuckerman’s); Gordon Hendricks, *Albert Bierstadt: Painter of the American West* (New York, 1988), 80.

I have above told you a little of the Wind River chain of mountains, as it is called. Some 70 miles west from them, across a rolling prairie covered with wild sage, the soap-plant (?) and different kinds of shrubs, we come to the Wahsatch, a range resembling the White Mountains.

He goes on to describe the streams in the Wahsatch, the willows on the streambanks, and the numerous intersecting beaver dams, though “we have not yet, however, seen any of their constructors.” His description is no view from the distance; he is there. “We are about to turn our faces homeward again,” he wrote, indicating they were still traveling west on July 10, less than a week after he had said they would advance for another month.⁵⁰

Even at a very conservative rate of 10 to 15 miles a day (Lander was known to average 35 miles per day on the plains), the group could easily have traveled 70 to 105 miles beyond Green River after July 4—where the party lingered to help hundreds of wagons cross. At a rate of only 10 miles per day, slower than on the plains, the pace would easily place the expedition well into the Wahsatch in a week. The *Weekly West* letter confirms the expedition’s camp in the Salt River Valley, not far from today’s Idaho border, on July 18, although they probably arrived there earlier.⁵¹ Another letter from Lander, written the morning after “Pannock” Indians had fired into his camp, suggests the expedition’s continued presence in the valley on July 21.⁵² Corroborating the party’s advance are Hitchings’s sketches after South Pass, among them images titled *Grass Springs WR Oregon July 4/59 Fremont’s Peak; Piney canyon July 8/59; Beyond Labarge July 10 1859 (Wahsatch Mtns); Salt Creek Can[ny]on; and July Salt River Valley*. Salt River Valley, now known as Paradise Valley or Star Valley, is just east of the present Idaho/Wyoming line.

Bierstadt’s stereographs, which he and his photographer, who is not identified, took while traveling along the plains, offer tantalizing possibilities about the scope of the artist’s travels. About fifteen survive. The 1860 Bierstadt catalog of fifty-one western stereographs identifies one (no. 69) as “Salt river valley.” The title is compelling. Among several Salt River valleys in the nation, two would have been in range of the artists’

travels. One location—in what is now western Wyoming—lies not far west of Piney Canyon. A second is south of Hannibal, Missouri, terrain known once for its salt springs, limestone bluffs, and good trapping. This Salt River would have been visible from both ferry and train, depending on the travelers’ itineraries.

If the unlocated Bierstadt photograph represents the rocky terrain along the Lander Trail in Wyoming, then the photographic progression west of the Wind River Mountains is no. 88, “Emigrant train on the Big Sandy river, Oregon”; no. 132, “Lander’s train camping on the Colorado”; and no. 69, “Salt river valley”—with the farthest west being the “Salt river valley.”⁵³

Evidence that Bierstadt participated in the photographic process is strong. The wet collodion technique of photography in use at that time was usually a two-man effort, and Bierstadt hired only one photographer to accompany him. In his letters, Bierstadt always used “we” when referring to photographing subjects, although given his personality it is unlikely that he left composition of subjects to his “photographer.” Bierstadt’s own words illustrate: “We have taken many stereoscopic views, but not so many of mountain scenery as I could wish, owing to various obstacles attached to the process, but still a goodly number.” Some have conjectured that Frost was the photographer, and he may have been. Frost’s obituary said he became an avid photographer with “few equals, perhaps no superiors,” but that he had taken up photography later in life.⁵⁴

A letter to Bierstadt from William J. Stillman, art critic and editor of *The Crayon*, invites Bierstadt to the Adirondacks as a photographer and offers to hire an assistant. The letter, dated September 16 without the year, is probably 1858 or 1859, for Stillman spent both of those summers in the Adirondacks before leaving to live in Europe for a decade. Stillman suggests that Bierstadt could reach Saranac, in the Adirondacks, from Boston in about thirty hours. Bierstadt moved from Massachusetts to New York in November 1859, shortly after returning from the West. The strong implication is that Stillman considered Bierstadt a photographer

50. Bierstadt letter.

51. St. Joseph, Missouri, *Weekly West*, August 27, 1859; F. W. Lander, “Report and Map of the Central Division of the Ft. Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road, January 20, 1859,” Senate Exec. Doc. no. 36, 2d sess., 35th Cong., pp. 46-73. Distances taken from Lander’s *Emigrant Guide*, pp. 58-62, measured by wagon odometer, west from Gilbert’s Station at South Pass were: South Pass to Green River, 71.82 miles; and to Salt River Valley, 137.69 miles (interval: 65.87 miles). At ten miles a day, the expedition and artists could easily have traveled the sixty-six miles to Salt River Valley from July 4 to July 10.

52. Lander to Alfred H. Campbell, Superintendent of Pacific Wagon Roads Office, July 21, 1859, microcopy 95, roll 4, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior Relating to Wagon Roads, 1857-1887, NA.

53. Joseph W. Snell, “Some Rare Western Photographs by Albert Bierstadt Now in the Historical Society Collections,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly*, 24 (Spring 1958), 1-5.

54. New Bedford *Daily Mercury*, January 7, 1859; *The Crayon*, 8 (January 1861), 22; Bierstadt letter; Arlington, Massachusetts, *Advocate*, December 29, 1902.

in fall 1859 or possibly earlier. Whether Bierstadt personally uncapped the lens to create the exposures is unknown. There is simply no proof that he did, but given the evidence we should consider him a photographer.⁵⁵

If Bierstadt and Frost advanced as far as the Salt River Valley, 138 miles beyond South Pass and 66 miles from Green River, does the new information concur with the known facts about their return? Bierstadt and Frost retraced the Oregon Trail. Bierstadt's letters indicate that their westward crossing of the Wolf River in Kansas Territory occurred on May 10, and their eastbound recrossing on September 3. If Bierstadt and Frost left Salt River Valley or its vicinity about July 15, or even a few days earlier, the eastbound trip would have been several weeks quicker than the westbound, a customary difference.

Hitchings's return trip, too, was accomplished more quickly than the westbound journey. His sketchbook record indicates that he continued to Fort Hall in present-day Idaho before returning east with members of the main expedition who did not wish to continue to California. His time line indicates he was weeks behind Bierstadt and Frost in returning, stopping near Fremont's Peak in the Wind River range in mid-August. Moreover, it appears that his returning group chose the shorter route east from Fort Laramie, reaching the Missouri River by way of the Niobrara River, which Hitchings sketched. That the homeward trip was speedier than the outbound one is reasonable: the country had already been visited, the roadwork had been done, and, with fall approaching, there was the urgency of weather.

Lander addressed the Pacific Railroad convention in San Francisco on September 22 with his vision and plan for a central transcontinental railroad route. Upon his return, he did not recross the plains, as some have suggested.⁵⁶ Rather, he went by ship. Eastbound from San Francisco with General Winfield Scott on the *John L. Stephens*, and "never having been out of sight of land before," Lander "was terribly seasick." The Colonel said he had "ridden forty-eight hours on a mule without rest; fought the Indians, the Mormons, and grizzlies; walked thousands of miles afoot over alkali plains, but never knew what it was to be miserable before."⁵⁷

After crossing the Panamanian Isthmus, he left Aspinwall and arrived in New York on December 13 on the steamer *Atlantic*. The engineers of the advance Lander party—including the young cartographer, John Ross Key, who would later be a compatriot at the Boston Art Club with Frost and Hitchings—preceded Lander from San Francisco to New York, arriving on November 9 on the *Atlantic*.

Lander spent the winter working on his report for the 1859 season and preparing for work in summer 1860 on the road's western division, which would lie east of the Sierra Mountains and in Humboldt country. Not only did he complete the tasks for 1860, he resolved the Pyramid Lake War of that summer as well. In October, he married actress Jean Margaret Davenport of Lynn, Massachusetts, who had performed during the summer in San Francisco. The Reverend Thomas Starr King, an intimate and patron of the Boston art community before moving to California in 1860, officiated at the wedding in his own home in San Francisco. King, an avid hiker who had written about his summers exploring the White Mountains of New Hampshire, later entertained Bierstadt during the artist's 1863 trip to Yosemite, the Sierras, and the Cascades.

Lander, a Douglas Democrat, resigned his wagon road office in February 1861 and offered to remain, with or without pay, until March 4, 1861, the day of Lincoln's inauguration. He declined the newly elected president's offer to become governor of Nevada Territory, but he did act as Lincoln's secret agent to Sam Houston in an effort to support Houston and keep Texas in the Union.

On the outbreak of the Civil War, Lander served on George B. McClellan's staff before receiving a command as a brigadier general on the Upper Potomac. Personally leading charges that cleared the Confederates from his department, he was wounded in the calf by a Confederate ball at Edward's Ferry in late October 1861. Lander later returned to combat but died as the result of his wound on March 2, 1862. After a huge Washington funeral led by Lincoln, his cabinet, and the Supreme Court, Lander's body, accompanied by his company of sharpshooters and his horse, was transported on a special train to his home in Salem, Massachusetts.

Seth Frost returned to Boston to add scenes of the West to his customary regional landscapes. He painted a large canvas of South Pass for one of the trip's patrons, one of only four located Frost oils of the Lander

55. William J. Stillman, Franklin, New York, to Albert Bierstadt, Boston, September 16, 1858 or 1859 [?], Library Division, Du Pont Coll. Bierstadt was involved in photographing the West from his arrival in St. Joseph, Missouri, in April. His brothers entered the photography business in December 1859. It has been suggested that Bierstadt "learned" photography either while in Dusseldorf prior to

1859 or from his brothers. William Welling, *Photography in America: The Formative Years, 1839-1900* (New York, 1978), 139; Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock, "Stereoscopic Photography and the Western Paintings of Albert Bierstadt," *Art Quarterly*, 33 (no. 4, 1970), 363-64; William C. Lipke and Philip N. Grime, "Albert Bierstadt in New Hampshire," *Currier Bulletin* (no. 2, 1973), 22-24.



As a result of their trek westward in 1859, Hitchings, Frost, and Bierstadt left, as Lander put it, “worthy relics” with which others might imagine the Rocky Mountains. The most monumental and widely recognized of their works is Albert Bierstadt’s *The Rocky Mountains, Lander’s Peak* (1863, oil on canvas, 73 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 120 $\frac{3}{4}$ "). Described by a contemporary as “one of the finest landscapes ever painted in this country,” it drew large crowds when exhibited in Boston and New York.

expedition. After 1859, he exhibited oils of scenes ranging from the Little Blue River in Kansas Territory to the headwaters of the Colorado River, west of the Wind River range. His recently discovered canvas of an Indian family, *Indian Encampment*, appears to be near Fort Laramie. In 1869, Frost, who had grown wealthy from family farm holdings, bought the oldest artists’ materials shop in Boston. He remained an active participant in the Boston Art Club, which he helped create in 1855, and continued to paint landscapes for the rest of his life.

Henry Hitchings produced numerous watercolors of the trip, many of them highly faithful to his field sketches, including *Near Rock Creek, Nebraska Territory, June 24, 1859 Our first view of The Wind River Mts.* While teaching at the Naval Academy from 1861 to 1869, Hitchings exhibited and sold paintings in Boston and New York, including one from his 1859 western trip, *Near Grass Springs Wind River Mountains—Oregon*, which was recently located. The painting’s field sketch survives. In 1869, after exhibiting at the National Academy of Design in New York City, he returned to Boston, where he worked briefly for his old friend, Seth Frost. Hitchings helped develop the nation’s first arts education curriculum, a program

that became a national drawing movement intended to improve industrial design skills. Hitchings would paint, write drawing texts, and teach until his death in 1902.

Bierstadt moved to New York City in late 1859, although he continued to paint in the White Mountains of New England. His painting, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander’s Peak*, finished in early 1863, is arguably the canvas that contributed most to his emerging reputation as an American landscapist. It made its debut on February 3, 1863, at the first reception of the season at the New York artists’ Tenth Street Studio Building, where Bierstadt had a studio. With twelve hundred invitations sent, nearly one thousand people attended, moving not only through the gallery but also through the artists’ rooms.⁵⁸

Six feet high and ten feet wide, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander’s Peak* stunned observers in Boston and New York not only by its size and merit, but also by its dramatic depiction of what one admirer noted was “a hitherto unknown portion of American scenery.” Boston critics described the painting as “beyond question one of the finest landscapes ever painted in this country. Its artistic merits are in some respects unrivalled: and added to these it has the advantage of being a

56. The artists may not have continued to California because of Indian danger.

57. Salem, Massachusetts, *Register*, February 20, 1860.

58. Boston *Evening Transcript*, January 16, February 7, 1863. Other artists whose works were at the gathering were Jervis McEntee, Regis Gignoux, William Hart, Worthington Whittredge, and J. G. Brown.

59. *Ibid.*, February 7, April 13, 1863.

representative painting of a portion of the most sublime and beautiful scenery on the American Continent. It will become widely known only to be warmly admired."⁵⁹ Today, it hangs prominently in New York's Metropolitan Museum across from Frederick E. Church's *Heart of the Andes*.

Ironically, as his former teacher's painting drew crowds in Boston, Frost was showing his own Rocky Mountain works at Williams and Everett, the city's premier art dealership. Described as "one of our most successful and painstaking artists," Frost included more than seventy works in what was his first "public sale for several years." Auctioned on April 24, the paintings included *Laramie Peak*, *Rocky Mountains*, *Wilds of the Rocky Mountains*, *Kansas Scenery*, and *Indian Traveling*. They drew a good crowd but low prices.⁶⁰

Hitchings and Bierstadt died within months of each other in early 1902, and Frost died in December of the same year. As for the area west of South Pass, the sage plain and mountains are much the same today as in 1859. The Civil War diminished emigration and the Pacific Railroad reduced travel between the coasts from months to days after 1869. Fencing and livestock replaced the Shoshone people, who were moved to a reservation northeast of South Pass and north of Lander, Wyoming.


With ditches diverting its water, the Green River runs lower than when wagons struggled to cross it. A few highways and roads cross the region, but the ruts of the Lander road are clearly identifiable in many places. Occasional tourists, some seeking the path taken and the vistas seen by Lander, Bierstadt, Frost, Hitchings, Key, and others, have replaced the emigrants.

There is promise that more members of the 1859 artists' mess will emerge. Lander left an intriguing statement in his official report to Congress after that summer's expedition. "A. Bierstadt . . . and S. F. Frost," he said, "accompanied the expedition *with a full corps of artists*." This statement has been dismissed by historians as "Lander hyperbole," but Lander, a civil engineer whose surveyors and wagon odometer measured the trail distances to hundredths of a mile, was not a man prone to exaggeration.⁶¹

Lander was quick to note that the "corps of artists" had traveled "bearing their own expenses." Official

Washington certainly had known of the artists' participation, but Lander, Campbell, Thompson, and Floyd were careful to avoid direct government sponsorship, aware of opposition from such vocal politicians as Representative Pryor of South Carolina, Lander's near dueling opponent. In spring 1859, Pryor had risen at a Washington Art Association meeting to say he "vehemently repelled the idea that art should receive corrupting patronage from Government."⁶² Despite political debate on what the government's role in supporting the arts should be, the Lander expedition was an artistic success. Frederick W. Lander left more than a few rock cairns and a road in the West; he left a visual monument to his passage. With its bounty of images, the trip emerges as one of the most visually (and best chronologically) documented expeditions of the West prior to the government surveys of the 1870s. Together, the artists' works now number in the hundreds.

These same images establish the western careers of two more American artists. They diminish confusion over whether Bierstadt traveled west of the Wind River Mountains or painted the Wahsatch range, or various spellings thereof; he did. In addition, early Bierstadt paintings from 1859 to his second trip west in 1863—both identified and unidentified—must be examined as possible scenes extending from the Wind River Mountains, through the Wahsatch, and, possibly, into the Salt River Valley.

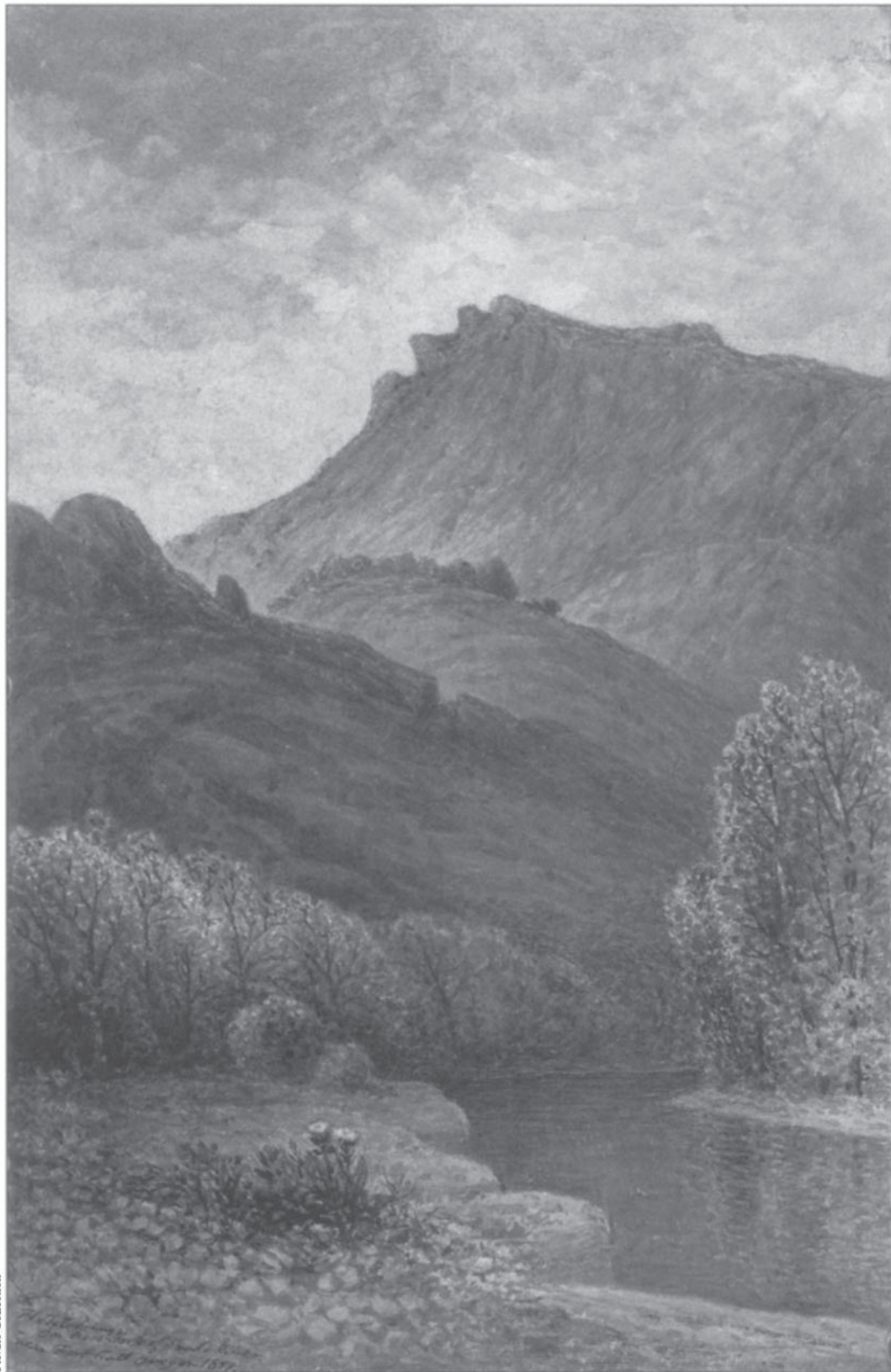
And, finally, the odyssey of Frederick Lander, cut short by an early bullet of the Civil War, is cast in a subtler light. The arts articulate—and now help document—the man and his mission, in this case during the wagon road journey of 1859. To that end, it cannot be said, to paraphrase Lander's words, that he, or his expedition, or its artists left "no worthy relic to tell the tale" of their existence. 

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60. *Ibid.*, April 20, 22, 24, 1863.

61. F. W. Lander, "Maps and Reports of the Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road," March 1, 1860, House of Representatives, Exec. Doc. no. 64, 36th Cong., 2d sess., p. 5; Leland, *Frederick West Lander*, 123; Trenton and Hassrick, *Rocky Mountains*, 120.

62. Lander, "Maps and Reports of the Fort Kearney, South Pass, and Honey Lake Wagon Road," March 1, 1860, p. 5; Washington, D.C., *Evening Star*, April 1, 1859.



Private Collection

Henry Hitchings produced *On Ross Fork of Snake River near Fort Hall Oregon 1859* (above, sepia wash, 12" x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ") from country he observed on his return trip in 1859. He and compatriots Bierstadt and Frost provided a formidable artistic presence for the 1859 expedition, but in light of Lander's reference to having had a "full corps of artists," yet undiscovered artists may have accompanied them as well.