

**WINSLOW HOMER'S
WORK IN
BLACK**

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WINSLOW HOMER'S WORK IN BLACK AND WHITE

Preface by R. Peter Mooz
Introduction by Philip C. Beam

Selected Works from the Bowdoin College Museum of Art
Brunswick, Maine

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Catalogue Designed by Russell Moore
Printed by the Brunswick Publishing Co.
Brunswick, Maine

PREFACE

In 1894, the first work by Winslow Homer became part of the Bowdoin College collection. The donors were credited with adventurous taste and their gift was thought a novel example of Modern art. Eighty years later, in 1974, a complete collection of Homer's woodcuts was acquired. Then, Homer was recognized as one of the greatest artists America ever produced. In the intervening years, watercolors, drawings, etchings and paintings were added to the collection. The jewel of all the gifts was the memorabilia, family letters and artifacts from Homer's Studio on Prout's Neck, Maine.

Of all the themes in Homer's work, his treatment of black and white has been chosen as the subject of this exhibition. The introduction has revealed the importance of this aspect of Homer's art from the beginning, when Homer was an apprentice making black and white lithographs, to his latest pictures with their contrasting patterns of dark waves and white spray. Included in the exhibition are wood engravings, etchings, a watercolor and drawing to show his expression of the theme in various media. Also included are photographs of Homer himself, his Prout's Neck Studio, his earliest drawing, later sketches and a Civil War pass from the memorabilia collection which add a personal dimension to his art.

Bowdoin is fortunate to be located only 25 miles from Prout's Neck and to have contact with the collectors of Homer's work in Maine and Boston. For this reason, we wish to share the best of these collections with those in other parts of the country. The exhibition will travel from New Hampshire to Oregon, Illinois to Texas, Alabama to Delaware. For their cooperation and enthusiasm in realizing this goal, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art wishes to express its great appreciation to the participating museums.

The tremendous job of organizing this exhibition has been ably carried out with care and sensitivity by Russell J. Moore, Curator. He has supervised the preparation of the exhibition, and designed and wrote the catalogue. To him go my special thanks. I also wish to thank Professor Philip C. Beam. As honorary Curator of the Homer Collection and a leading scholar of Homer's work, he has assisted in the selection of these works and written the introduction to this catalogue. Moreover, Professor Beam's association with the Homer family helped bring the memorabilia collection to the College and his interest in the woodcuts encouraged us to purchase them.

Finally, no exhibition could be held without the generosity of many donors. We deeply appreciate the gifts of Neal W. Allen '07, John F. Dana '98, John H. Halford '07, George Otis Hamlin, Charles B. Homer, Doris Homer, the Homer family, William W. Lawrence '98, Donald Lent, Charles S. Payson and Benjamin R. Shute '31.

R. Peter Mooz
Director



"The Boston Common"
Harper's Weekly — May 22, 1858
Wood Engraving



"A Bivouac Fire on the Potomac"
Harper's Weekly — December 21, 1861
Wood Engraving

INTRODUCTION

The importance of black and white in Winslow Homer's career can hardly be overstressed. When his father observed that Winslow was not suited for a higher education at nearby Harvard College, he yielded to his son's natural bent and apprenticed him to a Boston lithographer named J. H. Bufford at the age of eighteen. This was a usual way of training artists before the Civil War, and Homer showed sufficient aptitude to be allowed a measure of freedom. He gained his broadest and most extensive early experience in the graphic media of lithography and wood engraving, the latter a distinctly black and white medium which was rapidly gaining a national audience through the illustrations used by popular journals.

When Homer completed his apprenticeship at the age of twenty-one, he extended his freedom by becoming a free-lance artist and moved from Boston to New York in order to work closely with the new *Harper's Weekly*, the *Life* magazine of its day, for which he soon became the leading artist, first at the Civil War front and then on the domestic scene through the post-War years of the late sixties and early seventies. Throughout that period his principal activity and public reputation were associated with his black and white wood engravings for *Harper's Weekly* and other journals.

Although Homer's largely self-trained work in watercolor and oil loomed large in later years, the groundwork for them was laid by the character of wood engraving. As it was then used, the relatively coarse process of carving in wood eschewed details in favor of clear outlines and broad areas of black and white, with few subtle gradations of tone or atmospheric effects possible. Homer adapted readily to the limitations of the medium, with its high impact, poster-like effects, and retained its strengths throughout his life.

Homer also used the wood engraving process to reflect the character of pictures which he rendered in oil and watercolor, denoting thereby that he considered them more significant than other themes. In the main, his instincts were prophetic, for the duplicates in wood engraving will be recognized by most viewers as reflections of some of his most popular pictures in oil and watercolor. It was a type of repetition which Homer employed at an early date and continued as long as he produced wood engravings. In all likelihood, the now-famous pictures in oil and watercolor were best known to the people of his own day in their engraved form.

The year 1875 appears, in retrospect, to have been one turning point in his career. He sent the last of his wood engravings to *Harper's*, directed his energies progressively more toward the watercolor medium in which he was to excel, and paid his first visit to Prout's Neck, Maine (where his younger brother, Arthur, was honeymooning). This location became the major inspiration for the great oil marines of his later years. Before 1890 he was to try his hand briefly, and with remarkable aptitude, at etching. These works attest to his great ability with black and white compositions, but it was primarily the years of



“Our Watering-Places — The Empty Sleeve at Newport”
Harper’s Weekly — August 26, 1865
Wood Engraving



“‘Winter’ — A Skating Scene”
Harper’s Weekly — January 25, 1868
Wood Engraving

disciplined experience in drawing and composition in the wood engraving medium which enabled Homer to become a great and disciplined painter. Because he produced very few etchings, they are rarely seen today.

It is therefore fitting that the pictures selected for this group exhibition offer a wide view of Homer's work in wood engraving, along with examples of his work in watercolor, etching and drawing, which distinguished his later years. Much of the spectrum of his artistry from youth to maturity is thus made available for study and enjoyment.

Philip C. Beam

Curator, Homer Collection

Bowdoin College Museum of Art.

Author: *Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck.*



"Winter at Sea — Taking in Sail off the Coast"
Harper's Weekly — January 16, 1869
Wood Engraving



"Snap-the-Whip"
Harper's Weekly — September 20, 1873
Wood Engraving

CATALOGUE

Winslow Homer began his career as a graphic artist. His early work consists mostly of black and white lithographs, illustrations and drawings. He completed over 200 pictures for illustrated magazines, such as *Harper's Weekly*, *Ballou's Pictorial*, *Appleton's Journal* and *Every Saturday*. Wood engraving was the method used to reproduce illustrations in these magazines during the mid 19th century. Homer most likely drew in reverse on a wood block, the surface of which was as smooth as paper having been highly polished and coated with white. The bare white parts of the wood block surface were then cut away by an engraver. The drawn line would be left in relief and printed like type. The drawing was destroyed in the process; the wood block was planed down and reused.

Unless otherwise noted, the following works are part of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art's permanent collection. The wood engravings are arranged as a group by date of execution; the title is followed by the magazine source and date.

WINSLOW HOMER'S WORK IN BLACK AND WHITE

1. "The Match Between Sophs and Freshmen — The Opening"
Harper's Weekly — August 1, 1857
Wood Engraving
The artist's earliest known wood engraving.
2. "Rembrandt Peale"
Boston-Saturday — October 17, 1857
Wood Engraving
Portraits such as this were rarely done by the artist.
3. "The Boston Common"
Harper's Weekly — May 22, 1858
Wood Engraving
The artist here depicts fashionable Boston society promenading.
4. "Mademoiselle Piciolomini"
Harper's Weekly — October 30, 1858
Wood Engraving
5. "A Cadet Hop at West Point"
Harper's Weekly — September 3, 1859
Wood Engraving
6. "Fall Games — The Apple-Bee"
Harper's Weekly — November 26, 1859
Wood Engraving
Country life and country games had a special appeal to the artist.

7. "The Sleighing Season — The Upset"
Harper's Weekly — January 14, 1860
Wood Engraving
8. "A Snow Slide in the City"
Harper's Weekly — January 14, 1860
Wood Engraving
9. "Skating on the Ladies' Skating-Pond in the Central Park, New York"
Harper's Weekly — January 28, 1860
Wood Engraving
10. "Inauguration of President Jefferson Davis of the Southern Confederacy, at Montgomery, Alabama, February 18, 1861"
Harper's Weekly — March 9, 1861
Wood Engraving
11. "The Inauguration of Abraham Lincoln as President of the U. S., at the Capitol, Washington, March 4, 1861"
Harper's Weekly — March 16, 1861
Wood Engraving
12. "The Great Meeting in Union Square, New York, to Support the Government"
Harper's Weekly — May 4, 1861
Wood Engraving
13. "A Bivouac Fire on the Potomac"
Harper's Weekly — December 21, 1861
Wood Engraving
The artist most often depicted humorous, everyday activities of Civil War camp life.
14. "The War for the Union 1862 — A Bayonet Charge"
Harper's Weekly — July 12, 1862
Wood Engraving
The artist seldom depicted actual fighting; this is one of his few battle scenes.
15. "The Army of the Potomac — A Sharpshooter on Picket Duty"
Harper's Weekly — November 15, 1862
Wood Engraving
16. "Thanksgiving in Camp"
Harper's Weekly — November 29, 1862
Wood Engraving
The artist presented a realistic, unidealized view of camp life.

17. "The Approach of the British Pirate 'Alabama' "
Harper's Weekly — April 25, 1863
Wood Engraving
18. "The Russian Ball — In the Supper Room"
Harper's Weekly — November 21, 1863
Wood Engraving
19. "Any Thing for Me, If You Please? Post-Office of the Brooklyn Fair in Aid of the Sanitary Commission"
Harper's Weekly — March 5, 1864
Wood Engraving
The man at the mail window possibly is a self-portrait.
20. "Holiday in Camp — Soldiers Playing 'Football' "
Harper's Weekly — July 15, 1865
Wood Engraving
21. "Our Watering-Places — The Empty Sleeve at Newport"
Harper's Weekly — August 26, 1865
Wood Engraving
22. "Our Watering-Places — Horse-Racing at Saratoga"
Harper's Weekly — August 26, 1865
Wood Engraving
23. "A Parisian Ball — Dancing at the Mabilles, Paris"
Harper's Weekly — November 23, 1867
Wood Engraving
This particular scene was inspired by the artist's trip to Paris in 1867.
24. "Art Students and Copyists in the Louvre Gallery, Paris"
Harper's Weekly — January 11, 1868
Wood Engraving
The artist no doubt witnessed such a scene during his visit to Paris.
25. "'Winter' — A Skating Scene"
Harper's Weekly — January 25, 1868
Wood Engraving
The Oriental quality here possibly is the result of the artist's association with John La Farge, a collector of Japanese prints in the early 1860s.
26. "Christmas Belles"
Harper's Weekly — January 2, 1869
Wood Engraving
Although the artist remained a bachelor all his life, he had an appreciation for lovely, fashionable young women.

27. "Winter at Sea — Taking in Sail off the Coast"
Harper's Weekly — January 16, 1869
Wood Engraving
28. "Jurors Listening to Counsel, Supreme Court, New City Hall, New York"
Harper's Weekly — February 20, 1869
Wood Engraving
29. "The Artist in the Country"
Appleton's Journal of Literature, Science and Art, New York — June 19, 1869
Wood Engraving
30. "Summit of Mount Washington"
Harper's Weekly — July 10, 1869
Wood Engraving
The artist also did two oils of the same subject.
31. "Spring Blossoms"
Harper's Weekly — May 21, 1870
Wood Engraving
32. "The Dinner Horn"
Harper's Weekly — June 11, 1870
Wood Engraving
33. "Trapping in the Adirondacks"
Scribner's Monthly — Every Saturday — December 24, 1870
Wood Engraving
The artist was a lover of the outdoors and was often inspired by his various camping trips into the woods.
34. "A Winter-Morning, — Shovelling Out"
Scribner's Monthly — Every Saturday — January 14, 1871
Wood Engraving
35. "Deer-Stalking in the Andirondacks in Winter"
Scribner's Monthly — Every Saturday — January 21, 1871
Wood Engraving
36. "Lumbering in Winter"
Scribner's Monthly — Every Saturday — January 28, 1871
Wood Engraving
37. "Cutting a Figure"
Scribner's Monthly — Every Saturday — February 4, 1871
Wood Engraving

38. "On the Beach — Two Are Company, Three Are None"
Harper's Weekly — August 17, 1872
Wood Engraving
39. "The Wreck of the 'Atlantic' — Cast Up by the Sea"
Harper's Weekly — April 26, 1873
Wood Engraving
This is one of the artist's earliest illustrations dealing specifically with the sea.
40. "The Noon Recess"
Harper's Weekly — June 28, 1873
Wood Engraving
41. "The Bathers"
Harper's Weekly — August 2, 1873
Wood Engraving
42. "The Nooning"
Harper's Weekly — August 16, 1873
Wood Engraving
43. "Sea-Side Sketches — A Clam-Bake"
Harper's Weekly — August 23, 1873
Wood Engraving
44. "Snap-the-Whip"
Harper's Weekly — September 20, 1873
Wood Engraving
Children and their games had a special appeal to the artist; he represented them in an unsentimental, direct manner.
45. "Gloucester Harbor"
Harper's Weekly — September 27, 1873
Wood Engraving
The artist visited Gloucester, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1873, and was inspired by this shipbuilding community.
46. "Ship-Building, Gloucester Harbor"
Harper's Weekly — October 11, 1873
Wood Engraving
The same subject also inspired the artist to do two oils and a watercolor.
47. "Dad's Coming!"
Harper's Weekly — November 1, 1873
Wood Engraving

48. "The Morning Bell"
Harper's Weekly — December 13, 1873
Wood Engraving
49. "Watch-Tower, Corner of Spring and Varick Streets, New York"
Harper's Weekly — February 28, 1874
Wood Engraving
Although the artist lived in New York for over twenty years, he seldom used it as model; this is one of his rare city scenes.
50. "Raid on a Sand-Swallow Colony — 'How Many Eggs?'"
Harper's Weekly — June 13, 1874
Wood Engraving
51. "Gathering Berries"
Harper's Weekly — July 11, 1874
Wood Engraving
52. "Waiting for a Bite"
Harper's Weekly — August 22, 1874
Wood Engraving
In 1874, the artist stopped illustrating for Harper's Weekly and devoted himself to watercolors.
53. "Saved (The Lifeline)," 1884
Etching
Gift of the Homer Family
In 1881, the artist traveled to England and settled in Tynemouth on the North Sea for a time. There the artist achieved a seriousness and maturity of style not seen before.
54. "Eight Bells," 1887
Etching
Gift of Mr. Charles S. Payson
The artist based this work on an earlier watercolor.
55. "Mending the Nets," 1888
Etching
Gift of the Homer Family
The artist's fashionable, idle young ladies that were seen previously, here are replaced by strong, young girls hard at work.
56. "Perils of the Sea," 1888
Etching
Gift of Fred A. Neuren
57. "Fly Fishing, Saranac," 1889
Etching
Gift of the Homer Family

58. Study for "Undertow" and a Woman's Head
Etching (Restrike of the Original Plate)
Gift of Donald Lent
59. "Royal Palms, Santiago de Cuba," 1885
Pencil and white chalk
Hamlin Fund
60. "Wolfe's Cove, Province of Quebec," 1895
Watercolor
Gift of Messrs. Neal W. Allen, John F. Dana, John H. Halford, William W. Lawrence and Benjamin R. Shute
After 1874, watercolor replaced wood engraving as a graphic medium for the artist.

BIOGRAPHICAL CHRONOLOGY

- 1836 — Born in Boston, February 24.
- 1854/55 — Apprenticed to J. H. Bufford, lithographer, Boston.
- 1857 — Left Bufford to begin free-lance illustration.
- 1859 — Moved to New York and remained there until the 1880s.
- 1861 — Covered Lincoln's inauguration and visited the Army of the Potomac near Washington.
- 1862 — Began to paint in oils.
- 1863/65 — Traveled to the Civil War front and completed war paintings and illustrations; also began to paint rural subjects.
- 1864 — Elected Associate of the National Academy; next year, elected National Academician.
- 1865/67 — Involved less and less with illustration.
- 1866 — Sailed to France and remained for a year.
- 1868/74 — Worked as an illustrator for magazines and books.
- 1870 — Visited the Adirondacks.
- 1873 — Summered in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and completed first watercolor series.
- 1875 — Completed last illustration for *Harper's Weekly*.
- 1881 — Traveled to England and settled near Tynemouth; worked on watercolors and drawings.
- 1883 — Established home in Prout's Neck, Maine.
- 1884/86 — Traveled to the Bahamas and Florida on several occasions.
- 1910 — Died at Prout's Neck, September 29.



"Eight Bells," 1887
Etching
Gift of Mr. Charles S. Payson



"Wolfe's Cove, Province of Quebec,"
1895
Watercolor
Gift of Messrs. Neal W. Allen,
John F. Dana, John H. Halford,
William W. Lawrence and
Benjamin R. Shute



AND WHITE

