

Alfred Jacob Miller



Self-Portrait, ca. 1850
Oil on canvas,
30 x 25 inches
The Walters Art Gallery,
Baltimore, Maryland
(black & white image)

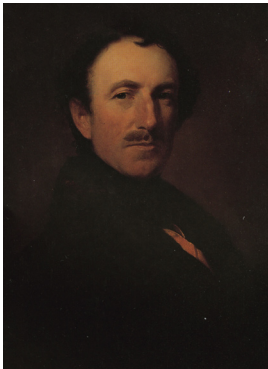
Alfred Jacob Miller, born on January 2, 1810 in Baltimore, MD, is best known for his artworks from the journey to the Rocky Mountains with Captain William Drummond Stewart. Although known for romanticizing the subjects in his renderings, Miller is one of the first significant artists to paint the Rocky Mountains as well as document the fur trade industry.

While living in Philadelphia from 1831 to 1832, Miller had the opportunity to study under artist Thomas Sully who was considered one of America's best portraitist. In Paris, he studied with a group of artists called "The Romantics," and that sense of

romanticism was reflected in their paintings. When he returned to the states, Miller briefly opened a studio in Baltimore. That venture proved unsuccessful so Miller set his sights on New Orleans launching a studio in 1836 with only \$30 to his name.

1837 proved to be a significant turning point in Miller's life. While attempting to make a successful career out of portraiture, he met Captain Stewart, a British Army officer and Scottish aristocrat, in April who in turn asked him to document a journey to the Rocky Mountains with him. After returning, Miller started creating oil paintings for Stewart while in New Orleans, and then Stewart invited Miller to come to his castle in Scotland. Before he left, Miller had a showing of the artworks in July 1838 in Baltimore as well as an exhibition in New York City in 1839. A number of people attended as it was their first opportunity to see depictions of the Rocky Mountains and Native Americans. In 1842, Miller returned to Baltimore to resume his studio and enjoyed a successful career creating western paintings and portraiture never returning to the West. Due to poor health and lack of commissions, he retired in 1872. Miller never married and died on June 26, 1874.

Journey to the Rocky Mountains



Henry Inman,
American, 1801-1846
Portrait of Sir William Drummond Stewart, 1844
Oil on canvas,
30 x 25 inches
Joslyn Art Museum

Captain William Drummond Stewart completed four annual expeditions to the Rocky Mountains and the *rendezvous*, however the one in 1837 was different. He secured the services of artist Alfred Jacob Miller to visually document the trip, and then to create oil paintings and additional artworks upon their return.

The traveling party's adventure started in May 1837 as they departed Independence, Missouri. The members of the party included Stewart, Miller, Antoine Clement, Francois Lajeunesse, a cook, three engages and two packers. Next they met up with a crew from the American Fur Company, and the caravan now consisted of 45 men and 20 wagons. It headed west passing by Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluffs along the Little Blue River with the first stop of Fort Laramie in their sights. Register Rock and Devil's Gate also are found on Sweetwater River path, and then on to the *rendezvous* held near the confluence of the Green River and Horse Creek in Wyoming.

The path taken to the Rocky Mountains would later be known as the Oregon Trail. During the trip they encountered a group of Pawnee Indians who turned out to be friendly just wanting payment for the group's wagon train to continue through their land. Stewart agreed by giving them items such as blankets, knives, tobacco and ammunition.

When they reached the *rendezvous*, the Snake Indians made "a grand entrance in honor of Stewart's arrival." Miller observed hundreds of trappers and thousands of Indians trading, and they became the subjects for many of his paintings. He made sketches of trappers pursuing Indian maidens to create paintings such as his *The Trapper's Bride*.

After participating in the three-week long *rendezvous*, Stewart's party headed further west to the Rocky Mountains to Wind River country to hunt and then returned to St. Louis in October. The trip's outcome for Miller was a hundred field sketches that he would use over the next 30 years to create more than a thousand paintings for Stewart and other patrons.



Trapping Beaver, 1858
Watercolor, 9 x 14 inches
The Walters Art Gallery,
Baltimore, MD

In hunting the Beaver two or more trappers are usually in company. On reaching a creek or stream, their first attention is given to "sign." If they discover a tree prostrate, it is carefully examined to ascertain if it is the work of Beaver, and if thrown for the purpose of damming the stream. Foot prints of the animal on the mud or sand are carefully searched for, and if fresh, they then prepare to set their traps. One of these is baited with "medicine" --hidden under water, and attached to a pole driven firmly on or near the bank. A "float-stick" is made fast to the trap, so that if the Beaver should carry it away, the stick remains on the surface of the water and points out its position.

-Alfred Jacob Miller



Pipe of Peace at the Rendezvous, (Camp of the Indians at the Rendezvous of the Whites near the Mountains of the Winds), ca. 1839
Oil on canvas, 39 x 67 1/2 inches
Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas

Alfred Jacob Miller American, 1810-1874

The Trapper's Bride 1850

il on canvas, 30 x 25 inches
Museum Purchase



The Trapper's Bride, n.d.
Watercolor, gouache, glazes, pen and ink, and graphite on paper,
10 3/4 x 8 3/4 inches
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma



The Trapper's Bride, 1857-58
Watercolor, with white on blue-gray tinted paper
12 x 9 3/8 inches
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland



The Trapper's Bride, 1846
Oil on canvas, 35 1/2 x 28 1/2 inches
The Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore, Maryland.
Photograph by Aaron Levin



Bartering for a Bride (The Trapper's Bride), 1845
Oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inches
Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis, IN



Trapper's Bride, 1840s
Oil on canvas, 19 x 16 inches
Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Scott L. Probasco, Jr.

Miller rendered at least seven versions of this composition, *The Trapper's Bride*, and the six available images are pictured here. Miller created the first, largest (eight-by-ten-and-a-half feet), and now missing version of this subject while he lived at Murthly Castle with Stewart.

There are several interpretations of this painting, and according to Miller's notes he says, "The scene represents a Trapper taking a wife, or purchasing one." Another thought, considered a national explanation, it is that the composition represents the bringing together of Indians and whites. While a third interpretation suggests that this artwork is actually a metaphor for uniting Baltimore merchants, represented by the trapper and western trade markets, represented by the Indian maiden. Miller understood what was happening in the business world at this time therefore he created artworks, such as *The Trapper's Bride*, with symbols of the trade industry in them for Baltimore businessmen to purchase to let people know they appreciated art and culture.

Timeline

Featuring Alfred Jacob Miller

1800

1803 Napoleon sells more than 800,000 square miles of land to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase.

1800 Thomas Jefferson is elected as the third president of the United States.

1805

1803-1806 President Jefferson commissions Lewis and Clark to explore and document the new territory.

1810

1810 Alfred Jacob Miller is born on January 2 in Baltimore, Maryland.

1815

1812-1814 The War of 1812, war between the United States and England, starts.

1820

1814-1816 Sir Walter Scott writes *Waverly* (1814), *The Antiquary* (1816), *A Legend of Montrose* (1819) and three others that were illustrated in Miller's sketchbook. Scott was one of Miller's favorite authors.

1825

Self-Portrait, n.d.
Pencil on blue-gray paper,
9 x 7 5/8 inches.
Joslyn Art Museum



1830

1831-1832 Miller studies portraiture in Philadelphia with Thomas Sully.

1832-1834 Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied sets out on an expedition west with artist Karl Bodmer.

1835

1836 Miller moves to New Orleans, LA and opens a studio to paint landscapes and portraits.

1833-1834 Miller studies at the École des Beaux Arts and travels to Italy. He returns to Baltimore, MD to open a studio.

1840

1840 Miller lives in Stewart's home, Murthly Castle in Scotland, creating oil paintings of their journey to the Rocky Mountains.

1837 Miller meets Captain William Drummond Stewart in April and they set out to document the trip to the Rocky Mountains. In July they attend the *rendezvous* near the confluence of Horse Creek and Green River in Wyoming.

1845

1842 Miller returns to Baltimore, MD in April and resumes his studio. He is known for his portraiture and American West paintings.

1850

1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe is published.

1854 Sir William Drummond Stewart writes the semi-autobiographical novel *Edward Warren*.

1855

1855 *The Trapper's Bride* inspires a passage in Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*.

1860

1858 Baltimore merchant, William T. Walters commissions Miller to create 200 watercolors including his comments with each artwork.

1858 Miller provides *Indian Girls Swinging* color plate for Charles Wilkins Webber's *Wild Scenes and Song-Birds*.

1865

1861-1865 The United States Civil War

Detail.
The Lost Greenhorn, 1866
Oil on canvas, 17 1/2 x 22 inches
Stonehollow Collection, Jackson, Wyoming



1870

Sales of artworks featuring western scenes, such as *The Lost Greenhorn*, were increased during the Civil War. Miller did not witness this scene as it is thought *The Lost Greenhorn* is based on a passage from *Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837) by Washington Irving.

1875

1874 Miller dies on June 26.

From the Museum to the Classroom Extensions

Fine Arts - The Tribute

Stewart rode a white Arabian horse while on his adventures in the American West. Miller frequently inserted a white horse in his artworks as a *tribute* to his benefactor, Stewart.

- Have each student think of someone important in their life.
- Then have them sketch something that represents that person.
- Next students should create a series of three to five artworks featuring this *tribute* to their important person.
- The series can be related or not, however the one thing that must be consistent is the *tribute*.



Crow Indian on the Lookout
Oil on board, 12 x 9 3/4 inches
Private Collection



Fort Laramie or Fort William on the Laramie, 1851
Oil on canvas, 18 x 27 inches
The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History & Art

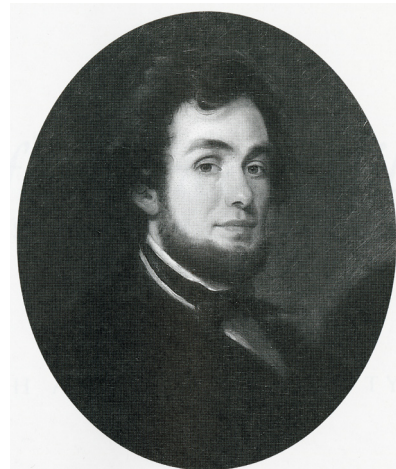
Language Arts - Compare and Contrast

Miller completed field sketches which he then used at Murthly Castle and his Baltimore studio to create multiple versions of the same subject for his patrons, Stewart and Baltimore merchants.

- Study several different images of two of Miller's popular subjects, *Ft. Laramie* or *The Trapper's Bride*.
- Have students take a visual inventory of each image.
- Next create a matrix to analyze the similarities and differences among the versions.
- Write a report using the information gathered in the matrix.
- Preposition hunt - students can see how they used prepositions in their analysis of the artworks.

Alfred Jacob Miller

a biography



Self-Portrait, ca. 1850
oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches (oval).
The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MD.
Gift of Mrs. L. Vernon Miller (Credilla), 1978.

Alfred Jacob Miller was born on January 2, 1810 in Baltimore, MD. He is best known for his paintings on the journey to the Rocky Mountains with Captain William Drummond Stewart. Although known for romanticizing the subjects in his renderings, he is one of the first significant artists to paint the Rocky Mountains as well as document the fur trade industry.

While living in Philadelphia from 1831 to 1832, Miller had the opportunity to study under artist Thomas Sully who was considered one of America's best portraitist. While in Paris, he studied with a group of artists called "The Romantics" and that sense of romanticism was reflected in their paintings. When he returned to the states, Miller briefly opened a studio in Baltimore. That venture proved unsuccessful so Miller set his sights on New Orleans launching a studio in 1836 with only \$30 to his name.



Self-Portrait
pencil on blue-gray paper,
9 x 7 5/8 inches
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska

1837 proved to be a significant turning point in Miller's career. While attempting to make a successful career out of portraiture, he met Captain Stewart, a British Army officer and Scottish aristocrat, in April who in turn asked him to document a journey to the Rocky Mountains with him. After returning, Miller started creating those oil paintings for Stewart late 1837 while in New Orleans, and then Stewart invited Miller to come to his castle. Before he left, Miller had a showing of the artworks in July 1838 in Baltimore as well as an exhibition in New York City in 1839. A number of people attended as it was their first opportunity to see depictions of the Rocky Mountains and Native Americans. In 1842, Miller returned to Baltimore to resumes his studio and enjoys a successful career creating western paintings and portraiture never returning to the West. Due to lack of poor health and lack of commission, he retires in 1872. Miller never married and died on June 26, 1874.



Detail. Alfred Jacob Miller, *Trapping Beaver*, 1858. Watercolor, 9 x 14 inches.
The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MD

Timeline..... 1800 - 1850 Featuring Alfred Jacob Miller

1800 Thomas Jefferson is elected as the third president of the United States.

1803 Napoleon sells more than 800,000 square miles of land to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase.

1803-1806 President Jefferson commissions Lewis and Clark to explore and document the new territory.

1800 1810 1820

1810 Alfred Jacob Miller is born on January 2 in Baltimore, Maryland.

1812-1814 The War of 1812, war between the United States and England starts.

Our Camp (Our encampment)

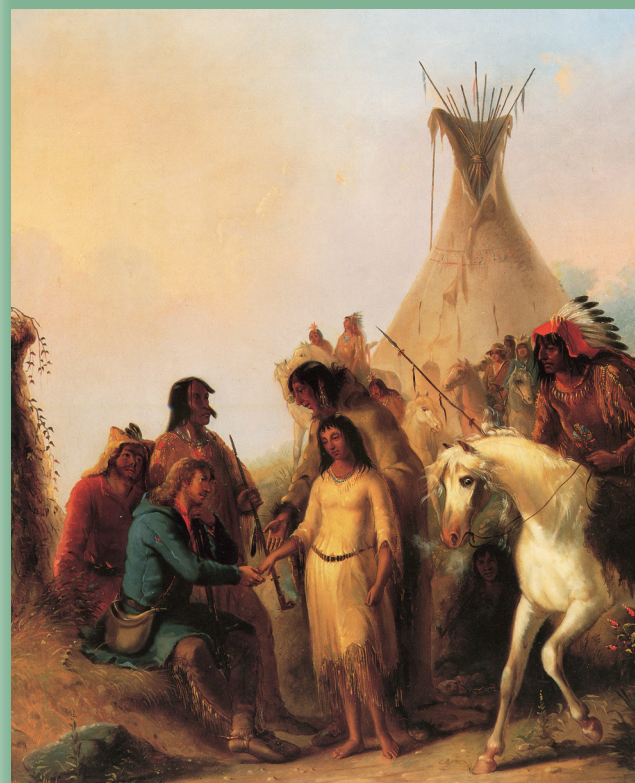
Watercolor & ink, heightened with white, on paper, 9 1/4 x 13 inches
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Frost, New York

Per Miller, *The teamsters find sleeping departments under the wagons, with sweet soft grass to lie on; - they have also a serenade provided for them, but it is chaunted by the wolves, who set up a hideous concert at times, - the former however are quite accustomed to this, and it does not affect their sleep in the least.*



The Trapper's Bride

Alfred Jacob Miller



The Trapper's Bride, 1850, Alfred Jacob Miller, American, 1810-1874, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches

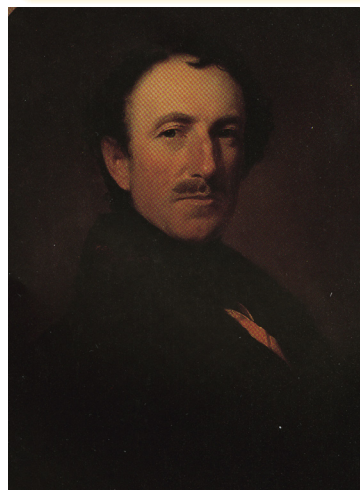
Miller painted nine versions of this scene, and there are at least as many opinions about the meaning of the picture. Miller titled on version *Bartering for a Bride*, and his notes for another say, "The scene represents a Trapper taking a wife, or purchasing one. The prices vary according to the circumstances...in this case \$600" in trade goods. Historians today might counter that the bride's family had more to gain than goods, since the union would be seen as an alliance - and Miller may imply that in the tenderly clasped hands. However, a contemporary Native American view might see inevitable personal and cultural diminishment in this exchange.

Discussion Questions:

- How do the two versions of *The Trapper's Bride* differ from Joslyn's version?
- Why do you think Miller made the changes he did?

Journey to Rocky Mountains

an adventure



Henry Inman, American, 1801-1846
Portrait of Sir William Drummond Stewart, 1844
oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches
Museum purchase, 1963.617

His paintings. He made sketches of trappers pursuing Indian maidens to create paintings such as his *The Trapper's Bride*. Stewart's kindness to the Snake Indians resulted in a parade of 2,000 Indians in his honor.

Stewart's party headed further west to the Rocky Mountains to Wind River country after participating in the approximately three-week long *rendezvous*. The outcome of this trip for Miller was 166 art works in addition to his numerous sketches used to created the final portraits and scenes.

Captain William Drummond Stewart completed four annual expeditions to the Rocky Mountains and the rendezvous, however the one in 1837 would be different. He secured the services of artist Alfred Jacob Miller to visually document the trip and then he would create oil paintings upon their return.

The traveling party's adventure started on a steamship sailing up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. The member's of the party included Stewart, Miller, Antoine Clement, Francois Lajeunesse, a cook, three engages and two packers. Next they met up with a crew from the American Fur Company, and the caravan now consists of 45 men and 20 wagons. It headed west passing by Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluffs along the Little Blue River with the first stop of Fort Laramie in their sights. Register Rock and Devil's Gate also are found on Sweetwater River path, and then on to the rendezvous held near the confluence of the Green River and Horse Creek in Wyoming.

The path taken to the Rocky Mountains would later be known as the Oregon Trail. During the trip they encountered a group of Pawnee Indians who turned out to be friendly just wanting payment for the group's wagon train to continue through their land. Stewart agreed by giving them items such as blankets, knives, tobacco and ammunition.

When they reached the *rendezvous*, the Snake Indians made "a grand entrance in honor of Stewart's arrival." Miller observed hundreds of trappers and thousands of Indians trading who provided the subjects for many of



Sir William Drummond Stewart Meeting Indian Chiefs, c.1837, Oil on canvas, 33 x 42 1/2". The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

What is Art of the American West?

Art that depicts events or scenes in the continental US west of the Mississippi River.

1831-1832 Miller studies portraiture in Philadelphia with Thomas Sully.

1832-1834 Prince Maximillian of Wied-Neuweid sets out on an expedition west with artist Karl Bodmer.

1833-1834 Miller studies in Paris and travels to Italy. He studies at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. During this time he could be found at the Louvre recreating the Old Masters. Then returns to Baltimore, MD to open a studio over a music store.

1830 1840 1850

1836 Miller moves to New Orleans, LA and opens a studio to paint landscapes and portraits.

1837 Miller meets Captain William Drummond Stewart in April and they set out to document the trip to the Rocy Mountains. In July they attend the rendezvous near the confluence of Horse Creek and Green River in Wyoming.

1840 Miller lives in Stewart's home, Murthly Castle in Scotland, creating oil paintings of their journey to the Rocky Mountains.

1842 Miller moves back to Baltimore, Maryland in April and resumes his studio and is known for his portraiture and American West paintings.

From the Museum to the Classroom Activities



Captain William Drummond Stewart and Caravan in the Wind River Mountains
Oil on canvas, 12 x 16 inches. Private Collection, TX.



Crow Indian on the Lookout
Oil on board, 12 x 9 3/4 inches
Private Collection



Alfred Jacob Miller, **Buffalo Hunt**, ca. 1839.
Oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 50 1/4 inches.
Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Tex. (1966.21)

Tribute

Miller frequently inserts a white horse as a tribute to his benefactor, Stewart who rode a similar horse during their adventure to the Rocky Mountains.

- Have each student think of someone important in their life.
- Then have them sketch something that represents that person.
- Next have them create a series of three to five artworks featuring a tribute to their important person.
- The series can be related or not, however the one thing that must be consistent is the tribute.

Compare-Contrast

Miller used his sketches to create paintings when he returned to his studio.

Study the Ft. Laramie images. Take a basic inventory. Then create a matrix to analyze the similarities and differences among the four versions.



Fort Laramie or Fort William on the Laramie, 1851, Oil on canvas, 18 x 27". The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History & Art.



Fort Laramie, Indian Girls Racing, ca. 1845, Oil on canvas, 14 1/2 x 25 inches. Private Collection, New Hampshire.



Fort Laramie, Indian Girls Racing, Oil on canvas, 10 x 16 inches. Collection of Gerald & Kathleen Peters, New Mexico.



Racing at Fort Laramie 1868, Oil on canvas, 31 x 48 inches. The Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Jack Warner, Alabama.

Art of the American West

at Joslyn Art Museum

The West - Romance and Imagination



Frederic Sackrider Remington
American, 1861-1909
Bonco Buster, 1895
bronze, 24 1/2 inches high.
Bequest of N.P. Dodge

If early nineteenth-century art depicting the American West can be described as documentary, that of later decades might best be termed dramatic. There is a sense of theater in the works of Frederic Remington and Carl Wimar that appealed greatly to the people of their era and reminds us today of the Wild West of Buffalo Bill and Lonesome Dove. Americans have long cherished their vision of the West as an ideal world, as a special paradise where the landscapes are unsullied by industry, and forthright frontier values-American values-still hold. The common vision was created and perpetuated in large measure by painters and printmakers, who ironically often had very little direct experience of the West. Alfred Jacob Miller's many pictures of buffalo hunts and Indian maidens became increasingly romantic the further he was in time and space from his brief 1837 adventure in the Rocky Mountains. Remington, deploring his own lack of opportunities to work in the real West, declared to a friend that "there are no people such as I paint, it's 'studio' or nothing." Remington's studio was in New York City.

Carl Ferdinand Wimar
American, born
Germany, 1828-1862
Indians Stealing Horses, 1854
oil on canvas
Museum Purchase, 1951



What are the dominant images of the West? Indians, of course, alternately seen as noble or savage. Tough, muscular cowboys riding a timeless, endless range. Legendary mountain men pitting their skills against the forces of nature. Sturdy, self-reliant pioneers establishing homesteads against all odds. Most of all, vast, grand landscapes that represent the awe-inspiring power and the certagin, manifest destiny of a young country. This is the romantic West that America, and her arists, have imagined for generations.