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CONTRIBUTORS

Georgia Brady Barnhill has been the Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts at the American Antiquarian Society for twenty-five years. She is particularly interested in the history of American book illustration and nineteenth-century prints. Currently she is serving as guest curator at the Adirondack Museum in New York State for an exhibition of their print collection, *Wild Impressions: The Adirondacks on Paper*. Another continuing project is the compilation of a bibliography on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American prints and illustrations under the auspices of the American Historical Print Collectors Society.

Jackie Dooley is Head of Special Collections and University Archives at the University of California, Irvine. Previously she has held positions with visual collections at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, the Library of Congress, and the University of California, San Diego. She is active in organizations supporting the preservation and documentation of visual collections and has published papers on topics such as authority control, subject analysis for archival materials, and rare book cataloging.

Marcy Silver Flynn has served in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Maryland Historical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. From 1991 through 1994, she was a cataloguer in the Processing Section of the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress. She recently founded Silver Image Management, a consulting firm which specializes in providing collections management services for institutions and individuals with holdings of visual materials.

William H. Helfand is a consultant to the National Library of Medicine, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and other institutions in areas relating to art and medicine. He has published a number of books and articles on the history of pharmacy and on his collecting interests which include prints, caricatures, posters, postcards, and other ephemera which relate to medicine and pharmacy.

Michael Scott Joseph, the Rare Book and Jerseyana Catalog Librarian at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, is best known for his work on wood engraving and children's book illustrations in the mid-nineteenth century American book trade. Currently he is at work on a history of the early American picture-book from 1800–1880, and on a bibliography of books illustrated with woodblocks by the McLoughlin Brothers of New York.

Katherine Martinez, the Curator of American and British History at the Stanford University Libraries, was formerly the Director of Advanced Studies at the Winterthur Museum and Director of the Winterthur Library. She has also held library positions at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Columbia University, and the Smithsonian Institution.

Amy McColl began as a cataloguer at the Biddle Law Library of the University of Pennsylvania. In 1991, she took the position of Name Authority Coordinator for the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSL), and in 1993 became Project Coordinator of PACSL's grant-funded cataloguing and authorities project. She has also served on various ALA and LC committees and task groups, including the Cooperative Cataloguing Council's Task Group on Authorities. She is the author of the Library of Congress NACC Participants' Manual.

Helena Zinkham has worked with collections of visual materials at both the Maryland Historical Society and the New York Historical Society. She is currently head of processing and cataloging at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, where many projects involving electronic surrogates and automated catalogs have been completed during the past decade.
A SPECIAL ISSUE OF
VISUAL RESOURCES

Images in Libraries, Museums, and Archives:
Description and Intellectual Access

Papers from PACSCL
(The Philadelphia Area Consortium
of Special Collections Libraries)
Summer Seminar, 1993

Edited by
AMY M. McCOLL
Introduction

by Amy M. McColl

In August of 1993, the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) sponsored the second of its annual summer seminars. The topic was "Images in Libraries, Museums, and Archives: Description and Intellectual Access," and the seminar was attended by approximately 80 participants from around the United States and Canada. Speakers addressed issues and current practice of describing and accessing illustrative matter, and geared their talks towards experienced graphic arts curators, special collections librarians, and archivists.

Several of the papers given during the PACSCL seminar are included in this special issue of Visual Resources in the hopes of reaching a larger audience. Georgia Barnhill of the American Antiquarian Society addresses the history of 19th- and early 20th-century pictorial histories, and discusses ways in which researchers might use them more effectively. Katharine Martinez of Stanford University gives a researcher's point of view on the intellectual access to images in libraries and archival collections. Marcy Silver Flynn and Helena Zinkham of the Library of Congress discuss ongoing projects at LC designed to give better access to the images in its vast collection. Michael Joseph of Rutgers University speaks of the particular problems faced by librarians and researchers with regard to description and access to book illustrations. Jackie Dooley, formerly of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and currently Head of Special Collections at the University of California, Irvine, details access to photographic collections. Finally, William Helfand describes the thorny problems encountered by researchers in accessing ephemera.

The papers generated much discussion during the seminar. Topics included the use of images as evidence, as well as the uses of digital imaging technology to improve access to images. Vendors were on hand to demonstrate several systems. While all agreed that this technology is definitely
desirable and the wave of the future, cost and budgetary issues were cited as hindrances to the speedy adoption of digital imaging systems by many librarians and curators. The seminar offered many opportunities for continued discussions among speakers and participants at two evening receptions and a closing luncheon.

PACSCL is an incorporated not-for-profit organization of twenty institutions—both public and private—in the Delaware Valley. The Consortium is dedicated to the notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and that through collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, member institutions can enhance services, facilitate learning, and increase support in ways they could not alone. PACSCL was founded in 1985, and the summer seminars series was begun in 1992. By sponsoring an annual seminar focusing on the “hot issues” of the day for librarians, archivists, and other information specialists and their clients, we hope to extend the opportunity for continuing education and communication between experts and professionals in the special collections community.

PACSCL would like to extend its gratitude to the editors of Visual Resources, most especially Helene Roberts, for agreeing to publish these papers from the 1993 seminar in this special issue. We are pleased that the proceedings will reach a greater number of graphic arts enthusiasts and professionals through this medium.
We belong to a generation that has no time to read its Gibbon but will linger fascinated over a thousand images of history ... The selection and interpretation of these pictures is a new art and constitutes a visual-literary form as revolutionary in our time as was the novel in the eighteenth century and the short story in the nineteenth. Today we are on the threshold of an even greater revolution whereby the eyes and ears of the world are being brought within the family through cinema and television. We are expanding the borders of Gutenberg's world beyond the setting of movable type.

(Francis Henry Taylor, 1951)

Taylor wrote these words in his foreword to Marshall Davidson's *Life in America*, one of the best modern popular pictorial histories of the United States. Sinclair Hitchings, keeper of prints at the Boston Public Library, used this quotation on a leaflet he produced over twenty years ago addressed to writers, publishers, and librarians. In it, Hitchings bemoaned the visual illiteracy of historians, publishers, picture researchers, and even librarians, none of whom seemed able to respond to the "new art" of presenting and interpreting pictures. He recommended that the professional picture researcher have a background in art history and "an acquaintance with four important classes of material—pictorial histories; illustrated exhibition catalogues; catalogues of collections; and bibliographies." More recently Hitchings has written,

The art and craft of pictorial history is seldom understood, rarely mastered, and yet to be taught. It requires a skillful weaving-together of pictures and words to present facts and insights which open to us some part of the past. A clearly defined theme, mastery of detail, and command of many sources must be combined with book design informed by special experience, if this approach to history is to succeed.²

Curators and librarians are destined to assist scholars and picture researchers in their effort to provide images for texts, films, and the various electronic media that are now being devised. How can we do this effec-
tively? Sinclair Hitchings suggested that researchers needed to be familiar with four classes of material. This essay will focus on the first of those—pictorial histories.

The lack of access to images in books and periodicals is a situation that we should remedy because our collections contain so much visual material that has not been fully exploited. Since our institutions continue to spend large sums of money to acquire, house, care for, and service these collections, it is extremely important that these collections are appropriately described and that there is adequate intellectual access to them. Moreover, as Francis Henry Taylor observed over forty years ago, the public clamors for pictures, but not for words. This characteristic of twentieth-century society increases the pressures upon us.

The images that we as curators and archivists provide to those who want them, for whatever reason, are a factor in the quality of the final product. The better access we provide to collections, the wider and better is the choice for those who come to us. Much of my work each day involves responding to inquiries from picture researchers who work for book publishers and film producers. I admit to a great deal of frustration in this part of my job. Many want eye-witness depictions of events in color, but they cannot leave their desks whether located in Boston, New York, or Orlando because of budgetary or time constraints. They seem not to care whether the depiction has any truth to it or if it is a total fabrication. And their deadline was the day before yesterday. I am sure that many curators have had the same experiences and that none of this is new to those of you who work in public services. There is an obvious need for assistance on a large scale.

Discussing traditional means of access in the world of electronic databases and videodisc presentations of collections seems archaic, but the future is not the present yet. We still need to guide users of our collections and this essay offers three suggestions. The Catalogue of American Engravings at the American Antiquarian Society provides access to over 16,000 engravings issued in the United States prior to the year 1821. A second suggestion follows the recommendation made by Hitchings a generation ago that picture researchers become acquainted with pictorial histories. There are several nineteenth-century authors and illustrators whose works are based on first-hand knowledge and thus are valid documents. Finally, in the present century, several publications can serve as both sources and models for picture researchers.

At the American Antiquarian Society, one component of our new on-line catalogue is the Catalogue of American Engravings, a revision and supple-
ment to the Stauffer and Fielding lists of American Engravings published early in the twentieth century. Funded over a fifteen year period by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the H.W. Wilson Foundation, and most recently by the Getty Grant Program, this Catalogue describes over 16,000 book illustrations and separately published prints issued prior to 1821. Access by artist, engraver, publisher, subject, genre, place and date of publication is possible. The thesaurus of subject headings includes over 7,000 terms. Over ninety percent of the engravings are book and periodical illustrations. For them we cite the author and title of the publication providing for the first time the full context for each illustration. This is a union catalogue containing information on the holdings of other libraries and museums. Each entry includes the technique, format, dimensions, exact transcription of the title, differences between states, and a description of the visual content of the image. The location of one impression of each engraving is noted. Unfortunately, the Catalogue of American Engravings Project began in earnest many years ago and images were not incorporated with the cataloguing records. We may, however, try to remedy this in the future. Picture researchers and historians can find many images of historical significance using this database and we use it frequently for this purpose. The Catalogue is available on the Internet via the AAS Gopher. Providing such detailed records for book illustrations is expensive. However, for the first time, researchers can quickly locate appropriate visual materials for whatever reason. This project can serve as a model for future cataloguing endeavors.

A number of illustrated popular histories were published during the nineteenth century. The works of three authors, John Warner Barber, Benson John Lossing, and Jesse Ames Spencer, are common, and the illustrators were all seeking to produce illustrations faithful to historical fact. No one has indexed the illustrations in these volumes, but researchers looking for images should be directed to them.

One of the first authors of illustrated pictorial histories of the United States was John Warner Barber. Born in Windsor, Connecticut, in 1798, he was the son of a farmer of modest circumstances. Although later in life he denied having much formal education, he was enrolled for at least some time at the Windsor Academy in 1808. Among his childhood reading was the Bible, Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress, The New England Primer, and Mrs. Barbauld's popular compilation, Hymns. He owned a copy of a chapbook, Lazy Lawrence, that he purchased in Hartford in 1806. At the age of ten, he was already copying illustrations from chapbooks so we know that images
appealed to him at an early age. Two sets of sketchbooks at the Beinecke Library at Yale University suggest that at a very early age he was trying to create children’s books on historical subjects.³

At the age of fifteen, shortly after the death of his father, Barber was apprenticed to the engraver Abner Reed, active in East Windsor. Barber started to keep a diary at that time and continued the practice until his death. Among the titles that he read were Stranger in Ireland, Christian Memoir, and Mather’s Life. This last title suggests his interest in history. Among the engravings that he did while an apprentice were the plates for The Naval Temple designed by Michel Felice Corné (ca. 1752–1845) and Elkanah Tisdale (1768–1835), a Connecticut illustrator and engraver then living in Boston. After his apprenticeship, Barber settled in New Haven where he lived and worked for over sixty years.

One of the first historical works that Barber wrote and illustrated was his Views of New Haven and Its Vicinity published by Barber and A. H. Maltby in 1825. This book is charmingly illustrated with views of New Haven, but they are views and not depictions of events.

Three years later, Barber published his first pictorial history of the United States. Barber compiled Interesting Events in the History of the United States from the “most approved Authorities.” It is illustrated with sixteen engraved plates, three images to a page. Each image is numbered and keyed to a paragraph in the text. The preface provides Barber’s reasons for compiling this text:

In a country like ours, it seems necessary to the existence of true and enlightened patriotism, that every person should possess some knowledge of the history of his own country. By the aid of history, we can call up past scenes and events in review—we can see the effects they have had upon the nations before us, and from thence we can learn wisdom for the future.⁴

He continues by noting that this book is not for those already knowledgeable about the history of the United States, but is for those “who cannot spare the time or expense of reading or procuring a full and complete history.”⁵ He thought the volume would be useful as a reference book, for there is a chronology at the end to record relatively minor events. He concluded by stating that the “numerous engravings interspersed through the book, it is thought will be of utility in making the work interesting, and of fixing the facts more firmly in the mind.”⁶ This role for images within an historical text is very important. Not only should the images make the text more interesting, but they help the reader remember the facts. The images in
this book, small copperplate engravings, are naive in style and quaint. They do relate perfectly to the text, however, and play a role within it as stated in the preface. Barber's work was designed to be both a popular and pictorial history, a genre that continues to this day. The text remained in print for some years. The copy of the 1831 edition at the American Antiquarian Society belonged to the great twentieth-century historian, Samuel Eliot Morison. The text of the 1831 edition is expanded, but the illustrations remain the same.

Barber's *History and Antiquities of New Haven* published by him in 1831 reused the illustrations that he published in his first book about New Haven. He added an engraving of the *Battle of Lexington* that he copied from Amos Doolittle's engraving of the scene based on the design of Ralph Earl, one of the participants. In fact, Doolittle was present as well. Barber recognized the significance of the eye-witness account by describing the print as the "first regular historical print ever published in America." With the engraving, Barber reprints a lengthy account of the military action, but fails to indicate why the engraving was included in this work on New Haven's history.

Barber went on to write and illustrate important works on the history of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and several other states. He traveled extensively to collect the materials for those works. These books are all illustrated with views of the towns and cities, not with depictions of events. In 1856 and 1857, he and Henry Howe, his sometime collaborator on the earlier volumes, produced *Our Whole Country: or the Past and Present of the United States*. Published in New York in 1861 in two volumes, it contains 605 illustrations, a substantial number when compared to publications earlier in the century. Barber notes that "care was taken that every engraving should be truthful; and as the work intends to be one of *facts only*, fancy sketches and artistic representations merely have been avoided in the text." Some of the views are derived from earlier ones, but many of them have been updated. Some illustrations focus on commerce and transportation while others introduce topics such as tourism. The illustrations in this work are different in scope from his 1828 publication. The text discusses events, but the images focus on places and commerce.

*American Scenes* published in 1868 returns to the earlier formula. (Figure 1) Barber notes that the object of the work "is to present to the reader a series of Historical Incidents in American History, (some of which may not be generally known,) in an *historical, pictorial, and poetic* form." It is to be "interesting and instructive." Barber knew the value of images in express-
PRAYER-MEETING AMONG THE SLAVES.

Figure 1. "Prayer-Meeting among the Slaves," From John Warner Barber, American Scenes (Springfield, Mass., 1868), p. 205. 2½" x 2¼". (Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society)

ing truths. He was also the author of several religious works including The Picture Preacher published in New Haven by Henry Howe in 1880. The publisher wrote in a preface that Barber's object was

not to make pretty pictures but to enforce some moral truth. Everything is made with studied simplicity to bend to this purpose. Hence they have a peculiar power. They attract by their originality and often create a smile by their quaintness. But they are so bold, so strong, as to tell their story at a single glance; and thus they impress a lesson when elegance and delicacy alone would fail.10

Barber had the same goals in mind when he created the illustrations for his histories and I would hazard a guess that publishers today are seeking to "impress a lesson" with their illustrations. Events in Barber's final historical work include The Attack on Brookfield depicting a raid on a Massachusetts
village during King Philip's War in 1695 and Prayer Meeting Among the Slaves.

A second historical writer who integrated illustrations with his own texts was Benson John Lossing (1813–1891). Born in 1813, Lossing was apprenticed to a watchmaker at the age of thirteen after just three years of formal education in the district schools in Beekman, New York. As a young man, he read widely, especially in history. At the age of twenty-two, he became a joint editor and proprietor of the Poughkeepsie Telegraph, and later of the Poughkeepsie Casket. It was then that he learned to engrave on wood, a skill that he took to New York in 1838 when he established himself there as an engraver on wood. A decade later he decided to write a narrative sketchbook relating to the American Revolution and he traveled more than eight thousand miles gathering material. It was published in parts by Harper & Brothers from 1850 to 1852 and was well received. Although he wrote other histories, those of greatest interest are his three "pictorial field books" of the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War.

At the time Lossing was writing, he felt confident that most people had a general knowledge of the history of the Revolution. What he felt was lacking was an acquaintance with the locations of the various events and battles. Lossing's goal was to fill this void by traveling thousands of miles to visit important sites and to gather as much information about them as he could by interviewing people who still had first-hand knowledge about that period of American history. In his own words:

For years a strong desire was felt to embalm those precious things of our cherished household, that they might be preserved for the admiration and reverence of remote posterity. I knew that the genius of our people was the reverse of antiquarian reverence for the things of the past; that the glowing future, all sunlight and eminence, absorbed their thoughts and energies, and few looked back to the twilight and dim valleys of the part through which they had journeyed.

His goal was a noble one. Of his pictures he wrote: "Special care has been observed to make faithful delineations of fact. If a relic of the Revolution was not susceptible of picturesque effect in a drawing, without a departure from truth, it has been left in its plainness, for my chief object was to illustrate the subject, not merely to embellish the book." Among the illustrations are depictions of battle scenes supplemented with battle plans generally copied from British sources. Lossing did not constantly focus on the experiences of the great men, as many other historians have done between his day and ours, but included the portrait of Isaac Rice, for example, a participant at the Battle of Saratoga and Lossing's guide at Fort Ticonderoga, the ruins of which are also depicted. (Figure 2)
While petitions and addresses were in course of preparation and adoption, Congress proceeded to make extensive military arrangements. The militia of the various colonies, and such volunteers as could be obtained, were mustered into service under the title of the Continental Army; and the troops which had flocked to the vicinity of Boston from all parts of New England after the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, were mustered into service under the title of the Continental Army.

Figure 2. "Ticonderoga at Sunset," From Benson J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field-Book of the United States (New York, 1851), Vol. 1, p. 127. 4 3/4" × 4 3/4". (Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society)

For his Field Book of the War of 1812 published in 1868 again by Harper & Brothers in New York, Lossing traveled more than ten thousand miles in the United States and Canada "gathering up, recording, and delineating every thing of special value, not found in books, illustrative of the subject, and making himself familiar with the topography and incidents of the battlefields of that war." He visited archives and libraries and "from the lips of actors in the events of that struggle he received the most interesting information concerning it, which might have perished with them."14

The choice of illustrative material is idiosyncratic, as we shall see. An illustration relating to the confrontation between General Arthur St. Clair and the tribe of the Miami Indians near Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1790, is of an apple tree near the Indian camp, sketched during his visit to the region in 1860. This tree was planted by a French trader in the first half of the eighteenth century. However, the Plan of St. Clair's Camp and Battle was
copied from a contemporary journal of the campaign kept by Winthrop Sargent of Philadelphia. It shows the disposition of the various troops and their enemies. Illustrations such as these show a combination of nostalgia for the past and the presentation of historically accurate information.

Lossing's *Pictorial History of the Civil War in the United States of America* was published in thirty parts from 1866 to 1868, with some thirteen hundred illustrations on wood and steel. He worked on this *History* during the War itself and he had the full cooperation of Union authorities and Lincoln's own blessing on the project which gave him access to official documents. He visited major and minor battlefields and interviewed civilian and military leaders on both sides of the conflict. He wrote in the preface that "the engravings, whilst they embellish the book, have been introduced for the higher purposes of instruction, and are confined to the service of illustrating facts. They have been prepared under my direct supervision; and great pains have been taken to make them correct delineations of the objects sought to be represented." He noted his indebtedness to the publishers of *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* for he based some of his own illustrations on the eyewitness illustrations that appeared in the pages of those two journals during the War. Among the illustrations is the *Battle of Antietam—Taking of the Bridge on Antietam Creek*, which is a heroic depiction of an important moment in that long battle. The *Evacuation of Cumberland Gap* looks more like a distant view of fireworks than the aftermath of a battle, but troops are marching by the light of the moon through a broad valley. *General Lyons Charge at the Battle of Wilsons Creek* was designed by the artist Felix Octavius Carr Darley. Again, the heroics of the Union leaders and soldiers are highlighted. The two wood engravings of Cairo, Illinois, at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, show the situation of the town between the two mighty rivers. Lossing attempted in his pictorial histories to weave past and present together in an interesting way. Lossing's insistence on accuracy is convincing and his depictions are probably trustworthy. As in Barber's case, Lossing was both author and illustrator and exercised considerable control over the final product.

A third nineteenth-century historian was Jesse Ames Spencer, who was born in Hyde Park, New York, in 1816. At the age of fourteen he moved with his family to New York City where he went to work in a printing office. Having mastered the art of printing, he assisted his father who was a surveyor and then attended Columbia College, graduating in 1837. Subsequently he attended the Episcopal General Theological Seminary where he was graduated in 1840. A spell of ill health forced him to travel extensively. In the 1850s he was employed as secretary and editor of the General
Protestant Episcopal Sunday-School Union and Church Book Society. Later he became rector of a church in Brooklyn and then a professor of Greek in the College of the City of New York. He wrote a number of theological works, educational texts, travel accounts, and a *History of the United States* published by the firm of Johnson, Fry, and Company in New York in 1867. This work is illustrated with steel engravings after designs by Alonzo Chappel, Emanuel Leutze, Thomas Nast, and other artists. From the preface, it seems that Spencer left the matter of illustration entirely up to the publishers, who according to him, “have zealously labored to secure the best service possible, and to present to the American public a work which, they believe, is unequalled in the spirit and beauty of its illustrations, and the elegance of its typography.” The illustrations from this book certainly abound in my own institution’s collection of miscellaneous portrait prints and in the collection of historical scenes. Long since removed from their publications, I have always been suspicious of Chappel’s work, assuming that his designs were always fictitious. It seems, however, that he too based his illustrations on a considerable amount of research, particularly in written sources. He also used extant portraits for the figures in engravings such as *Drafting the Declaration of Independence*. Since Chappel prepared most of the designs, his contributions to this work will be described.

Chappel often chose to focus on the action of a battle rather than select the distant point of view of earlier artists who drew, for example, two ships battling, rather than the arm-to-arm combat that often occurred even in naval battles. Examples include the *Battle of Lake Champlain—McDonough’s Victory* and *The Battle of New Orleans*.

Although some battle scenes are completely sanitized, occasionally Chappel does include a less idealized view of a battle. The *Battle of Gettysburg* shows the carnage as seen at the rear of the battle—men and horses killed, men pulling the artillery piece instead of a draft animal. The engraving, however, lacks the realism of photographs by Mathew Brady and other photographers at the fronts. Of course, the age of photographing action was still in the future, so photographs taken during the Civil War show the aftermath of battle, not the battle itself.

Alonzo Chappel was born in New York in 1828. Even as a youngster, the self-taught artist painted portraits for modest sums. He studied for just a year at the National Academy of Design. Unlike other illustrators, Chappel began and maintained a working relationship with one publishing firm and its various successors which began as Martin, Johnson, and Company. It published many historical works illustrated by Chappel. There is no evidence that Chappel or other artists whose works were included in Spencer’s
History traveled the way Barber and Lossing did to sites. Nor is there any special collaboration evident between the author and the artists who provided illustrations for this publication. This is the pattern for most later publications of American history.

The works of Barber, Lossing, and Spencer should be used judiciously by scholars and picture researchers. Perhaps these volumes remain unused on the shelves because there are no projects like the Catalogue of American Engravings for the nineteenth century. There is a rich body of pictorial material, but no access to it.

Having looked at the nineteenth-century beginnings of popular pictorial histories, we are now going to look at several twentieth-century publications. Tremendous changes took place in the publishing of books, largely due to photographic and reproductive processes. Rather than commission illustrators, publishers purchased copies of historical documents, prints, and photographs. The audience for American history had grown and publishers differentiated among and targeted specific audiences—students, scholars, and the general public. Many of these books provide a world of images for today’s researchers.
The Pageant of America was a fifteen volume history published by Yale University Press from 1925 to 1929. The first nine volumes were chronologically arranged; they were followed by six volumes that focused on specific topics such as literature, art, theater, architecture, and sport. In a letter from Oliver McKee, one of the assistant editors, to Clarence Brigham, then librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, McKee wrote:

the emphasis has been given to a pictorial treatment with a view of making the essentials of American history easier of comprehension to the general reader as well as to supply a useful adjunct to the work of the teacher of history in the schools. It will contain more than ten thousand illustrations, and I think you know something of the extraordinary care we have taken to locate and reproduce pictures having reasonable claims to authenticity.

The text is a combination of running commentary and lengthy captions for the illustrations that were drawn from a long list of museums, libraries, and archives in this country and abroad. This was a team effort with a number of writers and editors. Unfortunately, each page suggests a cut and paste job, but it was a significant achievement, and one that is ignored today, at least in my library. This is one of those monumental works that should be used.

Three authors wrote and gathered illustrations for their own volumes. The results of this kind of control are excellent and recall the efforts of Barber and Lossing. Stefan Lorant, born in Hungary in 1901, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp in 1935 when he was the editor of the Munich Illustrated Press. After his release he went to England and then came to the United States in 1940. Before the publication of The Presidency by The Macmillan Company in 1951, he wrote pictorial histories on Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. He spent seven years working on The Presidency, which contains portraits, statistics, political cartoons, facsimiles of campaign documents of every type, and pictures of conventions, inaugurations, and other presidential events. This volume is richly illustrated and should be used by picture researchers, particularly those who shy away from political prints because of their complex symbolism, and historians of American politics. Stefan Lorant’s collection of photographs is now at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities.

The American Past is another work by a single author. Roger Butterfield was born in 1907 near Rochester, New York. Both parents were school teachers. After graduation from the University of Rochester at the age of nineteen, he worked in Philadelphia for The Evening Bulletin and The Evening Public Ledger. Later he moved to New York and eventually joined the staff of Life magazine. To complete The American Past published in 1947, he left Life and worked from then on for a number of publishers as a freelance
ARTICLES TO APPEAR IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF VISUAL RESOURCES

Mary Bergstein, Evidences Again: Aaron Siskind and the Modernist Documentation of Art.


Alicia Faxon, Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s Images of Botticelli.

Susan Moldenhauer, Electronic Imaging Technology Reaches beyond Museum Walls.

Maria Antonella Pelizzari, Bourgeois Spaces and Historical Contexts: Facets of the Italian City in Nineteenth-Century Photography.