

Thomas Moran



Thomas Moran, ca. 1871 photograph, Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Moran appreciated Joseph Mallord William Turner's paintings so much that he and Edward traveled to England to retrace Turner's route along the southeast coast where he created his famous landscapes. It was during this trip he realized that Turner would take artistic license when creating his works because sometimes they could not find the exact location Turner portrayed. According to family lore, Moran spent much time in the National Gallery in London studying and copying Turner's paintings; he learned to paint by copying Turner. Moran would travel to Europe again in the 1860s to further pursue his education by European masters living mostly in Paris. In the spring of 1867 at the Exposition Universelle in Paris, he exhibited his major early work, *Children of the Mountain*.

Scribner's Monthly hired Moran to be an illustrator and he ultimately became chief illustrator. While working for *Scribner's*, one of his assignments was to create illustrations that would accompany Nathaniel P. Langford's article "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," by using Langford's verbal descriptions, notes, and poor sketches of this area. He was able to produce a landscape of an area he had yet to visit (see the engraving in the Timeline). This gave him a pseudo-taste of the West, and getting there was Moran's next goal.



Thomas Moran
American (born England), 1837-1926
The Pearl of Venice
1899

oil on canvas on composition panel, 25 1/8 x 45 1/8 in.
Gift of Mary McArthur Holland, Betty McArthur Heller, and
Mickey McArthur in memory of Marshall and Dorothea

Discussion Questions

- What do you see? Use your other four senses to describe *The Pearl of Venice*.
- What is the story Moran trying to tell? Who or what is in the boats?
- What buildings did Thomas Moran include in this painting?
- What place do you want to visit based only on the images you have seen of it?
- Should artists have the freedom to take artistic license when depicting places unknown to others? Why or why not?
- Why was Moran important to the creation of the National Parks System?
- What would the United States be like without National Parks?
- Which captures a more accurate impression of a place: a painting or a photograph? Why?

a biography

In 1871 Moran joined the U.S. Geological Survey lead by Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden who was in the fifth year of his surveying. It is also here that Moran met photographer and future friend William Henry Jackson. Together the artworks and photographs they produced led Congress to make Yellowstone the first national park in March 1872. The next move by Congress was to appropriate \$10,000 to purchase Moran's *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* for the nation's capital. This launched his career as a painter even though he was already a talented illustrator/engraver.

The successful results of Moran's participation in the 1871 U.S. Geological Survey led to many commissions and invitations to join other survey teams. Moran declined Hayden's invitation to join him on another expedition, and he joined U.S. Army major and college professor John Wesley Powell's team going to the Grand Canyon in the summer of 1873. Following this trip, Moran painted *The Chasm of the Colorado*, and Congress again paid him \$10,000 for this artwork. The Grand Canyon was a significant fixture in his life as he returned to visit it almost every year after 1892.



Anonymous, *Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden (1829-1887)*, ca. 1875, albumen silver print. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Although Moran is highly known for his paintings of the West, he also painted marine scenes in East Hampton, Long Island, as well as industrial scenes. The Santa Fe Railroad also commissioned him to create an image of the Grand Canyon that they could use for marketing purposes. Then came his trips to Venice.

Moran and his daughter Ruth moved west to permanently settle in Santa Barbara, California, after his wife, Mary, died of typhoid fever. He continued painting into the 20th century using his field sketches and photographs to help create compositions in his studio until his death in Santa Barbara on August 25, 1926. Over his lifetime he created more than 1,500 oil paintings, 800 watercolors, and many more drawings and prints.

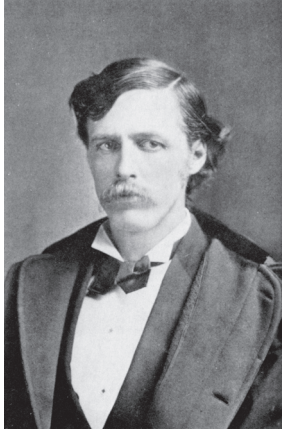


Thomas Moran, *Upper Falls, Yellowstone*, 1874, watercolor, 14 x 9 3/4 in. The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, gift of John Zink.

A Photographer and Friend

When William Henry Jackson first arrived in Omaha, Nebraska, he started working for a leading photographer, Edric Eaton Hamilton. Then in the late 1860s, with his father's help, Jackson purchased that studio and launched his own. He photographed Omaha and Pawnee Indians as well as Union Pacific Railroad construction. These images captured Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden's attention, and he offered Jackson the position of photographer on the U.S. Geological Survey team in 1870.

Moran joined the team in 1871. He and Jackson became good friends as they explored the land they were tasked to document. While Jackson took photographs, Moran would create sketches and back at camp he would add color to them. It is important to note that these watercolor studies would be the first color images the public back East would see of Yellowstone. Together, with Moran's paintings and Jackson's photographs, Dr. Hayden was able to make his case about the significance of Yellowstone. In March of 1872, Congress voted to make Yellowstone the first national park.



William Henry Jackson, 1873. Photographer unknown.



William Henry Jackson, *White Mountain Hot Springs - Group of Upper Basins (Thomas Moran on Mammoth Hot Springs)*, 1871, photograph. Courtesy of East Hampton Library, Long Island Collection.



William Henry Jackson, *Tower of Tower Falls*, ca. 1871, photograph. United States Geological Survey, Special Collections, Reston, Virginia.



William Henry Jackson, *Mountain of the Holy Cross*, 1873, photograph. United States Geological Survey Photographic Library (jwh01276).



Thomas Moran, *The Tower of Tower Falls*, 1874, pencil, watercolor, and opaque color, 14 1/2 x 10 1/2 in. Collection of Michael S. & Leslie Engl.

Chromolithographs

In 1876 printer Louis Prang produced chromolithographs from Thomas Moran's watercolor paintings of the first national park, Yellowstone. He published a portfolio of 15 images considered to be superb examples of chromolithography, and they were the first color images of Yellowstone widely accessible to the public. In 2001, Joslyn Art Museum added a complete *Yellowstone National Park* portfolio to its collection.

What is a chromolithograph? It is a type of lithography process. First a drawing is created on a plate or stone with a greasy crayon. Next the surface is moistened with water. The printmaker applies oily ink to the surface which adheres to the greasy drawing, and is resisted by the wet portions. A sheet of paper is placed on the surface, and they are put through a press. For a chromolithograph, a stone or plate is needed for each color; some artworks need more than fifty stones. They must be carefully registered or lined up to ensure each color prints in the correct place.



After Thomas Moran, *The Mountain of the Holy Cross*, ca. 1875, chromolithograph. 13 5/8 x 9 5/8 in. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, gift of Gail & Michael Yanney and Lisa & Bill Roskens



After Thomas Moran, *The Castle Geyser, Upper Geyser Basin*, ca. 1875, chromolithograph. 9 3/4 x 14 in. Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, gift of Gail Yanney & Michael and Lisa & Bill Roskens



After Thomas Moran, *The Towers of Tower Falls*, ca. 1875, chromolithograph. 13 3/4 x 9 in. Joslyn Art Museum, gift of Gail & Michael Yanney and Lisa & Bill Roskens.

Timeline

Featuring Thomas Moran

1830

1837 Thomas Moran, Jr., is born on February 12 in Bolton, Lancashire, England

1838-39 More than 14,000 Cherokee are displaced to Oklahoma Territory, walking the "Trail of Tears"

1840

1840 The final Rendezvous is held on the Green River

1844 Moran family immigrates to America and settles in Kensington, PA

1850

1851 Joseph Mallord William Turner, painter Moran admired, dies on December 19

1853 Works as an apprentice for the wood engraver firm of Scattergood and Telfer

1856 Holds his first solo exhibition of watercolors at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

1860

1861 Abraham Lincoln becomes U.S. President; the Civil War begins

1862 Travels to England to see J.M.W. Turner's paintings & study at the Royal Academy

1865 The Civil War ends; Lincoln is assassinated

1870

1871 Joins F.V. Hayden's U.S. Geological Survey expedition to Yellowstone

1872 Congress votes to make Yellowstone America's first national park

1873 Travels to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River with Major John Wesley Powell

1876 Louis Prang publishes a portfolio of chromolithographs

1880

1885 Mark Twain publishes *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

1886 Travels to Venice for the first time

1890

1892 Travels to Flagstaff, AZ to meet up with William Henry Jackson; they go back to the Grand Canyon & eventually Yellowstone

1900

1900 Takes his youngest daughter, Ruth, to see Yellowstone

1903 The Wright Brothers successfully fly an airplane at Kitty Hawk, NC

1912 The SS *Titanic* sinks in the Atlantic Ocean

1916 Moves to Santa Barbara, CA

1920

1926 Dies in Santa Barbara on August 25

After Thomas Moran, *Upper Falls of the Yellowstone, Wyoming*, 1872, wood engraving, *Scribner's Monthly* 2 (May 1871): 14

After Thomas Moran, *Tower Falls and Sulphur Mountain*, ca. 1875, chromolithograph, 9 3/4 x 14 in. Joslyn Art Museum, gift of Gail & Michael Yanney and Lisa & Bill Roskens.

After Thomas Moran, *The Great Blue Spring of the Lower Geyser Basin*, ca. 1875, chromolithograph, 9 3/4 x 14 in. Joslyn Art Museum, gift of Gail & Michael Yanney and Lisa & Bill Roskens.

Detail. After Thomas Moran, *Tower Falls and Sulphur Mountain*, ca. 1875.

Moran signed his artworks with the three-letter colophon TYM for Thomas "Yellowstone" Moran.



THOMAS MORAN
AMERICAN, 1837-1926

PEARL OF VENICE
1899, OIL ON CANVAS

JOSLYN ART MUSEUM® OMAHA, NEBRASKA
Gift of Mary McArthur Holland, Betty McArthur Heller, and Mickey McArthur, 1982