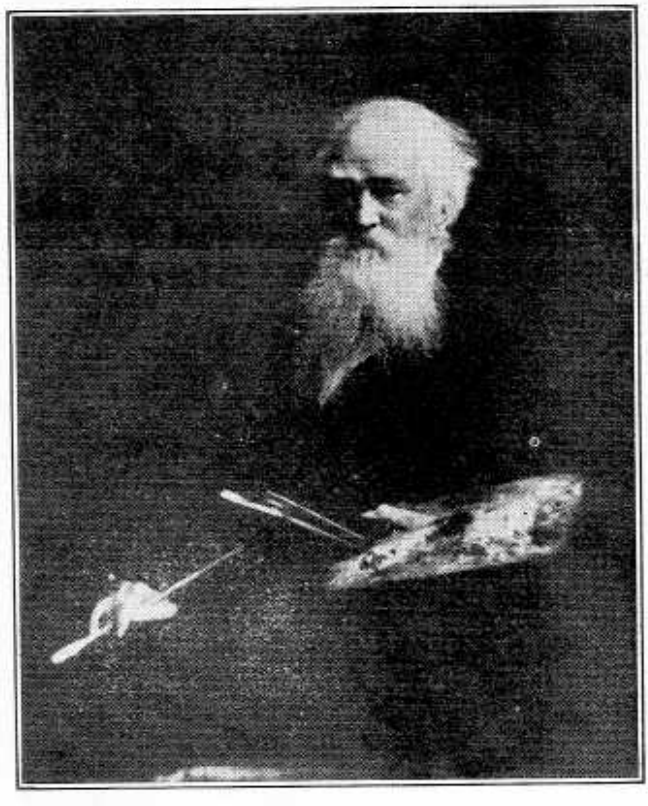
YOSEMITE NATURE NOTES



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The Thomas Moran Art Collection of the National Parks

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In the Mather Room of the Yosemite Museum is now being exhibited for the first time a selection from the Thomas Moran Art Collection of the National Parks, which was presented to the government in 1935 by Miss Ruth B. Moran, daughter of the great landscape painter. This is a collection which includes nearly 300 items. tains to many units of the National and as implied by its name it per- Park system. It has been assigned to Yosemite for this showing because of the many Yosemite subjects it contains, and because of the facilities available in the Yosemite Museum for its display under fireproof conditions.

While still in his 30's, Thomas Moran made a succession of notable journeys into the Far West as guest artist with governmental expeditions, and in this capacity he was the first or among the first to paint many landscapes that have since become celebrated. His earliest western trip was in 1871 when he accompanied F. V. Hayden into the then almost unknown Yellowstone region. In 1872 his destination was the Yosemite Valley. In the summer of 1873 he was with J. W. Powell in the canyon lands of southern Utah and Arizona, and in 1874 he penetrated the wilderness of central Colorado in search of the mysterious Mountain of the Holy Cross. In 1879 he journeyed with a military escort to the Teton Mountains of Wyoming, where he sketched, among other subjects, the noble peaks which several years previously had been named Mount Moran in his honor.

These were the earliest of a great many western journeys, and even at fourscore years Thomas Moran was still busily recording on canvas his impressions of those landscapes whose beauty never ceased to thrill him.

He died in 1926, nearly 90, and everywhere revered as the "Dean of American Artists" and regarded by many as the foremost of Am-

erican landscape painters.

In the story of the national parks Thomas Moran occupies a unique and honorable place by reason of his influence in bringing the American people to an awareness of their heritage of landscape—a realization without which there could later have been no national park movement. It is significant that the landscapes of eight national parks and monuments were painted by Thomas Moran and through his wonderful canvases made familiar to the public, in each case before they had been made into federal parks. With these areas his name is inseparably linked: Yellowstone, Yosemite, Zion, Grand Canyon, and Grand Teton National Parks; and the Mountain of the Holy cross, Devil's Tower, and Petrified Forest National Monuments. His companions of the Territorial Surveys called him "T. Yellowstone Moran."

The service rendered by Thomas Moran has been well stated by Robert Allerton Parker:

"He opened the eyes of Americans to the vast inexhaustible expanses of natural beauty upon our own continent. He was a pioneer like the other argonauts of his time, but he went forth in search of beauty as others were in search of copper, gold and oil. He was creative because he awakened the American consciousness to the permanent value of those wide measureless expanses of Nature, as natural resources of beauty, to be prized and conserved and held as great national parks. In the slang of our own day, Moran's canvases exerted a great influence in 'selling' the idea of the Yellowstone National Park (the first national park) to the American people. More than any other artist, declares Stephen Tyng Mather, he made us acquainted with the great West."

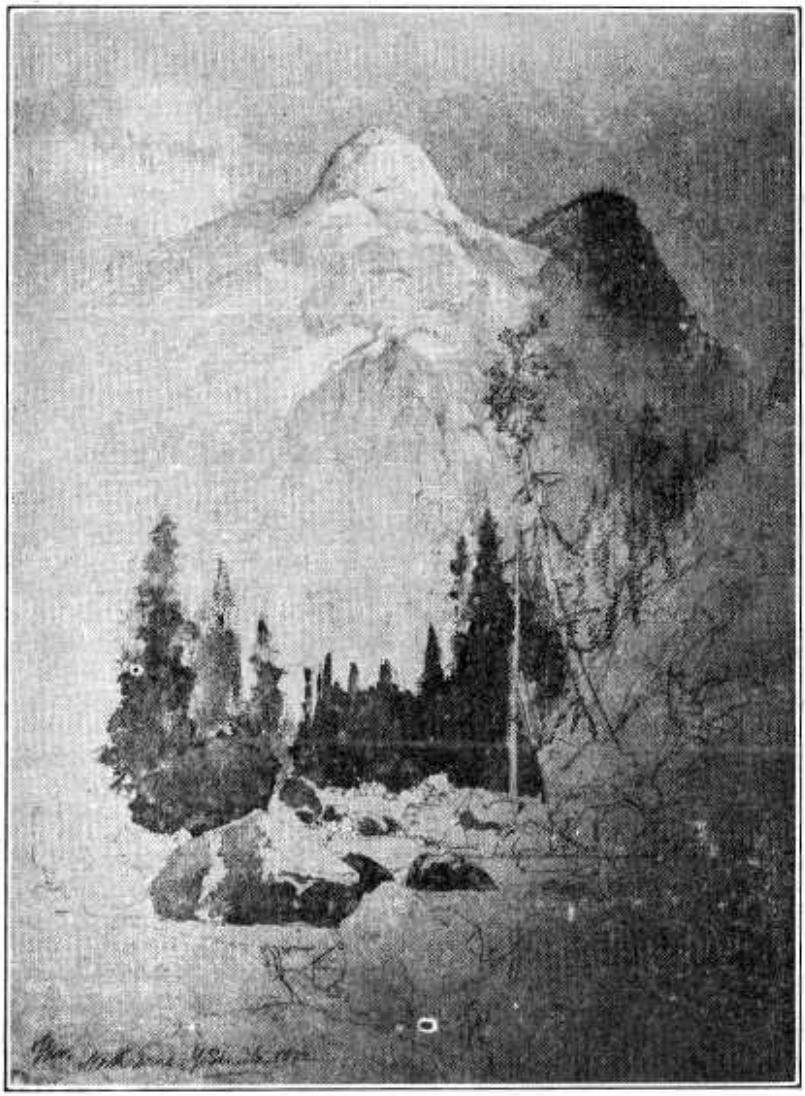
The collection now at Yosemite includes many originals dating back to Moran's first trips into the West, and some idea of its comprehensiveness and variety may be gained from an enumeration of its contents. There are 61 pencil sketches, most of them made in the early '70's; 15 black and white wash drawings; 7 water-color sketches; 6 etchings; 18 early lithographs from original water-color drawings or oil paintings; 2 large charcoal drawings; 2 oil paintings, and 60 illustrations from drawings on wood. Of special interest at Yosemite and symbolic of Thomas Moran's lifelong devotion to the sublime scenery of our national parks, is an unfinished oil painting of Bridalveil Fall, a work begun in 1924 but left incomplete because of the artist's sickness and death. It is shown along with the easel, painting stand and chair that Moran used through many decades in the painting of his landscapes.

The many sketches and drawings, really notes which Moran made for future reference and such never intended for other eyes, are of exquisite beauty; and recording as they do the artist's first sensitive reaction to the new lands through which he journeyed, they possess for us of a later generation a unique interest and appeal. For more than half a century they have lain unseen in Moran's studio folios, in New York.

In the collection are other materials of a personal nature, that help us visualize and understand the man himself: a series of 70 fine portraits showing Thomas Moran at various periods of his life; the six-shooter, holster, and army flask

that he carried on his early western expeditions; his palette and brushes; his hat, cane and wallet; the sketch books of the 1871 and 1873 expeditions, full of interesting pencil and water-color notes; his 1871 diary; and other materials in kind.

As her contribution to the collection, Mrs. Wirt de Virier Tassin,



A Field Sketch of North Dome by Moran - 1872

elder daughter of Thomas Moran, has presented the fine bust of her father made in 1891 by the noted sculptor, J. S. Hartley. This is being cast in bronze and when finished will be installed as a central feature of the exhibit.

Work of cataloging, mounting and framing the materials in the Thomas Moran Art Collection has been performed at the Berkeley laboratories of the National Park Service. Miss Ruth B. Moran has been a guest in Yosemite during the period of installation, and her suggestions contributed greatly to the effectiveness of the display. On her previous visits to the valley, in 1904 and 1922, Miss Moran was in company with her distinguished father.

This is not the only collection of the work of Thomas Moran in the National Parks. At Yellowstone is a magnificent series of finished water-color drawings, of Yellowstone subjects, made by Thomas Moran shortly after his first visit to that region. It was acquired several years ago by a group of friends of the National Park Service, and by them presented to the government. This season it is being exhibited at the Mammoth Museum. At Grand Teton is another collection pertaining to that park, a series also presented by Miss Ruth B. Moran.

Thomas Moran, A Biographical Sketch

From: National Cyclopedia of Biog.,(American)
Vol. 22, 1932 - pp. 24-25

Moran, Thomas, artist, was born at Bolton, Lancashire, England, January 12, 1837, son of Thomas and Mary (Higson) Moran, and brother of Edward and Peter Moran, both noted painters. The family came to the United States in 1844 and settled in Philadelphia, Pa. where Thomas Moran was apprenticed to the wood engraving firm of Scattergood and Telfer. He developed marked apitude for art and spent much of his time drawing in black and white and painting in water color. After his apprenticeship he began to paint in both oil and water color in the studio of his brother, Edward, and studied the paintings of older artist, especially the marines of James Hamilton and the landscapes of Turner, the English painter. His first inportant picture, "Among the Ruins There He Lingered," was exhibited at the Pennslyvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1858. He went to England in 1862 largely for the purpose of studing Turner's work in the national gallery and was in Europe again in 1866 studying the French and Italian masters. His first western journey was to the Yellowstone country as a guest of the U. S. Geological Survey under Ferdinand V. Hayden in 1871. His record of the expedition was his notable canvas "The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone" which possessed such national significance that congress appropriated money for its purchase and arranged for its exhibition in the capitol. The grandeur of the western scenery so fascinated him that he visited at different times the Yosemite Valley, Utah, The Grand Canyon of

the Colorado, the Rocky Mountain region of Colorado, and the deserts of Nevada and the Canyons of Arizona where inspiration was received for some of his most notable landscapes. His "Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone," Chasm of the Colorado" (also purchased by congress), "The Mountain of the Holy Cross" and "Green River, Wyoming", did much to awaken public interest in the natural wonders of theWest and stimulate the national park movement. He was called "the father of the national parks" and a peak in the Teton National Park was named Mount Moran in his honor. He designed the illustrations for the reports of the Hayden and Powell expeditions. He became a notable illustrator for the art magazines and books of the period. His fame as a painter in water color was quite as great as in his other mediums—his technique, color and design being unsurpassed. But his work was not limited to the West. He painted with the same enthusiasm and faithfulness of spirit subtropical scenery of Florida and Mexico, pastoral landscapes of eastern Long Island, where he made his home, rural scenery of England, the canals and palaces of Venice, and many marines. The most notable of his paintings besides those mentioned above are: "Children of the Mountain," "A Dream of the Orient," "Solitude," "Shoshone Falls—Snake River, Idaho," "The Pearl of Venice," "The Glory of the Canyon," "Zion Valley—Utah," "Spectres from the North," "Mid Atlantic," "Sunset, Long Island," and "A Dream City." Among his most notable water colors are: "On the Bright Angel Trail," "Acoma—New Mexico," "The Yellowstone Canyon," and "In Arizona." Collections of his water colors are preserved in the National Gallery of Art, Washington; Cooper Union, New York; Sheffield Museum, England; Chiswick Museum, England, and the Yellowstone National Park Museum, and a representative collections of his etchings and lithographs will be found at the New York public library. Moran excelled as an etcher also. One of his prints, "The Breaking Wave," was characterized by Ruskin as not only the best that had come from America, but the best that modern art had produced. The best of his book illustrations are found in Whittier's "Mabel Martin," and Longfellow's "Hiawatha," and books of poems by Henry M. Dodge and Lloyd Mifflin. The many awards for his pictures include the gold medal of the Centennial Exposition in 1876, and silver medals by the Columbian Exposition, Chicago, in 1893, and the Pan-American Exposition in 1901. Mr. Moran was a member of the National Academy of Design, American Water Color Society, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Royal Society of Painter-Etchers of London, the New York Etching Club, of which he was a founder, the Artist Aid Society, and the Society of Painters of the West (honorary). In all Moran's work, which varied so much in mood, subject matter and medium of expression, one constant quality is discernable—his knowledge of detail. "In art, as in any other profession," he declared, "knowledge is power. Twist this in any form you may, it remains a truth, and the foundation stone of all art . . . Just how far the artist shall go with his knowledge is left by nature on himself." That the

personality—taste opinions, everything . . . An artist's business is to produce for the spectator of his pictures the impression produced to him. He must typify his own impressions he produced with paint and canvas were charged with the ubiquitous but illusive poetry of nature, are ample evidence of the sensitiveness of his perceptive powers of how fully he realized his own goal as an artist. One of his last canvases, "A Venitian Sunset," was executed when he was eighty-five. He loved music and played the violin and took a great joy in all beautiful things, filling his home with rugs and objects d'arts from many lands. For more than forty years he maintained a studio at East Hampton, Long Island, N. Y., and spent his last years at Santa Barbara, Calif. He was married in Philadelphia, Pa., 1862, to Mary, daughter of Archibald Nimmo. Mrs. Moran was also an artist and etcher. They had three children: Paul Nimmo, Mary, wife of Wirt de Vivan. He died at Santa Barbara, Calilier Tassin, and Ruth Bedford Morfornia, August 25, 1926.

Thomas Moran; An Impression

(By His Daughter, RUTH B. MORAN)

(Revised and reprinted from The Mentor, August, 1924.)

The outstanding memory of my father; the first impression was and I believe the last impression will be the atmosphere of romance that he had about him; he seemed always to be starting off or coming back from strange, beautiful places, wild countries. And then at once on the return I would be thrilled by the lovely colors that almost at once began to grow and glow on canvas and water-color pads, and the delicate, beautiful drawings on the blocks of boxwood.

I used to come padding down in my nightgown and bare feet, lured by the talk that drifted up the stairs to my crib, and curl up in my mother's lap to be nearer, night after night, as my father sat drawing numberless illustrations for school books and magazines—all the then new wonders of the "Far West" that so captivated and thrilled him with their beauty and romance.

Thomas Moran's whole figure was romantic; perhaps the more so because of the utter lack of self-consciousness—the eyes not dreamy but clear and far-seeing, shining like a child's eyes. Always they had the look of seeing, and remembering, wonders. His mouth was delicate for a man's, but practically hidden by his beard and moustache of fair hair—his nose was delica te and sensitive. He used always to wear, in winter, a round beaver fur cap, set rather jauntily on his very small, compact head. Nearly five feet seven inches in height, thin, wiry, and quick and firm on his feet, with perfect balance—he wore his cap and cape coat, rather gallantly. Yes, he was a romantic figure, in not a very romantic period . He was quick-witted, full of humor, kind and very generous; but quick-tempered, also, and a good fighter for any cause that he might take up.

He loved music, playing the violin by ear only, but playing with

spirit; and as I first remember him, always singing with a good, sweet tenor voice. Loving his children, but forgetting them so completely when at work—which was practically always—that I have no recollection of ever asking, or depending on him for anything.

I do not think he ever reproved me or attempted any kind of discipline in his life; he did not believe in discipline for children, nor the theory of discipline for anyone. His children, three of us, loved him, and never felt the least awe or fear of him, but always instinctively an awe of his work. He, himself, disappeared so completely in it—was so rapt in it—that we children never had to be told, or taught, to reverence it—it was always the first thought of all of us—as it was practically the whole thought and life of my father.

We lived closely as a family, always in and out of the studio, but we never disturbed my father. We would lie flat on the floor and watch him paint, or use his water colors to paint the pictures for ourselves in the old pictorial magazine, The Aldine, or we would shudder with delightful horror over the Dore drawings in Dante's "Inferno," which was always in the studio, yet we never disturbed the complete concentration which isolated Thomas Moran from everyone he most lived—even his beloved wife, who was almost a part of himself.

He was never at any time really interested in making money, and always was the worst possible salesman for his pictures; almost anyone could get a picture cheapened in price, if he would stay long enough in the studio, for my father was always aching to get back to work, to get to his easel, and get rid of the buyer. He took a great joy in all beautiful artistic things; rugs and bronzes—and he spent his money lavishly to get them. Certain things that he and my mother bought in their youth he has taken with him whenever he traveled away from home, because something in their form or beauty was necessary to him, and so appealed that he felt their need wherever he might be.

His concentration on his art, his utter lack of introspection, and his lack of interest in people as a whole, made him personally and intimately known to very few, but his friendships were great friendships, full of trust, and sincerity and love.

He was always the most modest of men, but his own great sincerity of nature gave him little patience with the worldly wise, or insincere; and all his life he was ready with lance in rest to fight to the death for any of the principles of the art that he himself had been ready to risk health, happiness, and even life itself, to attain.

Now, as I look back upon him in his eighty-eighth year, at work on pictures of the Yosemite Bridalveil Fall, Yellowstone, and the skies and trees of California, still noting every variation of light and color and form, dreaming of misty mountains of colorful seas, I feel again, ten years after his death, the old thrill and wonder of romance as I did in my babyhood when I crept down the stairs into my mother's lap, watching him at work on his black and white illustrations after a long day with color, never tired, never through—always riding on into his enchanted forest where I believe he still rides on and on in a fulfillment of his happy earthly dreaming.

FURTHER NOTES

(By RUTH B. MORAN)
"THE STUDIO"
East Hampton, Long Island, N. Y.

The above article brings me very close to those days of August in 1926, when Thomas Moran closed his eyes to the beauty of the world about him, without fear or unquietness, as singleheartedly as he had lived, he died. He was creating the day before he left me, a design for a "Venice" from cracks and shadows on the ceiling. He spoke of our again seeing an exhibition in the National Academy in New York, and finally consented to rest, as the day was done. He slipped easily into quietness for all time.

Thomas Moran has no biographer, neither as man nor artist. Many false and foolish things, however, have been written about him.

I now feel that in giving this gift of his works to the National Parks, I am following a road that he believed in. These personal impressions of a country almost unknown were gathered and set down while with the men of the United States Surveys and the Far Western army posts. These men he rode and camped with, and these men knew him as a good companion as well as artist. They were close to him all his life. Now it is the men of the Park Service who have helped me with their ability, knowledge and appreciation to show this Moran collection in the perfect form it is exhibited here in Yosemite.

I have the hope that the collection may make young people of an artistic talent look at this, their own country, and look with their own minds and eyes, not led by other and foreign schools, but remembering especially those earlier schools of art in America. Nations live in the undying quality of their arts. America should be proud of her early beginnings and should win her own way in the painters' art by saying "Know Thyself." The man I write of did this in all simplicity of purpose, leading us to the saving of beauty in nature and art, otherwise lost to a later generation.

YOSEMITE MUSEUM

Temporary home of the Moran Art Collection.