Thomas Cole’s *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, After a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)*, currently hung in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, depicts a landscape in the prime of its existence. The Connecticut River winds into the foreground on the right side, meanders through a pastoral landscape of farmland and an occasional isolated grouping of trees, forms the once-famed Oxbow, and then disappears behind the Holyoke Range. Although not entirely flat, the land on the right side of the piece is composed primarily of gentle hills and neat fields. The mountains on the left side of the painting, part of the Holyoke Range, shield the river from view in their sheer magnitude but also in their cover of dense forest. A blasted tree, a remnant perhaps of other thunderstorms like the one that appears to have just left the valley, tops Mount Holyoke, slightly obscuring the view of the receding mountains. Though a single painting, *The Oxbow* juxtaposes two very different images. The serene landscape of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts on the right side of the painting is beautiful in its sunlit blues and greens, inviting the viewer to descend from the mountaintop and enjoy the scenery. The mountains on the left, shrouded in the volatility and darkness of a passing storm, are, by contrast, threatening and wild, a far cry from the docility one expects to find in the farmlands below. As most scholars of both this painting and Cole have noted, the piece is as much a social commentary as it is a work of art. As a landscape painter, Thomas Cole appreciated the beauty of land, but he was also aware of how and why landscapes change. With *The Oxbow*, Cole attempted to warn his viewers of the menacing implications of change, which in 1836 was becoming a reality. The Connecticut River Valley, on both sides of the Holyoke Range, was by the mid-nineteenth century a landscape in transition, balanced but torn between human and natural influences.
The view of the Oxbow from Mount Holyoke in 2009, if painted, would be a different picture. The title feature, the Oxbow, is gone. The Connecticut River, although rather slow and accommodating in the Massachusetts section, found the strength to break through the neck of the Oxbow in 1839, which forces those of us today to find a different feature of the landscape worthy of this picture’s title. The old Oxbow has become divided into smaller sections and the trees, once relegated to the riverbanks, have begun to take over. Beyond the abandoned Oxbow they have crept in where once was only field and farmland, preventing the scenery from being viewed in the bald way that Cole was able to showcase it. Along the banks of the river on either side of the Oxbow, however, the landscape remains very similar to that of Cole’s depiction. Farm fields abut the river, blocked only by a sparse bank of trees. The land remains dominated by the blues of the river and the greens of the fields and foliage. The valley landscape is also clearly dominated by people, a factor that wasn’t included in Cole’s painting. The small city of Northampton lies just beyond the farm fields, and although the buildings are surrounded by thick forestation, civilization’s presence is undeniable. Hadley, on the opposite bank of the river, presents a similar picture, a balancing act between fields and their surrounding vegetation and the pockets of distinct human influence in the form of houses, small commercial districts, with the unexpected towers of the University of Massachusetts piercing the skyline.

The landscape of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts, like all other landscapes, has changed over time. Change is inevitable, for even if an area remains completely untouched by human hands, nature manages to make alterations of its own. Water cuts a new path, bypasses an old one. Fields turn into forests and vice versa. Add humans into the equation and the changes become much more visible. The light colored spots of buildings and stretches of road are stark against the natural shades of the landscape. In the view from Mount Holyoke in
2009, civilization has crept into what was once depicted by Cole as a “partnership landscape,” balanced in its human and natural influences, yet in many ways, the changes could have been worse. Almost 175 years after Cole’s 1836 painting, the landscape still contains fields and trees and is green almost as far as the eye can see. The pockets of civilization and human activity have remained just that: pockets. There is no sprawling development and no sense that nature has been overtaken and forgotten by those who live within the landscape. The story of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts is one of both continuity and change. As expected, the physical landscape has been subdued and controlled by residents of the area, but there remains a balance between human needs and nature. The valley has made way for progress, yet in many places it has cloaked those changes within the folds of a landscape that has maintained its pastoral appearance.

Although the Connecticut River is not visible throughout the entire view, from the top of Mount Holyoke virtually the entire expanse of land that makes up the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River valley can be seen. To the north, one can see well into New Hampshire, as evidenced by the distinct peak of Mount Monadnock. To the south, Springfield, hidden decades ago by dense forest, has now risen above the tree line and is discernable by the peaks, not of mountains, but of modest skyscrapers. Mount Holyoke provides viewers with the best vantage to observe change over time because of the height to which it climbs, but also because of the centrality of its location. Although not geographically in the exact middle between the state’s northern and southern borders, the prospect provides an unparalleled view of two distinctly different landscapes that are not juxtaposed in such a way in any other location. From the top of Mount Holyoke, to the north lies the pastoral landscape of Thomas Cole’s painting. The small cities of Northampton and Hadley are surrounded and supplemented by the agriculture and
culture of other smaller towns. The river quietly winds through the relatively level topography. On the southern side of Mount Holyoke, however, the landscape varies from its northern counterpart. Although still a part of the landscape, the river initially disappears amid the forested land covering the mountainside and later re-emerges, flowing further into the background of one’s view. The river, the main feature of the northern view, fails to enjoy the same notoriety once passing between Mounts Tom and Holyoke. The southern landscape seems almost more wild than the northern due to the pervasive presence of trees, but the towers of Springfield and the industry of Holyoke suggest that the immediate forestation shields the viewer atop Mount Holyoke from the strong human influence farther south.

Mount Holyoke is an anchor between these two landscapes equally a part of and removed from each other. For Thomas Cole in 1836, it straddled the pastoral and sublime landscapes and provided a venue for the artist to couch his warnings for the landscape’s future development. Today, the change feared by Cole has indeed altered the Connecticut River Valley, but we have been left with two slightly different landscapes with the mountain acting as an anchor, a touchstone, for both the physical landscape, also for this study. Throughout the nineteenth century, the changing views of both the Pioneer Valley and the region south of the Holyoke Mountain Range, attest to the change occurring within the region. Some shifts are visible to the naked eye, while others relate more to the intangible relationships between residents and the place they live. What has changed within the valley remains hidden beneath a landscape that has remained generally the same. Although human relationships with the land may have changed, the view would suggest that the land itself hasn’t suffered due to man’s shifting perspective of it.

As the date of Cole’s painting would suggest, the Connecticut River valley within Massachusetts was a place particularly celebrated in the 19th century. It was a destination for
tourists, artists, and writers alike and witnessed significant population growth due both to the attention it received for its beauty but also for the promises it held for commercial and industrial wealth. As a repository of American values and a place representative of the nation’s rural roots, the Connecticut River Valley became an area where one could see the landscape and its residents struggle between a pastoral past and a progressive future. To understand the conflict present within the valley during the 19th century, one must first understand how the valley evolved initially.

The Connecticut River Valley, as the name suggests, is the area designated by the Connecticut River watershed, yet the landscape is distinctive and unique beyond the simple fact that a river runs through it. During the nineteenth century, the Massachusetts stretch was characterized by its pastoral nature, but long before then, geologic forces were at work to create the “happy valley” surrounded by a conglomeration of small hills. In the late Mesozoic period, rifting took place in two sections of the valley, creating the Deerfield Basin in Massachusetts and the Hartford Basin in southern Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Deerfield Basin extends only 25 miles, from the Holyoke Range in the south to Bernardston, MA in the north. Although short in comparison to other basins, the Deerfield extends throughout most of the Massachusetts stretch that became popular and well known in the river’s later history. During the early Jurassic period, the rifts within the Connecticut River Valley reached so deep into the earth’s crust that they tapped magma which poured into the Massachusetts section, creating basalt which was later eroded by the Connecticut River during the Miocene era.

The Massachusetts stretch was heavily influenced by its prehistoric shaping, but the topographical shifts of the last 80,000 years, due to the recession of the Connecticut Valley-Bronson Hill lobe of the Wisconsinian ice sheet, had the last word on the landscape’s
As the glacier retreated farther north, meltwater filled the basins that were then left exposed. Following the glacial recession, the entire Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley was covered by Glacial Lake Hitchcock. The lake extended from St. Johnsbury, Vermont, south to a sediment dam in Rocky Hill, Connecticut. The lake, as well as being extremely long, also ran very deep, in some places surpassing a depth of three hundred feet. Lake Hitchcock covered the Connecticut River Valley and much of its surrounding watershed for 3,600 years, a figure that was originally estimated by counting varves, the pairs of dark clay and light silt that layer on top of one another signifying the passage of each single year, that formed on the lake bed.

Although the formation of Lake Hitchcock was a relatively slow process, its drainage was rather abrupt. The southern portion of the lake overcame the ice dam in Rocky Hill, Connecticut 12,700 years ago and was followed three hundred years later when the northern reach of the lake “breached the sediment dam at the Holyoke Range.” According to Evan Hill, “in one cataclysmic gasp, it collapsed and the giant lake rushed to Long Island Sound, an enormous flood of water suddenly released. Where it had been, there grew the Connecticut River. And on its banks, …were left the broad, thick layers of glacial silt, the rich lake bottom that seeded itself to the forest.” The lake may have drained, but it left its mark in the form of deltas of sand and gravel on top of the sediments found at the bottom of the lake. Within the Massachusetts stretch, the two largest deltas left by Lake Hitchcock are found in Sunderland, in the northern section, and Chicopee and Westfield, south of the Holyoke Range divider. The deltas are characterized by the sandiness of the soil and the gravel pits that currently sit on them.

Following the complete drainage of Lake Hitchcock, the landscape rose due to the removal not only of glacial pressure but such a large mass of water. The rise in the landscape led
the Connecticut River to cut down into the lake sediments, to this date slicing 160 feet into the soft lake deposits. The Deerfield Basin, while smaller than its southern neighbor, was also much calmer during its creation, having less volcanic activity and shallower faults.

All of these geologic shifts have resulted in a landscape that was primed for eventual human settlement. Lake Hitchcock, although once a rather oppressive force on the landscape, deposited sediments and clay along its bed, thus creating soil that would serve agriculture well. The river meandering through the basin along the lakebed became an attractive feature for early settlers, including Native Americans looking to create communities. Such a landscape, in the fertility of its soil, the presence of the river, and the flat serenity of the basin in comparison to other Massachusetts areas, proved to be hospitable both to Native Americans and early colonists, thus leading it to become one of the most significant areas in early national history.

Although the Connecticut River Valley had long been home to Native American communities, many say that it “first came into existence” upon being found by Europeans in 1614. Adriaen Block, a fur trader and Dutch explorer, discovered the mouth of the river where it empties into Long Island Sound. Europeans’ knowledge of the river meant that settlement of its banks would soon follow. Civilization soon began to creep up the river from the south as early colonists traveled farther north, continuing to establish small communities as they went. This drive from the south prompted much of the settlement that took root in the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River valley, but there were also those who journeyed from the east to join in the cultivation of the fertile lowlands adjacent to the river.

Initially, colonists settled in Eastern Massachusetts partially because of its proximity to the center of “civilization,” but partially because much of the area to the west was perceived as a wilderness. Eventually, the process of settlement and the resulting shortage of available land
forced the early colonists to push into the frightening frontier, thus generating interest in the Connecticut River Valley. The Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley, though not close to the earliest settlements within the state, was attractive to early colonists because of its distinct, low-lying landscape and the river that ran through it. The area between the Atlantic Ocean and the Connecticut River was initially bypassed by settlers who chose instead to populate the river valley; for early colonists, “no business was more important than establishing cities and towns,” therefore they had to create such establishments within a landscape that would be friendly to the effort not only of creating a town, but sustaining one.

While the push from the south may have been the result of the natural movement of exploration, the push from east to west was determined less by easily navigated topography of the land and more by the Puritan desire to expand, conquer, and subdue the wilderness that they found bordering their civilization. For many Puritans, disappointed by the landscape they found upon landing in the New World, “Connecticut appeared to be the answer to a long-standing hope of the disappointed.” According to the nineteenth-century essayist Nathaniel Parker Willis, “Northampton, by its rich alluvial land allured the first settlers of Massachusetts long before most of the country between it and the sea coast possessed an inhabitant. These adventurous pilgrims seated themselves in the midst of an unprotected wilderness, and surrounded by populous Indian tribes.” Despite the presence of “savages,” the Connecticut valley was generally considered a place of “fruitfulness and commodiousness.” In the early years of Puritan settlement, those who wished to travel to “the interior” were distrusted and thought to have “an over-weaning desire for meadow-land.” To subdue the wilderness and the “savage” eventually became something that the Puritans believed was part of their divine destiny. For Puritans “in the interior,” the object of exploration was to cultivate “souls rather than markets.”
Pushing farther and farther west, the Puritans converted natives every step of the way and “sought to replace the wilderness [with] a garden.”

There was, however, some division between the Puritans of the original Massachusetts Bay and those who chose to venture inward and push the boundaries of the wilderness. With the establishment of permanent Puritan communities along the Bay Path and the Connecticut River “New England’s personality split in two as Boston and the interior went their separate ways until re-engaged, however modestly, a century hence on the eve of the American Revolution.”

Although it was hoped that the adventurers would maintain both their faith and their civilized dignity while conquering the “thicke Woode,” there was some concern from those in the east that their pioneering counterparts were losing sight of the original goal of subduing both natives and nature. The “moral character” of those on the frontier was questioned because they were supposedly “[following] the ‘evil manners of the Indians.’” Upon removal from the strict Puritan code in the eastern part of Massachusetts, the settlers of the interior and the Connecticut River Valley “[forgot] that New England was a plantation of religion, not of trade.” In the attempt to build a new hub of civilization in the west, the Puritan settlers had failed to maintain the strict codes of conduct that were so rigidly upheld in the east. Though the western communities founded by wayward Puritan explorers weren’t as rigid as their eastern counterparts, they managed to maintain some semblance of strict morality which perpetuated the reputation of the Connecticut River Valley as a hub of upstanding Puritan values. Later accounts in the mid-nineteenth century mentioned the ideals of “rigid morality, the religious feeling, and almost the stern manners of the Puritan pilgrims” that continued to pervade the region a century after it was settled by them.
One Puritan who made the journey from the eastern haven of Puritan civilization into the wild frontier was John Winthrop, Jr. A sense of the desolation that existed in between the Atlantic Ocean and the Connecticut River can be discerned from the diary chronicling his journey overland to Connecticut. Although not the most direct route when traveling from Boston to southern Connecticut, Winthrop first traveled west to Springfield, MA and then turned south, following the Connecticut River into the state of the same name. In the late 17th century, the road that ran from Boston to the Connecticut River Valley and on to Albany was little more than a well-used footpath, the “Bay Path,” initially created by Native Americans. Winthrop was forced to do all of his traveling on foot, usually not surpassing twenty miles in a day. Traveling was difficult partially because the lack of sophisticated modes of transportation, but also because the path itself was so rudimentary and remote. There were few, if any, settlements along the trail that could provide real hospitality to travelers. Instead, Winthrop and company were forced to camp out “in fields covered in nets filled with grass” 25 not exactly the nicest lodgings. Given the lack of settlement, the area along the Bay Path, in fact central Massachusetts in general, remained relatively unpopulated, due partially to its limited access to water, while the areas on the Atlantic coast and along the Connecticut River banks flourished.

The Native Americans, though they ceased to play a primary role in the region’s history after the mid eighteenth century, were an integral force during the early settlement of the area. Given the different ways the two groups conceived both of land and life in general, relations between the natives and those attempting to colonize them ranged anywhere from friendly to extremely strained. Colonists were able to buy land from natives in order to build their new communities, yet in most cases, the natives had no perception of what such an exchange entailed. Differing perceptions of ownership led the natives to sign away rights to land that they
themselves didn’t even recognize. The colonists, knowing that they had the upper hand due to their advanced technology (i.e. guns), chose to appease the natives by letting them continue to hunt and trespass on the land they had recently given away or sold, but as for ownership, the deeds were drawn up in Anglo, not native, names.

In many cases, the colonists and Native Americans could interact without much conflict. While traversing Massachusetts on his way to his Connecticut property, John Winthrop, Jr. had to rely on calm interactions with natives in order to complete his journey safely. Many travelers stopped at “Indian habitations to simplify the food problem of both man and horse. The Indians were very friendly at the time of this journey.” In 1645, the time of Winthrop’s journey, relations between the two groups were still rather cordial largely because there were still relatively few English settlers and the land remained wide open, thus making interactions more fruitful and leading colonists to feel more secure about the natives of the wilderness. Later in his journey, Winthrop encountered a group who were “plainly friendly and ever anxious to trade, [desiring] to sell him food and other wares.” Although the colonists, in this case the Puritans in particular, were afraid of how the natives would impact their way of life, such interactions attest to the fact that cooperation between the two groups occurred.

There were many events, however, throughout the early history of the Connecticut River Valley that contributed to the image of Native Americans as frightening opposition to the English/colonial way of life. Although beautiful and promising in their fertility, the settlements of the Connecticut River Valley were, in their early days, extremely vulnerable to attacks by Native Americans. At the turn of the 18th century, there were a rash of attacks that left towns severely damaged in both the physical and emotional sense. The main military goal of the entire Massachusetts colony was to protect the settlements along the Connecticut River. In many
instances, the area had been left exposed simply due to an inadequate militia and although distant settlers called for help, they often arrived too late. False alarms were often a problem, and thus the residents of western Massachusetts, particularly in the Connecticut River Valley, lived in a constant state of hypertension.\textsuperscript{28} Due to cooperation from Connecticut military forces as well as the addition of a growing population, by the mid 18\textsuperscript{th} century, Hampshire County (which was later divided into Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties) became self-sufficient in terms of its defense.

Despite the various obstacles posed by overland travel, a potentially hostile native population, and the lack of close civilization, the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River valley began to flourish during the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Given the modest means of most early settlers, as well as the emotional rigidity some carried due to their Puritan background, the area began as self-sufficiently agrarian. The infrastructure didn’t exist there, or anywhere else within a significant radius, that would have allowed for much expansion or growth. Had such accelerated change occurred, the section of the river valley would probably not have maintained the rural, agrarian feel that characterized it for the following two centuries. Early life in the valley, epitomized by simplicity and mild isolation, can be summed up in an early depiction of Northampton, MA:

It was an agricultural town; and the people produced among themselves nearly everything they wanted. Conditions made them conservative; and it because almost proverbial among them that if a man owned a strip of meadow land, belonged to the First Church, bought his clothes of Deacon Daniel Kingsley, and was a subscriber to the Hampshire gazette, he surely would go to heaven when he died.\textsuperscript{29}

These were simple people living in simple times. Later, technology and external pressures would force residents of the valley to re-evaluate their lives of simplicity, but in the earliest days, there was no other way to live.
There is evidence that some of the earliest towns were the result of colonists arriving in the area from the south as opposed to the Puritan arrival from the east. Towns right along the Massachusetts-Connecticut border were some of the first in the area to be settled, beginning with Agawam in 1635 and followed by Longmeadow and Springfield the following year. Then, interestingly, Northampton and Hadley followed in 1654 and 1659. The settlement of those areas would have required crossing the Holyoke Range, which while not that formidable, may indicate that those areas were settled by people coming from the east. Worcester was the next town of note to be settled, in 1673. Worcester, although a large town today and once a colonial outpost of significance, is located in central Massachusetts and was thus bypassed in the original sweep of colonization. It was settled nearly two decades after the smaller communities of Northampton and Hadley which together straddle the Connecticut River. Worcester was followed by Deerfield, Sunderland, and Montague, smaller towns north of Northampton, all of which border the Connecticut River. After the Connecticut River became almost completely bordered by towns (at least within that Deerfield Basin section), the area east of the valley that the Bay Path ran through began to be more populated. Palmer, Ware, Granby, Belchertown, and Wilbraham were all settled within two decades, between 1717 and 1737. This pattern of settlement supports the concept not only that people moved from east to west (as well as from south to north) but also that the Connecticut River valley was one of the most significant interior areas in the nation’s early existence. From the beginning it has been a place that has been beautiful to look at, but also extremely fruitful for those looking to make a life there.

In its early history, the residents of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts were primarily supported by agriculture and their own self-sufficiency. Settlers quickly took advantage of the fertile soil found along the riverbanks, and the small towns of the valley
emerged where agricultural livelihoods could be strongly supported. Household and family interests were at the core of the economy; therefore many people were trading with one another yet not with the intention of selling products to make a living. As towns began to grow and establish permanence, a budding market economy soon emerged. Families, once content to produce solely for themselves, “supplied their wants both by producing their own goods for consumption and by entering into complex networks of exchange with their neighbors.”

Although commerce began to take root within the valley on this small scale, the attitudes of those involved were not capitalistically cutthroat. Christopher Clark found that money was not often used within exchanges between neighbors and that instead people would trade their services with one another. The scale of exchange was too small at the end of the 18th century for profit to be a concern for most people other than local merchants.

As the Connecticut River Valley began to shift economically, it became a crossroads of Puritan instinct and commercial opportunity. Much of the activity coming from the south seemed to be stimulated by the idea of progress in a monetary, commercial, town-establishing kind of sense. There didn’t appear to be much pressure forcing civilization upward that was coming from a religious source. From the east however, there is that sense that in the earliest years of movement, people were creating towns and exploring the wilderness so that it could be subdued and controlled and so that natives could be converted. This conversion was partially to up the numbers of Puritans, but it was also a tool so that the Indians wouldn’t attack them. Why attack someone who shares your values and who you perceive to be a member of the same religious family? In the Massachusetts section, there was a tension between upstanding values and the desire to progress, to make money, and to conquer the frontier just for the sake of doing it. Throughout the early years when people were visiting, the area maintained its reputation of being
a place in which Puritan values predominated. These were contrasting yet complementary mindsets. Although the commercial side struggled to win out, the Puritan reservation kept that progress in check and kept the market small, at least for the next few decades.

In the villages and budding towns along the Connecticut, trade continued into the early 19th century on a small, contained scale. Townspeople traded with one another for goods and services, yet the commercial system also contained market towns that over time perpetuated significant change within the local economy. There was a “shift from local self-sufficiency in food and clothing toward increased dependence on outside markets for the sale and purchase of produce.” In the section of the valley above the Holyoke Range, Northampton became the local market town. As one of the earliest settled towns on that section of the river and later called “the Paradise of America,” it was only appropriate that Northampton fill such a role. Located within view of the Holyoke Range, nestled within farming communities, and with easy river access, Northampton soon blossomed and “by the eve of the American Revolution, …had risen rapidly to a position of importance in the community, the rural region, and New England.”

Surrounding small towns became dependent upon Northampton and its merchant class for goods that couldn’t be produced within the valley.

While the merchants of towns like Springfield and Northampton brought more commercial goods and opportunities to residents of the Connecticut River valley, they also created, supported, and financed projects that would change the physical topography of the valley as well as its economic structure. In the late 18th century, Northampton merchants “promoted the construction of turnpikes, canals, and bridges.” With improved means of transportation, residents of the area could move about with more ease, but more important for the merchants, goods could be moved faster. Projects like the canal from Northampton to New
Haven, which was chartered by the state in 1792, “improved Northampton’s attractiveness as a market town.” Although the improvements in the local infrastructure had the ability to directly benefit residents of the area, they were ultimately made in the attempt to increase the profit margins for local merchants.

The presence of merchants in the Connecticut River Valley could not be ignored. Most people living within the area were engaged in farming, but the emergence of a merchant class subtly encouraged a different kind of lifestyle. Money became a larger part of the equation as families no longer needed to work as hard to be self-sufficient. Merchants convincingly encouraged “new patterns of production, consumption, and exchange that both transcended and transformed communities.” Commerce began to take place on a larger scale. Suddenly, by opening up to a wider market beyond their town limits, people who were once content to simply exchange with their neighbors became enticed by the products and promises of a larger, more intricate market. During the late 18th century, this transition from rural, independent, self-sufficient farming to a more nuanced, profit-oriented market, was taking place across all of New England, but nowhere was it more distinct than in the Connecticut River Valley of Massachusetts. The pull between tradition and progress was palpable, and a “bifurcation developed within rural society, between those who continued willingly to extend their connections with the market and those who began to draw back from the system growing up in their midst because they feared its consequences.” The local economy, while in some ways becoming more divided, was also becoming necessarily diversified. A growing merchant class brought in new ideas, new people, and a new way of living that was simultaneously exciting and unnerving for the population within the valley, still composed generally of quiet farming people.
For those willing to embrace the future of a primarily market-based economy, the growing merchant presence within the Valley provided a multitude of new opportunities for obtaining wealth. Having established themselves to the point of being able to produce a surplus, many farmers were eager to not only get rid of their surplus goods but to make money in the process. Christopher Clark found that as merchants began to realize that there was a larger demand for products, they found that “there were [both] rural families willing to participate, and secondly, that a system of collection already existed in the local exchange networks.” Merchants, in basing the economy on profit, not self-sufficiency and survival, changed the way that locals did business and the “countryside went from being an economy dominated by independent farmers to becoming a part of the broader market and an outpost of industrial capitalism.” Although at the turn of the nineteenth century this transformation was not yet fully complete, it was underway. Merchants, even small-time ones, forced the Connecticut River Valley to become a player in an economy far larger than the one it was used to.

While there were those who embraced the transition from the farm to the market, there were those within the region who not only disagreed with the impending change, but who intended to fight the system with tooth and nail. Shay’s Rebellion in 1786 “revealed the difference between farmers and merchants in western Massachusetts.” In many cases, the conflicting beliefs of farmers and merchants went either unsaid or were dealt with quietly. In 1786 however, Shay’s Rebellion demonstrated that the tensions between independent farmers and the growing merchant class were far more serious than a simple conflict about how to do business. Although the conflict between the farmers and merchants wasn’t direct, the farmers were upset over what the new commercial class stood for. For those who fought in Shay’s Rebellion, the motivation was anger regarding the forced payment of taxes and debts. In an
economy based primarily on trading between neighbors, those in debt wouldn’t have gone to prison for a failure to pay; however with the new concepts of commercial exchange being integrated into the economy, the days of delayed repayment were over. The introduction of the market-based economy introduced a class hierarchy that hadn’t existed up to that point. There was a clear monetary distinction between farmers and businessmen, and although those involved in agriculture certainly outnumbered those in business, those with money were often those who wielded the most power.

By the end of the 18th century, the split between the rural and the commercial was becoming ever more pronounced, but it had yet to actually split the Valley, or even all of New England, in half. Such a split would never be complete, but it was the fracture, the tension between the old and the new that would define much of the following century. Although physically an unassuming, pastoral area, the Connecticut River Valley within Massachusetts became conflicted in the 19th century. As a beautiful landscape, it had the potential to act as a repository for American national values, a place for people to get in touch with the country’s rural roots, yet the valley also had the potential to harness the promises it held for commercial development. The tension felt between the rural past and a progressive, profitable future is the story of the entire Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley, not just its economy.

Throughout the late 18th century, the valley continued to evolve. Once an area completely dominated by farming and small town communities, new ideas, as evidenced by the emergence of a merchant class and the introduction of capitalism, were forcing people to react strongly by either questioning or clinging to the old ideals. By the dawn of the 19th century, the tension between a yearning for the past and excitement for the future was apparent. This tension was further heightened by the fact that the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River Valley was
slowly but steadily moving into the national spotlight. The 17th and 18th centuries had been the eras of the European Grand Tour, but by the 19th century, the time had come and technology had evolved to the point where it was America’s turn to become the touring hotspot. The Connecticut River Valley in its entirety garnered attention from a global audience, but no section warranted or received as much as the portion within Massachusetts. Although slow to start, the valley drew a steady number of both visitors and new permanent residents. In 1820, two decades after the first census was ever taken, the combined population of Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties, all of which line the Connecticut River, had risen by 11,344 from the original census, a 13.5 increase from the population only twenty years earlier.  

A new statistic within the 1820 Census suggests that while the population remained relatively homogenous, the valley was beginning to witness demographic change as a result of immigration. In 1820, the census recorded the “Number of foreigners not naturalized.” The foreign presence wasn’t large; each county only reported numbers in the low double-digits, but it is clear that most foreigners were settling in the region’s larger cities. Springfield, the largest town in Hampden County also reported the largest foreign presence: fifteen persons. Northampton, located in Hampshire County, had a similar story, reporting sixteen foreigners. Although not large numbers, especially when considered in terms of entire county populations, the fact that such a statistic was even being recorded at the time suggests an impending shift in local demographics.

The inclusion of certain statistics within the occupational section of the 1820 US Census similarly confirms the shifting culture of the valley. Although these new statistics didn’t address the increasing diversification of individuals, they alluded to emerging diversity within the job market. Although still a primarily agricultural area, opportunities for success in the commercial
realm were becoming increasingly available thanks in large part to the growing market economy. The Census recorded the number of persons involved in agriculture, but it also counted those engaged in commerce. As one would expect, agriculture out-stripped all other occupational fields, but commerce was well represented, particularly in the region’s largest towns and small cities. Springfield counted twenty-eight persons involved in commerce. Northampton, the town in Hampshire County increasingly known for its merchants, reported forty-eight involved in the field. Greenfield, the largest town in Franklin County, was also well represented by those involved in commerce and reported twenty involved in the field. At this point in the 19th century agriculture continued to maintain its monopoly on the region’s occupational opportunities, but the inclusion of commerce as an area to be engaged in suggests a shift in the valley’s occupational landscape. As the area diversified and expanded, a variety of jobs became available that had been non-existent in years before, when self-sufficiency and survival had been the primary concerns of residents.

By 1820, not only had the Connecticut River Valley managed to gain more attention from outside visitors, but it had become much easier to reach. The increased presence of merchants within the valley had created not only the economic shift but also the beginnings of transportation improvements. Merchants, forced to move goods from one place to another, were only as successful as they were mobile. No roads to travel on meant no way to get to a community, which meant no way to make money there. Since they were so dependent upon consistent and reliable modes of transportation, merchants and similar “persons engaged in commerce” financed canal, bridge, and turnpike-building projects.

One could never have predicted the changes the valley would undergo throughout the century by looking at a snapshot of the valley in 1820. If one were to have climbed Mount
Holyoke in 1820, the view would have been similar to, perhaps even more “primitive” than, the view painted by Thomas Cole sixteen years later. Nature would have been the dominant force, interrupted only by the small town centers and the cultivated fields that for the most part kept to the riverbanks. The towns themselves, although firmly established by that time, would have been hidden under the leafy barriers created by traditional tree-lined streets. Manufacturing centers and factories had infiltrated the valley, but by 1820, they had yet to fully mature and develop into a true driving force behind the area’s economy. Most factories were relegated to the larger cities within each county (Springfield, Florence [a village within Northampton], and Greenfield/Turner’s Falls). The population, although not easily visible from a mountaintop, even one as low as Mount Holyoke, remained largely homogenous, yet as evidenced by the US Census statistics, diversification seemed inevitable. An increasing stream of visitors brought new vitality into the valley without permanently altering its demographic makeup. The paths into the valley (turnpikes and canals) ensured that the stream of visitors was steady, yet limited.

In 1820, the Connecticut River Valley was on the brink of change. In many cases, its feet were firmly planted in the ground of its agricultural heritage and Puritan past. The appearance of the fertile fields and pastoral landscape encouraged residents and visitors to look backwards and appreciate the simplicity of nature. Shifts within the valley’s economy and demographics, however, suggested that the valley and its residents should embrace progress that was slowly traveling up the entire Connecticut River Valley and instead of clinging to the past, look to the future. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, the valley’s struggle with its identity continued to play out. By 1820, the area was poised for a change.

There are many factors that collaborated to alter the landscape and culture of the Connecticut River Valley. The economy shifted from one based on agriculture to one more
heavily intertwined with capitalism, manufacturing, and turning a profit. Tourists put the region on the map by expounding on the region’s beauty. The industrial revolution swept through the valley, along with the rest of the country, changing the way people produced objects and consumed goods and thus altered the nature of work. All of these changes impacted the valley’s cultural development, yet none of them would have been possible had it not been for the changes made within the valley’s transportation infrastructure. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Connecticut River Valley, once only accessible by road or river, witnessed the arrival of the railroad and was altered forever.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Massachusetts section of the valley was technically accessible, but one’s options were limited. The choices were either travel by road or by the river and although well-used, they each had their own drawbacks. According to Jill Hodnicki, the stagecoach was the most popular mode of transportation from 1800 to 1830.43 Clifton Johnson in his history of Hampshire County, wrote that in 1815, “every morning a stagecoach for Boston…drew up in from of Warner’s tavern with a great flourish.”44 The stagecoach was one of the earliest forms of relatively public transportation. It cost a small fee but was monetarily accessible to a variety of travelers. Most residents of the valley had little more than a carriage, which would never suffice for trips longer than a few dozen miles. Stagecoaches, as evidenced by Johnson’s account, were at the very least dependable (or were at least intended to be), even if they were rather slow and uncomfortable. They operated on a consistent schedule and stopped in most major towns. For individuals without private carriages, such an option was attractive, if not completely necessary, for extended trips.

Roads in general, although often privately owned, were relatively easy to travel on if trips were within the region. Timothy Dwight, an early and admiring visitor to the Valley, thought the
roads of the area to be “generally good throughout a great extent.” These well maintained avenues led to increased movement within the valley with residents able to journey easily from one town to another. In the span of six years (1797-1803), almost twenty corporations worked together to build turnpikes throughout western Massachusetts in the effort to link some of the smaller towns together. Although the transportation needs of residents were factored into the decisions about new construction, “[promoters] hoped that a combination of river improvements and overland routes would work together to spur trade and transportation in the region.” The improvements achieved their goal. Any transportation infrastructure made traveling to the region easier, which in turn encouraged larger numbers of people to visit and settle in the area. Dwight found that given the limited transportation options of the day, the roads allowed “a multitude of strangers…to make this Valley the scene of their pleasurable traveling.” Although the roads may have been rudimentary compared to the interstate that would eventually slice through the valley, they were enough to encourage people to visit.

The Connecticut River also provided a pathway into the valley. More than just a beautiful part of the landscape, the river proved to be functional as well. Ever since settlement of the area, the river has been a natural way to travel to the valley. Some of the first people to ever to reach the Massachusetts section did so by boat, journeying upstream, developing the riverbanks as they went. Travel to the Massachusetts section was part of the flow of people and domestication that seems to defy the natural force of gravity, the flow that travels northward. The water flows south, searching for the shortest way to the ocean, but development, civilization, and tourists traveled north.

Although within the Pioneer valley the river is calm and slow moving, falls to the south of the Massachusetts stretch made for difficult traveling, thus leading Timothy Dwight to write
that “as a navigable water, this river is inferior to many others of a smaller size.” The South Hadley Falls initially prevented travelers from reaching much of the Massachusetts section, frustrating merchants in particular, but the construction of the South Hadley canal running from South Hadley to New Haven, Connecticut, remedied the difficulty. Prior to the canal, “the boats were unloaded at the head of the Falls; the merchandise embarked again in other boats at the foot.” Although certainly a nuisance for early merchants and travelers, Dwight found profound beauty in the power of the falls at South Hadley: “Until I visited this spot, I knew not that it was possible for water to become so beautiful an object.” The river, once its falls were subdued by canals and advanced boat design, was a dependable mode of transportation and could be relied upon in ways that roads could not. Well into the nineteenth century, communities along the river in the northern sections of the Massachusetts stretch “maintained their principal links with Springfield and Hartford via the river.” The Connecticut River continued to be a strong link between communities up and down its banks. Many companies hoped that part of the appeal of traveling by boat was that visitors would feel as if they had an intimate connection with the river. A travel guide intended to promote travel by rail actually made traveling by boat sound downright appealing with the promise that “when they venture out onto [the Connecticut River] on a boat, they immediately fall head over heels in love with a beauty they didn’t suspect was there.” Although a potentially clumsy way to travel, the river provided visitors with a new way to experience the celebrated landscape.

As the century progressed, traveling within and to the valley became increasingly easier thus led to heavier and heavier traffic. Although the stagecoach was appealing in its consistency and quaint appearance and the river guaranteed mobility once its rapids had been controlled, no mode of transportation was more convenient, or changed the Connecticut River Valley more,
than the train. The Massachusetts stretch was first introduced to the railroad in 1839 when the Western Line railroad company connected Springfield to Boston.\textsuperscript{54} Five years later, Springfield connected to Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut in the south. In 1845, Northampton was linked to Springfield by rail and the following year, the line progressed north to Greenfield. Within a decade, the towns within the Connecticut River Valley became more solidly connected both to one another and to the larger cities beyond the immediate region. A trip to Boston would have been hazardous and long in 1835, yet by 1845 one could travel all the way from Northampton to Boston within the comfort of a train compartment. Accessibility by rail meant that the valley could become a true destination, not just an accidental discovery by an explorer or a hub for merchants. The convenience of traveling made the train much more appealing and the idea that tourists could utilize such a “modern” invention inspired them to book tickets. The train was the most “delightful way of reaching this enchanted land of Vacation, from whatever point of compass the excursion may be essayed.”\textsuperscript{55} Not only was it fast, but it was promoted as the best, if not the only, way to travel if one truly wanted to make the most of one’s trip. To travel by road or water would have been nearly provincial in comparison to gliding along the gleaming tracks of the new Western Line.

While the railroad heralded the arrival of progress and innovation, it also signified the beginning of the end for the boating industry. Traveling by train was part of the new wave of transportation. It was easier and faster than moving by water up the Connecticut River. If one was trying to travel to the Massachusetts section of the river, there “were all sorts of obstacles to navigation” like the Enfield rapids and the Willimansett and South Hadley Falls.\textsuperscript{56} If traveling was difficult even for “steamboat enthusiasts,” one can only imagine that it would have been for a passenger unused to traveling by water. However, despite their waning monopoly on
transportation in and out of the valley, steamboat companies tried to hold on to their livelihood in the face of nearly certain defeat. Part of boating companies’ staying power was not due to the necessity of their product (river travel) but to the power of the company owners. Men of the Connecticut River Steamboat Company managed to prevent the trains from extending their reach into the lower sections of the river valley until the late 19th century. This staving off of the railroads was a result of the power of the steamboat company owners, as well as the topography of the lower stretches of the river. The section of the Connecticut River to the north of Hartford (aka the entirety of the Massachusetts stretch) was notoriously difficult to reach. The entire Connecticut River contains its share of rapids and falls, yet the ones between Hartford and Northampton proved particularly difficult to overcome. Because river travel was difficult in the upper reaches of the river anyway, it is no surprise that the railroad was able to infiltrate that section of the valley with little difficulty. In the lower sections of the river steamboat companies had been able to solidly establish themselves and subdue the obstacles that the river had naturally created for smooth traveling. By establishing themselves as a solid part of the area’s transportation economy, the steamboat companies were more difficult to subvert in the lower areas.

Not only was the arrival of the railroad exciting from the perspective of someone wishing to travel with more speed and comfort, but it further promoted the industrialization that was beginning to make its way up the river and into the valley at midcentury. Even the appearance of the train alluded to the increasing mechanization to be seen within the area. To many, the train, and the promise of change that it stood for, threatened the way of life that the river valley symbolized. For such individuals, the train was an “Iron Horse,” symbolic of industry and might.
Though the arrival of the railroad certainly had its benefits, the valley had to pay a price for of convenient accessibility. The landscape of the Connecticut River Valley was historically pastoral. Its reputation was built upon the idea that it was agricultural, rural, peaceful, and unchanging. With the arrival of the railroad, that reputation and those values fell under scrutiny. Although the railroad brought in a new wave of visitors and workers, that influx altered the way residents viewed their region. In her essay “History of the Connecticut Valley,” Gloria Russell found that “there were…ambiguous feelings towards the appearance of the “Iron Horse” for although it heralded a new era of travel, it also marked an irreversible path through the landscape.”

Upon its arrival, it was clear that the railroad was there to stay. Its tracks were permanent, as was the change that it inflicted upon the valley. The construction of the railroad within the valley symbolized the arrival of a new way a life, a way of life that threatened and ultimately changed the culture of the area. According to Russell, “the railroad was the harbinger or change – a symbol of progress at the expense of the pastoral ideal.”

The Pioneer Valley, once a stronghold of American rural values, was vulnerable to the invasion of progress just like any other area in the nation.

In some ways, however, the train attempted to accommodate the landscape and tone of the area: “In the midst of Arcadia appears that symbol of progress, the train, following an unobtrusive course across the meadow.” In this description, the word “unobtrusive” suggests that although the train was clearly a presence within the landscape, it refrained from completely overpowering the scenery it traversed. The train may have hugged the tree line and remained invisible throughout much of the view, but its presence was far from unobtrusive. Just because it couldn’t be directly seen from the summit of Mount Holyoke didn’t mean that it was in fact as harmless as it appeared. Although a necessary innovation that improved travel speed and ease,
the train risked the pastoralism that the valley had established its reputation on. It was the agrarian landscape that people traveled to the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River to see, and the train traversing the Edenic landscape threatened to severely alter if not entirely destroy the view that came to be so iconic and definitive of the valley.

For those living in the Connecticut River Valley, Mount Holyoke was simply a part of the landscape. Ceremoniously raising its head above the valley floor, it was a unique topographical feature simultaneously protecting and dividing what Thomas Cole termed “Arcadian Vales” from the rest of the river valley. Given what seems to be the natural inclination of human beings to climb, Mount Holyoke was hiked and conquered by early residents, yet it wasn’t until the early nineteenth century that the view captured the attention of visitors, eventually becoming a must-see destination in the valley.

One of the first visitors to loudly sing the valley’s praises was Timothy Dwight, former president of Yale University, and following his retirement, avid traveler and lover of the American landscape along with the ideals which that landscape instilled in Americans. A man of New England, he traveled the region extensively, writing letters to those back home all the while. In his letters, later compiled in 1821 into the multi-volume *Travels in New England and New York*, he expounded upon and usually praised the sights around him, yet for the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts he reserved particular praise.

Dwight first traveled up the river and into the valley in the early decades of the nineteenth century. His exploration of the landscape was completed prior to the arrival of the railroad in the valley as well as the greater waves of tourist activity that began with British tourists, particularly in the 1820s. The landscape encountered by Dwight was less affected by human influence than
even the scene depicted by Cole in 1836. In the early 1800s, although present, humans had yet to establish a distinct presence; thus Dwight’s descriptions of the valley as seen from the summit of Mount Holyoke don’t include much mention of the human effect upon the landscape. Instead, he allowed his pen to flow freely in praise of the scenery: “A perfect neatness and brilliancy is everywhere diffused; without a neglected spot to tarnish the luster, or excite a wish in the mind for a higher finish. All these objects united present here a collection of beauties, to which I know no parallel.”

Although the landscape contained a significant population by 1820 (83,776 in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties combined), much of the occupational emphasis was still placed upon agriculture and small-scale commercial endeavors. The landscape as seen by Dwight from Mount Holyoke prior to 1821, when his volumes were first published, was one that continued to maintain a balance between human and natural influences. The two forces coexisted in harmony, leading Dwight to describe the view as “the richest prospect in New England.” It was a landscape that beautifully melded both the past and the future, providing the viewer with a sight that included both the ideal sublime and pastoral landscape forms. The scene was unlike any other in New England.

Following, through not directly due to Dwight’s publication, the atmosphere both atop and below Mount Holyoke began to shift. In 1821, when Dwight’s first edition of Travels was published, construction occurred on the mountain’s summit. Foot traffic had increased up and down the mountain to such a point that a refreshment pavilion was deemed both necessary and profitable. A “group of citizen investors from the Northampton area constructed rustic, overnight accommodations…that made it possible for hundreds of tourists to visit [the site] annually.” In creating a permanent structure on the summit, entrepreneurs encouraged consistent attention
from tourists, leading them to prolong their visits by providing them with a place to relax atop the mountain following an arduous climb.

The construction of the simple building alludes to the shifting focus of the valley during the early 1820s. Although there was money to be made with the increasing numbers of tourists, there were certain sacrifices that coincided with growing profits. Tourism, once not a remote concern of valley residents, was quickly becoming a force that was hard if not completely impossible to ignore. In the early years of the nation’s development, Americans had been confined to the business of community- and nation-building, yet with the country firmly established and knowledge of European travel habits sounding enticing, Americans had reached a point where they too wished to travel and consume the visual delights of their nation. With American culture lacking in monuments of historical significance, tourists turned to the landscape when in search of things to visually consume.

Given the slow start of the American tourist industry, some of the earliest visitors to the Massachusetts section of the valley were Europeans, particularly the British. The height of British travel in America was during the 1820s and 30s, just as American tourism was slowly taking off in popularity. Captain Basil Hall, a retired British naval officer, was one such traveler from across the pond who journeyed to the states to see the impressive landscape. Upon returning to England he published his account of the journey in *Travels in North America* in 1829. Although at times critical of American society as a whole, Hall recalled the Connecticut River Valley quite fondly. He remembered Northampton, Massachusetts, to be “one of those New England villages which is impossible to over praise.”

Unsurprisingly, while visiting Northampton, Hall also ascended Mount Holyoke. Since his visit was early in the site’s era of popularity, he probably traveled on one of the rudimentary
roads initially created to facilitate the movement of materials up the mountain intended for the construction of the rudimentary structures perched atop the summit. Although the weather on the day of Hall’s visit was less than desirable, the majesty of the scene was nearly as impressive as the pastoral view he anticipated:

The Beauty of the prospect from the summit of this noble hill, by completely arresting our attention had rendered us careless about sundry squalls of rain which stalked slowly over the landscape, like enormous giants with their heads thrust into the clouds, and adding much grandeur to the scenery, both by their majestic and half mysterious appearance…one of the drizzly monsters advanced upon Mount Holyoke…so as to shut us complete out from the wide world we had been admiring.

Making it to the summit in 1827, Hall just missed the construction of a carriage road, which was proposed in 1828, yet regardless of the method of travel up to the summit, he was one among the first wave of tourists to visit the valley and the mountain for the express purpose of seeing the sights. His description of the valley dominated by the impending storm fails to completely communicate the awe that many visitors had for the scenery below, yet Hall’s presence on the mountaintop speaks to the growing presence and influence of tourists. The landscape itself, by the late 1820s, had yet to be visibly and/or significantly altered by tourists, yet changes were inevitable.

The presence of tourists both on the valley floor and atop Mount Holyoke specifically indicated an increase in the human population in the area in general. Heightened movement within the area led some to settle down in the valley. After all, Dwight, even when visiting the valley around 1820, proclaimed the villages along the Connecticut River in Massachusetts to be “destined for the reception of men.” Although a tourist’s original intention may have been to simply pass through the area on the way to some other destination, the landscape had a way of encouraging prolonged visits. It was the alluring landscape that attracted essayists such as
Nathaniel Parker Willis, yet by inviting tourists like him and his readers, the landscape itself began to change due to their ever-growing presence.

In his book *American Scenery*, published in 1840 Willis, an American writer and poet, recorded his impressions of landscapes, limited primarily to scenes in the northeast. Willis’s book, along with its generous written praise of the American landscape, also includes 121 engravings after sketches of the scenery by William Henry Bartlett. If the words weren’t enough to entice visitors, the pictures could be relied upon to depict the scene attractively.

Although the Pioneer Valley is a relatively small stretch of the river, Willis devoted three short essays along with their respective sketches to its history and scenery. While he praises the landscape, his descriptions suggest, unlike the tourist accounts before his, the shifting focus and physical structure of the valley and its residents. When describing the landscape in the sketch “Mount Tom, and Connecticut River,” Willis fittingly focused on the land as opposed to the growing human presence in the area. There is a clause in his description, however, that belies conflicting interests in the region. Willis writes of the curved banks of the river and the gentle landscape that abuts it, yet he claims that meadows “are more profitable” 69. By mentioning profit, Willis suggests that money has become a shaper of the landscape. Although meadows may also be “more agreeable to the eye,” the fact that they are the best type of landscape when trying to turn a profit was not a fact long ignored by residents. The profitability of the landscape may not have been directly connected to the arrival of tourists, but the monetary focus suggests shifting priorities among valley residents, if not Americans as a whole.

While Willis only alluded to human influence in the valley in some of his writing, in other instances he found it impossible to mask the impact of tourism and the subsequent shift in the balance between mankind and nature. His publication was so popular that it “supplanted all
previous guides in popularity and attractiveness”70. Unsurprisingly, it was in his description of the view from Mount Holyoke that Willis most explicitly mentioned the presence not only of people within the valley, but tourists. Willis, an experienced traveler and arguably America’s first foreign correspondent, thought Mount Holyoke to have “the richest view in America, in point of cultivation and fertile beauty.”71 Though the prospect was beautiful, Willis was not the lone traveler atop the mountain. By 1840, when American Scenery was first published, the climb had become “fashionable for tourists, whose patronage of gingerbeer and sunrises [maintained] a shanty and a hermit at the top.”72 Though the building atop the mountain remained unimpressive, the view proved alluring to the point of becoming fashionable. By Willis’s visit, the view from Mount Holyoke had become an established tourist destination, and although the author didn’t seem overcrowded by his fellow visitors, the presence of tourists was undeniable and their power to influence both the buildings atop the mountain as well as the landscape below was ever-growing. Given the timing of Willis’s publication, the larger presence of tourists is to be expected. Although the railroad connecting Springfield to Boston was not yet complete when Willis traveled to Mount Holyoke, the promise of its arrival in the valley, along with the growing number of travel books, would surely increase the number of tourists.

Surprisingly, T. Addison Richards’s account of the river valley published in American Scenery Illustrated about a decade after Willis’s book describes the area as firmly balanced between human influence and the natural beauties of the landscape. He, like many travelers before him, wrote of the entire river valley’s beauty, but praised the superiority of the Massachusetts stretch most heavily: “The finest and most characteristic part of the Connecticut lies about midway from its source among the hills, on the Canadian borders, to its entrance into Long Island Sound – stretching above, from Northampton to Brattleboro, and below to
Although not as heavy handed with praise as others who passed through the region, Richards was far from stingy with his compliments, concentrating primarily on the “beautiful…country around Mount Holyoke”. Northampton, the town which most strongly attracted Richards’s attention, presented “a most charming picture of plenty and comfort in its luxuriant meadows, and cozy homesteads”. The view from Mount Holyoke was described in a similar fashion: “we see everywhere vast sweeps of cultivated meadow and indeterminable chains of hills”. Though writing in a decade marked by the arrival of the railroad and a growing tourist presence, Richards’s depiction of the valley was one of a partnership landscape which by midcentury the valley was beginning to transition away from. Surely the railroad, industrialization, and larger number of tourists had impacted the valley’s appearance. Richards’s vision, however, suggests otherwise.

Richards’s omission of certain technological innovations that were surely present through perhaps not entirely visible from the mountaintop is a significant one. Although his depiction of the Connecticut River Valley as one dominated by the landscape is not entirely unrealistic, it isn’t entirely truthful. By the 1850s, the time when his book was being researched and published, the railroad connecting the valley to Boston and New York was firmly established, as was the tourist industry. Although tourism was initially concentrated in and around Northampton on the opposite side of the river from Mount Holyoke, someone looking at the view, or a tourist who made the trip by rail, would have been aware of the increased activity within the valley as well as the railroad itself, no matter how inconspicuous it may have appeared, snaking along the tree lines.

While writers and early tourists flocked to the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River valley in the early third of the nineteenth century, artists were a bit later to follow. “Art
tourism,” a subset of the entire touring industry, didn’t take off in the Connecticut River valley until the 1840s, with the peak of artistic activity lasting for the following twenty years.\(^7\) The artistic lethargy was due to the way in which artists encountered the valley. Following the same pattern as early settlement in the area, artistic interest in the Connecticut River valley traveled from south to north. Hartford was the town of interest in the 1820s, then by 1850, artists moved farther north to the Massachusetts section.\(^7\) This was the peak of artistic interest, yet ironically, the most acclaimed pieces of art depicting the Massachusetts stretch of the river were produced before the boom and heavily influenced artistic activity in later years.

When recalling the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River, Timothy Dwight wrote that “it would be a hopeless task for an artist to attempt the representation of all the beauties which are here presented in one view to the eye.”\(^9\) Such an admission of the impossibility of the task did not, however, stop many artists from trying to achieve what Dwight believed to be impossible. It was difficult scenery to resist, for many thought of the valley as “the embodiment of the pastoral landscape.”\(^8\) While relatively tame on the valley floor, the regional landscape contained elements of the sublime, indicated by its rugged and untamed sections. The contrast between the picturesque riverbanks and the wilderness of the surrounding hills invited many early artists to attempt to turn the three-dimensional Eden into a painting.

The earliest depictions of the valley were done in isolation; instead of being part of the artistic wave that crashed on the region at the mid-century, they were the pieces that inspired the increased activity. Basil Hall, one of the early visitors to praise the valley through writing, was also one of the first to publish visual representations of the scenery in *Forty Etchings, from Sketches Made with the Camera Lucida, in North America, in 1827 and 1828*. Although not artistically significant, Hall’s sketches “can be directly connected with the visit of Thomas

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These early sketches of the valley may have been rudimentary in comparison to the works that the area later inspired, yet they communicated the impressiveness of the scenery.

Thomas Cole was one of the most influential early artistic visitors to the valley. Originally from Lancashire, England, Cole established himself in America as a landscape painter and became a founding member of the Hudson River School, a group of artists devoted to the celebration of the American landscape. For these like-minded artists, “there was something thrilling about a thunderstorm, the darkness of the forest, or the booming of a great waterfall.”

Prior Cole’s arrival in New York in 1825, landscape paintings had been completed, but interest in them remained “confined to members of an aristocratic elite.” Though initially unknown, Cole quickly asserted his preeminent place in the genre: “It has expression also, not of passion, to be sure, but of sentiment, whether it be tranquil or spirit stirring…And whatever scene is chosen, one spirit pervades the whole: light and darkness tremble in the atmosphere.” Hudson River School artists, with the absence of historic monuments in America, were able to capitalize on the “abundance of scenery both pastoral and wild.” Cole, in some ways a fresh-eyed foreigner, “was the first painter to see the striking topography of the new nation as a possible source of what its artists had failed to get from its meager history: a truly distinctive nature idiom in which to figure forth intimations of New World beauty and sublimity.” It was the desire to visit and depict the nation’s most beautiful scenery that led artists like Cole to explore the northeast and the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River Valley and turn previously unknown landscapes into icons signifying the power and majesty of the American landscape.

Given the relative newness of landscape painting as a respected genre of art, Cole and other members of the Hudson River School “engaged in aesthetic pioneering…Nature had to be seized, tamed, brought under the dominion of artistic law.” Confining an entire landscape,
particularly one as impressive as the American landscape, to a canvas proved to be difficult task. For artists unfamiliar with the new conventions promoted by the Hudson River School, certain landscapes were “unrepresentable; or at least could not be represented in a form that would, according to current standards, result in a coherent picture.” The panorama, although a relatively new “invention” in the art world, was heavily utilized by landscape artists and proved to be particularly helpful for Cole when creating his most famous view of the Connecticut River Valley. The landscape tourism that was quickly gaining popularity in American circles “was centered on panoramic vision…[and] created a demand for images of just those views that landscape painters had considered difficult or impossible to represent.” For Cole and many artists, the panoramic image, although ideal, was difficult to condense onto a single canvas, regardless of the size.

Cole traveled to the valley first in 1827 and stopped in Hartford, Connecticut. At the time, artistic focus was still in the lower stretches of the river valley and Hartford was a hub of both artistic and literary activity. Cole went on sketching expeditions throughout the region, but it wasn’t until 1833, while in Boston, that Cole first began what would later become his most celebrated scene of the Connecticut River Valley, *The Connecticut River From Mount Holyoke, After a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)*.

By 1833, Cole was an established artist with a variety of wealthy patrons. He was gaining both fame and respect for his role as a leader of the Hudson River School, and with such a reputation came a certain amount of personal freedom when it came to producing works. In the early 1830s, Cole was in the process of completing the five-part *Course of Empire* series. However, partway through, he found himself in need of both some distance from the arduous project and also some steady income. Although a successful artist, Cole often struggled
financially and was often forced to put aside ambitious works to paint something that would easily sell. With those needs in mind, he began *The Oxbow*. When discussing his motivation for the creation of the river scene, Cole wrote in a letter that “Fancy pictures seldom sell and they generally take more time than views so [he] determined to paint one of the latter. [He had] already commenced a view from Mount Holyoke.”

In the early stages of creation, Cole, though not normally one to copy the works of others before making a sketch himself, traced Hall’s version of the view when in the process of creating his own piece. Upon travelling to the top of Mount Holyoke and seeing the real view as opposed to one confined to the pages of *Forty Etchings*, Cole made a two page topographical drawing of his own that “reveal[ed] …his fascination with the panoramic and his interest in finding a way to represent it.” For Cole, it was a struggle to confine the panorama of the valley into a coherent composition given the wide variety of landscape forms that existed in the view. Although the pastoral fields of the river valley and the wild hillsides were visible when standing atop the mountain, forcing them to coexist within a painting proved to be more easily envisioned than executed. Ever conscious of his artistic license when it came to making a point through art, Cole manipulated the landscape in his painting, deviating from the actual scenery just enough to complete a seemingly realistic painting while simultaneously making a subtle but haunting remark on the contemporary state of the American landscape in a way that words had attempted and failed.

Cole used his skills to promote and celebrate the wondrous American landscape, but as the century progressed and industrialization began to threaten some of the nation’s most renowned scenery, he turned his artistic ability to a purpose higher than monetary gain. For Cole, art was a medium for communicating “that spiritual meaning which he himself drew from nature,
and to teach, when the subject admitted of it, a strong moral lesson." While one could interpret *The Oxbow* as a simple celebration of the power and variety of the American landscape (which in many ways it is), the piece is far more complicated than that and forced the “historical stakes to be raised.” Cole’s depiction of the pastoral river valley following the passage of an apparently violent thunderstorm suggests more than just the landscape’s ability to withstand the elements.

The storm, in all of its darkness and menace, becomes a natural stand-in for the clouds of industrialization that threatened to soon creep along the valley floor. Cole and other landscape artists of the Hudson River School were concerned about the ramifications that the landscape would suffer for the sake of progress. Both types of landscape in *The Oxbow* – the pastoral and the sublime – were at risk. Destruction at the “hands” of a thunderstorm, a natural phenomenon, was acceptable for Cole, yet to see a landscape ruined only to be replaced by industry was unthinkable. Although Cole intended *The Oxbow* to be a secondary project, a break from the *Course of Empire* series, he nonetheless seized the opportunity to warn his viewers of the risks of progress, just as he did in the celebrated series.

A simplistic interpretation of the piece would be that Cole was attempting to show how “storms bring beauty in their train,” but in its polyvalent symbolism, it’s complicated portrayal of the future, it also suggests that in Jacksonian America the viewer can no longer preside, aristocratically, “high above the storm’s center”: even the mountaintop is battered by rain and darkened by clouds. For Cole, the human being was an accomplice if not the primary harbinger of the destruction of the natural landscape. People must be implicated in the destruction for without their influence and desire for progress and innovation, the landscape would never have been altered. Standing atop the mountain watching the vulnerable landscape shift before their
eyes, tourists and residents of the area alike were far from innocent. A prime spot in the visual hierarchy only gives one access to a more complete view of the destruction.

Given the high moralistic value that Cole wished the painting to possess, he created a composition that, although realistic, “contains obvious and probably conscious departures from what could be seen from a single vantage point.” In order include the various aspects of the landscape that would make the most dynamic and thought-provoking composition, Cole was forced to “juxtapos[e]…what are almost two separate views.” Though the two landscapes combine to create a pleasant composition, Cole deviated from some normal expectations of panoramic painting. Although still technically a panorama, the artist managed to “disregard [the] consistent and apparently seamless transition from point to point within a visual field.” Also, Cole depicted a view that is about 85-90° of the visual field while most paintings display 55°. In condensing a large visual field onto a canvas, Cole was able to draw the contrast between the sublime and pastoral landscapes with more ease, yet the view, does not in fact exist in the way it is depicted. Despite this expansion of the visual field, The Oxbow, according to Cole’s biographer Ellwood Parry was “not decidedly overextended.” Cole may have nearly doubled the visual field and done the impossible by condensing such a view onto a canvas, but the composition still appears coherent and balanced to the viewer unaware of the artistic manipulation of reality. It was Cole’s deviation from the actual landscape that led his painting to become iconic, but that same stretching of the truth made his a difficult piece to duplicate.

It was Cole’s conscious derivation from the actual landscape that allowed him to make his point regarding the moral implications of progress. That same derivation, however, made his piece inaccessible for artists wishing to duplicate the scene. For a more “accessible” depiction of the view, many turned instead to the sketch by William Henry Bartlett, “View from Mount
“Holyoke” published in *American Scenery* by Nathaniel Parker Willis in 1840. Although only four years after the completion of Cole’s painting, the scene appears distinctly different when seen through Bartlett’s eyes. The stark contrast between the two versions of the view suggests that each artist had a clear agenda when depicting the scene and any differences in the view was the likely result of artistic license being exercised. While Cole used the painting to question the morality of the American relationship to the landscape, Bartlett sketched the scene so that it could appear attractive to readers who were also potential tourists.

Bartlett’s version of the view was topographically and representationally more accurate than Cole’s. His sketches were published in a travel book and therefore one of his main objectives was to make the view from Mount Holyoke seem appealing and to make the landscape in general both accessible and inviting to travelers. Any higher moral motivation behind Bartlett’s work is unknown and also unlikely given his other work and the format in which it was presented to the public. Where Cole attempted to downplay the human presence in his piece, Bartlett was unrestrained. Atop Mount Holyoke, Cole only included a small version of himself, the traveling artist with his easel. Bartlett, however, shows many people atop the mountain and also included the corner of a refreshment pavilion, a structure that had existed at least in some form since 1821 and which had gained permanence as time went on and the spot gained heavier tourist traffic. Although far from being an obnoxiously dominant feature of the piece, the pavilion corner confirms the sustained human presence atop the mountain that Cole was so anxious to omit and also suggests that Cole’s fear of an imbalanced landscape was close to becoming a reality. Bartlett includes shrubbery and massive rocks atop the mountain to create the sense of wilderness that so many tourists wished to experience, but much of the area had already been cleared so that visitors would have space to rest and relax after the challenging
climb to the summit. Bartlett even goes so far as to include some weary tourists seated in conversation admiring the view of the pastoral valley below and the Holyoke Range extending into the southwestern distance.

Although Cole and Bartlett differ in their inclusion of human beings, their works are similar in their depiction of the valley floor as seen from the summit. In Cole’s 1833 sketch and the painting completed three years later, the Connecticut River valley is shown as a balanced landscape. A human presence is evident in the tailored farm fields and small communities of white houses, yet its visible vitality suggests that the system works, that humans have molded the landscape to fit their needs but have done so with the natural limitations of the landscape in mind. In Bartlett’s sketch, the same balanced relationship is evident. Farm fields abut the riverbanks and similar small, orderly communities are sprinkled throughout the scene. Although a black-and-white engraving by R. Wallis after Bartlett’s sketch, the same sense of agricultural vitality is evident and affirms the successful and productive human-landscape relationship within the valley.

The main difference here is the artist’s attitude towards that scene of balance. Cole, as evidenced by his metaphoric use of the thunderstorm, was worried about the future of that balanced landscape. He was concerned that the scales were going to tip and that what was once a scene of balance would soon become one of human domination. Although he also included some swirling clouds above the summit and recognized the balanced landscape, Bartlett’s engraving does not evoke Cole’s concern for its future. Instead, he seems to encourage increased human activity and presence by including so many people within his piece. By depicting people utilizing and enjoying the landscape, Bartlett encouraged people to visit because they could literally see
themselves there. Bartlett’s sketch is almost instructive in that way. It shows the tourists the view but also shows them how they should interact with and approach it.

As the works of Cole and Bartlett demonstrate, most artists have had some kind of an agenda in mind when creating a work of art. Although creating a painting or drawing that is completely true to reality is nearly impossible and omissions are always made at some level, artists often consciously omitted aspects of the scene that undermined their point. For Cole, the omission was the established human presence atop Mount Holyoke; for Bartlett, it was the ramifications of human influence on the landscape. Depending on the aim, the picture changes. In most cases the omissions were relatively minor, yet representations of the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River Valley are often missing an object that by the mid-nineteenth century had altered the physical if not also the mental American landscape: the railroad.

As a general rule, Americans throughout the nation were fascinated by the train. It was a symbol of progress and “speed,” and eventually became an iconic metaphor of national movement into the west. While people were awed by the power of the machine, it was the physical appearance of the train that was so impressive: “A steam-powered locomotive moving across the landscape is an arresting sight – so arresting, indeed, that its visual character alone might seem to account for the strong hold it so quickly took on the imagination of artists.” Other forms of transportation may have had the ability to move people and goods with similar effectiveness, but the physical presence of a metallic monster sliding across the landscape was exciting in the sense that it seemed so out of place. The American landscape, particularly that of the Connecticut River Valley in Massachusetts, wasn’t heavily industrialized by the mid 1800s and thus the railroad contrasted sharply with the soft, pastoral landscape of the valley. For most artists, it was the juxtaposition of images that made for such interesting art. For them, it was “not
so much the machine itself – its inherent visual attributes – but its presence in the countryside; the evocative juxtaposition of the mechanical artifact with the shapes, lines, colors, and textures of the natural setting, whether wild of rural.”

The train made for interesting compositions, but for those artists wishing to use their skills to make a statement about some larger moral problem, the railroad provided them with an opportunity to air those concerns. While a symbol of power, the “iron horse” was also a symbol of change both in the sense of the physical landscape and the American cultural landscape and thus “the railroad’s merely visual or perceptual attributes [had] been inseparably bound up with its underlying thematic, social, or ideological significance.” Some welcomed the change and embraced the symbol of progress, choosing to look forward to the possibilities in store for the blossoming republic. Although a man with a healthy respect for the natural world, Ralph Waldo Emerson “saw the railway as an entirely appropriate subject for the art of a young, developing, democratic society. Just as traditional landscapes hosted classical temples as symbols of a glorious past, so modern landscape painting, it was felt, should avail itself of the railway as a symbol of a glorious future.”

While an image of progress, the railway was also a destructive image, barreling through the virgin landscape and claiming it in the name of industry and human influence. It was the destructive capability of the railroad that left many nervous about what would be forsaken for progress. Instead of having the simple reputation of being a vehicle for faster movement between locations, “the railroad was a vehicle of territorial conquest.” The language associated with the train was violent, suggestive of human domination. The train, in its steam, coal, and noise, tipped the scales of what was once a balanced landscape. For Cole, the train was a sign that “the ravages of the axe are daily increasing – the most noble scenes are made desolate, and oftentimes with a
wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation.” However, direct criticism of the new invention was far from advisable given the national excitement surrounding it for “to have done so would have been to set oneself clearly against the overwhelming current of optimistic nation-building, expansionism and progress.\textsuperscript{109}

Those wary of the train’s influence on the American landscape were forced to veil their complaints and misgivings within their art. For some, the strategy was to assimilate the train to the natural landscape. If it didn’t visually intrude upon the canvas, perhaps the hope was that the railway would blend just as seamlessly into the real landscape. Regardless of the thought process, “It is as if these artists were bent on making the new machine blend as inconspicuously as possible into its natural surroundings.”\textsuperscript{110} America, but more specifically the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley, struggled to maintain its image as a landscape immune to the impacts of a changing society and thus painted scenes depicted

landscapes of reconciliation in the sense, finally, that they divest the new machine power of its chief attributes as a stock emblem of progress. So far from representing a novel kind of power – the noisy, disruptive, fire-breathing, smoke-belching iron horse of popular journalistic illustration – artists … depict a neutralized technology, on that is easily harmonized with the natural environment.\textsuperscript{111}

The assimilation of progress into the natural landscape was an attempt to cope with the changes of human progress and maintain, as genuinely as possible, the sense of balance within the pastoral landscape.

In depictions of the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley, however, attempts to assimilate the new image of progress were weak at best. The valley had established itself as an Eden within an evolving landscape, a place where visitors could go to morally recharge and get back in touch with the landscape and the rural values that it embodied and encouraged. Because it was promoted as Arcadia, there was a certain pressure for the valley to
maintain that image despite the growing presence of tourists and a growing web of train tracks. In response to the “preoccupation of traveler’s journals and guidebooks with the image of the Connecticut Valley as a fertile garden, most paintings of the 1860s portray a pastoral ideal of rural peace and plenty.” By that point in time, the railroad, that object of national fascination, was well-established in the valley, yet to have included it, let alone highlighted it, would have been to risk the valley’s reputation. In order to minimize the potential of destroying the ideal, most artists avoided the sticky situation of including images of progress altogether. They often omitted symbols of progress and change that would force the valley to be cast in a different and potentially detrimental light and thus “painted views [didn’t] document industrial growth…Artists continued to enshrine the Connecticut, but their visions were more personal and less specific.”

While the rest of the nation was buzzing with anticipation regarding the impact of the railroad, the Pioneer Valley was a place where one didn’t want to imagine progress invading. People needed the valley to remain a garden, a haven from change in the form of mechanical monsters and iron horses, yet no amount of omission on the part of artists could prevent such change from happening. With the railroad came larger hordes of tourists, and with them came a demand for a new kind of landscape, one that could accommodate the technological innovations necessary for smooth traveling.

Although the desire to travel is natural, tourist activity in the nineteenth century was far from organic. Originally, the tourist industry was innocent, fuelled by curiosity and a love of beautiful scenery. Though well-intentioned during its inception and subsequent early growth, tourism “had a way of showing up in the areas with the fastest industrial and technological growth.” Tourism brought with it and promoted change, though interestingly, that change was
only possible by promised continuity. Tourists, especially during the nineteenth century, flocked to the landscapes that seemed to resonate most strongly with values from the past. For tourists, landscapes like the Connecticut River Valley were “repositories for ‘traditional values’ that were…besieged in cities.” How ironic that the touristic attempt to retain the values of rural America only served to place those same values in jeopardy.

In the mid to late nineteenth century, not only was the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River valley shifting, but the entire country was witnessing the arrival of industrialization and a subsequent permanent alteration of the American landscape. By that time, tourism had also begun to sweep the nation, encouraged by the increasingly pervasive railroad system. In a landscape that appeared to become more mechanized by the day, tourists wished to use their vacations as escapes from the emerging American landscape. Thus, “scen[ic tourism] softened the hard features of an industrializing society with a veil of romanticism.” Touring a landscape like the Massachusetts stretch, which seemed to have escaped the axe of industry, was refreshing and provided an opportunity for the weary American to recharge before returning to the oppressive urban environment that so many called home. Seeing the rural, pastoral American landscape supposedly provided tourists “remedies for crass commercialism, urban blight, labour conflict, the loss of permanence, the loss of community – every misery ever detected by the new industrial order.” Touring was an activity pitched as if it could heal the wounds inflicted by urbanism, yet it merely created problems elsewhere.

In removing themselves from the nation’s growing cores, mid-nineteenth century tourists often convinced themselves that their traveling was the result of lofty motivations. Visitors saw “themselves, not as consumers purchasing goods, but as sensitive lovers of scenery.” However, upon buying a train ticket or booking a hotel room, tourists altered the very landscape
that they believed to be paradise. In the Connecticut River Valley, tourists were profitable for the local economy, yet their established presence during the middle decades of the nineteenth century forever changed the appearance of the celebrated landscape. Tourism, an industry based upon the beauty of the landscape, became the force that precipitated some of the largest change in the area. An increased tourist population led to a need for increased services which subsequently required more workers and led to the growth of industry in the area.

The first sign of “progress” to enter the valley was the railroad, but it was soon followed by other indicators of growing industrialization. Prior to the railroad, the valley, despite its purely pastoral appearance, did in fact have light industry. In the 1840 Census the majority of individuals were involved in agriculture, as would be expected given the valley’s history, but a significant number of people were also working in manufactures and trades. Even Franklin County, the least populated of the three counties lining the banks of the Massachusetts stretch of the river, represented industry well with 1,387 of its residents involved in the field. Unsurprisingly, Hampden County, containing the largest population when the census was taken (37,366), also had the largest number of people working in manufactures and trades at 5,190, more than tripling the number in Franklin County.119

While industry in the area was a product of an increasing human presence, it was also made possible by the Connecticut River itself. With the water pressure from the river, factories were able to establish themselves or expand further, taking advantage of the free energy. It was the water that allowed the Industrial Revolution to find its way into the Pioneer Valley.120 Even a pastoral landscape had something to give to industry, despite the seemingly blatant visual evidence to the contrary. Certain sections of the river proved to be more useful than others. Industry, even in its earliest forms prior to the railroad and tourists, congregated around the
various falls in the river and areas where tributary streams and rivers flowed into the Connecticut. These areas had the greatest water pressure and were thus most useful for the purpose of generating energy for a new factory. In the northern portion of the Massachusetts stretch, the section made up of Franklin and Hampshire counties, industry along the river was relatively light. Turners Falls, located within the city of Montague (a city in name only, not size), and Greenfield in Franklin County were the primary manufacturing hubs given their locations at a falls and a tributary connection. Hampshire County, the section most visible from the summit of Mount Holyoke, similarly had little industry. Farm fields bordered the riverbanks, not town centers. Also, the section is devoid of many falls, rapids, or tributaries; the power simply wasn’t there to support a large industrial infrastructure. It was in Northampton, the largest town in the county, that industry found its local niche. Florence, a village within Northampton, became the city’s industrial center, specializing in silk production. The Northampton Silk Company was founded in the late 1830s and by the 1840 Census, had already led Hampshire to be categorized as a high producer of silk. The success of the early light industry in the city led Northampton to become an attractive hub for new industry later in the century. Metal, cutlery, and machinery works opened there in the 1860s and early 1870s.121

Farther to the south, in Hampden County, the industry was much more obvious than in the two northern counties. Where the topography did not provide a dynamic source of water power in Franklin and Hampshire counties, it was robust and easily available in Hampden County. The South Hadley Falls provided the towns south of the Holyoke Range with the power to create and sustain thriving industrial communities. Although the largest city both in the county and the larger region, Springfield was not in fact the most industrial in terms of its civic identity. That honor, if it can even be called that, was reserved for Holyoke, the city just north of
Springfield. Prior to its establishment as a purely industrial community in 1840, Holyoke was a conglomeration of farms, homes, and small mills – a fairly standard scene in the Pioneer Valley. However, with the development of water power technology and the need for a larger scale of production, Holyoke’s position just south of the South Hadley Falls became significant. In 1840, the town became the first community in the area to be designated an industrial city. Canals were built to fully utilize the river’s strength and aided in the rapidity of the city’s growth. What was once a grouping of many small mills eventually grew, unified, and became primarily concentrated on the production of paper and paper products, leading Holyoke to earn the nickname the “Paper City.” For Holyoke, or perhaps this is a function of the emerging industry-worshipping culture of the mid nineteenth century, the number of mills was something to be proud of. A brochure produced by the Passenger Department of the Boston and Maine Railroad seemed awed by the fact that there were twenty-six paper mills in the city. The concentration of industry in the small city and its quick transition from an agrarian community to manufacturing indicates that “Holyoke [epitomized] the changing modes of life and readjustment forced upon America.” Although Holyoke and cities south of the Holyoke Range may have seemed to transition from agrarian to industrial communities in isolation from the rest of the river valley, a similar shift was occurring throughout the country during the mid-century.

Springfield, as the largest city in the entire stretch of the Pioneer Valley, was also a hub of industrial activity. Located on the banks of the Connecticut, utilization of waterpower was inevitable, especially given the entrepreneurial spirit that had pervaded the city since its beginnings as a trading center in the eighteenth century. Ever since the arrival of William Pynchon, “the city has steadily maintained its supremacy as the metropolis of inland MA, rivaling Hartford below.” The industrial preeminence of the city was only further solidified
when it became the main terminus for the Western Railroad Line from Boston beginning in 1839. Springfield’s fate as the regional industrial and commercial center was sealed as soon as the last tie was nailed down. Though not a city with a particularly violent history, Springfield’s major industries were weaponry related. The Springfield Armory, established in the late eighteenth century, had always been an integral part of the local economy but became particularly noteworthy during the Civil War, when it functioned as the only working armory in the entire Union. Smith & Wesson, one of the largest producers of firearms, established its headquarters in Springfield in 1855 and has remained in the city ever since.

With the establishment of factories, “tall monuments of industry, many of them in the lower reaches of the river…and scattered in small towns throughout the northern sections, have replaced the water wheels whose power came chiefly from the feeder streams which tumble into the Connecticut throughout its length.” The landscape, at least in certain sections, was changing, and doing so drastically. Not only were the towers of industry raising their heads above rooflines and trees, but they were altering the landscape in the process. Land that had once been devoted to agriculture, land that was once a part of the pastoral ideal that residents of the valley strove to uphold, became dominated by new industrial infrastructure. With the arrival of industrialization, the lower sections of the Massachusetts stretch, once a landscape in transition, was beyond the point of being at risk of change. It had been fundamentally altered.

Not only did the physical landscape shift with industrialization, but the demographics of the population did so as well. Since its earliest stages of settlement, the Massachusetts stretch of the river was relatively homogenous. It was settled largely by whites of English ancestry. A foreign population was discernable as early as 1820, as the US Census of that year included the “Foreigners not Naturalized” population category. The numbers weren’t large enough to indicate
a significant foreign presence, but the existence of the category is suggestive of the impending population shift. Although not recorded in the same category again, it is fair to assume that the population of the region became increasingly diverse once factories were established and low-level employment opportunities became available. Even in Northampton, a town not as known for its industrial capabilities, workers both American and foreign born flocked there to pursue job opportunities between 1860 and 1920.128

Industry, although slow to start in the area, made its mark on the valley and with its concentration in the southern region of the Massachusetts stretch served to divide the valley into two parts. After midcentury, the section north of the Holyoke Range retained the rural, pastoral atmosphere of its earlier days. Industry in the two northern counties (Franklin and Hampshire), although evident, failed to grab the local economic spotlight, Agriculture, although on a slightly larger, more commercial scale than before, continued to be the primary bread-winning occupation for the second half of the century. To the south in Hampden County, large cities like Holyoke and Springfield, along with the smaller municipalities of Westfield, Chicopee, and Agawam, embraced industry and its promise of economic success. Factories blossomed along the riverbanks, profiting from water tumbling over the South Hadley Falls and tributaries feeding into the Connecticut. Smokestacks and mills emerged where there had once been low-lying buildings and farms. The south, though it had always enjoyed a larger population than the counties north of the Range, was irrevocably changed. Where there had once been a rural landscape similar to the one surrounding Northampton, by the 1860s there was a sprawling urban industrial area in Springfield but extending in all directions in the form of small factories and the homes necessary to accommodate the workers drawn the region.
Industry had arrived in the name of progress, but it served to divide what had once been a fairly uniform landscape. Within the Massachusetts stretch, two distinctly different landscapes found themselves starkly juxtaposed. Once the distinction had been between different forms of beautiful landscapes (the pastoral and the sublime), but with the arrival of industry, the distinction came to be between the rural and the urban. The Massachusetts section was once cohesively balanced and unified, a place where human needs and the natural offerings of the landscape could coexist. However, with the new industrial landscape to the south of the Holyoke range, the balance that had been so delicately maintained came undone. The Massachusetts stretch had been a landscape in slow transition, but with the arrival of tourists, industry, and progress, the southern portion of the river valley was irrevocably changed.

Initially the transitional landscape in the southern portion of the valley didn’t deter artists, writers and tourists from continuing to visit the area. The valley, and particularly the view from Mount Holyoke, had become established stops on the American Grand Tour, nestled conveniently between cosmopolitan New York and the rugged landscape of the Green and White Mountains to the north. The fractured cohesion of the Connecticut River Valley was more of a necessary evil in the name of progress, a natural progression of human ingenuity, and thus wasn’t the primary reason behind the fading of the valley’s golden age, at least initially.

Just as artists had moved up to the Massachusetts section of the river after abandoning the Hartford area, the Pioneer Valley was left behind as artists became interested in the Vermont and New Hampshire sections of the valley beginning around 1850. After the mid-century peak, the number of exhibited pieces began to decline slightly and thus so did the outside interest in the region. The 1860s and 1870s saw the last of the concentrated artistic interest in the valley, and even at that, the artists weren’t well known. In an attempt to maintain the image of the valley as a
haven from the changing world, most versions of the valley landscape portrayed “a pastoral ideal of rural peace and plenty.” In some ways, the art inspired by the area was simply tired as well as stylistically dated. Representational landscape painting toward the end of the nineteenth century had fallen out of vogue in American artistic culture, which by the turn of the century was more and more influenced by modernism. While the beauty of the landscape hadn’t shifted dramatically, at least to the north of the Holyoke Range, it was no longer artistically alluring and/or unique. The pastoral ideal was one that Americans were familiar with and in the face of increasing industrialization, it was one that was falling by the wayside. The golden age of the valley’s artistic significance and vitality was declining throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

As the valley became trite in an artistic sense naturally, the presence of industry in the region’s southern half proved to be quickly disconcerting. Although industry was a major presence in the valley beginning only in the 1840s, it caused problems in the water quality by the 1870s. All the industry, hundreds of mills interspersed on the riverbanks inevitably made an impact. Profit had a price and not only was the pastoral landscape replaced by an industrial montage of brick and glass, but the land that remained was a risk of damage even though it had been spared in the initial destruction. A polluted landscape is an uninviting one and through the northern section of the valley remained relatively free from the “ravages of the axe” that Cole was once so anxious about, the fear of the invasive industrial landscape constantly preyed on the minds of those attached to what remained of the pastoral ideal.

For some, however, the industry had yet to ruin the glowing perception of the valley. In his book *Northampton, the meadow city*, Kneeland recorded his thoughts on the relationship between industry and the pastoral landscape: “enterprise, traffic, factory wheels, steam whistles,
busy industries, enriching and enlivening the people, have not spoilt the landscapes or robbed the recesses, roads, foot-paths and bridle paths of their romance, their loveliness, their legends, their traditions, and their poetry.”

At least in Northampton and subsequently the northern reaches of the valley, the sense of a balanced, partnership landscape was maintained even by the late years of the nineteenth century. Industry had infiltrated the area, but north of the Holyoke Range it had failed to significantly alter the celebrated landscape.

By 1900, the golden age of the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River had faded. While the new century heralded the dawn of mechanization, economic promise and progress, it also signified the end of an era, the end of a time when nature was celebrated as an icon of the American spirit. The assembly line and a preoccupation with productivity came to replace nature and pastoralism. By 1900, the divide between the northern and southern sections of the valley had become even more pronounced with the fault line following the contours of the Holyoke Range. The vast majority of the population was concentrated in Hampden County, as was the bulk of local industry and manufacturing centers. Springfield and Holyoke alone contained 1,350 factories, a significant number, especially when compared to other towns along the river like Northampton that contained only 241 (US Census). In the part of the valley to the south of the Holyoke Range, agriculture had fallen by the wayside as an occupational pursuit. In Springfield, 8,622 males were involved in manufacturing/mechanical pursuits while only 310 were involved in agriculture.

While occupations shifted, so did the demographics of employees. In 1900, the largest proportion of males involved in manufacturing positions had native parents, yet the numbers of men who were immigrants or the American-born children of immigrants weren’t far behind. Factory work, though not enjoyable or highly paid, attracted an ethnically diverse and unskilled
labor force to the valley in ways that farms and agricultural opportunities never had. The new industries needed an abundance of low wage earners and had very little trouble filling the positions. Money was certainly being made in Hampden County at the end of the nineteenth century, but in comparison with the small towns that were once sprinkled throughout the area in the early decades of the century, the profit came with a price: significant alteration of the landscape.

North of the Holyoke Range in the low-lying plain of the Deerfield Basin, industry had yet to reach a point of dominance over the landscape or the economy. Factories and manufacturing centers remained confined to the small cities of Northampton and Greenfield, yet even there the physical evidence of progress had yet to manifest itself in the infrastructure and landscape. Small towns in Hampshire and Franklin counties like Amherst, with sixty-seven small industries, paled in comparison to the industrial capabilities of Hampden County. The flat basin with its lack of rapids and waterpower was still unproductive industrially as it had been throughout the century, thus confounding any desires to bring progress to the area.

Franklin and Hampshire Counties had smaller populations in comparison to Hampden and they were unsurprisingly more demographically homogenous in 1900 than the county to the south. While Hampden County had a population that was about thirty percent foreign-born, Franklin and Hampshire Counties had foreign-born percentages of 16.5 and 23.5 respectively. The northern section of the Pioneer Valley had certainly diversified demographically since the early stages of settlement but it was still very different from the melting pot that was emerging in large cities due to the arrival of large immigrant populations. Despite the obvious presence of a new population to the south, the upper valley remained comparatively homogenous, suggestive of the valley’s continuity over time.
No matter how consistent a landscape may appear, it is impossible for it to freeze in time. Even without the aide of human intervention nature has a way of modifying itself. Oxbows get destroyed and bypassed, leaving marshes in their old path. Rivers flood. Fields disappear as trees invade their borders. The addition of humans with their boats, canals, bridges, factories, farms, and trains changed the topography in further extremes, changing the landscape of celebrated natural features into one of roads and rooftops, landscapes that are no longer about the land at all.

In the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley, many things changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Some alterations were due to the human inability to leave the landscape untouched while others were due to more organic reasons. Once an agrarian landscape cultivated for the survival of individual families, the river valley became focused on a larger market and the potential of the fertile fields to turn a profit. Tourists arrived later as the landscape gained more notoriety and with them brought the need for more advanced infrastructure. They unknowingly spurred the growth of small towns and encouraged the arrival of the railroad. The iron horse in all of its steam and noise heralded the dawn of an industrial age in the valley. Technological innovations, growing cities and a new, foreign workforce enabled the lower reaches of the Pioneer Valley to develop into one of the most powerful inland industrial centers in New England. The entrenchment and burgeoning of the area’s industrial sector, however, signaled the end of its era as a destination for tourists. Through the northern portion of the valley maintained its distance from the factories and smoke to the south, by the close of the century its pastoral landscape was no longer a big enough magnet to draw visitors in the same numbers. Thus despite the comparatively consistent appearance and cultural attitude of the upper counties, the popularity of the Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River Valley...
began to fade. Though the area never fell into complete obscurity, never again would it enjoy the national spotlight with the same fervor.

In *The Oxbow, After Church, After Cole, Flooded, Green Light* (1998), Stephen Hannock depicts a landscape that seems to be in the prime of its existence. In the foreground sits the Connecticut River, a swath of cloudy blue lazily cutting a straight path amid cultivated farm fields. The Oxbow, once a unique quirk in the river’s course, sits abandoned above the main artery of the river, a marshland striped with sandbars prone to flooding. Farm fields dominate the foreground and extend past the Oxbow, sprawling over the right side of the canvas. Where the fields stop, the trees begin, densely packed in the distance and bordering the river in small groups. The human hand is also visible in bridges that traverse the old Oxbow in two locations; however, upon reaching land the roads disappear into the agrarian landscape, invisible among the greens and browns of the fields. Although Northampton should be visible in the scene given the imagined location of the artist, the small city is only alluded to by a tight grouping of trees on the far right side of the composition, a feature noticeable only because it is otherwise surrounded by cultivated fields. This composition suggests, as Cole’s *Oxbow* did, the existence of a partnership landscape in the Connecticut River Valley, one that has a distinct human presence but a benign impact on the natural world. Unlike Cole’s piece, however, there is no sense of an imminent threat to the peaceful pastoral landscape. There are no thunderclouds, no billows of smoke coming from factories or steaming trains. The only haze is in the distance, shrouding the foothills of the Berkshires in a cloak of gray mist, perhaps the result of early morning fog. While some artists of the mid-nineteenth century depicted the valley at least in part with the aim of attracting tourists, Hannock’s piece, produced in 1998, is a celebration of a landscape that survived the threats of progress, a landscape that continued to be pastoral while managing to modernize when
necessary. This is not a landscape frozen in time but an evolving, organic entity; in maintaining its cultural and physical integrity, the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River Valley has defied the odds, resisting, in Hannock’s imagination as well as in the lives of residents, many of the forces of modernity visible from the summit of Mount Holyoke.

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Notes


2 Ibid., 226.

3 Ibid., 226-227.

4 Ibid. 228.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 230.


11 Ibid., 232.

12 Ibid., 254.


17 Heimert, “Puritanism,” 365.

18 Ibid., 374.

19 Earle, “Pioneers of Providence,” 488.


21 Earle, “Pioneers of Providence,” 487.

22 Heimert, “Puritanism,” 373.

23 Ibid., 374.

24 Willis, *Scenery*, 351.


26 Ibid., 496.

27 Ibid., 500.


31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 169.


34 Ibid., 14.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 18.

37 Clark, “Household Economy,” 182.

38 Ibid., 177.


42 Ibid.


48 Dwight, *Travels*, 337.

49 Ibid., 322.


51 Ibid., 325.


53 Passenger Department of Boston and Main Railroad, “The River By Rail,” in *This American River, Five Centuries of Writing about the Connecticut*, ed. by W.D. Wetherell (Hanover, NH: UPNE, 2002) 171.


55 Passenger Department, “River by Rail,” 171.


58 Ibid., 22.

59 Ibid., 23.

61 Dwight, Travels, vol. 1, 356.

62 Ibid., 354.


69 Willis, American Scenery, 246.


71 Willis, American Scenery, 14.

72 Ibid.


74 Ibid., 299.

75 Ibid., 298.
76 Ibid.


78 Ibid., 49.


80 Ibid., 11.

81 Ibid., 17.


87 Truettner and Wallach, Thomas Cole, 51.


89 Ibid., 82.

90 Alan Wallach, “Some Further Thoughts on the Panoramic Mode of Hudson River School Landscape Painting,” in Within the Landscape: essays on nineteenth-century American art and
culture, ed. by Phillip Earenfight and Nancy Siegel (University Park, PA: Trout Gallery at Dickinson College, 2005):115.


92 Wallach, “Making a Picture,” 86.


95 Truettner and Wallach, Thomas Cole, 76.

96 Ibid.


98 Truettner and Wallach, Thomas Cole, 76.

99 Ibid.

100 Wallach, “Making a Picture,” 87.


103 Marx, “Railroad in Art,” 183.

104 Ibid.

105 Cole, though a visitor to the Connecticut River Valley prior to the arrival of the railroad, was one such artist who found the railroad to be worthy of concern. Many Americans were nervous about the railroad, but given his history as a concerned lover of landscape, to him it was “an unsettling, destabilizing force at odds with nature” (Schuyler 24).


Marx, “Railroad in Art,” 186

Ibid., 197.

Ibid., 199.

Ibid., 200.


Ibid., 46.


Ibid., 151.

Ibid., 4.

Ibid., 12.

Ibid., 6.

US Census.


Clark, “Roots of Rural Capitalism,” 328.


128 Clark, “Roots of Rural Capitalism,” 328.


132 US Census

133 US Census