

**THE NATIONAL LANCERS WITH THE REVIEWING OFFICERS ON BOSTON COMMON**  
Hand-colored lithograph, 1837, after a drawing by Charles Hubbard. "On stone by F. H. Lane."

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Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, M. and M. Karolik Collection.

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## The Lithographs of Fitz Hugh Lane

By JOHN WILMERDING

OF the marine painters in America previous to the emergence of Winslow Homer perhaps none is so important or so appealing as Fitz Hugh Lane. He is often included in discussions of American art to the same degree that many of his lesser known, near-contemporaries are: for example, James Butterworth, Thomas Birch, Martin Heade, and Robert Salmon, whom Lane is known once to have copied. But his work has been the subject of only a few specialized studies to date. Recent popular interest has been stimulated (and not necessarily for the best) by the sudden rise in the costs of his oil paintings. Within a period of some five years the values have quadrupled. This is worth mentioning if only because it illustrates two significant points about his work: that it is at last receiving the critical due that has long been neglected, and that an unfortunate danger can easily arise in the blanket praise for every painting that comes on the market.

What is to be noted is the great variety and richness in Lane's work, as well as

the inevitable scale of quality within that work. Only when these facts have been dispassionately accounted for can we reach some idea of the place of his paintings in the history of nineteenth-century American art. One useful approach is that of studying a certain aspect or portion of his work, which might give an insight into Lane's broader artistic contribution. Alfred Mansfield Brooks has made such a study of Lane's pencil drawings, over a hundred of which may be viewed collectively in Gloucester, and of the house Lane designed and built also in Gloucester (*Essex Institute Historical Collections*, January, 1945, pp. 83-86, and July, 1942, pp. 281-283). Another such area, still to be explored for its own contribution, is that of his lithographs. As yet these have received no comprehensive treatment outside of the incomplete and unpublished account by John Thomas Carey in his doctoral thesis for Ohio State University (1954).

What is so extraordinary about these lithographs is the frequent instance of high quality. They provide further

sources of interest in their range of subject and handling and in their occasional connections with similar oil paintings. At the moment there have been listed forty-six different lithographs; of some only one copy is known, while of others as many as a dozen have been accounted for. The largest public collections are located in the American Antiquarian Association, Worcester (12), the Boston Athenaeum (12), the Library of Congress (11), the Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia (8), the New York Public Library (6), the Cape Ann Scientific, Literary, and Historical Association, Gloucester (5), the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (5), the Peabody Museum, Salem (5), and the Yale University Art Gallery (4). A dozen are scattered through other museums and libraries in Boston, Baltimore, Salem, and Norwich, Connecticut; an equal number, if not more, is in private hands. Thus, the quantity of such prints is surprisingly extensive and affords an unusual opportunity to consider Lane as both artist and technician from a fresh point of view.

Though crippled in childhood, probably by polio, Lane took up sketching local scenes as a diversion. In an undated and untitled article among the files of newspaper clippings in the Cape Ann Scientific, Literary, and Historical Association, a relation, Edward Lane, tersely remarked in retrospect that the young Fitz Hugh also made shoes for a time; "but after awhile, seeing that he could draw better than he could make shoes, he went to Boston and took lessons in drawing and painting and became a marine artist." Apparently, Lane's work had come to the favorable attention of the Gloucester lithographic firms, and he was given work in several of these estab-

lishments. While he was at one of them, Clegg and Dodge on Sea Street, W. E. P. Rogers, a local lithographer of some repute, showed Lane's drawings to Mr. Pendleton who owned the widely known firm in Boston. Impressed with what he saw, Pendleton offered Lane a job. He promptly accepted the apprenticeship and in 1832 at the age of twenty-eight moved to Boston, his first and probably single prolonged excursion away from Gloucester.

Pendleton's at this moment was in the process of rapidly developing lithographic techniques. By employing a number of Europeans the firm sought to put its plant in successful operation through bringing the basic knowledge of lithography from its German sources. The medium was scarcely twenty-five years old, but was already producing diversified material of unusual finish; within a few more years color lithography was to appear. Americans now saw a new means of picturing their surroundings quickly and easily. When Lane arrived at Pendleton's, the firm already had a well-established reputation, having put on stone Stuart's famous portrait series of the first five Presidents under the far-reaching title of "The Five Kings." But the shop also had a significant European aspect in its welcome to a number of foreign artists who were able to contribute to the training in this medium of the younger, less experienced Americans. Lane's apprenticeship took place at a most promising moment.

He must have traveled back and forth between Boston and Gloucester during these years, for the *Gloucester Telegraph* several times mentions that he was proceeding with subscriptions for lithographs depicting views of the town. Notices about his work appeared August 15,

1835 and December 19, 1835, and in the November 16, 1836 edition the editor prophetically, if condescendingly, predicted of Mr. Lane "that he will some day become a distinguished artist." For the moment, though, his work consisted foremost in illustrating music-sheet covers (for instance, *Byron's Dungeon*, *Love Among the Roses*, *The Mad Girl's Song*, *The Maniac*, *On Ellen's Bloom Blushed a Rose*, *The Mariner's Return*, and *Alcohol Rocks*); small views of local buildings generally used as trade cards (*Old Building at the Corner of Ann Street*, [*The Old Feather Store*], *Great Western and New York Depot at South Cove*, and *William H. Ladd's Eating House*); and putting on stone the painted views by other artists (*City of Washington*, *Boston Harbor*, *Millbury Village*, *Battle Ground at Concord*, and *The Great Conflagration, St. John's, Porto Rico*). Most of these date from the thirties and early forties. Two portraits are of special concern. One shows the late President Harrison on a music-sheet cover (1841) and the other John W. Hawkins after a drawing by T. M. Burnham (1842), both in the Library of Congress. Along with a small oil portrait of Old John Somes in a private collection in Gloucester after an earlier pastel by Benjamin Blythe, these are the only portraits by Lane known still to exist.

Lane's style at this time in both his painting and lithography is relatively crude and somewhat primitive. There is a naïve and bright decorativeness to much of his work, as may be seen in the representative *National Lancers on the Boston Common* (Frontispiece). Similar stiff figures appeared on some of Lane's music-sheet covers from the same time (*A Militia Encampment*, *Capt. E. G. Austin's Quick Step*, *Yankee Ship and*

*Yankee Crew*, and *The Norfolk Guard's Quick Step*). Here he has added a local landscape seen from a bird's-eye view and hand colored the scene afterwards; in short, turned the motif into a composition of its own.

After a few years under Pendleton, Lane met Thomas Moore who succeeded Pendleton as owner of the firm and later invited Lane to join him in the new publishing association of Keith and Moore. Benjamin Champney, who subsequently became an apprentice in the same firm, wrote in his *Sixty Years' Memories of Art and Artists*: "Fitz Hugh Lane, afterwards well-known as a marine painter, did most of the views, hotels, etc. He was very accurate in his drawing, understood perspective and naval architecture perfectly, as well as the handling of vessels, and was a good, all-round draughtsman." Sometime in 1845 with more than ten years of work and professional experience behind him, he collaborated with another apprentice and aspiring artist, J. W. A. Scott, to form their own lithographic firm. Called Lane and Scott, the association put these two at last in business for themselves; under this sign Lane turned out his most familiar and successful prints. These years until 1848, when Lane returned to work in Gloucester permanently, mark the beginning of his maturity, a well-established reputation, and fifteen years of prodigious activity ahead.

Once on his own, Lane turned to the subjects he knew and loved best: ships and the harbors they sailed in. Notable lithographs of ship portraits from these years include the *Steam Ship "Massachusetts" in a Squall*, 1845, and the *Steam Demi-Bark "Antelope"*, 1855 (Fig. 1). This second print was translated nearly a decade later, in 1863 and only two years

before Lane's death, into a typical painting of his accomplished and mature manner, the *Brig "Antelope" in Boston Harbor* (Cover). Though they are not the same ship and the view has been reversed from the port to starboard side, the basic format of the ship portrait has been retained, if enlarged into a more

done in Lane's youth. This was a common practice that allowed a wide distribution of an artist's work, and in Lane's case provided sources for later pictorial arrangements.

But Lane is perhaps best known for his views of the town and harbor of Gloucester, a subject he sketched, painted, and

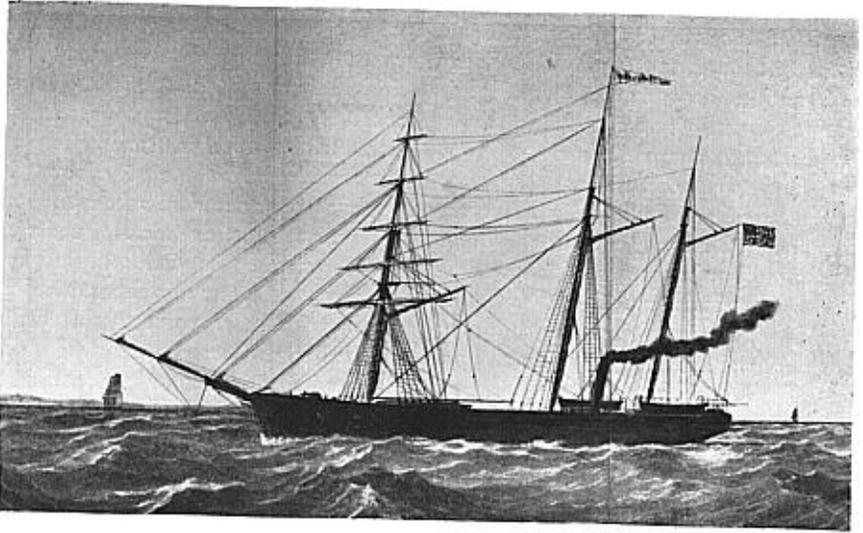


FIGURE 1. STEAM DEMI-BARK "ANTELOPE"

Hand-colored lithograph, 1855, "From a Painting by F. H. Lane."

Lithographed by Bufford, Boston.

Courtesy The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia.

interesting composition in the later oil. In each it is possible to see Lane's confident handling of details like rigging as well as his ability to render convincingly the qualities of water, light, and air. The comparison also illustrates the role his lithographs often played in relation to his paintings. Generally, the print was a ready means of documenting the shipping that frequented Boston's and Gloucester's harbors. Often Lane executed these portraits on commission from the ship's owner or captain, as Robert Salmon had

put on stone throughout his life. Here is to be found the best summary of his stylistic development. Sometime in the early thirties Lane executed his first *View of the Town of Gloucester, Mass.* (Fig. 2), which may be the best example of his youthful work. Several copies exist of this unusually bold scene that exhibits his early discovery of chiaroscuro. There is almost an excess of severe lighting as the eye moves swiftly from area to area. But the compositional unity dominates, however precariously, and a sense of rational

control is to be felt in the value changes and spatial depth. The point of view is somewhat confused when one compares the scale of figures to buildings. In a technique he was to pursue later he has made the horizon and distant shoreline congruent, but, in contrast, has viewed

context. It is only in the next decades that he successfully masters this problem. This lithograph also marks Lane's first experimentation with ships' reflections in water, another task that he was to surmount effectively in his mature work. Fullness of modeling and volume, par-

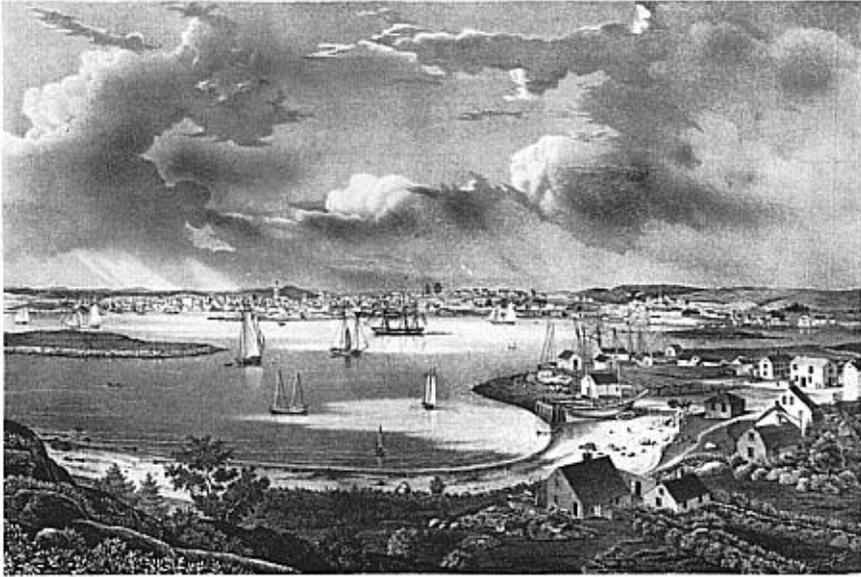


FIGURE 2. VIEW OF THE TOWN OF GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS  
Hand-colored lithograph, 1830's, "Drawn from Nature & on stone by F. H. Lane."  
Lithographed by Pendleton, Boston.

Courtesy Cape Ann Scientific, Literary, and Historical Association.

the near foreground from above. The spectator's eye thus slips down into the picture, as it were, and across to the background. The water and the buildings have almost a conceptual character in their surface flatness.

The introduction of the human figure is inconspicuous but noticeable. Lane generally included figures in his landscapes only as resting points in the total design or as a means of fixing scale. Here the proportion of the tiny figures in the right middle ground is inadequate for the

particularly in portraying ships, likewise awaited more competent treatment in later years. The details here of shipping and of the town, carefully including the gambrel-roofed house at the lower right, have their usual illustrative significance. One should also note how the occult balance of the oval formations of harbor line below and clouds above creates a restful focus. Although early, this is one of the most satisfying representations of Lane's search for expressive values.

*A second View of Gloucester, Mass.,*

done only a few years later in 1837, illustrates a remarkable change in design and handling (Fig. 3). The perspective is cohesive now, the figures are more in scale with their setting, and the view embraces a more lateral panorama. Like the earlier print, this has been hand tinted

instances of his attention in the large canvases to linear detail and contrasts of light and dark reflect his earlier apprenticeship. Sometimes, the lithograph provided the source for a more complicated painting, as in the ship portrait; conversely, such care in a canvas sometimes



FIGURE 3. VIEW OF GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS  
Hand-colored lithograph, 1837. Lithographed by Bradford, Boston.  
Courtesy The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia.

afterwards, while another known version has been painted over in oils to look like a painting. This attention to individual finish is indicative of the close relation between many of Lane's lithographs and paintings from this time on. Yet the bearing of his lithographic training on his pictorial style in oil is often neglected in studies of Lane. Like Copley in the preceding century, like the Hudson River artists in his own time, or like Homer in the next generation, Lane carried over the style and techniques of the graphic arts into his later painting, and many

anticipated a lithographic series that was to follow.

By 1845 Lane had successfully arrived at a mature style that was to be characteristic for much of the rest of his life. The *View of Gloucester, from Rocky Neck* (Fig. 4) makes another significant advance in being a chromolithograph, in which the color tints were produced during the printing process itself. With typical ingenuity Lane found the color crayon especially adaptable to capturing strong light effects. Yet he did not overdo his colors, which were generally soft

and cool, although never thin. He used them to fill in large areas and to highlight crucial details, but kept nevertheless a total sense of balance. The controlled white of the paper and the strength of his line kept their roles of expression. In two other views of the same time, *Newburyport from Salisbury* and *New Bedford*

The lithographs often have an unexpected usefulness, too, in documenting problematic paintings. A painted *View of Baltimore* was such a case until copies turned up of an almost identical colored lithograph, *View of Baltimore, from Federal Hill*. Because of Lane's paralysis in the legs, a common assertion has held



FIGURE 4. VIEW OF GLOUCESTER HARBOR, FROM ROCKY NECK  
Chromolithograph, ca. 1845, "Drawn from nature and on stone by F. H. Lane."  
Lithographed by Lane and Scott, Boston.  
Courtesy The Mariners Museum, Newport News, Virginia.

from the Fort near Fairhaven, and in one of 1855, *Castine from Hospital Hill*, one can see a style at last firm and sure. In the later works Lane has noticeably lowered the horizon. The clouds, charged with mood and tangibility, are no longer a weak curtain drop in the background. The same sky and air uniformly fill all parts of the scene and draw the spectator directly into the view. With structural simplicity has come a new substance, and the details of topography appear with an unexpected selectivity.

that he traveled little outside of his well-documented cruises down the Maine coast in the summers of the 1850's. This view gained easy credence since some of the New York paintings are unsigned; the *Baltimore* and *Saint John's, Porto Rico* paintings bear neither signature nor date; and the early lithograph of *Washington, D. C.*, was drawn by P. Anderson and not by Lane, only put on stone by him. All initial facts would suggest Lane never made trips to these places, yet in most cases subsequent documentary

and stylistic evidence has shown these assertions to be ill-founded. The *Baltimore* lithograph, for example, reads across its base line: "Sketched from nature by F. H. Lane," thus supporting the belief that it and its copy in oil were done on the spot by the artist. This lithographic view is also different from most other Lane prints in that a New York firm, Sarony and Major, published it. Further, both the graphic and the oil versions have an accuracy of representation that can be achieved at second hand only with great difficulty.

It is possible but unlikely that Lane worked from a daguerreotype; two dating from between 1850 and 1854 in the Peale Museum of Baltimore show the skyline of his print. Although this was a popular subject for artists of this decade, his version has an unusual accuracy of perspective and placement of buildings and monuments. The principal question arises over his authorship of the oil copy. It differs from the lithograph only in the number and arrangement of the figures in the foreground plane. Whether a commission necessitated certain restrictions in one and not in the other is unknown; the style of the whole in each certainly bears Lane's mark, and the close correspondence in sizes must inevitably link them to his hand.

In any case, the lithographic view always provided an inexpensive and versatile means of popularizing the artist's work. His frequent subscriptions meant an added source of income; indeed, after his return to Gloucester, he sold several series of harbor and town views to the local residents. Comment in the Gloucester newspapers indicates that his work was favorably received, and the editors kept close watch on each new series. One may especially regret the rarity of Lane's

late lithographs, most of which were destroyed in the Gloucester fire of 1864. However, in anticipation of the publication of his *History of Gloucester and Cape Ann*, which appeared in 1860, John J. Babson invited Lane to produce a series of lithographic illustrations of local sites and landmarks. These few sketches are among his last and most intimate efforts as a graphic artist.

The artistic value of Lane's lithographs has so far been generally overlooked. Like the once long-standing evaluation of his paintings, the common attitude has viewed these minor works as little more than competent topographic reproductions. Lane himself recognized that lithography held noteworthy characteristics of its own. In this medium, as in painting, he did not merely keep abreast of contemporary European and American efforts, but self-reliantly explored new possibilities. Consequently, his rendering of blacks and whites, his lines, crosshatchings, and tonal gradations and relationships, produced in his best work sensations of light and atmosphere quite different from those deriving from oil. Effects of chiaroscuro, space, and air took on a sparkling richness that came only from his feeling for the stone and what could be done with it. His marine lithographs were almost unique in kind and quality. No other lithographer specialized in marine views, and even the works of artists in portraits or landscapes seldom matched his.

Occasionally, Rembrandt Peale or another contemporary achieved similar effects of shadow and highlight in his portraits, but there were few landscapists who could combine Lane's ability to exploit his material and to compose a large picture on stone. Views of old estates or familiar landmarks in the area were pop-

ular subjects for commissions, but few of these have more than topographical importance. Here, as in painting, Lane was still the faithful recorder of nature, yet gave to his lithographic views an artistic coherence and a fresh sense of the character of what he saw. No doubt more

good and interesting examples will come to light. Those that exist will meanwhile testify to a remarkable phase in this important artist's career, for it is not a small merit to have solved distinctively the different problems of graphics and oils.